The Geography of Reception: Why Do Egyptians Watch Turkish Soap Operas?

Necati Anaz, Necmettin Erbakan University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/necati_anaz/18/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey’s Religious Diplomacy</td>
<td>Mehmet Ozkan</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dual Process of Xenophobia and Transnational Identity Formation in Turkey</td>
<td>Yunus Kaya</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Geography of Reception: Why do Egyptians Watch Turkish Soap Operas?</td>
<td>Necati Anaz</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmet Davutoğlu’s Foreign Policy Understanding: A Blend of Westernist and Multiculturalist Eurasianism</td>
<td>Özgür Tüfekçi</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Note / Note de recherché</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wolf and the Fist—Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the Gezi Protests</td>
<td>Coşkun Taştan and Hatem Ete</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Turkey’s Religious Diplomacy

Mehmet Ozkan
SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research & International Center for Terrorism and Transnational Crime (UTSAM), Turkish National Police Academy, Ankara, Turkey

Since 2002, Turkish foreign policy has transformed on the intellectual, geographical, and practical levels, opening up to different parts of the world. In one of the most salient transformations, religious diplomacy began to play a key role in expanding Ankara’s influence, from Latin America to Eurasia and Africa. This religious diplomacy has been implemented not only by state institutions but also through active contributions from civil society organizations. Today, Turkey’s religious diplomacy is much more sophisticated and comprehensive than many imagine, mostly thanks to the experiences of the past decade. Institutions that implement and develop religious diplomacy in Turkey have been reshaping themselves, both structurally and in terms of content.

Keywords: Turkey, religious diplomacy, Diyanet, foreign policy, Islam

Introduction

One of the most salient dimensions of Turkish foreign policy in the last decade is its opening to different parts of the world. Until the early 2000s Turkey largely followed a one-dimensional foreign policy based on a Western orientation despite various pressures from society to open to different parts of the world, such as the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and the Balkans. In those years, the state elite mostly acted to satisfy the social pressure whenever a crisis emerged, such as war in Bosnia, but these shifts
were neither deep-rooted nor comprehensive but rather based on ad hoc policies. Since the election of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AK Party) to office in 2002, one can talk about a “period of openings” in Turkish foreign policy to many areas which were neglected before. However, these openings have occurred not only in economics and politics but also in social and religious areas. This is a novel phenomenon in Turkey’s conventional or traditional approach to foreign and security policy, as Turkey is constitutionally a secular state.

The dimension of religious diplomacy has always been underestimated and under-studied among scholars of Turkish politics (Aydın 2008). Perhaps many considered it only as a natural repercussion and part of the soft-power approach (Beng 2008; Kalın 2011), but the time has come for a comprehensive understanding and situating of religious diplomacy within the overall structure of Turkish foreign policy. Although until recently this religious diplomacy has not been used much in foreign policy discourse for a variety of reasons, its influence and significance for Turkey’s foreign relations in most of the last decade are worth considering. This article argues that religious diplomacy is becoming a key factor in Turkish foreign policy and is now almost impossible not to notice. Therefore, this piece tries to develop a comprehensive approach to the elements of religious diplomacy in Ankara’s new geopolitical discourse and foreign policy with regard to both the content and the institutions involved. After analyzing the changing nature of Turkish foreign policy thinking, it will proceed to locate religious diplomacy within this changing framework.

The Changing Nature of Diplomacy and Religion in Turkey

While it is not possible to separate religious diplomacy from the general tendencies of Turkey’s foreign policy, it is possible to evaluate the economic, political, and intellectual foundations of this necessity on three basic points. A correct analysis of the intellectual basis for the openings will answer the question of why Turkey has started to undertake these openings toward different regions of the world—not only in economic and political terms but also through religion—which were previously neglected in Turkish foreign policy.

Especially since the AK Party’s accession to power, the first foundation for change has been intellectual. The major intellectual transition in Turkish foreign policy has been the visible prominence of a geographical perception in its outlook toward the whole world. Turkey no longer construes the world as it was during the Cold War period but rather has adopted new balances of power while re-conceptualizing its understanding of international politics in a new framework. This intellectual
transition and transformation has emerged as a result of foreign political circumstances as much as of Turkey’s own political dynamics.

Regardless of the reason, Turkey is today looking at its region and the world with a new and different perspective, and as a consequence there have been radical changes in its approach to Africa, Latin America, the Balkans, and Asia. According to this new perspective these regions are not regarded as distant and troubled regions but as possible partners with which political and economic relations ought to be established and developed and where unified action should be undertaken when necessary. For that reason, historical cultural ties and religious diplomacy have become key elements of Turkey’s foreign policy normalization.

The second transformation, which constitutes the economic foundation of the openings, has been Turkey’s efforts to reposition itself in a changing global economy. Although Turkey’s increasing engagement with the global economy started after 1980 with the efforts of Turgut Özal (Ataman 2008)—Özal perceived the world as an area of opportunities rather than a land of perils and in particular had tried to realize these new global economic opportunities—the systematic framework of a growing economic engagement was established after 2002 during the AK Party era. The struggle to redefine a world view which concentrates on economics has led the way and laid the foundations for the definition of a new “national role” and foreign policy orientation, which have manifested themselves even more during the AK Party era (Aras and Görener 2010). Yet even a brief comparison of the AK Party and Özal eras clearly reveals the basic differences between the two periods. Özal’s approach displayed both a structuralist and an opportunist character and regarded the economy as the principal component. As a result, in this period Turkey embraced a pragmatic approach. However, during the AK Party era Turkey has been trying to develop a new regional and global perspective based especially on historical and cultural components. Ankara’s proactive and dynamic openings toward different regions of the world have been systematic and important initiatives rather than being appendages to its relations with the West (Davutoğlu 2008). In this framework, Turkey’s definition of itself as a “central country” rather than a “bridge” is an indicator of this new vision (Davutoğlu 2004). Turkey, viewed from this standpoint, both started to open up toward other regions with an institutionalized partnership and wanted to play a more active role in foreign politics (Altunışık 2009). Therefore, the AK Party era’s foreign policy is more comprehensive and has more depth in both style and expression than that of the Özal era, and as a result it will probably have long-term effects.

Third, the political foundations of Turkey’s openings, in parallel to the intellectual and economic aspects mentioned above, are to increase
Ankara’s involvement in all regions, international organizations, and international relations and to increase Turkey’s activity in contributing to regional and global peace. Today Turkey is not prone to crisis but instead is pursuing a foreign policy with a specific vision and perspective (Davutoğlu 2009). Within Turkey’s political vision, its relations with Asia and Africa are an alternative to its relations with the West but at the same time do not pose a contradiction. In a world where the international system is no longer bipolar, Turkey wants to display an active presence in all international and regional organizations and has determined its foreign policy inclinations within this framework (Davutoğlu 2009). Turkey’s observer status in the African Union, its partnership of dialogue in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), its active stance in the G-20, and its non-permanent member status in the UN Security Council in the 2008–10 term have to be evaluated within this framework. Similarly, Ankara’s serious interest in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC; now the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) since 2003 indicates its decision to utilize religious diplomacy at the institutional level as well. Because of this, as the Turkish foreign minister at the time, Abdullah Gul, announced before the 31st meeting of the Islam Foreign Ministers Conference in May 2004, Turkey has placed special importance on its relations with the Islamic world, and it aims to get the OIC to take its deserved place in the international arena and to transform it into a more effective and dynamic structure. In this spirit, Turkey proposed Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu as its candidate for the OIC Secretary-General at the 2004 meeting. With the election of Ihsanoglu to that position, Turkey had upgraded its role in the OIC structure to the utmost degree (Ozkan 2007).

Deepening Turkey’s Religious Diplomacy

Turkey’s religious diplomacy has not been conducted exclusively at the state level. Many civil-society organizations, religious groups, and religious figures play an important role in this. However, to better explain the nature of religious diplomacy within Turkey’s new approach to the world, the main focus here will be the official state institutions, but other types of involvement will be analyzed where necessary.

Turkey’s Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) is the government body that—surprisingly for a state that identifies itself as secular—deals with all religious matters of the country’s Sunni Muslim majority (Adanali 2008). Diyanet employs the imams, pays their salaries, organizes religious life, and acts as the highest religious authority in questions of doctrine and practice. Since its establishment, the role of Diyanet has always been debatable (Tarhanlı 1993). In 1966, when Diyanet’s
president, İbrahim Elmalı, left the country for the first time to visit Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Syria to participate in the ceremonies commemorating the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday, the press published fervent criticisms of the visit (Milliyet, 28 June 1966). The Turkish government recalled Elmalı from Tunisia and asked him not to go to the other countries (Milliyet, 29 June 1966). However, from the 2000s on, foreign delegations, both Islamic and non-Islamic, visit Diyanet frequently, and Diyanet often pays a return visit. Turkey, unlike Saudi Arabia and Iran, constitutionally is a laicist state, but Diyanet has expanded its foreign activities over the last 30 years and has become a key actor in Turkish foreign policy.

Particularly since the military coup of 1980, when the generals mandated a revision in state ideology and introduced the “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008), Diyanet has embarked on several internal missions to bring citizens back into the fold of a patriarchal Turkish Islam, even if they were not Sunnis but followers of the heterodox Alevi traditions. With close to 100,000 employees and a budget larger than those of most ministries of the republic, Diyanet is probably the world’s largest and most centralized Muslim religious organization, comparable in scope and capabilities only to the Vatican. Despite the veneer of a secular regime, Diyanet today stands very much in the tradition of the Office of the Şeyh-ül Islam and feels increasingly less inclined to disguise this legacy (Erdem 2008). Until the 1980s, Diyanet’s remit had been limited to Turkey’s Muslims. At that point, religion was not a significant resource in the construction of dominant forms of national identity. After the coup of 1980, however, Diyanet began to develop administrative capabilities that extended well beyond Turkey’s national borders and expanded massively into countries with Turkish immigrant populations (Bardakoğlu 2008). If the 1980s marked the expansion of Turkish state Islam into the immigrant communities of western Europe, then the 1990s saw a gradual orientation toward Muslim communities in different parts of the world. What follows are details on and an analysis of Diyanet’s activities in different regions.

Latin America: Establishing Links

Until recently Turkish–Latin American relations have always been analyzed through the prism of sympathy with Che Guevara and romantic socialism. This, in reality, has produced nothing concrete to help develop relations between both sides. What it has produced is a romantic understanding of Latin America and a paradigm that sees developments on that continent as either black or white, namely, socialism or capitalism. The other understanding that has persisted in Turkey is to look at Latin
America in terms of popular culture, such as music, salsa, tango, and like. These perspectives are now beginning to change, at least on several fronts.

Turkey’s Diyanet organized a Summit of Latin American Muslim Religious Leaders in Istanbul for the first time on 12–15 November 2014, with a total of 71 people from 40 countries in attendance. Not only have community leaders from key countries like Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia joined in, but there have also been representatives from small countries like Belize and Barbados among the invitees. One of the main aims is, of course, to establish links and share experiences. Because of this, most of the topics discussed have been related to understanding and identifying the problems faced by Latin American Muslims. The main issues raised are the lack of sufficient religious leaders who speak Spanish and of religious books in Spanish. According to participants, one of the main ways of communicating, teaching, and learning for Latino Muslims is use of the Internet and various online sources. Subsequently, many participants have focused on credible online sources of Islam and their easy availability.

Diyanet’s summit cannot be understood without contextualizing the political opening of Turkey to Latin America in the last decade. Since the announcement of 2006 as “the year of Latin America” in Turkey, Turkish foreign policy-makers have put a special emphasis on Latin America. Ankara opened new embassies in countries like Colombia and Peru, and mutual visits have intensified. Several Latin American countries opened embassies in Ankara, and the presidents of Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, and Ecuador, along with many foreign ministers from the continent, have visited Turkey (Levaggi 2013).

Despite the huge geographical distance, social relations are also on the increase. One can find many mixed Turkish–Latin American couples living either in Latin American countries or in Turkey. At the same time, many students from Latin America are studying in Turkey through the scholarships of the Presidency for Turks and Related Communities Abroad and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK). There is also an increasing interest from the academic community to study and do research about the linkages of history, politics and culture between Turkey and Latin America.

Turkey’s religious opening to Latin America goes beyond bilateral relations and is partly a natural extension of Ankara’s Middle East policy with unexpected outcomes. Many Muslim organizations in Latin America are run by people of Arab descent, and most of their ancestors arrived on the continent with Ottoman passports in the late 19th and early 20th century. Indeed, many people think that these Arabs are Turks and call them los Turcos (Kalın 2015).

Although Latin America is less well known in Turkey, it is not an
exaggeration to say that Latin America is the continent where the Turkish passport has the most validity and acceptance. In order to connect the social aspects, there are Turks who not only represent the Middle East but also are integrated into Latin culture. Similarly, Islam is the fastest-growing religion in South America today, despite low levels of active proselytization; this ongoing phenomenon has been largely ignored in Latin America. Of course, when one considers the huge population of Latin America, the number and percentage of Muslims remain very low. It is estimated that there are about 6 million Muslims on the continent, about 1% of the entire population. However, what the statistics show is open to debate for two reasons. First, there is no reliable census of the population of Muslims. The second and more important reason is that the number of Muslims is growing by the day.

There is very little research on this phenomenon. Converts to Islam in Latin America range from 17 to 27 years of age. This leads us to conclude that young Latinos are interested in Islam, a phenomenon that should be investigated. By connecting with this group, Turkey can further deepen the social base of possible cooperation and development of relations with Latin America. In fact, the social ties between the two regions are already developing with input from various actors from civil-society organizations. With the Dyanet’s new opening, religion is becoming not only one of the most important elements of Turkey’s soft power in Latin America but also an important aspect of Turkey’s social connection with different regions.

**Africa: Deepening Social Connections**

Religion and historical relations are one of the subtlest but highly important elements in Turkey’s relations with Africa, and religion may even be considered a key legitimizing force. This is valid at both the state and societal levels. As mentioned, until recently Diyanet in Turkey had no role vis-à-vis foreign policy. Its main focus was to serve the domestic religious needs of Muslims. With the changing of Turkish foreign policy toward a multidimensional approach, religion has served as one of the soft-power elements, especially in Africa (Ozkan and Akgun 2010).

Diyanet now brings African religious leaders together in Istanbul for interaction. The first Religious Leaders Meeting of African Continent Muslim Countries and Societies was held in Istanbul in November 2006; representatives from 21 countries participated (Deniz and Orakci 2006). Until recently Turkey had deliberately refrained from involvement in any Islamic/religious meeting, let alone organizing an official one in Turkey. However, this started to change after the AK Party assumed power in 2002. For example, Turkey began to actively participate in the activities
of the OIC, and a Turkish citizen was elected as its Secretary-General in 2004. Turkey’s hosting of African religious leaders in Istanbul is directly related to the two paradigmatic shifts in Turkish foreign policy. First, Turkey softened its approach to religious-based organizations and meetings and saw these as opportunities to further Turkish national interests through soft-power instruments. Second, Turkey understood that an opening-up policy toward Africa would not be complete or sustained without a religious dimension, which is also directly linked to the Ottoman past in Africa. In confirmation of this, almost all of the religious leaders at the meeting emphasized the Ottoman legacy in their countries positively and wished to restore it (Presidency of Religious Affairs 2006).

Diyanet organized a second meeting in Istanbul and Ankara on 21–5 November 2011. At this meeting Muslim religious authorities from Africa called on Turkey to take a greater role in Islamic education in African communities. In a joint declaration, they urged that “educational institutions similar to the Imam-Hatip schools in Turkey should be used as an example for schools in Africa and backed with faculties providing higher religious education like [Turkey’s] theology faculties” (qtd. in Hurriyet 2011).

At a broader level, Diyanet also hopes to contribute to the development of religious education and a quality environment for praying in Africa. Thus, mosques are being established. This makes religion the most distinctive mode of Turkey’s involvement in the continent, in comparison to other emerging actors on the continent. Therefore, Turkey’s policy toward Africa goes beyond focusing only on humanitarian and economic aspects (Ozkan 2012, 2013).

Many civil-society organizations also resort to religion to legitimize and motivate their activities on the continent. Traditional religious groups from Turkey are actively involved with projects in Africa. The Hüdayi Foundation and Suleymancılar are just two that can be mentioned. They are usually active in the area of education. Religious schools, high schools, and vocational schools are the most common.

The Hüdayi Foundation places particular importance on family, society, and educational issues. As part of their projects in many parts of the world, the Hüdayi Foundation has offices in nine African countries, mostly located in central and western Africa, and from these offices they operate in over 40 countries on the continent. They run Imam-Hatip schools, religious schools, and colleges; graduates of the latter can then work as teachers. Based on the author’s personal observation on the continent and the limited information on their website, the schools in Africa seem to be modelled exactly on the Turkish version, albeit with minor differences, such as the language of instruction, which is French, and some other local elements.2
Suleymançilar, a religious group formed by students/followers of Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan (1888–1959), is also actively involved in Africa. They have been very active since the late 1990s in many African countries as part of their Islamic education. The details and the scope of this group in Africa are almost unknown; based on personal interaction and observation, however, one can say that their influence and their projects are broad, especially in the field of religious education, but take place out of the public eye.

With the maturation of democracy at home, Turkey’s rise is focused predominantly on economic and political dimensions. As part of its active foreign policy, Turkey is now moving in a new direction to make its presence felt in other fields, such as education. Since the colonial period, the best educational system has been considered to be one similar to that of France or the United Kingdom. This was relatively easy for societies in which Christianity is dominant; however, in Muslim-majority countries, this has not yielded the expected results. Instead, it has forced families to find alternative educational facilities where their children can acquire Islamic knowledge. This has resulted in competing parallel educational systems. Imam-Hatip schools have been a particular model to bridge the gap between religious and scientific teachings (Ozgur 2012).

The fact that almost all Islamic groups are interested in opening Imam-Hatip schools, in Africa and elsewhere, should be contextualized and emphasized here for several reasons. First, it is an educational model that was developed in Turkey, where students can study both Islamic studies and modern sciences. In that sense, it is unique because it does not operate like madrasas, where only Islamic studies are taught. Second, it is widely accepted that these are the best educational institutions available in the Islamic world for creating a new generation that is more tolerant, interactive, and moderate in their readings of the world while continuing to live as pious Muslims.

Imam-Hatip schools are also likely to be the first instance of a modern educational system being exported from a non-Western country to other parts of the world. Of course, one needs time to see the future implications of this, but Turkey’s social and religious depth in Africa is also connected to the success of these educational institutions.

The Balkans: Discovering the Past and Romanticism

Diyanet has played a major role in providing religious services to the Muslim communities of the Balkans on several levels. Its status as a directorate subordinate to the Prime Ministry and independent from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs increased its ability to act outside the limitations of diplomatic conventions and to work with Islamic unions.
and grassroots organizations rather than with often stolid state agencies. Since 1995 Diyanet has been organizing the Eurasian Islamic Council (EIC), of which the Balkan countries are members (Pikal 2013). At these meetings, issues of Islamic practice, from higher education to the accreditation of university degrees and the organization of the pilgrimage, are discussed and often resolved by extending Diyanet’s religious services to the Islamic administrations of other countries. As a complementary forum to the EIC, Diyanet has also hosted an annual meeting of the leaders of the Balkans’ Muslim communities since 2007.

In the Balkans Diyanet focuses on facilitating the spread of its assistance and services to Muslim communities, such as the organization of the hajj and the education of preachers and religious scholars, to mention just a few of Diyanet’s activities. Such policies are usually realized through scholarships, the organization of educational programs for religious personnel, and the publication of books, as well as translations of the Qur’an into the languages of the region. The scholarships usually cover introductory Qur’an courses in Turkey for students and professional training for imams, studies in religious high schools, graduate courses at faculties of theology, and post-doctoral courses. More than 1,000 students from the Balkans with religious interests study in Turkey every year with full scholarships granted by Diyanet.

Besides these influences, Diyanet’s most visible contribution in the Balkans has been its role as a facilitator of the construction and reconstruction of mosques. In the case of symbolic restoration projects, Diyanet collaborates mostly with the Turkish International Coordination Agency and the Turkish Ministry of Culture, which regards mosques of the Ottoman period as part of the Turkish-Islamic heritage. The construction of new mosques is also under way. For that purpose, Diyanet initiated the so-called sister cities project, which brings together the local mufti’s office of a town in the Balkans and a mufti’s office in Turkey. The mufti’s office of Prizren, for instance, is now coupled with the office of Antalya. The mufti of Antalya started a collection for the construction of a new mosque in the sister community; now, the mosque is being built, and the people of Prizren call it the “Antalya mosque” (Öktem 2010, 34). There are several dozen twinning projects in the Balkans. Many of these projects create networks between congregations in Turkey and the Balkans. Diyanet’s role in hosting the Eurasian and Balkan councils, in addition to the reconstruction and construction of mosques, is indicative of the role of Diyanet, and of Turkey in general, as a symbolic leader of the Muslim communities of the Balkans and Central Asia. This is a message that, as Öktem (2010, 35) argues, is generally well received, especially by the small and underfunded Islamic unions of the western Balkans and those of the former Soviet space.
Diyanet, for its part, is trying to shape Balkan Islam in the image of its own understanding of Islamic doctrine and practice, which is indeed the closest to local traditions, while using its external relations to legitimize itself as the heir of the Ottoman Meşihat. It does so as what is probably the world’s largest and most centralized administration of Muslim religious affairs.

**Eurasia: Reviving Religion**

Diyanet’s contacts with Muslim leaders in the Soviet Union date back to 1985, when a delegation headed by Tayyar Altıkulaç, president of Diyanet at the time, visited the muftis of the spiritual boards of Muslims in Moscow, Tashkent, Baku, and Mkhachkala. Altıkulaç met with the mufti of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, the South Caucasus, and the North Caucasus. Diyanet made its second visit in 1989 to attend the commemoration of the 1 100th anniversary of Russia’s acceptance of Islam and the 200th anniversary of the introduction of the Orenburg Spiritual Board of Muslims by Catherine II. A number of directors of Muslim spiritual boards and ministers of religious affairs from various Islamic countries participated in this meeting. The then president of Diyanet, Sait Yazıcıoğlu, and the delegation he led went to Ufa, Nizhnekamsk, Noberezhnaye Cheln, and Kazan and exchanged ideas with supreme mufti of the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation. After 1990 cooperation among religious leaders in Eurasia increased, with the result that Diyanet introduced a section in charge of Eurasian countries in its Foreign Affairs Department in 1994. This directorate followed and researched religious situations in Eurasia, guided the construction and restoration of mosques in Eurasia in line with the Project for Protection of the Turkish Cultural Presence, and managed the religious education of Muslim students and leaders sent from Eurasian countries.

Diyanet’s most effective educational, religious, and cultural contribution to Eurasian co-believers is the periodic convocation of the EIC, begun in 1995 to promote cooperation among the spiritual boards of Muslims in Eurasia. The presidents of the religious administrations of Turkey, Albania, Western Thrace, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Crimea, Lithuania, Dagestan, Chuvashiya, Omsk Oblast, Tatarstan, Slovenia, Belarus, Poland, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia, Bashkortostan, and Chechnya participate in the EIC. Academics, parliamentarians, diplomats, and even the prime minister of Turkey often attend EIC meetings. These meetings...
have been the usual forum for consultation on various issues, and in 2010 they decided to have a headquarters in Istanbul to better manage the exchange of ideas. In that centre there is also a secretariat administered by a Secretary-General (Presidency of Religious Affairs, Republic of Turkey 2012).

Diyanet has contributed financially to the construction or restoration of mosques and Islamic schools in Eurasia since the 1990s. It has built 27 and restored 6 mosques and paid for the internal and external decoration of many others. The Baku Shehitlik Mosque, the Nakhchivan Kazim Karabekir Mosque, and the Kazakhstan Talgar Mosque were built with investments from Diyanet Waqf, which also restored the Tomb of Murat Hüdavendigar in Priština, Kosovo. Diyanet also contributed to the restoration of Moscow Central Mosque, Belarus Mosque in Minsk, and many mosques in Bulgaria. Moreover, Diyanet plans to build mosques in Tbilisi and Batumi (Georgia), Vilnius (Lithuania), and Tirana (Albania). Moreover, Diyanet has built a number of secondary and higher Islamic schools in Eurasia. In the 1990s Diyanet contributed financially to opening a higher Islamic institute and three theological high schools in Bulgaria; an Islamic pedagogic high school in Romania; a theological faculty and Turkish high school in Baku, Azerbaijan; and a theological faculty in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. In the 2000s, however, authorities in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan closed the theological faculties created with the help of Diyanet. Since 1990 Diyanet has provided stipends to students who come to Turkey from Eurasian countries for religious education. In 2008, 547 local imams, including 60 from Albania, 57 from Western Thrace, 20 from Romania, and 20 from the Russian Federation, visited Turkey for a few months for educational programs and training seminars; 819 students participated in Qur’an courses, including 80 students from Mongolia, 5 from Kosovo, 10 from the Crimea, and 139 from Georgia; and 147 students were registered at Imam-Hatip High School, including 5 students from Azerbaijan, 8 from Kyrgyzstan, 6 from Montenegro, and 7 from Serbia. In addition, Diyanet assigned 198 students to theological faculties in Turkey, including 2 students from Romania, 2 from Kabardino-Balkaria, 15 from Kazakhstan, 3 from Western Thrace, 10 from Albania, and 2 from the Crimea. Diyanet provided scholarships to 43 students, including 6 from Tatarstan, 1 from Dagestan, 3 from the Crimea, and 3 from Bulgaria (Korkut 2010, 132).

In the 1990s Diyanet also began sending imams to Muslim regions in Eurasia. But the number of imams sent decreased as religious education in these countries developed. For example, during the Ramadan month in 1996, Diyanet sent 20 imams to Azerbaijan, 10 to Uzbekistan, 8 to Kyrgyzstan, and 8 to Tatarstan. In contrast, in Ramadan of 2008, no imams were sent to these countries. Since 2008 Diyanet has sent 30 imams
to serve in Crimea, 1 to Nakhchivan, 4 to the Russian Federation, 3 to Mongolia, and 12 to Kyrgyzstan. In sum, nearly 100 imams have served abroad. These imams attended a six-month course and learned the language and culture of the country to which they were being sent. Moreover, Diyanet also gave financial help to several foreign spiritual boards that did not enjoy any financial support from their own states and had insufficient revenue.

To take developments in religious diplomacy further, EIC member states are now considering establishing a joint university called International Eurasian Islamic University, where religious scholars can teach Islam in the main languages spoken around the world, such as Turkish, English, Arabic, Russian, and Persian. Turkey supports this greatly and is interested in potentially hosting the university. They also plan to establish a Muslim Minorities Institute within the body of the university. Apparently, this institute, which will follow the needs, problems, and situations of Muslim minorities in all the countries of the world, is needed. It is expected that this institute will prepare a report about the situation of the Muslim minorities and share it with all Muslims.

Conclusion

The role of religion is no longer considered obsolete in foreign policy as it was during the Cold War. There are now calls for the possible inclusion of religions and religious diplomacy in peace processes, problem-solving, and other areas of foreign policy (Mandaville and Silvestri 2015). Turkey has already considered and followed this line and has included religious diplomacy as part and parcel of its foreign policy since the early 2000s. Today, with the change toward a multidimensional approach to foreign policy, religion has become one of Turkey’s new tools in implementing its vision and policies.

Turkey’s religious diplomacy today is much more sophisticated and comprehensive than one might expect, mostly thanks to the experiences of the last decade. Institutions that implement and develop religious diplomacy in Turkey must reshape themselves in both structure and content. For example, Diyanet is no longer a state body catering only to the religious needs of Turkish citizens; rather, it has become one of the flag carriers of Turkey abroad. Similar transformations can also be observed for religious civil-society organizations in Turkey. Perhaps more than a decade ago, Turkish people’s education and needs were central to their existence, but today they are being challenged to reorganize themselves and internationalize. As Turkey’s democratization, economic development, and internationalization have gone hand in hand since the 2000s, the civil-society organizations have been quick to adapt.
to this situation as well. Eventually, as outlined in earlier sections, these developments resulted in a salient and influential implementation of religious diplomacy in Turkish foreign policy. In the coming years, it is highly likely that Turkey’s religious diplomacy will continue to deepen and widen considering the drastic social changes and developments in its neighborhood.

Notes
1 For the concept of soft power and its meaning for Turkey, see the special issue on soft power of *Insight Turkey*, vol. 10, no. 2 (April–June 2008).
2 The travel notes of the chairman on Africa were accessed at http://www.hudayivakfi.org/ayin-makalesi/183-afrika-seyahat-notlari.html on 10 January 2013.
3 An excellent summary of Diyanet’s activities in Eurasia can be found in Korkut 2010. This section of the current article is mostly based on Korkut’s work.

References


The Dual Process of Xenophobia and Transnational Identity Formation in Turkey

Yunus Kaya
Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of North Carolina Wilmington, 601 South College Road, Wilmington, NC 28403-5978, United States

This study analyzes the contradictory and simultaneous embrace of the transnational identity of world citizenship and rejection of individual countries and societies in Turkey. In the process, it assesses the impact of economic privilege and religion in this phenomenon. The results of the data analyses revealed that both privilege and religion played a role in shaping this contradictory process; however, their impact was limited and did not always have a clear direction. Overall, this study joins the scholars in the globalization literature who claim that globalization has been a contradictory process which reveals both universalizing and particularizing tendencies as it integrates economies and societies around the world while pitting them against one another.

Keywords: Turkey, xenophobia, globalization, transnational identities

Introduction

Recent data-collection efforts in Turkey revealed a very interesting and seemingly contradictory phenomenon. According to the last two waves of the World Values Survey, conducted in 2007 and 2011 in Turkey, 80% and 86% of respondents reported that they perceived themselves as world citizens (WVS 2007, 2011). However, the Survey of Global Attitudes Project of the Pew Research Center (2013) revealed that very few of the
respondents in their sample in Turkey had favourable opinions of other countries. Among a range of countries that the Turkish respondents were asked about in 2013, Pakistan had the highest score, with 35% having a favourable opinion of the country. Other countries received considerably lower scores: 20% of the Turkish respondents had a favourable opinion of the United States, 24% for China, 12% for France, 27% for Saudi Arabia, 20% for Russia, 18% for Iran, and 3% for Israel. In the 2014 survey, respondents reported even lower scores for these countries and for the new countries that were included in the survey, such as Brazil, for which only 20% of the respondents had a favourable opinion (Poushter 2014).

At first glance, respondents in Turkey seem to have a more favourable opinion of the majority-Muslim countries, although the percentages still remain quite low. At any rate, the overall low levels of favourable opinions about all countries, including those with limited or no historical ties or conflicts with Turkey, such as Brazil, as well as the significant variation among countries, merit scholarly attention. This study analyzes this contradictory and simultaneous embrace of the transnational identity of world citizenship and rejection of individual countries and societies in Turkey.

In the globalization literature, some scholars argue that globalization has been a contradictory and uneven process that has integrated economies and societies around the world while pitting them against one another (e.g., Robertson 1992; Appadurai 1998). According to this perspective, the globalization process includes both universalizing and particularizing tendencies. As globalization creates winners and losers both among and within nations, it promotes transnational identities and threatens and challenges national and tribal ones. In the literature, some predict that globalization will benefit all societies and all segments within those societies (e.g., Bhagwati 2004; Friedman 2006). Others, however, predict that those who stand to benefit from globalization, such as entrepreneurs and people with more education, are more likely to embrace globalization and transnational solidarities, while those who stand to lose from it, such as unskilled workers, are less likely to embrace these (e.g., Sklair 2001; Swank and Betz 2003; Robinson 2004). Other scholars argue that religious and regional/cultural affinities constitute the basis and boundaries of identity and solidarity in the contemporary world and counteract the economic, political, and cultural effects of global integration (e.g., Barber 1995; Huntington 1996).

This study addresses these claims and analyzes Turkish opinions on eight foreign countries (the United States, France, Russia, China, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Iran) and perceptions of the self as a world citizen using the aforementioned data. The sample consists of a total of
2 951 respondents from the 2007 and 2011 waves of the World Values Survey and 1 000 respondents from the 2013 Survey of Global Attitudes Project. The data analyses yielded mixed results. In the models, income had a limited but negative effect on favourable opinions of foreign countries, while it increased the likelihood of embracing world citizenship. Education increased the likelihood of having a favourable opinion of most countries; however, it had no effect on world citizenship. Religiosity, measured as praying regularly, significantly increased the likelihood of having a favourable opinion of majority-Muslim countries (except for Iran) and a less favourable opinion of other countries, while self-reported religiosity had no effect on world citizenship.

2. Past Research

The literatures on globalization and identity formation are vast. Reviewing both of them in their entirety here is not possible and is, moreover, beyond the scope of this study. This section first summarizes the debate on globalization and explains how this study perceives globalization. Then, it summarizes the debate regarding globalization’s impact on identity and solidarity and provides background information on Turkey.

2.1. The Globalization Debate

Globalization emerged as a compelling concept in the early 1990s in the social sciences and popular discourse. The term globalization was not widely used in academic and public debate until the early 1990s (Robertson 1992). By the end of the 1990s, however, there were countless articles and books on globalization. Although it has many dimensions, and the theories of globalization project long historical trajectories, the locus of thinking on globalization has been the changes in the world economy during the last two or three decades.

At one extreme of the globalization debate, we see some intellectuals, journalists, and business thinkers who claim that the world is experiencing a historically unprecedented integration. As the concept of globalization gained popularity in the second half of the 1990s, business thinkers such as Ohmae (1999), labelled as “hyperglobalist” by Held and colleagues (1999), enthusiastically claimed that globalization was creating a borderless world where nation-states and their borders did not mean much. In a more recent example, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman (2006) argued that the new digital economy was creating a world where geographical distances and borders do not matter; he made optimistic connections between economic globalization and democracy, prosperity, and modernization.
The sceptics of globalization, however, rejected the idea that the current era is fundamentally different from earlier periods in world history, especially the late 19th century (e.g., Bairoch 1996; Hirst and Thompson 1996; Obstfeld and Taylor 2003). Hirst and Thompson (1996) claimed that the developments labelled as globalization are not historically unprecedented. They argued that integration and interdependence among countries were higher in the late 19th century, with higher ratios trade to national output, more liberal trade and foreign investment policies, and more intense migration. In a similar fashion, Obstfeld and Taylor (2003) claimed that foreign capital is now discouraged by poor countries more than it was a century ago, and that the ratio of foreign investments to the size of the world economy was higher in earlier periods. Hirst and Thompson (1996) also argued that most of the transnational corporations depend on sales or production in their home markets and therefore labelled them as multinational corporations rather than transnational corporations. Similarly, Chase-Dunn and colleagues (2000) contended that the globalization of world trade goes through cycles and rejected the idea of a takeoff after 1970. In a well-known study, McMichael (1996) also labelled globalization as a project enacted by the same actors that had shaped earlier periods of the world economy and polity.

Against these critics, many globalization scholars rallied to identify and emphasize the distinctiveness of the integration in the current era. For example, Baldwin and Martin (1999, 4) claimed that the late 19th century and the current era “have superficial similarities, but are fundamentally different.” They argued that the current period is different because of the dramatic reduction in transportation and communication costs and the greater heterogeneity of the world. Held and colleagues (1999) claimed that the current period is different owing to its extensive-ness, real-time and around-the-clock economic transactions, and diverse set of financial products. Dicken (2011) argued that in contrast to the “shallow integration” of the earlier periods, the current global economy (post–World War II) is characterized by the “functional integration” of economic activities. He stated that global networks of firms, crossing national boundaries, had replaced the “arm’s-length” trade between countries. In a clever account, Levinson (2006) showed how the mass utilization of containers that started in the 1960s decreased the cost of transportation, especially the cost of handling products at the ports. The global reorganization of manufacturing, sometimes described as the new international division of labour, has also been seen as one of the defining characteristics of the latest wave of globalization (Fröbel, Heinrichs, and Kreye 1980). Scholars have observed that manufacturing is now organized through complex networks of firms, where leading firms, mainly
from developed countries, engage in complex sets of relations with firms from less developed countries through investment and subcontracting (e.g., Gereffi 2005; Dicken 2011).

Following Robertson (1992), Held and colleagues (1999), Dicken (2011), and others, this study perceives globalization as a long historical process. Thus, it accepts that the latest wave of globalization has similarities to earlier periods in world history, while maintaining that the latest wave of globalization has some distinct properties. This study also maintains that the globalization process goes beyond a mere integration of national economies and has changed, transformed, and challenged cultures and identities worldwide.

2.2. Globalization and Identity

The debate about the impact of globalization on identity arguably centres on the question of whether the increasing integration of economies and societies makes people who belong to different cultures more hostile or more receptive toward each other. A close review of the literature reveals two accounts regarding the effect of globalization on various ethnic, racial, national, and religious identities and the relations among the people who subscribe to them; evidence is found for both accounts. On the one hand, there are intellectuals and scholars who perceive globalization as a positive force bringing peoples and cultures together by facilitating a better understanding of one another and improving the well-being of everyone (e.g., McGrew 1997; Bhagwati 2004; Friedman 2006). On the other hand, many other intellectuals and scholars see globalization as a destructive force which worsens the economic and social conditions of the masses, polarizes the social structures, and pits societies and cultures against one another (e.g., Barber 1995; Appadurai 1998; Chomsky 1998).

The more positive outlook regarding the impact of globalization builds on the idea that the increases in economic welfare and exposure to democratic ideas and foreign cultures through globalization will help societies to embrace openness and prevent radicalism and violence. Although many proponents of this approach can be found in the popular literature (e.g., Friedman 2006), many scholars also project a positive influence of globalization. In the globalization literature, many scholars imply that the most recent wave of globalization has improved economies and social structures. In one of the boldest defenses of globalization, Bhagwati (2004) argued that the recent wave of globalization had improved people’s living conditions, helped women, and increased democratic participation in countries all around the world. Similarly, Bhalla (2002) claimed that globalization increased the well-being of people
overall and caused significant reductions in poverty and inequality. In the popular literature, Friedman (2006) made very optimistic observations and predictions about the impact of increasing integration in the global economy on economic well-being, social modernization, and democracy. In an earlier book, he had famously argued that “no two countries that both had McDonald’s had fought a war against each other since each got its McDonald’s” (1999, 195). International institutions such as International Monetary Fund and the World Bank use similar arguments when advocating economic liberalization and openness, especially in the developing world. They present a positive picture of globalization in which economic, ideological, and cultural benefits of globalization are realized together. Overall, according to this approach, globalization introduces previously alien cultures to one another, increases social interaction across different cultures, and thus creates new levels of solidarity and consciousness.

Similarly, a broader literature on transnational political communities views globalization as a powerful force challenging and changing local, regional, and national identities. Many argue that relatively well-defined and stable identities that were tied to geography, culture, and/or ethnic and racial groups have become more fluid and increasingly mixed with other sources of identity that transcend these boundaries (e.g., Featherstone 1995; Tomlinson 1991). Some even claimed that new forms of identity, such as those pertaining to virtual communities, emerged with the recent wave of global integration and the expansion of communication technologies (e.g., Rheingold 1993).

In contrast to the optimistic account above, many others have argued that the economic conditions and political climate created during the latest wave of globalization are a ripe environment for conflict and intolerance toward others. Many people around the world attribute their declining fortunes to the increasing integration of economies and societies. For example, Scheve and Slaughter (2001) showed that American workers perceive globalization, measured by international trade, investment, and migration, as a primary source of their economic troubles. Swank and Betz (2003) found that increasing international flows of trade and investment contribute to the electoral success of right-wing parties in western European countries. Arjun Appadurai (1998) argued that globalization sharpens and threatens identities and creates a reactionary backlash all around the world, often leading to violent ethnically based disputes. Barber (1995) also contended that as globalization demands the integration of national economies, it pits cultures against another and people against people. He predicted a dual process of globalization and balkanization, through a process in which strengthening global forces trigger a backlash and an embrace of national or tribal identities.
Similarly, Kaldor (2004) claimed that globalization inflated “new nationalism” and politics of identity both by threatening ethnic and religious identities and by opening new avenues for expressing them. In his well-known clash-of-civilizations thesis, Huntington (1996) argued that new fault lines in world politics would emerge across cultural and religious boundaries and that the competing world views of different civilizations would inevitably lead to conflict, especially between the Western and the Islamic civilizations. He argued that “culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilizational identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world” (1996, 20). He claimed that increasing integration has separated people from local identities, and religious identities, which have become increasingly de-territorialized, started filling this gap.

Referring to globalization’s contradictory and asymmetric effects within and across nations, some have linked globalization to the rise of a transnational capitalist class or global ruling elite (e.g., Robinson 2004; Carroll 2010). According to this account, since the 1970s the owners and managers of leading multinational corporations and private financial institutions have become increasingly aligned in their strategies and interests, forging ties and allegiances that surpass national boundaries (Robinson and Harris 2000). With the spread and development of global production networks, this class of “corporate executives, globalizing bureaucrats, and politicians, professionals, and consumerist elites” (Sklair 2001, 4) has grown increasingly transnational and unified in character. Proponents of the transnational capitalist class thesis point to steady increases in foreign direct investment and capital flows, offshoring and the reach of global production networks, and cross-border merges and business alliances as evidence (Robinson 2004). Among the world’s largest corporations, they argue, there has been a significant increase in the number of interlocking directorates, and the improvements in information technology and the rise of a “networked world” further consolidated control over the global economy (Harris 2001; Kentor and Jang 2004). Studies of specific industries or individual countries find evidence of a proliferation of cross-border ties and feelings of global solidarity among managers and professions (e.g., Kennedy 2004; Sener 2008).

Overall, the evidence accumulated in the globalization literature points out to a dual process of concurrent universalization and particularization. Appadurai claims that “the central problem of today’s global interaction is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (1990, 295). Robertson (1992, 100) argues that globalization involves “the universalization of particularization and the particularization of universalism.” As a result, globalization has emerged as a contradictory process which can bring together people who had
previously been separated by geography and borders while also carrying the potential to pit them against each other. As globalization gains speed, it leads to the proliferation of supranational identities and the galvanization of local and tribal ones at the same time.

2.3. Background on Turkey

The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, following the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, on the territorial heartland of Anatolia and a small piece of land in the Balkans. During its early years, the founding cadre led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk initiated a vast westernization process and established an authoritarian regime under his newly founded Republican People’s Party (CHP) (Ahmad 1993). The westernization process, and especially some of the reforms adopted by Ataturk and the CHP (e.g., the new Western-style dress code, modern civil law, and the adaptation of the Latin alphabet), created some backlash, to which the newly established secular state’s reaction was usually swift and harsh (Davison 1998). After World War II, Turkey shifted toward democracy, and the CHP was replaced by the Democratic Party (DP) in 1950 (Karpat 1959). In the following decades, Turkey managed to remain a representative democracy despite the military’s periodic interventions (that is, in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997) to, as it claimed, carry out its self-proclaimed mandate to uphold Ataturk’s principles and protect secularism (Tachau and Heper 1983; Hale 1994).

Although the founding cadre’s vision was to create a society with a Western orientation and lifestyle, Islam remained a powerful force within society and in politics. Turkey’s Islamist political movement has its roots in late-Ottoman pan-Islamist movements and a religious backlash against modernization since the republic’s establishment; it first appeared on the political scene during the late 1960s and early 1970s as a result of Necmettin Erbakan’s National Outlook Movement at the end of 1960s, which led to the foundation of the National Order Party (MNP). However, it really flourished in the 1990s when, building on its successes in the municipal elections of the early 1990s, Erbakan’s Welfare Party (RP) steadily expanded its support within society and won a significant portion of the national assembly seats in 1995. The following year, it established a coalition government with a centre-right political party, and Erbakan became the prime minister. The Turkish army and secular elites eventually initiated an anti-government campaign, known in Turkey as “the 28 February Process” or “the post-modern coup,” that forced him to resign in 1997. The Supreme Court banned the Welfare Party the following year (Cizre-Sakalloğlu and Çınar 2003). After this, his followers established the Virtue Party (FP), which the Supreme Court
banned in 2001. In 2002, however, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by Recep Tayyib Erdoğan, a former member of the Welfare Party and now the president, came into power. The party went on to win two consecutive elections in 2007 and 2011 and remains in power.

To counter the impact of religion in society and politics, the founding elites and their followers have promoted a secularly oriented Turkish nationalism (Mardin 2005). However, the fluid nature of Turkish identity and its close connection to religion, as exemplified by the promotion of Turkish identity among Muslims with different ethnic origins in the country following the founding of the secular republic, prevented nationalism from emerging as an alternative to religion (Mardin 2005). Hence, the religious and national identities have remained intertwined although they do not always overlap and have both been challenged in recent decades by globalizing and particularizing forces such as globalization and ethnic separatism.

Economically, Turkey isolated itself from the world economy and followed protectionist policies until the country opened up to the global economy in the 1980s. The year 1980 marks Turkey’s reorientation and the beginning of integration into the global economy. The military coup in September 1980 and the rise of Turgut Özal, a former employee of the World Bank, as prime minister were instrumental in this reorientation toward liberalization and an outward orientation. Starting in the early 1980s, the banking and trade systems were opened to the global economy. The restrictions on foreign investment flows were eliminated in the late 1980s (Aydın 2005). Although Özal’s party lost power in 1991, following governments did not change course. The privatization of state enterprises accelerated in the 1990s (Aydin 2005). The Turkish economy suffered from periodic crises in the 1990s and early 2000s. After these crises, Turkey signed new and comprehensive agreements with the International Monetary Fund, which pushed the country to open up even further to the global economy. Since coming to power in 2002, the Justice and Development Party has continued the outward orientation of the economy and increased it even further in recent years; international trade and foreign direct investment have reached historic highs. During the globalization process, inequalities in Turkish society increased as the social class structure became increasingly polarized and income inequality rose (Kaya 2008).

Data and Methods

Data for the analyses comes from rounds 5 and 6 of the World Values Survey (WVS), conducted in Turkey in 2007 and 2011, and the 2013 Survey of Global Attitudes Project (SGAP) of the Pew Research Center.
The data on attitudes toward foreign countries comes from the SGAP. The SGAP sample consists of 1,000 respondents. The data on self-perception of world citizenship comes from the WVS; the pooled sample of the two waves consists of 2,951 respondents in total. This study also considered other data sources, such as the European Social Survey; these were excluded, however, because of a lack of data on key parameters. Finally, the data from the 2014 SGAP had not been released at the time of this study and thus was not included in the analyses.

This study analyzes the determinants of the attitudes toward other countries and the self-perception of global citizenship using logistic regression. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is not appropriate for binomial and categorical dependent variables. The logarithmic models allow researchers to deal with binomial and categorical distributions as linear (Agresti 2002). Logistic regression models constitute the best statistical model when the dependent variable is coded as a dummy variable.

**Dependent Variables**

The dependent variable for world citizenship derives from the WVS question as to whether respondents see themselves as a “world citizen.” The respondents who answered “strongly agree” or “agree” were coded as 1 to create a dummy variable. The dependent variable for the perception of other countries is a dummy variable created by coding 1 for respondents who in the SGAP reported that they had a “very favourable” or “somewhat favourable” opinion of the countries that were asked about. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all variables.

**Independent Variables**

The first independent variable inserted in the regression models is religiosity, a dummy variable consisting of respondents who reported that religion is either important or very important in their lives in the WVS and respondents who reported that they prayed more than once a week in the SGAP. Second, the impact of income and education is assessed. Income is measured on a 10-point scale (the surveyors revised the scale according to the cost of living before each wave of surveys) in the WVS and on a 9-point scale in the SGAP. Education is measured on an 8-point scale in the WVS and on a 9-point scale in the SGAP. In addition, age and gender are included in the models as control variables. Age enters into the models directly, whereas the impact of gender is assessed by including a dummy variable for males. Finally, the year is added as a variable in the WVS sample to assess the strength and direction of changes over time.
TABLE 1

Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey of Global Attitudes Project</th>
<th>World Values Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no of. respondents</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of the United States</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of France</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of Russia</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of China</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of Israel</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of Pakistan</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of Iran</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable opinion of Turkey</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World citizenship</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World citizenship (2007)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World citizenship (2011)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income*</td>
<td>913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education**</td>
<td>994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity (praying regularly)</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity (self-reported)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NA = not applicable.

*Income is measured on a 10-point scale in the WVS (the surveyors revised the scale according to the cost of living before each wave of surveys) and on a 9-point scale in the SGAP.
**Education is measured on an 8-point scale in the WVS and on a 9-point scale in the SGAP.

Results

Table 2 presents logistic regression models for having a favourable opinion of foreign countries and perceiving the self as a world citizen and
displays odds ratios. A model for a favourable opinion of Turkey is also added to the analyses for control purposes. The results of our analyses suggest that people with higher incomes are less likely to have favourable opinions of foreign countries, although the impact of this is significant only for China and Iran. However, higher levels of income are associated with an increase in the likelihood of embracing world citizenship. A unit increase in income is associated with a 6% increase in probability of perceiving oneself as a world citizen. This only partially supports the arguments in the literature that the privileged portions of society are more likely to benefit from the integration of the world and to embrace foreign people and cultures as well as transnational identities. However, people with more education are significantly more likely have a favourable opinion of most countries, except for Saudi Arabia and Turkey itself, although education did not have a significant impact on

### TABLE 2

Logistic regression models for favourable opinions of foreign countries and perceptions of world citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>World citizen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.975</td>
<td><strong>0.876</strong></td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td><strong>0.832</strong></td>
<td>0.913</td>
<td>1.062*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(–1.87)</td>
<td>(–1.54)</td>
<td>(–1.35)</td>
<td>(–2.02)</td>
<td>(–1.61)</td>
<td>(–1.04)</td>
<td>(–1.30)</td>
<td>(–2.56)</td>
<td>(–1.44)</td>
<td>(2.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.135*</td>
<td>0.998</td>
<td><strong>1.179</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.162</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.397</strong></td>
<td>1.016</td>
<td><strong>1.156</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.166</strong></td>
<td>1.029</td>
<td>1.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(2.56)</td>
<td>(2.54)</td>
<td>(2.46)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(2.87)</td>
<td>(2.41)</td>
<td>(0.52)</td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td><strong>0.974</strong>***</td>
<td>0.982*</td>
<td><strong>0.983</strong></td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>0.993</td>
<td>1.004</td>
<td><strong>0.981</strong></td>
<td>0.992</td>
<td>1.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(–3.24)</td>
<td>(–2.76)</td>
<td>(–2.25)</td>
<td>(–2.34)</td>
<td>(0.46)</td>
<td>(–1.11)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
<td>(–2.46)</td>
<td>(–1.22)</td>
<td>(0.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.362</td>
<td>1.162</td>
<td>1.131</td>
<td><strong>1.621</strong></td>
<td>1.805</td>
<td><strong>1.595</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.597</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.561</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.395</strong></td>
<td>1.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.70)</td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td>(2.85)</td>
<td>(1.48)</td>
<td>(2.90)</td>
<td>(3.15)</td>
<td>(2.40)</td>
<td>(2.05)</td>
<td>(0.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity (praying regularly)</td>
<td>0.915</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td><strong>0.436</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.587</strong></td>
<td>0.580</td>
<td><strong>2.032</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.734</strong></td>
<td>1.043</td>
<td>1.872**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(–0.46)</td>
<td>(–1.65)</td>
<td>(–4.05)</td>
<td>(–2.91)</td>
<td>(–1.24)</td>
<td>(4.30)</td>
<td>(3.58)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>(3.58)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity (subjective)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>1.061*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.97)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>2 697</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Each cell contains odds ratios, with z-scores in parentheses.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two-tailed tests).
world citizenship. This suggests that people with higher education levels are more likely to embrace alien societies and cultures over national and religious identities. In the models, older people are significantly less likely to have favourable opinions about other countries, while men are more likely to have favourable opinions, although the effect is not significant in all models. Neither variable has a significant effect on world citizenship. The year variable has a significant positive effect on world citizenship, which suggests that the already high level of embracing world citizenship is still increasing.

Religiosity, defined as praying regularly in the SGAP, has a negative effect on having a favourable opinion of countries with predominantly non-Muslim populations and a positive effect for views of countries with predominantly Muslim populations (except for Iran), although self-reported religiosity in the WVS does not have a significant impact on the embrace of world citizenship. Praying regularly is associated with 57% and 42% declines in favourable opinions of Russia and China respectively. Interestingly, religiosity does not have a significant impact on having a favourable opinion of the United States, France, or Israel. This may result from the very low levels of favourable opinions of these countries (20%, 12%, and 3% respectively), suggesting that all segments of Turkish society have an unfavourable opinion of these countries. Praying regularly is associated with a 103% increase in having a favourable opinion of Saudi Arabia and a 73% increase for Pakistan. The religious are also more likely to have a favourable opinion of Turkey itself. This suggests that religious and national identities intertwine and counteract the impact of globalization and prevent the embrace of the world as a whole. The lack of a significant impact of religiosity on opinions of Iran may be religious and sectarian in origin as well as suggesting that practising Muslims in Turkey, who are primarily Sunni, do not feel the same affinity with Shi’ite Iran that they do with other predominantly Muslim societies. However, again, the lack of a statistically significant effect of self-reported religiosity on perceptions of oneself as a world citizen or on favourable opinions (overall quite low) about any country, Islamic or not, should be taken in the consideration before drawing any strong conclusions here.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study analyzed the simultaneous embrace of world citizenship and rejection and distrust of foreign countries in Turkey. Using data from the WVS and the SGAP, this study assessed the impact of economic privilege and religion in this phenomenon. The results of the data analyses revealed that both privilege and religion played a role in shaping this contradictory
process. However, their impact was limited and did not always have a clear direction.

In the models, income increased the probability of perceiving oneself as a world citizen; however, it decreased the likelihood having a favourable opinion of foreign countries, although this was not always statistically significant. Education increased the likelihood of having a favourable opinion of most countries; however, it had no effect on world citizenship. These results provide mixed and limited support for scholars who claim that those who stand to gain from globalization are more likely to embrace it and the transnational identities it fosters (Sklair 2001; Robinson 2004).

The data analyses also provided some support for the claims regarding the impact and role of religion. Religiosity, defined as praying regularly, increased the likelihood of having a favourable opinion of majority-Muslim countries (except for Iran) and unfavourable opinions of others; however, self-reported religiosity did not appear to suppress the embracing of world citizenship. These results suggest that religion is an important factor shaping how people view other cultures and societies and provide some support for the claims of other scholars such as Huntington (1996). However, with the overall maximum favourable opinion of any country at just 35 %, religion fails to explain the widespread suspicion that people in Turkey feel toward other cultures and societies, be they Islamic or non-Islamic. The high level of the embrace of Turkey itself in the SGAP sample and the significant role of religiosity in this suggest that ethnic and tribal factors are as important as, if not more important than, religion, at least in the case of Turkey.

Overall, this study provides support for the studies that perceive globalization as a contradictory process with opposing universalizing and particularizing tendencies (e.g., Robertson 1992; Barber 1995; Appadurai 1998). During the globalization process in Turkey, the embrace of the world as an abstract notion has increased, while the distrust of particular nations and societies has deepened. The uncertainties created by an ever-integrating and changing world seem to have pushed many people in Turkey to entrench themselves in religious identity to some extent and in national identity to a much greater extent. Although education and economic advantage seem to mediate this process, their impact is far too limited.

However, there were several limitations to this study that future research may overcome. First, although the data utilized in the analyses are fairly recent, the constantly evolving recent events in the region surrounding Turkey may alter the dynamics discussed in this study. Second, using secondary data from two different sources with different measures limited this study’s ability to comprehensively assess the ques-
ions raised at the beginning. Future data collected specifically on different levels and sources of identity, and contributing factors, will help to assess these questions more effectively. Finally, comparing the Turkish case to other countries using multi-level models that combine both country and individual data will improve our understanding of the Turkish case as well as providing a better test of the claims made in the literature.

Notes
1 The earlier rounds of the WVS were not included in the sample since the question on global citizenship was not asked.
2 The question was worded as follows: “Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of [country]?”

References


---

*Xenophobie et formation d'une identité transnationale*


The Geography of Reception: Why Do Egyptians Watch Turkish Soap Operas?

Necati Anaz
Institute of Security Sciences, Turkish National Police Academy, Ankara, Turkey

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of Turkish soap operas broadcast outside of Turkey, particularly in the Arab world. Turkish television stars quickly became pop idols in the Middle East and the Balkans, creating great sympathy for the Turkish identity, culture, and values. Egypt, with its large population and great importance in the region, epitomizes the salient geography of audiences where Turkish soap operas have become a pervasive phenomenon, and is therefore the focus of this study, which explores two sets of questions: (1) How have Turkish soap operas influenced Egyptian people, mainly students, in terms of their understanding of Turkish culture and Turkey’s role in the Middle East? What kinds of Turkish soap operas do they watch, and what actors do they favour? (2) Why do people watch Turkish soap operas? What do they do with them? How can Egyptian audiences’ interpretations of Turkish soap operas be conceptualized, signed, and classified? How and to what degree does Egyptian society interpret Turkish soap operas, and how can their meaning be read and understood? The study used a face-to-face survey and open-ended questionnaire to answer these questions. Salient findings are (a) that from the perspectives of technical quality, acting, and plot, no better alternatives exist to replace Turkish soap operas; (b) that Egyptian audiences enjoy romantic narratives and pure, immaculate love stories that are well written and passionately acted; (c) that young people and women, in particular, want to experience Turkish-style modernism (combining capitalism and tradition), fashion, and beauty; and (d) that many Egyptians see Turkey as a success story of the Muslim world, from economic development to democratization, human rights, freedom of expression, and the simultaneous practice of Islam and tradition.

Keywords: geography of reception, Turkish soap operas, popular geopolitics, audience reception, Egyptian viewers

Ces dernières années ont montré une augmentation du nombre de séries télévisées mélodramatiques turques diffusées en dehors de la Turquie, en particulier dans le monde arabe. Les stars de télévision turcs sont rapidement devenues des idoles au Moyen-Orient et dans les Balkans, créant une grande sympathie pour l’identité, la culture et les valeurs turques. L’Égypte, avec sa population importante et sa position dans la région, matérialise la géographie des publics où les feuilletons turcs sont devenus un phénomène omniprésent. L’objet de cette étude tente de répondre à deux séries de questions : d’une part, comment les séries mélodramatiques turques ont-ils influencé la population égyptienne, et en particulier les étudiants, dans leur compréhension de la culture turque et le rôle de la Turquie au Moyen-Orient ?

The Arab World Geographer / Le Géographe du monde arabe Vol 17, no 3 (2014) 255-274
© 2014 AWG Publishing, Toronto Canada
Quel effet ont-ils sur eux ? Comment les interprétations que fait le public égyptien de ces séries peuvent-elles être conceptialisées, signifiées, et classées ? Comment et dans quelle mesure la société égyptienne interprète-t-elle les séries turques, et comment cette façon de leur donner du sens peut-elle être lue et comprise ? Cette étude a utilisé des enquêtes en vis-à-vis et un questionnaire ouvert. Les résultats les marquants apparaître que du point de vue de la qualité technique, de l’action et de l’intrigue, le public égyptien n’a pas de d’autres choix pour remplacer les séries turques. Aussi, le public se régale des histoires romantiques et des histoires d’amour purs qui sont bien écrites et bien jouées. Ensuite, les jeunes et les femmes, en particulier, veulent faire l’expérience de la modernité turque qui mêle capitalisme et tradition, la mode et la beauté. Enfin, de nombreux Égyptiens voient la Turquie comme une réussite dans le monde musulman, un pays qui associe développement économique et démocratie, qui garantit les droits humains et la liberté d’expression et qui pratique simultanément l’Islam et la tradition.

Mots-clés: géographie de la réception, feuilletons turcs, géopolitique populaire, accueil du public, téléspectateurs égyptiens

Introduction

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of Turkish soap operas broadcast outside of Turkey, particularly in the Arab world. Turkish television stars quickly became pop idols in the Middle East and the Balkans, creating great sympathy for the Turkish identity, culture, and values. From Morocco to Syria, millions of viewers gather in front of their television sets and watch Turkish soap operas (Al-Jazeera Turk 2014). In academic circles this “new Ottomanism” has been interpreted as Turkey’s new foreign policy tool, through which it exercises soft power to consolidate its new diplomacy efforts (Taspinar 2008; Yinanç 2012). In various disciplines, Turkish soap operas’ effects on audiences, especially Middle Eastern viewers, have become the subject matter of recent studies (Falah 2005; Amal 2008; Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi 2013; Qudah and Tahat 2013; Yanardagolgu and Imad 2013; Anaz 2014; Buccianti 2010). Much of the interest in these results from the soap operas’ contradictions and conflicts; in them one can easily find competing rhetorics regarding different aspects of Turkish/Islamic society, which rests on modernity and tradition, secularism and religion. Turkish soap operas question and often challenge existing norms, cultural values, and socio-political circumstances in Turkish society and the Muslim world in general. In this sense, popular cultural products, especially the cinema and soap operas, are very much part of social life and, by extension, are an important conduit for socio-political and cultural exchanges among societies beyond the politics of diplomacy and any other forms of formal geopolitics.
In other words, Turkish soap operas can go beyond the limitations of diplomacy and high politics to grab the attention of Arab-world audiences, despite recent uneasy relations between Turkey and some Arab states. In particular, the strained relations between Turkey and Egypt after the coup in Egypt in the summer of 2013 impacted Turkish soap operas’ visibility and broadcasting in the Egyptian TV landscape. However, the popularity of Turkish soap operas in Egypt and in the Arab world in general did not cease because of diplomatic tensions between Turkey and Egypt. Comments observed on various YouTube videos give some insights into the Turkish soap operas that are still being viewed in the Arab world, including by Egyptians, and they continue to have considerable appeal for Arab audiences.

Turkish soap operas have successfully captured millions of viewers’ attention from all around the world, becoming a source of entertainment and a platform where traditional values are questioned, re-evaluated, and challenged, especially in the Middle East. Dubbed Turkish dramas have had success with Arab viewers, especially the series *Gumus*, popularly known in the Arab world as *Noor*. It became a hit: its finale was viewed by about 85 million people (Salamandra 2012). Recently, Turkish soap operas have been distributed to more than 75 countries and have attracted more than 400 million viewers all around the world (Al-Jazeera Turk 2014; Raci 2013). According to Izzet Pinto, chief executive officer of Global Agency, which controls the majority of exports of Turkish soap operas, Turkish soap operas became the second most exported TV series after Hollywood products (Al-Jazeera Turk 2014). Because of this increasing interest in Turkish soap operas, millions of Arab visitors chose Turkey, and especially Istanbul, as their vacation and shopping destination (Sobecki 2010). Turkish products became many Arab customers’ high-end fashion choice.

Turkish soap operas have not only attracted Arab viewers to visit Turkey and/or consume Turkish products but, even more, affected the lives of many viewers, especially youth and women. For instance, the Turkish drama series *What Is Fatmagul’s Fault* (2010–2)—popularly known as *Fatmagul*—inspired Arab women to speak out, realizing they are not alone, and encouraged them to take matters into their own hands and break their silence, instead of accepting their faith quietly (Paschalidou 2014). In the series the character Fatmagul is a victimized young girl who is raped by several drunk passersby; she has to face the reality of the local norms and also challenge the stigma in customs and perceptions of a girl who has been touched wrongly before her marriage. In Nina Maria Paschalidou’s article, Samira, an activist in Cairo, speaks about why post–Arab Spring Egyptian women need TV series like *Fatmagul* to help them talk about women’s rights in society. Samira, who took an active role in the revolution and suffered from sexual abuse by an army official, says, “We need Turkish TV series like ‘Fatmagul’ that talk openly about women’s rights” (qtd. in Paschalidou 2014, 3). According to
Paschalidou, Samira sued the military regarding the sexual abuse and won the case, resulting in the end of virginity tests in Egypt.

Such personal stories indicate that television dramas and similar products are not simply forms of entertainment and thus instruments of escapism; they are also inspirational visual imageries that often challenge, contradict, or reinforce social identities, values, and the conditions of people’s everyday lives (Power and Crampton 2007; Aitken and Zonn 1994). In addition to other disciplines which engage with films, television series, and other visual texts, geographers also show great interest in these visual materials, highlighting their importance for making explicit geographical connections between images and the effects of those images in real locations (Lukinbeal and Zimmermann 2006). Therefore, investigating Turkish television dramas in the Arab societies and the latter’s experience with Turkish soap operas is crucial, partly because, as Zonn highlights, “watching movies is about place and experience, and the myriad of possibilities and stories that surround them” (2007, 64). In other words, Turkish soap operas make alternative socio-cultural and spatial possibilities available for Arab audiences, especially women. The main point to underline here is that Turkish soap operas introduce new types of questions that radically contest and challenge existing socio-cultural roles within Arab societies and provide an alternative vision of the world, where especially “women are treated with respect and love, and the romance that seems so unreal in their situation becomes a reality” (Paschalidou 2014). This is not to say that none of these social qualities exist in the Arab society; rather, it means that Turkish TV series openly offer women alternative narratives that are generally considered a taboo subject. As this study highlights later on, Arab viewers like Turkish TV series and, beyond a dry statement of liking them, have a great appetite for such programs. Turkish drama series provide a comfort zone partially isolated from the harshness of reality and revive the beauty of life for viewers who aspire to a better life (Paschalidou 2014).

Another point to highlight here is that television productions as a form of everyday image-based language can provide useful ways of framing a radically changing geopolitical world and everyday social relations within a society (Power and Crampton 2007). Even the most complicated and problematic socio-cultural and political issues can be expressed smoothly through visual narratives and artistic forms. Under the circumstances, Turkish soap operas’ indisputable ability to present the Turkish way of life, which is presumed to be juxtaposed with European modernity and Islamic values, charms viewers as well as academicians and even television series producers. Turkish TV series’ contradictory, secularist, and even propagandist qualities attract millions to the screen and draw critiques at the same time.

Thus, this study aims to explore two sets of questions. The first set includes: What is the influence of Turkish soap operas on Egyptian people,
mainly students, in terms of their understanding of Turkish culture and Turkey’s role in the Middle East? What kinds of Turkish television series do they watch, and what actors and actresses do they favor? The second set of questions includes: Why do people watch Turkish TV series? What do they do with them? Furthermore, how can Egyptian audiences’ interpretations of Turkish soap operas be conceptualized, signified, and classified? How and to what degree does Egyptian society interpret Turkish television series? And how can their meaning-making be read and codified?

As mentioned above, this article also highlights to what extent Turkish television series have potential as a medium to project social, political, moral, and cultural perspectives for audiences in Egypt and in the Arab world in general. Given Turkey’s ongoing efforts to open new pages with the Islamic and Arab world since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took control of the government in Turkey, every possible instrument of “soft power” has become of interest for academics and those engaged in public diplomacy (Cevik 2014). Thus, the role of Turkish television series in the Arab world is worthy of investigation, and viewers’ opinions on the series are especially important in light of the recent strained relations between Turkey and Egypt. Turkish policy-makers take popular products seriously, as these products capture the attention of the Ottoman Empire’s so-called area of influence. Turkish soap operas are therefore a valuable soft-power asset for Turkey.

When one looks at the popular newspaper articles produced in Turkish, Arabic, and English, it is noticeable that there is increasing interest in Turkish television series from many corners of the globe, including minority populations in North America (TRTHaber 2013). In particular, the Arab world’s appetite for Turkish soap operas is growing every day, and the popularity of Turkish stars in many Arab countries is steadily rising. For instance, Jumana Al Tamimi (2012) reports that a few years ago the Lebanese prime minister, Sa’ad Al Hariri, visited a group of orphans during Ramadan. When he asked the children there what they would most want to have, the replies he received caught him off-guard. One would expect them to name things such as toys or bicycles; instead, they asked whether they could meet Noor. Al Hariri then asked his advisers to arrange a meeting with Noor. This and similar anecdotes show that Turkish soap operas are no longer foreign or unreachable for Arab viewers at all levels. It can also be inferred that the stars of Turkish series are unlike those of Hollywood, who can be seen only in a dream. In the minds of Arab viewers, Turkish stars are reachable, and their personal stories and the narratives they act out present cultural similarities with those of everyday viewers in the Arab countries. As this study highlights, it is partially the cultural and geographical proximity of the narratives, and the dramatized lives of the Turkish people, that make Turkish drama series successful abroad, especially in the Arab world.
Turkey’s relations with Egypt date back to the early years of the establishment of the new Republic of Turkey. Since then the two countries’ relations have fluctuated, mainly affected by international geopolitical developments. But the peak of the bilateral relations was when the regime of Hosni Mubarak lost control of the government after millions of Egyptians came out and protested the decades-long Mubarak regime. After popularly elected president Mohamed Morsi came to power in Egypt, Turkey began to use every opportunity to increase bilateral dialogues with Egypt. For instance, Turkey’s exports to Egypt exceeded $US2.3 billion as more than 200 Turkish companies were already investing in Egypt (*Hurriyet* 2011). Academic personal and student exchanges were at their height. Turkey opened new cultural centres in Cairo and Alexandria (e.g., Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center²). Turkish pop culture became a phenomenon in Egypt, and other cultural investments began flowing into post-Mubarak Egypt. But the coup of July 2013 interrupted this honeymoon period in Turkish–Egyptian relations. At the political level, relations are heading toward an unknown future, while cultural relations have similarly taken a hit. As mentioned earlier, the popularity of Turkish TV products in Egypt thus needs further investigation.

**Methodology**

In this article qualitative data collected through a survey in the cities of Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt will be analyzed. The questionnaire used for this research was initially prepared in English and then translated into Arabic. Once the data were collected, responses were translated into English to be coded and analyzed. With the help of Egyptian students at the Yunus Emre Culture Centers in Cairo and Alexandria, a paper version of the questions was distributed to various university students, shopkeepers, the neighbours of the survey conductors, and random people on the street. But, primarily, the snowballing technique for reaching survey participants played a big role in this research. The survey questionnaire has two parts; the first part was asked of every participant, while the second part was presented only to those who indicated that they had watched at least one Turkish TV series in the past or were currently following one. In this way, I aimed to evaluate whether watching a Turkish TV series made any difference in terms of their opinions on Turkey and Turkish–Egyptian relations.

Having said that, I have to acknowledge that the data collected via the survey does not allow me to claim that the results are complete and generalizable. The main reason for this is that the survey could not be finished because of the military coup in Egypt in July 2013. Only 158 questionnaires were completed. People who were assisting with conducting this survey could not continue doing data collection owing to the fear of being arrested or facing possible political surveillance. Although the initial aim was to reach every sector of Egyptian society, only a small group of viewers participated in the...
survey. However, these shortcomings of the study by no means discredit the arguments that this article puts forward, partly because this study includes open-ended questions where participants gave non-structured responses as to why they watch Turkish TV series and why they like or dislike them. This, of course enriches the results of the study. In addition, various news and journal articles also support the arguments made in this article (see Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi 2013; Qudah and Tahat 2013).

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

As mentioned earlier, the number of participants who completed the survey may not be satisfying. However, the outcome of this study resembles those of other studies that have been done on the same topic. This means that the majority of the viewers of Turkish soap operas are women and young and educated people. A possible explanation for this outcome is that the Turkish television dramas that sell to the Arab world are largely of a romantic and taboo-breaking nature and so attract especially young women, more than any other demographic group (Al Tamimi 2012; Qudah and Tahat 2013). However, an action-political series such as The Valley of the Wolves mainly attracts male viewers. In this study, out of 158 respondents, 79.1% are female, and 70.9% are single; 64.6% are 25 years old or younger, while 61.4% have some sort of graduate degree. A substantial number of the participants identified themselves as mild Islamists (63.3%), while 27.2% said they were conservatives.3

What Is the Location of Turkey in the Minds of Egyptians?

In this category, several related questions were asked to determine how Egyptians see Turkey in terms of its identity and cultural closeness to different geopolitical locations. As Table 1 shows, a high number of respondents locate Turkey in the Middle East. Perhaps to enforce this geographical perspective toward Turkey 33.5% of respondents see Turkey as an Islamic state. But 30.4% of them identify Turkey as a secular state, which should not be underestimated when looking at Turkey’s socio-political location. Turkey’s divided identity undoubtedly corresponds to the so-called bridge metaphor, in which Turkey is identified, on the one hand, as an important geopolitical location, stretching from Europe to Asia and North Africa, and, on the other, as a location which juxtaposes Western ideologies with Islamic values and institutions. Because of this unique position, Turkey is always considered as an example of a Muslim country which aims to attain a Western standard of living in partnership with the West by adopting liberal free-market policies and institutions (Fokas 2014).
When participants were asked to give their opinions on Turkey’s foreign-policy choices in the Middle East, a substantial number of people highlighted that Turkey is a country that is seeking to become a regional power (see Table 2). Turkey has been looked at in the Arab world as a country that projects an alternative voice in the search for solutions to decades-long conflicts in the Middle East (Sengupta 2014, 13). This is no casual observations when one considers Turkey’s recent socio-political and economic engagements in the Middle East.

One of the conventional roles given to or taken by Turkey is without doubt its unique position in the Islamic world—not only because of its geographical location and geo-strategic position during the Cold War and the war on terrorism after 11 September, but also because of its century-long aspiration to join the Western world and its struggle to pull itself out of being a Third World country while aiming to take on the leadership role in the Muslim world. This long-term endeavour has placed Turkey in a special posture wherein Islam and democracy can both be practised without incongruence. In this respect, the Egyptian people’s opinion on Turkey’s ability to be a role model for the Muslim world and Egypt in particular was one of the interests of this study (see Table 3).
TABLE 4
Would you accept Turkish-style democracy being practised in Egypt?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no idea</td>
<td>16.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>5.7 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whether Turkey has the potential to be a model country for the Muslim world remains a matter of academic debates, but in Egypt before the July coup d'état, the majority of respondents thought that Turkey could be a model country for the Islamic world (see Table 3). Similarly, almost half of the participants agreed that Turkish-style democracy can be practised in Egypt (see Table 4). Although what a “Turkish model” means for Egyptians requires clear explanation, the Turkish prime minister’s visit to Egypt in the same year that President Mubarak left office certainly showed that Turkey seeks to leverage the Arab uprisings into a greater influence for itself. Although a Turkish model—to some, an Islamic-based political party governing a secular democracy—is a source of ongoing debate among Egyptians, some still argue that without copying Turkey, Egypt should take Turkish experience into consideration (Michael and Keath 2011; Kirişci 2013). Despite the scepticism of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt toward the Turkish secular model with an Islamic touch-up, respondents in this study agreed that Turkish-style democracy could be practised in Egypt (see Table 4). Part of this is that a considerable percentage of the respondents saw Turkey as a close ally and brother to Egypt (see Table 5).

TABLE 5
In your opinion, how do you think Turkey sees Egypt?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ally</td>
<td>17.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>42.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>10.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rival/competitor</td>
<td>14.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>9.5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar study has been done by a Turkish think tank, the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), about pre-coup Egyptians’ opinions of Turkey (Akgun and Gundogar 2014). The study found that before the July coup, 84 % of Egyptians had positive opinions about Turkey (Akgun and Gundogar 2014, 5). This is a historic high for Egyptians. The same study also noted that 67 % of the people in Egypt agreed that Turkey could be a model state for their country, but concludes that this historic sympathy for Turkey went down dramatically after the coup, to 38 % (Akgun and Gundogar 2014, 5). Although this sudden erosion of sympathy for
Turkey seems to result from Turkey’s firm stance in favour of the deposed President Mursi and its strong opposition to the military regime in Egypt, further studies are needed to shed light on this sudden loss of attraction and its effect on the visibility of Turkish soap operas.

**Turkish Soap Operas and Egyptian Viewers’ Responses**

In the second part of the questionnaire, the questions were designed to investigate what kinds of Turkish television series were being watched and what viewers thought about what they had seen. If a respondent gave an answer indicating that she or he had never watched any Turkish TV series, that participant was immediately asked to stop completing the survey. By doing this, I aimed to see whether there would be a significant difference between those who had watched any kind of Turkish TV series and those who had not in terms of their perceptions of Turkey and Turkey’s relations with Egypt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever watched Turkish TV series?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (thank you for participating)</td>
<td>15.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never heard of it</td>
<td>0.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1.9 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 6 indicates, the majority of the respondents had watched at least one Turkish television series in the past or were watching one or more series. When they were asked what kinds of series they had watched, their lists varied but grouped around some of the well-known drama series, such as Forbidden Love and Fatmagul (see Figure 1).

Respondents listed a total of 35 different TV series. These names were given when respondents were asked to identify what Turkish TV series they had watched the most. In addition, I wanted to find out what actors and actresses respondents liked the most; from the list of 22 names, the top 3 were Kivanc Tatlitug of Noor (2005–7), known as Muhannad in Arabic; Beren Saat of Forbidden Love (2008–10) and Fatmagul (2010–2); and Engin Akyurek of Fatmagul and The Foreign Groom (2004–7). The results also showed that female participants’ favourite drama was Fatmagul, a drama with a story line about a girl who was raped but finds the courage to take her case to court. This Turkish drama became the focal point of many discussions in the Arab world and is the same drama series that inspired Arab women to question existing socio-cultural relations within their society (Paschalidou 2014).

The next question dealt with which part of the Turkish soap operas Egyptians liked the most, taking a different angle on the viewership in this study. As can be seen in Table 7, 32.3 % of respondents said they liked to see the city sights and natural landscapes of Turkey. Especially after Noor
became a pop-culture phenomenon in the Arab world, Istanbul saw a sudden growth in the number of Arab tourists, and the destinations of these Muslim tourists changed from historical and religious places to the locations where Turkish TV dramas have been filmed (Sobecki 2010). Sobecki reports that a chairman of the tour group Heysem Travel, Ayman Maslamani, stated that “travelers from the Middle East were increasingly asking to see sites featured in [Noor]. ‘We used to take Muslim tourists to the mosques in Istanbul, to the historical places, ... now they expect to see the places in the series, to meet the stars’” (2010, 5). Decor and dress style in the series seem to be other items that attract the attention of significant numbers of viewers as the most-liked features of the Turkish soap operas.

TABLE 7
Which aspects of the Turkish TV series do you like the most?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Its subject</td>
<td>22.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its scenario</td>
<td>3.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decor and dress style</td>
<td>14.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>8.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View (nature, city, houses)</td>
<td>32.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>17.7 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The initial idea in conducting this survey was to gain a sense of whether Turkish TV series have any impact on the opinions of Egyptian respondents toward Turkey, as well as on Egyptian society. A positive tendency no doubt would support the argument that Turkish cultural power via imported pop-cultural products can be an asset for a country that seeks to leverage its influence in the Arab world. However, the results of the survey show that Turkish TV series have made very little positive change in the opinions of respondents toward Turkey (see Table 8). As respondents indicated when asked to give their opinions in their own words, for the open-ended questions about their attitudes toward Turkish TV series, their views on the matter vary.

### TABLE 8
Have there been any changes in your opinions regarding Turkey after watching the Turkish TV series?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My opinions have changed positively</td>
<td>17.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My positive opinions of Turkey have remained the same</td>
<td>33.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My opinions have changed negatively</td>
<td>15.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My negative opinions of Turkey have remained the same</td>
<td>13.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>17.7 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a follow-up question I asked how respondents evaluated Turkish TV series regarding their cultural impacts on Egyptian society. Approximately 40 % of the respondents found Turkish TV series somewhat dangerous for Egyptians. A small group of participants even found Turkish TV series imperialist in nature, wanting to take over indigenous products and destroy the Egyptian way of life (see Table 9).

### TABLE 9
In general, how do you consider (evaluate) the Turkish TV series?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally dangerous, religiously unacceptable</td>
<td>24.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not dangerous and morally okay</td>
<td>30.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morally dangerous</td>
<td>16.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperialist</td>
<td>7.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>18.4 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an open-ended question, one viewer on this matter expresses her or his opinion as follows: “They [Turkish TV series] are all about cheating and illicit romance. Alcohol is consumed in large amounts in these series. Besides, they are no different than Western series, pushing more consumption and secularity.”

In the following open-ended questions, I wanted respondents to give their opinions about possible impacts and effects of Turkish TV series—positively and/or negatively—on their community. Their responses differed but had some commonalities. To highlight some, respondents were generally discontent with Turkish TV series for being a bad example...
for youth and women. They thought that youth, both men and women, imitate wrongdoings from these series including drinking alcohol and living together before marriage, and that the series arouse affection for Western-style dressing.

Morally Corrupt with Undesirable Messages

A considerable number of respondents emphasize the danger of the Turkish TV series in the Muslim world and Egypt especially. Their greater concern is that this moral threat comes from another Muslim country. Inserted messages become part of the threat for viewers because they are not easily noticed or obvious to common viewers. Hidden meanings in words or actions and the immoral behaviours of the actors and actresses are believed to be the most threatening aspects of Turkish TV series for Muslim people, especially the youth. For instance, when asked to give their opinions on this matter, respondents indicated that Turkish TV series included excessive soft pornography and implied an invitation for women to be receptive to sexual relations before marriage. In particular, parents were deeply concerned about the series’ legitimization of romantic relationships between young boys and girls. Quite large numbers of respondents thought that since the first introduction of Turkish TV series in Egypt, social relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and men and women have changed negatively. Some respondents criticized Turkish TV series for distorting, if not destroying, the fundamental pillars of Islamic life. On that point, one viewer noted:

When we evaluate Turkish TV series, we find that they are not appropriate for this society; they affect our marriage and threaten our way of life. Since they started airing in this country, divorce rates have increased. Since then, women began dressing complying with the fashion which is heavily influenced by Turkish actresses. Our girls began to imitate those stars. Now, Egyptian girls want a man look like Kivanc, and boys want to date with Beren. This is very dangerous.

Some respondents said that Turkish TV series are unsuited for the Muslim world as well as Turkey. They claimed that the first decay wrought by Turkish TV series began within Turkish society, and then that corrupted way of life was exported to the Arab world. In their assessment, Turkey acts as the front-line agent of Western immorality and cultural imperialism. Respondents again criticized the dumping of Turkish TV series in Egypt, displacing Egyptian TV series and filling Egyptian minds with secular ideas and practices. According to respondents, soon after the entrance of Turkish TV series, the Turkish way of doing things began to dominate the Arab world. To some, this cultural domination was the beginning of a new wave of neo-Ottomanism, fashioning Turkish socio-political and cultural dominance and a Moslemized Western way of life and freedom in the Arab world. Another respondent criticized Turkish TV series as follows:
They [Turkish TV series] are far away from being Islamic, never mind being Turkish. They not only encourage Western freedom and unsuited customs and values of the West but also undertake self-sponsorship to disseminate those values and norms in the Arab world. Unreal scenes and story lines affect people negatively. Young Egyptians now learn how to date at young ages, and betrayals among married couples increased tremendously. Turkish TV series are inappropriate for the East and their customs.

Again, critiques of Turkish TV series pile up around their moral inappropriateness for Egyptian society and their role as a promoter of Western values and ideas in the Arab world. Consequently, they cause socio-cultural corruption in values and change the dynamics that used to make Egyptians who they are.

**Guilty Pleasure and Informative Documents**

When respondents were asked to comment on the positive effects of Turkish TV series on Egyptian people, their responses were contradictory, with some affirming answers. The answers were contradictory because some of the respondents said that they had watched all the episodes of some Turkish soap operas and liked them but still thought that the series included morally corrupt scenes and stories of no use for Egyptian society. In their opinion, not all viewers are able to weed out the corrupt messages of the series. One respondent noted, “They consume lots of alcohol, and men in these series sleep around without caring about any kind of morality or decency.” But the same respondent then went on to give positive comments on the same TV series: “They taught me to be more polite to my wife and kids. I also learned a lot about Istanbul, streets are clean and houses are beautiful. I want to go to Istanbul :)” [Smiley face in original]. This viewer criticized the Turkish series but enjoys the attractions and pleasures of the series.

In a different direction, some comments were made on how Turkish TV series inform Egyptians about Turkey, Turkish social life, and Turkish culture, from music to cooking. Respondents highlighted that they not only learned about Turkish culture but also experienced it at home. One female viewer said, “Turkish TV series without doubt enriched our marriages. Our husbands became more romantic than ever.” She left a smiley face at the end of her comment. Another viewer noted that she or he learned Turkish by watching Turkish soap operas every day. It can be inferred from the comments that romance, long-running and heavy on the cliffhanger Turkish soap operas, opens a window for Egyptian viewers to escape their daily routines. For example, viewers engage in virtual travel to Istanbul not only to see the Bosphorus but also to see Turkish kitchens, living rooms, and bedrooms as the camera moves inside the mansions.
(Yali) of Istanbul on the Bosporus where many of the soaps are filmed. The frequent panoramic views shown in the series undoubtedly capture Egyptians’ curiosity and excitement. This, in turn, stimulates tourists to visit Istanbul (Sobecki 2010). But beyond soap operas’ impact on the increase in tourist numbers, they generate myths and filmic images about Turkey and Turkish life. As such, some respondents disputed these kinds of mythologized images of Turkey and Turkish men and women once they had actually visited Turkey. One viewer challenged the perceptions of Turkey, stating, “I went to Turkey but did not see Kivanc Tatlitug everywhere. Turkish men were as bellied as Arabs and dark.” Similarly, a number of respondents questioned the facts that are portrayed in Turkish TV series. For them, these fictional portrayals of Turkey and Turkish people ultimately harm Egyptians, partly because the constructed images and conversations in these series create false hope and imaginative locations of love and romance for Egyptian men and women. Turkish TV series vaporize ordinary Egyptian men and women away from their everyday spaces and compel them to search for non-existent fictional sites and extraordinary desires and wants. As one viewer noted, these unsatisfied desires and wants of individuals ultimately were a possible cause for fractures among couples and families.

The Success of Turkish TV Products

When participants were asked to comment on what made Turkish TV series successful—which is not merely an assumption when one considers the growing number of Turkish TV productions exported to the Arab world each year—respondents’ comments highlighted Egyptian TV productions’ inability to compete against Turkish TV series (see Table 10). Those who thought there were no better alternatives to Turkish TV series made up 51% of respondents. This tells us that there is a need for further investigation about what aspects of Turkish TV dramas attract Egyptian viewers and what aspects are missing in Egyptian TV dramas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do you think Turkish TV series are successful?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercials</td>
<td>10.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No better alternatives</td>
<td>32.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural similarities</td>
<td>10.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey’s political position</td>
<td>25.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>17.1 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When participants were asked why they thought Turkish TV series were successful, they pointed out Turkey’s Middle East politics (see Table 11). This
means that Turkey’s Middle East policies help Turkish products to gain ground in Egypt. People see Turkish pop culture as a commodity that goes hand in hand with Turkey’s regional policies. In other words, success for Turkish TV series goes beyond the series’ technical quality and narratives. However, respondents did not think there was a correlation between watching Turkish TV series and supporting Turkish foreign policies. The geographical attraction of Turkey is most important, contradicting the idea that those who watch Turkish TV series also like Turkey’s foreign policies.

**TABLE 11**
Which of the following might have relations with the success of Turkish TV series?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buying Turkish goods/products</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning the Turkish language</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling to Turkey</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying in Turkey</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Turkish foreign policies</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Viewers do more than simply watch Turkish TV dramas. They also show interest in events in Turkey, Turkey–Arab world relations, and Turkish fashion, romance, and politics. Answers to the question, “Why do you watch the Turkish TV series?” highlighted the Turkish TV series’ romanticism and sensuality. Indeed, 32.3% of respondents agreed that they watched Turkish TV series because of their alternative presentations of romanticism and emotions. Getting to know Turkey and the Turkish people also made up a substantial percentage (21.5%) in their answers to the same question (see Table 12).

**TABLE 12**
Why do you watch the Turkish TV series?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In order to forget daily issues/stress</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of their romantic and emotional nature</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Egyptian or Arabic TV series</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get to know Turkey and Turks better</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the options above, some respondents also gave extended answers for why they liked to watch Turkish TV series. The majority of the responses highlighted that interest in learning the Turkish language was part of why they wanted to watch Turkish TV series. It must be noted here that Turkey’s relations with Egypt deteriorated after Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took control of the government. Consequently, Egyptian people’s interest in Turkey and Turkish products after the coup needs to be examined in further studies.
People are not passive consumers of popular culture and cinematic productions, nor is their meaning-making process for those productions simplistic. Meanings and messages are certainly negotiated. In particular, Egyptian viewers’ understanding of Turkish TV drama series does not take place in isolation, nor do they use these dramas as a pastime. Moreover, people do not simply interpret Turkish TV series separate from contemporary Turkish–Egyptian relations and geopolitical events surrounding the Middle East. For instance, Turkey’s continuing critiques of Israel and embracing of the Palestinian matter publicly open new windows for Turkey and in turn help Turkish cultural products to dominate the Arab world. In the last decade, Turkish TV soap operas became as competitive as those of the rest of the world, including Hollywood. It is a recent phenomenon that revenues from exported TV series have reached a considerable amount compared to a decade ago in Turkey (Haber 2014). Nowadays, Turkish TV series find 400 million viewers from around the world (Al-Jazeera 2014).

As stated above, viewers’ opinions on Turkish TV series show some complexity, along with commonalities. For example, those who watched Turkish TV series highlighted that they greatly enjoyed Turkish pop culture, while they disliked messages it contains. Especially with regard to moralistic issues, viewers criticized the series’ for portraying infidelity, pushing for materialistic choices, and creating a platform wherein vulgarity is neutralized and made no longer a sin. They also perceived Turkish TV series as an intellectual invasion of Arab minds and culture. Furthermore, viewers were extremely critical of the Turkish TV series for contradicting Islamic values and destroying traditional relations between men and women in Egyptian society. To highlight this point one viewer said:

For this reason women mixing with strange men, touching of a strange woman by a man, looking repeatedly at strange women, wearing makeup and perfumes around strange men are all forbidden practices in Islam ... and watching this series makes these regulations less sound ... Turks brainwashed us and took us away from our real life.

On the other hand, some positive aspects of Turkish TV series can be expressed here. In the open-ended questions, some commentators highlighted that Turkish soap operas to some degree changed their opinions on how men and women should play their roles in the family. The influence of Turkish soaps seemed to be greater for women and young audiences. Turkish soaps offered these subgroups alternative ways of receiving pleasure and happiness that can also be enjoyed in Muslim homes and geographies. Undoubtedly, through soap operas the Turkish experience presented a new form of modernity that could be practised without casting off Islamic values and traditional
ways of living completely. Turkish soap operas, in other words, showed Egyptians how Turkish people, and women in particular, handle modernity.

To a certain extent, this study highlights that Egyptian people watch Turkish TV dramas because (a) there are no better alternatives to substitute for Turkish soap operas, whether one considers technical aspects or the quality of the acting and the plot; (b) Egyptian people enjoy romantic narratives and pure immaculate love stories that are elegantly engraved and passionately acted out in each and every episode; (c) especially the youth and women want to experience Turkish-style modernism (capitalism and tradition at the same time), fashion, and beauty; and (d) a great number of Egyptian people see Turkey as a success story in the Muslim world, from economic developments to democratization, human rights, freedom of expression, and the practice of Islam and the tradition. This facet of Turkish quality has a great impact on men and women in Egypt and influences their preferences for entertainment and pleasure, because the taste of joy and the feelings are very similar and satisfactory.

Although this article has some limitations and shortcomings, it concludes that Egyptian people’s reception of Turkish soap operas mainly depends on and cannot be separated from Turkey’s economic, political, and cultural policies in Egypt and in the Arab world in general. No doubt, Turkey’s current bleak relations with Egypt have a great effect on the visibility of Turkish soap operas and in turn reduce Turkey’s and Turkish culture’s degree of exposure to public notice. However, elements of entertainment such as soap operas cannot easily be fenced and contained in the realms of high politics. People will continue to watch Turkish soap operas regardless of political censorship, and in exchange Turkey will strengthen its soft power in dealing with Arab nations and Egypt in particular. For this reason, there need to be further investigations about how post-coup Egypt shaped people’s opinions about Turkish soap operas and Turkey in general.

Acknowledgements
This research paper would not have been possible without the help and support of especially Ismail Numan Telci, Lames Samar, and the people who conducted the actual survey on the ground in Egypt. I would also like to thank Dr Ghazi-Walid Falah for his insights and comments on this article. I acknowledge that all remaining errors are my own.

Notes
1 Soap operas is used interchangeably with TV series in this article although these productions differ slightly in their technical and other artistic aspects.
2 This centre was founded to promote Turkey, Turkish culture, history, language, and arts to a global audience. See http://yee.org.tr/.
3 For this question, I accepted however participants described themselves.
4 This dramatic fall in Egyptians’ positive opinions about Turkey may result from the
methods used in TESEV’s research. Right after the coup, TESEV conducted a random phone interview with people. Although phone interviews count as a legitimate technique for collecting data, Egyptian people’s responses to such politically tense questions over the phone are a matter of question. People in Egypt may not feel free to state their true feelings about Turkish–Egyptian relations.

References
Akgun, M., and Gundogar, S. S. 2014. Mısır-Türkiye ilişkilerinde daha iyi bir geleceğe doğru... Istanbul: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation.


Ahmet Davutoğlu’s Foreign Policy Understanding: A Blend of Westernist and Multiculturalist Eurasianism

Özgür Tüfekçi
Department of International Relations, Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey, 61080

Given that Turkey has increasingly been pursuing an active and multidimensional foreign policy since the end of the Cold War, discourses of Eurasianism have been perceived as one of the dynamics of this foreign policy course. In particular, Turkish foreign policy has undergone significant changes in its understanding during the Davutoğlu era, beginning in 2002. Accordingly, it may be claimed that Westernist and multiculturalist Eurasianism discourses have frequently been interpreted by the polity and consequently implemented in foreign policy–making in Turkey. This article examines how Turkish Eurasianism and its various discourses have been embraced and implemented by Ahmet Davutoğlu, first as a foreign minister and then as the prime minister of the Republic of Turkey. In the examination of this era, the discourses of Turkish Eurasianism are also briefly conceptualized and presented.

Keywords: Eurasianism, Turkish Eurasianism, Westernist Eurasianism, multiculturalist Eurasianism, Turkish foreign policy, Ahmet Davutoğlu

Introduction

There is a wide consensus among the students of international relations that Turkish foreign policy between 1923 and the early 2000s may be
divided roughly into four periods: an inter-war period (1923–45), the Cold War era (1945–1980s), a period of a new world order (1990s), and the AK Party (Justice and Development Party) era (2002–present) (Larrabee and Lesser 2003; Küçükcan and Küçükkeleş 2012; Hale 2013). These periods differ from each other. Generally speaking, until the 1980s, Kemalism had the upper hand; it was able to permeate and shape every level of society, and it was publicly unchallenged. In political life, this resulted in the emergence of a Kemalist civilian–military bureaucratic structure which did not allow elected governments to fully implement their own foreign policy programmes (Laçiner 2001, 281).

However, these conditions have gradually changed since Turgut Özal’s election. With the rise of Ahmet Davutoğlu, pro-activism in Turkish foreign policy has increased further. The foreign policy understanding of Davutoğlu and the AK Party has been multidimensional, similar to that of Özal and Ismail Cem. While Özal stressed building economic relations with countries in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central Asia, and Cem pointed out that Turkey was overlooking the importance of historical and cultural elements in foreign policy–making, Davutoğlu has made efforts in both directions to broaden Turkey’s foreign policy horizon and to integrate cultural and historical dimensions into the Turkish foreign policy–making process (Küçükcan and Küçükkeleş 2012). For instance, for the first time in history, during the AK Party era Turkey has had embassies/consulates in almost every country in the world. In this way, this period differs from other periods of Turkish foreign policy since 1923.

Therefore, this article first briefly examines the discourses of Eurasianism. Then, a special emphasis will be put on whether the discourses of Eurasianism have been applied or performed during the Davutoğlu era in Turkish foreign policy. In doing so, a number of indicators, which have been determined and chosen after in-depth analyses of Davutoğlu’s speeches, mindsets, and initiatives, will be used to examine whether this period presents any Eurasianist approaches, explicitly or implicitly. In this regard, this article will reveal the impact of Eurasianist ideology in the Turkish foreign policy–making during the Davutoğlu era.

Discourses of Turkish Eurasianism

Eurasianism began as a way of thinking, an ideology or geopolitical approach, intended to save the Russian Empire from collapse and to create a propitious sphere including all Eurasian nations. This version of Russian Eurasianism, or classical Eurasianism, had various discourses, which is one reason that Russian Eurasianism faded away around the 1930s. Having many participants and eminent founders who were
dwelling in different countries of Europe and various discourses caused the disappearance of Eurasianism until Gumilev’s efforts to put together neo-Eurasianism. Gumilev’s followers A. Panarin and A. Dugin made enormous contributions to neo-Eurasianism during the 1990s. However, Panarin’s death left Dugin as the sole ideologist of neo-Eurasianism.

Whereas classical Eurasianism did not manage to penetrate Turkish society, neo-Eurasianism has been perceived in various ways among the Turkish intelligentsia. It might be considered that there are two reasons that neo-Eurasianism has found more acceptance than classical Eurasianism. The first is that Turkey has been a convenient sphere for ideologies: the belief that Turkey has had a glorious history with regard to the Turkic ethnic roots facilitates new and stimulating ideologies. In addition, Turkey has started to embrace a new way of understanding throughout this glorious history. That has been one of the catalysts which has created an appropriate environment for eastern-oriented ideologies. The second reason is that the perception that “The only friend of a Turk is a Turk” has affected the Turkish identity-building process, generating a tendency among some nationalist circles to become conscious of any threat by anyone seen as an enemy of Turkey. That is why these circles support sustaining the “balance-of-power” rhetoric, especially against the Western world, by promoting ideologies such as neo-Eurasianism.

The Turkish intelligentsia’s encounter with Russian Eurasianism occurred through Gumilev’s and Dugin’s works. In particular, Dugin’s initial thoughts, which aimed to exclude Turkey from a prospective Eurasian union, were not welcomed in Turkey and caused Turkish intellectual circles to perceive Russian Eurasianism as a Russian imperialist ideology, even if Dugin later revised his approach to Turkey. Most of the discourses of Eurasianism are thus built on ideologies such as Islamism, Turkism, and so on. In light of this information, the discourses of Turkish Eurasianism can, in general, be classified into three separate types (see Table 1): nationalist Eurasianism, multiculturalist Eurasianism, and Westernist Eurasianism.

It is widely believed that Islam, the Ottoman heritage, and nationalism are three of the main influences on Turkey’s domestic and foreign policy. In theory, because Islam dismisses differences in culture, language, ethnicity, geographical proximity, and so on among its followers, it has the potential to build a sense of shared identity. Since Ottoman times Islam has therefore been perceived as a vital common denominator between different groups of subjects, such as Turks and Kurds. For that reason, Islam is influential in Turkish approaches to domestic and foreign policy. On the other hand, the majority of Turkish citizens adhere to Ottomanist discourses, despite disparaging Kemalist discourses toward Ottoman history. Along with Islamist and Ottomanist
discourses, Turkish nationalism also has a dominant effect on Turkish society. In particular, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rightist parties have always kept alive the tendency for unification with the Turkic states that emerged in the Caucasus and Central Asia. This is why ultra-right parties in Turkey have been in favour of forming a Turkic-nationalist discourse for a long time. In addition, although pan-Turanianism’s targets are highly unlikely, it has been a motivator to think of or embrace a much wider area, similar to Eurasianism.

In light of this knowledge, the following table summarizes the features of the three Eurasianist discourses. In line with the discussion, this summary draws attention to the overlapping expectations of the discourses, even though they differ from each other regarding the meaning of Eurasia and their sources.

These three discourses have similar perspectives regarding Turkey’s role and importance in the region. They all focus on the Turkic states’ facilitative role in order to create an environment for Turkey to promote Turkish Eurasianism as it derives from these kin states’ presence. However, when it comes to the content of the prospective Eurasian union, they have separate visions, based on their reservations about Russia and the Western states. While some of the nationalists claim that...
Russia might be a member of the union (if necessary), some of the multiculturalists have the same reservations about the Western world (except the United States).

Regarding Turkey’s place in this union, they all have different arguments. The most ambitious one comes from the nationalists, as they see Turkey as the leader of the union. While the multiculturalists argue that Turkey and Russia might share the leadership, the Westernists propose that Turkey might be one of the significant players in the union. In addition, there are several different means to prepare the ground for a prospective union. Last, their expectations are generally considered to be the same, as they all claim that such a union would promote a better future for the benefit of Turkey. In addition, only the Westernist discourse emphasizes democracy, while it argues that the Eurasian continent is one of the most important regions for Turkey and must be taken into account along with the Western world.

### The Davutoğlu Era: A Blend of Westernist and Multiculturalist Eurasianism

Following the November 2002 elections, Davutoğlu was appointed as chief adviser to the prime minister and ambassador at large by the 58th government of the Republic of Turkey. He continued to serve in the 59th and 60th governments. On 1 May 2009 he was appointed as the minister of foreign affairs of the 60th government of the Republic of Turkey and carried on this position in the 61st government. And in August 2014 he became the prime minister of the Republic of Turkey.

Davutoğlu owes his reputation to his book, *Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position* (Davutoğlu 2009). Some claim that Davutoğlu’s book is one of the works that has inspired the masses and influenced small
but powerful elites and their mindsets (see Ersoy 2009; Walker 2009; Balcı 2010; Kanbolat 2011; Kasapoğlu 2012). In his book Davutoğlu claims that the consolidation of political and economic stability would enable Turkey to play a peace-promoting role in neighbouring regions. His concept of strategic depth in order to help Turkey transition from being a peripheral actor in world politics to a central one features two elements: geopolitical inheritance and historical-cultural inheritance. These are the main components that differentiate Turkey from its neighbours (see Aras 2009; Walker 2011).

Davutoğlu (2010) conceptualizes his strategic depth doctrine through four principles: “[a] secure neighbourhood based on a common understanding of security, pro-active, high-level political dialogue with all neighbours, fostering regional economic interdependence and finally, promoting ‘multi-cultural, multi-sectarian peace and harmony.’”

In light of this way of thinking, Davutoğlu has repeatedly been criticized for being neo-Ottomanist or Eurasianist, even if he has rejected these claims at every turn. Yet signs of Eurasianism can be identified in his discourses and actions. To prove this claim, four indicators are presented below.

**Indicator 1**

On 24 November 2009, Davutoğlu stated:

Former US President Bill Clinton asked me why Turkey is actively dealing with the regional problems; I answered, Draw a circle with a diameter of 1000 km around Turkey and 20 states will fall into it. Then draw one with a diameter of 3000 km and 70 states will fall within. If we draw a similar circle around the US, how many states would fall into that? In this sense, of course Turkey will continue dealing with the problems of our neighbours (2009).

This discourse explicitly reflects Eurasianist thinking. From Panarin’s perspective, ethnic nationalism should be condemned as a product of Europe’s pagan sentiment. In this regard, states in Eurasia should deal with each other’s problems regardless of religion, race, colour, creed, nationality, social status, and so on. From this perspective, the effects of this understanding can be observed during the AK Party era. For instance, since 2002, the amount of Official Development Assistance and humanitarian assistance provided by Turkey have grown substantially. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013, Official Development Assistance from Turkey almost doubled between 2011 and 2012. This increase made Turkey the 15th-largest government donor in 2012 (see Figure 1). Furthermore, the increase of official humanitarian assistance to $US1 billion in 2012 made Turkey the fourth-largest donor...
in 2012 (see Figure 2) (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013). It is worth mentioning that, unlike in previous periods, in this era Turkey’s assistance has not concentrated solely on the surrounding area. While Turkey has continued to provide assistance to Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries, a significant amount of assistance has been given to certain countries in Africa and South Asia as well (see Figure 3).

In line with the ideology of Eurasianism, in the Davutoğlu era Turkey has been seeking to expand its sphere of influence through

FIGURE 1
Top 20 government contributors of international humanitarian assistance, 2003–12 ($US billions)

FIGURE 2
Official Development Assistance (ODA) from Turkey, 2000–12 ($US billions)
public diplomacy. The governmental institutions which conduct public diplomacy are the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (the principal body for administering aid) and the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) and Turkey’s Disaster and Emergency Management Office (bodies for humanitarian aid). These institutions provide, organize, and distribute humanitarian aid as an aspect of public diplomacy. It would not be wrong to claim that they have become much more active, with a wider range, during the Davutoğlu era. As is seen in the figures above, the amount of humanitarian aid has been increasing steadily during the Davutoğlu era. This might be considered as an extension of Eurasianism; to quote Davutoğlu, “Turkey will continue dealing with the problems of our neighbours” (2009).

In this sense, at first glance, Davutoğlu’s and Panarin’s approaches overlap. A condemnation of ethnic nationalism and a commitment to deal with each other’s problems regardless of religion, race, colour, creed, nationality, social status, and so on are two of the main elements of Davutoğlu and Panarin’s understandings. Although this indicator reveals whether Davutoğlu pursues a Eurasianist foreign policy, there must be more indicators, as it is not sufficient on its own.

FIGURE 3
Top 10 recipients of Turkey’s official humanitarian assistance, 2007–11 ($US millions)
There are other factors that indicate that Davutoğlu has embraced an element of Eurasianist thinking. For instance, Davutoğlu alleges that Turkey is a “central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character” (2008, 78). That is why “in terms of its area of influence, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf, and Black Sea country” (Davutoğlu 2008, 79).

In this regard, Turkey is economically and politically relatively stable, making it a viable international actor in these regions. In this context, while the incumbent government wants to exert political, economic, and cultural influence within the former Ottoman lands, it also strives to open up new horizons by improving its relations with states from the Yellow Sea to Latin America. An obvious example of this is the transformation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the Davutoğlu era. As an extension of his understanding of Turkey as a central country with multiple identities, Turkey has opened new embassies and consulates worldwide. While Turkey had 39 missions abroad in 1924, it is now represented by 222 missions worldwide. In addition, the Turkish Foreign Service has 2,183 diplomats, at the ministry and its missions abroad, despite criticisms that this number is excessive (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011).

Yet Turkey’s broadening relations with countries worldwide are a sign of a Eurasianist way of thinking. On this account, Turkey’s opening needs to be clarified by informative figures about Turkey’s and neighbouring countries’ diplomatic missions abroad (see Figure 4). According to Figure 4, Turkey has one of the largest global networks of diplomatic missions compared to economies of similar size, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel.

It is a fact that having more than 200 diplomatic missions abroad requires a decent economy. Turkey is considered the 17th-biggest economy in the world (CIA World Factbook n.d.). However, most economies of similar size do not have as many missions abroad as Turkey does. For instance, while Brazil is the 8th-biggest economy, it has 194 missions abroad (Ministério das Relações Exteriores n.d.). Further, while India is the 4th-biggest economy in the world, it has only 164 missions abroad (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India n.d.). These figures show that, as mentioned before, Turkey has a distinctive foreign policy understanding that is based on Turkey’s geopolitical centrality and on its enormous cultural and historical heritage and belongingness to Eurasia that makes Turkey itself responsible for the whole region in Davutoğlu’s way of thinking.
These kinds of goals and policies seem like a small-scale Eurasianist vision, especially in the building of relationships with both the Western and the Eastern worlds. In addition, it may even be alleged that the AK Party’s foreign policy stance in the post-2005 era represents the transition from a Western orientation to an Eastern orientation, or, as Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz call it, “soft Euro-Asianism” (2009, 13). Having said that, they define the soft Euro-Asianism approach as “foreign policy activism pursued with respect to all neighbouring regions but with no firm EU axis as was previously the case” (13).

In this sense, this indicator substantiates that Turkey’s axis is not shifting, just getting wider. It would therefore not be logical to claim that Turkey is pursuing an Eastern-oriented foreign policy nowadays. As Öniş and Yılmaz repeat, Turkey is striving to build relations with all the neighbours around it. In this, it should be emphasized that the new vision considers that it is Turkey’s fate to deal with its neighbours’ problems, as Turkey is a central country. Therefore, from time to time Davutoğlu is accused of embracing an Eastern-oriented foreign policy, but it seems that this is not true—the horizon has simply been broadened, and the relations with the European Union or the West are just a part of the foreign policy, not all of it, as once was the case.

**Indicator 3**

While Eurasianists attribute importance to the geopolitical location of Russia, Davutoğlu also puts forward the uniqueness of Turkey and its position. According to N. S. Trubetskoy, “The territory of Russia ... constitutes a separate continent ... which in contrast to Europe and Asia can be called Eurasia.... Eurasia represents an integral whole, both...
This separate continent was a self-contained geographical entity whose boundaries coincided roughly with those of the Russian Empire in 1914 (Halperin 1982, 481).

Similarly, by alleging that Turkey cannot be “explained” geographically or culturally by associating it with a single region, Davutoğlu seeks to emphasize the geographical significance of Turkey:

Turkey’s geography gives it a specific central country status, which differs from other central countries. For example, Germany is a central country in Central Europe, which is far from Asia and Africa. Russia is another central country in the lands of Europe and Asia, which is far from Africa. Iran is a central country in Asia, which is far from Europe and Africa. Taking a broader, global view, Turkey holds an optimal place in the sense that it is both an Asian and European country and is also close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean. A central country with such an optimal geographic location cannot define itself in a defensive manner. It should be seen neither as a bridge country which only connects two points, nor a frontier country, nor indeed as an ordinary country, which sits at the edge of the Muslim world or the West (2008, 78).

Obviously, this is a Turkish interpretation of Eurasianism, with a clear emphasis on Turkey’s centrality. In this framework, Davutoğlu argues that Turkey is the glue which brings together Europe and Asia, just like Russia in the mindset of classical Eurasianism during the 1920s and 1930s. Therefore, Turkey is destined to play a significant role in this region instead of pursuing a passive foreign policy course. This way of thinking has clearly influenced the current foreign policy course of Turkey, and “pro-activism” is one of the terms used to describe the approach of the Davutoğlu era.

Davutoğlu’s approach reveals itself in recent developments, such as the relations with Africa and initiatives in southern Asia. This indicator shows that Davutoğlu is again stressing Turkey’s centrality, with a clear emphasis on how its responsibilities and identities derive from its distinctive geographical, cultural, historical, and anthropological features. The recent developments are clear examples of this understanding. For instance, Turkey’s opening to Africa can be considered as a significant outcome of this policy. While Turkey has had observer status in the African Union since 2005, the Africa–Turkey partnership was established by the signing of the Istanbul Declaration and the Framework for Cooperation in 2008. Both parties have aimed at a stable, long-term partnership based on mutual interests and equality and the promotion of Africa–Turkey cooperation in specific areas of interests. While this opening toward Africa can be considered as an extension of Davutoğlu’s interpretation of Eurasianism, Turkey’s presence in Afghanistan as part
of the International Security Assistance Force is another initiative which confirms that the Turkish foreign policy course has been formulated to be more globally engaged, economically and diplomatically, by reaching out beyond the former Ottoman territories. Regarding its presence in the International Security Assistance Force, for Turkey it is more than a NATO-led mission. It is a duty of being a Eurasian state. The following statement by the incumbent president of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, emphasizes this point: “NATO planned to complete its mission in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, but it was not definite. It may happen after 2014. As Turkey, we think of leaving Afghanistan after all countries leave. We would not leave our brothers alone there unless Afghanistan wanted Turkey to” (Haber 7 2012). It is a fact that the rationale behind these policies can be explained only by Eurasianism, in particular the Westernist Eurasianist discourse.

**Indicator 4**

In a speech on 4 February 2010, Davutoğlu proclaimed:

This is the basis of what the classical Eurasianists wanted to establish via a Eurasian union. According to them, Eurasianism provided a theoretical structure to prevent the collapse of the Russian Empire. In the event of its collapse, the theory sought to build a new nation encompassing the whole Eurasian people under a single Eurasian state. This state would have a unique culture reflecting the characteristics of all the Turanian races instead of the Russian element. (The Turanian nations include, according to the Eurasians, the Finno-Ugric nations; Samoyeds; Turks [including Ottoman Turks]; various Tatars; Bashkirs; Turkmen; Kirgiz; Yakuts; Chuvash; a few extinct peoples such as Khazars, Polovtsy, and Ugurians; and, finally, Mongols and Manchurians.) In this vein, as Davutoğlu points out, an increase in political dialogue, economic interdependence, and cultural interaction would constitute the primary phase of founding the union.

There is a need to embark on a new vision in order to have the Eurasia region regain its historical importance…. If peace and welfare do not reign in Eurasia, it is not possible to make peace and welfare reign in the world, either. This region can export peace and welfare to the rest of the world…. The western and eastern ends of Eurasia should be reconnected (Daily Today’s Zaman 2010).

The statement above, made by Davutoğlu on 5 February 2010, is a call for a Eurasian union, and it is an unquestionable indication of the Eurasianism in his thinking, especially the multiculturalist Eurasianist discourse. This call has been a touchstone in terms of evaluating the dynamics of Turkish foreign policy.
It can be seen that during the Davutoğlu era the inclination toward Eurasia and the influence of Eurasianism have been gradually increasing. Unlike Özal and Cem, Davutoğlu promotes it and claims, to some extent, that the European Union and the Western world are obviously necessary for Turkey but that the Eastern world is much more important. In his thinking, Turkey needs the European Union but not as much as the European Union needs Turkey. Furthermore, if Turkey becomes a genuine player in Eurasia, it will definitely become indispensable for the European Union. For this reason, Turkey should aim to spread cooperation to the Eurasian continent and make peace and welfare reign in it. But we do not know whether it is a viable project yet, as the region is full of dictatorships and undemocratic and underdeveloped states. In addition, we do not know whether they want cooperation and peace in the region.

**Conclusion**

Although Eurasianism was an ideology that first appeared in Russia during the 1920s, it has had some reflections in Turkish foreign policy every now and then. While some of those reflections have been obvious, some have not been clearly expressed. In this article the Davutoğlu period of Turkish foreign policy has been analyzed, and the conclusion is that the discourse of Eurasianism in various forms has been widely applied in this period. The discourses of Westernist Eurasianism and multiculturalist Eurasianism have generally been embraced by Ahmet Davutoğlu and the AK Party to shift the course of Turkish foreign policy.

While the reason for embracing Westernist Eurasianism is that it is the most moderate and plausible discourse in terms of keeping good relations with the neighbouring countries, multiculturalist Eurasianism has also been embraced as another means to building an economic powerhouse for Turkey. This multiculturalist discourse has been observed during the Davutoğlu era when he explicitly proposed that a Eurasian union should be formed if humanity wants peace and welfare to reign in the world.

However, although the Davutoğlu era presents both discourses—Westernist and multiculturalist—from time to time, none of the discourses has been promoted as the state ideology during this period. Instead, the discourses have been applied when needed. Yet it might be observed that during the Davutoğlu era, the application of Eurasianism has reached to the highest level within Turkey.
Notes
1 Turgut Özal was sworn in as president of Turkey on 9 November 1989. On 17 April 1993 Özal died in office of a heart attack.
2 İsmail Cem served as a Turkish foreign minister between 1997 and 2002. He was one of Turkey’s longest-serving foreign ministers.

References


Laçiner, S. 2001. From Kemalism to Ozalism, the ideological evolution of Turkish foreign policy. PhD dissertation, King’s College University of London.


The Wolf and the Fist: The Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the Gezi Protests

Coşkun Taştan  
Department of Sociology, Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University, Ağrı, Turkey

Hatem Ete  
Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey

In the last week of May 2013, a series of mass demonstrations began in Taksim Square, Istanbul, and quickly spread all over Turkey. The demonstrations were initiated by a group declaring their opposition to the removal of some trees as part of an urban modernization project in the city centre. A severe security intervention triggered massive reactions from residents of Istanbul and, later, other Turkish cities: shortly after this intervention, an estimated 2.5 million people joined the demonstrations nationwide. Sustained in its most active form for nearly a month, the demonstrations left behind several deaths, many injuries, and inestimable property damage. Known as the “Gezi events,” they had a tsunami effect on Turkish politics, reshaping the political networks, redesigning ideological positions, and disorganizing the political agenda. This article focuses on the politics of Gezi protests in relation to the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), one of three opposition parties in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Founded more than 50 years ago, the MHP is known for its far-right nationalist views. Unlike the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), the MHP did not exploit the Gezi protests against the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP). The authors analyze the MHP’s discourses and actions regarding the Gezi protests and conclude that, more than ever, the Kurdish question is the key battleground for the MHP, and that since the 1990s the MHP has successfully transformed nationalist reactions to the Kurdish question into political fuel.

Keywords: Gezi protests of 2013, Nationalist Action Party (MHP), Turkey

Durant la dernière semaine de mai 2013, une série de manifestations de masse s’est déroulée sur la place Taksim à Istanbul, et s’est rapidement répandue dans toute la Turquie. Les manifestations ont été initiées par un groupe s’opposant à la l’abattage d’arbres prévu dans le cadre d’un projet de modernisation urbaine dans le centre-ville. Une opération sécuritaire d’envergure a déclenché une réponse massive des résidents d’Istanbul et, plus tard, dans d’autres villes Turques. Peu de temps après cette intervention, environ 2,5 millions de personnes au plan national auraient rejoint les manifestations. Durant près d’un mois, durant sa période la plus active, les manifestations ont fait plusieurs morts, de nombreux blessés et des

Mots clés: protestations de Gezi de 2013, Parti d’action nationaliste (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), Turquie

The Wolf and the Fist

In the most intense days of the Gezi Park events in Istanbul, a striking picture of the protests began to circulate in the media. In the picture, one could see a hand gesture made by simultaneously raising the little finger and index finger while the tips of the middle and ring fingers touch the thumb. There were other hands in the picture, one making a fist and another one the sign of victory. In the Turkish politico-cultural context, the first sign is that of the ultra-nationalist ülkücüler, the supporters of the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP). The latter two, in contrast, are popular markers for leftism. In those furious days, in which the country’s population was divided between supporting and criticizing the protests, that picture was worth much more than a thousand words. The supporters of the protests often referred to that picture as proof of the widespread alliance behind the Gezi protests, which would make the events a folk movement that included every part of society against the government. The detractors of the protests dismissed such a claim, however, by asserting that such pictures, although they pumped up sympathy for the protests, reflected only rare instances and were in no way representative of the dominant character of the protests. Instead, they claimed that the socio-political identities of the protestors did not cut across socio-political boundaries in Turkey. Rather, in their view, the protests had a recognizable dominant socio-political flavor, which was secular/Kemalist in its political disposition and upper-middle class in its social milieu, ignoring the participation of Turkey’s restive Alevi community.

The Arab World Geographer / Le Géographe du monde arabe Vol 17, no 3 (2014)
From this perspective, none of the three signs, but especially not MHP’s sign, reflected the mainstream of the protestors. Instead, these signs decorated the protest movement. Nevertheless, given the arguments for and against nationalists’ involvement in the protests, their traditional statist political disposition, and their understanding of and approaches to the state, state–society relations, the civilian sphere, and civil disobedience, an analysis of the MHP’s approach to the protest is long overdue.

In the following days, polls showed that the MHP’s involvement in the events was nearly non-existent. The MHP’s ülkücü youth were involved in the protests only to an insignificant degree. The polling company Metropol found that MHP voters composed only an estimated 2% of the protesters, equal to the percentage of protesters who declared that they had voted for the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), the main target of the protests. Soon after, Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the MHP, clarified its political position by declaring that neither the party as such nor its followers, the “grey wolves,” would support the protests at all. Such a stance was in accordance with their political philosophy, which attaches premium
importance to statecraft and decries any “subversive” actions, which it sees as inimical to the stability of the state structure and the maintenance of political order. Following that declaration, which at the same time implied a directive to the base of the party, MHP’s signs disappeared almost totally from the protests.

The next time MHP symbols appeared in the context of the Gezi events, it was in a manner no less unexpected manner than before. In the AKP counter-rallies where then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed his supporters, some signs of the MHP reappeared, this time beside the AKP symbols and banners, implying a preference for strong leadership, governance, political order, and stability on the part of a certain segment of the MHP’s grassroots. Erdoğan easily welcomed those symbols, and in some parts of his speeches he even encouraged them. This is how the MHP appeared in the context of the Gezi protests in the imaginary and symbolic senses, but never in the real sense. Both the imagined presence of the MHP in the Gezi protests and the symbolic appearance of the MHP in the AKP counter-rallies made one thing clear: the MHP’s real engagement would have changed the nature and course of the Gezi protests, moving the country toward uncharted waters. Therefore, a series of questions arise regarding the MHP’s attitude toward the Gezi events: Why would the involvement of the MHP in the Gezi events have mattered? And, more important, why did the party choose to stay away from the protests although this would otherwise have been a great chance for opposition?

The MHP and the Gezi Protests: The Party Position

Compared to other Turkish political parties, the MHP was the least effected by the Gezi events of May 2013. The protests directly targeted the ruling AKP, while the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), declared its full support for the protests. The pro-Kurdish opposition Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) was stuck between the call to participate in the protests and the need to protect the “Peace Process” in which it was engaged with the governing AKP. The process’s future was very much dependent on the continuity of the AKP’s rule in Turkey. Compared to the situations of the other political parties, the MHP’s position was relatively more comfortable. Because of its ideological position and political priorities, the party did not have difficulty distancing itself from the protests. Its political success was remarkable when it managed to avoid identification with the “street opposition” or the “language of the ruling party” simultaneously by locating the logic of its stance in a higher goal: avoiding language and a stance that would prove inimical to the political order while keeping its oppositional distance from the ruling party.

The MHP’s policy toward Gezi protests had two main elements. First, the party kept an eye on the Gezi protests to ensure that the events would not have
Coşkun Taştan and Hatem Ete

a positive impact on the “Peace Process.” Since the beginning of 2013, the MHP had been cautious about the peace negotiations, which has provided the party with a firm ground of opposition. Needless to say, the party finds it harmful for the Turkish state to have any kind of dialogue with the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, or Kurdistan Workers’ Party) in particular and with pro-Kurd politicians in general. Second, as part of its nationalist attitude, the MHP declared a careful position on the negative impacts of street protests on the political stability of the country. In line with this principle, Devlet Bahçeli, the MHP’s leader, stressed the dark face of the street, an allusion to Turkey’s troublesome history of the 1970s, when the streets were rocked by protests and blind violence and the country’s political order was marked by instability; Bahçeli called for MHP supporters to stay away from the protests in a speech on 11 June 2013.

The MHP’s attitude toward the Gezi protests evolved in three successive stages in the critical first month of the events. In the first stage, the party was what we might call here a “careful observer.” In the second stage, it became an “active political agent,” and in the third “the routine policy-maker” was back. We will discuss below what each of these means.

The Careful Observer

In the first week of the Gezi protests, the MHP and its leader, Bahçeli, were carefully observing the events, trying to understand what was happening and where it was bound to lead. The Gezi protests caught the country off guard. The size, speed, and shape of the events were astonishing for everyone, even for most of the protestors. Thus, the MHP positioned itself on a safe ground and started to observe the events and actors from a distance. In rare cases Bahçeli made smooth interventions to call for “sobriety” on the part of the ruling AKP and the protestors. The nationalist reaction to “keep the state safe” was rather decisive in this attitude. When the Gezi protests began on 29 May 2013, the MHP remained totally silent for two days, until Bahçeli made a declaration on 31 May. That was the beginning of the position that we call “careful observer.” This position lasted until the meeting of the Party Central Administration Board and the Provincial Presidents’ took place on 7 June, after which Bahçeli made another declaration.

In his 31 May declaration, Bahçeli said that “no fellow MHP members ever played any role in the actions. The party members and friends are invited not to participate in the events” (T24 2013). That was the first officially declared MHP position regarding the Gezi events. Bahçeli’s declaration immediately became subject to criticism in social media. That put a lot of pressure on the party, and Bahçeli allocated an important part of his weekly Assembly Group Speech on 4 June 2013 to explaining at length why the party had chosen not to participate in the protests. In that speech, he pointed to two
factors to explain why the MHP was staying away from the Gezi protests. First, he referred to the uncertain identity of the protestors and the ambiguity of their purposes: “It is impossible for us to have a peripheral place at the Taksim events, let alone to have a central role there. We never drink water from the wells with dark pits. We never rely on ambushes to get parts from provocations” (Hürriyet 2013a; translation by the authors). His second emphasis was on the Peace Process— which is inverted in MHP discourse as the “Betrayal Process”— as a political priority: “Where were those people who dare to supervise us today, when we were fighting an honorable fight against the ‘betrayal process,’ the so-called peace process started by the AKP–BDP–PKK alliance? Where were those who fight for a couple of trees today hiding when the real question was the integrity of Turkish nation and the lands?” (Hürriyet 2013a; translation by the authors).

It is clear that Bahçeli was belittling the agenda of the Gezi protestors vis-à-vis the agenda of the MHP. In this first stage, Bahçeli’s main effort was to justify the MHP’s indifferent position with regard to the Gezi events and to strengthen his “statesman” image by calling for sobriety. He was careful to underline his opposition to the ruling party but was equally cautious not to call for identification with the “street opposition” either. Thus, the MHP’s position was rather that of a “careful third party”: “For us, the only place where the AKP will be overthrown is the ballot box, by the holy will of the Turkish nation. No benefit will come out of the fogs of uncontrolled streets. For that reason, we have directed our eyes not to the streets but to the man’s arena of politics” (Milliyet 2013a; translation by the authors).

The Active Political Agent

The second stage in the MHP’s attitude toward the Gezi events of 2013 was characterized by a clear-cut political position. In other words, the MHP shifted its position from “careful observer” to “active political agent.” There were two main factors behind this repositioning. First, as time passed, the identity and the demands of the protestors in Istanbul and other metropolitan cities became clearer. This clarification was used by Bahçeli to make a distinction between “provocateurs” and “innocent citizens.” Such a stance in a sense echoed the government’s line, which centred on drawing lines between different groups of protestors that made up the protest movement instead of putting them all under one blanket and delegitimizing them with a single brush. Second, as the protests spread across the country and took on a rigid character, a polarization between the protestors and the ruling AKP became inevitable. Owing to this polarization, the MHP and other political parties gradually faded away from the scene. However, fading away from the scene of the protests did not mean that the MHP would be silent about what was happening. Bahçeli looked for an active but outside position, trying to
maintain a distinction between two types of protestors: those protestors who functioned as the tongs of the PKK (or foreign agents’ involvement, in general) and the “innocent citizens” who could no longer stand the AKP’s politics. Thus, Bahçeli was trying to keep to the main agenda of his party without missing the chance for opposition brought about by the protests.

Bahçeli’s press conference after the meeting of the Party Central Administration Board and the Provincial Presidents’ on 7 June 2013 marked an important turning point in the MHP’s Gezi politics. Although the MHP retained its distance from the protests, Bahçeli seems to have replaced his “statesman” image with that of the “leader of the MHP.” In that new framework, Bahçeli seems to have left his holistic negative approach toward the protestors. Instead, he began to classify the protestors into groups and give priority to criticizing Erdoğan. But here he had to tread a fine line in order not to land his party completely on the side of the protestors.

From 7 June 2013 on, the protests intensified, and the clashes between protestors and security forces resulted in deaths on the streets. Accordingly, Bahçeli began to attach much more importance to the protests and took the Gezi protests beyond the routine agenda of his party. He began to describe the Gezi incidents as “the most important question of the country” (Anadolu Ajansı 2013). Before 7 June, Bahçeli was rather prone to adopting a holistic approach toward the protestors and describing them as a group of people who rest in the shadow of a bunch of trees. After 7 June, however, he began to distinguish between “those who were agitated by an environmental sensitivity, motivated by personal freedom and a determined will to protect the green nature,” and “those illegal organizations, marginal groups, and PKK who try to make Gezi Park a headquarters for their illegal purposes.” His rough distinction between “innocent people who look for their democratic rights” and “provocateurs” was politically functional (MHP 2013; translations by the authors).

In this second stage, Bahçeli gave priority to targeting Prime Minister Erdoğan and the ruling AKP. On the one hand, Bahçeli blamed Erdoğan for the turmoil the country was going through. On the other hand, he accused Erdoğan of attempting to steal MHP votes by using the MHP’s nationalist symbols in meetings called “Respect for the National Will” (a series of counter-rallies organized and conducted by the AKP). Bahçeli also accused Erdoğan of being a leader who avoids reconciliation, ignores citizens’ personal preferences, and is obstinate with society (Milliyet 2013b). In short, Bahçeli blamed Erdoğan for deepening the chaos and taking the crisis to another level (Sabah 2013).

As part of the polemic started in this way, Bahçeli showed an inflexible response opposing the use of ultra-nationalist MHP symbols in AKP meetings (in Erdoğan’s counter-rally meeting in Sincan, Ankara, for instance, the MHP’s unique symbols of the “three crescents” and the “grey wolf” were used
to support Erdoğan). In one of his press releases, Bahçeli said that “the symbols of MHP were used in a rascally way, unabashedly and dishonestly” (Hürriyet 2013b; translation by the authors). According to Bahçeli, Erdoğan had tried to pull MHP youth onto the streets and put them in the same frame with the marginal, illegal groups, and when he failed to do so, he resorted to having his supporters raise MHP flags in the crowds to enlarge his base against the protestors (Milliyet 2013c).

The Everyday Policy-Maker

The third stage in the MHP’s and Bahçeli’s attitude toward the Gezi events was based on trivializing the Gezi protests and pushing it behind MHP’s regular agenda, that is, the “Peace Process.” After a month’s silence over the Peace Process, the MHP was back to criticizing the negotiations between the Kurdish representatives and the Turkish state. In this stage Bahçeli’s anxious attitude with regard to the Gezi protests was replaced by a relaxed, derogatory position. Bahçeli emphasized again and again that the AKP and Erdoğan should be overthrown not with “the wind of Gezi Park but with the hurricane of bullet box” (Bugün 2013). He claimed that “the epilogue of the MHP would not be something similar to Taksim” but would be much heavier than it (Hürriyet 2013c).

As has been shown, the MHP’s political position regarding the Gezi events has not been stable or one-sided. In the first week of the protests, the party had a flashback to its unpleasant experiences with the streets in the 1970s and preferred to stay away from the protests. To justify this position, Bahçeli often pointed to the “uncertain” and “deep-dark” character of the Gezi protests. When the protests became widespread and deepened, the MHP kept its position outside the events while trying to get some advantages out of the protests against the AKP and Prime Minister Erdoğan. One of the typical sociological outcomes of massive demonstrations like the Gezi protests is the rise of the far right. Thus, any resurgence in the far right might attract the attention of the ruling AKP. The MHP and its leader, Bahçeli, felt the pressure of the probability of massive movements of their ultra-nationalist votes toward the AKP, thanks to Prime Minister Erdoğan’s strategically well designed nationalist moves, and adopted a defensive position. As the protests weakened toward the end of June, the MHP left this cautious position behind and began to bring forward its original political agenda, namely, the Kurdish question.

Conclusion

There is a global tendency to see collective movements as intrinsically leftist, and this is the case in Turkey as well. However, the fact that an inclusive
collective movement like the Gezi Park protests failed to attract the involvement of the MHP was not because the ultra-nationalists categorically reject any collective movement whatsoever. There have been many protests and collective movements in the past which were initiated and led by the ultra-nationalists in Turkey (Ağaoğulları 1987, 188).9

Herbert A. Deane, an American political philosopher known for his engagement with the Columbia University student protests in the 1960s, claims that collective protests ultimately give rise to rightist reactions (1998, 85).10 One might expect a similar “unintended consequence” for the Gezi Park protests of 2013. However, the polls conducted immediately after the protests did not prove this: there was almost no rise in the MHP’s votes due to the Gezi protests. One connotation of this is that the MHP has been embedded in the Kurdish question. The agenda in Turkish politics when the Gezi protests began was dominated by the peace negotiations between the Turkish state and the Kurdish representatives (i.e., between the ruling AKP and the two main representatives for the Kurdish side, the PKK and BDP). The MHP has always been critical of the AKP’s deliberative attitude toward the Kurdish question and has described the peace process as a “betrayal.” The Gezi protests showed that the MHP, as an ultra-nationalist party, relies heavily on the Kurdish question and will face difficulty in repositioning itself politically if the Kurdish question is solved.

Also, the Gezi protests revealed that the ruling AKP has a significant number of rightist-nationalist voters. That is why it has easily absorbed the nationalist reactions against the protests. In the counter-rallies run by the AKP after the protests, Prime Minister Erdoğan did not hesitate to embrace the symbols of the MHP. Those symbols indicated that the otherwise invisible nationalist tendency within the AKP was powerful enough to absorb the ultra-nationalist reaction to the protests. This suggests that the AKP’s “central right” position has been reinforced. With regard to the AKP’s relation to rightist voters, it had been argued that the AKP had borrowed a very important mass of rightist votes and that in the case of any political shocks those votes would return to their original place, namely, to the MHP. This argument has failed to pass the empirical test in the Gezi protests.

Although the MHP has a very rigid ideological line, it is hard to say that the party is based on a monolithic structure. A panoramic analysis allows one to say that the party is fractured between at least two sides: On the one hand, there is the urban, mainly coastal constituency, which is quite close to the CHP’s nationalist attitude. On the other hand, the MHP has a large base in rural areas, which we might call the inland constituency. These two sides, with different tones of nationalism, bring about different political attitudes and preferences. The MHP’s structure and the party’s relatively inactive position in the Gezi events has a lot to do with this. In terms of the type and tone of nationalism, the inland voters of the MHP
have a lot in common with the AKP’s nationalist voters, whereas the coastal MHP voters are, instead, of the same type as the CHP nationalists. The members of the former category, namely, the conservative-religious MHP voters, have much more weight in the total MHP constituency, and this has played a smoothing role in the determination of the official party position as a quiet, relatively non-responsive actor.

The Gezi protests emerged out of the blue and became an unpredictable subject in the political agenda of the country. Both political parties and their voters, as well as the media, lacked a panoramic understanding of the protests at the beginning of the events. This was another smoothing factor which helped the MHP with adopting “a legitimate distance” from the protests. The leader of the MHP, Devlet Bahçeli, repeatedly underlined the “dark face” of the protests, which would never have been the MHP’s choice, he insisted. There have been allusions in Bahçeli’s discourse to the “illegitimacy of the streets.” After all, Bahçeli is well known and in most occasions appreciated for his leadership, distinguished by his capability to keep the MHP’s youth constituency off the streets. Bahçeli’s political image as the powerful leader who kept the MHP youth off the streets was a product of the political atmosphere of the 1990s, when the country suffered from the most violence related to the Kurdish question. An important conclusion from the Gezi protests with regard to the MHP’s part is that the Gezi protests showed that the nationalist anger of the 1990s (raised by the violent aspect of the pro-Kurdish movement) has been successfully transformed into political fuel by the party.

Notes
1 In the summer of 2013, a series of demonstrations began in Istanbul (Turkey) in opposition to the local government’s remodelling of the well-known Gezi Park. The protests began in late May and spread throughout the country in early June, with nearly 2.5 million people participating, according to the estimations of the Ministry of the Interior (Radikal 2013). The protests faded by the end of summer, leaving six dead and thousands (including both police and protesters) injured. The events dominated the country’s agenda for weeks and were powerful enough to reshape the political composition in the country.
2 Known as the “grey wolf sign” (Bozkurt işaret in Turkish), this hand gesture is very similar in shape to the “sign of the horns” in the heavy metal subculture in Western countries, but the signs’ meanings have nothing in common. Several different versions of that picture were in circulation; a well-known one depicted a bunch of young people running from the police attack, with totally incompatible ideological signs coming together in a single frame: one was carrying a Turkish flag onto which was inscribed an image of Atatürk (the flag in this form refers to “Kemalist nationalists”), one was holding a flag of the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, or BDP) to represent the Kurds, and one was...
making the “grey wolf” hand gesture of the ultra-nationalist MHP.

3 The Nationalist Action Party, or Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP), is one of the opposition parties in Turkey’s Grand National Assembly today. Its history goes back to the 1940s, when a group of members of Parliament separated from the Republican People’s Party (CHP), the founding party of the republic and the single ruling party until the 1950s. MHP as we know it today was founded in 1969 by Alparslan Türkeş, a military officer who played a role in the coup d’état of 1960. The party is known for its strict Turkism, that is, ultra-nationalism. Türkeş died in 1997, and Devlet Bahçeli has led the party since then. It has received around 13 % of the votes in at least the last two general elections (14 % in 2007 and 13 % in 2011). Projections indicate that it will not have difficulty passing the national threshold of 10 % in the 2015 general elections.

4 In Turkish political memory, these symbols recall the bloody clashes between the rightists and leftists in the 1970s, which caused thousands of deaths and eventually led to a second coup d’etat in 1980.

5 Ülkücü literally means “idealíst” and refers specifically to MHP’s far-right nationalist youth supporters.

6 Polls showed that most of the protestors (around 40 %) had voted for the main opposition party, the CHP, in the past and that even more of them (around 65 %) would vote for that party in future elections. Around 30 % the protestors declared that they had never voted and would never vote for any party because they did not believe in parliamentary democracy and elections, and nearly 10 % of the protestors had voted for parties that remained below the 10 % threshold. (For varying findings from different poll institutions, see KONDA 2013; Metropol 2013; Genar n.d..)

7 The AKP organized a series of open-air meetings (on 15 June in Ankara, 16 June in Istanbul, 22 June in Samsun, and 23 June in Erzurum) to illustrate that the “people” were on the side of the ruling AKP. That was politically meaningful because both supporters and detractors of the Gezi protests often referred to the “people.” The supporters were referring to the “people” when they argued that the protests were a “folk movement.” The government as well as the detractors were referring to the “people” to say that the AKP administration was an elected government authorized by “the people” to act politically. In a sense, the narrative of the Gezi protests is embedded in a contrast of “the people’s fight against a heavy-handed and overbearing government” versus “an uprising of the privileged against a government that is representative of the people (i.e., commoners).” Hence, there have been two contending narratives of the events. Protestors cast their protest into the lexicon of a people’s uprising against the detached and overbearing rule of the AKP, whereas detractors framed the events as the basis in the ancien régime’s uneasiness with their lost privilege, while the people’s will and values were reflected in the country’s political structure and its emerging social contract.

8 “Peace Process” is a common term denoting the peace negotiations between the AKP on behalf of Turkish state and the BDP (including the PKK, the armed organization) on behalf of Kurdish policy-makers, a process which was announced in 2010.
On 4–5 May 1944, a youth protest movement was led by Alparslan Türkeş and his friends, and that is seen as the seed of the MHP.

Deane discusses General De Gaulle’s “victory” in France in the summer of 1968 and Ronald Reagan’s rise in America in their connection to collective street protests.

References


Instructions for Authors

Manuscripts

*The Arab World Geographer* invites the submission of manuscripts on any topic of geographical interest. All manuscripts submitted will be subject to independent review by referees, following the “double blind” system. Contributions should be sent in triplicate to AWG’s Editor-in-Chief at the Department of Geography and Planning, The University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325–5005, U.S.A. On the title page provide the full names of the authors, academic or other professional affiliations, and the complete address of the author with whom the editor should correspond.

It is understood that manuscripts and book reviews submitted to *The Arab World Geographer* have not been and will not be submitted simultaneously or published elsewhere, unless otherwise agreed. It is further understood that opinions expressed in *The Arab World Geographer* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, members of the International Advisory Board, and or the publisher. Any necessary rights or permissions to reproduce quoted material or illustrations published elsewhere remain the responsibility of the author(s). Manuscripts submitted to *The Arab World Geographer* should embody the results of sustained research into matters of interest to social scientists and geographers. Authors should note that they are writing for an international readership and they should therefore communicate in clear, straightforward English (Canadian spelling), avoiding whenever possible the extensive use of professional jargon.

The use of appropriate illustrations is encouraged.

All material submitted should be typed with lines double-spaced, have wide margins, and use one side of the paper. The manuscript’s several parts (abstract, list of references, tables, and list of figure captions) should begin on separate sheets, and all parts should be typed and double-spaced. Tables should be prepared with a minimum of rules, following the format of tables in existing issues of the journal. The total length of a manuscript, including references, should not exceed 7000 words. The journal will consider longer manuscripts (to 9,500 words) exploring critically informed theoretical issues of importance to an international readership. Each article should be accompanied by a 200-word abstract in English.

References

References should be indicated in the text by the surname of the author(s) with the year of publication, as shown below. References to more than one publication by the same author in the same year should be distinguished alphabetically with a, b, c, etc. The abbreviated author and the date references should be placed in parentheses unless the name forms part of the text, in which case, only the year should appear in parentheses. The relevant page(s) may be given if necessary. Examples:

(McColl 1995a); (Dewar and Watson 1990, 12–13); As Rana (1994, 17) remarks,...

At the end of the main text, the references should be listed in alphabetical order by author’s last name and in ascending chronological order for each author. Only cited references should be listed. Full reference details should be given, including all authors, titles, publisher, and city of publication. For unpublished material, details of availability should be supplied. Examples of references are given below. Authors should follow this format in the preparation of their typescripts.


London: Routledge.