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**FROM SECURITIZATION TO DESECURITIZATION:  
DECODING TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS IRAN**

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**ABSTRACT**  
**Master's Thesis**  
**From Securitization to Desecuritization:**  
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**Dokuz Eylül University**  
**Graduate School of Social Sciences**  
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Turkey's turbulent relations with Iran have undergone significant changes in the recent history. From the early years of the Turkish Republic, foreign policy elites had a tendency to externalize the sources of domestic threats. Especially, the Iranian regime was presented as the external source of rising Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey. However, according to the Turkish foreign policy literature, the security-driven atmosphere in Turkish-Iranian relations has witnessed a clear change in 2000s. The impact of the security discourse of Turkish elites regarding Iran's Islamic regime has declined and a rapprochement process between Turkey and Iran has begun. The declining role of military in Turkish politics, the Islamic political background of the AKP government, and Davutoğlu's 'Strategic Depth' doctrine are presented as major determinants of that rapprochement. This study, while focusing on the changing dynamics of Turkish-Iranian relations between 1990 and 2011, argues that the domestic political discourse of Turkish elites have been influential in this process. Utilizing the 'securitization theory' of the Copenhagen School, it proposes a structured framework to analyze the link between the domestic politics and foreign policy. Accordingly, it asks: 'How do domestic political changes influence Turkey's policy preferences towards Iran?' In line with the Copenhagen School's argument that 'securitization' is a product of 'speech act', the study utilizes the political discourse of TFP elites. The speeches that are published in Turkish daily newspapers are analyzed in detail. Such analysis is

**argued to be an organized and comprehensive comparison of Turkey's Iran policy in the 1990s and 2000s.**

**Keywords: Turkish Politics, Turkish Foreign Policy, Turkish-Iranian Relations, AKP, Securitization Theory**

**ÖZET**  
**Yüksek Lisans Tezi**  
**Güvenikleştirmeden Güvenlik Dışılaştırmaya:**  
**Türkiye'nin İran Politikasını Çözümlemek**  
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Türkiye-İran ilişkileri yakın tarihte önemli değişikliklere uğramıştır. Cumhuriyet'in ilk yıllarından itibaren dış politika elitleri iç tehditlere dışsal kaynaklar bulma eğiliminde olmuşlardır. Özellikle İran rejimi Türkiye'de yükselen İslami köktencilğin dış kaynağı olarak sunulmuştur. Fakat Türk dış politikası yazınında Türkiye-İran ilişkilerindeki güvenlik eksenli ortamın 2000'li yıllarda ciddi bir değişikliğe sahne olduğu belirtilmiştir. Türk politika yapıcılarının İran rejimine yönelik güvenlik söyleminin etkisi azalmış ve İran ile Türkiye arasında bir uzlaşma süreci gözlenmiştir. Ordunun Türk siyasetindeki etkisinin azalması, AKP hükümetinin siyasi kökenleri ve Davutoğlu' nun 'Stratejik derinlik' doktrini bu uzlaşma sürecinin temel belirleyicileri arasında sunulmaktadır. Bu çalışma Türkiye-İran ilişkilerinin 1990-2011 arası değişen dinamiklerine odaklanırken, bu süreçte Türk siyasetçilerinin iç siyasete dair söylemlerinin oldukça etkili olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Kopenhag Okulu'nun geliştirdiği Güvenikleştirme Teorisi'nden faydalanarak, iç siyaset ile dış siyaset arasındaki bağlantının incelenmesi için yapılandırılmış bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, 'İç siyasetteki değişimler Türkiye'nin İran'a yönelik politikasını nasıl etkilemektedir?' sorusunu sormaktadır. Kopenhag Okulu'nun, güvenikleştirmenin bir söz-eylem olduğu iddiasına binaen bu çalışma Türk dış politikası seçkinlerinin siyasi söylemlerini incelemektedir. Siyaset yapıcılarının ulusal gazetelerde yayınlanan konuşmalarını detaylı bir şekilde incelenmektedir. Bu çalışmada sunulan araştırma yöntemiyle

**Türkiye'nin 1990'lı yıllar ile 2000'li yıllarda takip ettiği İran politikasının düzenli ve kapsamlı bir karşılaştırmasının yapıldığı iddia edilmektedir.**

**Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Siyaseti, Türk Dış Politikası, Türkiye-İran İlişkileri, AKP, Güvenlikleştirme Teorisi**

**FROM SECURITIZATION TO DESECURITIZATION: DECODING  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AKP</b>	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party
<b>ANAP</b>	Anavatan Partisi, Motherland Party
<b>ATAUM</b>	Ankara Üniversitesi Avrupa Toplulukları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi, Ankara University European Research Center
<b>BBP</b>	Büyük Birlik Partisi, Great Union Party
<b>BOTAŞ</b>	Boru Hatları ile Petrol Taşıma Anonim Şirketi, Petroleum Pipeline Corporation
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Service
<b>CHP</b>	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party
<b>COPRI</b>	Copenhagen Peace Research Institute
<b>CS</b>	Copenhagen School
<b>CSS</b>	Critical Security Studies
<b>DSP</b>	Demokratik Sol Parti, Democratic Left Party
<b>DTP</b>	Demokrat Türkiye Partisi, Democrat Turkey Party
<b>DYP</b>	Doğru Yol Partisi, True Path Party
<b>D-8</b>	Developing Eight
<b>ECO</b>	Economic Cooperation Organization
<b>EMASYA</b>	Emniyet-Asayiş-Yardımlaşma Protokolü, Security-Order-Cooperation Protocol
<b>EPDK</b>	Energy Markets Regulatory Authority
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FP</b>	Fazilet Partisi, Virtue Party
<b>G-20</b>	Group of Twenty
<b>IAEA</b>	International Atomic Energy Agency
<b>IBDA-C</b>	İslami Büyük Doğu Akıncıları Cephesi, Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front
<b>ISS</b>	International Security Studies
<b>MGK</b>	Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, National Security Council
<b>MGSB</b>	Milli Güvenlik Siyaset Belgesi, National Security Policy Document
<b>MHP</b>	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, Nationalist Movement Party

<b>MIT</b>	National Intelligence Agency
<b>MUSIAD</b>	Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği, Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Nongovernmental Organization
<b>PKK</b>	Kürdistan İşçi Partisi, Kurdistan Workers' Party
<b>PLO</b>	Palestinian Liberation Organization
<b>PM</b>	Prime Minister
<b>PS</b>	Paris School
<b>RP</b>	Refah Partisi, Welfare Party
<b>SETA</b>	Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı, The Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research
<b>SHP</b>	Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti, Social Democratın Populist Party
<b>SP</b>	Saadet Partisi, Felicity Party
<b>TAF</b>	Turkish Armed Forces
<b>TESEV</b>	Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation, Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation,
<b>TİP</b>	Türkiye İşçi Partisi, Workers' Party of Turkey
<b>TOBB</b>	Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği, Turkish Union of Chambers and Bursaries
<b>TUSIAD</b>	Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği, Turkish Industry and Business Association
<b>TNF</b>	Turkish Naval Forces
<b>U.K.</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UMUT</b>	Ugur Mumcu Uzun Takip Operasyonu, Ugur Mumcu Long Chase Operation
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>USAK</b>	Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu, International Strategic Research Organization
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>US</b>	United States

<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>WMDs</b>	Weapons of Mass Destruction
<b>WS</b>	Welsh School

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## INTRODUCTION

Turkey's turbulent relations with Iran have been a major interest for both academic and political circles, since the nature of relations are of capital importance both for the region and for the international arena accordingly. Although two states managed to maintain relatively peaceful relations since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the subsequent clash of interests on various regional and global issues have further strained the relations between Tehran and Ankara. However, after AKP's electoral victory in 2002, Turkey's relations with Iran have undergone a dramatic transformation that has never been witnessed throughout the history.

To date, the growing academic literature has tried to account the underlying causes of deterioration as well as the factors behind the rapprochement within the context of Turkish Iranian relations and three particular approaches has become prominent amongst others. As this study will elaborate in detail, the first group has pledged to prioritize the role of systemic / sub-systemic factors; the second group of studies has generally highlighted the significance of domestic factors. The third group in general has preferred to point out many domestic and international, if not all, determinants influencing Turkey's relations with Iran without setting side of one single policy domain.

Understood as such, Ankara's bid for EU membership, regional dynamics, and Turkey's relations with the US have been considered as systemic / sub-systemic imperatives that enforced certain types of foreign policy behaviors. On the other hand, governmental changes, domestic security concerns and structural factors such as political culture, national identity, history and ideology seemed to influence Turkey's policy preferences towards Iran.

Without ignoring the significance of these various contributions this study consciously restricts itself with the second approach since from the very early years of the Turkish Republic, foreign policy elites have a tendency to externalize the sources of domestic threats and such a pattern necessitates a comprehensive analysis on the domestic determinants of foreign policy behavior. Regarding Turkey's policy shift towards Iran, this assumption brings out a pertinent question that begs for an

answer: how do domestic political changes influence Turkey's policy preferences towards Iran? To answer this question, this study takes Turkey's domestic environment as a determinant to develop some preliminary hypotheses on the conditions under which the students of foreign policy analysis could expect a shift in Turkey's foreign policy preferences towards Iran as a result of domestic changes.

In this regard, this study claims that such an observable shift in Turkey's Iran policy can best be grasped by examining the changes in domestic level. Throughout the 1990s, Turkey witnessed the rise of new identities based on ethnic and cultural differences. Accordingly, Turkey had two main domestic concerns throughout the 1990s, namely Islamic fundamentalism and ethnic separatism. These concerns also shaped Turkey's problematic relations with Iran. In this regard, Turkey tried to eliminate two possible threats which were linked with Iran: first, infiltration of Iranian Islamic regime; second, Iran's possibility to support separatist Kurdish groups in Turkey. Although both issues affected Turkey's Iranian policy, the latter has been more influential in Turkey's securitization of Iran in the 1990s.

This study argues that, change in Turkey's ruling elites in the 2000s, which caused a shift in political rhetoric, is the main reason for normalization of relations with Iran. In other words, the impact of Islamic Revolution on Turkey's Iran policy has declined and a rapprochement process has begun, mainly because of the AKP's coming to power in 2002. However, other internal factors further paved the way for normalization in relations. These factors are the new foreign policy vision of the AKP, the military's diminishing role in decision making mechanism, and Islamic roots of the AKP and Islamization of Turkish politics. Within this context, the study claims that, securitization theory may provide new insights to researchers by revealing the linkage between discourse and praxis which became proponent in Turkish foreign policy with changing rhetoric in Turkey's Iran policy.

The theory of securitization developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, whose works are collectively called as the Copenhagen School (CS), has made one of the most important and, perhaps, the most controversial contributions to the security studies literature. From the very beginning of its infiltration to security studies and foreign policy analysis literatures, securitization has been used as an analytical tool to decode the complexity of the nexus between the discursive and



practical domains of foreign policy analysis. Securitization and desecuritization concepts refer variously to a framework for policy analysis, an approach to study security, a process in which issues become a matter of security, a move made by the securitizing actor, and an intersubjective act successfully presented by the actor and accepted by the audience. The securitization theory has been before applied to foreign policy analysis, to the cases of transnational crime and health diseases as security threats, to the war on terror policy of the US, and to minority rights especially in European states. As certain scholars indicate in their analyses, most prominently, there are now a vast array of analyses which apply the framework to empirical cases of the securitization of migration in Europe, and issues related to US foreign policy towards the Middle East, especially related to securitization of Islamic fundamentalism.

Thus, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on Turkish-Iranian relations, arguing that securitization theory provides an appropriate framework to analyze rhetorical and political shift in Turkish foreign policy towards Iran. What makes securitization theory relevant for the analysis of Turkey's policy shift towards Iran under AKP period is that it does not only highlight how the threat is constructed through speech act but it also demonstrates which actors are more influential and to what extent the audience has been convinced by the securitizing actors. To put it simply, securitization theory do well in Turkish case, since elites are the most, if not the only, influential actors in Turkish foreign policy making.

The methodological approach applied in this study is speech analysis, since securitization is basically defined as 'a speech act' by Waever and the Copenhagen School. In this manner, the study essentially reviews Turkish newspapers *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet* between 1990-2002, and 2002-2011 with the keywords "Islamic fundamentalism (*irtica*), threat (*tehdit*), Iran", along with certain speeches of the elites published in various newspapers. However, rather than looking at the impact of media in securitization / desecuritization of Iranian regime, this study argues that in Turkish-Iranian case the role of media is approached as a functional actor, rather than a major securitizing actor. Furthermore, political environment within which securitization became possible is analyzed based on the Paris School's approach of securitization, which is named as sociological approach, and adds the concept of

“context” as another component of securitization. This study goes in line with the argument that ignorance of the context within which the securitization act become possible would lead to reductionism, and incoherency since it is at odds with intersubjectivity view of the Copenhagen School. Thus the so-called sociological approach is also benefited from while analyzing the Turkey’s foreign policy towards Iran.

In this regard this study falls into three sections. The first chapter examines the securitization theory as an analytical tool for explaining elite-based foreign policy shifts in a particular country. After evaluating security conceptualizations, the chapter reviews the historical evolution of theoretical approaches to security. In this manner, traditional approaches to security are summarized, as well as challenges to them from various school of thoughts, beginning in the early 1990s. Following that, the chapter introduces CS and summarizes the innovations of the School to security studies. Being the applied theory of this study, securitization and desecuritization concepts are analyzed in a detailed manner, as well as critics to CS’s securitization framework from other schools studying security.

The second chapter incorporates securitization into Turkey’s Iran policy between 1990 and 2002, with a chronological order. In this regard, the study displays that in the first three years of 1990s, signs of securitization began to be observed in elite speeches. In the following two years, impact of domestic environment began to be more observable, with the Islamist RP’s (Refah Partisi, Welfare Party) increasing power in elections. The tension reached its peak in 1997-98, when the military intervened into politics, known as the February 28 process. While the impact of February 28 on Turkey’s Iran policy remained more or less stable until the end of 1990s, securitization decreasingly continued in the early 2000s, with the help of various issues in domestic politics. However, early signs of desecuritization began to be observed in relations, with the AKP coming to power with the claim of a brand new identity.

In the third chapter, starting from early 2000s, desecuritization as an explanatory concept will be used to reveal domestic roots of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement. While dealing with the context within which desecuritization of Iranian regime occurred, the chapter also deals with the possible causes of

rapprochement between Turkey and Iran. In this manner, the so-called Davutoğlu era in Turkish politics, Islamization in Turkish politics in the 2000s, decreasing role of military in politics are analyzed in depth, with the intent of demonstrating the political context of desecuritization process. Arguing that silencing an issue in political agenda falls short to analyze desecuritization per se, the chapter also looks at desecuritizing speeches of Turkish elites. After analyzing the policy outcomes of desecuritizing moves of elites, the study continues with the concluding chapter, within which main arguments are reaffirmed, as well as further interpretations on the topic, limitations of the study, a summary of the current relations in the Arab Uprisings period, and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SECURITY**

“Security” is a frequently used but not very easily understood concept in International relations. This frequent usage generates a ‘mirage of simplicity’. That is to say, the concept is used so many times and in so many different contexts as if everyone understands the same phenomenon and as if it is too simple to define what it is. Indeed, when confronted with one simple question (What is security?), that ‘mirage’ starts to become transparent. As a researcher, while chasing the ‘mirage of simplicity,’ enters into the theoretical literature of security studies, the already transparent mirage completely vanishes. Then the ‘simple’ becomes ‘complex’ and ‘one’ question becomes ‘too many’. Hence, this chapter does neither provide a simple definition of the concept, nor it does answer those ‘many’ questions. Through focusing on this wide, and rather complex, security studies literature, the chapter seeks to build the theoretical framework of the thesis.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the securitization and desecuritization framework of the Copenhagen School (CS) which is generally argued to provide an alternative approach to the study of security. Accordingly, the chapter will first analyze the development of security studies in the IR (International Relations) discipline and review various definitions of ‘security’ via presenting the approach of several schools of thoughts on the topic. It will then focus on the three most important contributions of CS to security studies, namely ‘Regional Security Complex Theory’, the concept of ‘sectors’, and the ‘Securitization Theory’. Finally, the chapter will discuss in detail the ‘securitization’ and ‘desecuritization’ concepts which were developed in the 1990s.

#### **1.1. SECURITY: DEFINITION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Like the wider discipline of International Relations, International Security Studies (ISS) is a Western-oriented subject, largely centered in North America, Europe and Australia. ISS emerged after the Second World War, with an aim to

provide ways of protecting states from external and internal threats. Before the Second World War, security had been studied under war studies, military studies and strategy. However after the 1945, 'security' became a distinct field of study. In this period the literature had become distinctive in several important ways. One of the most significant departures from the past is that, it chose 'security' rather than 'defense' or 'war' as its key concept.<sup>1</sup> This helped security studies to transcend the existing military monopoly to become more civilian. While 'nuclear deterrence' became the most important strategy of avoiding wars, the study of Nuclear weapons and strategic bombing had become the main issue of security in individual, national and international terms.

Since 1648, states have been considered to be the most influential actors of the international system, responsible for maintaining national and international security in an anarchical self-help system. One of the strongest theories, 'Realism', which deals with questions of national and international security, strongly shares this state-centric view of security. Historically, realist debates on security were shaped by classical realist thinkers, such as Hobbes and Machiavelli, who had a rather pessimistic view on security, and their views were also shared by subsequent realists, such as E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau. According to them, a Kantian perpetual peace is not possible. The main reason lies in their so-called 'Realist' understanding of human nature, which also applies to the characteristics of the states. States seek power in a self-help system in which each one tries to make capital out of the others. Thus, in order to protect themselves, they aim to maintain a balance of power that prevents any one state becoming the hegemonic power.

This pessimistic view of international relations is also shared by structural realists, particularly Waltz and Mearsheimer. Since they attribute the self-help characteristics of states to the structure of the international system, they are not considered as pessimistic as classical realists. As the international system constrains the actions of the states, they become similar units, mainly through competition and socialization. States need power to protect themselves from threats in this anarchical environment so power is not seen as an end itself by 'Neorealists'. It is rather a

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<sup>1</sup> See Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, **Evolution of International Security Studies**, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, (Evolution), p. 1

means to maintain their own security.<sup>2</sup> Walt, considered as a defensive realist, defines security as “the studies of the threat use and control of military force and power”<sup>3</sup>.

Especially in the early periods of the Cold War, the ‘Realist’ understanding of security has dominated the field. However, starting from roughly around 1960s, changing ideas and perceptions have challenged the traditional understanding of ‘security’ which was strictly established on an understanding that emphasized ‘material’ factors including military and economic power. In the discipline of International Relations, Grotian and Kantian approaches to security had challenged the realist and neorealist understandings.<sup>4</sup> In the field of security studies, especially in 1970s and 1980s environmental, humanitarian and societal aspects of security were emphasized and studied as well.<sup>5</sup>

“Anarchy is what states make of it.”<sup>6</sup> This was the claim presented by Wendtian ‘Social Constructivism’ which came as a major blow against the traditional understanding of IR. If institutions such as security are socially constructed by the interactions of the actors involved, their meaning can change over time and place. Accordingly, if the actors in an anarchical system begin to act differently, the nature of the system changes. This most important innovation of constructivism, their understanding of possible change, has contributed to the emergence of alternative approaches on security. If security issues are considered as fixed and given, it is not

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<sup>2</sup> Both Classical Realists and Neorealists aim to “explain” the world as they see it by applying a positivist methodology, aiming to extract causal relations between variables in order to develop law-like generalizations governing social phenomena. Taking lessons from the world’s violent past, they explain that the best way to achieve security is to seek power. The traditional view’s ontological claim is that social truth, which is “out there”, consists of material forces and can be observed objectively. See John Baylis, “The Concept of Security in International Relations”, **Globalization and Environmental Challenges : Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace**, Springer, Berlin Heidelberg, 2008, p. 496.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies”, **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 35, No.2, June 1991, (Renaissance), pp. 221-222.

<sup>4</sup> According to ‘social constructivist’ theory, self-help is not a constitutive characteristic of anarchy. It is rather constructed through a process in which anarchy plays only a permissive role. The claim that “anarchy is what states make of it” means that social structures are products of construction, made up of shared knowledge and interaction. That is, social structures are not only composed of material components; rather, they gain meaning through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded.

For further information see, Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of International Relations”, **International Organization**, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, (Anarchy).

<sup>5</sup> Buzan and Hansen, *Evolution*, p. 2

<sup>6</sup> See Wendt, *Anarchy*.

possible for two states to improve their insecure relations. However, constructivism argues that it is the actors that define the other as “friend” or “enemy” so it is possible that the security understandings of states can change. Thus, according to the constructivist approach, there is a link between security, identity and culture. Each culture constructs its own security issues, and those issues become a part of its identity. ‘Discourse’ plays a primary role in the process of transforming issues into threats. Since, discourse is the means to legitimize threats in the eyes of society.<sup>7</sup> Following the emphasis on discourse an alternative school of thought, the ‘Wideners’<sup>8</sup>, have emerged in the field of security studies. They “challenged traditional conceptions of security by widening and deepening the security studies agenda, both horizontally and vertically.”<sup>9</sup> The major aim of the wideners was to understand “who can securitize, what, and under what conditions”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Which CS names as an “act of securitization”.

<sup>8</sup> It is common to divide International Security Studies into two groups: “traditional” and “widening-deepening”. On the one hand, traditional refers to the approach that links security solely with military issues and takes a state-centric view of security. In practice, traditional security studies refer to realist security studies. On the other hand, widening-deepening refers to groups that widen the concept of security to include other sectors than military, and that deepen the referent object beyond the state. The latter group became influential after the Cold War. Widening-deepening includes constructivism (later divided into conventional and critical), post-structuralism, feminism, human security, post-colonialism, critical security studies, and CS.

Buzan et al., *The Evolution*, pp. 187-188.

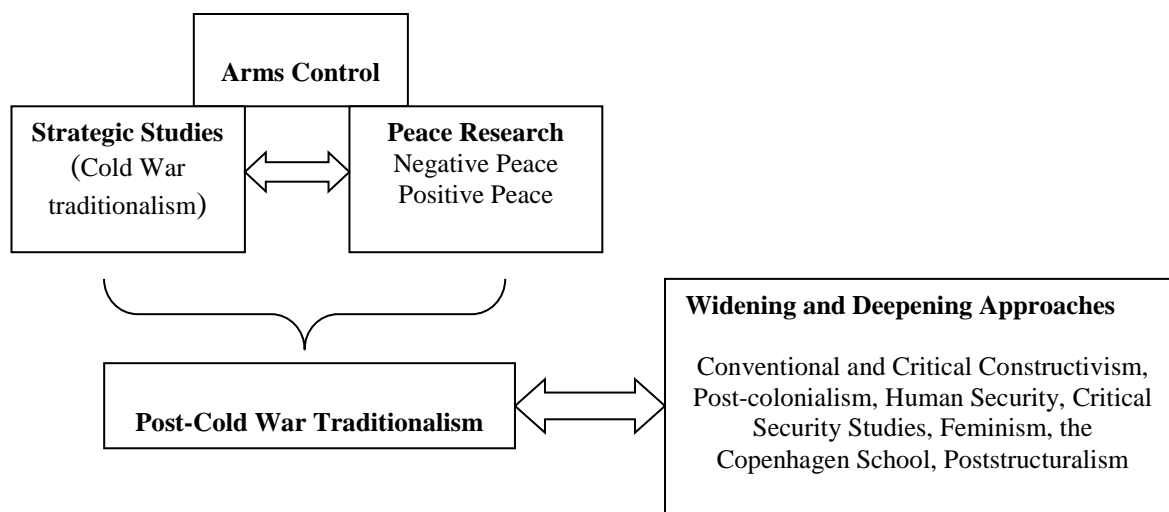
<sup>9</sup> According to Sulovic, the wideners’ innovation to security studies is that most of them choose not to apply a positivist methodology. Rather, their epistemological approach can be considered as a post-positivist one, based on empathetic interpretation, which can be categorized as a constructivist operational method, which is a process-oriented approach.

See Vladimir Sulovic, “Meaning of Security and Theory of Securitization”, **Belgrade Centre for Security Policy**, October 2010, [http://www.bezbednost.org/upload/document/sulovic\\_\(2010\)\\_meaning\\_of\\_secu.pdf](http://www.bezbednost.org/upload/document/sulovic_(2010)_meaning_of_secu.pdf), (20.02.2012), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, **Security: A New Framework for Analysis**, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, (Security).

CS is considered to be the most influential group among those defined as wideners. As they stated in “Security: A New Framework for Analysis”, Buzan is a widener who is also sceptical about coherent conceptualizations of economic and environmental security, while De Wilde is a widener from a liberal-pluralist background, and Wæver is a widener who defines himself as a postmodern realist.

**Figure 1.** The Changing Shape of ISS from Cold War to Post-Cold War<sup>11</sup>



When the changing shape of ISS is observed it becomes apparent that the question “What is security?” does not have a single agreed answer. Security is conventionally defined as “the state of being free from danger or threat”,<sup>12</sup> or the “protection of a person, building, organization or country against threats such as crime or attacks by foreign countries”<sup>13</sup>. However, it remains an essentially contested concept since almost every school or theory has developed its own definition.

According to McSweeney, “Security is an elusive concept. Like peace, honour, justice, it denotes a quality of relationship which resists definition.”<sup>14</sup> Walt defines security studies as “the study of the threat, use, and control of military force.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, his definition of security in International Relations is clearly based on military issues. Baldwin questions conceptualizations of security and indicates that “Security is more appropriately described as a confused or inadequately explicated

<sup>11</sup> Buzan and Hansen, *Evolution*, p. 190.

<sup>12</sup> Oxford Dictionaries Online, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/security?q=security>, (01.03.2012).

<sup>13</sup> Cambridge Dictionaries Online, [http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/security\\_1?q=security](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/security_1?q=security), (01.03.2012).

<sup>14</sup> Bill McSweeney, **Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Walt, *Renaissance*, p. 212



concept than as an essentially contested one.”<sup>16</sup> He argues that security can be defined with two main questions: “Security for whom and security for which values?”<sup>17</sup>

Wolfers argues that security is, “in an objective sense, the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.”<sup>18</sup> Booth<sup>19</sup> on the other hand, makes a clear and basic definition of security while arguing that “security is the absence of any threats.”<sup>20</sup> He also claims that security also means to be free of any obstacles.<sup>21</sup> CS positions itself in a middle place between traditional state-centric security studies and post-structural security studies.

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<sup>16</sup> David A. Baldwin, “The Concept of Security”, **Review of International Studies**, Vol. 23, 1997, (Concept), p.12.

<sup>17</sup> Baldwin, Concept, p. 13

<sup>18</sup> Arnold Wolfers, “ ‘National Security’ as an Ambiguous Symbol”, **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 67, No. 4, December 1952, p. 485.

<sup>19</sup> According to a widespread view, Ken Booth belongs to the so-called “Welsh School (WS)” in terms of his approach to security and securitization studies. The Welsh School posits a critical approach to security studies and securitization frameworks. This school is also called “emancipatory realism”, or “the Aberystwyth School”. Scholars such as Paul Williams and Richard Wyn Jones also belong to the WS. According to Bilgin, the most important difference between CS and WS lie in their ethical-political arguments. That is, they diverge in their answers to the question: “What is the best way to solve security problems: securitization or desecuritization?”. While CS supports the idea that desecuritization is the best way, the Welsh School emphasizes the importance remaining aware that security is a political enterprise.

For further information on the Welsh School see, Rita Floyd, “Towards a Consequentialist Evaluation of Security: Bringing Together the Copenhagen and the Welsh Schools of Security Studies”, **Review of International Studies**, Vol. 33, 2007, pp. 327–350; Pinar Bilgin, “Güvenlik Calismalarinda Yeni Acilimler: Yeni Güvenlik Calismalari”, **Stratejik Arastirmalar**, Vol. 8, No. 14, January 2010, pp. 43-46.

<sup>20</sup> Ken Booth, “Security and Emancipation”, **Review of International Studies**, Vol. 17, No. 4, 1991, p. 319.

<sup>21</sup> Neither Booth nor the WS is considered to be post-structuralist. Booth’s studies are mainly based on the Frankfurt School and Neo-Marxism. He (and the WS in general) claims that Critical Security School should have one main theory and this theory should have its base in Critical Theory (Frankfurt School). This approach excludes other wideners-deepeners such as Feminism, CS, Structuralism and Post-structuralism from Critical Security Studies.

David Campbell, Bradley Klein and Hugh Gusterson are scholars who study security within a post-structural framework. Post-structuralists challenge the bases of knowledge which determine security discussions. In other words, they challenge generalizations and macro representations.

Bülent Aras, Sule Toktas, Umit Kurt, “Arastirma Merkezlerinin Yükselisi: Türkiye’de Dis Politika ve Ulusal Güvenlik Kulturu”, **SETA Report**, November 2010, <http://www.setav.org/ups/dosya/60328.pdf>, (26.04.2012), p. 26.

Buzan et al. state in their book “Security: A New Framework for Analysis” that critical theory and post-structuralism have a place in Critical Security Studies as a school that aims to challenge conventional security studies by applying a post-positivist perspective. While claiming not to be post-structuralists, CS argues that CSS’s main aim is to show that change is possible because things are socially constructed. In contrast, CS believes that even socially constructed realities are sedimented as structure to become relatively stable. They emphasize that those who ask “What are actual security problems?” make a completely different ontological choice. When it comes to methodological differences, CS argues that CSS (including post-structuralism) have an individualistic perspective on security, while CS’s approach is methodological collectivism, focusing on collectivities.

On the one hand, it argues that security cannot be reduced to a state-centric military-based approach. On the other hand, it denies the argument that anything which threatens the people's existence and wealth can be considered as a security problem.<sup>22</sup>

According to Wæver, "security is a kind of stabilization of conflictual or threatening relations, often through emergency mobilization of state".<sup>23</sup> Security may include some destructive features. Thus, for Wæver, the aim should be desecuritization, which means "the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere".<sup>24</sup> Thus, security is "a specific way of framing an issue." However, CS agrees with the Waltzian view of security while defining security as "survival in the face of existential threats".<sup>25</sup>

Almost every theory provides a different understanding of how to prevent wars and provide a peaceful, secure environment. Thus, they not only clash over the definition of security, but also have different understandings of how to study security in International Relations, and how to apply security as an analytical tool to decode the complex web of international relations. In this regard, the next section analyzes CS's view on security and how to deal with security issues.

## 1.2. THE COPENHAGEN SCHOOL

CS refers to the work of a group of scholars, primarily Buzan and Wæver. The school includes many other scholars as well, including Jaap de Wilde, Morten Kelstrup, Pierre Lemaitre and Elzbieta Tromer all from the 'Centre for Peace and Conflict Research in Copenhagen'.<sup>26</sup> This group was first named as CS by McSweeney and the name has been accepted both by its members and by the broader academia.<sup>27</sup> CS has brought three main innovations to the ISS literature: security

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<sup>22</sup> Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe, "Algı mı Söylem mi? Kopenhag Okulu ve Yeni-Klasik Gerçekçilikte Güvenlik Tehditleri", **Uluslararası İlişkiler**, Vol. 8, No. 30, Summer 2011, (Algı), p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p.4.

<sup>24</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Bezen Balamir Coşkun, **Analysing Desecuritization: The Case of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Education and Water Management**, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2011, (Analysing), p. 8

<sup>27</sup> See, Bill McSweeney, "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School", **Review of International Studies**, Vol. 22, 1996, pp. 81-93.

sectors, a different approach to regional security complex theory, and the securitization / desecuritization framework.<sup>28</sup>

### **1.2.1. The Regional Security Complex Theory**

Buzan et al. updated the regional security complex theory and widened the traditional ‘military’ and ‘political’ understanding of security.<sup>29</sup> According to the authors, the importance of military-political security has declined since the Cold War, and traditional security complex theory can be applied to new sectors as well. Thus, they challenge the widespread understanding that adding new sectors to security studies is intellectually incoherent, arguing that, although they accepted the possibility of incoherence, it is necessary to widen the concept of security. CS aims to understand and analyze international security without losing sight of the original purpose: to widen the security agenda.

Security Complex Theory focuses on the fact that international security is a relational matter and states are the actors with the primary role in security issues. According to this theory, there is a level of interdependence between these primary actors in complexes.<sup>30</sup> Security complexes are inherent features of an anarchical international system. The dynamics of a security complex may be located along a spectrum, with amity at one end and enmity at the other. There are two conditions which explain the absence of a regional security complex despite the anarchical structure of International Relations. The first condition is that, if states have limited capacities, they cannot act beyond their boundaries. Second, if there is a direct intrusion of an outsider into a regional security system, called an “overlay”, this can result in an absence of regional security complexes.<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that, although security complexes are subsystems, they share almost all the features of Structural Realism’s international system.<sup>32</sup> The theory is important as it focuses on

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<sup>28</sup> The most important contribution of CS to security studies is the securitization theory, first named by Ole Wæver in 1995. It is widely accepted that this theory is also one of the most important innovations in the field of security studies. Since the theoretical framework of this study is the securitization approach of CS, the first two contributions of the school will be mentioned only briefly.

<sup>29</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>30</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Buzan et al. give the example of European colonialism period in the Third World.

<sup>32</sup> For further information on security complexes’ features see, Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 13.

the regional level and, by defining the structure of a complex, it reveals the possible options for change. Thus, it is both static and dynamic.<sup>33</sup>

The second condition is that, Buzan, Wæever, and de Wilde expand security concept by adding five new sectors: military, political, economic, environmental and societal. This challenges the military's traditional monopolization on security issues, while not denying its continued relevance as an important sector. While looking at each sector, CS identifies specific types of interactions.

*The military sector is about relationships of forceful coercion; the political sector is about relationships of authority, governing status, and recognition; the economic sector is about relationships of trade, production, and finance; the societal sector is about relationships of collective identity; and the environmental sector is about relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere.*<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 2.** Security Sectors

Security Sectors		What are they about?
1.	Military	Relationships of coercion
2.	Political	Relationships of authority, governing status, recognition
3.	Economic	Relationships of trade, production, finance
4.	Societal	Relationships of collective identity
5.	Environmental	Relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere

While agreeing with Buzan et al.'s perspective, this study argues that it is not easy to distinguish all sectors apart from each other in practice, although this classification is useful as a coherent framework to apply to case studies. Thus, since this study deals with Turkish-Iranian relations in terms of political Islam as a threat

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For features of the Structural Realist international system see, Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, Random House, New York, 1979, Chapters 4-5-6.

<sup>33</sup> Buzan et al., Security, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Buzan et al., Security, p. 7.

to Turkey's collective secular identity and secular regime, only the political and societal sectors are analyzed in a detailed manner in this chapter.<sup>35</sup>

### **1.2.2. The Societal and Political Sectors of Security**

The societal and political sectors are closely related to each other. One refers to the state while the other is related to a nation living in the territorial boundaries of that state. Societal security deals with ideas and rules that bind a group of people together, which relates to the concept of collective identity. According to CS, insecurity in terms of society occurs when communities feel that their survival (as a community) is in danger. In other words, societal security is related to any threat perception or construction to the “we-ness” or collective identity of a particular community.

Societal security differs from social security in the sense that it refers to issues related to collectivities rather than individuals. Additionally, social security mostly refers to economic issues, while societal security is about ideas, rules and feelings about identification. It is not easy to define society as its general reference is wider and vaguer. Buzan et al. reject this use of society, adding that carrying a strong identity is the decisive feature of CS society view. This ambiguous definition is not surprising, considering that communities are socially constructed, like the threats they face.

The most common societal security issues are migration,<sup>36</sup> horizontal competition,<sup>37</sup> vertical competition<sup>38</sup> and depopulation.<sup>39</sup> Societal security issues can be dealt with without applying political and military means, and societies prefer handling the issue through non-state means. According to CS, this is a question of

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<sup>35</sup> As will be seen the chapters below, both the secular social identity of Turkish people and their social life are perceived to be in danger, as well as the secular regime of the Turkish Republic. For further information on other three sectors see, Buzan et al., *Security*, pp. 49-118.

<sup>36</sup> Migration definition of CS: X identity is being changed by influxes of Y people.

<sup>37</sup> Horizontal competition definition of CS: X people will change their way of living because of some cultural and linguistic influence.

<sup>38</sup> Vertical competition definition of CS: X people stop seeing themselves as X as there is an integrating project, e.g EU accession.

<sup>39</sup> Depopulation could occur because of plague, war, natural catastrophe or policies of extermination. However, this issue can also be analyzed in terms of social security.

which actor to turn to, and a function of the structure of ties between societal and political sectors.<sup>40</sup>

In the past, when the state was considered the only responsible entity for “its” nation, the nation consulted “its” state when it felt threatened. However, this no longer seems to be the case. Considering that society takes care of its own security issues, two pertinent questions appear: How does the society speak? Who speaks on behalf of society? The answer is that actors and institutions within the society do this in the name of all. “But the society never speaks, it is only there to be spoken for”, states Wæever.<sup>41</sup> In order for this to happen, the society must give support to the speaking/securitizing actor.

CS’s approach of using a societal security concept has been criticized by some scholars, including McSweeney, who argues that CS defines societal identity as singular, which denies the multiplicity of social identities. In defence of CS, Coşkun notes, such criticism “misses the point of CS that illustrates how a securitising speech act creates the conditions for the reification of identity in a monolithic form.”<sup>42</sup>

The political sector has even more ambiguous boundaries since it appears to cover all other sectors. For instance, “When a political threat to the organizational stability of a state is made as a threat to its society (identity), this is cataloged as a societal security; if military means are used, it is military security (although it is political too), and so forth.”<sup>43</sup> As politics is widely defined as the activities related to the governance of a country and the group of people living in its territory, political security as a concept becomes more ambiguous.

According to CS, political security “is about the organizational stability of states, systems of governments, and the ideologies that give governments and states their legitimacy.”<sup>44</sup> Especially in weak states, with less organizational capacity, political threats are considered as dangerous as military ones. Political security is

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<sup>40</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>41</sup> Ole Wæever, “Securitization and Desecuritization”, *On Security*, (Ed. R.D. Lipshutz), Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, (Securitization), p. 63.

<sup>42</sup> Coşkun, *Analysing*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>43</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 119.

related to threats to the legitimacy or recognition of political units, or structures, processes, institutions, etc.

Two main types of political threats are identified by CS: internal and external legitimacy issues. If there is a threat to the ideology that is a decisive feature of the state's identity, this is an internal political security issue. However, if external legitimacy is considered as in danger, this is included within the scope of external political security threats. In such cases, the problem is generally related to the external recognition of a state.<sup>45</sup>

In the current international system, the territorial state is the main referent object of the political sector.<sup>46</sup> However, formations such as the EU, groups with strong political institutions, and transnational movements that are able to mobilize their supporters (such as the Catholic Church) can also be referent objects of the political sector. Thus, one can see that it is not easy to define the borders of the political sector, nor its actors and referent objects. In the case of a state, the government is usually the securitizing actor, according to Buzan et al. According to CS, in weak states, the securitizing actor is the object to alter, while in a liberal-democratic one,<sup>47</sup> the government is the only legitimate agent of a nation-state. In a strong state, the risk of secession is lower than in a weak state, but if state and nation do not correspond, a group in that nation may desire to gain independence from the state, which clearly leads to destabilization.

### **1.2.3. The Securitization and Desecuritization Framework**

The third innovation that CS has brought to field of security studies is its framework of securitization and desecuritization. This approach to security was developed by the group of scholars mentioned above, who worked at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI)<sup>48</sup> to find an answer to the question

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<sup>45</sup> For instance, in Turkish-Iranian case, the problem is rather an internal legitimacy problem since the secular ideology of the Turkish state is perceived as endangered by a threat perceived to come from Iran.

<sup>46</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 145

<sup>47</sup> According to CS, the definition of a strong state refers to a state with a consolidated liberal-democratic structure.

<sup>48</sup> For further information on COPRI see, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute – COPRI, <http://www.pdgs.org/institutions/ins-dinamarca1.htm>, (09.06.2013).

“What makes something a security issue?”<sup>49</sup> Their answer to this question is embedded in their securitization and desecuritization concepts, which are considered as a major challenge to the traditional security approach. It is also important to note that securitization and desecuritization concepts refer variously to a framework for policy analysis, an approach to study security, a process in which issues become a matter of security, a move made by the securitizing actor, and an intersubjective act successfully presented by the actor and accepted by the audience.<sup>50</sup>

### 1.2.3.1. The Concept of Securitization

Securitization means “to present an issue as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure”.<sup>51</sup> In other words, securitization refers to a process in which an actor transforms a certain issue into a matter of security. Thus, securitization means the transformation of a ‘situation’ into a ‘problem’.

The securitization theory argues that security is not an objective and material condition. Rather, it is an intersubjective act, socially constructed via language.<sup>52</sup> It is language that authorizes specific actors and conceptualizes an issue as a matter of security. CS’s claim is that “something is a security problem when the elites declare it to be so.”<sup>53</sup> If a securitizing actor presents an issue as a security threat, requiring the use of extraordinary means, emergency measures and other actions outside normal political conditions, it begins to be considered as a security issue/threat.<sup>54</sup> Thus, securitization is a means for a securitizing actor to ask the audience for

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<sup>49</sup> Wæver, *Securitization*, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Coşkun, *Analysing*, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> Buzan and Hansen argue that one of the most important epistemological distinctions central to ISS is the one between objective, subjective and discursive conceptions of security. By applying “speech act” theory to security studies, CS’s epistemological approach takes place in discursive security studies. To put it simply, CS claims that security is a self-referential practice.

For further information about the relation between ISS and epistemology see, Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, “The Key Questions in International Security Studies: the State, Politics and Epistemology”, **The Evolution of International Security Studies**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, pp. 32-35.

<sup>53</sup> Wæver, *Securitization*, p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> Bülent Aras, Rabia Karakaya Polat, “From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey’s Relations with Syria and Iran”, **Security Dialogue**, Vol. 39, No.5, 2008, (Conflict), p. 497.



permission to apply deviant precautions, with the aim of dealing with an emerging problem or responding to a forthcoming threat.

There are three main concepts of a securitization process. The first is the speech act, which constitutes the mechanism used by securitizing actor to convince the audience. The second one is securitizing actor, the entity that makes the securitizing move. The last component is the audience that needs to be persuaded, the target of the securitization act. Thus, we can say that securitization aims to reveal “who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent object), why, with what results, and under what conditions”. In order for a securitization act to succeed, three concepts must be observed.

**Figure 3.** Central Concepts of Securitization Analysis<sup>55</sup>

Concepts	Facilitating Conditions
1. Speech act	1. The demand internal to the speech act of following the grammar of security
2. Securitizing Actor	2. The social conditions regarding the position of authority of the securitizing actor (the relation between securitizing actor and audience)
3. Audience	3. Features of the alleged threats that either facilitate or impede securitization

One difference between securitization theory and traditional approaches is embedded in their focus on the role of the actor. While realist approaches, for instance, are interested in the actor in terms of its ability to confront a threat, in securitization theory it is the actor itself that makes an issue a matter of security. Additionally, audience has an active role in security issues according to securitization theory, while traditional approaches treat the audience as a passive group that is influenced by security issues. Although definitions on the referent object are mostly common, the roles of the securitizing actor and audience in the securitization process are more conflicting. CS argues that for a successful securitization act, the audience must be persuaded. In other words, the audience should be convinced about an existential threat and the extraordinary measures

<sup>55</sup> Coşkun, Analysing, p. 13.

needed to defeat it. The difference between a securitization move and a securitization act comes here. These two concepts are different in terms of their consequences. A securitization move is an attempt to make something a security issue, whether successful or not. However, to become a securitization act, the move must be successful (the audience must accept the initiative of the actor).

The Paris School (PS) offers various criticisms of this view, arguing that ‘the audience’ is not defined clearly and that CS is unable to show clearly whether the audience accepts the move. Within this context, CS argues that at least a certain level of mobilization, support from the audience, is needed to name a move as a securitization act. Balzacq suggests that the role of the audience is under-theorized in the securitization framework because of CS’s reliance on Austin’s language theory.<sup>56</sup> According to Austin, articulation is doing the act, rather than a process in which actor and audience construct the threat in an interactive process.<sup>57</sup> Although CS argues that the audience is a crucial component of securitization acts, it defines three other types of units: referent objects, securitizing actors, and functional actors. Functional actors are agents that “affect the dynamics of a sector”.<sup>58</sup> They define a functional actor as one that is not a securitizing actor, but which influences the securitization process. Interest groups, pressure groups, companies, transnational actors, individuals, institutions, etc. can be functional actors in securitization/desecuritization practice. As a result, wideners have discussed a lot the ambiguous position and definition of the audience in securitization.

Turning back to the conceptualization of the securitizing actor issue in the securitization framework, CS’s approach to the securitizing actor has been criticized for its narrowness. CS focuses on the major role of political elites in securitization process. McDonald, however, challenges this conceptualization by arguing that the focus on only dominant actors is narrow and problematic since it ignores the voice of subaltern groups (such as women) and contributes to traditional approaches with both

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<sup>56</sup>Thierry Balzacq, “The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context”, **European Journal of International Relations**, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2005, pp. 171–201., Quoted in, Matt McDonald, “Securitization and the Construction of Security”, **European Journal of International Relations**, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2008, (Securitization), p. 572.

<sup>57</sup> For more information about the speech act theory of Austin see, J.L. Austin, **How to do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1962.

<sup>58</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 36.

normative and analytical implications.<sup>59</sup> Additionally McDonald argues that visual representations and articulations are equally important in securitization processes, along with speech, while the role of artists and media is more important than CS presents them.<sup>60</sup> He therefore supports PS's view that a broader context must be analyzed in a securitization process, rather than considering the role of political elites and speech narrowly.

The security label itself is not enough to consider an issue as a security problem. Rather, securitization of an issue is a political decision made by actors. According to Wæever, when an issue is securitized, there are many ways of addressing it, such as through threat, defense and state-centered solutions.<sup>61</sup> CS argues that a speech act is a political act, made intentionally by the securitizing actor. This securitizing actor has the ability to decide what is a security threat and what is not. This political decision is taken *consciously*, which gives actor the ability to apply extraordinary means.<sup>62</sup>

This opens a discussion on securitization as a means of legitimization. According to Taureck, three steps are needed for successful securitization: the identification of existential threat(s), emergency action, and the legitimization of exceptional measures.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Coşkun notes, "The theory of securitization underlined two intertwined logics, namely the claim about existential threats and the legitimization of exceptional measures".<sup>64</sup> Thus, securitization is applied to legitimize a political action that might not otherwise considered as legitimate. During the securitization process, the claim of the securitizing actor is that there is a necessity prior to others which needs the use of extraordinary measures. Therefore, a move from normal politics to exceptional politics is suggested, and methods that would not be accepted by the audience in normal times become legitimate as a response to the emerging threat. Bush's 'war on terror' policy and discourse is an appropriate example here, given its call for emergency means to respond to a supposedly imminent threat coming from Iraq. This discourse must be understood as

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<sup>59</sup> McDonald, *Securitization*, p. 574.

<sup>60</sup> McDonald, *Securitization*, p. 569.

<sup>61</sup> Wæever, *Securitization*, p. 59.

<sup>62</sup> Açıkmeşe, Algi, p. 66.

<sup>63</sup> Rita Taureck, "Securitization Theory and Securitization Studies", **Journal of International Relations and Development**, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2006, p. 55.

<sup>64</sup> Coşkun, *Analysing*, p. 9.

an attempt to legitimize extraordinary measures, which in this case was an attack to Iraq. McDonald further argues that the securitization framework as a legitimizing factor is applicable to European immigration studies, especially after 2001. He states that it was a choice (of politicians) to consider and describe immigration as threatening “for the aim of justifying emergency measures, and suspension of the normal rules of the game”.<sup>65</sup>

However, discussions about securitization as a means of legitimization introduce the question of intersubjectivity. According to CS, “securitization is intersubjective as it is neither a question of an objective threat or a subjective perception of a threat.”<sup>66</sup> CS does not consider securitization act as something constructed in a natural period. It rather is an intersubjective act, which starts with the specific discourse of the actor and ends with its acceptance by the audience. In any attempt of legitimization, two parties needed: the one who needs legitimization, and the one who accepts this demand. Thus, the audience’s approval is the target. If the actor’s demand is accepted by the masses, the issue becomes legitimate, which is very similar to a securitization act. In other words, proclaiming an issue as security threat justifies the means and methods used to ‘protect the citizens’ from this supposedly imminent threat.

According to Wæver, “security discourse is characterized by dramatizing an issue as having absolute priority. Something is presented as an absolute threat.”<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, securitization is considered as a ‘speech act’ and in order for a securitization act to become successful, the audience must be persuaded. On the other hand, change in terms of securitization or desecuritization is impossible without the approval or will of the power-holders. Stabilization and destabilization processes are necessary for this kind of change, which means adding or removing threats to the present agenda. Concerning this issue for the desecuritization concept, Oelsner argues that there are two steps in a desecuritization process. The first is peace stabilization while the second is peace consolidation. The first step is the starting point for altering relations, which paves the way for a more consolidated

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<sup>65</sup> McDonald, *Securitization*, p. 567.

<sup>66</sup> Coşkun, *Analysing*, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> Ole Wæver, “European Security Identities”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1996, (European), p. 108.

stable relationship between the parties. All of these steps become possible via speech acts, according to CS's view. It is important to note that CS's approach to speech acts is parallel to Austin's articulation. In this view of language theory, language itself becomes security, since it is the factor that makes the securitization act possible. Waever shares the idea that "the utterance itself is the act", as he clearly states in his study "Securitization and Desecuritization".

CS's approach to speech acts has been criticized by many scholars. McDonald, for example, argues that "the form of act constructing security is defined narrowly, with the focus on the speech of dominant actors, usually political leaders".<sup>68</sup> This focus on speech acts ignores other forms of representation, such as images, material practices, etc. Balzacq similarly claims that treating securitization as a speech act means reducing it to an 'illocutionary act'.<sup>69</sup> However, considering a speech act as a 'perlocutionary act'<sup>70</sup> enables greater attention to be paid to the audience's role of accepting or declining the securitization move. According to Balzacq, CS's error derives from their ignorance of contextual analysis while overemphasizing the role of textual analysis. He argues that philosophical theory<sup>71</sup> lacks methodological and epistemological consistency. Their claim that securitization is a self-referential practice contradicts their view that it is an intersubjective process.

In arguing this way, CS ignores the importance of audience and context. Balzacq argues that CS's theoretical position of the speech act stems from a Derridean re-appropriation of Austin's philosophy.<sup>72</sup> For Derrida, a speech act's importance comes neither from the context nor the speaker's intention. It is rather the 'iterability' or reproducibility of the enunciation. Thus, CS takes a post-structural approach towards *the speech act*. According to PS, this approach towards securitization raises difficulties, especially in epistemological terms. The speech act approach requires a deductive analysis, while post-structuralism's main purpose is to

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<sup>68</sup> McDonald, *Securitization*, p. 564.

<sup>69</sup> Illocutionary means "performing a function at the moment of speech". See, McDonald, *Securitization*, p. 572.

<sup>70</sup> Perlocutionary means "necessary for enabling particular actions". See, McDonald, *Securitization*, p. 572.

<sup>71</sup> Thierry Balzacq names these two approaches "philosophical" (referring to CS) and "sociological" (referring to the Paris School) variants.

Thierry Balzacq, "A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants", **Securitization Theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve**, (Ed. Thierry Balzacq), Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London, 2011, (A Theory), pp. 1-30.

<sup>72</sup> Balzacq, A Theory, p. 21.

study inductively, “without a theoretical framework a priori”.<sup>73</sup> Bigo adds a further criticism by arguing that a group of often routinized practices are able to construct emergency issues, rather than simply speech acts.<sup>74</sup> McDonald notes that, “according to Hansen and Wilkinson, CS ignores physical action generally, action which can serve to communicate ideas about security in their own right”.<sup>75</sup> He argues that CS needs to overcome this challenge, suggesting that “they need to downplay either the performative effects of the speech act or the intersubjective nature of security”.<sup>76</sup>

To summarize the argument so far, according to CS, securitization is a three-step-act. First, an issue must be presented as an existential threat. When a securitizing actor presents an issue as a threat, it becomes a security threat. Second, the threat must be an urgent one that calls for emergency measures. This permits extraordinary means to be applied to deal with the threat, including compulsory military service, tax increases, secrecy, security, intelligence etc.<sup>77</sup> Third, the audience of the securitization act must accept that there is an existential threat that requires extraordinary measures.<sup>78</sup> According to Huysman, the main question for CS is, “How to rescue Security Studies from being a narrow state-centric military-based concept, without making it an overarching-exaggerated concept which includes any threats to individuals, groups, nations, and humanity”.<sup>79</sup> Wæver states that security issues still evoke a threat-defense image.<sup>80</sup> He basically challenges the idea that security is only a matter of “state” a “given” thing, instead aiming to conceptualize security. He therefore tries to contribute to the security concept, by arguing that security is a ‘speech act’, which is not given but constructed through a discursive process. For Wæver, “The main question on security issue is simple: What really

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<sup>73</sup> Balzacq, A Theory, p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> Didier Bigo, “Security and Immigration: Towards a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease”, **Alternatives: Global, Local Political**, Vol. 27, 2002, p. 65

<sup>75</sup> Lene Hansen, “The Little Mermaid’s Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School”, **Millennium - Journal of International Studies**, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2000, p. 300.; Claire Wilkinson, “The Copenhagen School on Tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is Securitization Theory Useable Outside Europe?”, **Security Dialogue**, Vol. 38, No.1, 2007, pp. 5–25., Quoted in, McDonald, Securitization, p. 570.

<sup>76</sup> McDonald, Securitization, p. 573.

<sup>77</sup> Ole Wæver, **Securitization: Taking Stock of a Research Programme in Security Studies**, Unpublished Conference Paper, Chicago, 2003, p. 9, Quoted in, Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe, Alğı mı, p. 61.

<sup>78</sup> CS is criticized for not conceptualizing “audience” and the act of “acceptance”. I will come to that later.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Açıkmeşe, Alğı, p. 58

<sup>80</sup> Wæver, Securitization, p. 48.

makes something a security problem?” The answer of securitization theory to this question is that “something is a security problem when the elites declare it to be so”.<sup>81</sup> Elite interests are generally presented as class interests, and the issue becomes a national security problem. However, Wæever claims that attempts to define class interests have always failed, so the only source of securitization is the institutional voice of the elites.

Apart from these discussions between different variants of wideners, there is another important claim from traditional security studies. To briefly differentiate between traditional and widener security studies, it is necessary to note that two types of securities are now being discussed by scholars: the traditional military and state-centered view, and the new wideners. Although traditionalists argue that wideners risk intellectual incoherence by adding new sectors, CS thinks that taking the military as the core in security studies does not help to solve the incoherence problem. The aim of securitization theory is to construct a “neo-conventional security analysis [that] sticks to the traditional core of the concept of security, but is undogmatic as to both sectors (not only military) and referent objects (not only states)”.<sup>82</sup>

As mentioned above, the military focus of traditionalists and their state-centric approach has been challenged by wideners, who have added new sectors to security studies. While Chipman, as a traditionalist, accepts that peoples and nations, states and alliances can also be strategic users of force in the international system, Walt, one of the fiercest defenders of the traditional approach, argues that widening the concept of security would lead to incoherence and make it harder to solve security problems. Wideners on the other hand, reply that the belief that widening this agenda will lead to incoherence reflects a narrow understanding of security. CS aims to maintain coherence, not by narrowing down the agenda, but by “exploring the logic of security itself”<sup>83</sup>, and by differentiating security/securitization from that which is political.<sup>84</sup> Security threats and vulnerabilities “have to be staged as

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<sup>81</sup> Wæever, *Securitization*, p. 52.

<sup>82</sup> Wæever, *European*, p. 110.

<sup>83</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> They aim to conceptualize security by defining it as something more than just any threat or problem.

existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor, who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind”.<sup>85</sup>

Arnold Wolfers argues that security issues can be both objective (where there is a real threat) and subjective (where there is a perceived threat or a political issue).<sup>86</sup> Buzan et al, on the other hand, regard security as an ‘intersubjective process’, as they define securitization as to make an issue a matter of security, and to make it accepted (as a threat) by the masses. This is why securitization becomes an intersubjective act. To measure security in an objective way, one needs to reach a clear definition and conceptualization, which is not very easy, if not impossible, as security is not fixed or purely objective, but is constructed and intersubjective (although, in the military sector, it is easier to make such a certain definition). Besides, to analyze if a security issue exists in the real world is not the job of a securitization analyst, Buzan et al. point out, “*Although analysts unavoidably play a role in the construction (or deconstruction) of security issues, it is not their primary task to determine whether some threat represents a ‘real’ security problem.*”<sup>87</sup>

Thus, the analyst does not ask whether there is a real security issue or not. Whether or not the security issue exists in the real world, starting from the securitization act itself, it has real consequences, which need coherent analysis. A universal definition of security may be helpful regarding the question of coherence. However, for political analysis, it helps very little because a security threat is mainly a perception with different meanings in different times and places (for different states and nations). Beyond an objective definition of security, securitization is not about studying an actor who says “we are now securitizing” or even uses the word “security”. It is the job of the analyst to interpret the situation and name it a securitization act. From this perspective, the security analyst is also a security actor, as he or she reveals which situations have been transformed into security matters and which not. However, the role of the analyst is very limited and, as argued above in line with Buzan et al, the securitizing actor is only the one who performs a political act in a security mode.

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<sup>85</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Arnold Wolfers, **Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics**, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1962, p. 150.

<sup>87</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 33.



Following these objectivity/subjectivity discussions, many analysts have argued that securitization theory lies between constructivist and realist theories of International Relations.<sup>88</sup> The definition of securitization theory as an intersubjective act, made by CS itself, shows us the constructivist part of this theory. Speeches, interactions and perceptions are crucial elements of securitization acts and theory, which are also the main areas of investigation for social constructivist theory. It is deeply related to the politicizing of an issue. “Security politics is not just about underlining pre-existing threats but is also a performative activity that makes certain issues visible as a threat.”<sup>89</sup> It follows from this that security is a matter of constructing issues in an intersubjective manner, independently of whether such issues exist in the real world or not. Another important point is that, by defining something as a security issue or problem, an actor (or we can say a power holder) also attains the right to apply any necessary means to deal with the issue or resist the threat. Once an issue is defined as an existential threat and a challenge to state sovereignty, the state should not be limited in means to block it. This realist view of CS on security is criticized by many scholars, particularly by the Welsh School (WS). They argue that CS’s approach creates a normative problem, “serving to reify and normalize the traditional statist, exclusionary and militaristic approaches to security”, meaning that CS’s security approach is “fixed and politically conservative”.<sup>90</sup>

Williams, for instance, argues that CS’s security approach includes both the limitation and expansion of the security agenda, and its analysis.<sup>91</sup> It is an expansion in the sense that securitization is basically defined as a speech act, which enlarges possible threats, referent objects and the range of actors. Security is identified in terms of five sectors (military, environmental, economic, societal and political),<sup>92</sup> with each having its own referent object. However, it introduces some limitations to the security agenda since the practical application of unlimited theory has some

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<sup>88</sup> Michael C. Williams is one of those scholars who argues that “while CS adopts a form of social constructivism, its roots lie also within the Realist tradition”.

Michael C. Williams, “Words Images Enemies: Securitization and International Politics”, **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 47, 2003, (Words), p. 512.

<sup>89</sup> Coşkun, *Analysing*, p. 8.

<sup>90</sup> McDonald, *Securitization*, p. 579.

<sup>91</sup> Williams, *Words*, p. 513.

<sup>92</sup> Buzan et al., *Security*, p. 32

limits.<sup>93</sup> Although it stands within a constructivist position, the securitization concept of CS is different from constructivism in the sense that it limits a security issue to a speech act that calls for extraordinary means, while constructivism defines a security issue as any security issue constructed through the interactions of actors. However, CS defines the limits of securitization by describing a successful securitization as one which is both claimed by the actor and accepted by the audience. A successful securitization has three elements according to Buzan: “existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules”.<sup>94</sup> Williams also argues that securitization theory has its deeper roots in realist theory rather than constructivism. Carl Schmitt’s emphasis on enmity, exclusion and decisions related to political order has also played a vital role in the development of CS’s approach to security.

By using the “speech act”, any non-security issue like migration, environmental degradation and/or religion (...etc.) can be put into the realm of security which, in the long run, will not always be a positive development. Any development may become a threat to security when state elites define them to be so. It is always possible that power holders in a state securitize issues in order to obtain special powers and use extraordinary measures to deal with those securitized issues and this possibility is not easily avoidable. Security “frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics’ and a spectrum can therefore be defined ranging public issues from the *non-politicized* (...), through *politicized* (...), to *securitization*.”<sup>95</sup> Those securitized issues, then, are taken out of the realm of normal (democratic) politics and put into the realm of security in which the state elites could use any means necessary. Therefore, after setting up his theory on securitization, Wæver claims that in most circumstances de-securitization will be a better option. He is critical of framing issues in terms of security.<sup>96</sup> Contrary to most of the security studies literature, he regards security in a negative sense because when issues are securitized, extraordinary measures will be employed and progressive change will

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<sup>93</sup> Williams, Words, p. 517.

<sup>94</sup> Buzan et al., Security, p. 32.

<sup>95</sup> Buzan et al., Security, p. 23. See also Buzan and Hansen, The Evolution, p. 214.

<sup>96</sup> See, Ole Wæver, “Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen: New 'Schools' in Security Theory and their Origins between Core and Periphery”, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, 17-20 March 2004, (Aberystwyth), Montreal Canada.2004, pp 13-14.

Also see, Buzan et al. Security, pp. 28-30.

become nearly impossible. This was the case in Europe during the Cold war when speech act security was the main obstacle blocking progressive change. Change oriented agents engaged in de-securitization by aiming at “speech act failure”. Until speech act failure is reached the strategy was to put negotiated limitations on the use of speech act security. By this way, they would, at least, stop further securitization of issues.<sup>97</sup> Desecuritization, in Wæever’s words “means not to have issues phrased as ‘threats against which we have countermeasures’ but to move them out of this threat-defense sequence and into the ordinary public sphere.”<sup>98</sup> Now, let us analyze CS’s concept of desecuritization.

### 1.2.3.2. The Concept of Desecuritization

Many scholars argue that the desecuritization concept of CS is undertheorised and unstudied comparing to securitization.<sup>99</sup> Buzan et al. argue that securitization and desecuritization are antonymous. One can infer that since securitization is defined as “moving an issue from a situation to a threat”, desecuritization can be defined as the return of issues from being existential threats to normal politics. As quoted above, under the subtitle “Security: definition and development”, CS states that what is needed and desired is desecuritization in world politics. They define desecuritization as “a process in which a political community downgrades or ceases to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and reduces or stops calling for exceptional measures to deal with the threat”.<sup>100</sup>

According to CS, there are three options for desecuritization. First, as securitization is defined as a speech act, desecuritization basically refers to a situation in which there is no such speech act. Thus, not to talk about an issue in terms of security entails the desecuritization of that issue. Second, once an issue is securitized, it is important to avoid generating security dilemmas and vicious circles

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<sup>97</sup> See, Wæever, *Securitization*.

<sup>98</sup> Wæever, *Aberystwyth*, p. 14.

<sup>99</sup> For various critiques on desecuritization concept of CS see, Coşkun, *Analysing*; Andrea Olsner, “Desecuritization Theory and Regional Peace: Some Theoretical Reflections and a Case Study on the Way to Stable Peace”, RSCAS EUI Working Paper, Number 2, 2005; McDonald, *Securitization*.

<sup>100</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Wæever, **Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 489.

in order to achieve desecuritization.<sup>101</sup> Third, moving an issue from the security agenda to the realm of normal politics means desecuritization is possible. That is, a securitized issue does not necessarily continue to be an existential threat.

In the societal sector, desecuritization is accepted as being more difficult, if not impossible. There are two main possibilities for a societal security threat to be desecuritized. First, both sides can accept that they have different identities and learn to live with this dissimilarity. Second, one of the parties can begin to define its identity in a different way (or both sides can change their identities in the same direction). For the first option, both sides must act consciously to desecuritize the issue. However, when it comes to the second option, there can be spontaneous change and rapprochement. In this case, the discourse of the changing side begins to change first, with the other side subsequently orienting itself to this softening discourse. As a result, the securitized issue is transformed into a normal political situation.<sup>102</sup>

It is important to explain the difference between security, insecurity and asecuritization within this context. According to Wæver, security and insecurity do not necessarily constitute an opposition.<sup>103</sup> In both situations, there is a security problem. Security means that there is an articulated threat and a response to this threat. In the case of insecurity, there is no response although a security issue (or threat) exists. In contrast, asecuritization means that no threat has been conceptualized so no measures have been taken. One needs to turn a security issue into an asecuritization issue to perform a desecuritization act. That is, in order for a desecuritization act to be successfully performed, the threat must be removed from the security agenda.

CS defines desecuritization as the opposite of securitization. Coşkun argues from this that the same components (securitizing actor, audience, speech act) can all be applied to desecuritization analysis as well.

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<sup>101</sup> Coşkun, *Analysing*, p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> This study argues that the situation that occurred is rather the second one in the Turkish-Iranian case. Once the new government in power began to define Turkish identity differently, the elites let the desecuritization process start.

<sup>103</sup> Ole Wæver, "Security, Insecurity and Asecuritization in the West-European Non-War Community", *Security Communities*, (Ed. Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 81.

**Figure 4.** Concepts of Desecuritization Analysis<sup>104</sup>

Components	Facilitating Conditions
1. Desecuritizing Language	1. Changes in the language used to define the previously securitized issue
2. Desecuritizing Actor	2. Social conditions regarding the position of the desecuritizing actor (the relation between desecuritizing actor and audience)
3. Audience	3. Conditions that prove the necessity for desecuritization

Although it makes sense that the desecuritizing actor and audience remain the same, the “speech act” component seems somewhat problematic. Behnke defines desecuritization as “the lack of any securitizing speech act”.<sup>105</sup> Although the process of desecuritization seems straightforward, it is not as easy to prove as securitization because it is challenging to develop a methodological framework to analyze it. Aras and Karakaya claim that what is needed to justify desecuritization is basically *nothing*.<sup>106</sup> Following Behnke, they argue that, since securitizing speech is considered evidence for securitization, lack of such speech must be enough to show desecuritization. However, this study argues that, as desecuritization is a process following securitization, a change in discourse must be observed. To understand the process by which a desecuritization act is made, it is therefore necessary to analyze discourse. However, if desecuritization means that there is no such speech act, how one can conceptualize and analyze desecuritization? This paradox is the main reason why security analysts argue that desecuritization remains an undertheorised concept.

According to Oelsner’s desecuritization analyses, there are two possible ways for an issue to be desecuritized: “Either it loses its threatening image because agent and audience’s perception of the nature of the threat change in a positive manner or they perceive a qualitative change in the relationship between them and securitized

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<sup>104</sup> Coşkun, *Analysing*, p. 21.

<sup>105</sup> Andreas Behnke, “No Way Out: Desecuritization, Emancipation and the Eternal Return of the Political – A reply to Aradau”, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol.9, No.1, 2006, p. 65.

<sup>106</sup> Aras and Karakaya, *Conflict*, p. 498.

threat.”<sup>107</sup> He argues that the first option is a rather passive one, compared to the second, which requires a reassessment of relations. He also adds that many factors can influence this rapprochement process, including pressure from interest groups, changes in the constitution of domestic governments, global transformations, etc. As analyzed above, CS mentions these influential actors as “functional actors” with a role in both securitization and desecuritization acts.

In contrast to CS, PS considers the impact of the broader context when analyzing securitization and desecuritization. Balzacq claims that without any real (objective) threat, it is not really possible for a securitization move to be successful. The constructed threat should at least have some connection to a real external threat or an important political issue. According to him, discourse and action are linked in two ways. First, through mutual knowledge, discourse shapes social relations and builds their form and content. Second, discourse targets and creates the basis for a particular communicative action, which means that it can be a “cause” of the action.<sup>108</sup>

McDonald also examines the role of context in securitization theory and states that the context of securitization act is defined too narrowly by CS. As a result, “the potential for security to be constructed over time through a range of incremental processes and representations are not addressed”, and the reasons why particular securitization moves have repercussions on a particular audience are left unanalyzed. Similarly, Oelsner argues that (de)securitization can start as a bottom-up or top-down process. A regional or global impact on the act indicates top-down (de)securitization. However, he adds that, even though external conditions impact on these processes, both securitization and desecuritization are domestic developments.<sup>109</sup> This study aims to contribute to the idea that the domestic agenda (or motivations) is the decisive factor underlying a state’s foreign policy behavior, although it does not deny the secondary impact of the broader international agenda on foreign relations.

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<sup>107</sup> Olsner, *Desecuritization Theory*, p. 4, Quoted in Coşkun, *Analysing*, p. 22.

<sup>108</sup> Balzacq, *A Theory*, p. 23.

<sup>109</sup> Olsner, *Desecuritization Theory*, p. 5, Quoted in Coşkun, *Analysing*, p. 22.

Like Oelsner, McDonald claims that CS downplays the importance of contextual factors, such as dominant narratives of identity.<sup>110</sup> He argues that CS needs to consider the impact of the broader social and political context in which the act occurs. However, he accepts that one can find three central forms in which CS does engage with the broader context of the speech act. First, it defines different sectors, and argues that an issue looks different in, for example, the context of the military sector than it looks in the context of the economic sector. Second, engagement is the role of so-called “facilitating factors”, which refers to the dynamics and institutional context that enables securitizing moves to become securitizing acts. Third, the securitization framework engages with contextual factors by attaching importance to the role of audience and security pronouncements.

### **1.3. APPLYING CS FRAMEWORK TO THE TURKISH CASE**

This study argues that, securitization theory may provide new insights to researchers by revealing the linkage between discourse and praxis which became prominent in Turkey’s Iran policy with influential elites’ discursive shift towards Iran from ‘threatening enemy’ to ‘cooperative friend’. By doing so, the study reviews securitizing/desecuritizing speeches of Turkish military and political elites, by searching for phrases “Iran, Islamic fundamentalism, threat”.

Thus, drawing on CS’s approach, the methodological approach taken in this study is an in-depth analysis of elite discourse, given that securitization is basically defined as “a speech act” by Wæver and CS. However, this study also uses policy analysis, based on PS’s sociological approach to securitization, which adds the concept of “context” as another component of securitization. McDonald claims that, without looking at the context, issues appear to be rapidly resolvable,<sup>111</sup> and this study also follows the argument that ignoring the context within which a securitization act becomes possible leads to reductionism and incoherence since it is at odds with intersubjective view of CS.

Specifically, the following chapters argue that Turkey’s security policies towards Iran are influenced by the domestic and international contexts they are

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<sup>110</sup> McDonald, *Securitization*, p. 571.

<sup>111</sup> McDonald, *Securitization*, pp. 576-577.

constructed in, and therefore cannot be analyzed without looking at the political and social context. In short, this study also seeks to benefit from the approach of PS while analyzing the Turkey's Iran policy case, for the aim of contributing to both securitization concept of CS and literature on Turkish-Iranian relations.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE 1990s: SECURITIZATION IN TURKEY'S IRAN POLICY

Turkish-Iranian relations had been conservatively stable since 1648, although relations evolved around the historical Ottoman-Persian rivalries. As neighboring countries from different sects, they competed for leadership of Islamic world. This rivalry changed with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran that came to power in 1924. Turkey changed its domestic and foreign policy goals by adopting a completely different identity. It abandoned religious and regional claims, adopting instead a new policy of secularization, democratization and Westernization. It also sought to develop friendly (or at least neutral) relations with its neighbors. Thus, until the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Turkey had experienced almost problem-free relations with Iran. The Shah's regime in Iran also had good relations with the West and followed similar policies aiming to build good relations with its neighbors.

However, after the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution,<sup>112</sup> both countries' perceptions of each other began to change, and relations continued to be unsteady until the first half of the 2000s. On the one hand, Iran's foreign policy became more ideology-driven after the revolution, with Israel and the U.S. being considered as enemies, which influenced its perception of Turkey as well. On the other hand, Turkey was not very comfortable with the new Islamic regime in Iran for two main reasons. The first was the fear of possible infiltration of fundamental Islamic movements into Turkey. The second was a possible failure of the revolution, which might lead to the establishment of a Kurdish state within Iran and the spread of Kurdish nationalist movements into Turkey. Since Turkey had always aimed to prevent separatist movements, its policies towards Iran had always been very cautious. In addition, in countries like Turkey, foreign policy and domestic politics

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<sup>112</sup> On February 13, 1979, when the revolution was declared, Bülent Ecevit said that it was important to develop bilateral relations with the new regime of Iran, and advised other states to do the same. Considering that Iran's new identity conflicted with Turkey's identity, this was unexpected. Turkey is a secular democracy, a NATO member, and an ally of the US and Israel. In contrast, Iran is a theocratic autocracy, very cautious towards the West and Israel, and has attempted to change the balance of power in the region by spreading its ideology and power.

correlate with each other. That is, while domestic issues are mostly associated with foreign threats, foreign policy issues are exploited to gain support in domestic policies. Thus, it is possible to argue that Turkey's policies towards Iran were shaped, not only by regional and global dynamics, but also by Turkey's own domestic security and identity concerns as well.<sup>113</sup>

This chapter deals with the 1990s, leaving the 1980s behind. Although there was some concern over relations during the 1980s, this period was not as troubled as the 1990s. It is worth mentioning that Turkey was amongst the first group of countries to recognize Iran. According to Süha Bölükbaşı, Turkey's cautious approach to the new regime in Iran was based on three needs: to live peacefully alongside Iran, to stay neutral between Iran and Iraq in their war, and to benefit from the Iran-Iraq War to develop its economic relations with Iran.<sup>114</sup>

One may argue that there were three main reasons for these relatively problem-free relations. First, during the last period of the Shah's regime, there were some problems related to Kurdish issue. There was a lack of sympathy in Turkey for the new regime but the new regime - at least in a limited way - promised possible cooperation against Kurdish separatism. Second, a regime change in Turkey from a civilian to a military administration<sup>115</sup> caused a considerable shift in Turkish politics in terms of the level of threat perception related to separatist movements.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Aknur affirms the main argument of this study by indicating that although Turkish-Iranian relations were tense during the 1980s and 1990s because of Turkey's anxiety that Iran was trying to export its Islamic regime to Turkey, Turkey's new neighborhood policy ignored ideological differences and increased trade and cooperation with Iran. Moreover, the JDP supported Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The AKP developed cooperative relations with its former enemy, Iran, by removing Kurdish issue and Islamic fundamentalism threats in domestic politics, and by decreasing the role of military in politics.

See, Müge Aknur, "The Impact of Civil-Military Relations on Democratic Consolidation in Turkey", **Democratic Consolidation in Turkey**, (Ed. Müge Aknur), Universal Publishers, Florida USA, 2012, (Civil-Military), pp. 241-242.

<sup>114</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "Turkey Copes with Revolutionary Iran", **Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol: 13, No: 1-2, 1989, p. 95.

<sup>115</sup> From 12 November 1979 to 12 September 1980, Süleyman Demirel's administration held power. With the 1980 coup, the Demirel government was overthrown and a military government came to power till 13 December 1983 when Turgut Özal's civilian government took power. The military government's PM was Saim Bulend Ulusu, and the president was Kenan Evren. Some have argued that one of the reasons for the coup was because of the Turkish military's concerns about the coming Iran-Iraq War, particularly a possible Kurdish problem related to the war, so they wanted to take control. Others have claimed that the Iranian Islamic Revolution was one of the reasons for the coup, again with the similar concern of the Turkish military that it might spread into Turkey.

<sup>116</sup> Additionally, there was a wide belief that those who staged the coup (particularly Kenan Evren) tried to make use of religion, for example by increasing the importance of religion in Turkish identity, to provide domestic unity and solidarity. Evren's policies related to religion were widely criticized in

Thus, Iran-Iraq War between 1980 and 1988 led to relatively neutral relations between Turkey and Iran. Turkey became less suspicious about Iran during the war, with the Turkish military administration adopting a policy of positive neutrality intended to avoid hostile relations with either Iran or Iraq. Olson claims that while both countries tried to accumulate capital for industry, they tend to avoid war unless they are directly threatened.<sup>117</sup> Regarding Turkey's economic situation in those years, the military administration also tried to take economic advantage by remaining neutral.<sup>118</sup>

## 2.1. THE PROCESS OF SECURITIZATION

Although the impact of ideology had declined after the Cold War ended, and while political pragmatism had come to the fore of Turkish-Iranian relations, ideological tensions still persisted. Turkey's political landscape in the 1990's was not very stable, and the rise of political Islam was becoming more visible, together with the rise of Kurdish nationalism, economic crisis, and political instability. Meanwhile, Iran was experiencing more or less the same situation:<sup>119</sup> economic crisis, a rise in Iranian nationalism<sup>120</sup> and the emergence of a reformist movement.<sup>121</sup>

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the media. For example, Hasan Cemal argued that Iran was a bad example that must be learnt from. He claimed that the Shah had cooperated with the mullahs in Iran to secure his position, but this had only caused the reactionist Islamic Revolution in Iran.

See, Hasan Cemal, "Tarihi Yaşarken Yakalayabilmek", **Cumhuriyet**, 12 January 1987, p. 10.

On the same day as this article, the newspaper claimed that the 1980 coup and its leaders had been responsible for increasing Islamic movements, with the most important changes promoting religious politics being made in Turkey's education system. See, "İslamcı Akımlar 12 Eylül Döneminde İlerledi", **Cumhuriyet**, 12 January 1987, p. 6.

It is also important to note that, according to some researchers, Turkish-Iranian relations also fluctuated because of domestic instability in Turkey. Bayram Sinkaya is one of those researchers.

For further information see, Bayram Sinkaya, "Turkey-Iran Relations in the 1990s and the Role of Ideology", **Perceptions Journal of International Affairs**, Vol: 10, No: 1, 2005, (Turkey-Iran), p. 4.

<sup>117</sup>Robert Olson, **Türkiye-İran İlişkileri 1979-2004: Devrim, İdeoloji, Savaş, Darbeler ve Jeopolitik**, trans. Kezban Acar, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Babil Yayıncılık, (Türkiye-İran), Ankara, p. 12.

<sup>118</sup>The war provided economic opportunities for Turkey, with both Iran and Iraq offering improved economic relations in exchange for Turkey's neutrality in the war. For further information about Turkish-Iranian economic relations during the Iran-Iraq War see, Ünal Gündoğan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences", **Middle East Review of International Affairs**, Vol: 7, No: 1, 2003, pp. 1-12.

<sup>119</sup>One may argue that two developments in Iran were more important for Turkish-Iranian relations during the 1990s. The first was the end of the Iran-Iraq War and the second was the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. Iran had to fight with both domestic and international pressure to transform revolutionary politics into "normal politics". Domestically, even the Velayat-i Fakih rule, which is the main base of the Iranian regime, was being questioned. According to Iranian twelfth imam belief, the twelfth imam,

There are two main explanations for the conflictual relations that developed in the 1990s. The first one refers to external factors or the role of structure in relations. According to this view, “geopolitical developments following the demise of the USSR and the Gulf War led to the eruption of Turco-Iran competition over Iraq and over the Caucasus and the Central Asia, which created a conflictual atmosphere in Turkey-Iran relations.”<sup>122</sup> The second approach argues that internal developments in both countries had a more significant impact on deteriorating relations.<sup>123</sup> Although this study argues that ideological frictions between Iran and Turkey were the source of conflict during the decade; going in line with the PS’s position, it also argues that the (internal and external) context must be analyzed further to understand securitization more effectively. Thus, the impact of other developments, such as the role of Western countries, the PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi, Kurdistan Worker’s Party) issue<sup>124</sup>, the economic situation, geopolitical and power relations, should also be briefly considered.<sup>125</sup>

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Mehdi, will come to provide order some day. Khomeini thought that a government should provide this order until that day comes. Thus, he mentioned Velayat-i Fakihi as a founding element of the new regime. According to Khomeini, as supreme leader, he was responsible for providing this order. This caused Iranian domestic and foreign policy to be strongly individual-based. Outside pressure, on the other hand, was exerted via the international isolation of revolutionary Iran to compel it to accept the existing regional and international system. Iran was also suffering from economic and social deterioration as a result of the war. Finally, the 1990s was mired by conflict between radical and reformist wing Islamists.

Sinkaya, Turkey-Iran, p. 5.

<sup>120</sup> Persian culture, which re-emerged after the collapse of the Soviet regime, helped Iranian nationalism to increase its impact in politics. Iranian nationalism increased especially after the Iran-Iraq War, although it was suppressed by Islamic rhetoric after the revolution. Some researchers further argue that Khatemi’s rhetoric amalgamating nationalist and Islamist elements helped him to win the presidency.

See, A. Reza Sheikholeslami, “The Transformation of Iran’s Political Culture”, **Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol: 9, No: 17, 2000, p.130.

<sup>121</sup> Bayram Sinkaya, “Türkiye-İran İlişkilerinde Çatışma Noktaları ve Analizi”, [www.glopolitic.net/?Syf=26&Syz=52129](http://www.glopolitic.net/?Syf=26&Syz=52129), (27.03.2012).

<sup>122</sup> For further information on geopolitical confrontations between Turkey and Iran see, Sinkaya, Turkey Iran.

<sup>123</sup> Aras and Karakaya argue that Turkey’s changing foreign policy towards Iran (and Syria) can best be explained by analyzing the changes in Turkey’s domestic politics.

See, Aras and Karakaya, Conflict, pp. 495-515.

<sup>124</sup> Although the PKK issue has been the second source source of threat perception for Turkey and Iran has also been securitized in relation to the PKK issue as well, the main desecuritization argument of this study does not apply to the PKK issue, since securitization related to PKK continued from the 1980s until recently. Thus, one can argue that the PKK has been one reason for conflict between Turkey and Iran, but one cannot identify a significant decrease in securitization over this issue in the 2000s.

<sup>125</sup> Bülent Aras argues that there had been three problems that shaped Turkish policy makers’ perceptions towards Iran between 1979 and 2000: Iran’s support to the PKK, Iran’s will to spread Islamic regime into Turkey, and competition in Central Asia and Caucasus. He also argues that

As Özcan argues, Turkey's policy of confrontation towards Iran during the 1990s was driven by various internal factors.<sup>126</sup> First, the activities of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Turkey were increasing, including violent actions, some of which, according to Sinkaya, were carried out in collaboration with Iranian intelligence service members,<sup>127</sup> thereby linking this domestic problem to a foreign source. Secondly, although Iran did not formally establish a fundamentalist organization to export its Islamic regime, there were radical groups within the Iranian state bureaucracy that sought ways to make propaganda in Turkey. When some Turkish radicals were independently inspired by the Iranian regime, Iran did not ignore their demands for economic and logistical support.<sup>128</sup> Thirdly, the political situation in Turkey also influenced the level of securitization. Whereas the rise of the Islamist RP (Refah Partisi, Welfare Party) disturbed Turkey's military and political elites, the increasing popularity of political Islam in Turkey was welcomed by Iran.

As previously mentioned, the study argues that securitization theory constitutes a fruitful framework to compare Turkey's Iran policy in the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>129</sup> Securitization is defined as a "speech act" in the simplest term, which means that issues become security matters when they are declared so. Following this argument, in order to understand the level of securitization in Turkey, this study will scrutinize the speeches and attitudes of the securitizing elites, as well as media

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Turkey's Iran policy had been shaped under the thumb of domestic politics. Turkish elites considered Iran a homogenous monolithic nation consisting of mollahs only. This prevented them from understanding the process of change in Iran.

For further information see, Bülent Aras, "Türk-İran İlişkileri: Değişim ve Süreklilik", **Avrasya Dosyası**, Vol: 12, No: 2, 2006, p. 64.

<sup>126</sup> Gencer Özcan, "Turkey's Changing Neighbourhood Policy", **Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, Vol: 35, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>127</sup> Sinkaya, Turkey-Iran, p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> Sinkaya, Turkey-Iran, p. 3.

<sup>129</sup> Rahmat Hajimineh is one of the scholars who argues that securitization theory provides a relevant framework to understand Turkish-Iranian relations. As for causes of desecuritization process in 2000s, EU accession process (as a fundamental factor) and the AKP's coming to power are approached. However, main question of mentioned research is whether there is a shift from desecuritization to securitization in Turkey's Iran policy in the Arab Uprisings period. "Therefore, referring to securitization as the cause of Turkey's problems and to desecuritization as the solution for resolving the country's internal and external problems can help the amendment of the rift between the military and civilian officials over different issues. Meanwhile, desecuritization aims to strengthen the politicians of the Justice and Development party against the military." According to Hajimineh, Turkey has begun to seek regional power in the Middle East in the post-2011, it currently follows interest-based policies towards Iran.

See, Rahmat Hajimineh, "Analyzing the Turkish-Iranian Relations from the Copenhagen School's Point of View", **Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly**, Vol: 10, No: 3-4, Summer-Fall 2012, pp. 80, 93.

commentary and analytical reports about their declarations.<sup>130</sup> In the following detailed analysis, materials are classified chronologically to make it easier to follow.

### 2.1.1. 1990-93: First Signals of Tension

After the Islamic Revolution, a widely-used negative discourse appeared: “Turkey is not going to be Iran”. With every debated issue related to Islam, the fear that Islamic Revolution might spread to Turkey was put into words. Between 1989 and 2002, dozens of news reports concluded with the exact words, “Will Turkey become Iran?”<sup>131</sup> This general fear shows how Iran’s regime became a source of anxiety for various circles in Turkish bureaucracy and public. Apart from this indirect fear, there were various speeches in which the elites explicitly declared that the Iranian regime was a threat to Turkey. In an interview with researchers studying Islamic movements in Turkey, Kenan Evren, former president who stayed in power since 1980 coup, stated that “Islamic fundamentalist movements are not new in Turkey, they have always existed. Sometimes they act unnoticeably, sometimes obviously”. He added that such fundamentalist movements were supported by foreign countries;

*It is unfortunate that states around us have regimes which are in conflict to ours. Syria, Iran and Iraq are not democracies. One of them [Iran] has a sharia regime that is governed by very strict Islamic rules... After regime changes, states try to export the new regime to their neighborhood. It [Iran] tries to*

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<sup>130</sup>Elite speeches published in Cumhuriyet and Milliyet newspapers between 1 November 1989 and 2002 with the keywords “Iran, Islamic fundamentalism (irtica), threat (tehdit)” were reviewed for this chapter. There were 75 news reports in Cumhuriyet (including the main newspaper, magazine, science, additional specific publications, politics supplement and book supplement) and 80 news reports in Milliyet that included all three keywords. These newspapers were chosen because they are popular local newspapers for which online archives are available via membership. Another important element of the crisis between Turkey and Iran during the 1990s involved the assassinations of Kemalist (or leftist) intellectuals. Some were members of Cumhuriyet, which is also the reason why this newspaper’s archives were chosen for analysis.

This chapter also focuses on other important incidents related to the ideological confrontation between Turkey and Iran. Robert Olson’s analysis, in which he makes reference to six main developments in Turkish-Iranian relations in the 1990s in the framework of Kurdish and Islamic threats, are also taken into account. These are: 1) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Gölham Huseyin arrestments, 2) the Merve Kavakçı issue, 3) student upheavals in Iran in July 1999, 4) bombings in Turkey on 17 June 1995, 5) the Hezbollah Issue in Turkey, 6) the arrest of the killers of Turkish intellectuals and their connection with Iran.

<sup>131</sup>The last one was a column written by Yalçın Doğan in 2002, in which he mentioned “such obsolete questions such as will Turkey become Iran if the AKP comes to power...”.

*export it to us. It tries to become organized in our country. We have to be very careful about this.*<sup>132</sup>

Bahriye Üçok<sup>133</sup> left a report three days before she was assassinated in which she indicated that religious movements had been legalized and encouraged after 1982. Üçok warned both the government and opposition parties that a mobilization movement against these developments was needed immediately: “Islamic fundamentalism rises under the wings of the government”. She claimed that various religious organizations<sup>134</sup> were trying to draw Turkey away from the West and made Iranian Islamic Revolution propaganda in secret.<sup>135</sup>

In 1992, Kenan Evren’s memoirs were published in *Milliyet*. A dialogue between Mesut Yılmaz and Evren in 1989 demonstrates how Iran was securitized by both military and political elites. Evren recalled that,

*Foreign Minister Mesut Yılmaz came to me before the MGK (National Security Council Milli Güvenlik Kurulu) meeting and said, “The Iranian ambassador has a role in all Islamic fundamentalist movements in Turkey; we will deport him for this; we will recall our Tehran ambassador to Turkey; in this way we want to demonstrate our reaction against Iran’s interference in our internal affairs; we got Prime Minister (PM hereafter)’s [Turgut Özal] consent and now we are asking your approval”. I answered, “You had better do this. Actually, we are even late in doing this. We do not need Iran; they need us. We have been diffident so far. Iran is responsible for all the Islamic movements in Turkey. I’ll approve your move.”*<sup>136</sup>

In January 1993, Yekta Güngör Özden, President of the Constitutional Court, declared that, “The footsteps of sharia are deeply felt in Turkey. Islamic fundamentalism does not come abruptly, it comes very slowly. It happened like this in Iran. Secularism in Turkey is being confronted by an Islamic attack supported by external and internal groups.”<sup>137</sup> In this speech, an eminent bureaucrat warns clearly

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<sup>132</sup> Çetin Yetkin, “Evren: İrtica Tırmanıyor”, *Milliyet*, 19 April 1990, p. 14.

<sup>133</sup> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahriye Üçok was a Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP, Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti) parliamentarian who was killed in a bomb attack.

<sup>134</sup> Those organizations were Rabitat-ul Alem-ul Islami, Hizbut Tahrir, Hizbi Islami, Siret Un Nebi according to Üçok. She also accused Naksi, Nurcu and Süleymanci Tariqas of carrying an Islamic fundamentalist threat.

<sup>135</sup> “İktidar İrticanın Koruyucusu”, *Milliyet*, 11 September 1990, p. 16.

<sup>136</sup> “Kenan Evren’in Anıları 5. Bölüm”, *Milliyet*, 10 April 1992, p. 13.

<sup>137</sup> Oktay Akbal, “Ya Demokrasi, Ya İrtica”, *Milliyet*, 12 January 1993, p. 13.

that Turkey's secular regime and identity are in danger and external forces (such as Iran) are responsible.

When Süleyman Demirel became president in 1993, Tansu Çiller was elected as the new leader of the DYP (Doğru Yol Partisi, True Path Party). SHP (Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti, Social Democrat Populist Party) and DYP formed a coalition government, with Çiller becoming PM. Before she had time to receive a vote of confidence, the Sivas Massacre occurred on the 2nd of July, 1993. It was one of the biggest tragedies in the history of Turkish Republic. Specifically, this incident is remembered as the most violent act of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Turkey and it redoubled the fears of the secular elite. It was a major crisis both in terms of domestic politics and for its far-reaching consequences for Turkey's relations with Iran.

Every year on the anniversary of the death of Pir Sultan Abdal, a cultural festival has been organized in Sivas. Aziz Nesin, a very well-known atheist critic and poet, was one of the guests of the festival in 1993. Aziz Nesin had earlier translated Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* into Turkish, which had angered radical Islamist groups. Before that, Iran's supreme leader, Khomeini, had issued a fatwa ordering that Rushdie should be killed, which was a primary reason for linking this incident to Iran. Radical Islamist groups started a fire in Madimak Hotel that killed 37 people, most of whom were Alevi intellectuals staying in the hotel for the festival as well as two hotel employees.<sup>138</sup>

35 people were arrested the next day, and this number rose to 190 later on. A total of 124 out of the 190 defendants were charged with "attempting to establish a religious state by changing the constitutional order" and indicted.<sup>139</sup> This incident was seen as a major assault on free speech and human rights in Turkey, and significantly deepened the rift between society's religious and secular segments. One

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<sup>138</sup> Asım Bezirci, Nesimi Çimen, Muhlis Akarsu, Metin Altıok and Hasret Gültekin were among the Turkish intellectuals who died in this event. Aziz Nesin was seriously injured but survived. In a documentary about February 28, there are scenes in which fundamental Islamist groups shout slogans such as "Muslim Turkey". In the same documentary, a man's voice was heard saying "This is the fire of hell. Please God send this fire inside and burn them!" M. Ali Birand, "Son Darbe: 28 Subat", Part 1, (Part 1), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GR3L4BmcZBo> (23.08.2012). This event has remained a contested issue, with many debates continuing, both in the political and public arenas.

<sup>139</sup> For details of the event and the prosecution process, see "40 Killed in a Turkish Hotel Set Afire by Muslim Militants", *New York Times*, 3 July 1993; "Sivas'ta 14 Yıl Sonra Madımak Sıcağı", *Radikal*, 03 July 2007; "Sivas'ta İdam Kesinleşiyor", *Radikal*, 18 October 1998.



of the alleged criminals's lawyers was Şevket Kazan, who was the Minister of Justice during the Refah-Yol (Welfare-True Path) Coalition, and other lawyers of the defendants were also drawn from the RP,<sup>140</sup> which caused considerable criticism within military and political elites, and among the public.

### **2.1.2. 1994-96: Rising Impact of the Domestic Environment**

In early 1994, both the DYP and the SHP faced challenges from corruption allegations against their party members, and the start of the 1994 economic crisis only inflamed these rumors.<sup>141</sup> On 27 March, RP increased its public support from 9% to 19% in local elections. The DYP and the ANAP (Anavatan Partisi, Motherland Party) achieved similar levels of support, although their share of the vote had fallen compared to previous elections. Following this success, RP leader, Necmettin Erbakan, and his party's members were hoping for a striking result in the subsequent general elections. As Erbakan put it, "The other parties have voters, but we have believers". He stressed that the National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş Hareketi)<sup>142</sup> was very different from the other parties, since it was neither materialistic nor a collaborator with the West. Considering Turkey's political and economic environment of the 1990s, it was not surprising that Erbakan's support increased swiftly. However, the RP's growing popularity and power would soon become the main reason why the military and political elites' concerns related to Iran deepened.

Even before the local elections, the General Directorate of Security sent a report titled "Iran's actions towards Turkey" to PM Çiller and the General Staff<sup>143</sup>, in which they reported that Iranian agents had been exploiting the advantage of diplomatic immunity to infiltrate the Islamic Revolution into Turkey since 1983:

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<sup>140</sup> Many of those people joined the AKP (Justice and Development Party, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), and the SP (Felicity Party, Saadet Partisi) later on.

See, "Sivas Davası'nın avukatları şimdi ne yapıyor?" <http://www.focushaber.com/sivas-davasi-nin-avukatlari-simdi-ne-yapiyor--h-119465.html> (28.05.2012).

<sup>141</sup> Inflation reached its highest level (149%) since the Second World War. Banks were seized and the April 5 economic decisions were made, which caused serious harm to the public.

<sup>142</sup> The name that Erbakan and his followers used to refer their ideology. Milli Görüş Hareketi (National Outlook Movement) was not new, as its roots went back to 1967.

<sup>143</sup> The report is divided into three subtitles: "PKK Actions in This Country", "Iran-Armenia Relations", and "Attempts to Export the Islamic Revolution".

*In embassies, consulate generals, consulates and Iran Cultural Centers the attempts to export the Islamic Revolution are organized with the help of diplomatic immunity. Propaganda materials from Iran are brought in and distributed in Turkey. Meetings and memorial days are organized to inform the Turkish public about the Islamic Revolution. Iranian students that are educated in Turkey organize the movements. Our citizens that may have similar ideologies are taken to Iran for the aim of ideological indoctrination. Opponents of the Islamic regime in Turkey are followed by the Iranian secret service. They also organize intelligence gathering activities about Turkey. Internal issues such as the headscarf are applied as a means for Iran to make revolutionary propaganda. Iranian students play a considerable part in this Iranian propaganda that aims to attack Kemalist thought and secularism. Iranian diplomats distribute free pro-Islamic regime magazines, brochures, newspapers, booklets and tapes in Turkey. Tehran radio broadcasts against Atatürk and secularism. Turkish citizens are encouraged to attend religious classes in Kum (in Iran), and they are sent back to Turkey to make further propaganda.<sup>144</sup>*

Iran was officially accused over the assassinations of several Turkish intellectuals in 1993<sup>145</sup>. Then, in 1996, İrfan Çağrıçı, the leader of the Islamic Movement Organization, confessed after his arrest that his organization had ties with Iran. This caused a diplomatic crisis between the two neighbors, with eight Iranian diplomats being expelled. When RP came to power as the biggest coalition partner, this was welcomed by Iranian elites. However, the resulting Refah-Yol Coalition led to increasing elite concern about longstanding challenges to Turkey's national identity and secular regime, specifically the Kurdish issue and, more importantly, Islamic fundamentalism.

The coalition marked the first time in the republic's history when a party with an openly religious orientation had come to power. Erbakan's pro-Iranian policies divided the military and bureaucratic elites' approaches towards Iran. For instance, he made his first foreign trip to Iran, and claimed that neither Iran nor Syria was sponsoring PKK terrorism, despite receiving MİT (National Intelligence Agency) reports that indicated the opposite. The Islamist members of the coalition were

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<sup>144</sup> Soner Gürel, Tolga Sardan, "Emniyet'ten 'İran'a dikkat' raporu", **Milliyet**, 7 February 1994, p. 31.

<sup>145</sup> See, Minister of Interior Affairs İsmet Sezgin's press statement on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 1993. In this statement Sezgin indicated that, those who had ties with Çetin Emeç and Turan Dursun assassinations were militants of Islamic Movement Organization and they were trained to be guerrillas in Iran. See, Ely Karmon, "Radical Islamic Political Groups in Turkey", **Middle East Review of International Affairs**, Vol: 1, No: 4, 1997, <http://www.gloria-center.org/1997/12/karmon-1997-12-02/>, (10.06.2013).

accused of undermining the secular regime, while a considerable number of people believed that the coalition was collaborating with Iran's Ayatollahs in exporting Iran's Islamic regime, and cooperating with Iran in Turkey's war with the PKK's Kurdish separatist movement.<sup>146</sup> Such accusations legitimized the belief that the Turkish military had to act to protect Turkey's unity and solidarity.

Almost all the media reportage and commentary supporting securitization was published after the Refah-Yol Coalition came to power,<sup>147</sup> strongly supporting the argument that these domestic fears were linked to foreign threats, following Turkish political tradition. For example, columnist Ahmet Taner Kışlalı claimed that secularism was being destroyed in Turkey. While criticizing the RP, he argued that its representatives should absorb democracy and secularism. Kışlalı quoted from a Turkish general: "When the Iranian generals realized that the Khomeini movement was purely Islamic itself, it was too late".<sup>148</sup> Kışlalı's use of this quotation indicates how Turkey's military elites had securitized Iran's regime as a threat to Turkey's secular regime and identity, and how this view had been accepted by an important journalist, who had the support of a considerable portion of the Turkish public.

The pro-Iranian regime speeches of some RP representatives also caused reactions from the secular side. When RP parliamentarian Bahri Zengin said that the Khomeini revolution was a bottom-up movement demanded by the Iranian public, he was criticized by the secular elites. He also added that Chief of General Staff's ideas were of no particular concern for the RP because, for him, what the Turkish people wanted was decisive in this case, implying that they wanted an Islamic regime.<sup>149</sup>

### 2.1.3. 1997: Increasing Threat Perceptions

Ideological tension between Turkey and Iran reached a peak with the Sincan incident. Between 31 January and 2 February 1997, "A Night for Jerusalem (Al-Quds Night, Kudüs Gecesi)" which had been originally declared by Khomeini in

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<sup>146</sup> Özden Zeynep Oktav, "Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations", *Perceptions*, Summer 2004, (Changing), pp. 105-106.

<sup>147</sup> The Welfare-True Path coalition government (also known as the first Erbakan government) was the 54th government of the Turkish Republic (28 June 1996-30 June 1997). The public and media informally named the coalition "hacı and sister" (hacı ve bacı).

<sup>148</sup> Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, "30 Ağustos Muhtırası", *Cumhuriyet*, 04 September 1996, p. 3.

<sup>149</sup> Oktay Akbal, "Yüzde 21 ile İktidar Olunmaz", *Milliyet*, 05 September 1996, p. 21.

1980 as an anniversary for the Iranian Islamic Revolution, was organized in Sincan, Ankara. At the time of this incident, the mayor of Sincan was an ideological and political supporter of RP, Bekir Yıldız.<sup>150</sup> Yıldız invited Mahmud bin Yasin, representative of PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) in Turkey, and the Iranian Ambassador Muhammed Riza Bagheri to the event. In his speech at the event, in which posters of Hamas and Hizbollah leaders, Abbas Musavi, Musa Sadr, Fethi Sakaki, were hung, Bagheri declared that “those who signed agreements with the United States and Israel would, sooner or later, be punished by Turkish youths.”<sup>151</sup> Bagheri also criticized Israel, declaring that Britain had let this illegal child be born and America had raised it.<sup>152</sup> He advised those who attended the meeting to fearlessly support sharia. In a symbolic move, while the meeting was still proceeding, TAF (Turkish Armed Forces) sent 50 tanks down Sincan’s main street, Ataturk Avenue on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February.

In the eyes of the Turkish elites, the so-called Bagheri crisis formed part of a broader campaign to form an Islamic regime in Turkey similar to Iran. It caused a great political reaction in Turkey, with both countries’ ambassadors being recalled. Opposition parties and TAF defined the Sincan incident as a challenge to Turkey’s secular regime and identity, and an attack on the essential features of the Turkish Republic. Mayor Yıldız was later tried and sentenced to over 19 years in prison, with 11 bureaucrats also being found guilty and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

February 28 1997 MGK meeting, which followed the Sincan incident, and its decisions<sup>153</sup> are important to understand the level of securitization towards Islamic fundamentalism and Iran. The meeting was the longest one in MGK history, resulting in an eighteen-point memorandum. According to President Demirel and Minister of Internal Affairs, Meral Akşener, Güven Erkaya, Commander of the TNF

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<sup>150</sup> Olson, Türkiye-İran, p. 34.

<sup>151</sup> “Tepki Yağıyor”, **Hürriyet**, 03 February 1997; “Tahrik Bitmiyor”, **Hürriyet**, 04 February 1997, Quoted in, Ofra Bengio and Gencer Özcan, “Old Grievances New Fears: Arab Perceptions of Turkey and its Alignment with Israel”, **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol: 15, No: 2, 2000, p. 25.

<sup>152</sup> Olson, Türkiye-İran, p. 35.

<sup>153</sup> MGK meetings used to be held once in a month (now bimonthly), with the president, PM, minister of foreign affairs, minister of internal affairs, minister of defence, chief of staff, force commanders, secretary general of the MGK attending. The aim is to discuss internal and external security issues and strategic goals. A memorandum is prepared after each meeting, in the form of a recommendation to the government. Normally, remains a secret document. However, following the February 28 meeting, the elites leaked it to the media, presumably to tell the public why and to what extent they believed Islamic fundamentalism and its foreign supporters was a serious threat.

(Turkish Naval Forces), criticized the government severely.<sup>154</sup> He stated that the government had been supporting Islamic fundamentalist movements and that PM Erbakan never mentioned “being a Turk” in his speeches. Contrary to usual practice, the meeting’s memorandum had the characteristics of a command rather than a recommendation. The most important points concerned eight-year compulsory primary education, Koran courses, religious sect actions, application of the dress code, and limitations on Islamic capital.<sup>155</sup>

In the same meeting, the generals declared that “fundamental Islamist movements which threaten Turkey’s secular democratic regime are linked to Iran”, and “Iran’s attempts that will destabilize Turkey’s regime should be monitored.” They criticized Iranian ambassador Baqeri’s speech at the Jerusalem Night meeting, and Kazan was also warned for visiting Yıldız in jail. The generals stated that the RP’s actions and speeches contradicted.<sup>156</sup>

The diplomatic crisis eased a little with the establishment of the 55<sup>th</sup> government, which was a coalition of the ANAP, DSP (Demokratik Sol Parti, Democratic Left Party) and the DTP (Demokrat Türkiye Partisi, Democrat Turkey Party) after the February 28 crisis. During this period, Khatemi, who was a more moderate leader than his predecessor, came to power in Iran. His efforts to make democratic reforms in Iranian politics were welcomed by Turkey, and created the impression that his attitude would improve Turkish-Iranian relations.<sup>157</sup> Khatemi also softened Iran’s policies on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which led the U.S. to lift its embargo on certain Iranian exports. These developments created hope that Iranian-American relations would improve, which was also desired by Turkey. However, it appeared not to be enough for friendly relations, regarding both the US’s and Turkey’s threat perception from Iran.<sup>158</sup>

In an interview, Doğu Perinçek, the Head of TİP (Türkiye İşçi Partisi , Workers’ Party of Turkey), mentioned a report written by the Rand Corporation of CIA stating that, “*the U.S. was late to abandon the Shah in Iran. We shall not make*

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<sup>154</sup>M. Ali Birand, “Son Darbe: 28 Şubat Belgeseli”, 8. Part, (Part 8), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBHbFSFV8rU>, (25.08.2012)

<sup>155</sup>For all eighteen points see, Evren Değer, “Hükümete Taviz Yok”, **Milliyet**, 31 March 1997, p. 18.

<sup>156</sup>Mete Belovacıklı, “Notlar”, **Milliyet**, 02 March 1992, p. 14.

<sup>157</sup>Selin Çağlayan, “İran’da Hatemi Dönemi”, 04 February 1997, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=-258151> (30.09.2012).

<sup>158</sup>Oktav, p. 109.

*the same mistake in the Turkish case. There is no possibility to control Turkey with parties such as the ANAP and the DYP ... We shall support the RP from now on.*"<sup>159</sup>

He clearly thought from this that the US would support a moderate Islamic model in Turkey, comparing this situation with the U.S.'s attitude towards Iran. There was an in-sight fear that Turkey might become like Iran by going through a similar process.<sup>160</sup>

In April 1997, a retired admiral's commentary<sup>161</sup> was published in *Cumhuriyet*. In this commentary, the admiral revealed information about the February 28<sup>th</sup> MGK meeting, in which generals stressed the importance of Article 2 of the Turkish Constitution.<sup>162</sup> He recalled that there were specific reasons why the MGK viewed Islamic fundamentalism as an existential threat, the most important being that secularism was the keystone of the Republic's founding principles, so it needed to be protected for the republic to remain secure. According to him, certain groups that wanted the country to become a "Turkish Islamic Republic" by imitating Iranian regime. He completely opposed this idea, claiming that secularism and the secular identity were essential features of the Turkish Republic.

In April 1997, the Turkish General Staff declared that the PKK and followers of sharia had cooperated to divide the Turkish Republic, arguing that it was crucial to destroy Islamic fundamentalist movements which were linked to the PKK. The General Staff clearly indicated that Iran and Syria had supported separatist terrorist and Islamic fundamentalist organizations and this issue was the first priority related to domestic and foreign threats needing an immediate response. They added that Iran led those countries which economically and politically supported Islamic and separatist terrorist movements in Turkey.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Leyla Tavşanoğlu, "Cumhuriyetten Öç Almak İstiyorlar", *Cumhuriyet*, 16 February 1997, p. 8.

<sup>160</sup> However, in June 1997, an American commander, Richard Bethuren, visited Turkey and declared that "they appreciate the Turkish Armed' efforts in trying to protect the secular order and democracy, and prevent Turkey from becoming Iran". Thus, the signals about Washington's attitude towards developments in Turkey were not very clear. This can only show us that the US's point of view was important for Turkey in terms of its relations with other states.

<sup>161</sup> Tanju Erdem, "Akıllar Başlara Alınmalıdır", *Cumhuriyet*, 21 April 1997, p. 2.

<sup>162</sup> Article 2 states that "The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state governed by the rule of law; bearing in mind the concepts of public peace, national solidarity and justice; respecting human rights; loyal to the nationalism of Atatürk, and based on the fundamental tenets set forth in the Preamble."

<sup>163</sup> "Genelkurmay Bölücü ve Dinci Teröre Karşı Yeniden Yapılandı: Öncelik İç Tehdit", *Cumhuriyet*, 30 April 1997, p. 5.

According to Sinkaya, Turkey was amongst those countries which Iranian radicals targeted for exporting the Islamic Revolution. As evidence of the military's concerns, in 1997, the General Staff gave briefings titled the "Islamic fundamentalist threat" to media members, academicians, bureaucrats, NGO members and judiciary members. On 29 April 1997, the military elites declared in a media briefing that Iran aimed to support terrorism to Turkey and export its anti-secular regime. The military stated that they had the necessary arms and were ready to respond when the public wanted.<sup>164</sup> The briefing also described Iran's role,

*Separatist and Islamist terrorist groups are cooperating to destroy Turkish Republic. The existential threat is separatism and reactionary Islam. Destroying them is of vital importance. Iran supports organizations such as Turkish Hezbollah, Turkish Islamic Jihad, and so on... Iran uses terror as a means for its political aims. Among all states which support the PKK, Iran and Syria being in the first place, give military and economic aid to radical Islamists..*<sup>165</sup>

In this briefing, the General Staff made further attempts to explain the reasons why Iran and Syria were seen as threats, mentioning that both the PKK and fundamental Islam threats came from both neighbors. They accused Turkey's civil authority (the Erbakan government) of being too close to Iran, adding that "It may be on Turkey's agenda to use economic, political and even military means to stop the neighbors' support for terrorism".<sup>166</sup>

When the General Staff called members of the judiciary to a briefing, Şevket Kazan did not permit them to attend. However, although he threatened to open an investigation into those who went, four hundred still participated in the briefing, showing the level of acceptance in the judiciary that Islamic fundamentalism and its foreign supporters constituted an imminent threat. The only group that did not agree that such a threat existed was the one accused of constituting it. In this meeting, the participants were informed about Turkey's domestic situation and how and why some countries, principally Iran, supported Islamic political movements in Turkey. They also listed the names of press and broadcasting corporations and companies

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<sup>164</sup> "Ordu: Öncelik İç Tehdit", **Milliyet**, 30 April 1997, p. 18.

<sup>165</sup> "Ordu 'İrtica'yı Anlatacak", **Cumhuriyet**, 05 June 1997, p. 1.

<sup>166</sup> Şükrü Elekdağ, "İç Tehdit Dış Tehditin Önünde Mi?", **Milliyet Dış Haberler**, 12 May 1997, p. 19.

which they claimed supported fundamental Islamic activities in Turkey.<sup>167</sup> In the following days, the military held briefings that other groups attended, with the same issues being discussed.<sup>168</sup>

Derya Sazak, a Milliyet columnist who wrote various columns regarding Turkey's perception of Islamic regime, discussed how the elites securitized Iran over the Islamic fundamentalism threat. He wrote that,

*the tenth point of the February 28 memorandum literally targeted Iran. The military's assessment is a clear sign of Turkey's distrust towards the larger neighbor on the eastern border. The General Staff thinks that Iran is trying to export the Islamic regime to Turkey.*<sup>169</sup>

Although this study only focuses on fundamental Islam and excludes the PKK threat to allow a more detailed and clear analysis, the threat perception related to Iran in reality combined both. It was clearly seen that concerns related to both the PKK and Islamic fundamentalism were considered as foreign threats. One statement in the briefing notice summarizes well how those two issues were linked,

*Radical Islamists prefer the word 'ummah' rather than 'nation'. Because of this, Islamists consider PKK followers as simply Muslims and support them. They also consider Iran and Syria's support for the PKK righteous. Iran and Syria also give economic support to radical Islamists. For this reason, the PKK and radical Islamist follow the same lines.*<sup>170</sup>

Turkey's fears about Iran led it to pursue new alliances. In particular, Turkey and Israel started a new strategic dialogue in 1997. According to the Turkish military and diplomats, cooperation with Israel would provide a number of possible benefits. It would strengthen Turkey against its "problematic neighbors" in that a Turkish-Israeli axis would constitute a new and active balance against Iran and Syria. This cooperation would limit the room for maneuver of neighbors possessing WMDs and

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<sup>167</sup> "İrtica Yakin Tehlike", **Milliyet Geniş Açı**, 11 June 1997, p. 18.

<sup>168</sup> Since the content of all briefings are almost the same, details of each are not given here. Some other sources are as follows, "Trilyonluk Gözaltı", **Milliyet**, 11 June 1997, p. 1; Derya Sazak, "Silahlı Uyarı", **Milliyet Geniş Açı**, 12 June 1997, p. 18. For further news about the meetings, one can scan any Turkish journal between February-December 1997.

<sup>169</sup> Derya Sazak, "Askeri Brifing", **Milliyet Geniş Açı**, 30 April 1997, p. 18.

<sup>170</sup> "Apo, Suriye Kışlasında", **Milliyet**, 30 April 1997, p. 18.



seen as the source of “some movements” against Turkey.<sup>171</sup> This Turkish-Israeli partnership and the military’s increasing role in politics concerned Iranian leaders.<sup>172</sup>

Soon afterwards, when Turkey declared Islamic fundamentalism and its foreign supporters as an existential threat, the military requested missiles from Israel to counterbalance Iran’s chemical weapons.<sup>173</sup> This is significant in demonstrating how Turkish policy makers manage foreign relations according to current circumstances. That is, cooperation with the West becomes important in times of crisis with the East, and vice versa.

On 21 May 1997, the Supreme Court of Appeals Prosecutor’s Office<sup>174</sup> presented a closure case against the RP to the Constitutional Court, claiming that “they have some illegal actions and some members targeted secularism”, warning that Turkey would slide into a civil war.<sup>175</sup> This case was concluded on 16 January 1998, with the order to close the RP. In the same case, Necmettin Erbakan, Şevket Kazan, Ahmet Tekdal, Şevki Yılmaz, Hasan Hüseyin Ceylan, Halil Çelik and Şükrü Karatepe were all banned from political activity for five years.<sup>176</sup>

After the General Staff declared that Iran was supporting separatist and fundamental Islamist movements, the Ministry of Internal Affairs denounced Iran for supporting drug trafficking. The security general directorate released a report claiming that in 39 operations related to drug trafficking in 1995, 39 Iranians had been arrested.<sup>177</sup> Not only the General Staff, but also several ministries and bureaucrats also accused Iran of supporting illegal financial and political activities in Turkey.

On 26 May 1997, an extraordinary session of the Supreme Military Council was held to decide whether the Islamic fundamentalist threat should be categorized

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<sup>171</sup> Sami Kohen, “İsrail İle Stratejik Diyalog”, **Milliyet Dış Haberler**, 07 May 1997, p. 20.

<sup>172</sup> According to Sinkaya, because Turkey developed alliances with the US and Israel, this hindered relations between Turkey and Iran. Additionally, Iran was also concerned with increased nationalism in the 1990s, which caused a fear of Pan-Turkism as Iran hosted nearly 25 million people of Turkish-speaking minorities. For further information see, Sinkaya, Turkey-Iran, pp. 4-8.

<sup>173</sup> Yasemin Congar, “İran Tehditine İsrail Füzesi”, **Milliyet Dış Haberler**, p. 21.

<sup>174</sup> “Yargıtay Cumhuriyet Bassavcılığı” in Turkish.

<sup>175</sup> “1997’deki Refah Partisi Kapatma Davası İddianamesi”, 14 March 2008, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/8460645.asp>, (06.08.2012); [http://www.belgenet.com/dava/rpdava\\_savas.html](http://www.belgenet.com/dava/rpdava_savas.html) (06.08.2012).

<sup>176</sup> For the original resolution text (in Turkish) see, [http://www.belgenet.com/dava/rpdava\\_karar.html](http://www.belgenet.com/dava/rpdava_karar.html) (06.08.2012).

<sup>177</sup> Alper Ballı, “İran’in Yasadışı Kuşatması”, **Cumhuriyet**, 18 May 1997, p. 3.

as the most important one in the National Military Strategic Concept. Military bureaucrats shared their knowledge about the Islamic fundamentalist threat coming from Iran with PM Erbakan, who approved the removal of a hundred military staff members because of their possible support for Islamic movements in Turkey. This put Erbakan in a difficult position due to his relations with Islamic groups and the media.<sup>178</sup>

There was also resistance to the secular elite's securitizing moves related to Islamic fundamentalism. In June 1997, Erbakan declared that claims that fundamental Islam represented an existential threat to Turkey were figments of media imagination. Shortly after his statement, the General Staff declared that they would give a briefing about "Islamist fundamentalist movements" on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June. *Cumhuriyet* reported that the General Staff had made some specific preparations before this briefing, the most striking being that they had collected data about bureaucrats with relations to Islamic movements and academicians who had visited Iran.<sup>179</sup>

In June 1997, the MGK gave a briefing in which they declared that they would intervene militarily if necessary. According to Nazlı Ilıcak, media members were precensored during this period.<sup>180</sup> Ali Bayramoğlu, a columnist in *Yenişafak*, similarly argued that "February 28 was done with the help of the media, not arms".<sup>181</sup> However, Fikret Bila, a columnist in *Milliyet*, argued that "the media fraction was important, but its impact was not primary".<sup>182</sup> M. Ali Birand made a parallel explanation about the situation: "The media believes wholeheartedly that the government was seriously dangerous".<sup>183</sup> This study follows Bila's argument that the media is under the control of the ruling elites. Thus, although it is not the primary actor in the securitization, it is analyzed as a secondary actor in the securitization of Islamic fundamentalism and Iran.

In this briefing, the General Staff sternly warned the Refah-Yol Coalition government, claiming that government bodies had failed to react to the Islamic

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<sup>178</sup>"Refah'tan Orduya Suçlama", *Cumhuriyet*, 26 May 1997, p 4.

<sup>179</sup>"Ordu 'İrtica'yi Anlatacak", *Cumhuriyet*, 05 June 1997, p. 1.

<sup>180</sup> M. Ali Birand, "Son Darbe 28 Şubat", Part 9, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h8OEAGvkgY>, (Part 9), (10.09.2012).

<sup>181</sup> Birand, Part 9.

<sup>182</sup> Birand, Part 9.

<sup>183</sup> Birand, Part 9.

fundamentalist threat. In the briefing, the RP was accused of maintaining relations with Islamist groups that themselves had ties with separatist terror. The military constantly repeated that Islamic fundamentalism was an existential threat against the unity and solidarity of Turkish Republic that had to be responded to.

In a clear declaration of securitization, the briefing stated that “Iran, Libya, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Islamic organizations in those countries supported fundamental Islamist groups in Turkey”.<sup>184</sup> In the briefing text,<sup>185</sup> Iran was seen as the primary threat:

*Iran provides every kind of moral and material support to establish a Sharia regime in Turkey. In this regard, there is evidence indicating that some fundamental Islamist terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah, Salaam, and the Islamic Movement Organization, are indoctrinated, and the militants of such organizations are trained by Iran. For example, a captured Islamic movement militant confessed that “he was trained in Iran and the organization had relations with Iranian diplomats in Turkey.”*

*Iran supports Islamic fundamentalist groups in Turkey especially via the media, and interferes in the internal affairs of Turkey. Iran makes every possible effort to motivate Islamic fundamentalist elements Turkey. Thus, a general of the Revolutionary Guards of Iran, Muhsin Rızai, said on a TV show that they can fight on two fronts at one time, one the U.S.A. and other its Western neighbor. This clearly shows that they support Islamist movements in Turkey.*<sup>186</sup>

In one speech, PM Yılmaz asked Erbakan whether he was PM of Turkey or Iran.<sup>187</sup> This is one of the very clear examples of how the political elites themselves considered the Iranian regime as a threat, and accused each other of being a part of this threat. According to the paper, the General Staff publicized any information they possessed related to the Islamic fundamentalism problem in the expectation that the public would take action. Remembering the factors necessary for a securitizing move, this case has a securitizing actor (General Staff), an audience (public), a referent object (secular regime and identity), an existential threat (export of the Islamic regime), and a call for taking action.

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<sup>184</sup> “Şeyhler Ordusu Kuruldu”, **Cumhuriyet**, 11 June 1997, p. 1.

Such expressions were referred to in many other news reports and columns in various newspapers. For the aim of avoiding repetition, this study does not go into the details of all of them. For further news indicating that Iran was considered as a threat in this briefing see, “Şeriat Sermayesi Besleniyor”, **Cumhuriyet**, 12 June 1997.

<sup>185</sup> For the full text of briefing see, “Laik Cumhuriyet Tehdit Ediliyor”, **Cumhuriyet**, 12 June 1997, pp. 10-11.

<sup>186</sup> “Ordu İrticayı Anlatacak”, **Cumhuriyet**, 05 June 1997, p. 1.

<sup>187</sup> Mustafa Balbay, “İrticaret”, **Cumhuriyet**, 12 June 1997, p. 1.

The General Staff argued that Turkey's religious affairs administration needed to be restructured, as it concerned them that "some parts of Istanbul looked like Iran", those where Koran courses took place, which had relations with religious sects. They claimed that such courses were controlled by Islamic political groups (they especially indicated the RP here) and that this structure needed to change.<sup>188</sup>

The issue of the eight-year compulsory primary education system was also a source of discussion related to the Islamic fundamentalist threat. Cemil Çiçek, an ANAP parliamentarian, and known for his religious identity was uncomfortable with this. His concern was that, with a longer period of compulsory education, it would be impossible to school the "hafız"<sup>189</sup> in Turkey, so people would go to Iran for this education instead, which would threaten the unity and solidarity of the Turkish Republic.<sup>190</sup>

Then the Western Study Group<sup>191</sup> prepared a supposedly secret report analyzing Islamic fundamentalism in all its aspects, which was leaked to the press. It warned that "If the government does not take measures, the political part of Islamic fundamentalism will come to power on its own by the 2000s". As the report noted,

*Turkish Republic is encountering the biggest Islamic fundamentalism threat since its establishment. The purpose of all the National Outlook Movement followers, sects, and radical Islamists is to establish an Islamic Republic like Iran. In case there is a need for a power-grab, radical Islamist groups are arming themselves very fast.*<sup>192</sup>

After summarizing the current situation, the report added that the Turkish Armed Forces would use all its power to eradicate Islamic fundamentalist movements. They also called on civil groups to take action against such movements, while another proposal was to discharge military officers who had relations with religious groups.

During this period, Erbakan was obliged to resign because of all these developments. The next government (the 55<sup>th</sup> Government) allowed various

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<sup>188</sup> "Genelkurmay: Diyanetin Yapısı Yeniden Tartışılmalı", **Cumhuriyet**, 22 June 1997, p. 4.

<sup>189</sup> People who memorize the Koran from beginning to end.

<sup>190</sup> Oral Çalışlar, "Eğitimden Önce", **Cumhuriyet**, 29 July 1997, p. 4.

<sup>191</sup> It was a unit formed within the General Staff after February 28 to monitor whether MGK decisions were implemented or not and to gather intelligence about Islamist groups.

<sup>192</sup> "Devlet İrticanın Elinde", **Cumhuriyet**, 01 August 1997, p. 1.

extraordinary measures to be taken in the fight against political Islam. In particular, they accepted the EMASYA protocol, signed between the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which allowed the military to act against radical Islam without the consent of political governors. In this way, the civil bureaucracy was placed under the control of military. In addition, many civil bureaucrats, including Melih Gokcek (later mayor of Ankara) were placed under investigation. According to Besir Atalay (deputy PM of the current government), the conservative rectors of some universities were forced to resign or were dismissed. Finally, the generals made harsh speeches for the media almost every day, with a strong emphasis on secularism.

Shortly after Erbakan's resignation, an interview with Admiral Güven Erkaya demonstrated how the elites used discourse as a means to draw attention to an existential threat and to confront it. When asked if a military coup might have taken place or not, he answered:

*If somebody tries to make Turkey Iran, intends to change the democratic secular regime into a religious one... We thought that we should dissuade them with "discourse" first. Everything was stated in the MGK. If Islamic fundamentalists want to take it to the streets, what will be done about this? The Turkish Armed Forces analyzed this and took precautions. This is what has been done. The threat against the secular and democratic regime of Turkey has not ended yet.<sup>193</sup>*

The military intelligence service prepared another report in which they focused on the new strategies of the Naqshbandi, Nurcu and Suleymanci sects, Hezbollah, IBDA-C (İslami Büyük Doğu Akıncıları Cephesi, Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front), and the FP (Fazilet Partisi, Virtue Party). It was interesting here that a Turkish political party was mentioned as one of other Islamic or terrorist groups,<sup>194</sup> which again indicates the level of securitization against all Islamic movements and even political parties in Turkey at this point.

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<sup>193</sup>Yavuz Donat, "İhtilal Yapmak İstemedik", **Milliyet Geniş Açı**, 11 August 1997, p. 16. ; Yavuz Donat, "Tehdit Sona Ermedi", **Milliyet Geniş Açı**, 13 August 1997, p. 16.

<sup>194</sup> For further details see, Yusuf Özkan, "Son İrtica Raporu", **Milliyet**, 29 March 1998, p. 16.

#### 2.1.4. 1998: Ongoing Process of February 28

As previously mentioned, on January 1998, the RP was closed on the grounds that it had become a center of anti-secular activities. Vural Savaş, the Supreme Court of Appeals Prosecutor, opened the case and his attitude and speeches about the RP and radical Islam were critical. Erbakan and six other members of the RP were banned from politics for five years. However, the FP was rapidly formed with the same ideology to replace the RP, which inflamed anxiety of military elites, regarding Islamic fundamentalism and civil bureaucracy's ties with Iran.<sup>195</sup>

The general directorate of security affairs prepared a report titled "Terrorism and Turkey",<sup>196</sup> which clearly highlighted Iran's impact on Islamist terrorist movements in Turkey. According to the report, the Islamic Movement Organization, which was believed to be responsible for the assassinations of intellectuals such as Uğur Mumcu, Muammer Aksoy, Çetin Emeç and Turan Dursun, was "a counter intelligence project of the Iranian intelligence service, rather than a terrorist organization"<sup>197</sup>. Iran and Islamist elements in the Middle East were also blamed for ideological separatist movements emerging in Turkey. "After the Islamic Revolution, Iran wanted to export its regime to Turkey, and that is why many fundamental Islamic groups appeared, especially in the Eastern and South-Eastern cities of Turkey"<sup>198</sup>, the report claimed. The Hezbollah terrorist organization, with its roots in Iran, and its different subgroups were detailed in the report.<sup>199</sup>

In June 1998, Supreme Military Council conducted a meeting in which it was decided that 160 military officers and sergeants should be discharged because of

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<sup>195</sup> The Islamic fundamentalism threat also discomforted Alevi groups in Turkey. According to what the elites and the public believed, Shia Iran aimed to control Alevi people in Turkey, since they believed that they were steadily becoming more and more "atheist and communist". According to Cumhuriyet columnist İlhan Selçuk, Islamic fundamentalism in Anatolia threatened both the Alevi and Sunni population, as well as the secular Republic of Turkey. He added that everybody was asking the same question: "Will Turkey become Iran?" He warned that "Islamic fundamentalism is like terrorism. Regardless of the source it comes, it needed to be resisted".

See, İlhan Selçuk, "İrtica Terror Gibidir", **Cumhuriyet**, 16 June 1998, p. 2.

<sup>196</sup> Alper Ballı, "Terörde İran parmağı", **Cumhuriyet**, 13 April 1998, p. 1.

<sup>197</sup> Ballı, Terörde, p. 1.

<sup>198</sup> Ballı, Terörde, p. 1.

<sup>199</sup> For details of the paper and branches of Hezbollah see, Ballı, Terörde, p. 1 ; Ruşen Çakır, "Amaç, Kürt şeriatçılığı", **Milliyet**, 20.01.2000, p. 18.

allaged relations with Islamic fundamentalist groups. The council listed four points of concern related to the government's attitude.

*First, the legal basis for the fight against Islamic fundamentalism is not enough. Second, representatives of some parties –especially ANAP- are not supportive of precautions against Islamic fundamentalism. Third, representatives of the government act with popular concerns rather than state interests. Fourth, all these developments encourage Islamic fundamentalist groups.*<sup>200</sup>

The report also mentioned a particular Islamic high-school, which it claimed had pro-Iranian teachers and publications encouraging an Iranian type Islamic regime. There were also other Islamic schools that were accused of trying to spread and consolidate Islamist doctrine.

According to Olson, the (ironic) tale of the two mayors' is important to understand the role of fundamental Islam in Turkish-Iranian relations.<sup>201</sup> When they were arrested in 1998, Tayyip Erdoğan (Istanbul) and Gholam-Hussein Karbaschi (Tehran) were mayors of two very important cities. Erdoğan was found guilty for reading a poem at a meeting in Siirt (Turkey), which said that "minarets are our bayonets, domes are our helmets, mosques are our barracks, Muslims are our soldiers". The prosecution's claim that this speech provoked Islamic fundamentalist movements in Turkey was accepted by the court, and Erdoğan was sentenced to ten months in prison, losing both his mayoralty and FP membership. One of Erbakan's consultants declared that they were disappointed by Iran's silence about Erdoğan, which increased concerns that the Erbakan government had ties with Iranian Islamic groups. On the other hand, Karbaschi's moderate support of secular reforms in Iran caused him to be arrested in 1998. He was released in 2000, after being pardoned by Ali Khamenei.

During 1999, the elites' anti-fundamentalist discourse and related news reporting decreased, although it was not finished yet. For example, in January, a report was prepared by relevant departments for the MGK analyzing the fight against religious terrorism. It found that the government was not taking all necessary precautions related to the Islamic fundamentalist threat. The report analyzed religious

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<sup>200</sup> "Orduda Büyük Temizlik", *Cumhuriyet*, 17 June 1998, p. 1.

<sup>201</sup> Olson, *Türkiye-İran*, p. 48.

sects, classifying them according to various features, including their connections with Iran and Saudi Arabia. The report determined that Islamic fundamentalism was still a threat for Turkish Republic, although it had lost some of its power in a few areas.<sup>202</sup> In a column published in October 1999, İlhan Selçuk noted that “the General Staff had specified that the existential threat for Turkey is Islamic fundamentalism. If religious educational system is not controlled, Turkey will be like Iran”.

Tension with Iran was heightened when it interfered in a domestic crisis related to a female parliamentarian elected in the April 1999 elections, named Merve Kavakçı. She wanted to enter the Parliament wearing a headscarf, but Turkish Parliamentary rules forbid this, on the grounds that it would cause cultural and ideological division.<sup>203</sup> Iranian students at Tehran University then protested about the stance of the Turkish Parliament against an Islamist deputy.<sup>204</sup> These student demonstrations, which occurred in July 1999, caused the outbreak of a new crisis. As well as Turkey’s reaction to Iranian interference, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ecevit’s words<sup>205</sup>, labelling the demonstrations as “a natural” reaction against an outdated regime of oppression, further increased the tension between the two countries.<sup>206</sup>

#### 2.1.5. 2000: Hezbollah terror

In 2000, concerns related to the possible emergence of an Islamic regime in Turkey remained. When the head of the Association of Kemalist Thought presented a

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<sup>202</sup> “Hükümet Yasayı Uygulamadı”, **Cumhuriyet**, 03 January 1999, p. 1.

<sup>203</sup> Kavakçı’s attitude was judged as separatist activity for which she lost her Turkish citizenship. After this incident, a closure case was also opened against the SP.

<sup>204</sup> “Iran Interferes With Kavakçı Affair”, **Turkish Probe**, 16 May 1999; “Iran’la Merve Kavakçı Bunalımı”, **Cumhuriyet**, 09 May 1999; “Iran tahriki sürdürüyor”, **Milliyet**, 12 May 1999, in Oktav, Changing, p. 107.

<sup>205</sup> Linking what Ecevit said to wider issues, Taha Akyol discussed Turkish-Iranian relations in relation to the PKK and Islamic fundamentalism, arguing that there were two factors in this relationship: neighborhood and competition. “*It is a marginal factor in their conflicts that Turkey is secular and Iran is theocratic. The Turkish regime uses Islamic fundamentalism paranoia when it needs to consolidate itself. Iran’s regime also wants to consolidate itself by declaring Turkish secularism as irreligiousness to create a foreign enemy. As Ecevit says, the reason why Iran damages its relations with Turkey for no reason is the “domestic politics factor”. Since its regime is becoming more liberal, Iran wants to strengthen the religious roots of the state by creating problems with its neighbor. Since Turkey’s regime is more powerful than Iran’s, Iran uses the PKK card whenever it is stuck in a difficult position*”.

See, Taha Akyol, “İran ve PKK”, **Milliyet Politika**, 28 July 1999, p. 21.

<sup>206</sup> “Iran Türkiye’yi Suçladı”, **Cumhuriyet**, 19 July 1999, p. 8.



list of names to the office holders and bureaucrats, which included teachers and principals with alleged relations to fundamentalist Islamic groups, he was threatened by unknown sources, and both public and bureaucratic elites considered this as a threat.<sup>207</sup> This demonstrates that the rumors and incidents related to the sharia threat in Turkey still continued into the early 2000s.

In 2000, the Hezbollah Operation and UMUT Operation were launched while the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Turkey for an official visit. Such incidents served to maintain the sense of crisis based on the idea that Iran supported Islamic terrorist groups in Turkey. On 17 January 2000, a police raid on a Hezbollah cell in Beykoz, a district in Istanbul, which had started a new era in the Hezbollah issue. The UMUT operation started with this raid. Successive raids on different locations revealed tens of corpses, as well as armaments and documents. Clues relating to 22 unsolved murders, including those of Ugur Mumcu, Bahriye Uçok, Muammer Aksoy and Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, were found.<sup>208</sup>

The Minister of Internal Affairs, Sadettin Tanttan, announced that the Mumcu assassination's suspects had been captured in UMUT operation although operations were still continuing throughout the country. Militants under surveillance<sup>209</sup> revealed that they had planned and carried out the assassination under the coordination of Iranian agents, explaining that they had been trained in Iran and organized to carry out many other incidents in Turkey. It was also claimed that Iran's former Deputy Consul General Muhsin Karger Azad determined the timing of assassinations and attacks, as it became evident that Iran's intelligence service had ordered the assassination and provided economic support to the organization.<sup>210</sup>

In fact, Turkish elites disagreed about these allegations of Iranian links to the assassinations of intellectuals. While the Minister of Internal Affairs, PM and the General Staff adopted a more critical stance towards Iran, the Foreign Ministry made

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<sup>207</sup> "Aydın ADD Başkanına Gözdağı", **Cumhuriyet**, 09 February 2000, p. 5.

<sup>208</sup> "Umut Operasyonunun tarihçesi", <http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/128660.asp>, (13.08.2012).

<sup>209</sup> The nine militants that were captured in Istanbul were members of the Islamic fundamentalist Selam (Tevhid) organization. Twelve more were captured from the Bursa cell of the operation.

<sup>210</sup> "Düğüm Çözülüyor", **Cumhuriyet**, 08 May 2000, p. 1.

more pragmatic and moderate speeches<sup>211</sup> that avoided accusing Iran officially, arguing that there was not enough evidence against them.

These discoveries caused a great reaction throughout the country. Especially the columnists of Cumhuriyet newspaper, for which many of the murdered intellectuals had worked, showed their reaction in the media. On the one hand, the public was glad that the suspects had been captured. On the other hand, reaction against Islamic movements and Iran became more concrete. This time, the source and reason for the securitization of the Islamic regime in Iran was more visible than ever.

Ilhan Selçuk wrote a column in February 2000 in which he asked whether the “danger” had passed or not. According to him, preparations for an Islamic regime in Turkey had started forty years ago. He claimed that the religious education system, the Hezbollah threat, followers of Fethullah Gülen<sup>212</sup>, religious publications and other media were clear signs of an existential threat. “Turkey could have been like Iran, Afghanistan or Algeria ... if February 28 had not happened”, he stated.<sup>213</sup>

On the third anniversary of February 28, Cumhuriyet published a long article summarizing the so-called ‘post-modern’ coup’s<sup>214</sup> details and decisions taken during this process. In this summary, the paper repeated those related to Iran, concluding that, “for the aim of protecting our country from an outdated regime and a possible conflict caused by the abuse of religion, Iran’s pro-regime (Islamic regime) actions and behaviors must be prevented”.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Ilknur Çevik, “Time To Talk About Concrete Evidence”, **Turkish Daily News**, 18 May 2000; “Tahran Bilmecesi”, **Aksam**, 25 May 2000, in Sinkaya, Turkey-Iran, p. 8.

<sup>212</sup> He is the founder and leader of the Gülen movement. For further information on Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen Movement see, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/>, (13.08.2012); İstar B. Gozaydin, “The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Politics in Turkey: a Chance for Democratization or a Trojan Horse?”, **Democratization**, Vol: 16, No: 6, 2009, pp. 1214-1236.; Filiz Başkan, “The Fethullah Gülen Community: Contribution or Barrier to the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey?”, **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol: 41, No: 6, 2005, pp. 849-861.

<sup>213</sup> Ilhan Selçuk, “Tehlike Geçti Mi?”, **Cumhuriyet**, 12 February 2000, p. 2.

<sup>214</sup> This term refers to February 28 military memorandum. Türker Alkan, a Radical newspaper columnist, first mentioned this term in his paper titled “Post-modern Bir Askeri Müdahale / a Post-modern Military Intervention. Cengiz Çandar and Salim Dervişoğlu also contributed to popularize the term by using it frequently.

Cengiz Çandar, “Post-modern Darbe”, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1997/06/28/y12.html>, (30.09.2012).

It is also argued that Çevik Bir was the first person who use the term in front of the word “coup”.

Necdet Subaşı, “Bir Darbeye Ad Koymak ya da Post-modern Darbe”, <http://www.necdetsubasi.com/index.php/makale/33-bir-darbeye-ad-koymak-ya-da-postmodern-darbe>, (30.09.2012).

<sup>215</sup> “28 Şubat: Tarihsel Dönemeç”, **Cumhuriyet**, February 28 2000, p. 1.

In April 2000, a law officer of the Ankara State Security Court, Nuh Mete Yüksel, completed the Hezbollah investigation's bill of indictment, which was collected into a 66-page-book. In the indictment, Hezbollah's roots within the Iranian Islamic Revolution were highlighted and Yüksel claimed that "Iran still has an important impact on the Hezbollah terrorist organization". He claimed that some leaders of Hezbollah cells and other Islamic terrorist groups were still at large and that Islamic fundamentalist movements slowly aimed to capture the state.<sup>216</sup>

At the end of 2000, Turkey's concerns related to Iran peaked. Iranian involvement in assassinations of intellectuals, Iran's permission for the PKK to hold its meetings on Iranian territory,<sup>217</sup> and its sheltering of PKK leader Öcalan's brother<sup>218</sup> were the main reasons behind the Turkish elites' latest concerns about Iran. The idea that Iran acted towards Turkey from ideological motives harmed other realms of cooperation with Iran. For example, they caused President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's rejection of an invitation to join the sixth summit meeting of the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) in Tehran in June 2000, a summit for heads of state of the organization's members "to exchange views on issues of regional interest and discuss the future strategy of ECO in the new millennium towards accelerating the efforts for socio-economic development in the ECO Region".<sup>219</sup>

#### **2.1.6. 2001-2002: the AKP and Early Signs of Desecuritization**

In August 2001, a political crisis that began in an MGK meeting over a disagreement between PM Ecevit and President Sezer turned into an economic crisis. In the meeting, Sezer accused Ecevit of preventing corruption investigation against

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A very similar paper titled "Karanlığa Karşı Savaş / War Against Darkness" was published in Cumhuriyet (on page 9), in 2001, on the fourth anniversary of February 28. The paper emphasized that Erbakan made his first visits to "countries such as Iran, Libya, Sudan" and he tried to establish an alternative group called D-8 and consists of only Muslim countries.

<sup>216</sup> İlhan Taşçı, "Örgüt devletten ayıklanamadı", **Cumhuriyet**, 09 April 2000, p. 4.

<sup>217</sup> For further information on this incident related to PKK see, "Iran'dan PKK'ya kongre izni", **Milliyet**, 28 October 1999; "Tahran'ın PKK'yla ilişkileri inceleniyor", **Radikal**, 06 March 1999; in Oktav, Changing, p. 108.

<sup>218</sup> Oktav, Changing, p. 108.

<sup>219</sup> "6<sup>th</sup> Summit Declaration", **Tehran Declaration**, 10 Jun 2000, [http://www.ecosecretariat.org/ftpoot/Documents/Declarations/6sum\\_dcl.htm](http://www.ecosecretariat.org/ftpoot/Documents/Declarations/6sum_dcl.htm), (30.09.2012).

the FP.<sup>220</sup> In the same meeting, the MGSB (Milli Güvenlik Siyaset Belgesi, National Security Policy Document or Red Booklet) was updated. The parts related to internal threats stayed as they were after February 28: Countering Islamic fundamentalism was the first priority and separatism remained the second. When the document was revised after Öcalan's capture, Syria was no more considered as a threat. According to the document, the terrorist organization had moved its logistic support centers from Syria and started to get more support from Northern Iraq and Iran. Thus, "concepts related to Iraq and Iran might change in near future" the authorities stated.<sup>221</sup>

In 2001, the FP was closed and immediately replaced by the newly formed SP (Saadet Partisi, Felicity Party). However, this latest closure caused divisions within the party. The so-called "reformist wing" of the FP did not join the SP, forming the AKP instead on 14 August 2001. This party would later form the government for the next decade. The leader of the AKP, Erdoğan, defined the party as "democrat, conservative, reformist and modern". However, soon after its formation, various videos and records were leaked to the press, in which Erdoğan and other AKP members made anti-secular and pro-Islamic regime speeches. In these videos, Erdoğan stated that "one must be secular or Muslim, there is no middle way", "the European Union does not want us as a member; we do not want to join either", and accused the EU of being a Catholic states' union.<sup>222</sup> According to Bülent Arınç, Deputy PM of the current government, many cases were opened because of these videos, but all were closed without penalties.

After the AKP government came to power, domestic concerns related to Islamic fundamentalism began to decrease. Although some tensions with Iran remained, Islamic fundamentalism ceased to be considered an existential threat. In connection with these changing security perceptions, the desecuritization of Iran started in the early 2000s. The next chapter analyzes the desecuritization process during the AKP period and possible reasons for change in Turkey's Iran policy.

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<sup>220</sup> The crisis went down in history with the name of "constitution book crisis / anayasa kitabı krizi" because Sezer threw the book to Ecevit, saying that he does not apply the rules.

<sup>221</sup> "Siyaset Belgesi güncelleşti", *Cumhuriyet*, 14 August 2001, p. 19.

<sup>222</sup> Birand, Part 9.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The 2000s: DESECURITIZATION IN TURKEY'S IRAN POLICY

Among the alterations in relations with all the Middle Eastern states, the changes in Turkey's foreign policy towards Iran during the 2000s were most obvious. As already discussed, in the post revolutionary era, Turkish governments had been highly concerned about Iranian efforts to export its Islamic fundamentalist regime. However, after 2002, the new Turkish policy-making elites no longer feared a transition to an Iranian style regime for several reasons. In agreement with this study's main assertion regarding the reasons for desecuritization, Yeşilyurt<sup>223</sup> argues that the last visible conflict related to the Iranian regime was experienced in 2000:<sup>224</sup> "In the 2002 elections, a conservative party which gathered many politicians with Islamist roots came to power and the alienation of Iran stopped".<sup>225</sup> This shift of threat perceptions was thus the most important reason for Turkey's softening Iran policy. Additionally, the new foreign policy vision of the AKP, the military's decreasing political role (due to the democratization and civilization of policy-making processes), the Islamic roots of the AKP and the Islamization of Turkish politics, all further paved the way for the desecuritization of the Iranian regime.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> In *Türk Dış Politikası 2001-2012*, Nuri Yeşilyurt argued that the most important reason for the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement was the convergence of national interests. He analyzes Turkey's Iran policy under two categories, economic and political relations. According to him, the most significant political areas of rapprochement have been cooperation against terrorism, regional politics, overcoming regime problems and the Iranian nuclear crisis. In the pre-AKP period, the secular elites had accused Iran of supporting Turkish Hezbollah (THB) and The Great Islamic Raiders Front (IBDA/C), which was considered as an effort to export its Islamic regime to secular Turkey. According to the new elites, Iran had stopped supporting the PKK and PJAK terror organizations, and cooperated with Turkey against separatist terrorist groups, especially after the American invasion of Iraq. Along with Turkey's improved relations with the other Middle Eastern actors and its aggressive attitude towards Israel, this cooperative environment further paved the way for good relations. See, Nuri Yeşilyurt, "Ortadoğu'yla İlişkiler", *Türk Dış Politikası Cilt III: 2001-2012*, (Ed. Baskın Oran), İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2013, (Ortadoğu'yla), pp. 451-452.

<sup>224</sup> The reformist wing's success in the Iranian parliamentary elections of 2000 was considered to be a positive development for liberty, modernity and democracy, especially by Ecevit and Akbulut. However, Iran considered this an intervention in its domestic affairs. When Ahmadinejad won the 2005 elections, the Turkish government avoided any comment, saying that it was a domestic issue for Iran. However, after Ahmadinejad's re-election in 2009, Gül became one of the first political leaders to congratulate him.

Yeşilyurt, *Ortadoğu'yla*, pp. 454-455.

<sup>225</sup> Yeşilyurt, *Ortadoğu'yla*, p. 455.

<sup>226</sup> In contrast with this study's position, Bayram Sinkaya argues that the reason for desecuritization was not the ideology-based policies of the government. He argues instead that there has been a

According to Ünver, Iran had tried to destabilize Turkey's secular regime by supporting the PKK, "with a hope to soften its resistance to the ideals of Islamic Revolution".<sup>227</sup> However, the Kemalist elites had avoided open confrontation by minimizing relations with Iran. On the other hand, the Turkish Islamists' attitude towards Iran has been quite different, leaving sectarian differences aside and trying to move closer to Iran.<sup>228</sup> The Islamists believed that Kurdish nationalism is a problem for the Kemalist nationalist elites and that the problem can be resolved by applying "a more religious and etho-linguistically inclusive policy", so they simply ignored Iran's support for the PKK.<sup>229</sup> Since Turkish Islamists believe that the ideology of political Islam can create a supra-identity acting as a common ground for solving the problems of Turkish-Iranian relations, and problems in the Muslim world more generally,<sup>230</sup> they have tried to develop close relations with Iran.

Reflections of the changing threat perceptions in elite discourse enabled both sides to move closer. Thus, as with the previous securitization process, political rhetoric has been used as a tool to construct positive perceptions of Iran and convince the public that such a shift in Turkey's political behavior is essential for it to increase and consolidate its power and prestige internationally. This discursive shift in political rhetoric determines both how friendly relations between states are constructed via speech and how closer ties can develop with Iran. Thus, by the end of the 2000s, not only policy makers but also the public appeared to seek friendly relations with the former enemy. Furthermore, the change in the MGSB, energy, trade and security agreements signed with Iran and the administration's support for

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"rationalization" in Turkish-Iranian relations throughout the 2000s, meaning increasing economic and political cooperation that ignores ideological differences. Thus, as discussed earlier, in the 1990s, Ankara accused Iran of supporting the PKK and Islamic fundamentalist groups in Turkey. However, in the 2000s, "the latter factor has considerably lost its impact and later on activities of radical Islamists dropped from the Turkish public agenda".

Bayram Sinkaya, "Rationalization of Turkey-Iran Relations: Prospects and Limits", **Insight Turkey**, Vol: 14, No: 2, 2012, p. 140.

Moreover, Wang Bo analyzes both internal and external factors' role in Turkish-Iranian relations, arguing that geographical position, minority issues, religious sectarian division, distinct political models of two states, border disputes, role of ideology, role of economy have important impact on changing relations.

For further information, see, Wang Bo, "Turkey-Iran Reconciliatory Relations: Internal and External Factors", **Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)**, Vol: 5, No: 1, 2011, pp. 1-18.

<sup>227</sup> H. Akin Ünver, "How Turkey's Islamists Fell Out of Love With Iran", **Middle East Policy**, Vol: 19, No: 4, 2012, p. 103.

<sup>228</sup> Ünver, p. 104.

<sup>229</sup> Ünver, p. 104.

<sup>230</sup> Ünver, p. 104.

its neighbor's nuclear while rejecting Western demands for economic sanctions towards Iran, are all signs of increased affiliation between the two countries.<sup>231</sup>

This chapter first analyzes the domestic transformation in Turkish politics, regarding the changes in the policy-making elites and processes, Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision and the Islamization of Turkish politics to determine possible reasons for the change in political rhetoric. The chapter then examines foreign policy outcomes to identify signs of rapprochement between Turkey and Iran. Finally, to investigate the role of elite discourse in foreign policy making, the chapter reviews the speeches of both states' elites, although with a strong emphasis on the Turkish side.

### 3.1. THE DAVUTOĞLU ERA IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

#### 3.1.1. Strategic Depth Vision

The change in the principles and the methods of Turkish Foreign policy in the AKP period has mostly been associated with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, whose vision is structured and predicated on history and geography. In Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision, namely *Strategic Depth*<sup>232</sup>, history and geography are considered as static assets which empower decision makers to formulate their foreign policy objectives extending far beyond the surrounding physical environment of the country. For him, except for geography and history, all other elements of foreign

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<sup>231</sup> For Karacasulu and Karakır, rapprochement in Turkish-Iranian relations has both ideological and pragmatic reasons. First, Tehran acted against the PKK and PJAK, and gave support to Turkey in the fight against the PKK. Secondly, Turkey has been searching for energy supply security and thus, considered Iran as an energy partner; while Iran has also supported this partnership. Lastly, economic cooperation has been beneficial for both Iran and Turkey. Yet, Iran has been aware of Turkey's increasing energy dependence and might use this advantage in conducting economic relations, while also collaborating with Turkey against the Kurdish separatists. In regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, Turkey does not oppose Iran's search for peaceful nuclear energy but also does not want spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. In short, with security and economic considerations cooperation between the two countries continues.

See, Nilüfer Karacasulu and İrem Aşkar Karakır, "Iran-Turkey Relations in the 2000s: Pragmatic Rapprochement", *Ege Academic Review*, Vol: 11, No: 1, January 2011, p. 1405.

<sup>232</sup> Strategic Depth is a book written by Ahmet Davutoğlu before he became the MFA, analyzing Turkey's foreign policy before and after the Cold War, claiming that states should be aware of their strategic depth (historical and geographical features) in order to occupy an important place in the world. After Davutoğlu was appointed to the MFA, the book became the main strategic guide of the new Turkish foreign policy.

See, Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, Küre Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001.

policy should be considered as dynamic elements that are open to change.<sup>233</sup> In periods of transition, such as the post-Cold War period, the importance of historical and geographical aspects increases. For Davutoğlu, this is because historical and geographical elements are needed while making a rational evaluation of a country's potential and its ability to adapt to new conditions.<sup>234</sup>

For Aras, Davutoğlu has brought a revolutionary dynamism to Turkish foreign policy since the previous tendency to externalize domestic problems has been abandoned.<sup>235</sup> Aras indicates that, prior to Davutoğlu, Turkey's foreign policy elites tended to establish a connection between domestic threats and the foreign policy agenda that strengthened their own privileged positions, with the effect of gradually distancing the country from its near abroad. In contrast, Davutoğlu structured his foreign policy on the basis of "a novel geographic imagination" that avoided alienating Turkey's neighbors.<sup>236</sup> This reconstruction of Turkey's neighbors' images enabled Turkey to overcome the obstacles that were previously created by domestic policy considerations.<sup>237</sup> For Davutoğlu, by abandoning the "bordering and othering"<sup>238</sup> view in foreign policy, Turkey could discover its geographical capacity and historical awareness and gain the chance to actively engage in regional affairs.

The following excerpt from his book clearly demonstrates his emphasis on the significance of Turkey's geographical location:

*In terms of geography, Turkey occupies a unique space. As a large country in the midst of Afro-Eurasia's vast landmass, it may be defined as a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character. Like Russia, Germany, Iran, and Egypt, Turkey cannot be explained geographically or culturally by associating it with one single region. Turkey's diverse regional composition lends it the capability of maneuvering in several*

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<sup>233</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy", 08 December 2009, **SETA Foundation**, Washington DC, (Principles), <http://arsiv.setav.org/ups/dosya/14808.pdf>, (10.06.2013), p. 3.

<sup>234</sup> "The 'Strategic Depth' that Turkey Needs": An Interview with Ahmet Davutoğlu, **The Turkish Daily News**, 15 September 2001, in Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol: 42, No: 6, 2006, p. 952.

<sup>235</sup> Bülent Aras, "The Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy", **Insight Turkey**, Vol: 11, No: 3, 2009, (Davutoğlu Era), p. 128.

<sup>236</sup> Aras, Davutoğlu Era, p. 128.

<sup>237</sup> Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, p. 49.

<sup>238</sup> H. V. Houtum, "The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries", **Geopolitics**, Vol: 10, No: 4, 2005, p. 674, in Aras, Davutoğlu Era, p. 129.



*regions simultaneously; in this sense, it controls an area of influence in its immediate environs.*<sup>239</sup>

Davutoğlu also attributes greater significance to the country's Ottoman past, arguing that a shared history can be used as an asset for Turkey in its current relations with neighbors.<sup>240</sup> Davutoğlu specifies the importance of historical awareness as follows:

*The historical heritage is the most decisive element that identifies a society's position in the time dimension. For that reason, historical heritage can be reinterpreted and replaced in strategic planning, but it cannot be changed and ignored. Those who ignore the importance of history and behave with conjunctural concerns can neither interpret current developments nor make future predictions.*<sup>241</sup>

For Davutoğlu, Turkey should be proud of its historical roots since “the only civilization and only political entity that dominated Europe was produced by the Ottomans.”<sup>242</sup> Thus, the Ottoman history that has previously been ignored by Kemalist modernism is perceived as an asset by neo-Islamists. Similarly, Kalın reaffirms that “Turkey's post-modernity seems to be embedded in its Ottoman past.”<sup>243</sup> Even though the term ‘neo Ottomanism’ was rejected by the AKP because of its imperialistic connotations, Ottoman history has been increasingly referred to as an element of brotherhood that can pave the way for future cooperation, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa.

### 3.1.2. Principles of New Foreign Policy Vision

Davutoğlu identifies five main principles (or goals) in Turkish foreign policy. “*Balance between security and freedom*” is the first.<sup>244</sup> According to him, the Republicans have always prioritized national security at the expense of freedom. An important indicator of this perspective is the successive military coups in Turkish

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<sup>239</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey's New Foreign Policy Vision”, **Insight Turkey**, Vol: 10, No: 1, 2008, (New), p. 78.

<sup>240</sup> Aras, Davutoğlu Era, p. 130.

<sup>241</sup> Davutoğlu, Stratejik Derinlik, p. 65.

<sup>242</sup> Davutoğlu, Stratejik Derinlik, p. 66.

<sup>243</sup> İbrahim Kalın, “Turkey and the Middle East: Ideology or Geo-Politics?”, **Private View**, No: 13, 2008, pp. 1-2.

<sup>244</sup> Davutoğlu, Principles, p. 7.

politics. In the battle between freedom and security, the AKP's stance is summarized by Davutoğlu as "Now, security is, from outside and inside, much less of an issue for Turkey".<sup>245</sup> Without ignoring the significance of national security, Davutoğlu claims that prioritizing national security jeopardizes foreign policy objectives that can eventually culminate in Turkey's distancing itself from its surrounding environment.

The second, important principle of Davutoğlu's foreign policy is "*zero problems policy with the neighbors*".<sup>246</sup> Specifically, this principle aims at problem-free relations with Armenia, Greece, Cyprus, Iran, Syria, Iraq and Russia, who have all previously been considered as enemies targeting the territorial integrity of Turkey. Quoting Atatürk's "Peace at home, peace with our neighbors" principle that necessitates the establishment of friendly relations with the neighbors,<sup>247</sup> Davutoğlu argues that "*We may disagree on some issues but we have to reintegrate because our destiny is the same [as the neighbors']*".<sup>248</sup> For him, bilateral economic, political and cultural relations are as important as regional cooperation in the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea regions.

One policy outcome of the zero problems principle was close cooperation with the EU on particular regional matters.<sup>249</sup> Davutoğlu himself claims that, not only the zero problems policy, but also all the principles of Turkey's new foreign policy vision are compatible with European values since they represent humanitarian aspects that are relevant in all ages and for all nations.

The third principle of Davutoğlu's foreign policy is "*proactive/preventive peace diplomacy*" in both neighboring regions and globally.<sup>250</sup> According to Murinson, the doctrine calls for active engagement with all regional systems in Turkey's neighborhood.<sup>251</sup> Turkey's active involvement as a mediator in Syrian-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli conflicts exemplifies the implementation of this principle. For Davutoğlu, Turkey's mediation skills and capabilities can inspire all Muslims to settle their disputes through peaceful means. He emphasizes that "Turkey

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<sup>245</sup> Davutoğlu, *Principles*, p. 7.

<sup>246</sup> Davutoğlu, *Principles*, p. 8.

<sup>247</sup> For Davutoğlu's emphasis on this quote see, Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>248</sup> Davutoğlu, *Principles*, p. 8.

<sup>249</sup> For example, Turkey's retreat from its uncompromising attitude towards the settlement of the Cyprus problem, initiation of a dialogue process with Armenia and de-securitization of Syria and Iran.

<sup>250</sup> Davutoğlu, *Principles*, p. 12.

<sup>251</sup> Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol: 42, No: 6, 2006, p. 953.

should act as a central country, breaking away from a static and single-parameter policy, and becoming a problem solver by contributing to global and regional peace”.<sup>252</sup>

The fourth principle of Turkish foreign policy is “*rhythmic diplomacy*”, which refers to active engagement in global and international issues, together with increased presence and activism in all international and regional organizations.<sup>253</sup> Aras explains this principle as “*having presence on the ground, in particular during times of crisis*”.<sup>254</sup> Similarly Yılmaz argues that “instead of being a bystander, Turkey tried to become involved in complicated world affairs and take part in the relevant processes.”<sup>255</sup> Turkey’s membership of the UN, G20 and NATO, its attempts to join the Pacific Forum, and to be an observer of the African Union and Arab League, are all policy outcomes of this principle. Aiming to increase the country’s visibility internationally, Turkey also plans to open new embassies in Africa and Latin America, and also signed the Kyoto protocol, as a responsive member of the international environment.

Davutoğlu considers his fifth principle, “*multi-dimensional foreign policy*”, as a decisive principle of Turkish foreign policy,<sup>256</sup> emphasizing that the world is no longer bipolar, so there is no need to choose a bloc. For instance, having close relations with Russia or Iran need not be an obstacle to Turkey’s EU membership bid or strengthening its partnership with the U.S. For the AKP, this principle should be considered as a rupture with the Republican formulation of foreign policy. As Davutoğlu’s explains,

*Turkey enjoys multiple regional identities and thus has the capability as well as the responsibility to follow an integrated and multidimensional foreign policy. The unique combination of our history and geography brings with it a sense of responsibility. To contribute actively towards conflict resolution and*

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<sup>252</sup> William Hale, “Turkey and the Middle East in the New Era”, **Insight Turkey**, Vol: 11, No: 3, 2009, p. 144.

<sup>253</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Zero-Problems Foreign Policy”, **Foreign Policy Magazine**, 20 May 2010, (Zero Problems), [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/20/turkeys\\_zero\\_problems\\_foreign\\_policy](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/20/turkeys_zero_problems_foreign_policy), (10.06.2013).

<sup>254</sup> Aras, Davutoğlu Era, p. 134.

<sup>255</sup> Mehmet Yılmaz, “Conceptual Framework of Turkish Foreign Policy in AK Party Era”, **Turkish Review**, 15 October 2010, [http://www.turkishreview.org/tr/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?newsId=223001](http://www.turkishreview.org/tr/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=223001), (11.06.2013).

<sup>256</sup> Davutoğlu, Zero-Problems.

*international peace and security in all these areas is a call of duty arising from the depths of a multidimensional history for Turkey.*<sup>257</sup>

Davutoğlu does not only identify new principles of foreign policy but also determines some instruments for these principles to be implemented systematically. What these instruments have in common is that they all seek to move Turkey to take a more active position in regional and international affairs.

### **3.1.3. Instruments of New Foreign Policy Vision**

Davutoğlu first considers that a “*vision-oriented approach*” as opposed to a “*crisis-oriented*” one should be adopted. This instrument seeks to leave past disputes behind and apply a brand-new approach while handling current crises. For Davutoğlu, a crisis-oriented approach constantly reproduces the negative legacy of the past, since it is trapped by fixated details of former experiences. A vision-oriented policy, in contrast, moves beyond previous crises to deal with new issues with a fresh vision,<sup>258</sup>

*Our perception should not be based on crises but on being vision-oriented. This vision has four principles: economic interdependence, a common security understanding, high-level strategic dialogue and the coexistence of multicultural, multi-religious life. If we were cooperating in our region, the situation would be totally different. This might seem like a utopia to you, but imagine that for the next 20 years we have stability in the region and no tension. We would be richer than any other emerging powers.*<sup>259</sup>

Second, Turkish foreign policy in the Davutoğlu era applies soft power rather than hard power. According to Davutoğlu, the main sources of a country’s soft power are “its historic and cultural links with all the regions it belongs to, as well as its democratic institutions and thriving market economy.”<sup>260</sup> Turkey needs to leave aside its militaristic image and promote conflict resolution and regional economic

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<sup>257</sup> Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, “The Davutoğlu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy”, **Working Paper**, Bilkent University / ELIAMEP, No: 8, 2010, p. 5. (pp. 1-11)

<sup>258</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “A Forward Looking Approach for the Balkans”, **Center for Strategic Research (SAM)**, No: 1, 2011, p. 5.

<sup>259</sup> Ayşe Karabat, “Turkey Creates Balance in the Middle East: Interview with Turkey’s Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu”, 21.04.2010, <http://en.qantara.de/Turkey-Creates-Balance-in-the-Middle-East/6993c154/index.html>, (18.02.2013).

<sup>260</sup> Grigoriadis, p. 5.

cooperation, which will eventually eliminate the outside intervention of major powers in the region. He argues that the adoption of a new discourse and diplomatic praxis in regional and international politics that emphasizes Turkey's civil-economic, historical and cultural power will result in the spread of Turkish soft power in the region.<sup>261</sup>

The third instrument is “*total performance*” in foreign policy, meaning the involvement of new actors in the foreign policy-making process.<sup>262</sup> According to Davutoğlu, NGOs, business communities, intellectuals, the media and think-tanks should and have increased their voice in foreign policy. The AKP claims to have freed Turkish foreign policy from its past rigid understanding based on elite formulations. MUSIAD's active involvement exemplifies the use of this instrument.<sup>263</sup>

Fourth, Davutoğlu claims that an “*integrated foreign policy*”<sup>264</sup> approach needs to be applied. He claims that there was a hierarchy between issues and regions in the foreign policy agenda before the AKP period. Instead, Turkey needs to integrate foreign policy issues within “a single formulation framework”.<sup>265</sup> According to this view, since Turkey has multiple identities, it does not have the luxury to ignore some issues. A consistent, systematic foreign policy framework is also needed for an integrated approach. For Davutoğlu, approaches towards different regions should be in cohesion and harmony, with single party government being an important advantage to maintain an integrated foreign policy.<sup>266</sup> He emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that will increase Turkey's power and prestige in the global sphere:

*Turkey's engagements from Chile to Indonesia, from Africa to Central Asia, and from the EU to the OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference] will be part of a holistic approach to foreign policy. These initiatives will make Turkey*

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<sup>261</sup> Davutoğlu, Zero-Problems.

<sup>262</sup> Aras, Davutoğlu Era, p. 135.

<sup>263</sup> E.g. Members of MUSIAD visited the EU Commission in Brussels, Berlin Embassy, consulate generals of Canada and was visited by consulate generals of Brazil and Belarus throughout 2012. MUSIAD Dış İlişkiler, <http://www.musiad.org.tr/syf.asp?altkat=haberler&kat=disIlişkiler>, (14.02.2013).

<sup>264</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Vision 2023: Turkey's Foreign Policy Objectives”, London, 2011. [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled-\\_vision-2023\\_-turkey\\_s-foreign-policy-objectives\\_\\_delivered-by-h\\_e\\_-ahmet-Davutoğlu\\_-minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled-_vision-2023_-turkey_s-foreign-policy-objectives__delivered-by-h_e_-ahmet-Davutoğlu_-minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa), (14.02.2013).

<sup>265</sup> Aras, Davutoğlu Era, p. 133.

<sup>266</sup> Davutoğlu, Zero-Problems.

*a global actor as we approach 2023, the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Turkish republic.*<sup>267</sup>

The AKP's attempts to implement Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision, principles and instruments are clearly visible in Turkey's foreign policy outcomes in the last decade. Turkey's continuing cooperation with the West and deepening relations with the East, and its strong emphasis on the significance of diplomacy as a tool for peaceful settlement of disputes are hallmarks of an integrated, multidimensional, and proactive foreign policy approach. However, this would not have been possible without certain structural changes in Turkish politics. In particular, the 2000s witnessed remarkable alterations to the legal and institutional structure, political discourse and policy-making process in Turkey.

### 3.2. ISLAMIZATION OF TURKISH POLITICS

An article published in Wall Street Journal in 2003 claimed that "Turkey's relations with Iran, have vastly improved. Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution troubled secularist Turkey, which accused Tehran of supporting religious militants on its territory. But the arrival of an Islamist-oriented government in Ankara has narrowed differences between the two states."<sup>268</sup> Similarly, Cuneyt Gurer argues that "Islamic identity is not a primary determinant of Turkish-Iranian relations. It is of secondary importance (following national interests). Islamic identity, however, helps in eliminating mistrust among foreign policy makers".<sup>269</sup>

Looking at the Islamist roots of the AKP, it is important to note that, in the 1990s, both Gül and Erdoğan were representatives of the RP and among the closest

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<sup>267</sup> Davutoğlu, New, p. 96.

<sup>268</sup> Guy Chazan, "Turkey Strengthens Ties with two U.S. Adversaries: Iran, Syria", **Wall Street Journal**, 10 April 2003, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=5&did=322957041&SrchMode=1&sid=3&F&cfc=1>, (02.11.2012).

<sup>269</sup> Interview with Cuneyt Gurer on December 24, 2009. Ankara/Turkey. Dr. Gurer is an Intelligence Specialist at the International Terrorism and Transnational Crime Research Center (UTSAM), Superintendent at the General Directorate of Security. Behsat Ekici, **Is Turkey Realigning? A Three Dimensional Investigation of Turkish-Iranian Security Rapprochement**, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Pittsburgh the Graduate Faculty of The Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, Pennsylvania, 2010, (Is Turkey), p. 257.

associates of Erbakan,<sup>270</sup> while of their past statements demonstrate that they sought an Islamist approach in Turkish politics. For example, as a RP member Erdoğan once said, “It is impossible for one who says ‘I am Muslim’, to say ‘I am also secular’. Why? Because the Muslims’ creator Allah has absolute domination. [Atatürk’s] saying ‘sovereignty belongs to the nation unconditionally’ is a big lie! Sovereignty belongs to Allah unconditionally. They [secular circles] say that ‘Secularism is being lost. Sure it will be, if people want it so!’”<sup>271</sup> Although this rhetoric has softened in the course of events, party members did not leave their Islamist identity aside. Thus, deep-rooted religious identity of AKP members helped eliminate prejudices against the Iranian Islamic regime.

In order to fully understand the rapid turn in Turkey’s relations with its Muslim neighbors, one should realize the complex transformation that took place in Turkish politics after the AKP came to power by winning over two-thirds of the parliamentary seats. In power since 2002, the AKP government has pursued a wide range of domestic reforms. For example, while the AKP has had to satisfy its supporters over the headscarf issue, it has, as Başkan argues, approached this issue cautiously, in terms of human rights rather than religious freedom, since it aims to generate broader support, rather than fall into conflict with secular circles.<sup>272</sup> Thus, the main argument of the AKP’s elites is that the headscarf ban in universities and state institutions is an infringement of women’s rights to education and working in public establishments.

The fact that the majority of the Turkish public and politicians support such AKP policies can be seen from survey results. For example, in May 2003, *Milliyet* published a poll about Turkish public opinion related to Islam that included questions

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<sup>270</sup> The RP was banned in 1998 after alienating the secular Turkish military, the courts and the West. Following that, the party was recreated under the name of FP (Fazilet Partisi, Virtue Party), which was also later closed by the Constitutional Court in June 2001 for being a center of activities against the principles of the secular republic. Two successor parties were then formed then, the Saadet (Contentment) Party and the AKP. The AKP immediately experienced rapid growth and survived, despite a lawsuit aimed at excluding it from the elections.

<sup>271</sup> “Laiklik zorla olmaz”, **Radikal**, 21.08.2001, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=11765>, (26.02.2013).; “Erdoğan: Millet İsterse Laiklik Tabi ki Gidecek”, **Hürriyet**, 21.08.2001, <http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2001/08/21/18523.asp>, (26.02.2013).

<sup>272</sup> Filiz Başkan, “Accommodating Political Islam in Turkish Democracy”, **Democratic Consolidation in Turkey**, (Ed. Müge Aknur), Universal Publishers, Florida USA, 2012, (Accommodating), p. 355. Ümit Cizre and Menderes Çınar, “Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and Politics in the light of the February 28 Process”, **The South Atlantic Quarterly**, Vol: 102, 2003, p. 327.

about the headscarf ban in universities and government offices. According to the poll, only 24.5% of Turkish people were against the headscarf in universities, while 75.5% were supportive. Similarly, 62.6% of respondents said that they did not support the headscarf ban in state offices. While 88.2% of those who supported the wearing of a headscarf in government offices were AKP supporters, only 24.7% of CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party) supporters agreed with headscarves in state offices. Regarding the opinions of party representatives, 100% of the BBP (Büyük Birlik Partisi, Great Union Party) and SP members said that headscarf ban should be repealed, while 93% of AKP and 87% of MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, Nationalist Movement Party) members were totally against a headscarf ban.<sup>273</sup>

However, although most political party members and citizens apparently supported headscarf freedom, the military's reaction slowed down the reform process. However, over the long run, peripheral forces' support for domestic reforms not only increased support for the AKP but also reduced the military's political influence.<sup>274</sup> Aware of decreasing public support, the secular elite preferred to show their reaction indirectly, despite their dissatisfaction with the pro-Islamist discourse and attitudes of the government.<sup>275</sup> For instance, in 2003 President Sezer refused to attend "the official reception for National Sovereignty and Children's Day as a reaction to Bülent Arınç's wife's headscarf wearing in official ceremonies."<sup>276</sup> Sezer also did not invite the headscarved wives of the AKP elites to the official receptions that he organized. In the MGK meeting on 30 April 2003, the military was afraid that the AKP would propose to revoke headscarf ban in state institutions.<sup>277</sup>

With the AKP's proposed change in the penal code to allow the headscarf in public universities, the military saw that their fears were justified. In 2004, Erdoğan made a two-stage proposition to remove the headscarf ban in educational institutions. First, he proposed to allow the headscarf in all universities. However, given the

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<sup>273</sup> Ayça Atay, "Tesettür mayosu bana göre değil", *Milliyet*, 30.05.2003, pp. 16-17.

<sup>274</sup> The military's decreasing role in policy-making is discussed in detail in the next section.

<sup>275</sup> Metin Heper, "The Justice and Development Party Government and the Military in Turkey", *Turkish Studies*, Vol: 6, No: 2, 2005, (The Justice), p. 220.

<sup>276</sup> William Hale and Ergun Özbudun, "The AKP Government and the Military", *Islamism Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The case of the AKP*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2010, (The AKP), p. 85.

<sup>277</sup> Hale and Özbudun, *The AKP*, p. 85.



reaction to this, he then made a more moderate proposition to remove the ban in just private universities.<sup>278</sup> In the same year, the government planned another reform regarding the higher education system that included proposals to increase the efficiency of Imam-Hatip Schools (schools for imams and preachers). According to Şen, “Imam-Hatip schools have played a crucial role in terms of dissemination and legitimization of the main ideas and ideals of Turkish Islamism”.<sup>279</sup> Although the government’s attempts to change the education system continued during 2004, the reform package was shelved when President Sezer rejected it.<sup>280</sup>

Both presidential and general elections were held in 2007. When the military initiated a so-called “e-coup”<sup>281</sup> on 27<sup>th</sup> of April in a sign of the AKP’s growing self-confidence, Erdoğan refused to back down, deciding instead to stand up to the military by calling early elections. Before the elections, a series of opposition protests called “republic meetings” were organized throughout the country, attended by millions of people with slogans such as “Protect your Republic!”, and “Are you aware of the danger?” Although this caused great reaction and hope among the Kemalist elites and intellectuals, the results of the 22 June 2007 general elections showed that the great majority of Turkish people did not accept the securitization moves of the military and the main opposition, CHP, with the AKP taking 46.47% to the CHP’s 20.84%.<sup>282</sup> In the presidential elections, AKP parliamentarian, Abdullah Gül, was elected as the 11<sup>th</sup> president of Turkey.

Because the AKP had avoided confrontation with secular groups, an organized movement against the headscarf ban did not develop between 2002 and 2007.<sup>283</sup> Furthermore, the AKP failed to gain external support for headscarf freedom,

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<sup>278</sup> Başkan, Accomodating, p. 357.

<sup>279</sup> Mustafa Şen, “Transformation of Islamism and the Rise of the Justice and Development Party”, **Turkish Studies**, Vol: 11, No: 1, 2010, (Transformation), p. 66.

<sup>280</sup> Hale and Özbudun, The AKP, pp. 85-86.

<sup>281</sup> On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 2007, General Staff made a written statement warning the public and the government about threats against secularism on official website of Presidency of General Staff, in behalf of Turkish Armed Forces. On 29<sup>th</sup> of August, 2009, the statement which was called “e-coup or e-memorandum” was moved from the website. For the text of statement (in Turkish) see, “Genelkurmaydan çok sert açıklama”, **Hürriyet**, 29 Nisan 2007, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/6420961.asp?gid=180>, (06.06.2013).

<sup>282</sup> “Türkiye Geneli Seçim Sonuçları”, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/secimsonuc/default.html> (07.10.2012).

<sup>283</sup> Burhanettin Duran, “JDP and Foreign Policy as an Agent of Transformation”, **The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party**, (Ed. M. H. Yavuz), The University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 2006, pp. 298-299, in Başkan, Accomodating, p. 358.

for example, from the European Court of Human Rights' decisions regarding previous headscarf cases.<sup>284</sup> In February 2008, the AKP made another attempt to make amendments regarding headscarf freedom in universities with two propositions.<sup>285</sup> However, the CHP asked the Constitutional Court to dissolve the amendments on the basis that they harmed the secular principles of the Republic. In June 2008, the court concluded that allowing the headscarf in universities would be at odds with Turkey's democratic, secular and social structure.<sup>286</sup> While the AKP's members regarded the decision as interference in parliament's authority, the CHP's representatives supported it, and warned political parties against taking any action conflicting with the constitution.<sup>287</sup> Thus, despite its efforts, the AKP was unable to remove the legal ban on the headscarf.<sup>288</sup>

In March 2008, right after the government had made its proposals, a closure case against the AKP was filed on the grounds that the party was a center for anti-secular movements, demanding political bans of five years for 71 party members, including Gül.<sup>289</sup> The court's verdict cut the party's public financing in half, but did not close the party. According to secular groups, this was a warning message to the AKP regarding its domestic activities.<sup>290</sup>

During the election campaign in 2011, the AKP promised to introduce a new constitution. Although almost all political forces agreed on the need for a new constitution, the AKP had actually achieved the changes it most desired in earlier referendums in October 2007 and September 2010. The party had consolidated its power over the three forces that threatened its agenda after 2002: the presidency, the high judiciary, and the military. Then, in late 2010, the Higher Education Council prohibited all universities from preventing students from attending classes because of

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<sup>284</sup> Başkan, Accomodating, p. 358.

<sup>285</sup> Article 10: the state has to respect the equality of all citizens when receiving public services. Article 41: no one can be denied his/her right to higher education for any reason, except for the restrictions defined by law.

Başkan, Accomodating, p. 359.

<sup>286</sup> For the Court's cancellation decision (in Turkish) see, [http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/index.php?l=manage\\_karar&ref=show&action=karar&id=2608&content=](http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/index.php?l=manage_karar&ref=show&action=karar&id=2608&content=), (26.02.2013).

<sup>287</sup> "Üniversitede türbana iptal", **Milliyet**, 06 July 2008.

<sup>288</sup> Başkan, Accomodating, p. 359.

<sup>289</sup> "Başsavcı Ak Parti'ye kapatma davası açtı", **Radikal**, 28 March 2008.

<sup>290</sup> "AK Parti kapatılmasın' kararı çıktı", **Milliyet**, 30 July 2008.

the students' attitudes against disciplinary regulations.<sup>291</sup> This decision paved the way for allowing freedom of dress in public universities, thereby in a sense legalizing the headscarf.<sup>292</sup> However, the restrictive dress code for broader public institutions remained in place.

There have been further moves by the government, implying further "Islamization" in the political and social sphere, such as stricter alcohol laws,<sup>293</sup> suggestions to women to have at least three children, the assault on the opposition media,<sup>294</sup> and its role in the ongoing Ergenekon trials. Regarding the latter, currently 68 journalists have been arrested on the grounds of involvement in an alleged coup, raising doubts among Western politicians and the Turkish public as to whether the AKP is as truly committed to the values of democracy as it pretended to be when it first came into power. The recent adoption of a highly critical report by the European parliament is another indicator of this change in the West's perceptions towards the AKP government.<sup>295</sup> Mustafa Şen further argues that, withdrawal of the state from economic life, and the marketization of certain public services, has also paved the way for further Islamization in the sociopolitical sphere.<sup>296</sup> For example, the privatization of health and education services has created an opportunity for Islamist entrepreneurs.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> In March 2012, the head of Higher Education Council closed the Societal Activities Unit (Toplumsal Faaliyetler Birimi), formed during the February 28 period to inform universities about injunctions taken against Islamic fundamentalism.

Esra Kaya, "YÖK Başkanı 28 Şubat'ın İzini Sildi", **Hürriyet**, 01.03.2012, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=20033021>, (15.03.2013).

<sup>292</sup> Neslihan Tanış, "Üniversitede artık türbana engel yok", **Radikal**, 02.02.2011, [http://www.radikal.com.tr/egitim/universitede\\_artik\\_turbana\\_engel\\_yok-1038728](http://www.radikal.com.tr/egitim/universitede_artik_turbana_engel_yok-1038728), (11.06.2013).

<sup>293</sup> "Turkey alcohol curbs raise secular fears", **BBC**, 12 January 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12174905>, (25.02.2013).

<sup>294</sup> "Journalists' Arrests Signal Growing Press Freedom Backslide in Turkey", **Freedom House**, <http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1357>, (25.02.2013).

<sup>295</sup> "European Parliament Adopts Critical Report On Turkey", **Hürriyet Daily News**, 09 March 2011, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=toughest-report-ever-says-chps-brussels-chief-2011-03-09>, (25.02.2013).

<sup>296</sup> Şen, Transformation, p. 75.

<sup>297</sup> Şen adds that "the amount of health services bought from private hospitals by the government in total public health spending has strikingly increased from 14 percent in 2002 to 24 percent in 2007". Şen, Transformation, p. 75.

### 3.3. STRUGGLE FOR POWER AND AUTHORITY: CHANGING ELITES IN POLICY MAKING

According to Atilla Kiyat, a retired military member, the AKP's single-party government shocked the military:

*I am sure that their concerns were genuine and spontaneous. They did believe that the AKP was dangerous for Turkey's secular regime and identity. Their reaction was not because of their wish to hold power. They believed that the AKP would break off Turkey's relations with the West and drag it to Islamic fundamentalism.*<sup>298</sup>

However, in contrast to Kiyat's claim, it is widely argued that elites have a tendency to exaggerate problems and place them on the top of the threat list in order to justify taking extraordinary measures. Thus, the securitization of certain issues can also be seen as a power struggle between policy makers. As a part of Turkish political culture, the bureaucratic and military elites have separately believed that they are responsible for maintaining political and cultural order and modernization since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>299</sup> This perception has caused mistrust between them, paving the way for problematic relations between the civil and military elites throughout the history of the Turkish Republic. This competition over responsibility to rule politically caused them to further securitize particular issues.

Regarding the AKP's Islamist roots, it is apparent that there were many conflicts between the military and civilian elites throughout the 2000s concerning Turkey's secular regime and identity. For Hale and Özbudun, Kemal Atatürk's secularist, modernist and republican principles were an important commitment for the military, forming the basis for its perception that it is responsible for protecting the secular republic,<sup>300</sup> sometimes against civilian governments.<sup>301</sup> Aras further argues that nationalist foreign policy rhetoric of Turkish political elites is

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<sup>298</sup> M. Ali Birand, "Son Darbe 28 Subat", Part 12, (Part 12), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUTDtawLPDE>, (10.09.2012).

<sup>299</sup> Aras and Karakaya, Conflict, p. 498.

<sup>300</sup> Hale and Özbudun, The AKP, p. 80.

<sup>301</sup> Article 35 of the Law on the Turkish Armed Forces Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service (İç Hizmet Kanunu) gives the military the task of protecting the Turkish homeland, secular regime and principles of Kemal Atatürk when necessary against internal and external threats. Thus, the Armed Forces believed that it had a right to interfere in politics against what it considered as threat. See, Aknur, Civil-Military, pp. 220-221.

exclusionist and it tries to maintain legitimacy by dramatizing foreign threats coming from enemies.<sup>302</sup> With the beginning of AKP period, this conflictual relationship between the civil and military elites resulted in a decrease in the military's political role by the end of 2000s.<sup>303</sup>

The AKP's electoral victory with an absolute parliamentary majority not only increased the secular elites' anxiety, but also caused division within the military. Its fragmented structure was an important reason why its impact on politics diminished. One specific group, informally called the "disgruntled young officers", was more uncomfortable than others with the election results. Group members constantly expressed their discontent with the government, criticized the Chief of General Staff Hilmi Özkök for not being tough enough towards the AKP. In order to reduce the level of internal criticism, Özkök declared that "February 28<sup>th</sup> was the consequence of certain developments in Turkey. The effect would not be different if the causes continue to exist".<sup>304</sup> However, when rumors about preparations by some groups within the military to intervene in politics rose during 2003, both the civil and military elites became concerned, making it clear that, compared with previous military reactions, like February 28, the military's attitude this time was far from cohesive.<sup>305</sup>

In addition, various institutional mechanisms<sup>306</sup> that had previously consolidated the military's political power were removed due to the Europeanization

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<sup>302</sup> Bülent Aras, "Türk-İran İlişkileri: Değişim ve Süreklilik", *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol: 12, No: 2, 2006, p. 68.

<sup>303</sup> Hale and Özbudun analyze civil-military relations in Turkey under three phases: controlled conflict in 2002-06, challenge and crisis in 2007, and military retreat in 2007-08. For Aknur, civil-military relations in the AKP period can be examined in three periods: power struggle (2002-2005), confrontation (2005-2007), and the erosion of the military's credibility and power (2007-2011). Ümit Cizre, on the other hand, examines the relations in two phases, termed civilian empowerment and the reversal of the government's reform momentum.

See, Hale et al., *The AKP*, p. 80.; Aknur, *Civil-Military*, pp. 224-232.; Ümit Cizre, "Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey", *The Making of the Justice and Development Party*, (Ed. Ümit Cizre), Routledge, London and New York, 2008, pp. 132-171.

<sup>304</sup> Heper, *The Justice*, p. 220.

<sup>305</sup> Gencer Özcan, *The Changing Role of Turkey's Military in Foreign Policy Making*, **UNISCI Discussion Papers**, No: 23, May 2010, (Changing Role), p. 41.

<sup>306</sup> Aknur argues that the military has influenced Turkish politics through two main mechanisms: institutional (formal) and non-institutional (informal). While institutional mechanisms are legal means mainly structured by law, non-institutional mechanisms are composed of national culture, speeches of the military elite, the impact of the media and national education. Institutional mechanisms that consolidated the military's power in politics are the "MGK, the institutions established by the General Staff to influence foreign policy (departments, groups, and centers), the presidency, state security courts (DGM), defense budgets, military internal service law, and intelligence gathering".<sup>306</sup>

process and the EU's demands for legal reforms during the 2000s.<sup>307</sup> This legal process gained momentum after 2001 with the introduction of harmonization packages and constitutional reforms aiming at limiting the military's political authority. In particular, constitutional amendments concerning the composition and role of the MGK were decisive. Amendments in 2001 reduced the number of military members of the council<sup>308</sup> while increasing the number of civilian members,<sup>309</sup> while the change to Article 118 of the constitution made MGK decisions merely advisory, which reduced military's power over the political decision-making process.<sup>310</sup>

Along with the government's attempts to meet EU criteria for the constitution, EU harmonization packages also limited the military's role in politics. Specifically, the seventh package of August 2003 banned military courts from judging civilians in peace time and authorized the Court of Accounts<sup>311</sup> to monitor any institutions benefiting from public sources, including the armed forces.<sup>312</sup> This monitoring power was further increased with Court of Accounts Law in 19 December 2010. The package also redefined the MGK's scope of duties and assignment criteria. The procedure for the appointment of the secretary general was also changed so that "the secretary would be appointed with the approval of the president on the proposal of the PM".<sup>313</sup>

Despite its decreasing role, the MGK continued to give securitizing briefings regarding Islamic fundamentalism and Iran, and bringing up the AKP's roots in the RP as a source of threat. One MGK meeting was arranged after the AKP came to power, in which the military and political elites discussed fundamental Islamist

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Additionally, former and current commanders, among others, have been investigated with the claim that they were planning coups to overthrow the AKP government, mainly because of its Islamist roots and pro-Islamist policies.

Müge Aknur, Civil-Military, pp. 214-224.

<sup>307</sup> In 1999, Turkey was given candidate status by the European Council and, in 2002, the European Council stated that the EU would open negotiations with Turkey if Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria. These developments accelerated the membership process.

<sup>308</sup> With this change, the number of civilian members was increased from five to eight to exceed the number of military members. Additionally, the minister of justice and deputy PMs became members of the MGK.

"Siyasi Reformlar – I", TC Avrupa Birliği Bakanlığı, Ankara, No: 04, p. 16. [http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/rehber/04\\_rehber.pdf](http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/rehber/04_rehber.pdf), (07.02.2013).

<sup>309</sup> Özcan, Changing Role, p. 30.

<sup>310</sup> Siyasi Reformlar, pp 16-17.

<sup>311</sup> Tr. Sayıştay.

<sup>312</sup> Siyasi Reformlar, p. 17.

<sup>313</sup> Aknur, Civil-Military, p. 228.

movements in Turkey. In the meeting, the issue of bureaucrats that had relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia was discussed, where it was claimed that Islamic fundamentalist groups considered AKP power as signalling permission to continue their terrorist activities, suggesting that this perception needed to be prevented.<sup>314</sup> As well as the military, groups within the political elite were uncomfortable with the AKP government and its possible ties with the Iranian Islamic regime. As Ecevit noted, “Before the elections I indicated that the AKP might be a threat to the regime. I am still anxious.”<sup>315</sup>

One of the most important legal changes was the removal of legal obstacles preventing a civilian becoming the Secretary General of the MGK.<sup>316</sup> With the amendment in Article 5 of the MGK code, it was decided that the council would meet bimonthly instead of monthly.<sup>317</sup> With the eighth harmonization package of 2004, the article of Higher Education Board’s regulations regarding the General Staff’s power to choose one board member was changed limiting the military’s influence over higher education. The General Staff’s authority in the Radio and Television Supreme Council was also decreased, while civilian control over the military budget was tightened.<sup>318</sup> The ninth package further consolidated demilitarization in public institutions.<sup>319</sup>

Cizre points out that, although some legal and institutional mechanisms let the military retain a strong voice in politics, the military’s real source of legitimacy was the culture of the people.<sup>320</sup> Starting from the Turks’ adventure in the Central Asia, to the growth of the Ottoman Empire, from the Independence War against the imperialist powers and the establishment of the Turkish Republic to 2000s, the

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<sup>314</sup> “İrtica MGK Masasında”, **Cumhuriyet**, 27 November 2002, p. 1.

<sup>315</sup> Mustafa Balbay, “Rejim Uyarısı”, **Cumhuriyet**, 27 November 2002, p. 1.

<sup>316</sup> In August 2004, the government appointed a career diplomat, Ambassador Yiğit Alpogan, as the Secretary General of the MGK.

See, Özcan, Changing Role, p. 30.

<sup>317</sup> “Avrupa Birliği Uyum Yasa Paketleri”, TC Başbakanlık Avrupa Birliği Genel Sekreterliği, Ankara, 2007, <http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/pub/abuyp.pdf>, (11.06.2013), p. 73.

<sup>318</sup> Avrupa Birliği Uyum Yasa Paketleri, p. 76.

<sup>319</sup> For further information see, “The 9th harmonization package”, 29 June 2004, <http://www.abgs.gov.tr/index.php?p=33322&l=1>, (07.02.2013).

<sup>320</sup> Ümit Cizre, “Türkiye’de Silahlı Kuvvetler’in etkisi ve gücü yalnızca yasalarla, kurumlarla ve kurullarla ölçülemeyecek büyüklüktedir”, **Kışladan Anayasaya Ordu: Siyasi Kültürde TSK’nın Yeri**, (Ed. H. Göktaş and M. Gülbay), Siyahbeyaz Metis Güncel Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, pp. 184-195., Quoted in, Aknur, The Impact, p. 222.

Turkish people had been a society of military even before they became a nation.<sup>321</sup> For the majority of the Turkish public, the military was the most trustworthy state institution.<sup>322</sup> The public also took external threats very seriously because they believed that Turkey's geopolitical position made it a target for "enemies" around, which was also why the public accepted the perception that Iran's Islamic Revolution was a threat to the secular republic.

Aknur argues that desecuritization of some issues<sup>323</sup> by the AKP and the Ergenekon cases<sup>324</sup> caused a decrease in the military's role in politics<sup>325</sup> and their prestige in the eyes of public throughout the 2000s, especially after the 2007 elections.<sup>326</sup> According to Bayram Sinkaya, the Ergenekon investigations eliminated the mistrust of Iran among the political elite.<sup>327</sup> According to data from Ekici's interviews conducted for his PhD thesis, "some interviewees believed that the Turkish Hezbollah was not affiliated with the Iranian government but had functioned as a manipulation tool of Ergenekon"<sup>328</sup>. Mehmet Şahin noted that,

*When individuals from the secularist elite were killed, some media organs immediately accused Iran. Later, we learned that Iran killed none of them. Instead, they were assassinated by the Ergenekon terror network. The purpose*

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<sup>321</sup> Aknur, Civil-Military, p. 207.

<sup>322</sup> Aknur, Civil-Military, p. 222.

<sup>323</sup> The AKP aimed at desecuritization of the Kurdish issue and Islamic fundamentalism in domestic politics, and certain states, especially neighbors that were linked to these domestic problems prior to the AKP.

<sup>324</sup> As a result of his interviews with academicians focusing on Iranian politics, certain policy makers and members of the AKP, Ekici states that "some interviewees believed that Turkish Hezbollah was not affiliated with the Iranian government but had functioned as a manipulation tool of Ergenekon". Ekici, *Is Turkey*, p. 101.

<sup>325</sup> According to a poll conducted by a consulting firm in 2006, 58% of the Turkish public indicated that they were against the military's interference in politics. Only 14.5% said that the military should have a strong voice in politics.

"Halkın görüşü: asker siyasete karışmasın", **Zaman**, 16 November 2006, [http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika\\_halkin-gorusu-asker-siyasete-karismasin\\_455374.html](http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_halkin-gorusu-asker-siyasete-karismasin_455374.html), (22.02.2013).

Another poll was conducted in 2010, as part of a TÜBİTAK (Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey) project. Summarizing the most important points of the results, Birand pointed out that "The TAF is trusted but there is a visible increase in those who do not want the army to be involved in politics ... Those who say that the TAF's influence over politics and the government has lessened have steadily increased."

Mehmet Ali Birand, "Society's view of the military is changing, but...", **Hurriyet Daily News**, 02 December 2011, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/societys-view-of-the-military-is-changing-but-.aspx?pageID=449&nID=8332&NewsCatID=405>, (22.02.2013).

<sup>326</sup> Aknur, Civil-Military, p. 224.

<sup>327</sup> Ekici, *Is Turkey*, p. 105.

<sup>328</sup> Ekici, *Is Turkey*, p. 104.



*was simple. They wanted to undermine Turkish-Iranian relations through a set of false accusations.*<sup>329</sup>

According to some researchers, civilization process in Turkish politics has been “a bottom-up process rather than a top-down effect”.<sup>330</sup> Throughout the 2000s, the military also lost public power at a discursive level. For Özcan, the military could not mobilize public opinion on many occasions and failed to gain their support for its policies.<sup>331</sup> In several domestic political issues in which the government and military disagreed, particularly over the headscarf and Islamic religious education, the majority of the Turkish public took the side of the government.<sup>332</sup>

Özcan further argues that the Europeanization process and changing political culture also led to the formation and participation of NGOs in decision-making in Turkey.<sup>333</sup> These non-state actors took advantage of the democratization process imposed by the EU to become increasingly involved in issues concerning politics and security. This affected foreign policy-making in Turkey in both political and economic terms. On the one hand, non-state actors’ involvement in political issues further demilitarized and desecuritized political domestic and foreign issues since they claimed to be presenting the public’s voice. On the other hand, Turkey’s foreign

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<sup>329</sup> Ekici, *Is Turkey*, p. 104.

<sup>330</sup> Kıvanç Ulusoy, “The Changing Challenge of Europeanization to Politics and Governance in Turkey”, **International Political Science Review**, Vol: 30, No: 4, 2009, p. 376., Quoted in Özcan, *Changing Role*, p. 32.

<sup>331</sup> Özcan, *Changing Role*, p. 44.

<sup>332</sup> The Kurdish issue was another controversial point both between the public and government, and military. Although their attitude on various issues including the Kurdish issue has changed occasionally in the process, the AKP elite indicated that they accepted the cultural diversity of Turkey. On the other hand, regarding their concern for national security, the military opposed the idea because of their belief that it might endanger Turkey’s territorial integrity. However, the military’s loss of ground in foreign policy making also showed itself in the fact that the “national security” concept began to lose its preeminence in state discourse. This concept was introduced to Turkish politics after the 27 May coup, and generally applied to securitize ordinary political issues. However, since the late 1990s, the concept has begun to be publicly questioned, and considered as a rigid way of understanding political issues that hinders democratic alternatives. The ex-deputy-undersecretary of the National Intelligence Service, Cevat Öneş, said that the national security concept should be replaced with a “democratic security concept”. Although the meaning of “democratic security” was not clarified, the purpose is to demilitarize and widen the concept, and to propose democratic solutions to the Kurdish issue.

See, Bülent Tanör, “Türkiye Demokratikleşme Perspektifleri”, **TÜSİAD**, Edition No . T/97 – 207, İstanbul, 1997, [http://www.tusiad.org.tr/\\_rsc/shared/file/demoktur.pdf](http://www.tusiad.org.tr/_rsc/shared/file/demoktur.pdf), (11.06.2013)., in Özcan, *Changing Role*, p. 31.; Ümit Cizre, “Demythologizing the National Security Concept: The Case of Turkey”, **Middle East Journal**, Vol: 57, No: 2, 2003, pp. 213-230. ; Cevat Öneş, “Demokratik güvenlik konsepti”, **Radikal**, 12 April 2006.

<sup>333</sup> Özcan, *Changing Role*, p. 25.

and security related issues became more related to economic concerns.<sup>334</sup> TOBB, TUSIAD and MUSIAD for instance, are businessmen's organizations that have had a notable impact on foreign policy decisions. During the 2000s, for example, TUSIAD supported and advocated Turkey's EU membership and integration into the international economic system, with the slogan of "Less geopolitics, more economics".<sup>335</sup> Özcan adds that at least one group within the armed forces became more open to economic guidance in determining relations with other states.

Discussing Turkey's March 1<sup>st</sup> decision<sup>336</sup> in 2003, concerning military cooperation with the U.S. in the Iraq War, Kaliber argues that the public increased its role in foreign policy making in Turkey in that the government rejected the 1 March memorandum because the public had demonstrated against the war in Ankara, which he terms the civilization of foreign and security policy.<sup>337</sup> Ovalı further argues that not only economic and political organizations but also think tanks such as SETA, TESEV, and USAK have become more influential in certain foreign policy issues.<sup>338</sup> Inferring from these developments, one may clearly argue that non-state actors have become the agents of desecuritization of various issues.

All the regular progress reports by the EU between 2003 and 2007 appreciated developments reducing the military's role in politics, although there were certain criticisms on some issues. The most substantive criticism was in the Report of 2007 in relation to the military's memorandum on the website of the Armed Forces, indicating concerns that secularism was being weakened.<sup>339</sup> The memorandum,

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<sup>334</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey's Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times", **Challiot Paper**, Vol: 92, September 2006, <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/turkeys-foreign-policy-in-turbulent-times/>, (11.06.2013), pp. 29-52.

<sup>335</sup> Özcan, *Changing Role*, p. 32.

<sup>336</sup> March 1<sup>st</sup> memorandum is a note concerning Iraqi crisis, and that was offered by the AKP government to TBMM (Grand National Assembly of Turkey) on February 25, 2003. Full name of the memorandum is "The memorandum of Prime Ministry, empowering the government to send Turkish Armed Forces abroad and to accept foreign armed forces to be situated in Turkey". The memorandum was not agreed due to lack of majority among members of the parliament, and left the U.S. disappointed. If passed, it would provide Turkish military's support to the U.S. in its war with Iraq.

<sup>337</sup> Alper Kaliber, "Toplum Da Artık Bir Aktör", **Radikal**, 06 March 2003, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=68085>, (11.06.2013).

<sup>338</sup> Şevket Ovalı, "From Europeanization to Re-Nationalization: Contextual Parameters of Change in Turkish Policy", **Studia Europea**, Vol: 57, No: 3, 2012, (From Europeanization), p. 27.

<sup>339</sup> For 2009 Report and other Regular Progress Reports between 2003 and 2010 see, Aknur, *Civil-Military*, pp. 229-234.

published right after the 2007 elections, stated that the military opposed the candidacy of President Gül and PM Erdoğan.<sup>340</sup>

Confrontation reappeared in the second half of the 2000s, when President Sezer claimed that Islamic fundamentalism was a threat to Turkey's unity. While Deniz Baykal and the CHP members and the military supported Sezer, the government and supporters of the AKP opposed him. When Yaşar Büyükanıt took over as Chief of General Staff from Hilmi Özkök, he immediately repeated Sezer's claims that Islamic fundamentalism was still a threat to Turkey's secular regime.<sup>341</sup> Non-political entities also became part of the debate. For example, the secularist Association in Support of Contemporary Life declared their support for Sezer while the Islamist Vakit newspaper strongly criticized him.<sup>342</sup> When asked about Sezer's speech, Erdoğan answered: that "Fundamentalism exists in every religion and it is a problem for all of them. However, there is not a fundamentalist Islamic threat in Turkey".<sup>343</sup>

In 2008, Yaşar Büyükanıt, as the Chief of General Staff, gave a speech stating that Islamic fundamentalist elements were persisting both inside and outside the state via legal and illegal organizations.<sup>344</sup> In 2009, a retired general, Nejat Eslen, made a speech about rumors that the government wanted to remove Islamic fundamentalism from the list of threats in the MGSB. He criticized Erdoğan and the AKP, saying that one could not control threats by denying their existence. Since he was a retired general, it is not surprising that he adopted the military's view in relation to the Islamist threat. However, it is notable that he did not mention Iran as a supporter of Islamic movements in Turkey, but rather accused the U.S. of consolidating a moderate Islamist structure in Turkish politics.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Although such incidents happened in 2007, military intervention completely lost validity within almost all circles in Turkey. For instance, on its anniversary in 2006, the February 28 decisions were discussed by politicians, intellectuals and the public. Cumhuriyet, for example, had a series of articles discussing the decisions, which is significant because it had previously harshly criticized the Refah-Yol Coalition and Iran regarding the Islamic fundamentalist threat.

For article series see, "İrtica Birinci Tehdit Kabul Edildi", **Cumhuriyet**, 28 February 2006, p. 9.

<sup>341</sup> "Sevr'i Dayatamazlar", **Cumhuriyet**, 29 August 2006, p. 1.

<sup>342</sup> "Vakit Haddini Aştı", **Cumhuriyet**, 18 April 2006, p. 6; "Rejim Tartışması", **Cumhuriyet**, 24 April 2006, p. 1; "Laiklik Takkiyesi Yapıyor", **Cumhuriyet**, 26 April 2006, p. 5.

<sup>343</sup> Yılmaz Polat, "Erdoğan Bush'la bugün görüşecek", **Cumhuriyet**, 02 October 2006, p. 8.

<sup>344</sup> "Orgeneral Büyükanıt'tan Önemli Mesajlar", **Milliyet**, 04 April 2008, <http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/buyukanit-tan-onemli-mesaj/gundem/gundemdetay/04.04.2008/513086/default.htm> (08.10.2012).

<sup>345</sup> Sertaç Eş, "İrticayı Yok Sayıyorlar", **Cumhuriyet**, 03 February 2010, p. 8.

On 29 July 2011, the military's chief of staff resigned over a disagreement with Erdoğan about staff promotions. The same day, the heads of the army, navy and air force also requested early retirement. It is important to note that, by early 2012, half of all Turkish admirals and one in ten active-duty generals were in jail on remand for plotting against the government within the scope of the ongoing Ergenekon trial. This represented an obvious paradigm shift for a country that had experienced three military coups and constant military political interference for almost a century.

Summarizing the turbulent civil-military relations throughout the 2000s, Taha Akyol's remark that Islamic fundamentalism served the aim of dividing policy makers and the public into two camps seems reasonable. He argued that the broad authority of the military in politics was not democratic and their perception that they were responsible for protecting Turkey's secular identity was defective. According to Akyol, Islamic fundamentalism and Iran had been claimed as threats to Turkey for many years because of the struggle for power and authority between policy makers.<sup>346</sup> Focusing on the military's declining role in the AKP period compared to the 1990s, the securitization of Iran's Islamic Regime during the 1990s seems to have served as a power struggle in both domestic and foreign politics. The government's victory at the end of this battle and the military's decreasing voice in politics paved the way for the desecuritization of Islamic fundamentalism in domestic politics and Iran beyond Turkey's borders.

### **3.3.1. The National Security Policy Document (MGSB)**

There have been further attempts to demilitarize policy making process in Turkey. The MGSB, which has been the most important mechanism consolidating the military's influence on foreign policy making, used to be prepared by the office of the Chief of General Staff and the MGK without consulting the government.<sup>347</sup> Traditionally, the document is renewed every five years, although there have been occasional exceptions to this rule. For example, in 2002, rumors began about a

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<sup>346</sup> Taha Akyol, "Laikliği korumak", *Milliyet*, 21 April 2006, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/laikligi-korumak/taha-akyol/siyaset/yazardetayarsiv/21.04.2006/154211/default.htm>, (07.10.2012).

<sup>347</sup> Aknur, *Civil-Military*, pp. 217-219.

renewal of the MGSB. According to Özcan, “In the 2002 revision of the MGSB, in comparison to the way it was mentioned in the 1997 MGSB, Iran was *covertly* referred to as a source of threat given its aspirations to develop nuclear power and WMDs and its continued support for the PKK.”<sup>348</sup> Thus, although it was mentioned as a threat, the level of emphasis on Iran decreased in general and the main source of the Iranian threat changed. While WMDs and the PKK were considered as security problems (related to Iran), Islamic fundamentalism was removed from the threat list. This automatically changed the referent object from the secular regime to other spheres, such as territorial integrity and political stability. The document was revised again in 2005 when the government took a more active role in its preparation. It was not only shorter than its predecessors, but also no longer included the preparation of “action plans” against specific states.<sup>349</sup>

In March 2005, the three hundred-page draft was sent to those who were concerned and clashes on the document started. While the military elite wanted it to be long and detailed, the political elite insisted on a summary giving only a general framework about security issues and threats.<sup>350</sup> On 25 June 2005, the MGK conducted a regular meeting, but the two sides could not reach agreement about the length and content of the document. In the part relating to Islamic fundamentalism, Iran was not mentioned as an external supporter.<sup>351</sup>

It is worth looking in more detail at the issues over which the military and political elites clashed. The military had three main concerns: the Cyprus issue<sup>352</sup>, the unity and territorial integrity of the state<sup>353</sup> and Islamic fundamentalism. Although all three issues caused dispute between the governing elites, the most important clash between them concerned the Islamic fundamentalism threat. While the military took

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<sup>348</sup> Özcan, *Turkey’s Changing*, p. 4.

<sup>349</sup> Özcan, *Changing Role*, p. 30.

<sup>350</sup> “Öncelikli Tehdit İrtica”, **Cumhuriyet**, 02 June 2005, p. 4; “Bağlayıcı siyasete hükümet müdahalesi”, **Milliyet**, 17 January 2005, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/baglayici-siyasete-hukumet-mudahalesi/siyaset/haberdetayarsiv/17.01.2005/102396/default.htm>, (07.10.2012).

<sup>351</sup> For the full text of the MGSB see, Mustafa Balbay, “İşte Siyaset Belgesi”, **Cumhuriyet**, 14 November 2005, p. 8.

<sup>352</sup> On the one hand, the military supported harsh declarations about the Cyprus issue since they thought that Greece wanted to control the island. The government, on the other hand, wanted to adopt a softer attitude.

<sup>353</sup> The government demanded the removal of phrases such as “one flag, one nation” from the document. They also removed sentences which did not allow ethnic groups to be considered as minorities. Phrases like the “noble Turkish nation” and “Ataturk’s nationalism” were also omitted by the government.

a tougher line about fundamental Islam, the government had a softer attitude. The government wished to remove Islamic fundamentalism from the list of domestic threats, in particularly demanding that the following phrases relating to Islamic fundamentalism be removed from the document,

*Enlightening society with a correct and modern religious understanding and raising their awareness of the fight against Islamic fundamentalism should be maintained by all institutions and organizations of the government. Freedom of religion and religious service should stay at the individual level. Its existence in the public area should be prevented.*

*The attempts of Western countries to consolidate moderate Islam instead of fundamentalist Islam in Turkey should be monitored and their moves to be active in politics should be prevented. The actions of sects that are forbidden by law should be prohibited and their appearance should be monitored.*<sup>354</sup>

In terms of taking extraordinary measurements against existential threats, one change in the following phrase seems important. The sentence *“In the times that domestic security is under threat, all powers are applied including military power”* was changed to *“When inevitable, all power elements should be applied within the limits of the law”*.

The most remarkable change in terms of this study was the one related to Iran. In the previous document, the part concerning Middle Eastern states stated that *“Iran’s attempts to export Islamic regime to Turkey and its support to Islamic fundamentalist groups should be prevented.”* However, this part was revised in a more positive way: *“Relations with Iran should be based on the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs and the friendly neighborhood relations principles”*<sup>355</sup>

Following discussions on the MGSB, the New Anatolian Newspaper conducted a poll regarding the Turkish public’s perceptions of Turkish-Iranian and Turkish-American relations. According to the results, 87.7% of the Turkish public considered the U.S. as an enemy, while 71.2% indicated that “Iran is not a threat to Turkey”. When asked whether they supported an American intervention against Iran or not, 87.3% answered that they were against such attack.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> “Ortak Milli Siyasette Kriz”, **Cumhuriyet**, 27 June 2005, p. 6.

<sup>355</sup> “Iran Tehdit Olmaktan Çıkıyor”, **Cumhuriyet**, 27 June 2005, p. 6.

<sup>356</sup> “Amerika Dost Değil”, **Yeni Şafak**, 5 February 2005, <http://yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2005/subat/05/g22.html>, (18.02.2013).

Normally, the MGSB is not allowed to be shared with the press and public. However, every five years, rumors about the document fill the media. In 2010, Cumhuriyet published an article claiming that Iraq, Russia, Greece and Iran would no longer be considered as threats.<sup>357</sup> Since coming to power, the AKP have made many attempts to make changes in the document. However, because of the military's resistance to making fundamental changes, only small alterations were possible in the document in 2005. For instance, it mentioned Iran's nuclear program and regime exportation threats.

In 2010, President Gül indicated that the document should be re-written in the light of the foreign policy principle of "zero problems with neighbors".<sup>358</sup> The AKP's aim was to remove the word "Islamic fundamentalism" totally from the text and to acquit Muslim neighbors in the Middle East of being threat for the Republic. In October 2010, the threat of "Islamic fundamentalism" was replaced with "organizations using Islam as a political means".<sup>359</sup> The rationale was that, although Iran was not a democracy, it was not trying to export its regime to Turkey. Additionally, cooperation with Iran on PKK terror was mentioned in the document.<sup>360</sup>

In the same year, M. Ali Birand wrote a column in Milliyet discussing the military's role in Turkish politics. He argued that the military had assigned three main responsibilities to itself. The first one, which Birand defined as "the real duty of the military", was to protect the borders and defend the country. The second one, which he defined as "the duty that they assigned to themselves", was to fight Islamic fundamentalism, while the third was to protect the unity of the state and fight Kurdish nationalism and PKK terror. He argued that the military needed to redefine its role in Turkish politics:

*In the past, the MGSB used to determine domestic and foreign threats. It used to determine the level of domestic threat (Islamic fundamentalism) and state the*

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<sup>357</sup> "MGSB'de komşu değişikliği", **Cumhuriyet**, 24 August 2010, p. 4.

<sup>358</sup> Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, "Kırmızı Kitabı Hem Gördüm Hem De Yazdım", **Milliyet**, 8 February 2010, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/kirmizi-kitap-i-hem-gordum-hem-yazdim/siyaset/haberdetay/08.02.2010/1196093/default.htm>, (11.06.2013).

<sup>359</sup> Barkın Şık, "İrtica İç Tehdit Olmaktan Çıktı", **Cumhuriyet**, 28 October 2010, p. 5.

<sup>360</sup> Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, "Kırmızı Kitapta Köklü Değişim", **Milliyet**, 23 August 2010, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/kirmizi-kitapta-koklu-degisim/asli-aydintasbas/siyaset/siyasyazardetay/23.08.2010/1279655/default.htm>, (08.10.2012).

*foreign sources of that threat (Iran...). The military's interventions in Turkish politics are rooted in this document. This is the point which needs to change.*<sup>361</sup>

While the 2005 MGSB included both the PKK and Islamic fundamentalism as domestic threats, the MGSB of 2010 excluded Islamic fundamentalism from the list of domestic threats. Instead, the document mentioned “radical groups exploiting religion”. In other words, it referred to groups using religion as a means to conduct violent and destructive separatist actions.<sup>362</sup> For Aknur, the reason why the military is still a considerably powerful force in politics is the Kurdish issue<sup>363</sup>, not the Islamic fundamentalism threat.

### **3.4. DESECURITIZING DISCOURSE AND THE AUDIENCE'S POSITION**

The most important reason for the desecuritization of Iran was the change in influential elites and their ideological preferences. The AKP's Islamist identity, analyzed previously, has been an important cause for the rapprochement with Iran. Desecuritization of domestic political disputes and reshaping of socially constructed enemy images have affected the Turkish elites' posture and discourse towards Iran. For instance, Karacasulu and Karakır note that, throughout the 2000s, Turkish and Iranian policy-maker elites increased the frequency of visits to each other, which has been an important sign of improving bilateral relations between the two neighbors.<sup>364</sup> It is also of great importance that AKP figures have continuously counseled the leaders and groups of Islamic countries. In particular, the institutional platforms of the OIC and the Organization of the Arabic Union provided Turkish statesmen with such opportunities. The fact that a Turkish national was elected as Secretary General

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<sup>361</sup> Mehmet Ali Birand, “TSK'ya gerçek bir modernizasyon gerekiyor”, **Milliyet**, 03 September 2010, <http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/tsk-ya-gercek-bir-modernizasyon-gerekiyor-/mehmet-ali-birand/guncel/gundemyazardetay/04.09.2010/1284789/default.htm>, (08.10.2012)

<sup>362</sup> Aknur, Civil-Military, p. 218.

<sup>363</sup> Aknur, Civil-Military, p. 244.

<sup>364</sup> The authors list some of these visits as “the visit of Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ertugrul Apakan to Iran in June 2008, Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki to Ankara in July 2008, Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan to Iran in the same month, Iranian President Ahmedinejad to Istanbul in August 2008, Iranian Parliament speaker Ali Larijani to Turkey in January 2009 and Turkish PM Erdoğan to Iran in October 2009.” Karacasulu and Karakır, p. 1399.



of the OIC can also be mentioned as demonstrating the rise of Islam in Turkey's approach towards the Middle East.<sup>365</sup>

The AKP is the only group whose posture towards Iran and Islamic fundamentalism has been coherent. Neither the military's nor the opposition civil elite's posture towards the Islamic fundamentalism threat and Iran have been consistent during the 2000s. The General Staff gave a briefing to President Gül in 2002 in which they informed him about the Islamic fundamentalist threat in Turkey. In the briefing, the General Staff reported that Iran's support to Hezbollah persisted.<sup>366</sup> In the same year, the MGK Secretary General, Tuncer Kilinc, criticized the EU for ignoring Turkey's security concerns, and called for a change in foreign policy.<sup>367</sup> He emphasized that the EU was not the only alternative for Turkey and that Turkey should cooperate more with Russia and Iran if it wanted to be more powerful in world politics.<sup>368</sup> Although he added that there was still an Islamic fundamentalism threat for Turkey, he did not externalize the threat by linking it with Iran. Soon afterwards, president Sezer declared his support for this idea.<sup>369</sup> However, some groups criticized the idea of moving closer to Iran and Russia, which caused discussions in military and civil circles about whether Russia and Iran could be alternatives to the EU or not. The most important concern was that such an alteration in foreign policy goals would not be welcomed by the U.S., which would endanger Turkey's national interests.<sup>370</sup> A similar hesitancy also occurred when Hilmi Özkök was the Chief of General Staff. The military's plans to invite the Iranian Chief of Staff to Turkey were cancelled because President Gül indicated that, while they

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<sup>365</sup> Tarık Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?", *Turkish Studies*, Vol: 9, No: 1, 2008, p. 14.

<sup>366</sup> "Genelkurmay'dan Gül'e İlk Brifing", *Cumhuriyet*, 09 December 2002, p. 5.

<sup>367</sup> It is known that a new grouping, informally called the "Euroasianists", emerged within the armed forces, who supported this idea since they believed that Turkey would never be accepted for European membership. This was one of the most important issues on which different groups in the military disagreed.

Ümit Cizre, "The Justice and Development Party and the Military: Recreating the Past After Reforming it?", *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: the Making of the Justice and Development Party*, (Ed. Ümit Cizre), Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2008, p. 141.

<sup>368</sup> "Köktendincilik Tehditi Sürüyor", *Cumhuriyet*, 26 August 2003, p. 8.

<sup>369</sup> "Sezer: Tek Secenek AB Degil", *Milliyet*, 04 April 2002, p. 19, "Ucuza Aldım", *Milliyet*, 04 April 2002, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ucuza-aldim/siyaset/haberdetayarsiv/04.04.2002/48223/default.htm>, (07.10.2012).

<sup>370</sup> Taha Akyol, "Rusya ve Iran", *Milliyet*, 09 March 2002, p. 15.

would appreciate such meeting, the purpose of such a visit might be questioned by the U.S.<sup>371</sup>

In both cases, the fear that rapprochement with Iran might damage Turkey's relations with the U.S. deterred Turkey from moving closer to Iran. Thus, in the early 2000s, when Turkey aimed at strengthening its ties with its Middle Eastern Muslim neighbors, it had to make cost-benefit calculations to balance relations with the West and the East. However, the impact of structural constraints on Turkish foreign policy decreased in the following years, due to the rising self-confidence of the AKP, mainly as a result of public support.<sup>372</sup> Looking from the Western perspective, the concerns of the U.S. were replaced by support for Turkey's softening relations with Iran. In June 2006, Gül made a visit to Tehran and the next month he went to Washington, when the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, praised Turkey's mediating role in the Iranian nuclear issue. The U.S. continued to support Turkey's role as mediator between Iran and the West regarding Iran's nuclear program. As President Obama put it, *"I believe that Turkey can be an important player in trying to move Iran in that direction [abiding by international rules and norms]."*<sup>373</sup>

According to Aras and Karakaya, Turkey's involvement in Iran's nuclear power issue has broken up the threat-security issue in two ways. First, Turkey has stopped defining Iran as an "external other" and a source of its domestic problems. Second, the elimination of "others" has increased Turkey's self-confidence in foreign policy.<sup>374</sup> There has also been a shift in the Turkish elites' rhetoric regarding Turkey's dependency on the U.S. in its foreign policy choices. For instance, during Ahmadinejad's visit to Turkey in August 2008, Gül responded to a question about U.S. concern regarding an energy deal with Iran:

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<sup>371</sup> Heper, *The Justice*, p. 219.

<sup>372</sup> Both the AKP and Turkish public's self-confidence increased in the 2000s. For instance, a plurality (44%) of Turks said it should be Turkey's role to promote democracy in the Middle East and North Africa, while only 35% said Turkey should not engage in such activities.

"Transatlantic Trends", 2011, [http://www.gmfus.org/publications\\_/TT/TT2011\\_final\\_web.pdf](http://www.gmfus.org/publications_/TT/TT2011_final_web.pdf), (11.06.2013), p. 33.

<sup>373</sup> "Obama sees role for Turkey in Iran dispute", *New York Times*, 07 December 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/08/world/europe/08erdogan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/08/world/europe/08erdogan.html?_r=0), (11.06.2013).

<sup>374</sup> Aras and Karakaya, *From Conflict*, p. 508.

Ovalı further argues that the AKP's retreat from its pro-EU approach and its implementation of an independent foreign policy after 2005 may also be a result of its increasing self-confidence due to Turkey's impressive economic performance.

Ovalı, *From Europeanization*, p. 28.

*Expansion of relations on a regional level seems quite natural for Turkey, and it is not important what other states think of it. Turkey cares about its own interests. Turkey will establish good ties with its neighbors with the aim of stability and security in the region. We are an independent country. Here we look for our national interests. We have to make investments for the [energy] supply security of Turkey.*<sup>375</sup>

However, in UNSC meetings, Turkey's constant rejection of sanctions on Iran stirred up criticism from the West. More recently, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2010, Turkey voted against UNSC resolution 1929, which proposed a fourth round of sanctions against Iran because of its nuclear program. The Erdoğan administration's posture contradicted "the U.S. and Israeli policies of preventing nuclearization of a 'rogue' regime that could pose an 'existential' threat to Israel".<sup>376</sup> The U.S. also blamed Europe for alienating Turkey from the West as the country became one of only two members of the UNSC to vote against stepping up sanctions on Iran, along with Brazil.<sup>377</sup> Despite such criticism from the U.S., the Turkish government's rigid discourse did not change much. On his visit to the European Political Center at Brussels, Erdoğan responded angrily to Western demands to reduce economic relations with Iran, claiming that

*We will never cut our relations with Iran. No one can define our policy. Turkey is not a tribal state. Turkey is a powerful country that has a great history. Therefore, we decide our destiny, we take our decisions. No one can determine to whom we will talk and to whom we will not.*<sup>378</sup>

Ahmadinejad's speeches stating that Israel should be wiped off the map were neither approved of nor reproved by Turkey. Although Israel has become one of the points uniting Turkey and Iran, the West was irritated by Turkey's soft approach towards the Iranian regime. When Ahmadinejad denied the Holocaust in the UN General Assembly meeting, the Jewish Lobby in the U.S. wanted Erdoğan to leave

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<sup>375</sup> John C.K. Daly, "Analysis: Turkish Iranian Energy Ties", **Russo Daily**, 21 August 2008, [http://www.russodaily.com/reports/Analysis\\_Turkish-Iranian\\_energy\\_ties\\_999.html](http://www.russodaily.com/reports/Analysis_Turkish-Iranian_energy_ties_999.html), (11.06.2013)., Quoted in Ekici, Is Turkey, p. 221.

<sup>376</sup> Ekici, Is Turkey, p. 6.

<sup>377</sup> Alex Barker, Najmeh Bozorgmehr, Daniel Dombey, "US blames Europe as Turkey votes against further sanctions on Iran", **Financial Times**, 10 June 2010, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/91993cf8-7427-11df-87f5-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2Vtn6upxk>, (11.06.2013).

<sup>378</sup> Statements of PM Erdoğan in Brussels at European Political Center, 01 January 2009, in Ekici, Is Turkey, p. 222.

the hall, but he rejected their demand,<sup>379</sup> which showed Turkey's sensibility regarding friendly relations with Iran.

In the D-8 Summit in 2004, former Iranian President Khatemi declared that Turkey and Iran shared the same regional security concerns, saying that "*Turkey's security means Iran's security.*"<sup>380</sup> In a similar way, in a press conference in Ankara, Iranian Foreign Minister Muttaki noted that "*We consider threats against Turkey a threat against Iran.*"<sup>381</sup> Muhammed Hussein Lavasani, Iranian Ambassador to Turkey, commented that "*Turkish-Iranian relations have been developing across multiple policy areas. Our security ties have been strengthening. We share the same regional threat perceptions. We don't want the dissolution of Iraq because it will destabilize the region.*"<sup>382</sup>

As mentioned earlier, in his strategic depth vision, Davutoğlu argues for the significance of historical and geographical features, and emphasizes the need for discursive practices to display the significance of these soft power assets. One speech of Erdoğan exemplifies how the AKP aims to increase its ties with Middle Eastern countries through this discursive element:

*Although we talk different languages in this vast region, we should not forget that we have one history, one culture and similar values. We have given a shape to history together. Be sure that we will give a shape to the future altogether. We are members of a civilization that gives high importance to the neighborhood.*<sup>383</sup>

The central role of rhetoric in AKP policies also reveals itself in its policy towards Iran. After his visit to Tehran, Erdoğan stated that

*We have conducted very fruitful negotiations with the Iranians. We are giving the utmost importance to our relations with Iran in all issues. Our relations continue to develop on the principles of good neighborhood and non-interference in domestic politics. We are acting in coordination with the Iranian government on many political and economic initiatives. We had a strategy when*

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<sup>379</sup> Yeşilyurt, Ortadoğu'yla, p. 455.

<sup>380</sup> Mesut Hakkı Casin and Gonca Oğuz Gök, "Basra Körfezinde Yükselen Nukleer Gerilimde İran-ABD Türkiye'nin Yeni Diplomatik Yol Haritaları", **Satranç Tahtasında İran Nukleer Program**, (Ed. Kenan Dağcı and Atilla Sandıklı), Tasam Yayınları, Ankara, 2007, p.56.

<sup>381</sup> Casin et al., Basra, p. 56.

<sup>382</sup> "İran Büyükelçisi: Kılınç'ın Sözlerine Şaşırmadım", **Hürriyet**, 28 March 2002, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=62367>, (11.06.2013).

<sup>383</sup> "Erdoğan Proposes 'Islamic Schengen'", **Hürriyet**, 25 November 2010, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/4411932.asp?gid=74>, (19.02.2013).

*we took over the government. We would improve our relations with our neighbors. Over the past seven years we are determinedly moving in this direction. Turkey and Iran are two important players in regional politics. We can do many things for regional peace. We should not be the crux of problems but the initiator of solutions.*<sup>384</sup>

Similarly, in a press conference with the Syrian Foreign Minister, Davutoğlu said that Turkey's ties with Iran were “excellent”, adding that Ankara was ready to expand bilateral ties with Tehran.<sup>385</sup> In another meeting, Ahmadinejad said that “*Tehran and Ankara can play an important role in regional and international developments by boosting their cooperation and consultations*”.<sup>386</sup>

Along with the central role of discourse, the emphasis on the decisive role of audience in the securitization framework makes Turkish public's posture towards AKP policies and Iran vitally important. Thus, it is necessary to analyze the audience's response to the government's desecuritizing moves. To do this, Ekici interviewed many Turkish citizens to understand their perceptions of the Erdoğan administration's Iran policy. He found that the majority supported diversification of foreign policy. In general, many of his interviewees supported Turkey's cooperation with Iran in security issues, particularly in the post Iraq War security landscape. Turkey's diversification of foreign relations was supported by various political parties, such as the CHP, MHP, SP and BBP. As one of his interviewees noted, “secularists don't really think differently from the AKP administration. They also want diversification of foreign relations”.<sup>387</sup>

USAK conducted a survey in 2009 to analyze the foreign policy perceptions of the public. The survey gave an important indication of whether the new foreign policy elite of the 2000s had succeeded in convincing its audience about the desecuritization of Iran. Answering the question, “Which country threatens Turkey most?”, only 1.09% of the participants said Iran<sup>388</sup>. Instead, the U.S. took first place

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<sup>384</sup> PM Erdoğan, Press Speech in Tehran, 28 October 2009, Quoted in Ekici, *Is Turkey*, p. 256.

<sup>385</sup> “Turkish FM Calls Turkey's Ties with Iran Deep-Rooted”, **FARS News Agency**, Tehran, 14 October 2009, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/443474480?accountid=10527>, (24.02.2013).

<sup>386</sup> “Ahmadinejad Calls For Further Cooperation With Turkey”, **Asia News Monitor**, 22 April 2010.

<sup>387</sup> Ekici, *Is Turkey*, pp. 251-252.

<sup>388</sup> Those who thought that Iran was the most important threat were 3.60% of the total participants in 2005, and 2.20% in 2004.

See, “USAK Dış Politika Algılama Anketi (DPAA)”, Ankara, August 2009, [http://www.usak.org.tr/dosyalar/TDPAnket4\\_TFP.pdf](http://www.usak.org.tr/dosyalar/TDPAnket4_TFP.pdf), (11.06.2013).

with 25.45%, while Israel took second place with 15.64%.<sup>389</sup> It is important to note that Iraq, Iran and Syria were the only Muslim states among the first fifteen countries, whereas Western states occupied the first eight places.<sup>390</sup> Iran was also the eighth country which the public believed would help Turkey if Turkey experienced a catastrophe or civil war. Furthermore, when asked “Which country threatens world peace most?”, almost none of the participants answered Iran.<sup>391</sup> Of the participants, 49.9% considered the AKP’s foreign policy successful, while only 27.7% thought the opposite.<sup>392</sup> Only 5.45% of the participants indicated that Turkey’s first priority in foreign policy be “to prevent attacks on Turkey’s secular structure”.<sup>393</sup>

The Transatlantic Trends Research survey of 2009 indicates that “If diplomatic efforts fail to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons, a plurality (48%) of respondents in the European Union and Turkey would increase diplomatic pressure on Iran, but ruled out the use of military force against it, a perspective that had not changed since 2007.”<sup>394</sup> This shows that the Turkish public also supports the AKP’s approach towards the Iranian nuclear program. According to the foreign policy poll which ATAUM conducted in 2010, only 38.6% of participants thought that the AKP foreign policy was not successful, while the rest supported the government’s foreign policy behavior.<sup>395</sup> Interestingly, the ratio of participants who did or did not want Turkey to mediate between the U.S. and Iran was equal (43.4% each).<sup>396</sup> Although half of the Turkish public were not sure about the necessity of being a mediator between Iran and the U.S., they were not confused when it came to being close friends with Iran. In answer to the question, “Which countries are the first three enemies of Turkey?”, only 0.19% mentioned Iran.<sup>397</sup>

The Transatlantic Trends report of 2011 states that “A plurality of the Turks considered Turkey’s neighbors in the Middle East as more important to the country’s economic interests (43%) and security interests (42%) than countries of the EU”,

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<sup>389</sup> (DPAA), 2009.

<sup>390</sup> (DPAA), 2009.

<sup>391</sup> (DPAA), 2009.

<sup>392</sup> (DPAA), 2009.

<sup>393</sup> (DPAA), 2009.

<sup>394</sup> “Transatlantic Trends”, 2009, [http://trends.gmfus.org/files/archived/doc/2009\\_English\\_Top.pdf](http://trends.gmfus.org/files/archived/doc/2009_English_Top.pdf), (11.06.2013), p. 39.

<sup>395</sup> “ATAUM Kamuoyu ve Türk Dış Politikası Anketi”, ATAUM, Ankara, 18 Ocak 2010, <http://ataum.ankara.edu.tr/anket.pdf>, (11.06.2013).

<sup>396</sup> ATAUM, 2010.

<sup>397</sup> ATAUM, 2010.

while 36% of Turkish participants said that Turkey does not belong in the EU because it is a Muslim country.<sup>398</sup> 45% of Turkish participants said that they were satisfied with the AKP government's approach to international affairs, while 47% indicated that their government was handling economic issues well.<sup>399</sup> Turkey took the last place among NATO member states who considered the organization as essential, with a percentage of 37%.<sup>400</sup>

Davutoğlu's article published in Foreign Policy Magazine presenting the zero-problem policy had the subtitle "The Turkish government this week brokered an 11th-hour nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran. Turkey's foreign minister explains the principles that made it possible."<sup>401</sup> Thus, one may observe that Turkey's good relations with Iran are closely related to this principle. Davutoğlu himself emphasized increasing trade relations with Iran, Syria and Egypt, and noted that Turkey's trade with neighbors has risen from 8% to 32% in the last six years. When asked whether Iran's or Israel's nuclear program is more threatening for Turkey, Davutoğlu says that the AKP has three principles concerning the nuclear issue. First, nations have the right to develop peaceful nuclear technology. Second, the AKP is against nuclear weapons, regardless of the purposes and identities of the states in question. Third, the AKP wants to resolve problems diplomatically. Therefore, he argues that the AKP is not concerned about Iranian nuclear weapons as long as Iran is transparent with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency). Davutoğlu adds that Turkey is against increasing sanctions on Iran.<sup>402</sup> In response, an Iranian MP, Gholam Reza Mesbahi Moqaddam appreciated Turkey's stance recognizing Iran's right to develop peaceful nuclear power, adding that "*expansion of ties between the two countries has caused further convergence of the two governments in dealing with Muslim world issues in international circles and organizations*".<sup>403</sup>

In *What makes the World Hang Together*, John Ruggie claims that "countries with similar cultures are less likely to be considered as threats, while countries with conflicting cultures, political and economic systems are more likely to be perceived

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<sup>398</sup> Transatlantic, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>399</sup> Transatlantic, 2011, pp. 8-9.

<sup>400</sup> Transatlantic, 2011, p. 24.

<sup>401</sup> Davutoğlu, Turkey's.

<sup>402</sup> Davutoğlu, Principles, p. 18.

<sup>403</sup> "Iranian MP Admires Turkey's Stance On Palestine", **Asia News Monitor**, 12 May 2009, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1018181723?accountid=10527>, (24.02.2013).

as serious threats when they develop non-conventional weapons capabilities.<sup>404</sup> For instance, the U.S. is less likely to perceive the U.K.'s nuclear weapons as threat than those of Iran, Iraq or North Korea. According to survey results, "Turkey was the least worried about Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. Only 38% of Turks were troubled by their neighbor becoming a nuclear power, while 51% were only a little concerned or not concerned at all."<sup>405</sup> 50% of Turkish participants said that they would accept Iran's nuclear program if they had to choose between a nuclear Iran or military action towards Iran.<sup>406</sup> According to the survey, the percentage of those who believed that NATO was essential for the country's security had decreased, while the percentage of those who said Turkey should act in close cooperation with the Middle Eastern countries had doubled. "Taken all together, it looked as if Turks were turning away from the West and instead looking toward their Middle East neighbors".<sup>407</sup> In 2012, Turkey was still the NATO member with the lowest public support for NATO, at only 38%.<sup>408</sup> In terms of views about Iran, "As in past years, Turkey was the least worried about Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. Only 48% of Turks were troubled by this possibility, representing a ten-point increase over the previous year."<sup>409</sup> What is more striking is that 27% of Turks said that accepting a nuclear Iran was the best option, while only 4% preferred military action over other options.<sup>410</sup> 55% of Turkish participants indicated that they would not approve of sending their country's aircraft if a military action against Iran was carried out.<sup>411</sup>

Although softening relations with Iran have been emphasized in this study, it should not be ignored that Iran was still perceived as a threat from time to time. However, it is remarkable that, even if Iran was occasionally considered as threatening Turkey, it has rarely been linked with Islamic fundamentalism throughout the 2000s. If linked to any threat, Iran was associated with PKK terror in Turkey and the Middle East more generally. Thus, one can argue that the trend of

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<sup>404</sup> John G Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge", **International Organization**, Vol: 52, No: 04, 2005, p. 858.

<sup>405</sup> Transatlantic, 2011, p. 26.

<sup>406</sup> Transatlantic, 2011, p. 27.

<sup>407</sup> Transatlantic, 2011, p. 37.

<sup>408</sup> "Transatlantic Trends", 2012, <http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2012/09/TT-2012-Key-Findings-Report.pdf>, (11.06.2013), p. 32.

<sup>409</sup> Transatlantic, 2012, p. 38.

<sup>410</sup> Transatlantic, 2012, p. 38.

<sup>411</sup> Transatlantic, 2012, p. 39.



linking Iran with Islamic fundamentalist movements in Turkey, and the fear that Turkey might become like Iran, ended in the 2000s. For example, in an article analyzing the National Outlook Movement, there was no mention of ties with Iran. Under the part titled “Special relations with Islamist countries”, Iran was not mentioned, while Libya and Saudi Arabia were shown as sources of Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey.<sup>412</sup> In a speech on 30 August 2002, Hilmi Özkök answered a question relating to the fundamentalist Islamist threat by saying that “*If there is a threat, there is a power to counter it as well. When precautions are taken, the threat ceases to be a threat. Islamic fundamentalism and separatism threats have existed since the Ottomans. They are like mushrooms growing with the rain*”.<sup>413</sup> He further mentioned the PKK threat, by correlating it with Iran and Syria. In short, if the Turkish elites perceived any threats from Iran, it was related to Iran’s possible support for the PKK, rather than its Islamic regime per se.

### 3.5. ECONOMIC INDICATORS OF DESECURITIZATION

It is widely accepted that the connection between the economy and foreign policy is important in bilateral relations. The vast majority of the related literature, especially liberal approaches towards international affairs, argue that closer economic ties result in political rapprochement. In contrast, Aydın and Aras claim that, in the Middle East, the nature of political ties between states are important for developing economic relations.<sup>414</sup> More generally, in states with an authoritarian tendency, even if they have an open market, strategic and political perceptions determine the level of economic interaction. The authors further argue that, when the AKP came to power with an Islamist identity, it not only changed political discourse, but also aimed to deepen economic ties with Iran.<sup>415</sup>

Iran became a significant trade partner for Turkey after the AKP came to power. In December 2006, Erdoğan made a visit to Iran and stated that there had

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<sup>412</sup> Mustafa Balbay, “En Güçlü Ve Organize İrticai Grup”, **Cumhuriyet**, 22 November 2006, p. 9.

<sup>413</sup> “Atatürkçülük Anlatılamadı”, **Cumhuriyet**, 31 August 2002, p. 8.

<sup>414</sup> Mustafa Aydın and Damla Aras, “Political Conditionality of Economic Relations Between Paternalist States: Turkey’s Interaction with Iran, Iraq and Syria”, **Arab Studies Quarterly**, Vol: 27, No: 1/2, Winter 2005, p. 22.

<sup>415</sup> Aydın and Aras, Political, p. 29.

been 500% growth in Iran-Turkey trade in the previous four years. The chairman of Iran's Expediency Council, Hashemi Rafsanjani also indicated that trade and financial relations between two countries were increasing swiftly, which was beneficial for both of them. According to the Turkish Institute for Statistics, overall trade volume between Iran and Turkey increased 730% over the last decade.<sup>416</sup> In 2008, Iran became the Turkey's seventh largest import partner and 19th largest export partner.<sup>417</sup> As one can infer from the data and speeches, Iran has begun to be considered a close trading partner by Turkey, and this new Iranian model poses no challenge to Turkish elites.<sup>418</sup>

**Table 1.** Turkey's Foreign Trade with Iran between 2002 and 2011 (millions of dollars)<sup>419</sup>

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Import</b>	921	1861	1962	3470	5627	6615	8200	3406	7645	12462
<b>Export</b>	334	534	813	913	1067	1441	2030	2025	3044	3590

As can be seen from the table above, Turkish-Iranian overall trade volume has increased continuously during the last decade. Turkey's imports from Iran increased over tenfold throughout the AKP administration while exports to Iran rose from \$334 million to \$9,923 million. The rising trend helps in understanding the developing bilateral economic and political relations between the two countries.

The share of natural gas in Turkish-Iranian trade relations has been particularly significant for political ties and requires closer analysis. Before 2002, Turkey purchased less than 4% of its natural gas requirements from Iran. In contrast, new contracts throughout the AKP period have increased the overall volume of natural gas trade between Iran and Turkey steadily.<sup>420</sup> According to the EPDK's (Energy Markets Regulatory Authority) 2009 data, Turkey's natural gas suppliers

<sup>416</sup> "Foreign Trade Statistics", **Turkish Institute for Statistics**, <http://www.tuik.gov.tr>, (23.02.2013).

<sup>417</sup> Foreign Trade Statistics.

<sup>418</sup> Aras and Karakaya, *From Conflict*, p. 508.

<sup>419</sup> Data from Turkish Ministry of Economy, available at, [www.ekonomi.gov.tr](http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr), (27.02.2013).

<sup>420</sup> "Foreign Trade Statistics Database", **TUIK**, 08 February 2009, in Ekici, *Is Turkey*, p. 5.

were Russia with 56%, Iran with 15%, Azerbaijan 14%, Algeria 13%, and Nigeria 3%.<sup>421</sup>

According to Necdet Pamir, a Turkish energy analyst, Turkey's dependency on Iranian gas is the main reason why Turkey's relations with Iran have intensified. Iranian natural gas both helps to fill the Nabucco pipeline and reduces Turkey's own dependency on Russian natural gas supply. According to foreign trade reports, more than half of Turkey's natural-gas demand is met by Russia's Gazprom.<sup>422</sup> The Director General of BOTAŞ supported diversification in a speech in 2007, noting that *"According to our agreement, 30 billion cubic meters of Iranian gas will be transferred to Europe via Turkey. Iran is crucial for the Nabucco project and Turkey has to take advantage of it"*.<sup>423</sup>

During the 2000s, Erdoğan and Ahmadinejad stated their willingness to develop broader bilateral cooperation on energy, security, transportation and industry. In 2008, Ahmedinejad visited Turkey, and both leaders said that they had agreed to increase the bilateral trade to \$30 billion. Erdoğan stated that

*Turkish and Iranian merchants have become like brothers. Both countries' investors share the same economic concerns and future prospects. There is a rising trend in overall trade. We are really happy with the rise of bilateral trade to over \$10 billion. To increase the volume more, we as politicians will eliminate the barriers, the investors will do the rest. When we attain a trade volume of \$30 billion, Turkey and Iran will be in a very advanced situation."*<sup>424</sup>

Rahimi said at a meeting in 2009 that *"The expansion of trade relations and cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey is a necessity under the current conditions of the world."*<sup>425</sup> He added that Turkish-Iranian relations had no boundaries and that energy, oil and gas, investment, trade and commerce were some of the potential areas for cooperation. During the meeting, Turkish representatives indicated that Turkey wanted to expand relations and cooperation with Iran in many different areas.

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<sup>421</sup> "Energy Market Regulatory Authority", Petrol Piyasası Sektör Raporu, 2009, [http://www.epdk.gov.tr/yayin\\_rapor/petrol/2009/SektorRaporu2009.pdf](http://www.epdk.gov.tr/yayin_rapor/petrol/2009/SektorRaporu2009.pdf) (23.02.2013).

<sup>422</sup> "Turkey/Iran politics: Too energetic a friendship", **EIU ViewsWire Report**, New York, 24 August 2007, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/466545146?accountid=10527>, (24.02.2013).

<sup>423</sup> "İran Gazından Dönüş Yok İmzalar Ekimde Atılıyor", **Stargazete**, 28 September 2007.

<sup>424</sup> "Başbakan Erdoğan'dan İran'da Ekonomik Mesajlar", **Stargazete**, 27 October 2009.

<sup>425</sup> "Iran Seeking \$20 bln Trade Exchange with Turkey", **FARS News Agency**, Tehran, 25 October 2009, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/443472836?accountid=10527> (24.02.2013).

There has also been an increase in the number of Iranian tourists to Turkey in the 2000s. This increase is important since it both maintains and demonstrates developing cultural relations. As can be seen from Table. 2, the number of Iranian tourists quintupled from 2002 to 2011. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, more than 30 million tourists visited Turkey in 2011. Among all other Muslim countries, Iranians took first place with 1.8 million tourists visiting Turkey.<sup>426</sup>

**Table 2.** Number of Tourists Coming to Turkey in the 2000s<sup>427</sup>

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
432281	494977	631522	957245	865942	1058206	1134965	1383261	1885097	1879304

Turkey and Iran's elites have declared their commitment to collaboration in broader areas beyond energy, security and industry, with the judiciary, education, cultural issues, media and sports being some of the many mentioned potential areas for cooperation. Turkish foreign trade minister Zafer Çağlayan said that "*Bilateral commercial and economic ties between Iran and Turkey will remain in force and the ties will be developed and expanded fast*". At a meeting in Ankara, the Turkish side described Iran and Turkey as two great states of the Middle East. The representative added, "*Turkey and Iran's common history and civilization is the most important reason for having close relations*", and "*These two neighboring countries should enjoy the most expanded border cooperation and opening the doors of new border customs posts is specially important for the expansion of cooperation*".<sup>428</sup>

It is also important to note that both Turkish and Iranian leaders started to perceive each other as friends and allies in the region. In answer to a question regarding Iran and Turkey's role against Israel's actions, Ahmadinejad said that, Iran

<sup>426</sup> "Müslümanların Gözdesi Türkiye", 10 August 2012, **CNNTURK**, <http://www.cnnturk.com/2012/guncel/08/10/muslumanlarin.gozdesi.turkiye/672474.0/index.html>, (14.03.2013).

<sup>427</sup> Yeşilyurt, Ortadoğu'yla, p. 460.

<sup>428</sup> For more reports on the Iranian and Turkish elites' speeches declaring their will for further cooperation see, "Iran-Turkey Agree to Boost Cultural, Educational Ties", **Fars News Agency**, 17 February 2010; "Iran, Turkey to Expand Media Cooperation", **Fars News Agency**, 8 April 2010; "Iran, Turkey Confer on Increasing Sports Cooperation", **Fars News Agency**, 14 May 2010; "Minister Predicts Sharp Increase in Tehran-Ankara Trade Ties", **Asia News Monitor**, 2 September 2010; "Turkey Underline Further Development of Cooperation", **Asia News Monitor**, 14 December 2010; "Iran, Turkey Discuss Expansion of Judicial Cooperation", **Asia News Monitor**, 17 June 2009.

and Turkey had a very important and effective position in the region and with bilateral cooperation they would be able to solve all regional problems.<sup>429</sup>

Despite these signs of the desecuritization of Iran throughout the 2000s, it should be noted that some circles have occasionally attempted to apply securitizing discourse. Behnke's argument claiming that "in a sense, desecuritization can never really happen" is appropriate here. The expression may have more than one meaning.

On the one hand, a securitized issue can never be completely desecuritized since it is impossible to make all the audience to accept this. In the Turkish-Iranian case, although survey results show that a majority of the Turkish public consider Iran as friend not an enemy, there have always remained a smaller minority who perceive the Iranian Islamic regime as a threat to Turkey's secular regime and identity. For instance, the military tried to intervene politically on 27 April, claiming that the AKP was unwilling to protect the secular regime and identity of Turkey. In the General Staff's written statement, "developments in the [Middle Eastern] region" were exemplified as bad examples of erosion of secularism. In addition, some media members, academicians, and opposition party members have tried to continue to securitize political Islam threat in Turkey.

Although throughout the 2000s there had been some exceptional cases showing ongoing concerns related to Iran's regime, there are two main points that indicate that securitization of the Iranian Islamic regime had almost ended in the 2000s. Firstly, the attempts by securitizing actors were rejected by the broad audience this time. The mass demonstrations against the AKP government in 2007 could be seen as evidence for securitization. However, early elections in 2007, in which the AKP gained 47% of the votes while the CHP (which was associated with the demonstrations) got only 21%, shows that the securitization of the Islamic regime was not accepted by the great majority. Nevertheless, as Aras and Karakaya argue, "It was almost a truism among Turkey's bureaucratic/military elite that Iran had a campaign to export the Islamic Revolution to Turkey by all possible means at its disposal, including support of illegal, overt Islamist groups".<sup>430</sup> Secondly, and more

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<sup>429</sup> "Attacking Freedom Flotilla, attack against freedom and humanity", **Asia News Monitor**, 10 June 2010.

<sup>430</sup> Aras and Karakaya, *From Conflict*, p. 505.

importantly, those securitizing groups did not directly blame Iran, as they referred to an Islamic regime threat within Turkey.

Although desecuritization can be seen with some issues, others continue to be securitized. Turkey's policy towards Israel during this period is the best example requiring analysis to understand the incomplete desecuritization towards Turkey's neighbors.<sup>431</sup> Tense Turkish-Israeli relations were welcomed by Iranian policy makers. For instance, regarding Erdoğan's outburst in Davos, Ahmadinejad stated that *"The act of the Turkish PM reflects the expectations of all Turkish people, the nations of the region and the entire world. We appreciate it. He behaved exactly how he should have behaved in that situation."*<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> For further information on how Turkish identity influenced Turkey's perceptions towards Israel see, Ali Şevket Ovalı, "Revisiting the Turkish Identity Debate in Turkish Israeli Relations", **Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol: 35, No: 4, 2012, pp. 28-54.

<sup>432</sup> "Ahmadinejad praises Turkish PM for Davos Outburst", **Asian News Monitor**, 09 February 2009, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1017749169?accountid=10527>, (24.02.2013).

## CONCLUSION

Between 1979 and 2002 Turkey's Iran policy has been subject to securitization and this process has gained momentum particularly during the 1990s. However, with the AKP's electoral victory in 2002, Iran, hitherto been considered as threat due to its Islamic regime, has been desecuritized by the new foreign policy making elites of Turkey. Taking this remarkable shift in Turkey's Iran policy into account, the study aimed to display the domestic causes behind this rhetorical and practical shift in Turkey's Iran policy.

For the purpose of developing a theoretically governed account on the role of elite discourse on the construction of security threats as domestic factors, this thesis applied securitization theory which sets out analytical tools to analyze the shift in Turkey's Iran policy. As Bilgin argues, "Turkey is one of those places where Wæver would expect securitization theory to do well" due to elites' tendency to utilize language as a means of justification for their policies, and their aim to limit civil society's sphere of influence.<sup>433</sup> Argued as such, domestic shifts in the discourse and praxis of Turkish politics had and still have a considerable degree of influence on Turkey's foreign policy behavior.

Herewith, this thesis has specifically investigated the central role of ruling elites' discourse, in point of creating and disposing security threats, and convincing the public that the adopted policies are legitimate and necessary for the sake of state. On the one hand, military and political elite in power between 1990 and 2002 strictly internalized secularity as an identical feature, and had a tendency to perceive domestic and foreign political 'issues' as existential 'threats' to secular regime of the state and secular identity of the nation. Since state and nation seem to correspond to each other in Turkey, it was common to perceive nation in danger also, when state has been threatened by an external source. On the other hand, the AKP has distanced itself from traditional republican sources of Turkish national identity. In this manner a new discourse and policy formulations, that are considered as revolutionary by many, towards the neighbors became proponent in the foreign policy domain. The AKP defines itself as a 'conservative, religious, right-wing, liberal' political party.

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<sup>433</sup> Pinar Bilgin, "The Politics of Studying Securitization? The Copenhagen School in Turkey", *Security Dialogue*, Vol: 42, No: 4-5, 2011, p. 406.

Thus, Iran and Islamic regime's covert and overt support for Islamic fundamentalist movements in Turkey have not been perceived as an existential threat by the AKP elites.

In Turkey, an issue is considered as an existential security threat when it is mentioned in MGSB. While MGSB in 1990s stated that Iran and Islamic fundamentalism are threats for Turkey, both statements have been removed from the document according to information leaked in newspapers. While there were incidents such as February 28, which were indirectly related to Iran, the 2000s did not witness such measures. Economic rapprochement and cooperation over politics, security and trade are other outcomes of desecuritization in relations. According to formal data, level of foreign trade and number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey increased dramatically, which imply the existence of a relatively stable period between Ankara and Tehran.

**Figure 5.** Key findings

	<b>1990-2002</b>	<b>2002-2011</b>
<b>Process tracing</b>	Securitization	Desecuritization
<b>Securitizing actor</b>	Military and political elites	Political elites
<b>Referent Object</b>	Secular identity of nation and secular regime of state	Secular identity of nation and secular regime of state
<b>Speech act</b>	Securitizing actors' emphasis on Iranian regime as a threat	Desecuritizing actors' emphasis on cooperation and close relations with Iran
<b>Audience's response</b>	Ambiguous (No concrete data)	Public polls (Desecuritizing move became successful)
<b>Outcomes / Measures</b>	MGSB Low level of cooperation General Staff's briefings February 28 (indirect)	Change in MGSB Increase in bilateral trade Increase in political and security cooperation

The application of securitization theory to analyze Turkish-Iranian relations poses certain pearls and pitfalls. On the one hand, the strength of securitization theory lies in its demonstration of how security issues and threats are socially constructed, and how elites 'determine existential threats' via speech act. Elite



perceptions and ideologies matter above normal in terms of Iranian case. The theory is also convenient for Turkish case since it helps to demonstrate the nexus between domestic and foreign policy formulations of a state.

On the other hand, the securitization theory of CS has negative features which put a cap on its application, especially to a foreign policy case. The most challenging weakness of the theory lies in its tendency to reduce security to speech act. To put it another way, the theory does not give a sufficient answer to the question “why and under which circumstances do the construction of security threats via speech act occur?”. In this regard the study benefited from the arguments of a second generation of securitization theory, -so called the Paris and Welsh Schools- which claim that broader social and political context also matter in securitization/desecuritization. On that note, besides Islamic identity of the AKP and the gradual Islamization of Turkish politics, Davutoğlu’s new foreign policy vision and Turkey’s “self” perception in the Middle East, and declining role of military in Turkish political structure have been influential factors of such shift in Turkey’s Iran policy and adopted rhetoric of elites.

Second short-coming of securitization theory is its ambiguous definition of “the acceptance of the audience”. Since foreign policy decisions of a government are not necessarily taken by consulting and asking the public – as it is common in other policy domains-, and foreign policy is not the main motivation of voting behavior, it can be challenging to measure public’s response to securitizing actors’ move. Although there are certain polls in the 2000s directly asking whether Turkish public perceives Iran as threat, attempts to find such polls in 1990s did not respond. Moreover, a future study conducting a public poll itself would be very worthwhile.

There have also been empirical limitations in the formation of the current research. Not ignoring the influential role of competition between Ankara and Tehran over the domination of the region (geopolitics) and the leadership of Islamic world, minority issues of both states, Iranian nuclear issue, energy politics, the Kurdish question, Ankara and Tehran’s relations with the Western world, and Iranian domestic politics in Turkish-Iranian relations, this study limited itself with the impact of Islamic fundamentalism threat perception. Role of other external and internal factors were left behind, since hardly any of the existing studies analyzing Turkey’s

Iran policy focuses on the role of Islamic fundamentalism threat perception of elites per se. In this respect, examining the role of elite perceptions and rhetoric in foreign policy behaviors in general; Turkish military and political elites' perceptions of Iranian regime specifically was at the focus of this study. However, further research in this field regarding the role of the abovementioned factors would be of great help in understanding the dynamics of Turkish-Iranian relations.

The methodological approach applied in this study was an in-depth analysis of elite rhetoric, as well as investigation of broader context within which securitization became apparent, and political outcomes of securitizing speeches. In this respect, the second and third chapters contain quotations from Turkish elites, regarding Islamic fundamentalism and Iranian Islamic regime. Two leading Turkish newspapers, *Cumhuriyet* and *Milliyet* were taken as main sources, and reviewed with the keywords "Islamic fundamentalism (irtica), Iran, threat". The reason why formal speeches are not chosen as the main source was because of the claim that securitizing speeches are made to convince the audience, which heads the researcher towards media sources that have stronger channels between elites and public. In this manner, further studies comparing attitudes of different media groups have the potential to contribute to literature on Turkish foreign policy.

The most challenging limitation on the empirical part of this study lies in the fact that Turkish-Iranian relations seemed to enter into a new era in the post-2011, with unsettling uprisings in the Middle East. According to Aras, non-material factors and ideological tendencies have a decisive role in Turkey's policy towards Iran, and this causes extraordinary foreign policy decisions, which push the limit of normal politics. uncommon and unforeseen foreign policy approaches.<sup>434</sup> In contrast, for many scholars, uprisings deteriorated the relations between Tehran and Ankara by awakening regional competition. In other respects, some scholars did not believe in such concrete shift in relations, although they admit there have been some points of conflict. It is appropriate to signify the points of conflict and cooperation between two parties after the Arab Spring, by considering the link between discourse and policy outcomes.

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<sup>434</sup> Bülent Aras, *Türk-İran İlişkileri*, p. 84.

On the one hand, developments such as NATO's Kürecik radar base in Turkey, Turkey and Iran's diverging responses to the Civil war in Syria, Turkey's decision of implementing oil embargo on Iran, and Iran's explicit support to Lebanon Hezbollah in Syria seemed to increase tension between two states, if not completely deteriorated the relations. On the other, Turkish and Iranian leaders aimed to maintain existing friendly environment. Turkey for instance, played a mediator role between Iran and the West regarding Iran's nuclear issue, and held meetings in Istanbul. Moreover, both sides gave friendly speeches stating that Iran and Turkey cooperate in political, economic and security issues. Furthermore, when Syrian artillery shell hit Turkish neighborhood, after a meeting that both sides attended, Erdoğan stated that Turkey and Iran were working on the problem collaboratively. Similarly, vice president of Iran Rahimi declared that Turkey and Iran did not fall afoul in Syrian issue, since they both desired security, stability and development in the region.

Besides arguments of deterioration in relations, the question concerning this study is whether there has been any signs of re-securitization in Turkish elites' speeches and attitudes towards Iran. The answer within the light of a plot summary of both sides' discourses seems to be "no". It is explicit that what Turkey and Iran wish for the future of Syria dissociates. However, what is more apparent is that both states' first priority is a peaceful and stable Middle East, without any foreign intervention. Yet, since the so-called Arab Spring is an ongoing process which has not yielded certain results yet, it is neither possible nor appropriate to come up with absolute conclusions and future prospects about Turkey's position within a theoretical framework. As a matter of fact, it is still an unanswered question whether Turkish elites' Islamist identity will be able to overcome its problems with the rising Arab regimes in the Middle East and the emerging clashes with Iran on the Middle Eastern issues, or will Turkey's eagerness to play a dominant role in the region invalidate its regional policies based on a 'common history and civilization'. However, further analysis on Turkish-Iranian relations in the post-2011 would help scholars to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter.

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