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VECTORS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: WHAT REMAINS OF THE STRATEGY FOR 2023?

ABSTRACT

The article examines the probability of achieving the self-imposed criteria for Turkey to become a macro-regional power by 2023. The author analyses components of variables in Davutoğlu's equation of power and the results of the "zero problems with neighbours" policy as an essential prerequisite for Turkey becoming one of the poles of power at the global level. Presenting the state of progress in military industries, in the development of technological infrastructure and in the economy, the author assesses the limited progress and failure to materialise the country's expected goals. After years of progress in various fields, the leading AKP party is now troubled by conflicts inside and outside the country. The author concludes that Turkey will not be able to realise its 2023 strategy due to combination of failures in internal, foreign and economic policies.

Key words: Turkey, AKP, Turkish vision 2023, economy, Kurds.

Turkish cities under curfew in August and in September 2015, with the parallel burning and attacks on offices across the country of the pro-Kurdish liberal HDP party—are these signs of an end to the previous political, economic and cultural growth of this country? Or those are Cizre and the Sur district of Diyarbakir, with heavy fighting and death tolls in hundreds on both sides in less than two

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months? Maybe it is only a sad, but temporary episode, a challenge in the period of regaining strength for a new rise of Turkey on the basis of its historical and geographical depth? Is Turkish downing of the Russian military jet and the resulting economic war with Russia a policy of the new regional assertive power?

In 2001 the author of the new Turkish strategy in foreign affairs, Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, published his analysis of Turkish and Ottoman history, looking at the situation in the world and in international relations and security in particular. He assessed that there were historical and geographical depths that characterized Turkey and were the structural and permanent bases of its power. In reaching this assessment, Davutoğlu relied on the classical geopolitical thought of Karl Haushofer, Nicholas Spykman, Halford Mackinder and other representatives of classical geopolitics. He also borrowed some understandings of international relations and the role of states from the realist theories of international relations. At times in the book he adopted the language of an organic understanding of the nation, which was reminiscent also of Johan Rudolf Kjellén's theories of organic state, its expansion and vital space. Davutoğlu presented his recipe for gaining regional and eventually global power status for Turkey in the 21st century, and developed a formula of power for countries. Excluding the stable elements, the potentialities in the formula are: a) Economic capacity; b) Technological infrastructure; and c) Military capacity.² Aside from this formula, Davutoğlu argued that in order to achieve the status of a regional power, Turkey should manage to arrange a zero problem policy with her neighbours.

Mr. Davutoğlu later became councillor for foreign affairs of the Turkish Prime Minister, then Minister of Foreign Affairs and eventually Prime Minister of the Turkish government. The basic prescriptions in his book have become the central tenets of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and official Turkish policy in international relations (political and economic). That is why analysing Turkey's position in its near abroad from the standpoints of this author is a good starting point in assessing the achievements of that policy.

As history and geography are mostly immutable factors in the formula of power, according to Davutoğlu, and we may subscribe to this assertion, we need to study the variables of power and prerequisites for Turkey's achieving power status, as designed by its foreign policy architect. These variables are internal. Furthermore, these internal variables are influenced by political stability.

Therefore, this paper will present an analysis of the Turkish zero problems with neighbours policy (foreign affairs) and development of its 'potentialities' (internal affairs) in order to make a judgment on the probability of achievement of Turkey's main foreign policy objective—becoming a macro regional and global power.

² Ahmet Davutoglu, *Strategijska dubina*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2014, str. 43.

AIMS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

While Foreign Minister, Mr. Davutoğlu used several occasions to present the Turkish strategy of development until the year 2023—the centenary of the Turkish Republic. Its vision is truly impressive; it lists a vast number of goals to achieve in different areas, from pharmaceuticals to tourism, to the armaments industry. One of the occasions for its presentation was the Turkey Investor Conference: The road to 2023, organized by Goldman Sachs in London. The delivered speech was entitled “Vision 2023: Turkey’s Foreign Policy Objectives.” The main points outlined were: 1) “to make Turkey in one of the first ten country big economic powers in 2023”; 2) to participate in the reform of the United Nations (“We think that in the UN there should be a much more participatory political order, much more justice oriented and economic order and a much more inclusive cultural order”); and 3) “reintegration with neighbours” on the basis of common security and cultural backgrounds.³

What was particularly interesting and indicative of the results was the explanation given of the vision for the Middle East, which follows the logic that Davutoğlu used to describe the wishful future reorder also of the Balkans and of the Caucasus: “Which type of Middle East do you want? We want a Middle East without tension, without crisis, with democracy, freedom of economy and a spirit of integration rather than having Chinese walls between countries. We want to have one integrated region based on political dialog, based on a common understanding of common security, multiculturalism, and a multi-religious character of the societies. This is our vision for the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. We want to achieve this in the next 10–12 years. We hope that these objectives, this strategic belt of stability, prosperity and security, will be established around Turkey.”

This will to transform Turkey and to augment the significantly Turkey’s role in the neighbouring regions (the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East) and even globally, is contingent on the propositions that the world order is shifting toward multipolarity; that the Turkish economy is growing; and that with the fall of the Eastern communist bloc, Turkey has free hands, since it is no more essentially a holder of the south-eastern front of the West. Moreover, it rests on an understanding that a volatility of international relations with new Islamic states having common political, cultural and religious history (in the Balkans and in the Middle East) leaves

³ “Vision 2023: Turkey’s Foreign Policy Objectives”, speech delivered by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey at “Turkey Investor Conference: The Road to 2023”, Goldman Sachs, London, 22 November 2011, www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled-_vision-2023_-turkey_s-foreign-policy-objectives__-delivered-by-h_e_-ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa, 19/11/2015.

space for Turkey to enhance its political influence using its common ethnic heritage (Turkic peoples in the Caucasus and in Central Asia). With these, Ankara may become the central, pivotal area of these three macro-regions.

This policy was analysed by many foreign and Turkish authors. Şaban Kardaş, a Turkish scholar close to the ruling AKP government, writes that “(I)t has been challenging to define Turkey’s foreign policy activism of late properly. Turkey has embarked on an ambitious regional agenda in the last decade, which in many ways extends on its earlier policies in the surrounding regions in the early post-Cold War era. This recent wave, however, has been accompanied by Turkey’s equally ambitious global agenda (...)”.⁴

In order to look at the feasibility of achieving such results, the following sections will look at three potentialities in Mr. Davutoğlu’s formula of power, emphasizing the most obvious gaps between aims and trends, and will briefly analyse the situation in the mentioned regions. Finally, the article will consider the position of Turkey in its neighbourhood.

POTENTIALITIES

Our country has the potential to be one of the greatest powers of its region and the world. We will continue to advance toward our 2023 targets and build Turkey’s future hand in hand with our nation.⁵

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Military

Turkey’s military is big—more than half a million between soldiers and gendarmerie—it is the second largest in NATO and according to *Globalfirepower.com* one of the top militaries in the world. Turkey has modernised its defence industry, and reduced its dependence on foreign products. In less than 15 years, Turkey scaled its dependency ratio from around 80% to 40–46% in 2014 (depending on source).⁶ Turkish President Erdoğan announced an ambitious plan to achieve full auto sufficiency in

⁴ Saban Kardas, “Turkey: A Regional Power Facing a Changing International System”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2013, p. 637.

⁵ “Turkey: A landmark decade Vision 2023”, *Foreign Affairs* – sponsored section, September–October 2013.

⁶ According to *Jane Defence*, Turkey satisfied 60% of its military equipment supplies in 2014, as country of final assembly. See: “IDEF 2015: Turkey aims for defence industrial independence by 2023”, *IHS Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 6 May 2015, www.janes.com/article/51225/idef-2015-turkey-aims-for-defence-industrial-independence-by-2023, 16/10/2015.

defence production and growth of defence exports to USD 25 billion.⁷ The timeframe for achieving full autonomy in armament production is 2023, the same year that Turkey should, according to the plan, become a macro regional power. In terms of armament production, big hopes have been placed in the development of the first Turkish tank the Altay, being developed by Otokar and other Turkish defence industry companies.⁸

As Turkey is developing its own armaments production it has also started to export its own products. The value of Turkish arms sales was worth USD 634 million in 2010, but its defence and aerospace exports have risen by 17.7% since then, reaching USD 1.4 billion in 2013 and 1.648 billion in 2014.⁹ This growth decreased significantly, however in the first quarter of 2015, with defence exports in that period being valued at USD 461 million, only a 1.36% increase.¹⁰

As regards the future development of the Turkish armed forces, indications can be found in the army's 2033 vision, or the "TAF's 2033 Plans", which the Chief of Staff presented to the Prime Minister in November 2014. This document is not public yet, but what appeared in local media is that the plan relies on achieving better effectiveness and on augmenting the special forces, which means a partial professionalization of the army. At the same time, though, Turkey seems ready to maintain its large conscript army able to deter foreign aggression, and also to be prepared to engage in wars with big armies, such as those of neighbouring Greece, Russia and Iran.

Technological infrastructure

"The Vision 2023 Project has been initiated to overcome the major problems of science, technology and innovation policy making and their implementation in Turkey."¹¹

⁷ Onur Kanan, "President Erdoğan: Turkey aims to use no external resources for defense systems", *Daily Sabah*, 5 May 2015, www.dailysabah.com/money/2015/05/05/president-erdogan-turkey-aims-to-use-no-external-resources-for-defense-systems, 16/10/2015.

⁸ Burak Ege Bedil, "Turkish Firm To Produce Tank Engine", *Defense News*, 24 March 2015, www.defensenews.com/story/defense/land/vehicles/2015/03/24/turkey-tumosan-altay-tank-engine/70373916/29/09/2015; "IDEF 2015: Turkey aims for defence industrial independence by 2023", op. cit.

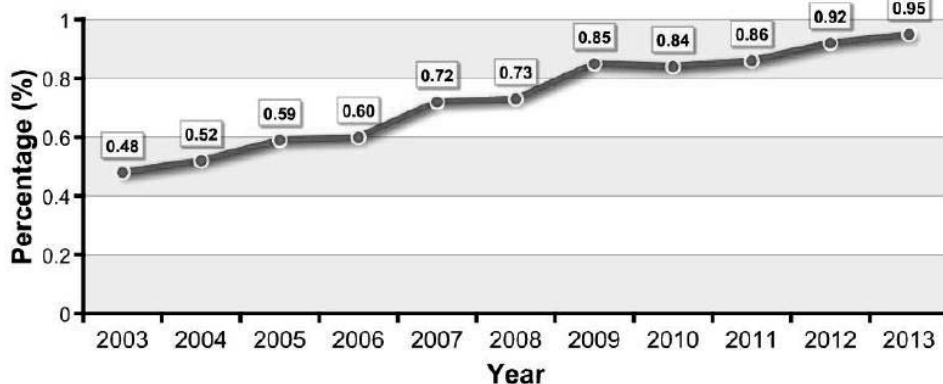
⁹ "Turkey Domestic Arms Industry", *GlobalSecurity.org*, www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/tu-industry.htm, 22/09/2015.

¹⁰ Jerin Mathew, "Turkey targets international partners to boost defence exports to \$25bn by 2023", *International Business Times*, 20 July 2015, www.ibtimes.co.uk/turkey-targets-international-partners-boost-defence-exports-25bn-by-2023-1511656, 16/10/2015.

¹¹ "Private Sector Interaction in the Decision Making Processes of Public Research Policies Country Profile: Turkey", http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/psi_countryprofile_turkey.pdf, 08/11/2015.

Accordingly, another objective for the year 2023. Development of the defence industry is itself evidence of such technological advancement. Indeed, Turkey is augmenting its gross domestic expenditures on research and development (GERD). From 2003 to 2013 such expenditures have almost doubled as a percentage of GDP (see Graph 1), from 0.43 to 0.95. In this country, the number of full-time equivalent researchers has grown “three-fold since 2002 from a very low human resource base.”¹² Its participation in the overall research and development sector of OECD countries remains very low (1.1% of total OECD PPP), but it is growing. In terms of public investment in technological advancement, Turkey is behind the average for OECD countries (0.43% of GERD was publicly financed in 2011 compared to 0.77% as the average for OECD countries).¹³

Graph 1: GERD as a percentage of Turkey's GDP



Source: TurkStat

Even though Turkey lags significantly behind most OECD countries in Research and Development, mostly in information and communication technologies, this number is growing. Average GERD in OECD in 2012 was 2.4 and in Turkey it was 0.92%.¹⁴ This is still an enormous success if we look at the situation from 15 years ago. Even if Turkey misses some or even most of the highly aimed 2023 objectives, such as “Becoming one of the top 10 countries in e-transformation”, still it will be on the path of fulfilling the criteria of significant important technology development, as is seen in the plan’s section on the military.¹⁵

¹² *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Outlook 2014*, OECD, Paris, 2014, p. 438.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 436.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ “ICT”, *Invest in Turkey*, www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/sectors/Pages/ICT.aspx, 01/10/2015.

Between technology and economy stands the issue of nuclear energy. Turkey has for years longed to build a nuclear power plant. Construction of such a project was finally agreed upon in 2010, when a joint project was established stipulating that the Russian state nuclear energy corporation, Rosatom, would finish the job. Still, due to different national policies toward Syria, this cooperation may be harmed, similar to the situation with the Turkish Stream gas pipeline project. After the South Stream gas pipeline project was cancelled, Russia and Turkey announced plans for the Turkish Stream. Due to a series of politically motivated obstacles, Russia decided to build the Nord Stream phase II, and easily reached agreement with Germany on it. Essentially, Nord Stream is a project that will “double existing Baltic pipeline’s capacity... led by Gazprom, which has put the cost of the plan at up to 9.9 billion Euros (USD 11 billion) and maybe less due to savings, the group is to build a third and fourth pipeline to transport up to 55 billion additional cubic meters of gas a year.”¹⁶ However, as Russian and German companies signed the Agreement, and Turkey and Russia continued to have a political diatribe over Syria, Moscow decided to almost halve “the planned capacity of its TurkStream gas pipeline project to 32 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year from an original capacity of 63 bcm (...).”¹⁷ In a clear sign of bilaterally worsening situation, the decision was taken by Gazprom on October 9th not to provide an additional 3 billion cubic meters of gas to Turkey.¹⁸ This implies a temporary setback for the Turkish economy in terms of energy sources.

Economy

In January 2013, a reporter for CNBC wrote the headline: “Can Turkey Become ‘the China of Europe?’”¹⁹ The article was on Turkey’s economic potential—the third potentiality in Mr Davutoğlu’s formula. Yet, this variable is the weakest.

Turkey’s foreign trade has been steadily growing, from USD 20 billion a year in 1985 to USD 400 billion in 2014. But for the past 44 years (since 1971), Turkey has

¹⁶ “UPDATE 2-Gazprom, European partners sign Nord Stream-2 deal”, *Reuters*, 4 September 2015, www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/04/russia-forum-nord-stream-idUSL5N11A0G420150904_07/10/2015.

¹⁷ “Russia’s Gazprom to halve TurkStream pipeline capacity”, *Today’s Zaman*, 6 October 2015, www.todayszaman.com/business_russias-gazprom-to-halve-turkstream-pipeline-capacity_400769.html, 07/10/2015.

¹⁸ “Gazprom turns down Turkey’s request for 3 bcm of gas via Blue Stream”, *Today’s Zaman*, 9 October 2015, www.todayszaman.com/latest-news_gazprom-turns-down-turkeys-request-for-3-bcm-of-gas-via-blue-stream_401060.html, 09/10/2015.

¹⁹ Holly Ellyatt, “Can Turkey Become ‘the China of Europe?’”, *CNBC*, 18 January 2013, www.cnbc.com/id/100390252, 04/03/2015.

never reached a positive balance of trade. At this time, the country's foreign debt has been constantly growing and it is being partially paid for with the growth of the GDP.²⁰ In order to pay the debt, Turkey, under the AKP rule, started an extensive program of privatization, reaching its climax with the selling of agricultural terrain to foreign companies and considering even the privatization of lakes.

One of the outcomes of the constant deficit... is growing foreign debt. That is why it was a success when, in April 2013, Turkey repaid the last tranche of credit to the IMF. When Erdogan became Prime Minister, Turkey had USD 23.5 billion of debt to the IMF.²¹ Even though in the period from 2002 to 2012 complete public foreign debt proportionally dropped from 78% to around 36% of Turkish GDP,²² (or 27.8% according to the IMF),²³ it actually grew. Namely, the GDP of Turkey was USD 182.8 billion in 2002 and ten years later it was USD 794.4 billion.²⁴ This is not all. Because of massive privatizations of public companies (for example, the public electric grid network was sold in March 2013),²⁵ public debt was proportionally diminishing but the private foreign debt kept rising. In fact, both private and public debt were rising, although proportionally, due to the rapid rise in GDP, and the total external debt of Turkey fell from 56.2% of GDP (in 2002) to 37.9% of GDP in 2008.

After 2008 and the world economic crisis, the proportion of debt in Turkey started to grow again and reached 52.5% of GDP in the second quarter of 2015 (see Table 1). In the meantime, the public sector share in external debt fell from 67% in 2002 to 33%.²⁶ The latest wave of privatization hit the Turkish markets in the summer of 2015. A total of 29 hydroelectric and gas-turbine powered power plants of the Turkish Electricity Generation Corporation (EÜAŞ), and Turkey's state-run oil company TPAO's oil distribution unit, TP Petrol Dağıtım, were put under a

²⁰ "Turkey Balance of Trade", www.tradingeconomics.com.

²¹ "PM Erdoğan dishes up IMF criticism", *Sabah*, 11 May 2013, <http://english.sabah.com.tr/economy/2013/05/11/pm-erdogan-dishes-up-imf-criticism>, 05/12/2015.

²² "Erdogan's IMF Triumph Masks Surge in Private Debt: Turkey Credit", *Bloomberg*, 14 May 2013, www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-05-13/erdogan-s-imf-triumph-masks-surge-in-private-debt-turkey-credit.html, 20/11/2015.

²³ "World Economic Outlook", International Monetary Fund, April 2013.

²⁴ Slobodan Janković, "Turkish Policy in the Middle East", in: Miša Đurković and Aleksandar Raković (eds), *Turkey regional power?*, Institute for European Studies, Belgrade, 2013, pp. 137–158.

²⁵ "Turkish government rakes in \$3.5 bln in power grid tenders", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 15 March 2013.

²⁶ See data in table in: Öznur Keleş, "An assessment of Turkish external debt", *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, 6 April 2015, www.turkishweekly.net/, 08/04/2015.

privatisation program, according to a written statement published in the Official Gazette on June 24.

Table 1: Gross External Debt of Turkey²⁷

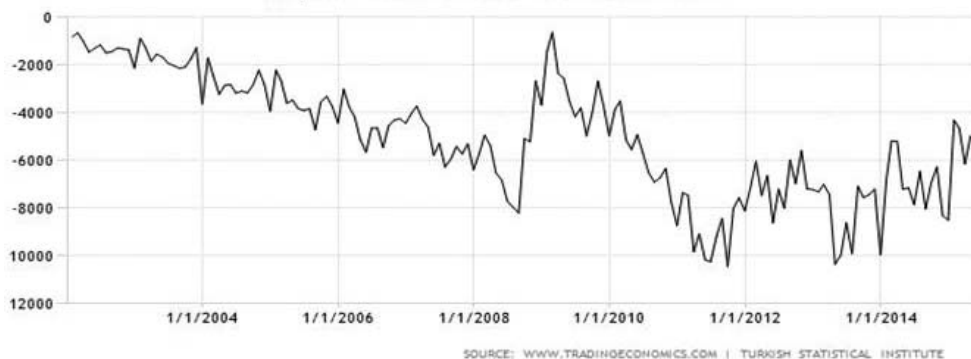
	Gross external debt total (in USD million)	Gross external debt to GDP (%)
2002	129.596	56,2
2003	144.161	47,3
2006	208.108	39,5
2008	280.957	37,9
2009	268.963	43,6
2010	292.057	39,9
2011	303.931	39,3
2012	339.042	43,01
2013	389.146	47,3
2014	402.720	50,4
2015 Q2	405.223	52,5
2015 Q3	405.985	50,8

Money acquired from privatisation was used to cover public debt, but this did not solve the problem of trade imbalance and only transferred part of the burden to the private sector. Having an essentially fragile economy, Turkey remains as an air jet willing to perform acrobatic figures in the air, but lacking octane.

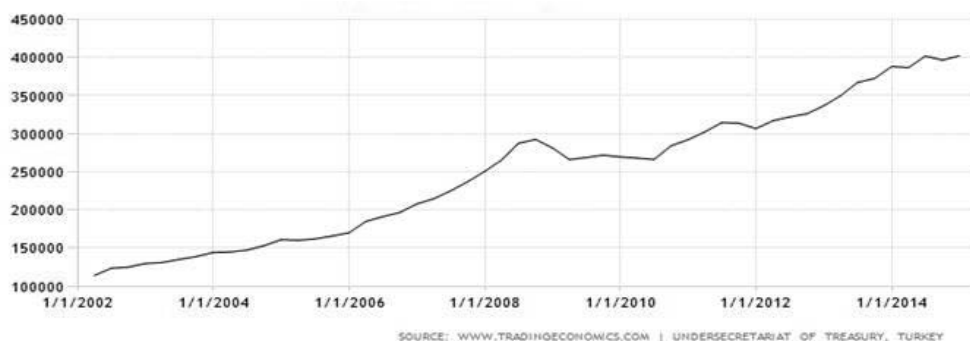
The negative results of trade and rising debt are observable in Graph 2 and 3:

²⁷ “Gross External Debt Stock of Turkey”, The Undersecretariat of Treasury, General Directorate of Public Finance, Republic of Turkey, www.treasury.gov.tr/, 10/10/2015.

Graph 2: Balance of trade (2002–2015)



Graph 3: External debt of Turkey



Even tourism was hit hard as a result of the economic sanctions on Russia, with the migrant crisis and with revamped terrorist activity on Turkish soil.²⁸

Due to all the aforementioned setbacks in the economy, Turkey dropped one place on the list of the largest economies in the world according to nominal GDP size (from 17th to 18th place). What used to be an impressive economic growth of 6.8% in the period between 2002 and 2007, changed significantly to 3.2% per year between 2008 and 2014. Proportionally main growing market for Turkish products—Middle East and North Africa—collapsed after the Arab Spring. “Turkey’s trade with the region, for instance, fell to USD 55.8 billion in 2014 from USD 64 billion in

²⁸ “Number of Tourists in Turkey Drastically Dropped in 2015”, *CBW*, 18 September 2015, <http://cbw.ge/economy/number-of-tourists-in-turkey-drastically-dropped-in-2015/>, 01/10/2015.

2012. According to the figures from January–November 2015, Turkey’s imports from the region declined by 34%, while its exports declined by 10%.”²⁹

Growing number of Syrian refugees in Turkey further burdened Turkish economy, but later gave her also leverage in the relations with the EU. Turkey uses this position even to blackmail European Union.³⁰

Political stability

For the purpose of this study, it is enough to observe that AKP leadership, initially allied with Hizmet (the Gulen movement) and with the foreign backing of the EU, managed to reform the country’s civil-military relations and establish control of civil institutions over the army. Before reaching this result the AKP was under threat of court ban. After the victory over the army as a political factor, Turkey initiated an unprecedented expansion of its soft power and overall influence in the Middle East, the Balkans and in the Caucasus. But as it conflicted with U.S. interests in Iraq, and with Israel, the Turkish government also faced internal opposition from its ally in cultural politics, namely from the Gulen movement.³¹

First two attacks by the so called Islamic State were perpetrated on the Turkish soil, first against the Kurds marching in Ankara, and second against tourists in Istanbul.³² Thus the conflict in Syria had direct consequences on the security situation in Turkey.

After the elections in 2015, the AKP also faced parliamentary opposition by the country’s largest ethnic minority. Hence, the Kurdish card, after many years, became again a factor of significant internal instability and divisions. Initial political opposition was transformed in the summer of 2015 in the open armed conflict with the PKK in cities and villages of the south-eastern Turkey since July. Death toll at the end of January 2016 reached few thousands between the Turkish armed forces,

²⁹ Mustafa Kutlay, “Europe’s Increasing Importance For Turkey – Analysis”, *Eurasia Review*, 6 February 2016, www.eurasiareview.com/06022016-europes-increasing-importance-for-turkey-analysis/, 08/02/2016.

³⁰ How Turkey blackmails EU is evident in: Angeliki Papamiltiadou, “Thick game on the back of Greece”, www.euro2day.gr/news/economy/article/1397081/hontro-paihni-di-sth-plath-ths-elladas.html, 09/02/2016.

³¹ In Serbia Miša Đurković noticed initial conflicting interests of Hizmet and AKP which evolved in open conflict in 2014. See: Miša Đurković, “Fetulah Gjulen i Džemat Hizmet”, in: Miša Đurković and Aleksandar Raković (eds), *Turkey regional power?*, op. cit., pp. 63–82.

³² “Turkish soldiers attacked by DAESH near Syrian border” *TRT World*, 3 February 2016, www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkish-soldiers-attacked-by-daesh-near-syrian-border-39951, 09/02/2016.

PKK militants and civilians.³³ In order to retaliate for the dead foreign tourists and for the attack on the Turkish military camp in Iraq, Turkey allegedly opened fire on Daesh positions in mid-January 2016.

If the economy and, in certain measure, technology, are lagging, the internal political situation, despite the parliamentary majority of AKP is for the moment significantly destabilised, at least in the south-east. What about foreign politics results in the neighbourhood, the final factor essential for power politics?

A MESS WITH THE NEIGHBOURS

Prior to the Arab Spring, Turkey's policy of zero problems with neighbours was flourishing. Turkey was reinforcing its diplomatic presence also in the cultural field as it had started to promote its culture and history by making TV fictions. Turkey and Turkish private organisations developed a system of faculties, around the region. Then partner of Erdogan, the Hizmet group, chaired by Fethullah Gülen, sponsored such events as the International Turkish Language Olympiads each year between 2003 and 2013. In 2014, the finals of this particular Olympiad were held around the world as Gulen's movement opposed the politics of the government and vice versa. Turkey was building Shamgen, the visa-free zone with Syria, Iraq and Iran.³⁴ Shamgen followed Turkey's introduction of several visa free regimes, among others with Syria in September 2009.³⁵ In the same year Turkey started a rapprochement with Armenia. This was the outcome of the careful policy of improving relations with countries in the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus.

Still, problematic speeches and initiatives, like that of 2011, when Ankara offered to mediate in the conflict between two Islamic communities in Serbia by proposing their subservience to the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), and many more on Kosovo and the supposed golden times of Ottoman occupation in the Balkans and in the Middle East, among others, caused different diplomatic sparks with neighbours and other countries of the three named regions.

³³ There are various figures, all of which are difficult to confirm at present. For example: "Death toll rises among Kurds trapped in Cizre basement amid heavy fighting", *Deutsche Welle*, 29 January 2016, www.dw.com/en/death-toll-rises-among-kurds-trapped-in-cizre-basement-amid-heavy-fighting/a-19012447, 02/02/2016.

³⁴ "'Shamgen', bright future for united Asia", *Press TV*, 8 March 2011, <http://previous.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=168894§ionid=3510303>, 08/08/2015.

³⁵ "Turkey, Syria sign strategic deal, lift visa", www.todayszaman.com/latest-news_turkey-syria-sign-strategic-deal-lift-visa_187372.html, 05/10/2015.

In 2011, as the AKP won again the elections and the Arab Spring was in full swing, Turkey's policy of zero problems started to crumble. Suddenly Turkey was against the Libyan leader, and against the president of Syria. Turkish President Erdogan was hailing the Islamist movements in North Africa and in Syria.³⁶ After the military coup in Egypt, Turkey suddenly had bad relations with the most important Arab country.

EU integration lost its appeal and AKP leaders started to rely publicly more and more on the Ottoman heritage and relations with 'brothers and sisters' in Gaza, Sarajevo, Baku and elsewhere.³⁷

Today this policy is in tatters. What is left is Turkish support for some military groups in neighbouring Syria, fighting against the armed forces of President Bashar el Assad. Turkey reached a preliminary agreement with the USA to intervene military in Northern Syria at the end of July 2015, and free use of the Incirlik military airport for U.S. Air Force.³⁸ After one week, Russia announced its military presence in Syria, thus preventing the fall of the current regime, and started to bomb terrorist groups and rebels in Syria, pre-empting also the creation of the so called humanitarian corridor or the safe zone in Northern Syria.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Turkey had four military coups in its history (1960, 1971, 1980, 1997). The Army, a guardian of the legacy of the Kemal Ataturk, along with the Justice system may have planned the fifth coup in 2008, this time against the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP). The AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan were on the verge of being banished from politics, but with the little help from the Brussels, who was protesting against such a move asking for the civil control over the army, Erdogan Davutoglu, Babacan and others stayed in power. After more than 13 years of parliamentary majority, a politics that started as pro-American, pro-EU moderated Islamic party, transformed Turkey into a country where the leading party made a coup against the army, against judges, journalists and academia. What was announced as different, more efficient policy aimed at

³⁶ For more details see: Slobodan Janković, "Turkish Policy in the Middle East", op. cit.

³⁷ Slobodan Janković, "Turkish Policy in the Middle East", op. cit; "Turkish Foreign Policy in the AKP's Third Term", *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, No. 189, September 2011, www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm_189.pdf, 22/10/2015, p. 1.

³⁸ Anne Barnard and Gordon Schmitt, "Turkey and U.S. Plan to Create Syria 'Safe Zone' Free of ISIS", *New York Times*, 27 July 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/07/28/world/middleeast/turkey-and-us-agree-on-plan-to-clear-isis-from-strip-of-northern-syria.html?_r=1, 08/09/2015.

zero problems with neighbours, reignited the military clash with the Kurds and made the situation where Turkey is in the problem with almost all of its neighbours (excluding Azerbaijan and Georgia). This politics brought more votes to AKP than ever in November 2015, but the results in foreign policy and in the economy are not as promising.

Three years after the announcement of the Vision 2023 strategy for the overall development and expansion of Turkey in economy, technology, military and foreign affairs, the results are not promising. The AKP leadership that tried to promote Turkey's qualitative leap on the global scene was adapting its wishes to the system of understanding Turkish politics and Turkey's role in the international order according to the research of Professor, now Prime Minister, Davutoğlu, at least in terms of the country's foreign affairs. This plan was meant to augment the military, technological and economic potentialities in Prof. Davutoğlu's formula of power in international relations, while securing internal development, stability and zero problems with countries in the neighbouring regions.

Regarding the neighbour policy, the reality is dim. If during the first years of AKP rule, the pro-Islamist party had large support among Kurds in Turkey despite intervening in Iraq, after the war erupted in Syria, Kurdish aspirations for autonomy went even further; creating an informal state in Northern Iraq but also appearing as a de facto situation in northern Syria. Kurdish militia obtained control over important parts of the Syrian border region with Turkey. Kurds in Turkey have become increasingly alienated, and have begun supporting the moderate Kurdish political party, or the HDP, which is highly critical of the current government. Hence, foreign growth of Kurdish strength is paralleled with rising internal political division along ethnic lines.

Turkey's rise of power in the Middle East and in other regions has not only been contained but has declined due to heavy involvement by the great world powers in the same parts of the globe.

The USA, despite having some differences with Israel, still considers the Jewish state as its main strategic ally in the Middle East and acts accordingly. It is vitally interested in controlling the political processes in the Balkans, although no longer through its proxy partner—Turkey.

Russia pre-empted a Turkish incursion into Syria and returned to the Middle East as a power broker. Thus, the danger of the creation of a Kurdish state along Turkish borders and an invigorated Russia are isolating Turkey from the Middle East.

In the Balkans, what is left of Turkish expansion is as before—good relations with Muslim communities in Albania, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, partly in Serbia and in Bulgaria and nothing more. The USA, Germany and even Russia are major actors in the peninsula.

The situation in the Caucasus has gone back to old schemes, as antagonistic relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia are again renewed and Russia is stronger than it has been in the recent past. Russia also holds South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The military is still the strongest part of Turkey's power equation, while the technology is still lagging compared to that of highly developed countries. The economy is the weakest part. It is fragile due to unreliable sources of wealth and because of growing foreign debt, which impedes its general positive results in the power formula. All in all, the vision of Turkey's macro regional and global grandeur is crumbling amid internal sectarian clashes in Turkish cities.

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**PRAVCI TURSKE SPOLJNE POLITIKE:
ŠTA JE OSTALO OD STRATEGIJE ZA 2023. GODINU?**

APSTRAKT

Predmet članka je razmatranje mogućnosti ispunjenja kriterijuma koje je Turska sebi postavila kako bi postala makro-regionalna sila do 2023. godine. Autor analizira varijabilne delove Davutogluove jednačine moći i rezultate „politike nula problema sa susedima” kao ključnih preduslova za postizanje položaja Turske kao jednog od polova moći. Predstavljanje stanja razvoja vojne industrije, razvoja tehnološke infrastrukture i privrede omogućuje autoru da utvrdi ograničenost napretka i propast ostvarenja željenih ciljeva. Nakon godina uspeha u različitim oblastima vodeća AKP partija danas je suočena sa unutrašnjim i spoljnim sukobima. Autor zaključuje da Turska neće uspeti da ostvari deklarirane strateške ciljeve spoljne politike sadržane u *Viziji za 2023. godinu* zbog niza neuspeha u unutrašnjoj, spoljnoj i ekonomskoj politici.

Ključne reči: Turska, AKP, Turska vizija 2023, privreda, Kurdi.