MAKING OF THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL PARTNERSHIP: TURKEY-SYRIA RELATIONS BETWEEN 2003 AND 2011

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis attempts to analyze the exceptionally friendly relations and the multidimensional partnership between traditionally hostile neighbors Turkey and Syria between 2003 and 2011, which was forged by the political leaderships. Dynamic interplay between political-economic factors and foreign policy making is discussed throughout the thesis. Utilizing conjuncture approach, the thesis takes into consideration ideational dimension and regional and international political context.

The thesis mainly employs concepts and frameworks of the traditions of Historical Sociology and Historical Materialism in an effort to demonstrate that the partnership of Syria and Turkey is socially constructed and constituted in its specific historical process. It is argued that, social and political-economic transformations towards neoliberalism, taken place simultaneously in Turkey and Syria in 2000s, had constitutive ramifications on foreign policies of both countries. Thus, foreign policies had, inter alia, social determinants and social origins.

Keywords: Turkey, Syria, Multidimensional Partnership

ÖZ

ÇOK BOYUTLU ORTAKLIĞIN OLUŞUMU: 2003-2011 YILLARI ARASINDA TÜRKİYE-SURİYE İLİŞKİLERİ

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Bu tez, geleneksel olarak hasım iki komşu durumunda olan Türkiye ve Suriye arasında, 2003-2011 yılları arasında geliştirilen istisnai yakınlaşma ve dostluk ilişkileri ile her iki tarafın siyasi liderliklerinin inisiyatifi ile inşa edilen çok boyutlu ortaklığı analiz etmeye çalışmaktadır. Politik-ekonomik faktörler ile siyasal boyutta dış politika yapım süreci arasındaki dinamik etkileşim tezin ana tartışma konusunu oluşturmaktadır. Konjonktür yaklaşımı çerçevesinde, dış politika yapım sürecinin düşünsel boyutu ve bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasi bağlam da göz önünde bulundurulmaktadır.

Suriye ve Türkiye arasındaki çok boyutlu ortaklık ilişkilerinin toplumsal düzeyde ve kendine özgü tarihsel süreci içinde inşa edildiğini göstermek amacıyla, Tarihsel Sosyoloji ve Tarihsel Materyalizm geleneklerinin kavramlarından yararlanılmıştır. 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye ve Suriye'de eş zamanlı olarak hayata geçen neoliberal sosyal ve politik-ekonomik dönüşümlerin her iki ülkenin dış politikaları üzerinde kurucu etkileri olduğu, böylece ikili ilişkilerin büyük ölçüde gelişmesinin önünün açıldığı

ileri sürülmektedir. Dolayısıyla, diğer faktörlerin yanı sıra, her iki ülkenin dış politikasının sosyal belirleyicileri ve sosyal kökenleri bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler Türkiye, Suriye, Çok Boyutlu Ortaklık

To my beloved family…

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria have gone through dramatic changes in thirteen years between 1998 and 2011, having shifted first from animosity and brink of war towards normalization, rapprochement and partnership; and then to animosity and brink of war again. Indeed, friendship and partnership between two countries cannot be considered the usual mode of the bilateral relations, given the trajectory of historically tense and hostile relations of two countries. Nevertheless, an extraordinary period was witnessed between 2003 and 2011 under Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) governments and the Bashar Assad administration in Syria. This thesis attempts to analyze the exceptional partnership between Syria and Turkey by discussing the dynamic interplay between political-economic factors and foreign policy making, also by taking into consideration ideational dimension and regional and international political context. The thesis mainly employs concepts and frameworks of the traditions of Historical Sociology in International Relations and Historical Materialism in accounting for the complexities of the case.

As two neighbors, Turkey and Syria that had been positioned in rival camps of the Cold War until 1990s. In the post-Cold War era too, instead of mending the fences, hostility was exacerbated due to border dispute over Hatay/Alexandria province, Syria's support to the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey and discord on water sharing of transboundary Euphrates River. However, surprisingly, bilateral relations began to improve steadily following the Adana Accords of 1998 and reached its peak level in the first decade of the century.

Along with agential and ideational changes in domestic politics of both Turkey and Syria, one of the most striking features of this period is economic and social neoliberal

restructuring programs both countries went through, with the support of international financial institutions, i.e. IMF and World Bank. Hence, both Syrian and Turkish economies were increasingly more integrated into world capitalism, which were reflected in increased level of bilateral trade and investment relations, as well as upgraded political relations.

Steadily improvement of bilateral relations was maintained under both enabling and constraining impacts of regional and international politics, until the wave of Arab uprisings hit Syria in mid-2011. In fact, while mass social movements were shaking the long-established regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya in early 2011, Turkey was inconsistent in dealing with this surprise development. Thus, after upsurge reached Syria in March 2011, it took almost six months for Turkey to leave aside its hesitancy and take side with the opposition to bring down the Syrian regime. Eventually, Turkey came once again to brink of a conventional war with Syria. These unusual shifts in bilateral relations and such a rapid oscillation between hostility and partnership are surely worth to be studied in depth.

In order to examine the significance of the role of political-economy determinants in domestic and international levels, trajectory of Turkish-Syrian relations offers a fruitful case study. In this period both countries have undergone significant social, political and economic transformations almost simultaneously. Specifically, neoliberal restructuring in political-economy perspectives have drastically changed social and class structures both in Turkey and Syria. These fundamental transformations beget ramifications in domestic political contestations and foreign policy preferences of governments. Nevertheless, dynamic interaction between political-economy perspective and foreign policy making/interstate relations for Turkish-Syrian case has not been adequately explored in the literature. This thesis attempts to fill this gap by addressing the issue in a comprehensive way with a multi-disciplinary approach. The thesis is built upon the notion that domestic and international are co-constitutive and gives due consideration to the role of agency and structure and to policy making processes.

1.1. Research Question

The main question on which the thesis focuses can be formulated as follows: How did social and political-economic transformations in domestic settings influence the dramatic improvement in Turkey-Syria relations between 2003 and 2011?

The thesis will also problematize the following sub-questions:

1. How political-economy and ideational aspects of contestations in domestic politics interact with regional and international politics to give way to this specific outcome in interstate relations?
2. Through which mechanisms social and political-economic factors affected foreign policy making in the Turkish-Syrian case?
3. How did domestic political struggles in Turkey and regime survival efforts in Syria impact their foreign policy decisions?
4. How regional and international contexts produced enabling and constraining effects in relations between Turkey and Syria?

The constitutive role of the political-economic factors in interaction with ideational dimension of the governments' policies in Turkey and Syria in this period will be explored in terms of domestic politics. On the other hand, regional and international developments will also be incorporated and the international context in which bilateral relations developed will be put into analysis as a variable. Consequently, complementary nature of domestic and international as well as structure and agency will be underscored in accounting for the trajectory of Turkey-Syria relations in 2000s.

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1.2. Methodology

The thesis takes development of bilateral relations in the specific period between 2003 and 2011 as the "case" to be studied. As for the case study technique, the thesis will utilize Howard S. Becker's "conjuncture approach", assuming the validity of certain independent variables' contributions to the specific outcome only "when they operate in concert" (Becker, 1992, p. 208). That is, none of the factors involved would be influential to bring about the certain outcome unless the other factors were in place. Hence, throughout the thesis, co-existence of and interactions among (i) political-economy perspective, (ii) ideational dimension and (iii) developments in regional and international politics are held responsible for making of the multidimensional partnership between Turkey and Syria in 2000s.

Within the framework of qualitative research, the thesis will analyze and interpret first-hand data as well as primary and secondary sources making use of discourse analysis. The primary sources are official statements by representatives of relevant institutions, speeches and remarks by key actors and policy documents of both sides. Besides, along with the relevant academic literature developed in Turkey, Syria as well as in the West, documents and reports of international institutions will also be studied.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis starts with introducing the case in the chapter one by explaining the research question, research purpose and the research design. Case study technique the thesis utilizes and the basic assumptions of the thesis are made clear in the first chapter.

Chapter two provides a brief discussion on main theoretical approaches, debates and narratives in the academic literature covering Turkey-Syria relations, as well as the main pillars of the Turkish and Syrian foreign policies at the specified time period. This chapter also elucidates the theoretical foundations on which the thesis bases its main arguments, which went beyond the existing perspectives.

Chapter three attempts to provide an explanation to the rapid amelioration of the bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria under new governments and social-economic conditions between 2003 and 2006. The chapter crystallizes the

accommodating attitudes of political leaderships and underlying factors that gave way to the multidimensional partnership of two countries in numerous fields. In that context, the conjuncture that was composed of political-economy, ideational and international aspects is underscored.

Chapter four takes the consequent phase of the relations that is full partnership within a wide range of areas. The rapturous features are exposed supported with empirical evidences. The conjuncture is emphasized again while accounting for the making of the multidimensional partnership between two countries.

Finally, the conclusion chapter summarizes the main arguments of the thesis in light of the findings of the case study. Relevance of examination of the political-economy perspective in terms of formulation and implementation of the foreign policy is discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with suggesting further research in the literature in terms of contribution of the political-economy aspect to the disciplines of international relations and area studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Having presented the case in the introduction, this chapter will continue with the review of the academic debates on the issue. Afterwards, theoretical framework of the thesis which is mostly predicated on traditions of Historical Sociology and Historical Materialism will be outlined and discussed.

2.1. Literature Review

The unusual shift in Turkish-Syrian bilateral relations in 2000s has attracted much attention of the scholars from various perspectives. Indeed, this issue at hand has merit to be labeled as "catchy" for IR, political science and area studies scholars. As a matter of fact, new political leaderships in both countries embarked on initiatives that brought novel political-economic orientations. Furthermore, substantial changes in domestic, regional and global levels has prompted researchers to study the case employing diverse concept clusters and methodologies.

In this section, literature on bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria is reviewed. The literature includes discussions on regional and international developments as well as ideational/agential/structural factors in both countries. In particular, studies conducted within the perspective of IR theories are subjected to critical review based on their dealing with domestic political-economic transformation processes. This perspective is deemed necessary as the thesis attempts to reveal the "constitutive relationship" between changing social and class structures (due to neoliberal restructuring) and foreign policy formulation.

Viewed from Turkish perspective, the improvement of the Turkish-Syrian relations was generally considered as an integral and indeed essential part of a broader foreign policy initiative of the AKP leadership. The literature on the Turkish policy mostly prioritizes agential and ideational factors, worldviews and values with the rise of the AKP to power. On the other hand, the literature analyzing the Syrian policy focuses more on regional/geopolitical issues along with changing social and class structures inside Syria following a leadership change. This difference is interesting, both in terms of the empirical focus and the different concepts and theories they use. On the whole, in this section, main constructivist, realist, liberal and critical accounts which contributed to the discussion will be reviewed.

First and foremost, the substantial change in the bilateral relations were identified by almost all scholars in the literature, albeit with nuances within their own perspectives. To determine the level of change, Meliha B. Altunışık and Lenore Martin employ Hermann's model and conclude that Turkish foreign policy under AKP has changed effectively in terms of "adjustment, program and goals" categories. The most substantial change category, "international orientation", however, remained constant (Altunışık & Martin, 2013, p. 584).

This model is quite useful to conceptualize the change in foreign policy, as it makes available four categories as an analytical tool to identify and grade the level of change. Hence according to Altunışık and Martin, considering (i) the increased level of foreign policy activism in the Middle East (adjustment change), (ii) employing diplomatic negotiations and other soft power instruments replacing military-based security-oriented policy (program change) and (iii) regional leadership objective through economic interdependencies as well as the desire for domestic power consolidation at home (goals change) Turkish foreign policy underwent transformation under AKP rule 2002 onwards. As for the "international orientation" category, however, despite contrary arguments uttered on "axis shift" debate, the authors argue that Turkey has in fact did not give up its Western bloc in the favor for Eastern/Islamic orientation.

From the Syrian perspective too, after decades-long Hafez Assad rule, Bashar Assad assumed the leadership under great expectations for gradual change in both domestic and foreign policy realms. Though we do not have a study based on Hermann's model

to evaluate the level change in Syrian foreign policy, when looked retrospectively from 2010, it's safe to argue that Syrian policy changed considerably towards a pro-Western stance compared to that of 2000. In this context, we should note the setbacks caused by crises due to Iraqi war of 2003 and Hariri Assassination in 2005. Though what happened on the ground fell far short of the initial expectations for a broader change, gradual economic liberalization continued uninterrupted in Syria in this decade.

Since these dramatic changes in both Turkey and Syria took place simultaneously together with the changes in leadership, and by extension ideological orientation, plenty of the analysts link foreign policy preferences with the ideational dimension in an agency-centric manner. New leaderships themselves too propagated new approaches and alternatives to the existing policies, often in credible ways. Thus, constructivist approaches in academic literature proliferated to account for the issue in the beginning of this period in particular. This literature review will begin with these constructivist accounts, followed by realist, liberal, institutional and Marxist approaches as well as studies with mixed perspectives.

2.1.1. Constructivist Approaches

Inspiring other scholars, Altunışık summarizes two main perspectives, i.e. "worldviews", that compete with one another in order to characterize the main trajectory of the Turkish foreign policy towards Middle East in the last three decades; neo-traditional and critical-alternative ones. Basically, neo-traditionalists, assuming the validity of realist premises, advocate non-interference policy in the Middle East as they perceive threat, rather than opportunity, emanating from the region. As interest perceptions of critical-alternative perspectives differ from the traditionalists, they seek more active policy in the region. Altunışık differentiates three variants of the critical-alternative perspective which have dominated, in a scattered manner, in the last three decades: Özal's liberal functionalism, İsmail Cem's social democratic constructivism and AKP's conservative constructivism (Altunışık, 2009, p. 172-173). Policy formulations of these versions varies based on differing assumptions they have.

According to Altunışık, these two broadly categorized rival perspectives dominate from time to time and balance each other depending mainly on domestic political

conjuncture. As for the period this thesis focuses, Altunışık accentuates AKP's 'conservative constructivism' perspective which also includes 'liberal-functionalist' elements in pursuing improvement of political and economic relations with Syria and the wider region (Altunışık, 2009, pp. 191-192).

Similar to Altunışık, Ömer Taşpınar too offers three "strategic visions" to understand Turkey's foreign policy: Kemalism, Neo-Ottomanism and Turkish Gaullism. In this framework, Neo-Ottomanism refers to (i) foreign policy activism in the former Ottoman geography viewing Turkey as a pivotal state, (ii) multi-culturalism at home (tolerance to Kurdish cultural demands) and (iii) "embracing the Islamic world as much as the West". Kemalism suggests just the opposite for all of these three issues, while Turkish Gaullism includes some shared assumptions of Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism, such as patriotism and commitment to interests of the Turkish nation-state in a state-centric approach (Taşpınar, 2009, p. 132).

Taşpınar argues that, Turkish policy towards the Syria during the AKP era until the Arab uprisings was mainly a product of Neo-Ottomanism. However, with the advent of the Syrian Crisis as part of the Arab Uprisings, Ankara's policy included elements from other two perspectives. While siding with and indeed actively supporting political and militant opposition against the regime forces (Neo-Ottomanism), Turkey also prioritized security and national interests in the face of growing concerns about Kurdish separatism that the crisis exacerbated (Gaullism) and largely remained restrained and did not take action unilaterally with an emphasis on international law (Kemalism).

Highlighting Davutoğlu's "strategic depth doctrine", Alexander Murinson argues that the new Turkish foreign policy under AKP has its roots in geopolitics of Islamic civilization and neo-Ottomanism of Özal and locates Turkey in a "central country" position (Murinson, 2006, p. 949). As part of this foreign policy doctrine, and in the context of "pragmatic regional considerations" such as fear of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq, according to the author, Turkish-Syrian relations enjoyed a dramatic improvement.

Ideology and pragmatism constitute the basis of the analysis of Behlül Özkan too. Özkan, argues that true portrayal of AKP's foreign policy towards the Middle East under deep influence of Ahmet Davutoğlu should be "pan-Islamist" in essence, not Neo-Ottomanist (Özkan, 2014, p. 128), assuming (Neo) Ottomanism as the modernization/Westernization efforts while adopting a unifying (Ottoman) identity beyond religious and ethnic bonds within the boundaries of the existing state. However, Özkan underlines contradictory character of "pan-Islamism" (of Davutoğlu) for its claim to pursue both Islamic unity and ambition to increase Turkish influence in the Middle East based on power politics of "archaic Western geopolitical theories" (Özkan, 2014, p. 129). This contradiction is solved in theory by embracing the notion of the rationality of Turkey's supposed benign leadership role in the region for the sake of wellbeing of all. Hence, the argument goes, having embraced a pragmatic stance, Turkey sought to create a "hinterland" to increase its clout in the region in 2000s both politically and also economically given its rapidly increasing export capacity; and therefore, developed good relations with the authoritarian non-Islamist regimes, including Syria. In Özkan's account, both constructivist (Islamist ideology) and realist (rationality and power politics) elements play their roles.

Soner Çağaptay, too, opposes Neo-Ottomanism depiction of AKP's foreign policy, arguing that AKP's policy is closer to Islamism, rather than Neo-Ottomanism, as the party's focus was on the Islamist actors of the Arab world rather than the former Ottoman territories in search for "secular imperial ambitions or status as a regional power". Çağaptay argues that "The AKP views the world as composed of religious blocks, and this disposition colors its views of the Middle East and the world". What's interesting is that Çağaptay portrays AKP as Islamist for being "pro-Hamas, pro-Syria, pro-Hezbollah, pro-Qatar, pro-Saudi", putting apples and oranges in the same "Islamist" basket.

Burhanettin Duran assumes that AKP's foreign policy imagination transcends neo-Ottomanism and 'serves the Islamic ideals of having better relations with Muslim and Middle Eastern countries' (2010, p. 16). This Islamism arguments is based not on specifically Syrian policy, but Muslim Middle East policy in broad sense, for it relatively engages more with Muslim countries.

In an attempt to overcome the debate on labeling AKP as Neo-Ottomanist or Islamist, Lisel Hintz combines these two ostensibly distinct phenomena offering a new term: 'Ottoman Islamism'. Hintz too discusses nexus between national identity and foreign policy. Her theory of "identity hegemony" basically assumes that supporters of competing national identity "proposals" take this competition to the foreign policy realm if and when they face obstacles inside. In the Turkish case, contestation takes place between "Western Liberalism", "Republican Nationalist" and "Ottoman Islamist" national identity categories. The distinctive feature of Hintz's account is that, unlike conventional constructivist perspectives, the discussions around the identity does not determine directly the foreign policy practice, but the foreign policy realm is the arena where the rival national identity proposals clash in order to create conducive conditions for spread of their own proposal in the domestic setting. Thus, in this theoretical framework, foreign policy is not the end-goal, but serves as an instrument for the contestation within the domestic politics.

Birgül Demirtaş underlines incompatibility of ideationally driven overambitious foreign policy objectives and actual material power in the Turkish case under AKP government. According to the author, this "capability-expectations gap" was crystallized following the evolution of Syrian revolutionary movement into a civil war in post-2011 period and AKP's attempts for regime change in Syria was proven futile (Demirtaş, 2013, p. 117). Demirtaş assumes neo-Ottomanism and other ideational elements as the decisive factors behind the AKP policy towards Syria along with structural regional and systemic factors.

In the structure-agency debate, constructivist approaches are on the side of the agency, much more than other theories. Even though if a piece of literature does not explicitly discuss identity dimension, its agency-based perspective implies constructivist elements. We can consider accounts of Sami Moubayed and of Philip Robins as such. In an agency-centric manner, Moubayed argues that Turkish-Syrian "honeymoon" was not an institutional but a personal one (Moubayed, 2013), heavily relied on the leaders, underlining AKP leader Erdoğan's popularity within the Syrian public as well as the Baathist cadres, who once had been seen as an enemy.

Philip Robins too argues that Turkish-Syrian relations episode in 2000s was based, at least partly, on leaders' personal relationship notwithstanding the existence of institutional context and material orientation (Robbins, 2013, p. 82). Based upon the football match between well-known football clubs of two countries in 2007 in Aleppo, Robbins touches upon the popular and cultural aspect of the developing Turkish-Syrian relations (Robbins, 2013a). He argues that popular-cultural events like the football match serves two goals: increasing domestic political legitimacy inside while developing the relations at the grassroots level.

As for the Syrian foreign policy, Constructivist accounts do nor circulate much, since the ideology of the Syrian regime remained constant for decades under the rule of Baath Party, of which Bashar Assad is a member too. Thus, change in ideational reasoning does not fit much to account for Syria's changing foreign policy preferences. However, there are still some accounts to analyze the whole foreign policy of Syria on ideational grounds. Arab nationalism and ideological positioning on the "resistance (muqawamah) front against Western Imperialism" can be indicated as the ideological sources of the Syrian foreign policy as a whole (Mohns & Cavatorta, 2010; Zisser, 2009). For instance, Arab nationalism is indicated as a factor for the Syrian rejection to support Iraqi occupation of the US in 2003, unlike Syrian support in the First Gulf War of 1991 (Mohns & Cavatorta, 2010).

As seen and as expected, in constructivist perspectives, ideational motivation is prioritized and an identity or a broad worldview that guides the foreign policy is underlined. Concepts that denote the identity and worldview such as Neo-Ottomanism, Islamism, Westernism, etc. are identified and developed in order to categorize the guiding identity. Hence, interests are assumed to be defined and redefined on the basis of identities/worldviews that dominate the foreign policy formulation.

However, although the way of identifying the interests is made clear in constructivist accounts, the question of whose interests are represented by the foreign policy remained vague. The tacit assumption is that policy makers represent and advocate general public's interests, within the guidance and limits of the ideational reasoning. Thus, barring an in-depth discussion on the state, it is assumed as a monolithic bloc administered by ruling political elite, abstracted from the social/economic forces.

Although the guiding identity in constructivism is shaped by cultural and social elements within a society, identity is isolated from the socio-economic structures. Thus, impact of social and economic forces on the foreign policy making is almost completely excluded from the analysis.

2.1.2. Realist Approaches

Realist perspectives account for Turkey-Syria relations in 2000s by underlining systemic factors, global and regional power structure that was altered in the post-cold war period of 1990s, post-9/11 era and the US invasion of Iraq (specifically the fear of an independent Kurdish state in the north of Iraq). They mainly argue that above-mentioned systemic factors led Turkey and Syria meet on a common ground with removal of obstacles before their friendship. Having fallen in rival camps of the Cold War, two neighbors did not have the chance to develop bilateral their relations. Then, 1990s was marked by their particular security threats against each other (Syria's support to separatist PKK and Turkey's tight control over water resources of Syria). Hence, following the end of the Cold War and further re-alignments in the region in 2000s, Turkey and Syria "found" themselves as friends and partners, specifically due to these changing structures, without any considerable effect of agency or any other factor. Finally, regional structural changes due to Arab Uprisings once again transformed the foreign policies and bilateral relations fundamentally.

To begin with, Mustafa Aydın and Cihan Dizdaroğlu initiates their structural analysis from the end of the Cold War, when Turkey redefined its priorities which includes developing economic bonds with close neighborhood (Aydın & Dizdaroğlu, 2020, pp 39). They argue that, in order for accomplishing this objective goal, inherited from the previous governments of the 1990s, AKP government employed new policy tools. AKP government took into consideration regional and international developments, when formulating its Middle East policy. Aydın and Dizdaroğlu attributes a deterministic role to structural developments that enable Turkey's "more active and assertive role in the region". The authors touch economic restructuring processes in Turkey, beginning from 1980s, only as a contextual and complementary element rather than constitutive role.

Fuat Keyman's account is very similar to this approach. The author underlines the importance of changing global environment following the 9/11 attacks as well as other systemic factors in Turkey's growing interest in the region as a rational choice. Moreover, Turkey employs multidimensional foreign policy without detaching from the West, as the accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU continued. Therefore, "in an era of risk, turbulence, and uncertainty", Turkey made a logical preference and re-engaged in the Middle East in accordance with the "dictates of globalization" responding to the realities of the existing international system (Keyman, 2009, p. 7). Keyman locates this highly structural and system-based analysis in a historical perspective starting with Özal's policies in 1980's followed by İsmail Cem's approach before the AKP, while attributing AKP only the role of implementing this strategy, but in a well-designed manner. Unlike Aydın and Dizdaroğlu, there is no discussion on the structural changes in the political-economy of the country.

Marwan Kabalan analyzes the rapprochement process and further improvement of bilateral relations from the geopolitical lens and detects regional developments that bring two countries closer, i.e. US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and fear of Iraqi Kurdistan. Apart from this joint threat perception, in the subsequent years, under severe international pressures following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri, Syria viewed Turkey as a "lifeline" both politically and economically. Kabalan argues that Turkey and Syria adopted "liberal" perspectives and focused on trade and economic issues, downgrading long-lasted security issues. Having downgraded the security cooperation with Israel and supported Iran and Hamas instead, Turkey was not seen as a hostile power in Syria anymore. As for Turkey, Kabalan argues, improvement of relations with Syria was important as part of the strategy of the AKP government to sustain political and economic reach to the Muslim Middle East. Kabalan too takes the economic issues as a structural component in terms of the foreign policy objectives of Syria and Turkey for maintaining or increasing their "hard power" (Kabalan, 2013).

From a regionalist perspective, Altunışık underlines the central role of developments in the region arguing that any little meaningful interference from the global and domestic levels were also regionalized through regional processes. According to

Altunışık, in the immediate post-Cold War era, the cooperation potential between Turkey and Syria could not be materialized, because bilateral problems were regionalized by the Syrian side. And when it comes to 2000s, it was again the regional developments and alignments following 9/11 and the Iraq invasion of the US that had the decisive impact on improvement of Turkish-Syrian relations (Altunışık, 2013). Contrary to other publications of Altunışık, the chapter limits its scope, too narrowly, to regional political issues, without any mention to other factors.

Some variants of realism object against classical realism and neorealism's sidelining the impact of domestic politics and non-state actors on Turkey's long-term established parameters of foreign policy making. Ahmet K. Han, for instance, assumes the supremacy of 'the relative material power' in establishing foundations of any foreign policy which has to be devised on the basis of necessities of systemic constraints. Nevertheless, his neo-classical realist perspective also requires taking into account the actual domestic context in which foreign policy is made. Thus, domestic politics and ideational inclinations of the political or bureaucratic elite have a bearing on formulating the foreign policy, but only as distorting factors on the rational long-term foreign policy behavior. Steven David's notion of "omni-balancing" has also been included in the Han's analysis for highlighting the central point of domestic politics and search for domestic legitimacy inside Turkey. According to Han, "omni-balancing", which refers to appeal of foreign policy as an instrument to take advantage in domestic politics against the AKP's rivals in our case, has a negative connotation under neoclassical realist approach (Han, 2013, p. 56). Nevertheless, Han's account based on neo-classical realism includes domestic political debates only on ideational terms; ideologies and worldviews. There is no discussion on transformation of the political economy within Turkey or Syria.

As for the Syrian side, mainstream literature on Syrian foreign policy does not focus much on Syrian-Turkish bilateral relations, given the centrality in the Syrian foreign policy of hot security issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and regional/international struggle on Lebanon. Thus, it revolves around Realist approaches, examples of which will be reviewed below. One of the most important debates on the Syrian foreign policy is the relation between domestic politics and external relations. Indeed, the link

between these two domains was acknowledged by almost all of the observers. Yet, while one group argues that international politics shape the Syrian state and politics inside, the other group posits that the regime abuses foreign policy issues for legitimization of the minority rule within the country. Thus, the second group argues that, the nature and structure of the regime in Syria determines its foreign policy.

Representing the first group, according to Hinnebusch "International forces – imperialism and war – have profoundly shaped the Syrian state". Hinnebusch argues that external threats Syria has faced are real ones, like struggle with Israel, not merely "invented". Therefore, stabilizing the regime inside was necessary for coping with these threats (Hinnebusch, 2007, p. 276). Barry Rubin, on the other hand, puts forward the regime survival as the most important issue in Syrian politics, arguing that the regime instrumentalizes external confrontations for the sake of internal legitimacy (Rubin, 2007, p. 74).

In terms of regime survival's supremacy, Eyal Zisser is of the same opinion with Rubin. He argues that "Syria's foreign policy has always been characterized by indecisiveness, caution and passivity" (Zisser, 2009, p. 108). Zisser is convinced of the "malign" regional role of Syria and argues that the ostensible positive attitude of Syrian regime in diplomatic dealings would not bear breakthroughs on the main issues.

Muhammed Hüseyin Mercan too underlines that foreign policy has been used by the regime for increasing legitimacy at home, since "regime survival" appears as the main goal and a red-line for Syria under both Hafez and Bashar al-Assad. Championing Arab nationalism and upholding a firm stance on anti-Israel and anti-American resistance (muqawamah) front constitute the main axis of the Syrian foreign policy. Along with these main objectives, Mercan argues that Syrian regime was successful in building temporary good relations as practical foreign policy moves under global systemic or regional pressures (Mercan, 2016, p. 257). Although neither Mercan nor Zisser comments on Turkish-Syrian partnership in 2000s, their accounts assume that improvement of relations with Turkey was a tactical and pragmatic diplomatic move of Syrian side under rational realist calculations.

Bassel F. Salloukh highlights the concept of realist principle of balancing in analyzing Syrian foreign policy in the aftermath of US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and Hariri assassination in 2005 (Salloukh, 2009, pp. 162-163). Erik Mohns and Francesco Cavatorta too agree on the realist grounds of the Syrian foreign policy in 2000s as the regime successfully implemented balancing. According to Mohns & Cavatorta, Syria is in the resistance front due to pressing threats against its security and identity (Mohns & Cavatorta, 2010, p. 291). The authors place Syrian-Turkish relations under the same realist principle of balancing in terms of Syrian perspective (2010, p. 295).

In a similar fashion, Bente Scheller argues that Syria's preference of rapprochement with Turkey in 1998 was mainly because of Turkey's "cozy relationship with Israel". Hafez al-Assad regime opted to cooperate with Turkey on economic and security relations in order to "pre-empt a possible Turkish-Israeli move against Syria" (Scheller, 2013, pp. 114-119). As for explaining improved bilateral relations in 2000s, Scheller only cites common threat perceptions for Syria and Turkey, like Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq after 2003 Iraq invasion of the US, similar to other realist authors. However, Scheller not only overlooks the political economy of the bilateral relations, but also the complex and advanced nature of Turkish-Syrian partnership in 2000s.

Realism is the most frequently criticized theoretical framework since 1990s by the critical accounts for many reasons, that will not be discussed here. Applied to our case, authors that prioritize Realist arguments mainly focus on amelioration of the relations from the all-times-below level of 1998. Bilateral relations in 2000s, however, went far beyond the level of reconciliation. This decade witnessed relations steadily heading towards political and economic partnership, which should not be characterized as just the continuation of the rapprochement process started in 1998.

The literature centered on realist premises tend to disregard domestic politics and take the state as a monolithic bloc, and rational and primary actor in foreign relations. Realist accounts give priority to security-wise structural and systemic factors but not political-economic structures inside countries. In our case, transformations of the social and class structures caused by transition to neoliberalism in both countries are

either ignored (downgraded) or taken as the context without giving due consideration as the constitutive element.

2.1.3. Mixed Approaches

Notwithstanding all the legitimate criticisms against Realism, scholarship could not totally leave aside its basic tenets, since security concerns occupy indispensable aspect of actual foreign policy strategies of the states. Therefore, scholars try to transcend the fallacies of the theory with novel approaches that combine principles of realism with those of other theoretical frameworks.

One example is the chapter by Samir al-Taqi and Raymond Hinnebusch. Having reflected more the Syrian perspective, the authors focus on the regional and global systemic factors behind partnership of Turkey and Syria. They complement their analysis by discussing political economy of mainly Syria, and partly Turkey, that made improvement of the bilateral relations possible. They argue from a geopolitical viewpoint that, having lost its main international supporter of the Cold War era in the beginning of 90s and with the collapse of Arab-Israeli Peace Process in the end of the decade, Syria was indeed keen to resolve the conflict with Turkey, which culminated in Adana Protocol of 1998 (al-Taqi & Hinnebusch, 2013).

Elsewhere, Hinnebusch argues that, when Bashar al-Assad assumed power in 2000, the new leadership was eager to improve its relations with the Europe and its neighbors Turkey and Iraq under the framework of new economic liberalization reform process (2009, p. 8). With the unfolding developments such as, 9/11, US invasion of Iraq and attempts to reshape the region in favor of Israel, which increased Syria's threat perception, resonates in Ankara, which shares the threat perceptions from possible disintegration of Iraq with fears of Kurdish independence. Hence, shared perceptions encouraged two countries to deepen their political and strategic cooperation.

In terms of political-economy aspect, al-Taqi and Hinnebusch (2013) argues that, domestic political-economic developments in two countries paved the way of economic and political partnership. In Turkey, the rise of Anatolian conservative bourgeoisie both brought AKP to power and encourage the party to explore new exports market in the region. As for the Syrian political economy, the regime needed

to liberalize the economy, at a time when the rent coming from the Gulf and oil revenues plummeted and risk the regime survival. Thus, Syrian regime decided to open up to Turkish economic investments and trade, whereas the direct reach to the Western markets was neither possible nor preferrable. The authors conclude that "domestic political economy factors weighed as heavily in the Turkish-Syrian equation as did regional geo-politics" in the partnership of the two countries. While this double-sided portrayal has an advantage for a better understanding, a thicker and in-depth analysis on the link between domestic political-economy and foreign policy formulation is unaccomplished in this study either.

Making use of Samuel Barkin's 'realist constructivism' theoretical framework, Marwa Daoudy underlines 'structure-identity nexus' to account for the changes in Turkish-Syrian relations. She offers a combined approach that includes main elements of realism (material structure) and constructivism (idea-driven agency) arguing that selecting one of these perspectives does not suffice to explain all the shifts in Turkish-Syrian case (Daoudy, 2016). AKP's rise to power and construction of new identities for Turkey and Syria that is conducive to developing partnership by first Turkish and then Syrian new leadership are presented as the main drivers behind the sudden push for 'amity' rather than a temporary alignment against the US position in Iraq and Syria in the early 2000s. Daoudy also applies this combined framework in post-2011 period for the turn to enmity due to both structural changes brought by Arab Uprisings and elite's perceptions of antagonistic identity and standpoints against each other.

In Daoudy's account too, material structure is reduced to security concerns and domestic politics is reduced to identity cleavages; without any room reserved for domestic political struggles for material interests of social forces.

In a similar vein, Meliha Altunışık and Özlem Tür argue that both international and regional systemic and domestic/ideational factors were important in improvement of the Turkish-Syrian relationship after 1998 Adana Accord. Reminding Christopher Hill's analogy of 'two-way flows' of policymaking with regards to mutual interactions between domestic politics and external factors (Altunışık & Tür, 2006, p. 39), the authors posit that, systemic developments are viewed from the perspective of domestic politics, thus external factors do not have exclusive deterministic role in foreign policy

making. As for the improvement of the Turkish-Syrian relations case, whereas domestic politics have more weight in Turkish side, realist perspective is explanatory for the Syrian policy, as the political elite has a consensus at a time when the Syrian regime faced serious existential threat emanating mainly from the US after the Iraqi war (2006, p. 243).

Altunışık and Martin too emphasize the interplay between domestic, regional and international contexts. In their analysis, effect of domestic politics in Turkey surpasses the other levels of analyses, mainly due to agential factors, i.e. AKP's rise to power and subsequent structural changes in Turkish economy and politics (Altunışık & Martin, 2013, p. 584). The authors argue that though agency (AKP) is important to explain the change in Turkish foreign policy, domestic, regional and international level structure should not be sidelined either. Making a state-level analysis, region-wide security and economic cooperation opportunities in the region (taking into consideration the roles of GCC, Iran, Syria and the US) are emphasized. As for domestic level structural analysis, the authors underline the political reforms undertaken for the EU membership process and more importantly policies towards more economic liberalization designed for encouraging increased exports and capital inflows. According to Altunışık and Martin, in terms of regional and international structure, not only "balance of power" but also "perceptions of regional actors" enabled Turkey's enhanced involvement in the Middle East region.

In both of these studies (Altunışık & Tür, 2006; Altunışık & Martin, 2013) domestic, regional and international factors are combined by employing both realist and constructivist elements. Political repercussions of economic strategies like trade liberalization were also put into analysis. Nevertheless, the short-coming of these analyzes is assuming socio-economic issues only as a supplementary element or contextual phenomenon, rather than a constitutive factor of the foreign policy formulation.

2.1.4. Liberal / Institutional Approaches

Another line of scholarship in Turkey focuses on changing actors and modalities of foreign policy decision-making processes. According to this line, with the rise of AKP

to the power, not only the ideology of political actors has changed but also the approaches and mechanisms of the foreign policy processes transformed. In that regard, Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat argue that the change in Turkish policy in 2000s is mainly due to the changes at domestic politics, principally "desecuritization process", within the domestic and external context that made desecuritization possible. Emphasizing the EU membership process in particular as the contextual factor, Aras and Karakaya Polat posits that, domestic policies in dealing with the "Kurdish issue" and the fundamentalism were desecuritized inside and this process was resonated in Turkey's external relations, inter-alia, with Syria and Iran. (Securitization here is understood as a "speech act"; i.e. discourse of the actors involved that identifies certain issues as a threat (Aras &Karakaya Polat, 2008, p. 497). Thus, absence of a declaration of a threat amounts to desecuritization.)

Within this framework, "old bureaucratic authoritarian traditions", which dominated the foreign policy making in 1990s and securitized domestic politics and foreign policy, was replaced with political actors and liberal societal forces that took action towards desecuritization. According to Aras and Karakaya Polat, such an analysis is more explanatory than concepts like "détente, cooperation, or ideological preferences in foreign policy" (2008, p. 504). In Aras and Karakaya Polat's analysis, intervention of societal forces in the policy formation is significant. But we have to underline that this intervention is based on liberal assumptions, which suppose all the societal forces and classes on equal ground, without paying attention to actual (uneven) essence of social relations.

Burak Bilgehan Özpek and Yelda Demirağ propose to employ "complex interdependence theory" of Keohane and Nye to understand Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East. In this framework, given the absence of adequate material power to act unilaterally for the sake of interest maximizing in the Middle East, AKP's foreign policy resorted to the international organizations and platforms (Özpek & Demirağ, 2014, p. 333). Turkey's participation in regional platforms and employing non-military soft power instruments can be suggested as illustrative examples for this strategy. This argument, however, contradicts the empirical reality in the Turkish-Syrian case where Turkish support to Syrian regime contravene the anti-Syrian

policies of Western and regional organizations in the wake of Hariri assassination of 2005. Another problem with the article is its state centrism and the lack of discussion on the nature of the formulation of the foreign policy, let alone absence of the social determinants.

Studies by Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz and also Tarık Oğuzlu dwell on Turkey's EU membership process and attribute "Europeanization" a causal role, not only a contextual one. By highlighting this concept, they posit that as Turkey proceed towards the EU membership, in particular between 2002 and 2005, along with high economic growth and democratization, foreign policy was another realm that Europeanization had great impact on (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2004; Oğuzlu, 2007. In particular, a foreign policy approach that draws more on soft power instruments and economic interdependences with the neighboring region is seen as an outcome of democratization within the framework of EU conditionality. Elsewhere, Öniş and Yılmaz give examples of willingness to resolve the Cyprus issue and dramatic improvement of bilateral political and economic relations with Syria as outcomes of Europeanization (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009, p. 9).

On the other hand, Turkey's double track foreign policy activism, both towards the EU membership and the Middle East, encourage some scholars to view the process the other way around. They argue that, rather than the impact of EU conditionality and desecuritization on Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East, what we witness is the rational choice of Turkish policy makers, who prefer to engage in the Middle East region, in order to increase its weight and clout in its traditional long-lasting alliance with the West (Özpek & Demirağ, 2014, p. 33; Aras, 2009; p. 8). This argument suggests that as a rational actor, Turkey is engaged in the Middle East not due to structural factors nor "identity obsessions", but owing to a strategy pragmatically devised by the ruling elite. Ideational aspect of this strategy and the cultural, historical and religious bonds with the region serve only as useful instruments and elements of this policy that prioritize national interests of Turkey. The arguments goes as capitalizing on its unique role, Turkey pursues a holistic and integral multi-dimensional foreign policy in the East and the West, and even across the globe.

A core liberal analysis is more apparent in Kemal Kirişçi's "trading state" conceptualization for Turkey. Rather than security and ideational dimensions, Kirişçi argues that principally economic considerations increasingly shaped Turkish foreign policy in 2000s (Kirişçi, 2009, p. 29). Business organizations became vocal and active contributor to the foreign policy making. In this approach, in search for new exports markets and economic benefits, Turkey pursued a 'trading state' foreign policy, putting aside ideologically driven policy orientations (Kirişçi & Kaptanoğlu, 2011, p. 706). Hence, as access the EU market proved insufficient and due to other economic and political factors, Turkish foreign trade expanded into neighboring regions. Kirişçi and Kaptanoğlu highlights AKP's "new" foreign policy as an important factor behind the growing economic interdependence, and in turn, economic interdependence is used as a useful instrument for political and economic agenda of the government, such as conflict resolution, peace building and provision of new export markets for burgeoning Anatolian bourgeoisie that is natural supporter of the AKP.

In "trading state" conceptualization, economic interdependence and AKP's foreign policy is supporting each other constantly as long as the government consistently stay on track. The AKP pursed this strategy pragmatically until the Arab Spring, even with Israel under growing political tensions. Like Aras & Karakaya Polat, Kirişçi & Kaptanoğlu, too, underline desecuritization of the foreign policy and ascending of business and trade oriented actors as well as the EU membership context.

In terms of economic relations debate, Özlem Tür argues that the dramatic increase in trade and investments between Turkey and Syria in 2000s took place due to the improvements in political relations (Tür, 2013, p. 159). Elsewhere, the author clarifies the argument asserting that in the Middle East "rather than economics, politics drives regional developments in general" (2011, p. 589). As for the causes of improvement of the political relations, the author underlines shared interests of two countries in the region following the 9/11 and US invasion of Iraq. Tür puts forward two interconnected intervening factors behind the development of economic relations; evolution of Turkish economy towards an export-led economy which needs new markets especially in the region and AKP's coming to power in Turkey (2011, p. 589). In the same fashion with Kirişçi, participation of the business community in foreign

policy making and implementing mechanisms is underlined. In that regard, the author underlines the central role of two pro-government business associations; MÜSİAD and TUSKON, along with semi-official DEİK and TÜSİAD, the representative of İstanbul based the big bourgeoise.

The salient feature in Tür's account is that improvement in bilateral economic relations was a product of deliberate political strategy. Agential factor is also underlined since the AKP is presented as the leading actor that pushed the process. The author also touches liberalization attempts in the Syrian economy under Bashar Assad rule. However, constitutive role of the transformations of the socio-economic and class structures (due to neoliberal restructuring) in the foreign policy making is not discussed adequately.

Mustafa Kutlay too addresses the foreign policy activism of Turkey in 2000s from the political economy perspective. Kutlay discusses the applicability of regional integration theories; Neofunctionalism theory of Ernst Haas and interdependence theory of Keohane and Nye, in Turkey's new foreign policy. He argues that, Turkish foreign policy towards the neighboring regions explored economic opportunities and interdependence; thus, institutionalized bilateral and regional relations based on economic bonds rather than security issues (2011, p. 71). In that effort, rise of a new capitalist class and ascending role of business associations buttressed the economic aspect of the foreign policy. While explaining "multiple dialogue channels" of the interdependence theory, Kutlay underlines the role of "Anatolian industrialists and exporters", located at the border in particular, in inducing the government to liberalize trade with Syria. Kutlay also underpins the (neoliberal) economic restructuring after the 2001 crisis putting special emphasis on the financial sector. He argues that, with elimination of certain segments, power has shifted in domestic finance capital, which had impacts on an active foreign policy engagement. Nevertheless, the link between developments in financial sector within the framework of neoliberal restructuring in the Turkish economy and their impact on foreign policy has not been established clearly in Kutlay's analysis.

The liberal and institutional accounts problematize decision-making processes and attempt to de-code foreign policy formulation in terms of agency and modality.

Changing mentality behind the policy making and actors involved in these processes in 2000s Turkey are underlined. However, transformations in the state-society complex and developments on the social ground due to accompanying neoliberal economic restructuring are ignored. Thus, impact of "the social" on foreign policy formulation is not considered thoroughly. It's not about who and in what ways contribute to the formal foreign policy making processes, but why and how these policies are made by those specific actors.

2.1.5. Historical Materialist / Marxist Approaches

Clemens Hoffmann and Can Cemgil analyze Turkey's foreign policy activism in 2000s by employing historical materialist tradition of IR and international historical sociology. They make use of Robert Brenner's "strategies for social reproduction" concept, develop it in an agent-centric manner and extend its meaning out of political-economic sense towards all social actions. They assert that the states "devise strategies of social reproduction for themselves", albeit this can only be possible as an outcome of interplay of social actors (Hoffmann & Cemgil, 2016). However, instead of focusing on real social forces on the ground at present, the article's emphasis is on historical continuity of strategies of social production since the late Ottoman times in the face of domestic and external challenges.

From the neo-Gramscian (Amsterdam School) point of view, Mehmet Gürsan Şenalp reads AKP's foreign policy as 'a neo-Ottomanist transnational hegemony attempt' based on a class project aiming at integration with the current neoliberal global economic system. In this analysis, material interests of a certain faction of Turkish bourgeoisie, i.e. the rising Islamist Anatolian bourgeoisie, had a deterministic role over Turkey's increased foreign policy activism in neighboring regions including Syria and in the broader Middle East (Şenalp, 2017).

Faruk Yalvaç proposes to employ critical realism in order to account for the foreign policy activism of AKP on historical materialist grounds. Yalvaç advocates a structural account since, he argues, the mainstream literature is agent-centric and event oriented (Yalvaç, 2014). The purpose of the article is to underline the significance of "providing a social account of foreign-policy practices", where social here refers to social

relations of production and property relations. However, having remained on theoretical level, the study does not elaborate on "how class interests are mediated and translated into state policies" on actual level in Turkish case.

The need for a non-deterministic and non-reductionist historical materialist / Marxian analysis on Turkish foreign policy analysis has long been underscored. Nevertheless, studies on this issue largely remained on theoretical level, lacking elaborations on actual empirical reality. This thesis too does not purport to provide a comprehensive Marxian perspective to account for Turkish foreign policy activism in 2000s, but make use of concepts and frames developed in Marxian accounts to underscore constitutive role of "the social" in the foreign policy making.

2.1.6. Chapter Conclusion

The literature on the improvement of Turkish-Syrian relations in 2000s (including Turkey's foreign policy activism in the Middle East and foreign policy of the Syrian regime), seems to have been covered from many perspectives with multiple methodologies. The literature includes analyses touching domestic, regional and global level political and economic considerations and encompasses structural and agential aspects. Most of these accounts, however, mention the political-economic issues or social and class structures only as the context in which the rational state actors formulate their foreign policies under the influence of other factors.

Studies focusing on relationship between changing political economies of either Turkey or Syria on the foreign policy formulation are also remarkable (e.g. al-Taqi and Hinnebusch, 2013; Tür, 2011, 2013; Kutlay, 2011, 2012; Şenalp, 2017). Nevertheless, these studies too fall short of acknowledging the "constitutive relationship" between neoliberal transformations (with their impact on social/class structures) and foreign policy formulation. Indeed, it was the simultaneous transformations in the political economies of both countries that gave way to improvement of bilateral relations. In order to grasp the dynamics behind the trajectory of bilateral relations, one should problematize, in a "thick" manner, neoliberal restructuring processes in both countries.

Furthermore, these studies focusing on political-economic factors mostly elaborate on either Turkey or Syria, not analyzing the simultaneous character of these transformations in both countries. This particular concurrence lies behind the improvement of bilateral relations. Therefore, to complement the existing literature, an in-depth analysis of the changing social and economic structure of both Turkey and Syria in the same study within their interactions is still needed. In this context, this thesis attempts to fill this gap by prioritizing social origins and social determinants of foreign policy making of both states in the specific historical context, in which neoliberal restructuring took place simultaneously.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Following Susan Strange's recommendation, this thesis employs multi-disciplinary approach with contribution of inputs from theoretical advancements in the disciplines such as international relations, political science, economics and history (Strange, 1970). By doing so, both the trajectory of the interstate relations is investigated and the foreign policies of Syria and Turkey is problematized thoroughly in the specific historical and social context.

Indeed, multi-disciplinary perspective is required for studies conducted within the framework of Historical Sociology, which constitutes the main theoretical basis of this thesis. Along with concepts developed within the Historical Sociology perspective, analytical tools developed in the tradition of Historical Materialism are utilized for a better understanding of the social determinants of the foreign policies and interstate relations.

Having dominated the study of international relations for decades, (neo)realism has not been considered the single hegemonic theoretical framework anymore, since the 'sociological turn'. Yet, neorealism is still considered one of the mainstream approaches, along with constructivism and liberalism, in conceptualizing the international and interstate relations. While neorealism in particular is criticized for employing state-centrism and ahistoricism in varied forms, other mainstream perspectives are not exempted from this criticism.

Historical Sociology approach has emerged as a reaction to mainstream theories' ahistoricism. In fact, a true analysis of the current issues in the society and foreign policy as well, requires, inter alia, a 'constitutive reading of history' (Hobson, 2002, p. 5). Contrary to assumptions of the mainstream perspectives, the current scene is not a spontaneously and naturally emerged end-product which is unconcerned of the transformative historical processes. Instead, it has been socially constructed and constituted in historical processes which can be traced by making use of historical analysis.

Historical Sociology re-presents historical analysis in a different perspective as a new tool in analyzing interstate relations and foreign policy that is formulated within a specific social context in any country. As Mabee underscores, historical sociology follows the patterns of change in 'social forces and institutions over time' (Mabee, 2007, p. 432). Lawson also underlines the significance of an account based on "dynamism of social action and social change" (Lawson, 2006, p. 414).

As seen, in Historical Sociology tradition, state policies, including the foreign policy, are viewed as the product of social relations in a specific historical context. As Fred Halliday puts it;

… foreign policy is a product not just of personal and bureaucratic process within the state but of the interests, and clashes, of state and class alike. Ideology and norms are central, not as the constitutive domain of politics, but rather as part of the process of legitimation and coercion. (Halliday, 2005, p. 37).

Thus, rather than, for instance, ideational dimension, contrary to constructivist accounts, social and class relations are underscored in analyzing foreign policy making.

In terms of formulation of the policies, rather than focusing on the formal policy-making processes, Historical Sociology perspective requires disentangling social factors actually existing on the ground. Those social determinants are assumed to be driving force behind that formal policy-making process. In that regard, foreign policy making and implementing cannot be divorced from the social level factors; i.e. underlying social relations.

Under this understanding, social actors and social relations, including – but not limited to – social relations of production, are the ultimate determiner of the social reality. By extension, the state structure and the state policies are outcomes of the interplay among societal forces within the specific historical context. In other words, state policies and the foreign policy are, in effect, within the reach of social forces. Therefore, this thesis rejects abstraction of state and foreign policy from the societal forces and argues for reinstatement and embedment of them in the society.

Within that context, the question of how these social interests and clashes/struggles are mediated and reconciled within the state framework comes to the fore. Rather than liberal-pluralist understanding which preaches the assumption that all interests of diverse societal groups are represented equally and freely on the public platforms and resolved by the arbiter state authorities with a neutral attitude, this thesis ascribes Poulantzasian concept of "relative autonomy" (Poulantzas, 1975) to the modern-capitalist state. The state institutions are the locus of policy making where the interests, demands and expectations of social forces are piled up, but not on equal grounds. In capitalist societies, maintaining relations with both dominant and dominated classes, the state has relative autonomy within the "power bloc" (Türk & Karahanoğulları, 2019, p. 203) and at times may be at odds with the certain factions of the dominant classes for the sake of survival and sound functioning of capitalism.

Foreign policy has privileged status where states enjoy relative autonomy to higher degrees. For Halliday, foreign policy provides "room for maneuver" for the states in the Middle East in particular (Halliday, 2005, p. 42).

By resorting the concept of relative autonomy in Poulantzasian sense, the thesis neither reifies the state's subjective role as a distinct entity, nor ascribes the state only an object/instrument role. Thus, while the state does not have its own intrinsic objectives abstracted from social forces, it is not a mere instrument at the hands of the dominant classes. State in capitalist societies or the capitalist state, however, has a special role in sustaining political unity between dominant and dominated classes as well as among dominant classes. State preserves the existing economic and social order that is vital for maintenance of the social and production relations. Thus, under capitalism, in its

varied forms, the state is the guardian, and indeed encourager, of the private investments and investors/capitalists.

On the other hand, along with the social relations of production (economic relations), the thesis acknowledges the existence of other types/forms of social relations in which the state is also embedded in. Thus, ideological, cultural and religious/sectarian kind of social relations may have impact on state behavior. Thus, the state policies "represent the temporary equilibrium of the interplay of (all) social agents" (Hoffmann & Cemgil, 2016, p. 3). The thesis parlays Historical Materialist arguments in a non-deterministic and non-reductionist way, leaving space for social relations other than relations of production. New fractions and layers of bourgeoisie or other segments of the society that are favored by Turkish and Syrian regimes on ideological and religious/sectarian grounds are the cases in point.

Within the Historical Sociology tradition, international and domestic structures are co-constituted and are fundamentally embedded within a series of social relationships (Hobson, 2002, p. 21). Hence, constantly interacted, interpenetrated and mutually constitutive character of domestic and international is emphasized (Hobson, 2002, p. 16; Göçer Akder & Altunışık, 2018, p. 79). In the words of Hobson, Lawson, and Rosenberg "International factors are juxtaposed, conjoined and interrelated with domestic processes" (Hobson et al., 2010, p. 5).

Structure-agency debate often constitutes an indispensable part of foreign policy debates. This thesis adopts an approach that attributes constitutive role to both structure and agency, as the structure can be deemed as the outcome of preceding human agency and social relations (Göçer Akder & Altunışık, 2018, p. 72). Since there is "a dynamic relationship between political leadership as agency and the international, institutional, normative and cultural constraints as structures" (Çuhadar et.al., 2020, p. 2), giving due consideration to both agency and structure is needed, without sacrificing one of them in favor of the other.

While avoiding state-centrism and "methodological nationalism" (Göçer-Akder & Altunışık, 2018), this thesis attempts to problematize and conceptualize the state conduct, which is shaped by social determinants, within the scope of formulation of

the foreign policies of Turkey and Syria in the period under examination. Along with political-economy perspective, which is based on historically evolved social relations, ideational factors as well as enabling and constraining impact of regional and international politics have been put into analysis without drawing clear demarcation lines between domestic and international.

CHAPTER 3

RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS (2003-2006)

The gradual rapprochement process between Syria and Turkey that started with Adana Protocol of 1998 gained momentum 2003 onwards. High level visits became frequent between the new AKP government in Turkey and Bashar Assad administration in Syria. Positive remarks of Turkish and Syrian politicians towards each other are followed by diplomatic talks on exploring new economic and political cooperation possibilities. Problem areas, such as water sharing issue and border disputes over Alexandria (Hatay) province, were sidelined intentionally in order to size cooperation opportunities. Hence, cooperative relations towards a multidimensional partnership in many fields, that is beyond a good-neighborly relations, consistently proceeded in this period.

This chapter seeks to account for how and why this process took place and paved the way for the multidimensional partnership between Turkey and Syria. The purpose of this chapter is not simply narration of the events in a sequential order for describing the trajectory of the bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria in the period in question. Events and developments have already been manifested in the literature in detail. The chapter, however, intends to put forth a re-reading and re-interpretation of the developments in domestic and regional/international setting from a different perspective by prioritizing three interrelated issues and processes: (i) social and economic transformations in both countries due to neoliberal restructuring, (ii) ideational dimension of the new administrations' foreign policy strategies and (iii) enabling and constraining effects of the regional and international politics.

In the rest of the chapter, dynamic interplay among these three ostensibly distinct factors will be underlined, rather than listing all the factors or focusing on only one big "cause" as independent variable. By emphasizing the "conjunctural combination" of these processes, the chapter will attempt to analyze the case in a comprehensive manner. Analyzing the conjuncture implies the necessity of the co-existence of all of these independent variables for the development of the bilateral relations. That is, if any of these factors were absent, we would not talk about this specific outcome with regards of the improvement of the bilateral relations.

Interwoven character of these processes also bears particular importance. Ideational dimension of the foreign policy strategies of both AKP government and the Syrian regime is not completely devoid of politic economic calculations. On the contrary, the thesis argues that politic-economic issues are inherent in the ideational aspect of the policy making as well. Additionally, constraining and enabling effects of the regional and international politics offer the main context for putting into force the formulated foreign policy strategies.

3.1. 1998-2003: Lead Time

Traditionally hostile relations that marked the Cold War period suddenly escalated towards the brink of war in 1998 following the deployment of Turkish soldiers at the border over the continued support of the Syrian government to the PKK. With the protocol signed in Adana in the same year, Syrian regime took a step back and agreed to expel the PKK leader against the threats of Turkey to use force. This move marks the beginning of a political and diplomatic process that would include normalization of relations, rapprochement and political and economic partnership.

In fact, gradualism was at play in the beginning of the normalization process which began by easing security tensions. At that time, the AKP was not in power in Turkey, nor Bashar Assad was ruling Syria. In the "Old Turkey" of 1990s, both domestic politics and external relations, those towards the Middle East in particular, were highly securitized (Aras & Karakaya Polat, 2008; Kirişçi & Kaptanoğlu, 2011). The Syrian regime under President Hafez Assad too came to agreement with Turkey by prioritizing national security interests in an effort to "pre-empt a possible Turkish–

Israeli move against Syria" (Scheller, 2013, p. 119). Thus, it is plausible to argue that realist principles were dominating both sides' policies towards each other at the beginning of normalization in 1998, as it used to do so during the entire 1990s (Aydın & Dizdaroğlu, 2020). Therefore, policies aiming at de-escalation culminated in only a gradual normalization between two neighbors.

As a matter of fact, in terms of domestic political economy and ideational accounts or in regional/international settings, not a game changer development took place in the immediate after of Adana Accords until death of Syrian President Hafez Assad (between the years 1998 and 2000. Turkish political economy was in the decade of unstable governments on the pendulum between neoliberal and populist polities. The plenty of economic crises in the "lost decade" of the 1990s were virtually precursors of the biggest crisis of Turkey in 2001 that ushered a new era in Turkey's political economy. Thus, in a highly securitized climate of 1990s, fundamentals of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East and Syria in particular did not change in effect. It's true that, in the late 1990s, then Foreign Minister İsmail Cem's approach included nuances in terms of positive engagement with the region (Altunışık, 2009). Nevertheless, Cem's nuanced perspective did not bear concrete fruits that could go beyond security-oriented approach of Turkish foreign policy towards the region.

On the other hand, political economy of Syria began to alarm in the late 1990s. The initial economic growth in the wake of the First Gulf War due to capital inflows from the Arab states and rise in the oil prices began to wane. Furthermore, the limited liberalization efforts did not suffice to offset the economic losses in the post-cold war era. Inside Syria, there was a consensus about the necessity of a new political economy orientation that include further economic liberalization (Hinnebusch, 2009). Aging President Hafez Assad had already begun to prepare his youngest Western-educated son Bashar for the upcoming presidency after himself, following to a tragic death of his elder son Basil. Prospective president "Young Bashar" was supposed to bring a fresh blood to the Syrian regime and prepare the country to the new millennium with a more Western orientation, in the sense of further liberalization in Syrian political economy and pro-Western foreign policy (Scheller, 2013). Hence, Syria had to wait

for the new leadership in 2000 for the re-orientation of political economy and foreign policy.

3.2. The AKP Period in Turkey: Debate on Agency

Real acceleration in development of bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria, however, became possible after the government change in Turkey in 2002. Scaling up the level of relations was in fact forged by the political will of both sides, the AKP government and Bashar Assad administration, in particular at the initiative of Turkey's ruling party. This phenomenon sparks the debate on the role of agency and the ideological inclinations of the ruling elite (Çuhadar et.al., 2020; Moubayed, 2013; Robins, 2013; Altunışık & Martin 2013). On the Turkish side, rather than Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the AKP Leader and Prime Minister, or Abdullah Gül, No.2 of the AKP as Deputy PM and Foreign Minister, another name was top on the foreign policy debates: Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, firstly Chief Advisor to the PM and later Minister of Foreign Affairs.

So-called "Davutoğlu effect" in Turkish foreign policy under the AKP governments is put forward by many authors studying the AKP foreign policy (Yorulmazlar, 2015; Murinson, 2006; Özkan, 2014; Aras, 2009; Bank & Karadag, 2012). Among others, in his PhD dissertation that is dedicated to discuss the role of Davutoğlu's ideas in the AKP's foreign policy, Emirhan Yorulmazlar (a close aide to Davutoğlu during his tenure as the Foreign Minister and a former student of him) argues that Davutoğlu was in the driving seat of Turkey's foreign policy under the AKP rule, starting with the policy towards the Middle East region but then extended to the other foreign policy issues as well (2015, p. 190-191). According to Yorulmazlar, "Davutoğlu's ideas had a causal role in foreign policy change under the (AKP) rule" (2015, p. 319). With regard to Syrian policy too, the first Foreign Minister of the AKP Yaşar Yakış, argues that Davutoğlu "was given an almost free hand and played a conclusive role to build bridges between the two leaderships" (Yorulmazlar, 2015, p. 228).

Indeed, Davutoğlu's ideas were reflected in statements of the high-level AKP officials. These statements were presenting the new foreign policy as "multi-dimensional", "pro-active", "soft-power oriented" and "problem-solving", while the foreign policy

before the AKP was portrayed as "problem-driven", "defense oriented", and "reactive" (Altunışık, 2009; Duran, 2010; Aras, 2009). There surely are some setbacks in materializing foreign policy strategy that had been borne in Davutoğlu's and other AKP officials' mind. Yet, thanks to the Turkey's relative macroeconomic stability in the first term of the AKP, essential parts of the pre-determined strategy were put into force within the context of regional and international politics.

"Strategic Depth" concept is often referred as the hallmark of Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision designed for Turkey. Davutoğlu proposed this concept in his academic career before he assumed political office and this vision is arguably translated into practice, especially after the first few years of gradualism of the AKP government. One of the three pillars of Davutoğlu's grand strategy is "enhanced economic and cultural cooperation". Along with expansion of trade and transportation as well as economic and cultural integration, the argument went further to calling for "facilitation of the movement of labor and capital" (Davutoğlu, 2001, p. 145). Davutoğlu's projection of economic and social interdependence for the region is equated to "commercial peace theory" by Yorulmazlar (2015, p. 195). Davutoğlu likened his proposed Middle East integration project to the European Union project in terms of the principles, such as economic integration and free movement of people (Kirişçi, 2011, p. 49).

On the other hand, agency/structure debate seems to be relatively less significant for the Syrian case in terms of foreign policy determinants in the beginning 21st century. Although a young and Western educated President's assumption of office raised expectations to shift the foreign policy orientation towards the West, the idea of policy change was not alien to the former president and the other regime strongmen too (see Rubin, 2007). Indeed, former President father Asaad, described as "Fox of Damascus" (Rubin, 2007, p. 102) was famous for pragmatical policy re-orientation. Positioning on the side of the US during the Gulf War in 1990 was a case in point. Additionally, within the Syrian regime, further economic liberalization and taking a more pro-Western stance seemed inevitable at the end of 1990s for sustaining economic growth and thus stabilizing the regime (Hinnebusch, 2009, p. 11). As the reproachment with Turkey started under Hafez Assad presidency in 1998, it can be speculated that further

development of Syrian-Turkish bilateral relations towards partnership in 2000s would also be possible without a leadership change in Syria.

3.3. Political Economy of Turkey

As discussed in the literature review, many factors can be put forward in explaining Turkey's new foreign policy towards the Middle East under the AKP. Apart from pursuing its ideological Neo-Ottomanist or Islamist political agenda items, in terms of Turkey's national objectives, pragmatic geo-economic ambitions and seeking non-material support by utilizing soft power instruments were argued as dominant features (Özkan, 2014; Murinson, 2006). Domestic political confrontations can also be cited as an important factor behind the increased foreign policy activism in the Middle East and in Syria under the AKP rule (Han, 2013; Hintz, 2016; Bank & Karadag, 2012). As a political consolidation strategy, AKP focused on politically noncontroversial issues, such as sustaining growth and macroeconomic stability, increased efforts for Turkey's EU membership process and establishing advantageous foreign trade relations with the Middle East region and beyond. Furthermore, the AKP arguably used the foreign policy issues and multidimensionality discourse to increase its domestic popularity (Bank & Karadag, 2012). AKP's conservative populism often resorted to sense of "grandeur" in foreign policy discourse in presenting its new activism in former Ottoman territories (Taşpınar, 2012, p. 129).

However, leaving aside the discussion on the real determining factor of the AKP's foreign policy, the role of political economic issues was apparent in the foreign policy making strategy. Indeed, ideational dimension of foreign policy strategies is not only about ideology or worldviews. Political economy dimension, which includes efforts for creating material interests for supportive groups or classes, is often more important than pursuing ideological goals for the political survival of the incumbent (DiGiuseppe & Shea, 2018).

Within this framework the AKP government embarked on an ambitious foreign policy activism mainly focused on, but not limited to, opening to the Middle East region, which would diversify Turkish export markets. Hence, while this strategy created further material interests for the AKP supporter business groups in particular, at the

same time provided enabling opportunities for the party in domestic political context. That is because, increased level of foreign trade volume with the Middle East region was beneficial for Turkish economy, as this region was unique in terms of providing trade surplus (excluding oil imports). This issue had a particular importance for Turkey as the country was struggling with the current account deficit, a potential threat to its macroeconomic stability (Bank & Karadag, 2012, p. 16).

3.3.1. 2001 Crisis and Neoliberal Restructuring

In fact, chronical current account deficit problem was only an outcome of the new political economic model Turkey embraced following the 2001 economic crisis, which was the watershed in the trajectory of Turkey's political economy of the recent decades. Being the "severest economic disaster" (Kutlay, 2011, p. 71) in modern Turkey, 2001 crisis forced (or enabled) policymakers to totally divert the economic strategy of Turkey. Though unwillingly, coalition government led by Ecevit came to terms with the neoliberal prescriptions, mostly imposed by international financial institutions (IMF and World Bank) to recover the economy by attracting foreign investments to the country. Radical economic reforms designed by the new Economy Minister Kemal Derviş who was transferred from the World Bank and bestowed with a free hand and "super powers" in economy policies, totally changed the economic landscape of the country.

With the radical reforms, in an economy that is more integrated into global financial circuits, Turkish financial sector underwent a significant restructuring with the elimination of weak and non-competitive banks. New model of financial sector prioritized issuing credits to the manufacturing firms, rather than financing the government. In fact, this economic reformism amounted to a "new model of capital accumulation strategy" (Kutlay, 2011, p. 72) supported by major business circles inside Turkey.

AKP government voluntarily inherited and perpetuated this neoliberal restructuring program together with a strong political will for political reforms towards the EU membership after the party rose to power in November 2002. By committing to the neoliberal policy prescriptions imposed by international financial institutions, the AKP

retained the support of global financial market players, big businesses and foreign investors. Privatization was another distinctive feature of the first period of the AKP. While 9.5 billion USD had been generated from privatization from its inception until 2002, this figure exceeds 34 billion USD between 2002-2011 (Bank & Karadag, 2012, p. 10). Positive developments on the macroeconomic indicators including significant economic growth and inflation became possible also thanks to the global liquidity glut in this period. Thus, foreign direct investments skyrocketed from 5 billion USD in 2004 to 20 billion USD in 2007.

Consequently, relative relief among the many segments of the society seemed to "create a broad-based interclass alliance" (Kutlay, 2011, p. 72). This inter-class alliance behind the AKP government has also do with the conservative populism of the party (Akça, 2014). Social and political economic structure entered a new phase. It was characterized by export-oriented manufacturing of little value-added products, hot money inflows that were directed towards large investments in construction and other unproductive sectors, skyrocketing consumer debts, "pre-mature de-industrialization" (Rodrik, 2016), "jobless growth" and further deterioration of the income inequality (Öniş & Bakır, 2010).

Despite these long-term unpleasant social consequences, the neoliberal economic model, boosted by enhanced access to credit, provided the manufacturing sector with new opportunities. Regardless of the size, production capacities of all big, medium-sized and small manufacturing companies in Turkey increased. In that context, need for new export markets for the both İstanbul-based big bourgeoisie and conservative Anatolian bourgeoisie was surfaced in the early AKP era. While increased production capacities serve well for the entire manufacturing sector, conservative and traditionally AKP supporter Anatolian bourgeoisie was the major beneficiary of the newly created export opportunities to the Middle East due to geographic vicinity and cultural affiliations.

3.3.2. Enabling Opportunities Conservative Anatolian Bourgeoisie

Indeed, the so-called Anatolian Tigers (as well as big bourgeoisie) had already been considered as a prospective integral element of the foreign policy strategy designed in

the ideas of Davutoğlu and other AKP leaders. Davutoğlu's initial ideas were encompassing regional economic integration with the neighboring countries with the active participation of the conservative bourgeoisie. That is, this social class's material interests were inherent in foreign policy strategy of the AKP. It is plausible to argue that material interests of the conservative Anatolian bourgeoisie and ideational dimension of the foreign policy strategy are mutually and constantly supporting each other.

As a matter of fact, not only the conservative faction but all of the business groups were supporting the AKP government's foreign policy initiatives including the activism in the surrounding regions as well as enhanced efforts for the EU membership process. Kirişçi, Kutlay, Atlı, and Ünay consider the role of increased economic relations as the new policy tool of Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government which prioritize soft power instruments (Kirişçi, 2009; Kutlay, 2012; Atlı, 2011; Ünay, 2010). Thus, the business groups and in particular certain faction of the capitalist class (conservative bourgeoisie) are taken as the new actors in formulating and implementing the foreign policy, Nevertheless, conservative Anatolian bourgeoisie and the business groups in general were not only the actor or the instrument of the foreign policy; but a class whose material interests had constitutive role in making of the foreign policy strategy of the AKP. For instance, interests of the manufacturing, tourism and services sectors in Gaziantep, an important industrial city located at the border with Syria and dominated by conservative bourgeoisie, had central role in enhanced economic activities with Syria (Öktem, 2009). Once economic relations developed, manufacturers in Gaziantep would reach new lucrative market and malls, shops and even hospitals of this Turkish border city would be attraction points for Syrian tourists and visitors. Thus, business groups of the city lobbied successfully for the improvement of the political and economic relations between Turkey and Syria (Kutlay, 201, p. 81; Öktem, 2009).

In fact, strategy of supporting the Anatolian bourgeoisie had already been identified and envisioned beforehand and embodied in the foreign policy formulation of Davutoğlu and the other AKP elite. Erdoğan, Davutoğlu and the other AKP elites had been engaged with these capitalist groups back in 1980s and 1990s (Dönmez, 2015).

Indeed, Erdoğan was among the core team that pioneered the establishment of MÜSİAD, the major businessman association that represents conservative and Anatolian bourgeoisie (Dönmez, 2015, pp. 55-56). Davutoğlu served MÜSİAD as Foreign Policy Advisor in 1995 for one and half years and wrote for the publication of MÜSİAD named "Çerçeve" (Dönmez, 2015; Davutoğlu, 2014). In his speeches, Davutoğlu concedes the role and importance of MÜSİAD members and other conservative bourgeoisie in the formulation of AKP's foreign policy and the existence of "joint goals" that were determined following the consultations between politicians and businesspeople (Davutoğlu, 2014).

Foreign policy strategy of the AKP, which preached increased economic relations with the neighboring regions, had been designed having considered this prospective role of the Anatolian bourgeoisie. Increased foreign trade and investment activism had been projected in the AKP's and Davutoğlu's strategic thinking thanks to the existence of a such dynamic business groups that had been traditionally supporter of the party. Davutoğlu's "strategic depth" concept had already included this specific economic integration model in his book published before the AKP rose to power.

However, this does not amount to the role of the AKP Government only as an instrument at the hands of a certain faction of the bourgeoisie. Having the relative autonomy in Poulantzasian sense, the AKP government not only pushed forward the interests of this group within the capitalist class, but also tried to ensure sound functioning of capitalism in the country. Indeed, this export-oriented manufacturing strategy, which was to the interest of conservative bourgeoisie, turned out to be a supporting element of Turkish capitalism in broad sense. Besides, it served political objectives of the AKP in terms of domestic political contestations.

3.4. Political Economy of Syria

Development of economic relations with Turkey was perceived as an opportunity by the new President Bashar Assad administration in Syria's journey towards Western oriented foreign policy and political economy. After "remaining in limbo" with the demise of the East Bloc in 1990s, Syrian regime finally decided to integrate its

economy into the global markets and embrace neoliberalism in the first decade of 21st century.

Transition to neoliberalism induced Syria to increase its trade relations and to attract foreign investments from the region in its integration to global capitalism. Indeed, this transformation in Syrian political economy perfectly fit neoliberal restructuring at full steam in the Turkish political economy setting under new government of the AKP. In other words, both Turkey and Syria had new political leaderships and new neoliberal structural adjustment programs that encourage them to cooperate economically.

Institutional and legal framework of economic relations between Turkey and Syria was established in 2004 during the Syrian President Assad's visit to Turkey. At this visit, opening of the Syrian consulate in Gaziantep and further facilitation of border trade was decided. Two countries also agreed on demining of the border zones to support the interaction between neighbors as well as agricultural production. Turkish PM Erdoğan's visit in the end of the same year was not less important in developing bilateral economic relations as it includes the signature of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). FTA, which would be ratified in 2007, was promising differing advantages for both Turkey and Syria; offering a gateway to the Middle East for Turkey and a gateway to the Europe for Syria. Syria's trade with Turkey and Iran (and to a certain extent with the EU), amid regional and international isolation, helped survive Syrian economy in 2000s (Haddad, 2011, p. 47).

3.4.1. Transition to Neoliberalism in Syria

Improvement of the bilateral economic relations is very much related with Syria's transition to neoliberal economic order under Bashar Assad administration. In fact, economic liberalization policies have a long history in Syria. During the long Hafez Assad rule (1970-2000), Syrian Baath socialism had been increasingly diluted and private sector rights began to be safeguarded. As early as in 1970s, the political elite has gone through a gradual embourgeoisement, and the regime's commitment to socialism eroded (Hinnebusch, 1997, p. 253). Although the Syrian regime preferred to shy away from political liberalization for decades, economic liberalization had been on the political agenda since the second half of 1980s. It's noteworthy that, in 1980s

and 1990s the Syrian regime was able to achieve macroeconomic stability with limited liberalization not necessarily adopting full-fledged neoliberal policy package. Thereby, the regime had the chance to abstain from privatization of public enterprises, liberalization of labor and financial markets, and the reduction of government activity in the field of social policy (Abu-Ismail and McKinely, 2005, p. 17). In fact, since late 1980s, the strategy of the regime was gradual transformation to economic liberalization so as to maintain the political stability as well as to retain the economic elite unharmed.

However, partial economic liberalization did not serve full economic recovery. After a period of growth in the early 1990's, the Syrian economy fell into recession again in 1996. Unemployment rates increased from 5 per cent in 1981 to 11.6 per cent in 2002, which was concentrated among the youth (Abu-Ismail & McKinely, 2005, p. 25). When it comes to late 1990s, comprehensive economic liberalization reforms seemed unavoidable within the regime circles (Hinnebusch, 2009). Mostly state-controlled Syrian economy was weak and unproductive (Tür, 2011, p. 161). Among other factors, diminishing oil revenues also put pressure on the regime to radically liberalize the economy.

Hence, the economic liberalization efforts that were slowly but steadily continuing since the end of 1980s, were replaced by the radical neoliberal transformation following the Bashar Assad's coming to power. Indeed, real change in Syrian political economy took place in 2000s with the advice and support of international financial institutions (IFIs), IMF and World Bank. IFIs anchor is particularly important as it brought a qualitative change in the liberalization program. In this period, Syrian economy has gone through a deep transformation from a mostly state-controlled economy towards a market-oriented one.

Syria applied to membership of the World Trade Organization in 2001; however, as late as in 2010, the Organization accepted to start membership talks with Syria, after the US and Israel finally decided to lift the block (Reuters, 2010). A new state organ, Credit and Money Council, was established in 2002 and decided to decrease the interest rate from its decades-long level of 22% to 1% in order for boosting investments. The Syrian government passed regulations in 2003 to allow private banks

to operate only in Free Zones (Abboud, 2019). Damascus stock market opened in 2009, insurance reform was launched. Five-year plans began to be compatible with the free market principles. Private sector investments and private capital exceeded those of public sector (Al Wazani, 2014, p. 40). Income tax was reduced and the government took measures to support the private sector and better the business environment. As for foreign economic relations, free zones were established and foreign trade and incoming foreign investments were promoted by reducing tariffs and eliminating barriers.

Liberalization continued with international trade agreements, most important of which are GAFTA (Greater Arab Free Trade Area) and FTA with Turkey. Despite the launch of GAFTA, while intra-Arab trade did not meet the expectations, foreign trade with Turkey, Iran and European Union was promising (Haddad, 2011, p. 46-48).

The reforms in this era also included abolition of price controls and reduction of tariffs, further amendments in investment regulations, official adoption of market exchange rates, abandonment of subsidies, and almost full liberalization of trade and capital accounts (Matar & Kadri, 2015, p. 200; Abboud, 2019). It was definitely a neoliberal turn, especially as an outcome of the 'Social Market Economy' policies, which were adopted at the tenth Baath Regional Command Conference in 2005. Through these reforms, Syrian economy would be connected to global economy while securing social protections.

Several IMF Reports commended "gradual reforms" of the Syrian regime and demanded further liberalization efforts (IMF, 2010). Indeed, the word gradual was also embraced by the Bashar Assad administration. Following "China model", the regime introduced the markets, except for certain protected sectors, but also tried to preserve the authoritarian rule (Abboud, 2019). It is plausible to argue that rather than being fan of liberalization, Syrian regime aimed at preserving the regime stability by limited reforms.

Though limited, certain improvements were materialized in macroeconomic indicators, including economic growth. Nevertheless, transition of Syrian political economy from a centralized one to a free market harmed the middle and lower classes

and thereby jeopardized the stability (Joya, 2012; Haddad, 2011; Matar & Kadri, 2015). As the welfare state which used to be responsible for providing employment and subsidies collapsed, grievances of the people scaled up. In particular, elimination of subsidies to lower income groups. increased social inequalities, unemployment and poverty, especially in the rural regions, and thereby created dissatisfaction among the wider public.

Given the low level of urbanization and the fact that nearly half of the population lives in rural areas, significance of elimination of subsidies to the agricultural sector became prominent. Whereas the agriculture sector constituted 25% of the GDP in 2003, this figure fell to 17% in 2008 (Kelly, et al., 2015, p. 3245). According to former Prime Minister Riyad Hijab, while tourism and service sectors were supported, but the agricultural sector, which is the most important sector in terms of providing employment, was neglected. Thus, shrinkage in agriculture caused considerable increase in unemployment. Fuel prices soared, so did the inflation (Gümüşoğlu, 2013, pp. 133-134). Thus, living standards of the general public decayed.

3.4.2. "The New Bourgeoisie"

On the other hand, while the popular masses suffer from increasing poverty, a new kind of bourgeoisie that is supported and safeguarded by the state came into prominence (Abboud, 2019). This new faction of bourgeoisie, "the ruling merchant–military class", is argued to have expanded their command over means of production (Matar & Kadri, 2015, p. 201). In the Syrian type neoliberalism, monopolies in profitable sectors that are owned by this class were protected by the state, rather than allowing free competition of market forces.

Haddad names this new class the "new bourgeoisie", which connotes to elite associated with the various institutions or organizations/bodies of the state. On the other hand, Haddad underlines the overlapping interests of the private business community, which had certain autonomy from the regime, and that of the new bourgeoisie (Haddad, 2012, p. 232) which "together form a class". Indeed, while the Syrian government was trying to attract investments particularly in energy, tourism and unproductive sectors and boost foreign trade, the "new bourgeoise" was the

benefiters of the neoliberal restructuring and the increasing foreign economic relations in 2000s at the expense of the general public.

Another unintended consequence of transition to neoliberalism was strengthening Islamist groups in the Syrian society. Joya underlines the rise of Sunni Islamic merchant groups in the 2000s, capitalizing on the economic liberalization policies. Indeed, these mostly Aleppo based Islamic businessmen were the ones who were engaged in economic relations with their Turkish counterparts (Joya, 2012, p. 31). Overall, along with the "new bourgeoisie", business groups, including those with Islamist inclinations, were the clear winners of neoliberalism at the detriment of farmers and workers, who relied on state subsidies.

As seen, it's clear that transition to neoliberalism in Syria and neoliberal restructuring in Turkey in 2000s deeply affected social structures and external economic relations. Certain factions of the bourgeoise both in Turkey and Syria, which had political and ideological affiliations with the political elite, benefited more from neoliberal reforms and the increased level of bilateral trade and investment relations. Though this internal relationship between state elites and certain business groups had much to do with the improvement of bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria in 2000s, enhanced foreign economic activities for both countries were more related to neoliberal capital accumulation strategy.

On the other hand, this should not amount to disregarding of the ideological aspect or the pragmatic instrumentalization of the foreign policy in domestic political settings both in Turkey and Syria. Securing the interests of a certain segment of the bourgeoisie is not the sole factor behind the formulation of the foreign policy. There is certainly a political and ideological preference in prioritizing policy preferences. Both the AKP Government and the Bashar Assad regime was in search for internal legitimacy and did not shy away from instrumentalization of the foreign policy in domestic politics. In the AKP case, domestic politics serves as the arena where foreign policy issues are used by the government to boost its electoral support, build hegemony, maintain economic stability and growth and further its ideological goals in the society (Hintz, 2016; Han, 2013; Altunışık & Tür, 2006; Bank & Karadag 2012).

In Syria, Turkey's formerly hostile image was re-designed by the regime itself to remove the obstacles in front of the partnership of two countries. Thus, ideological reservations of the hard-core nationalist circles within the regime were averted (Altunışık & Tür, 2006, p. 244). Thus, political strategy managed to surpass ideological prejudices.

3.5. Regional and International Context

Whatever the real determinants of the foreign policy are, regional and international politics present the main context in which bilateral relations proceed. In the Turkish-Syrian case too, both enabling and constraining elements of the systemic factors were on the ground. Trajectory of the bilateral relations gained meaning through the developments in this level. Even so, the striking phenomenon is that, regardless of the regional/international politics' climate, encouraging or dissuading, bilateral relations steadily developed in 2000s.

In the first place, regional context following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 was encouraging for two countries to cooperate. Both Turkey and Syria were considered as partners by the Wet as they have similar positions on radicalism and extremism in the region. In this period, Syrian regime under Bashar Assad adopted a soft line towards the West and vowed to cooperate in the fight with extremism in the region (Aras & Karakaya-Polat, 2008, p. 511).

US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was another important factor that brings two countries together and give the way for steaming up the relations (Yorulmazlar, 2015; Altunışık & Tür, 2006). Two countries shared the same threat perception stemming from a possible establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Thus, in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of the US, close political consultations and security cooperation between Turkey and Syria continued at various level.

Repercussions of the US intervention in Iraq, however, strained the relations of both countries with the West. While Turkey had significant leverages to ameliorate its relations with the West, like its long-standing NATO membership, Syria had to cope with its consequences. After Iraq, Syria became the target of the Bush Administration for providing support to resistance groups in Iraq and in the region in general. After

all, along with Iran, Hizbollah and Hamas, Syria was a component of the muqawamah (resistance) against Israel and the US. Under these hard circumstances, Syrian regime, in a realist calculation, was seeking support from Turkey against the American threat (Altunışık & Tür, 2006, p. 240).

2004, when reciprocal state visits were paid by Syrian President Assad and Turkish PM Erdoğan, was an important year in boosting bilateral relations not only in economic realm but in political and security too. 2004 visit of Assad was the first ever state visit on presidential level from Syria to Turkey. As manifested by declaration of joint position on regional issues like Iraq, according to Hinnebusch, bilateral relations were proceeding "beyond normalization, toward amity, even alliance" (Hinnebusch, 2013, p. 22). Assad viewed Turkey as "one of the friendliest countries toward Syria in the region, one which pursues not only good relations at a bilateral level but also cooperates with Syria on a number of regional issues (Aras & Karakaya-Polat, 2008, p. 511).

Nevertheless, international pressure on Syria was heightened due to Syria's alleged role in assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri in 2005. Western countries pressed Syria to pursue "a more constructive line" in its policies in the regional issues (Aras & Karakaya-Polat, 2008, p. 510). Against the mounted pressure from the West, Syrian security forces had to withdraw from Lebanon. In this hard period, Syria pursued a double strategy; bandwagoning and balancing (Atunışık & Tür, 2006, p. 244). While the Syrian regime tried to appease the tension with the West by preventing the cross-border mobility of the insurgents in Iraq, militarily withdrawing from Lebanon and suggesting to re-start of the peace talks with Israel, it also attempted to reinforce its friendship in the region with Turkey. Thus, Syria's policy can be analyzed under realist premises.

Under these pressing circumstances, along with economic support thanks to the increased level of trade and investment relations, Bashar Assad regime found political support from Turkey as well. For example, despite several and serious warnings of the US, Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer did not cancel his official visit to Damascus in 2005 (Altunışık & Tür, 2006, p. 242). By doing so, Turkey preferred to defy the Western pressure to isolate Syria in the regional and international politics.

Turkey tried to mitigate the discord on the Syrian policy with its Western allies but made no compromise on its support to its neighbor confronting harsh criticism from the West. By defying to bandwagon with the Western allies, Turkish foreign policy demonstrated that it's not based on realist principles in this period.

Through the end of the decade, the US and Western attitude towards Syria began to change again. Syrian attempts to defuse the tension, Turkey's facilitator role in talks between Syria and Israel and Syria's full commitment of integrating its economy to the global economy by embracing neoliberal economic orientation can be listed as the main factors behind this development. In that period, Turkey's "model" role in Syria and in the MENA region in its broad sense was acknowledged (in fact overrated) in the Western circles, in particular by the new Obama Administration in the US. Turkey was seen as a "transforming agent" in the region and also for a possible Syrian integration to world politics and global market. Against this backdrop, developing Turkish-Syrian relations were seen as a showcase for Turkish new foreign policy and presented as an exemplary case for the rest of the region.

3.6. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter attempted to propose a re-interpretation of construction of the political and economic partnership between Turkey and Syria in the first decade of the century. Interrelated feature of political economy, pragmatism, ideational and systemic factors are investigated. By ascribing political economic factors at the social level, a constitutive role, rather than a contextual one, the chapter seeks to expose the underlying factors of the foreign policies of Turkey and Syria. On the other hand, having eschewed mono-causal explanation, complementary character of ideational/ideological dimension and regional/international context is also underlined.

CHAPTER 4

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PARTNERSHIP: 2006-2011

Bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria were at the highest point when the Arab Uprisings started in December 2010 in Tunisia and reached to Syria in the spring of 2011. Before the dramatic collapse of relations in the summer and fall of 2011, the AKP Government in Turkey and Bashar Assad administration in Syria was cooperating in every possible field. In terms of political relations, official and unofficial visits at various levels, including the heads of state and government, used to be held more than once a year. Joint cabinet meetings presided by the PMs with participation of ministers from both sides, which were planned to be organized every year, were indicators of the level of the relations. Governments of each side committed themselves to the development of economic relations in particular, and signed hundreds of agreements for this purpose in less than ten years. Visa requirement for citizens of both countries was abolished mutually, which contributed immensely to the interaction of peoples and economic activities. Free Trade Agreement, which was operationalized in 2007, skyrocketed bilateral trade. Hence, trade volume between Turkey and Syria increased 4 times in 8 years between 2002-2010. Turkish investments in Syria increased considerably and joint investment projects were initiated by governments. Economic interdependence and integration between two countries was presented as a "model of progress for the rest of the region" by the politicians of each side (Davutoğlu, 2008, p. 80). Thus, this model was attempted to be expanded to the neighborhood with the participation of Jordan and Lebanon.

In regional and international politics too, two countries were coordinating their policies; they were on the same page when Turkey assumed the facilitator role in peace talks between Syria and Israel and also when the talks were suspended due to Gaza War in December 2008-January 2009. Syria full heartedly supported Turkey against Israel at the flotilla incident in May 2010 and Turkey's mediator role together with Brazil at attempts to reach the swap deal between Iran and the international community with regards to the Iranian nuclear issue. Turkey too supported Syria at various regional and international fora. Therefore, level of the bilateral relations between two neighbors moved towards a "multi-dimensional partnership" that included political, economic, cultural aspects and human-to-human interaction.

This chapter explores this striking rupture in the trajectory of the bilateral relations 2006 onwards and attempts to put this drastic change into context. In accounting for the transformation, "conjuncture" that was driven by political-economic factors, but also shaped by ideational and regional and international contextual factors will be discussed.

4.1. High-Level Political Dialogue

Mutual confidence between Bashar Assad administration and the AKP government seemed to have been established in terms of political cooperation mechanisms. Launch of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, that is composed of heads of governments and "line ministers" from both sides, can be shown as the most important dialogue channel between political leaderships. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu explained the operational role of this council to form a "one government of the two states" (Bila, 2009). According to this plan developed by Davutoğlu, eight "line ministers" from each side would meet a few times each year to further the cooperation in many fields and the results of this ministerial meetings would be evaluated and endorsed by head of governments in the yearly meetings of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (Bila, 2009). The number of ministers increased to twelve in 2010. Although this council was presented to symbolize the political cooperation, in fact it served for the smooth functioning of the economic cooperation of Turkey and Syria.

Upon decision of its establishment during Syrian President Bashar Assad's visit to Turkey in September 2009 to solidify and deepen the bilateral cooperation, first meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council was held in December 2009 in Damascus (MFA Turkey, 2010). Among the fifty-one agreements and protocols that were signed during the Council meeting, 30 of them were covering economic issues aiming at lifting barriers to economic activities, trade and investments (Tür, 2013, p. 167). Before the Council meeting, a preparatory meeting was held at the Ministerial level to finalize the documents to be signed.

The second meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council was held in December 2010 in Ankara at the same setting, presided by the PMs, following a Ministerial Meeting organized two months ago in October. This Council meeting too brought together twenty-five ministers from both sides and enabled eleven agreements to be signed. One of the results of the meeting was setting six concrete targets to be accomplished till the end of 2011, all of which aimed at enhancing economic cooperation (Cumhuriyet, 2011). These targets were: (1) opening a joint customs gate at Nusaybin-Kamışlı, (2) initiating a joint venture bank, (3) building high-speed railroad between Gaziantep and Aleppo, (4) linking the two countries' natural gas infrastructure, (5) extending loans from Eximbank of Turkey to the Syrian side and (6) constructing a dam on Orontes River (Tür, 2013, p. 171). As follow-up, two PMs laid the foundation of the "Friendship Dam" on Orontes two months later in February 2011 (Hürriyet, 2011). It's plausible to argue that both sides took the high-level dialogue seriously to implement the signed agreements and protocols and materialize the objectives set therein. However, with the uprising surged in Syria, Turkey stood against the regime and all of the cooperation projects were suspended.

Despite such attempts for institutionalization of the political and economic relations, bilateral ties were not independent of the leaders' political will. According to Sami Moubayed, honeymoon between Turkey and Syria is "very much dependent on the chemistry between Erdoğan and Assad" (Moubayed, 2013, pp. 73-74). Robins too draw attention to "the close personal relations" between two leaders in explaining developing relations between Turkey and Syria as much as material factors (Robins, 2013, p. 82).

Leaders and leadership are important in Turkish politics in general and in the AKP case in particular (Yavuz, 2009, p. 83). On top of leader-centered character of the AKP, considering Syria's highly authoritarian character of the Syrian regime, it's safe to argue that leaders' will would be central in any case for the development of bilateral relations. Yet, even though initiative of the political leaders is necessary, it is not sufficient. Why leaders are so eager to develop the relations is a legitimate and indeed essential question to be answered for explaining the partnership between two formerly foe neighbors.

Heightened political dialogue was pretty much closely linked to achieving economic objectives; trade, investment and tourism. Both Bashar Assad regime and Erdoğan's AKP government had political and economic interests in development of Turkish-Syrian relations. More than that, behind the Turkish-Syrian partnership, there were concrete material conditions with regards to political economies of two countries.

As the Syrian regime adopted neoliberal political economic program as a full package in 2006, the country needed external support in dealing with the challenges of the transition and Turkey was willing to do the assistance job (Tür, 2006, p. 163). Developing Turkish-Syrian relations in this period came as a godsend in Syria's struggle. Turkish political elite, PM Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, were already on the ground promoting the "Turkish model" for the region and offering help in devising economic strategies and reforms to the Syrians (Moubayed, 2013, p. 73).

In fact, the process that Syria was undergoing was quite ironic: Syria was cooperating with the international financial institutions, IMF and World Bank that were dominated by the US, in transition to neoliberalism and integration to the global economy. However, at the same time the country was under sanctions led by the US over its anti-Western regional policies. As discussed in the previous chapter, Syria continued to pursue economic liberalization policies, softened its tone towards the West, started diplomatic talks with Israel at Turkey's facilitation and explored new ways to cooperate with Europe. And finally with leadership changes in the US and the Europe, hostility between Syria and the West was minimized through the end of the decade.

In this process, Turkey's friendly and supportive attitude towards its southern neighbor was appreciated by the Syrian leadership. Turkey was considered as a lifeline for Syria both in political and economic sense (Kabalan, 2013). Turkey's support helped the Syrian regime in preserving its domestic and international legitimacy while easing financial hardships the regime and the allied business groups face. Definitely, Turkey's policy was also beneficial for Turkish economy due to advantageous trade relations and served material interests of the AKP supporter bourgeoisie that mostly does business with Syria.

4.2. Bilateral Trade and Investments

Primary factor that boosted bilateral trade was the entering into force of the Free Trade Agreement on 1 January 2007. Only in that year, volume of bilateral trade increased 36 per cent, and Turkish exports to Syria rose almost forty per cent as shown by Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) figures. According to provisions of the FTA, Syrian industrial goods would be granted free access to the Turkish market without levied any customs duties. However, all the Turkish industrial goods were not granted free access to the Syrian market, but complete removal of customs duties were tied to a calendar of twelve years. Still, some of Turkish industrial goods gained free access to Syria at time of the coming into force of the FTA (Tür, 2013, p. 164).

As shown in the Table 1, according to the TÜIK data, bilateral trade between Turkey and Syria increased almost four times between 2002 and 2010. While rise in Syria's exports to Turkey remained limited, Turkish annual exports to Syria rose around seven times. Turkish products became very popular among Syrian people which help run the trade liberalization "one-way trade boom" (Oweis, 2010). Expressing dissatisfaction with the striking rise, Turkish PM Erdoğan declared in 2009 the goal for the trade volume as reaching US$ 5 billion in a few years until 2012 (AA, 2011).

Table 1. Bilateral Trade Figures (USD Million)

Year	Turkey's Exports	Syria's Exports	Volume
2002	266	314	580
2003	410	261	671
2004	394	247	642
2005	551	142	694
2006	609	187	796
2007	797	259	1,057
2008	1,115	323	1,438
2009	1,421	221	1,643
2010	1,844	452	2,297

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

Expectedly, increasing trade, investment and tourism relations mostly benefited border cities of both sides, Gaziantep and Aleppo in particular. As discussed before, industrialists and exporters of Gaziantep demanded and effectively lobbied for removal of the barriers in front of economic relations with Syria for years (Kutlay, 2011; Öktem, 2009). Thus, the AKP government was very well aware of the prospective benefits to the mostly AKP supporter business groups and wider public living in cities in the Syrian border.

One of the effective mechanisms that the AKP government utilized in attempts to increase economic relations with target countries was the "Business Forums" organized by official and semi-official institutions like DEİK (Kirişçi, 2009; Atlı, 2011; Ünay, 2010). This mechanism worked in Turkish-Syrian case too. At the margins of almost all official visits at heads of government and state level, business forums were organized either in Syria or in Turkey with the participation of hundreds

of businesspeople. For example, at the margin of the first meeting of High-Level Cooperation Council in 2009, Turkey-Syria Business Forum meeting was held in Damascus with the participation of the PMs of both sides and 350 businessmen. Investment opportunities in the Syrian coastal region in tourism, transportation and agricultural sectors in particular were discussed in particular at the business forum (MFA, 2009).

On the other hand, Turkey's growing economic relations with its neighbor Syria has not been a unique case in terms of Turkey's regional policy. Driven mostly by Davutoğlu's proposals, Turkey embarked upon profitable trade relations with its neighboring regions. Consequently, "from 2003 to 2010, the EU's share in Turkish foreign trade declined from 51.38% to almost 42%, whereas Turkey-Asia and Turkey-Near and Middle Eastern foreign trade increased to 26.5% and 12%, respectively (Kutlay, 2011, p. 79).

Booming trade relations was the most visible and essential component of the partnership between Turkey and Syria. Skyrocketing bilateral trade mostly benefited Turkish side, and the amount of the Turkish exports reached 4 folds of Syrian exports. However, boosting trade received criticisms from the Syrian side. Experiencing the challenges of dealing with more competitive products produced with advanced technology and production techniques of the Turkish side, many Syrian manufacturers could not compete and went out of business. These collapsing private firms included Kouefati Group, one of Syria's largest textiles manufacturers based in Aleppo (Gavin, 2009). Though the Syrian side did not publicly complain about their discomfort about the imbalance in the trade volume, they pronounced their demands in the official meetings (Tür, 2013, p. 171). On the other hand, Syria's deficit in the trade account with Turkey was offset, to a certain degree, by the growing Turkish investments in Syria.

The year 2007 symbolizes the boom in economic relations between Turkey and Syria in terms of both trade and investments. With coming into force of the FTA, not only trade volume increased considerably, but also Turkey became "the largest single foreign investor in Syria, with the stock of Turkish foreign direct investment doubling to $146m in 2007 from 2006" (Gavin, 2009). In addition to the FTA, two other

agreements on prevention of double taxation and protection and encouragement of investments contributed substantially to the economic relations (AA, 2011). Turkish companies were establishing factories in Syria to take advantage of cheaper materials and labor (Migdalovitz, 2010, p. 17).

Turkish investments in Syria were also promoted by the decision of opening a credit line by Turkish Eximbank amounted to EUR 180 million (equivalent to US 250 million) to finance the specified projects in Syria that will be undertaken by Turkish companies (MFA, 2010). Before this decision, though limited in volume, Turkish companies had already started to invest in Syria.

One of the biggest Turkish investments in Syria was from the firm called Güriş for construction of a cement factory in Raqqa that is equivalent to EUR 280 million. Sheikh Najjar Industrial Zone of Aleppo too attracted Turkish investments amounted to USD 650 million, and almost half of firms based in the zone (40 per cent) had a partnership with at least one Turkish firm (Tür, 2013, p. 169). Due to geographical proximity and close cultural bonds, Aleppo, where traditional Sunni bourgeoisie of Syria is based in, seemed to be the center of Turkish investments.

Construction, energy, machinery and automobile sectors are cited as the priority sectors for Turkish firms in Five Year Development Plan for the years between 2007 and 2012 prepared by Turkey's State Planning Organization (Tür, 2013, p. 163). In reality, however, investments in automobile sector, which requires big investments by financially strong big companies, could not be materialized. Instead, in addition to construction projects supported directly by the governments, like Friendship Dam on Orontes River, textile manufacturing and tourism sectors attracted Turkish investments in Syria.

Energy cooperation was also supported directly by the governments. In that context, Syrian and Turkish governments declared that they were planning to launch a joint oil exploration company to operate anywhere in the region and set up a common cross-border electricity grid (Gavin, 2009). Official oil companies, Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) and Syrian National Oil Company, reached an agreement to start

the exploration on seven oil fields in Syria by the joint company (NTVMSNBC, 2010). Ankara and Damascus also designed a gas pipeline (Migdalovitz, 2010, p. 17).

4.3. Tourism and Grassroots Level Interaction

Substantial amounts of investments were also made with a view to enhancing interaction between peoples of Syria and Turkey by the two governments or promoted by them. In that regard, for the rehabilitation of the railway line linking Turkey, Syria and Iraq, USD 70 million were allocated and the railway was reopened in February 2010 to encourage and expediate the transportation, human interaction and tourism. In terms of tourism investments, Dedeman Hotels took over the operation of the first five-star hotels of Syria in Damascus, Aleppo and Palmyra (Tür, 2013, pp. 168- 170).

Turkish PM Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu underlined quite often "the artificiality of the border" between Turkey and Syria in an effort to encourage people to people interaction and boost economic activities, especially tourism (Tür, 2013, p. 167). Thus, two countries signed an agreement to lift the visa requirement reciprocally in September 2009 during Syrian President Bashar Assad's visit to Turkey which enabled more than 60.000 Syrians monthly to visit Turkey (Bank & Karadag, 2012, p. 13). This was symbolically a big event in the partnership of Turkey and Syria.

Consequently, grassroots level interaction and tourism was enhanced impressively. According to TÜİK figures, the number of tourists from both sides visiting the other country closed to one million (Table 2). As the Turkish products abounded in the Syrian bazaars and shops, so did Turkish tourists visited Syria and Syrian tourists flocked to Turkish cities for shopping (Tür, 2013; Oweis, 2010).

Table 2. Number of Tourists

Year	Turkish Citizens visiting Syria	Syrian Citizens Visiting Turkey
2002	128,922	126,428
2003	146,552	154,823
2004	192,174	195,597
2005	274,718	288,626
2006	271,848	277,779
2007	322,487	332,840
2008	398,331	406,935
2009	501,016	509,679
2010	891,192	899,494

Source: Based on Turkish Statistical Institute data (Tür, 2013, p. 168)

Turkish border city Gaziantep, as the first door out of Syria, became the attraction center for Syrian tourists. Shopping centers that made global brands available and high-quality private hospitals of the city attracted Syrian shoppers and health tourists (Tür, 2011, p. 167). In addition to tourism relations and registered visitors, unregistered cross-border luggage trade contributed considerably to the local economy of the border cities of both sides (Robins, 2013, p. 86).

Governments also agreed to work for the development of the border provinces. Thus, Turkish-Syrian Regional Cooperation Program was drafted in 2006 (Tür, 2013, p. 162). For the operationalization of the Program, 55 projects from state institutes and organizations, small and medium enterprises, education and consultancy firms and NGOs were approved by the authorities at three rounds and USD 8 million were allocated for the materialization of the projects (Tür, 2013, p. 165).

As seen, development of economic relations and interaction among peoples were pursued by the political leaders of both sides enthusiastically. Politicians exerted every effort not only for elimination of the barriers in front of trade, investments and tourism, but also took initiative on behalf of public bodies to start joint investment projects. That's why many analysts put forward the primacy of the agency, as discussed in the

literature review. However, underlying factors that impelled politicians to take initiative should have been revealed. In that effort, this thesis prioritizes political economy perspective, mainly arisen from the neoliberal restructuring, and its social ramifications.

4.4. Soft Power Projection of Turkey

Creating economic interdependences, promoting human-to-human interaction, tourism relations, cultural exchanges and lifting visa requirements were indeed integral parts of Turkish foreign policy under the AKP, that is mostly designed and developed by Davutoğlu. Furthermore, though in a modest manner, Turkey presented itself as model for the region (Moubayed; 2013, p. 71). Hence, utilizing these soft-power instruments was seen as a policy objective by some writers (Handy, 2011, p. 65). Whether it can be classified as an objective or an instrument, Turkish political elite counted on a positive image in the region; that is a democratic country anchored in the Western institutions, and economically stable and developing nation with a predominantly Muslim population. TESEV 2010 survey indicates that Syrians were among the most enthusiastic fans of Turkey as 75% of the Syrian population viewed Turkey as a model for themselves (TESEV, 2011, p. 12).

In fact, Turkey not only cooperated with the governments but addressed the sensitivities and aspirations of the peoples of the region. Palestinian issue was an important tool in that regard. As Moubayed argues (2013, pp. 71-72), Turkish support to the Palestinian cause and increasingly anti-Israel rhetoric especially after the Gaza War and Davos in January 2009 and flotilla incident in May 2010 are welcomed by the Syrians in particular. Turkish PM's pro-Palestinian political stance and discourse against Israel increased his popularity not only in the eyes of Bashar Assad and the Baath Party circles, but the entire Syrian society.

Nevertheless, amelioration of the Turkish image within the Syrian society did not start in 2009. Indeed, the Syrian regime intentionally built a new image for Turkey in the eyes of the Syrian public, upon the demand of the Turkish side. Indeed, Turkish public diplomacy efforts for transforming its "colonizer" image within the Arab peoples towards a "brother and friend nation" was not unique to the Syrian policy (Oğuzlu,

2007). The Syrian regime, however, surprisingly volunteered in this effort to help transform the "foe" and "occupier" (due to territorial dispute on the Alexandria (Hatay) province) image of Turks to "friendly and brotherly" Turkish nation. It was the trajectory of the bilateral relations that made the Syrian regime change its attitude towards its northern neighbor and former "colonizer". Increased number of Turkish and Syrian tourists and visitors to each other's countries as well as heightened economic activities facilitated the transformation of the image of Turkey within the Syrian society. Therefore, it was the outcome of the deliberate strategy of both sides.

The 2010 TESEV survey indicates positive perception of Turkey among the Middle Eastern nations, including Syria. According to the survey, among many other political and cultural factors, economic welfare of Turkey and other economy-related factors had the biggest impact on Turkey's positive image like tourism (TESEV, 2011, p. 22). It's plausible to argue that economic influence of Turkey in the region is bigger than political and cultural influence.

To sum up, partnership between Turkey and Syria was deliberately constructed by the governments. Prioritizing soft power elements such as political dialogue, creating economic interdependence and enhancing human-to-human interactions, the AKP leadership took the initiative in developing Turkey's relations with the region including Syria. In fact, this strategy had much to do with the social and political economy factors following the neoliberal structuring of Turkish political economy that brought export-oriented manufacturing of little value-added products.

4.5. Regional Politics

As Turkey increased its influence in the region and began to augment its clout in regional politics, a new cooperation area emerged between Turkey and Syria in terms of regional politics. In the early period of both the AKP and Bashar Assad rule, Turkey managed to initiate good relations with both Syria and its allies (muqawamah front) as well as their adversaries (pro-Western camp) in the "regional Cold War" (Altunışık, 2013, p. 184). However, starting with the Gaza War of 2008-2009 Turkish regional policies shifted towards anti-Israel, anti-US and pro-muqawamah front. Hence, two

countries began to cooperate in regional politics and coordinated their policies in the Palestinian issue, Iraq, Iran and elsewhere.

It would not be wrong to argue that both Bashar Assad regime and the AKP government approached the bilateral partnership from a pragmatist perspective (Gresh, 2010). This holds true not only in mutually beneficial bilateral economic relations, but also for alignment in regional politics. Bashar Assad regime was able to find political support from NATO-ally Turkey during hard times under international (Western) pressure.

On the other hand, economic aspect of the regional politics should not be underestimated either. At the initiative of Turkey, Quadripartite High Level Cooperation Council among Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon was established on June 10, 2010 with a view to further strengthening their cooperation within a multinational and institutionalized framework (MFA Turkey, 2010a). The ultimate goal was announced as creating a free trade and mobility area among four countries by contributing to the welfare and economic stability in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In this context, Levant Business Forum was set up in December 2010 in Istanbul to facilitate the cooperation among businesses from four nations and the second meeting in this format was gathered in Beirut. Representing the private sector, the forum would serve as a permanent dialogue and cooperation mechanism (UNECE, 2011). In addition to promoting trade, encouraging investments and enhancing cultural and tourism activities, a conducive investment and business environment was attempted to be created. Semi-official "Banks Associations" of four countries had a meeting to further talks on cooperation agreement in February 2011 in Beirut (TBB, 2011).

Officials from Turkey, like Minister for Foreign Trade Zafer Çağlayan and representatives of business associations, like Rıfat Hisarcıklıoğlu, the President of semi-official Union of Turkish Chambers of Trade and Commerce (TOBB) and DEİK, argued that this quadruple scheme would be the first step to create the first regional economic integration project in the Middle East region (Tür, 2013, p. 170). The Syrian side too expressed their contentment in expectations for economic and political gains out of the quadripartite cooperation mechanism (Tür, 2013).

At the initiative of Turkey, Foreign Ministers of Syria and Iraq met in 2009 to reduce tensions between Syria and Iraq (Kardaş, 2009). As another regional mechanism that included Turkey and Syria was trilateral process among Turkey, Syria and Qatar. At the summit meeting of Syrian President, Turkish PM and Qatari Emir, three countries coordinated their policies and expressed common positions on regional issues like Palestinian-Israeli issue, Syrian-Israeli peace process, situation in Iraq and Iranian nuclear issue (MFA Turkey, 2010b).

Shift in Turkish policies in regional politics was particularly important for the Syrian regime to legitimize Turkish-Syrian partnership in Syrian domestic politics. This is evident in President Assad's remarks at his official visit to Turkey in 2010 where he cites three positions of the AKP government that have enhanced Turkey's standing in Syria and Syria's trust in Turkey: its support for the Palestinians, its refusal to allow the U.S. forces to invade Iraq via Turkish territory in 2003, and its steadfastness while many other countries were trying to isolate Syria and exerting pressure on Turkey to do the same (Migdalovitz, 2010, p. 16).

Turkey's increasing engagement with the regional issues and sense of ownership of the regional problems brought two countries together in terms of regional politics. Thus, reginal politics offered enabling opportunities for Turkey-Syria partnership. On the other hand, due to this "Euro-Asianism" (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2013), Turkish foreign policy was questioned in terms of "axis shift" debates in the West (Çağaptay, 2009; Taşpınar, 2012). Thus, Turkey felt international pressure for its allegedly over-engagement with the Middle East. This constraining factor, however, did not make Turkey abstain from activism in the Middle East and develop partnership with Syria. Therefore, it's plausible to argue that regional and international politics offered the context; however, did not leave a deterministic mark on the partnership between Syria and Turkey.

4.6. Chapter Conclusion

Political and economic relations, that encompass trade, investment and tourism, as well as cultural relations and human-to-human interaction between Turkey and Syria were enhanced immensely 2006 onwards until mid-2011 in particular. Behind this

multidimensional partnership, which had been unthinkable a decade ago, there was political will of both the AKP Government in Turkey and Bashar Assad Administration in Syria. The deliberate strategy of both sides to construct the partnership was based on political-economic, ideational and pragmatic factors within the context of regional and international politics.

Turkish Government was increasing policy activism in its close neighborhood, including Syria, mainly by utilizing soft power instruments for political and economic gains which had also an ideational dimension. The AKP Government aimed at strengthening its support base within the general public thanks to economic growth fed by increasing exports to the Middle East region. Particularly, the clear winners of this strategy were the AKP supporter business groups that were inclined to do business with the region. Ideationally, Turkish policy was based on Davutoğlu's "central country" doctrine which had both ideological (be it neo-Ottomanism or Islamism) and pragmatic aspects. Syrian regime too pragmatically viewed partnership with Turkey useful both politically and economically against the pressure the country was feeling under international sanctions. Turkey's alignment with the "muqawamah front" lately on key regional political matters helped the Syrian regime to legitimize domestically its partnership with Turkey. Finally, domestic, regional and international political context had both enabling and constraining impacts.

What's striking is that although cooperation and partnership of Turkey and Syria encompassed political, economic and cultural levels, the most concrete developments were materialized in the economic realm. Trade figures, investments and touristic activities skyrocketed in this period. Indeed, main objective of high-level political dialogue and bilateral agreements was to give impetus and facilitate bilateral economic relations. On the other hand, cooperation in political matters and declarations of common position on regional politics remained on paper and symbolic lacking concrete initiatives even on outstanding cases like the Palestinian issue.

Therefore, it's plausible to argue that partnership of Turkey and Syria was mainly a "business partnership" that generated mostly economic and political gains for the regimes of the both countries and in particular ruling parties' supportive classes and groups. Especially, Turkish capitalist groups that were in business with Syria were the

representers of the AKP supporter conservative small and medium sized capital mostly based in Anatolia, rather than TÜSİAD-kind big bourgeoisie (Tür, 2013, p. 172; Şenalp, 2019; Kutlay, 2011). In Syria, the picture is more complicated; the benefiters of business relations with Turkey and the newly transited neoliberal order in general were the entire capitalist class: both the regime-linked "state bourgeoisie" and the traditional Sunni bourgeoisie (Joya, 2012; Haddad, 2011; Matar & Kadri, 2015).

The bottom line is that, simultaneous neoliberal transformation of the national economies of both Syria and Turkey paved the ground for two countries to enhance their economic relations. Thus, policies of both countries towards each other, which constructed the partnership, were designed and developed by the political elite on purpose for this outcome. Developing relations and partnership between Turkey and Syria served interests to the general public to some extent, but in reality, certain political and business elite were the primary beneficiaries.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Multidimensional partnership of traditionally hostile neighbors Turkey and Syria was forged carefully by the political leaderships of both sides between 2003 and 2011. However, exceptionally friendly relations were totally destroyed when the Arab Uprisings hit Syria in 2011. Indeed, rather than the collapse of the relations, the preceding "golden age" in 2000s was outstanding, and thus, was analyzed from various perspectives in the literature. Offering a re-interpretation of the case, this thesis argues that social and economic transformations taken place in Turkey and Syria domestically in 2000s had "constitutive ramifications", as termed here, on foreign policies of both countries, paving the way for the improvement of bilateral relations drastically. In other words, the thesis posits that, foreign policies of Turkey and Syria had, inter alia, social determinants and social origins.

In this concluding chapter, firstly main arguments of the thesis are summarized based on findings of the case study. In the second place, the existing literature's handling of the case is outlined and the relevance of employment of the political-economic perspective in explaining the Turkey-Syria relations is discussed. Finally, bearing in mind the theoretical framework that the thesis employs, prospective contributions of the political-economic perspective to the broader literature in disciplines of international relations and area studies will be debated in light of this case study of the thesis.

5.1. Findings and Arguments of the Thesis

Finding 1: Transformation of Turkish-Syrian relations, which had started with the Adana Accords of 1998, was qualitatively upscaled and proceeded to partnership level with the rise of the AKP to power in Turkey in November 2002 and under the Presidency of Bashar Assad in Syria.

This basic fact sparked the role of agency and ideology debates, particularly in the Turkish foreign policy analyses. Improvement of relations between Turkey and Syria was presented by some analysts as the showcase of the new Turkish foreign policy strategy of the ruling AKP Government, which arguably brought a new foreign policy paradigm by prioritizing soft power instruments. Within this frame, agential and ideational aspects are underscored and the new Syrian administration under Bashar Assad is portrayed as the conformist party in the new mode of the bilateral relations. Accordingly, collapse of the relations following the mass uprisings in 2011 is viewed from the same perspective. Although it's true that the sharp turn in bilateral relations in 2000s is mostly shaped by foreign policy preferences of governments rather than systemic constraints, these accounts simply overemphasize the role of agency and ideational dimension. On the other hand, agency/structure debate seems to be relatively less significant for the Syrian case in terms of foreign policy determinants.

Finding 2: Political leaderships of both sides exerted every effort for the improvement of the relations.

Constant high-level political dialogue was an important feature of the period. It's plausible to assume the existence of mutual confidence between the Bashar Assad Administration and the AKP Government. Hence, joint cabinet meetings under the name of High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council were held regularly. More than being an important dialogue channel between political leaderships, meetings of this Council served speeding up implementation of the agreements towards construction of the partnership.

Another aspect of the issue is the personal relationship between the leaders. Rapidly improving relations of two countries were tied to "the chemistry between Erdoğan and

Assad" (Moubayed, 2013, pp. 73-74) or "the close personal relations between two leaders" (Robins, 2013, p. 82).

As observed by Tür, the level of political relations is the precursor of the development of the relations in other realms (Tür, 2013, p. 159). However, rather than ascribing a causal role to political relations, the thesis argues that underlying factors that led improved political relations should be investigated.

Finding 3: Among many aspects of the multidimensional partnership, the most concrete steps were taken in the economic cooperation realm.

Given the hostility on the political level between Turkey and Syria before 1998, business circles that were willing to do business between two neighbors tried to separate foreign economic relations from the political relations. For example, participants of the Turkish-Syrian Business Council in 2003 expressed the need for an "economy not affected by politics but politics affected by economics' (Tür, 2013, p. 160). However, this time in 2000s politicians were on the same page with the business world. High-level political dialogue at multiple levels and its institutionalized arrangements, like joint cabinet meetings, made concrete steps possible in terms of economic cooperation. Tangible objectives to increase trade, investment and tourism activities were set and followed closely by the governments.

In that regard, hundreds of agreements were signed, visa requirement for citizens of both countries was abolished reciprocally, Free Trade Agreement was operationalized, "Business Forums" were organized at the margins of high-level official visits. Hence, trade volume between Turkey and Syria increased 4 times in 8 years between 2002-2010. Turkish investments in Syria increased considerably, joint public investment projects were initiated and Turkey became the largest single foreign investor in Syria.

As an indicator of the significance of the economic relations, when commenting to Reuters on the improving Turkish-Syrian relations, Turkish ambassador in Damascus prioritized Syria's growing market and economic partnership potential before the political issues (Oweis, 2010). Economic interdependence and integration between two countries was presented as a model to the region by the high-level officials.

Prioritization of the economic relations gives an idea regarding the real motivation behind the developing partnership between two countries.

Finding 4: Increased foreign economic activities of Syria and Turkey in 2000s are indeed outcome of neoliberal transformation of the national economies. While Turkey entered third phase of its neoliberal transformation (Yalman, 2009) with an export-oriented manufacturing model and a new financial system; Syria took first serious steps for transition to neoliberalism, notwithstanding qualitative differences from the Turkish case in terms of level of integration into the global economy.

Almost simultaneously, both countries have undergone economic and social neoliberal restructuring programs with the support of international financial institutions. Neoliberal transformations deeply affected social structures and external economic relations. In Turkey, neoliberal restructuring program was embraced as a remedy following the 2001 economic crisis, which was the gravest crisis of the modern Turkey. The new neoliberal model, which was later continued by the AKP, was indeed a "new model of capital accumulation strategy" (Kutlay, 2011, p. 72). The new phase was characterized by, inter alia, export-oriented manufacturing of little value-added products. As access to credit was also eased within the new financial architecture supported by hot money inflows, growing production capacities of the manufacturing sector necessitated new export markets. Thus, economic actors were encouraged to increase foreign economic activities with neighboring region, including Syria.

As for Syria, full economic liberalization and transition to neoliberalism was viewed indispensable in 2000s under new President Bashar Assad. Integrating the Syrian economy into the global markets and embracing neoliberalism was deemed necessary also for the stability and regime survival (al-Taqi & Hinnebusch, 2013). Hence, Syrian economy has experienced a deep transformation from a state-controlled economy towards a market-oriented one.

Transition to neoliberalism induced Syria to increase its trade relations and to attract foreign investments from the region in its integration to global capitalism. Indeed, this transformation in Syrian political economy perfectly fits neoliberal restructuring at full steam in the Turkish political economy setting. Improvement of the bilateral economic

relations is very much related with Syria's transition to neoliberal economic order under Bashar Assad administration.

Finding 5: Increased level of bilateral economic activities served material interests of the capitalist classes of both countries, particularly of certain factions that were supportive of the ruling parties, and strengthened the regimes in domestic political contestations.

Diversifying and increasing export markets for Turkish products boosted economic growth in Turkey, and by extension, consolidated the electoral base of the AKP in terms of domestic politics. Trade with Syria and the Middle East in general was particularly important, since this region provides trade surplus in favor of Turkey. The AKP instrumentalized foreign policy issues, and particularly economic opening the Middle East that had advantageous terms for national economy, in the political contestations with its rivals, including the army, in terms of domestic politics (Han, 2013; Bank & Karadag, 2012, p. 5)

Although the new export markets are potentially beneficial for the entire business groups, conservative and traditionally AKP supporter Anatolian bourgeoisie was well positioned to seize the opportunity of the newly created export markets in the Middle East due to geographic vicinity and cultural affiliations.

Indeed, the AKP officials had long been engaged with these business groups. Statements of Davutoğlu revealed the central role of the conservative bourgeoisie in the formulation of the party's foreign policy and the existence of "joint goals". Thus, it's plausible to argue that AKP's strategy towards increased economic activities with Syria and the region was designed by taking into consideration of the interests of this class. For instance, demands of the manufacturing, tourism and services sectors in Gaziantep, an important industrial city located at the border with Syria and dominated by conservative bourgeoisie, had central role in enhanced economic activities with Syria.

No doubt, bourgeoning Anatolian bourgeoisie received preferential treatment from the AKP Government in terms of materializing their export and growth potentials through new foreign policy initiatives towards the Middle East including Syria in 2000s.

Nevertheless, this strategy should be viewed only one aspect of the AKP's political-economy objectives within the framework of neoliberal restructuring in Turkish economy. That is to say, the AKP government not only served interests of the conservative faction of the bourgeoisie, but also protected interests of the entire capitalist class, including hegemonic Istanbul based big TÜSİAD bourgeoisie (Şenalp, 2017, p. 960). For instance, neoliberal restructuring package included measures to attract foreign capital inflows and thus to bolster credit opportunities for all of the businesses, which was the engine of the high growth figures.

The picture is similar in Syria too. With transition to neoliberalism, a new kind of bourgeoisie, that was bourgeoned around the regime circles and supported by the political elite, came into prominence. However, this new faction that was called "the new bourgeoisie" (Haddad, 2012) or "the ruling merchant– military class" (Matar & Kadri, 2015), was not alone in utilizing opportunities arisen from liberalized domestic and external economic activities. In fact, the entire capitalist class, including the traditional Sunni bourgeoise, benefited from the economic liberalization and increased level of bilateral economic activities with Turkey.

Indeed, this phenomenon is compatible with "relative autonomy" of the state in Poulantzasian sense. While the state was sustaining sound functioning of capitalism in the broad sense, interests of the certain capitalist groups in the "power bloc" might be contradictory in the short term. In that case, thanks to its relative autonomy, the state acts as the unifying agent for the political unity of the "power bloc". By doing so, in the long run, interests of the dominant social forces are not sacrificed (Poulantzas, 1975, p. 301; Türk & Karahanoğulları, 2019, p. 203).

On the other hand, despite deteriorated income equality in Syria, by integrating its economy to the global capitalism and increased foreign trade and investments, the regime managed to evade a total collapse. Hence, both the Bashar Assad Administration and the AKP Government had political interests in terms of regime survival.

Finding 6: Developing partnership between Turkey and Syria had an ideational dimension, which also includes ideology and pragmatism.

While studying the case, the thesis employs Becker's "conjuncture approach" and assumes co-existence of political-economic determinants, ideational dimension and enabling and constraining impacts of regional/international politics for the specific outcome to happen.

Ideational dimension of the foreign policy strategies for the Turkish case is debated around ideology of the AKP that is often dubbed as Neo-Ottomanism or Islamism. Among others, Davutoğlu was widely accepted as the ideologue of the AKP foreign policy that was shaped by his "strategic depth" concept and projection of economic and social interdependence in the region. According to him, "order in the Middle East cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of isolated economies" (Davutoğlu, 2008, p. 85). Along with ideological elements, this strategy includes equally pragmatic aspects in terms of economic objectives. Thus, ideational dimension of the foreign policy strategies of the AKP Government cannot be separated from political economic calculations.

As for the Syrian side, although the basic tenets of the ideology of the regime did not change, the new "young" President Bashar Assad is believed to bring a Western orientation and further liberalization to the country (Scheller, 2013). This liberalization strategy too included pragmatic elements to recover the Syrian economy.

Finding 7: Partnership of Turkey and Syria was developed under enabling and constraining effects of the regional and international politics.

In the beginning of the decade, regional context in the wake of the 9/11 attacks had enabling impact on cooperation of two neighbors against extremism. Iraq War in 2003 too brought about joint threat perceptions and new cooperation avenues. However, the West mounted pressure on the Syrian regime over assentation of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri in 2005 and expected Turkey to minimize its relations with Syria. Though the international context turned to be a constraining factor, Turkey tried to lessen the pressure of its Western allies and perpetuated to construct multidimensional partnership with its neighbor. With the end of the international boycott when French president Nicholas Sarkozy visited Syria in 2008 (Phillips, 2009), Turkey once again received international support in integrating Syria into the international community.

Increasing engagement of Turkey with the countries and issues of the region was another enabling factor in terms of regional politics. Two countries coordinated their policies in the regional issues like the Arab-Israeli issue, Iraq, Iran and elsewhere. Economically too, regional quadripartite cooperation mechanisms with participation of Jordan and Lebanon were established.

Regional and international politics offered the main context through which Turkey-Syria bilateral relations gained meaning. However, steadily improvement of the relations continued under both enabling or constraining systemic effects in 2000s.

5.2. Relevance of the Political-Economy Perspective

The case studied in this thesis, i.e., bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria in the first decade of the 21st century, has already been analyzed from many perspectives. For that reason, some of the findings of this study may have already been discussed in the literature. The novel aspect of this study, however, is a comprehensive reinterpretation of the events and the policies in light of the theoretical framework by employing political-economy perspective. Dynamic interplay between political-economic factors and foreign policy making by considering ideational dimension and regional and international political context have not been adequately explored in the literature.

Within the IR discipline, constructivist, realist, liberal and critical accounts contributed to the literature employing various concepts. Constructivist accounts prioritize discussions on effects of identity, worldviews and agency in formation of foreign policies, such as AKP's Neo-Ottomanism or Islamism. Nevertheless, overemphasis on the agency and identity lacking any discussion on the social and economic factors, which are indeed real determinants of the material interests, does not give the full picture. On the other hand, studies based on realist principles focus on acts of rational state actors in systemic constraints and, with a few exceptions, do not consider domestic politics and political-economic factors as a variable in explaining interstate relations. The liberal and institutional accounts do discuss decision-making and implementation processes in terms of agency and modality. However, impact of the social determinants on policy making is not on their agenda. Political-economic factors

at the social level and class structures are either disregarded or mentioned as a contextual element in most of these accounts. Therefore, they don't assign a constitutive role to neoliberal economic and social transformations in Turkey and Syria in terms of foreign policy making.

Nevertheless, as discussed above, neoliberal transformation is not a solely technical issue whose consequences remain in the realm of financial sector or economics field. On the contrary, this new mode of capital accumulation strategy created concrete outcomes in class and social structures, domestic political contestations, policy preferences in every field including the foreign policy and even in daily lives of the people. In our case, it was the neoliberal restructuring in Turkey and transition to neoliberalism in Syria that impelled the governments to boost foreign economic activities, like trade, investments and tourism.

We also observe that economy was the most prioritized realm in which Syria and Turkey took concrete steps within multidimensional partnership. Indeed, it was a "business partnership" that generated mainly economic gains for both countries and in particular supportive classes and groups of the ruling parties. Developing relations and partnership between Turkey and Syria served interests to the general public to some extent, but in reality, certain political and business elite were the primary beneficiaries.

Therefore, it's plausible to argue that social and economic transformation had constitutive impact on foreign policy making of both countries. That's why the thesis argues for the social origins and social determinants of foreign policy making of both states in the specific historical context, in which neoliberal restructuring took place simultaneously.

5.3. Implications of Employing Political-Economy Perspective on the Broader Literature

The thesis attempted to conduct multi-disciplinary research acknowledging the necessity of contributions from political science, economics, history, etc. in the study of international relations. This understanding is also compatible with HSIR tradition which offers historical analysis as a tool in analyzing foreign policy.

Developments at the social level and socio-economic transformations are not only subject of sociology, political science or economics. Social level is in fact the real source of change in every field under the rubric of social science. The studies in the discipline of IR too, shall not be isolated from the social level variables.

Indeed, public policies, and by extension foreign policy, are direct or indirect products of social relations and socio-economic factıors. In that regard, employment of political-economy perspective to the IR studies would enhance their explanatory power in a comprehensive way.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki ikili ilişkiler, 1998 ile 2011 yılları arasındaki on üç yıl içinde önce konvansiyonel kara savaşının eşiğine varan husumetten normalleşme, iyi komşuluk ilişkileri ve ortaklığa doğru ilerlemiş; ancak sonrasında yeniden husumete doğru evrilmiştir. Aslında, tarihsel olarak gergin ilişkilerinin gidişatı göz önüne alındığında, iki ülke arasındaki dostluk ve ortaklık, ikili ilişkilerin olağan biçimi olarak kabul edilemez. Bununla birlikte, 2003-2011 yılları arasında Türkiye'nin Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) hükümetleri ve Suriye'de Beşar Esad yönetimi altında olağanüstü bir döneme tanık olunmuştur. Bu tez, siyasal ekonomik faktörler ile dış politika yapımı arasındaki dinamik etkileşimi tartışarak ve ayrıca düşünsel boyutu ve bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasi bağlamı da dikkate alarak Suriye ve Türkiye arasındaki istisnai ortaklığı analiz etmeye çalışmaktadır. Tez, esas olarak Tarihsel Sosyoloji ve Tarihsel Materyalizm geleneklerinin kavramlarını ve çerçevelerini kullanmaktadır.

İki komşu olarak 1990'lara kadar Soğuk Savaş'ın rakip kamplarında konumlanan Türkiye ve Suriye arasındaki ilişkiler, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde Hatay/İskenderiye vilayetinin statüsünden kaynaklanan sınır anlaşmazlığı, Suriye'nin Türkiye'deki Kürt ayrılıkçılığına verdiği destek ve sınır aşan Fırat Nehriyle ilgili su paylaşımı konusundaki anlaşmazlıklar gibi nedenlerle daha da gerginleşti. Ancak, şaşırtıcı bir şekilde, 1998 Adana Mutabakatının ardından ikili ilişkiler istikrarlı bir şekilde gelişmeye başlamış ve 2000li yıllarda zirve noktasına ulaşmıştır.

Arap ayaklanmaları dalgası 2011 ortalarında Suriye'yi vurana kadar, bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasetin hem kolaylaştırıcı hem de kısıtlayıcı etkileri altında ikili ilişkiler istikrarlı bir şekilde gelişmesini sürdürdü. İkili ilişkilerdeki bu olağandışı değişimler

ve düşmanlık ile ortaklık arasındaki bu denli hızlı salınımın kesinlikle derinlemesine incelenmeye değer olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Hem Türkiye'nin hem de Suriye'nin iç siyasetindeki değişimlerle birlikte, bu dönemin en çarpıcı özelliklerinden biri, her iki ülkenin de uluslararası finans kuruluşlarının desteğiyle uyguladığı ekonomik ve sosyal neoliberal yeniden yapılanma programlarıdır. Siyasal-iktisat kökenli faktörlerin yerel ve uluslararası düzeydeki rolünün önemini incelemek için Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinin 2000li yıllardaki gidişatı verimli bir örnek olay incelemesi sunmaktadır. Bu dönemde her iki ülke de neredeyse aynı anda önemli sosyal, politik ve ekonomik dönüşümler yaşadı. Bunun sonucu olarak hem Türkiye'de hem de Suriye'de toplumsal ve sınıfsal yapılar büyük ölçüde değişime uğramıştır.

Bu temel dönüşümler, hükümetlerin iç siyaset ve dış politika tercihlerinde değişimlere yol açmıştır. Bununla birlikte, Türkiye-Suriye ilişkileri, siyasal iktisat perspektifi ile dış politika yapımı/devletlerarası ilişkiler arasındaki dinamik etkileşim literatürde yeterince araştırılmamıştır. Bu tez, konuyu multi-disipliner bir yaklaşımla kapsamlı bir şekilde ele alarak bu boşluğu doldurmaya çalışmaktadır. Tez, yerel ve uluslararası düzeyleri arasında kesin ayrım olmadığı fikri üzerine inşa edilmiştir ve faillik (agency) ve yapının (structure) rolüne ve politika yapma süreçlerine eşit derecede önem vermektedir.

Tezin odaklandığı temel soru şu şekilde formüle edilebilir: Genellikle İç siyaset bağlamında tartışılan sosyal ve politik-ekonomik dönüşümler, Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinde 2003 ve 2011 yılları arasında yaşanan dramatik düzeydeki gelişimi nasıl etkiledi?

Türkiye ve Suriye'de hükümet politikalarının düşünsel boyutuyla siyasi-ekonomik faktörlerin etkileşimi iç politika açısından araştırılmıştır. Öte yandan bölgesel ve uluslararası gelişmeler de ihmal edilmeyecek ve ikili ilişkilerin geliştiği uluslararası bağlam bir değişken olarak analize dahil edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinin gidişatı açıklanırken yerel ve uluslararası düzeylerinin yanı sıra, yapı (structure) ve failliğin (agency) tamamlayıcı niteliği vurgulanmıştır.

Vaka çalışması tekniği bağlamında tez, Howard S. Becker'in (1992) "konjonktür yaklaşımı"nı kullanmakta ve belirli bağımsız değişkenlerin belli bir sonuca katkılarının geçerliliğini yalnızca "uyum içinde çalıştıklarında" kabul etmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, konjonktürdeki diğer faktörler var olmadıkça, hiçbir faktör gerçek sonucun ortaya çıkmasında yeterli olmamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, tezin farklı bölümlerinde, Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki çok boyutlu ortaklığın kurulmasında, (i) siyasal iktisat perspektifi, (ii) düşünsel boyut ve (iii) bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasetteki gelişmelerin bir arada bulunması ve etkileşimleri incelenmektedir.

Tez, araştırma sorusunu, araştırma amacını ve araştırma tasarımını açıklayarak birinci bölümde vakayı tanıtmakla başlamaktadır. Tezin kullandığı vaka çalışması tekniği ve tezin temel varsayımları birinci bölümde açıklığa kavuşturulmuştur.

İkinci bölüm, Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerini kapsayan akademik literatürdeki temel teorik yaklaşımlar, tartışmalar ve anlatıların yanı sıra belirtilen zaman diliminde Türkiye ve Suriye dış politikalarının temel yönelimleri hakkında kısa bir tartışma sunmaktadır. Bu bölüm aynı zamanda, mevcut bakış açılarının ötesine geçen, tezin temel argümanlarını temel aldığı teorik temelleri de aydınlatmaktadır.

Üçüncü bölüm, 2003 ve 2006 yılları arasında yeni hükümetler ve sosyo-ekonomik koşullar altında Türkiye ve Suriye arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin hızla iyileşmesine açıklama getirmeye çalışmaktadır. Bu bağlamda siyasal iktisat perspektifi ile düşünsel ve uluslararası boyutlardan oluşan konjonktür vurgulanmaktadır.

Dördüncü bölüm, ilişkilerin sonraki aşaması olan çok boyutlu ortaklık aşamasını ele almaktadır. Bir önceki bölümde değinilen spesifik konjonktür, iki ülke arasında çok boyutlu ortaklığın farklı yönlerinin tartışıldığı bu bölümde bir kez daha vurgulanmıştır.

Son olarak, sonuç bölümü, vaka çalışmasının bulguları ışığında tezin ana argümanlarını özetlemektedir. Bu bölümde ayrıca, dış politikanın formüle edilmesi ve uygulanması bakımından siyasal iktisat perspektifinin çalışılmasının yerindeliği tartışılmaktadır.

Esasen, 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinin gelişimine ilişkin literatür birçok perspektiften farklı metodolojilerle yapılan çalışmaları kapsaması bakımından zengin sayılabilir. Literatür ayrıca, yerel, bölgesel ve küresel düzeydeki siyasi ve ekonomik hususlara değinen analizleri de içermektedir. Ancak bu çalışmaların çoğu meseleye siyasal iktisat perspektifinden yaklaşmamakta, sosyal ve sınıfsal faktörlere yalnızca bağlam olarak değinmektedir.

İstisnai bazı çalışmalar bulunmakla birlikte, bunlar neoliberal dönüşümler (sosyal/sınıf yapıları üzerindeki etkileriyle birlikte) ile dış politika formülasyonu arasındaki "kurucu ilişkiyi" derinlemesine tartışmakta yetersiz kalmaktadır. Ayrıca, siyasi-ekonomik faktörlere odaklanan bu çalışmalar, her iki ülkedeki dönüşümlerin eşzamanlı karakterini analiz etmeksizin, çoğunlukla tek ülke olarak Türkiye veya Suriye'ye odaklanmaktadır.

İkili ilişkilerin gidişatının arkasındaki temel dinamikleri kavramak için, her iki ülkedeki neoliberal yeniden yapılanma süreçlerini derinlemesine sorunsallaştırmak gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle, mevcut literatürü tamamlamak için hem Türkiye'nin hem de Suriye'nin değişen sosyal ve ekonomik yapısının aynı çalışmada etkileşimleri içinde derinlemesine bir analizine hala ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bu tez, neoliberal yeniden yapılanmanın her iki ülkede aynı anda gerçekleştiği spesifik tarihsel bağlamda Türkiye ve Suriye'nin dış politika yapımının sosyal kökenlerine ve sosyal belirleyicilerine öncelik vererek bu boşluğu doldurmaya çalışmaktadır.

Susan Strange'in (1970) yaklaşımını takiben bu tez, uluslararası ilişkiler, siyaset bilimi, ekonomi, tarih vb. disiplinlerdeki teorik ilerlemelerin katkısıyla multi-disipliner bir yaklaşımı benimsemektedir. Nitekim tezin temel kuramsal temelini oluşturan Tarihsel Sosyoloji çerçevesinde yürütülen çalışmalar için multi-disipliner bir bakış açısı gerekmektedir. Tarihsel Sosyoloji perspektifinde geliştirilen kavramların yanı sıra, dış politikaların ve devletlerarası ilişkilerin toplumsal belirleyicilerinin daha iyi anlaşılması için Tarihsel Materyalizm geleneğinde geliştirilen analitik araçlardan yararlanılmaktadır.

Tarihsel Sosyoloji geleneğinde, dış politika da dahil olmak üzere devlet politikaları, belirli bir tarihsel bağlamda toplumsal ilişkilerin ürünü olarak görülür. Bu nedenle, dış

politika yapımının analizinde, örneğin inşacı yaklaşımın açıklamaların aksine, düşünsel boyuttan ziyade, sosyal ve sınıf ilişkilerinin altı çizilir.

Politikaların formülasyonu açısından, formel politika oluşturma süreçlerine odaklanmak yerine, Tarihsel Sosyoloji perspektifi, sahada fiilen var olan sosyal faktörleri incelemeyi öncelemektedir. Bu sosyal belirleyicilerin, formel politika oluşturma sürecinin arkasındaki itici güç olduğu varsayılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, dış politika yapımı ve uygulaması toplumsal düzeydeki faktörlerden, temel sosyal ilişkilerden ayrı tutulamaz.

Tez, modern-kapitalist devlete Poulantzas'ın "göreli özerklik" kavramını atfeder. Buna göre devlet, liberal anlatının aksine, toplumsal güçlerin çıkarlarının, taleplerinin ve beklentilerinin eşit zeminde biriktirildiği, toplumsal güçlerden bağımsız bir politika oluşturma platformu olmadığı gibi; hakim sınıfların elinde basit bir araç da değildir. Kapitalist toplumlarda hem egemen hem de madun sınıflarla ilişkilerini sürdüren devlet, "iktidar bloğu" içinde göreli özerkliğe sahiptir ve zaman zaman egemen sınıfların belirli hizipleriyle kapitalizmin sağlıklı işleyişi adına çelişebilir. Özellikle dış politika, devletlerin daha yüksek derecelerde göreli özerkliğe sahip olduğu ayrıcalıklı bir statüye sahiptir. Halliday'e göre dış politika, özellikle Orta Doğu'daki devletler için "manevra alanı" sağlamaktadır.

Kapitalist toplumlarda devlet (veya kapitalist devlet), egemen sınıflar arasında olduğu kadar madun sınıflar arasında da siyasi birliği sağlamada özel bir role sahiptir. Devlet, toplumsal ve üretim ilişkilerinin sürdürülmesi için hayati önem taşıyan mevcut ekonomik ve toplumsal düzeni korur.

Bu tez, incelenen dönemde Türkiye ve Suriye'nin dış politikalarının formüle edilmesinde sosyal belirleyicileri sorunsallaştırmaya ve kavramsallaştırmaya çalışmaktadır. Tarihsel olarak gelişen toplumsal ilişkilere dayanan siyasal iktisat perspektifinin yanı sıra, iç ve dış arasında net sınır çizgileri çizilmeden, bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasetin kolaylaştırıcı ve kısıtlayıcı etkilerinin yanı sıra düşünsel faktörler de analize tabi tutulmuştur. Tez, Tarihsel Materyalist argümanları determinist olmayan ve indirgemeci olmayan bir şekilde tartışmakta ve üretim ilişkileri dışındaki toplumsal ilişkilere de yer vermektedir.

Suriye ile Türkiye arasında 1998 yılında Adana Mutabakatı ile başlayan tedrici yakınlaşma süreci 2003 yılından itibaren hız kazanmıştır. Türkiye'deki yeni AKP hükümeti ile Suriye'deki Beşar Esad yönetimi arasında üst düzey ziyaretler sıklaşmıştır. Türk ve Suriyeli politikacıların birbirlerine yönelik olumlu açıklamalarını, yeni ekonomik ve siyasi işbirliği olanaklarını keşfetmeye yönelik diplomatik görüşmeler takip etmiştir. Su paylaşımı sorunu ve İskenderiye (Hatay) ili üzerindeki sınır anlaşmazlıkları gibi sorunlu alanlar, işbirliği fırsatlarını kaçırmamak için kasıtlı olarak göz ardı edilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, iyi komşuluk ilişkilerinin ötesinde birçok alanda çok boyutlu bir ortaklığa yönelik işbirliği ilişkileri bu dönemde başlatılmış istikrarlı bir şekilde ilerletilmiştir.

Sözkonusu süreç, neoliberal yeniden yapılanma, dış politika stratejilerinin düşünsel boyutu ve bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasetin kolaylaştırıcı ve kısıtlayıcı etkileri bağlamında ele alınmaktadır. Hem AKP hükümetinin hem de Suriye rejiminin dış politika stratejilerinin ideolojik boyutu, siyasal iktisat perspektifinden tamamen ayrıksı değildir. Bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasetin kısıtlayıcı ve kolaylaştırıcı etkileri de esasen, dış politika stratejilerinin yürürlüğe konması için temel bağlamı sunmaktadır.

1998 Adana Mutabakatı, Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinin normalleşmesi ve ardından siyasi ve ekonomik ortaklığa gidecek sürecin başlangıcına işaret etmektedir. Aslında husumetin giderilmesiyle başlayan normalleşme sürecinin başlangıcında tedricilik söz konusuydu. 1990'ların "Eski Türkiye"sinde hem iç siyaset hem de özellikle Ortadoğu'ya yönelik dış siyaset, yüksek oranda güvenlikleştirilmişti. Hafız Esad yönetimindeki Suriye rejimi de, Suriye'ye karşı olası bir Türk-İsrail ittifakını önleme çabasıyla ulusal güvenlik çıkarlarını ön planda tutarak Türkiye ile mutabakata varmıştı. Dolayısıyla, 1990'ların tamamında olduğu gibi, 1998'de normalleşmenin başlangıcında da, realist ilkelerin her iki tarafın birbirine yönelik politikalarına hakim olduğunu söylemek makul görünmektedir. Bu nedenle, gerilimi azaltmayı hedefleyen politikalar, iki komşu arasında yalnızca tedrici bir normalleşmeyle sonuçlanmıştı.

Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin gelişimindeki gerçek ivme ise, 200 yılında Beşar Asad'ın Suriye'de yönetimi devralması ve 2002 yılında Türkiye'de hükümet değişikliğinden sonra mümkün olmuştur. İlişkilerin düzeyinin yükseltilmesi, aslında

her iki tarafın, AKP hükümeti ve Beşar Esad yönetiminin siyasi iradesiyle şekillenmiştir. Bu olgu, failliğin (agency) ve yönetici elitin ideolojik eğilimlerinin rolü hakkındaki tartışmayı önemli hale getirmektedir.

AKP hükümetleri döneminde Türk dış politikasında "Davutoğlu etkisi"nin var olduğu, Türk dış politikasını inceleyen birçok yazar tarafından ileri sürülmektedir. "Stratejik Derinlik" kavramı, genellikle Davutoğlu'nun Türkiye için tasarladığı dış politika vizyonunun alameti farikası olarak anılmaktadır. Esasen Davutoğlu bu kavramı, siyasi görevleri öncesinde akademik kariyerinde önermişti ve bu vizyon, özellikle AKP hükümetleri tarafından hayata geçirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda Davutoğlu'nun stratejisinin üç ayağından biri "gelişmiş ekonomik ve kültürel işbirliği" olarak ifade edilmektedir. Bu kapsamda, ekonomik ve kültürel entegrasyon önerisi "emek ve sermaye hareketinin kolaylaştırılması" önerisini de içermektedir.

Öte yandan, genç ve Batı eğitimli bir Devlet Başkanının göreve başlaması, dış politika yönelimini Batı'ya kaydırma beklentilerini artırsa da, dış politika belirleyicileri açısından fail/yapı tartışması (agency/structure debate) Suriye bağlamında nispeten daha az önemli görünmektedir.

AKP döneminde Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu'ya yönelik yeni dış politikasını açıklamada pek çok faktör öne sürülebilir. Neo-Osmanlıcı veya İslamcı düşünsel/politik ajandanın takip edilmesinin yanı sıra, pragmatik jeo-ekonomik emeller ve yumuşak güç araçlarını kullanarak bölgesel destek arayışı Türk dış politikasında öne çıkan hususlar olarak tartışılmıştır. AKP iktidarı döneminde Ortadoğu ve Suriye'de artan dış politika aktivizminin arkasında Türkiye iç siyaseti de önemli bir faktör olarak gösterilebilir. AKP'nin dış politikasının asıl belirleyicisinin ne olduğu tartışmasının ötesinde, dış politika yapım stratejisinde siyasal iktisat perspektifinin rolü yadsınamaz.

Bu çerçevede AKP hükümeti, Türkiye'nin ihracat pazarlarını çeşitlendirecek, ağırlıklı olarak Orta Doğu bölgesine açılmaya odaklanan, ancak bununla sınırlı olmayan iddialı bir dış politika aktivizmi başlatmıştı. Dolayısıyla bu strateji, özellikle AKP'li iş çevreleri için daha fazla maddi çıkar yaratırken, aynı zamanda partiye iç siyasi bağlamda olanak sağlayan fırsatlar da sağlamıştır.

Artan kredi olanaklarının desteklenen neoliberal ekonomik model, imalat sektörüne yeni fırsatlar sağlamıştır. Türkiye'deki büyük, orta ve küçük ölçekli tüm imalatçı firmaların üretim kapasiteleri bu şekilde artırılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, hem İstanbul merkezli büyük burjuvazi hem de muhafazakar Anadolu burjuvazisi için yeni ihracat pazarlarına olan ihtiyaç, AKP döneminin başlarında ortaya çıktı. Artan üretim kapasiteleri tüm imalat sektörünün işine yararken, coğrafi ve kültürel yakınlıklar nedeniyle Ortadoğu'da yeni oluşturulan ihracat pazarlarından en çok muhafazakar ve geleneksel olarak AKP destekçisi Anadolu burjuvazisi yararlanmıştır.

Gerçekten de Davutoğlu ve diğer AKP liderlerinin dış politika stratejisi, İstanbul merkezli büyük burjuvaziden ziyade "Anadolu Kaplanları"nın aktif katılımıyla komşu ülkelerle bölgesel ekonomik entegrasyonu kapsıyordu. Yani bu sosyal sınıfın maddi çıkarları AKP'nin dış politika stratejisinin merkezinde bulunmaktaydı. Bu bakımdan, muhafazakar Anadolu burjuvazisinin maddi çıkarları ile AKP^nin dış politika stratejisinin düşünsel boyutunun karşılıklı olarak birbirini desteklediğini söylemek makuldür. Diğer taraftan, sadece muhafazakar kesim değil, tüm iş grupları AKP hükümetinin çevre bölgelerdeki hareketlilik dahil olmak üzere dış politika girişimlerinde belli bir yer tutuyordu.

Muhafazakar Anadolu burjuvazisi ve genel olarak iş grupları dış politikanın yalnızca bir aktörü ya da aracı değil, AKP'nin dış politika stratejisinin oluşturulması aşamasında maddi çıkarları kurucu niteliği haiz olan bir sınıf olduğunu vurgulamak gerekir. Ancak bu husus, AKP Hükümetinin yalnızca belirli bir burjuva hizbinin elinde bir araç olduğu anlamına gelmez. Poulantzascı anlamda göreli özerkliğe sahip olan devlet (AKP Hükümeti), kapitalist sınıf içinde yalnızca bu grubun çıkarlarını öne çıkarmakla kalmamış, aynı zamanda ülkede kapitalizmin sağlıklı işleyişini sağlamaya çalışmıştır. Nitekim muhafazakar burjuvazinin çıkarına olan bu "ihracata yönelik üretim stratejisi", geniş anlamda Türk kapitalizminin destekleyici bir unsuru haline gelmiştir. Ayrıca iç siyaset açısından da AKP'nin siyasi amaçlarına hizmet etmiştir.

Suriye tarafında ise, 1980'lerin sonundan itibaren yavaş ama istikrarlı bir şekilde devam eden ekonomik liberalleşme çabalarının ardından rejim, 2000li yıllarda ekonomisini küresel pazarlara entegre etmeye ve neoliberalizmi benimsemeye karar verdi. IMF ve Dünya Bankası'nın tavsiye ve desteğiyle Neoliberalizme geçiş, Suriye'yi

ticari ilişkilerini artırmaya ve küresel kapitalizme entegrasyonunda bölgeden yabancı yatırımları çekmeye teşvik etti. Gerçekten de Suriye siyasal iktisadındaki bu dönüşüm, Türkiye'de tüm hızıyla devam etmekte olan neoliberal yeniden yapılanmaya mükemmel bir şekilde uymaktaydı. Dolayısıyla, ikili ekonomik ilişkilerin iyileştirilmesi, Suriye'nin Beşar Esad yönetimi altında neoliberal ekonomik düzene geçişiyle yakından ilgilidir.

Suriye siyasal iktisadının merkezi bir ekonomiden serbest piyasaya geçişi orta ve alt sınıflara zarar vermiştir. Öte yandan halk kitleleri artan yoksulluktan muzdaripken, devletin desteklediği ve koruduğu yeni bir burjuvazi türü ön plana çıkmıştır. Burjuvazinin bu yeni hizbi, devletin çeşitli kurum veya kuruluşları/organları ile ilişkili seçkinleri ifade eden "yeni burjuvazi" olarak adlandırmaktadır. Öte yandan, bu grubun çıkarları da esasen, birlikte bir sınıfı oluşturdukları burjuvazinin çıkarlarıyla örtüşmektedir.

Öte yandan, Sünni İslami tüccar grupları da ekonomik liberalleşme politikalarından yararlanarak bu dönemde yükselmiştir. Nitekim, çoğunlukla Halep merkezli bu İslami işadamları, Türk iş dünyasıyla ekonomik ilişkiler içinde olmuşlardır. Genel olarak, "yeni burjuvazi" ile birlikte, İslamcı eğilimleri olanlar da dahil olmak üzere tüm burjuvazi Suriye'nin neoliberalizme geçişinde kazanan taraflardı.

Görüldüğü gibi 2000'li yıllarda Suriye'de neoliberalizme geçiş ve Türkiye'de neoliberal yeniden yapılanma süreçlerinin toplumsal yapıları ve dış ekonomik ilişkileri derinden etkilediği açıktır. Siyasi seçkinlerle siyasi ve ideolojik bağları olan hem Türkiye'de hem de Suriye'de burjuvazinin belirli fraksiyonları, neoliberal reformlardan ve artan ikili ticaret ve yatırım ilişkilerinden daha fazla yararlandı. Devlet seçkinleri ve belirli iş grupları arasındaki bu iç ilişki, 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin iyileşmesiyle çok ilgili olsa da, her iki ülke için artan dış ekonomik faaliyetler daha çok neoliberal sermaye birikim stratejisiyle ilgiliydi.

Öte yandan bu, hem Türkiye'de hem de Suriye'de dış politikanın ideolojik yönünün ya da dış politikanın pragmatik araçsallaştırılmasının göz ardı edilmesi anlamına gelmemelidir. Dış politikanın formüle edilmesinin ardındaki tek faktör, burjuvazinin belirli bir kesiminin çıkarlarının güvence altına alınması değildir. Politika tercihlerinin

önceliklendirilmesinde siyasi ve ideolojik tercihler de sözkonusu olmuştur. Hem AKP Hükümeti hem de Beşar Esad rejimi iç meşruiyet arayışı içindeydi ve dış politikayı iç siyasette araçsallaştırmaktan çekinmedi. AKP örneğinde iç politika, dış politika konularının hükümet tarafından seçmen desteğini artırmak, hegemonya kurmak, ekonomik istikrar ve büyümeyi sürdürmek ve toplumdaki ideolojik hedeflerini ilerletmek için kullandığı bir arena işlevi görmüştür.

Bölgesel ve uluslararası siyaset, ikili ilişkilerin ilerlediği ana bağlamı oluşturmaktadır. Türkiye-Suriye örneğinde de sistemik faktörlerin hem kolaylaştırıcı hem de kısıtlayıcı unsurları sahadaydı. İkili ilişkilerin yörüngesi bu düzeydeki gelişmelerle anlam kazanmıştır. Bununla birlikte, bölgesel/uluslararası siyasetin iklimi teşvik edici de olsa caydırıcı da olsa, ikili ilişkiler 2000'li yıllarda istikrarlı bir şekilde gelişmiştir.

2001'deki 11 Eylül saldırılarının ardından uluslararası ve bölgesel siyasi dinamikler, iki ülkeyi işbirliği yapmaya teşvik ediyordu. Hem Türkiye hem de Suriye, bölgedeki radikalizm ve aşırıcılık konusunda benzer pozisyonlara sahip oldukları için Batı tarafından ortak olarak görülüyordu. ABD'nin 2003'te Irak'ı işgali, iki ülkeyi bir araya getiren ve ilişkilerin daha da alevlenmesine yol açan bir diğer önemli faktör oldu.

Öte yandan, 2005'te Lübnan Başbakanı Hariri'nin suikaste uğramasının ardından gelen zor koşullarda Beşar Esad rejimi Türkiye'den siyasi desteğin yanı sıra, artan ticaret ve yatırım ilişkileri sayesinde ekonomik destek de sağlamıştır. Türkiye bu dönemde, bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasette Batı'nın Suriye'yi tecrit etme baskısına karşı koymayı göze almıştı.

Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki ikili ilişkiler, Aralık 2010'da Tunus'ta başlayan ve 2011 baharında Suriye'ye ulaşan Arap Ayaklanmalarına kadar en yüksek noktasındaydı. 2011 yazında ve sonbaharında ilişkilerin dramatik bir şekilde çökmesinden önce, Türkiye'de AKP Hükümeti ve Suriye'deki Beşar Esad yönetimi mümkün olan her alanda işbirliği yapıyordu. Siyasi ilişkiler açısından, devlet ve hükümet başkanları da dahil olmak üzere çeşitli düzeylerde resmi ve gayri resmi ziyaretler yılda bir defadan fazla yapılmaktaydı. Başbakanların başkanlığında her iki taraftan bakanların katılımıyla her yıl yapılması planlanan ortak kabine toplantıları ilişkilerin ne kadar ileri düzeyde olduğunun göstergesidir. Özellikle ekonomik ilişkilerin geliştirilmesine

büyük önem verilmiş ve iki ülke arasında on yıldan kısa bir sürede bu amaçla yüzlerce anlaşma imzalanmıştır. Her iki ülke vatandaşlarına yönelik vize zorunluluğunun karşılıklı olarak kaldırılması, halkların etkileşimine ve ekonomik faaliyetlere büyük katkı sağlamıştır. 2007 yılında faaliyete geçen Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması, ikili ticareti ivmelendirmiştir. Böylece 2002-2010 yılları arasında Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki ticaret hacmi 8 yılda 4 kat artmıştır. Suriye'deki Türk yatırımları önemli ölçüde arttı ve hükümetler tarafından ortak yatırım projeleri başlatılmıştır. İki ülke arasındaki ekonomik karşılıklı bağımlılık ve entegrasyon, "bölgenin geri kalanı için bir ilerleme modeli" olarak sunulmuştur. Böylece Ürdün ve Lübnan'ın da katılımıyla bu model yakın çevreye de yaygınlaştırılmaya çalışılmıştır.

Bölgesel ve uluslararası siyasette de iki ülke politikalarını koordine etmekteydi. Suriye-İsrail barış görüşmelerinde Türkiye'nin arabulucu rolü, Mayıs 2010'daki Mavi Marmara olayı, İran nükleer meselesine çözümde Türkiye'nin çabaları iki ülkenin ortak hareket ettiği alanlardan bazılarıdır. Türkiye ayrıca Suriye'yi çeşitli bölgesel ve uluslararası kuruluşlarda desteklemiştir.

Tüm bu hususlar göz önüne alındığında, iki komşu arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin düzeyinin, siyasi, ekonomik, kültürel yönleri ve insandan insana etkileşimi içeren "çok boyutlu bir ortaklığa" ulaştığı öne sürülebilir.

Her iki taraftan hükümet başkanları ve icracı bakanlardan oluşan Yüksek Düzeyli Stratejik İşbirliği Konseyi'nin kurulması, siyasi liderlikler arasındaki en önemli diyalog kanalı olmuştur. Bu konsey, siyasi işbirliğini simgelemek için örnek olarak gösterilse de aslında Türkiye ve Suriye'nin ekonomik işbirliğinin sorunsuz işlemesine hizmet etmekteydi. Artan siyasi diyalog, ticaret, yatırım ve turizm başta olmak üzere, ekonomik hedeflere ulaşmakla yakından bağlantılıydı. Her iki hükümetinin ilişkilerin gelişmesinden beklediği siyasi çıkarları olduğu ileri sürülebilir. Ancak, bunun da ötesinde, Türkiye-Suriye ortaklığının arkasında iki ülkenin siyasal iktisadı bakımından somut maddi koşullar vardı. Suriye rejimi 2006 yılında neoliberal programı bütüncül bir paket olarak kabul ettiğinde, geçişin zorluklarıyla başa çıkmak için dış desteğe ihtiyacı vardı ve Türkiye yardım uzatmaya gönüllüydü.

Artan ticaret, yatırım ve turizm ilişkileri, başta Gaziantep ve Halep olmak üzere en çok iki tarafın sınır şehirlerine katkı sağlamıştır. Esasen, Gaziantepli sanayiciler ve ihracatçılar Suriye ile ekonomik ilişkilerin önündeki engellerin kaldırılmasını talep etmiş ve etkin bir şekilde lobi faaliyeti yürütmüştü. Bu nedenle, AKP hükümeti, gelişen ekonomik ilişkilerin Suriye sınırındaki şehirlerde yaşayan, çoğunluğu AKP destekçisi iş gruplarına olası faydalarının farkındaydı.

Dış ticaretin yanı sıra, yatırımlarda da patlama yaşandı. Türkiye, 2007'de Suriye'deki en büyük yabancı yatırımcı haline geldi. Halklar düzeyinde etkileşim ve turizm ilişkileri de büyük ilerleme kaydetti. TÜİK rakamlarına göre her iki taraftan da diğer ülkeyi ziyaret eden turist sayısı bir milyona yaklaştı.

Görüldüğü gibi, ekonomik ilişkilerin ve halklar arasındaki etkileşimin gelişmesi için, her iki tarafın siyasi liderleri inisiyatif almıştır. Bu nedenle birçok analist konuyu failliği (agency) ön plana alarak tartışmıştır. Ancak politikacıları inisiyatif almaya iten temel faktörlerin ortaya çıkarılması gerekir. Bu nedenle, bu tezde esas olarak neoliberal yeniden yapılanma ve bunun toplumsal sonuçlarından kaynaklanan siyasal iktisat perspektifine öncelik vermektedir.

Özetlemek gerekirse, Türkiye ile Suriye arasındaki ticaret, yatırım ve turizmi kapsayan siyasi ve ekonomik ilişkiler ile kültürel ilişkiler ve insan-insan etkileşimi 2006 yılından itibaren özellikle 2011 yılının ortalarına kadar büyük ölçüde gelişmiştir. On yıl önce hayal bile edilemeyen bu çok boyutlu ortaklığın arkasında hem Türkiye'de AKP Hükümeti'nin hem de Suriye'de Beşar Esad Yönetimi'nin siyasi iradesi vardı. Ortaklığı inşa etmek için her iki tarafın planlı stratejisi, bölgesel ve uluslararası siyaset bağlamında siyasi-ekonomik, düşünsel ve pragmatik faktörlere dayanıyordu.

Aslında bu strateji, ihracata yönelik ve katma değeri düşük ürünlerin imalatını öngören neoliberal yeniden yapılanma sürecinin de bir sonucudur. Türkiye ile Suriye'nin işbirliği ve ortaklığının siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel boyutları kapsamasına rağmen en somut gelişmeler ekonomik alanda gerçekleşmiştir. Bu dönemde ticaret rakamları, yatırımlar ve turistik faaliyetler hızla arttı. Nitekim, üst düzey siyasi diyalog ve ikili anlaşmaların temel amacı, ikili ekonomik ilişkileri hızlandırmak ve kolaylaştırmaktı.

Türkiye ve Suriye arasındaki çok boyutlu ortaklığın esas olarak her iki ülkenin rejimleri ve özellikle de iktidar partilerinin destekleyici sınıfları ve grupları için çoğunlukla ekonomik ve siyasi kazanımlar sağlayan bir "iş ortaklığı" olduğunu iddia etmek makuldür. Özellikle Suriye ile iş yapan Türk kapitalist grupları, TÜSİAD tipi büyük burjuvaziden ziyade AKP yanlısı muhafazakar, çoğunlukla Anadolu merkezli küçük ve orta ölçekli sermayenin temsilcileriydi. Suriye'de ise Türkiye ile iş ilişkilerinden ve genel olarak yeni geçilen neoliberal düzenden en çok yararlananlar, hem rejime bağlı "devlet burjuvazisi" hem de geleneksel Sünni burjuvaziyi içeren tüm kapitalist sınıftı.

Sonuç olarak, hem Suriye hem de Türkiye'nin ulusal ekonomilerinin eş zamanlı neoliberal dönüşümü, iki ülkenin ekonomik ilişkilerini geliştirmesinin zeminini hazırladı. Böylece, ortaklığı inşa eden iki ülkenin birbirine yönelik politikaları, siyasi seçkinler tarafından bu sonuca yönelik olarak tasarlanmış ve geliştirilmiştir. Türkiye ile Suriye arasında gelişen ilişkiler ve ortaklıklar bir dereceye kadar kamuoyunun çıkarına hizmet etti, ancak gerçekte, belirli siyasi ve ticari seçkinler birincil yararlanıcılardı.

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