

# Chapter 2

## From Chaos to Cosmos: Strategic Depth and Turkish Foreign Policy in Syria

Hüseyin Bağcı and Şuay Nilhan Açıkalm

**Abstract** Wars and conflicts have been a key determinant of international system dynamics. The end of the Cold War was especially noteworthy as a new era for all actors in terms of policy making and international dynamics. Then 9/11 completely changed perception of war and American unilateralism triumph shaped the system based on security. As former President Bush said “a new era has started”, in this new order Turkey became more vital for US in its war on terrorism. Although Turkey has never been considered as great power, due its geographical position and historical legacy Turkey is a unique partner. That’s why Turkey’s foreign policy has been influenced and is also influential. That’s why war, peace or any social events in real life should be considered and reanalyzed by nonlinearity and chaos theory. Balance of power and keeping the status quo have been the determinant elements of Turkish foreign policy for the last 50 years.

**Keywords** Chaos Theory · Cosmos · Strategic depth · Foreign policy · Syria · Turkey

### Abbreviations

MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
TFP	Turkish Foreign Policy
AK Party	Justice and Development Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
SNC	Syrian National Council
NCC	National Coordination Council

---

H. Bağcı (✉) · Ş.N. Açıkalm  
International Relations Department, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey  
e-mail: bagci@metu.edu.tr

Ş.N. Açıkalm  
e-mail: suaynilhan@gmail.com

## 2.1 Introduction

In 2002, AK Party government came to power with a multidimensional and active foreign policy as their key vision. AK Party government took over a politically and economically unstable country that's why in the first years of AK Party period, TFP was not as active as they assumed. Ahmet Davutoğlu can be considered as an architect of the new Turkish foreign policy under AK Party period. Until he became MFA he worked as an advisor to the Prime Minister Erdoğan, then Davutoğlu was appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009. He is academician who worked in different universities in both Turkey and foreign countries.

His book "Strategic Depth" can be considered as a summary of vision of new Turkish foreign policy. Most of the scholars claim that Ahmet Davutoğlu and his political paradigms would have been completely new and fresh in Turkish foreign policy. On the other hand, through the years, Turkish foreign policy has been criticized on the basis of "shifting" or unreal policies. When the Arab Spring started, especially on the advent of the Syrian crisis, criticism was unleashed on Turkish foreign policy. By the time this article was written at the beginning of January 2014, Syria was being considered the vicious circle of Turkey in foreign policy. In light of this, this paper aims at analyzing Turkey's foreign policy in Syria as a chaotic environment based on Strategic Depth. There will be three main parts which are key tenets of Strategic Depth; characteristics of Syrian crisis based on chaos theory, Turkey's foreign policy during crisis, and in epilogue, there will be an evaluation of Turkish foreign policy under strategic depth and the Syria case.

## 2.2 The Main Tenets of Strategic Depth

### 2.2.1 *Chaos to Cosmos*

Strategic Depth by Ahmet Davutoğlu was first published in 2001 and in Turkey only it has been published 42 times. His book Strategic depth is an asset of his foreign policy paradigms for Turkey. It is kind of theoretical background for the new Turkish Foreign Policy. He expounded on his book in a conference at the Oxford University thus: "It is a re-interpretation of Turkey's history and geography in accordance with the new international context". The main purpose of this book is to suggest and prescribe methods of how to achieve the new Turkish Foreign Policy. "The significance of the book stems from its prescriptive nature and its introduction of the concept of Strategic Depth as a factor that should characterize the Turkish foreign policy" (Kirişçi 2009). Especially after he became Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009, Strategic Depth has been the main reference book on new Turkish foreign policy. The main idea of the book is composed of geostrategic position and historical depth which show value and credibility of any state in the international system. For this chapter, beginning of the book has been main reference of analysis. He categorizes the

societies within the dynamic international system. Davutoğlu claims that there are three types of behaviors of societies which are in the process of evolving.

The first type of societies is those which adopt a static behavior, these countries prefer to wait until dynamism ends in the international system. This static behavior limits its dynamism too. To Davutoğlu, if a society has no self-confidence to lead its dynamism and is even afraid of its dynamism, they would generally prefer to behave in a static way. Second type of societies considers itself as an ordinary actor and because of this they leave their fate in the course of dynamism of the international system under the shadow of great powers. Third and last group of societies is of those which can transform their own potential dynamism as a power indicator into dynamism of the international system. This choice of behavior is the result of understanding and explaining of elements, mechanisms and flow of the dynamic international system.

Davutoğlu furthers that while the first and second type of societies are struggling with self-confidence and identity problem, the third type of societies who have power from their self-confidence by history and geography can put across a determinant performance to transform dynamism into balance in the international system. Although the behavior of the third type of society seems risky, third type of societies considers dynamism as an advantage to determine the future. In addition to this, first two types of societies try to inhibit internal dynamism and start to alienate from their culture and be part of global trends. Despite this, third type of societies will try to use all different internal dynamics in suitable moments to strengthen their power. In other words, Davutoğlu suggests that the third type of societies try to build up a meaningful relationship between their existence and global existence. Davutoğlu concludes that, the first type of society tries to protect itself from chaos, the second type of society prefers letting itself into chaos and the third type of society aims to be an actor of transformation from chaos to cosmos. Our analysis of Turkey's Syrian policy based on his categorization of societies in the dynamic international system and his vision is that Turkey has the capability to transform chaos to cosmos.

In this framework, Davutoğlu suggests that Turkey is now at crossroads and Turkey should combine its cultural, historical depth and potential dynamics with strategic policies. Thanks to its unique geographical position, cultural and historical depth Turkey should be a core country. In other words, Davutoğlu claims that Turkey should be the third type of society given its characteristics. It is kind of necessary for Turkey to design her foreign policy and regional policy as a center state in the international system. Because of her historical and geographical depth Turkey should take responsibility of being a core country. "The premise of this argument is that Turkey should not be dependent upon any one actor and should actively seek ways to balance its relationships and alliances so that it can maintain optimal independence and leverage on the global and regional stage" (Walker 2007). These assumptions of Davutoğlu in Strategic Depth have been the main columns of the Turkish Foreign Policy in his era. Beginning with his categorization of societies, the analysis will continue with the main principles and tenets of his theoretical background of the new Turkish foreign policy.

### 2.3 From Theory to Practice of Strategic Depth

As Davutoğlu mentioned in the introduction part of the book, Turkish foreign policy and power parameters need to be revisited. For him, there are some tools which are a must for Turkey to use to achieve Turkey's real power capability in the dynamic international system. Firstly, as a third type of societies, Turkey should understand and transform dynamic interpretation of her power parameters. In other words, in order to have transition of Turkey from chaos to cosmos there should be a clear description of her dynamic parameters. Secondly, depending on the dynamic interpretation, Turkey should have a multidimensional foreign policy. Turkey's constant and potential parameters can turn into kinetic and dynamic parameters through a multidimensional foreign policy formulation.

Ahmet Davutoğlu continues that only two methods can be understood and realized through historical assets and geographical depth of Turkey because history and geography make Turkey unique. "The analysis of an international relations sphere without penetrating its historical depth is similar to a psychological analysis ignoring the person's memory records" (Davutoğlu 2001). In his book, Davutoğlu defined Turkey as neither a history maker nor an outcome of the existing system. Turkey is unique country as an outcome of the Ottoman Empire. As an inheritor of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey is a mono-religious country with a multiethnic population. Meanwhile, religious leadership and imperialism were replaced by nationality based transformation when Turkey was founded. These domestic changes were reflected as Westernization in foreign policy. Not only Turkey's domestic sphere but also global scale events such as Soviet aggression and Cold War made Turkey part of the Western block. In other words, Davutoğlu claims in his book that, Turkey had to leave its influential zones which were inherited from the Ottoman Empire. He calls this situation of Turkey a "break off from historical continuity" and he furthers that this break off caused instabilities in domestic policy of Turkey (2001). Although Turkey had this unnatural transformation, he notes that the historical assets of the Ottoman Empire are still potential assets for Turkey.

Geographical depth of Turkey is a second vital element of new Turkish Foreign Policy in dynamic international relations. According to Davutoğlu, geography is a stable power parameter when it combines with politics, a potential power parameter, they both lead to geopolitics. "Geopolitics" as a term and a body of knowledge was introduced to Turkey for the first time during World War II in a series of articles published in the newspapers (Bilgin 2007). That's why geopolitics as a potential power assessment cannot deal with static behavior choice. Davutoğlu links Turkey's historical assets with her geographical depth, Turkey lies at crossroads of many geopolitical dynamic areas from her historical inheritance. In other words, Turkey's geopolitical depth is based on her identity which is basically Turkish, Ottoman and Islam (Bilgiç and Bilgin 2011). In light of these, Davutoğlu explains three major "regional areas of influence" which are (1) near land basin, the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus; (2) near maritime basin, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf and the Caspian; and (3) near continental

basin, Europe, Northern Africa, Southern Asia, the Middle and Eastern Asia (2001). In the near land basin, the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus, Turkey ought to increase its cultural, economic and political power by transitivity and interdependency in these regions. That's why regional cooperation and cultural integration are necessary to strengthen Turkey's power in the near land basin. Davutoğlu suggests that Turkey's influence power in the near land basin is guarantee of politics in near maritime basin and near continental basin.

Within this theoretical and practical framework of Strategic Depth, Davutoğlu concludes that Turkey with her unique history and geographical position requires a comprehensive and complex foreign policy (Bağcı and Sinkaya 2006). Also, he furthers that new Turkish foreign policy should meet requirements of time and place dimensions. As Davutoğlu suggests, Turkey needs to establish a widespread network of interrelations, which include maximum diversity with sufficient co-operational depth and harmony (2001). In other words, Turkey should have a highly complex and effective foreign policy to transform and manage chaos to cosmos. Syrian crisis in Arab Spring would be the first and toughest test for Davutoğlu.

## 2.4 Syrian Crisis—The Most Chaotic Case of Arab Spring

Just three years ago since the Arab Spring started with Muhammed Bauzazi burning himself, it was named an ordinary uprising in Tunisia yet it was indeed more than that. It was only a kind of trigger of upcoming events (Açıkalın and Bölücek 2014). Arab Spring was a result of the demand for democracy, human rights and economic justice. Just like other Arab Spring countries, Syria has been ruled by Assad family for a long time. From Hafız Assad, Syrian people lived under oppressive regime. Although there are many similarities between Syria and other Arab Spring countries, uprisings in Syria are surprising. There are three important reasons why Syrian people's uprising can be considered as a surprise. Firstly, actually no one really expected Bashar al Assad as president after his father however when his older brother died in a car accident, Bashar Al Assad was called from Damascus. The new era of Bashar al Assad expected to be a "Damascus Spring" because he had been known as a reformer in his country (Gelvin 2012). Secondly, in the beginning of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Bashar al Assad did not expect uprisings to spill over to his country because the young population which has been the backbone of uprisings did not become popular in Syria at first (Gelvin 2012). Thirdly, after Hama Massacre as a regime reaction to uprisings in 1982, no one really expected any rebellious movement. So, unpredictability is also part of the chaotic nature of the Syrian crisis. Also, the analysis of the Syrian crisis with chaos theory will highlight Davutoğlu's categorization of countries in the Strategic Depth, which imply Turkey should be the center state to transform chaos into cosmos.

First of all, notions of chaos and chaotic systems are terms generally associated with physics, meteorology, biology and mathematics rather than international political relations (Grebogi and Yorke 1997). The dynamics of social systems are

not linear therefore it is more unpredictable. Events in real life are generally complicated, it is made up of various elements and faceted into various aspects. In other words, each event is linked to other events. "It is extremely difficult, therefore, if not impossible, to gain an in depth understanding of them" (Bertuglia and Vaio 2005). Furthermore, there are limitations of linear models to having long-term predictions and solutions to real life events. Linear models have capacity to produce stable solutions and predict however they are not able to encompass the whole range of possible long term consequences within the field of social science (Bertuglia and Vaio 2005). That's why war, peace or any social events in real life should be considered and reanalyzed by nonlinearity and chaos theory. Firstly, chaotic systems are composed of non-linear and various elements. Non-linearity and various elements directly increase impossibility of forecasting in the long run.

As mentioned in the introduction, although chaos theory has not been used in international relations so often, Diana Richards in her 1993 paper, "A Chaotic Model of Power Concentration in the International System", outlined the first detailed assessment of and suggestion that chaotic dynamics may exist in international political interactions (Richards 1993). From minor interactions at individual level in international relations to system level interactions, it completely seems independent but would be interdependent in long term. Secondly, the most well-known feature of chaos theory is butterfly effect which implies small events will lead to large scale consequences. It is also interpreted as sensitiveness to initial conditions which means forecasting is impossible. Paralleling with first characteristics of chaotic systems, within various nonlinear elements, "Prediction, at least in the long term, becomes impossible and attempts to forecast future realities become probabilistic at best and misguided at worst" (Lorenz 1979, 56). When it comes to international relations, as Kissane suggests that there are other few analyses about historical and international events which focused on small individual event its long-term consequences. At its most basic level, the assumption of a chaotic system forces the scholar to consider events at the domestic and individual levels of analysis and their potential impact on the wider global system (2010). Also Kissane suggests that every element of the system has the potential to play the role of 'the butterfly' and effect significant change across the system (2006).

In light of these chaotic system suggestions, it is also possible to analyze Syria as a chaotic environment. Syria can be revisited by chaos theory in terms of two important features of chaotic systems. Firstly, as mentioned in chaos theory, there are different and independent and also very interdependent non-linear elements in the system. Although imprisonment of a group of children triggered off civil war, there are numerous and effective interest groups which can be categorized religiously, ethnically and politically. Basically, Syria is a kind of heterogeneous country in terms of religion. Despite Assad family and elites who are 11 % of population belonging to Alawites, 75 % of Syrian people are Sunni and there are Christian minorities too. Ethnically, Syria has been the homeland of Kurds, Turks, ethnic Armenians, Arabs and Circassians. So, ethnic and religious breakdowns are just one part of Syria's complexity (Fisher 2013).

This diversity of ethnic and minority groups in Syria turned into a nightmare because not only local groups but also some other regional and foreign interest groups intervened in conflicts in Syria. Also, this ethnic and religious diversity is composed of political groups. In Northeast Syria, there is de facto Kurdish Autonomy which gained power after the Syrian army's retreat from this area. Free Syrian Army is the forces group which emerged from the street protests and former Syrian army members; there are also some fractions within it. Interestingly, majority of Free Syrian Army are composed of the Sunni population of Syria. Jabhat Al Nusra is a radical Islamic force that has pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda, composed of militant Muslims from around the world. They also receive money and weapons from supporters and have become the rebels' most effective fighting force. They aim to impose Sharia law in areas they occupied.

There are also two different political opposition bodies in the Syrian case which are Syrian National Council and National Coordination Council. Syrian National Council is based in İstanbul, they emerged as the main political opposition to Assad and searching for international recognition as the legitimate representative of the uprising, despite rifts with other Syrian factions. On the contrary, National Coordination Council is kind of opposition of Syrian National Council. There are main differences between SNC and NCC. Members of the National Coordination Body are committed to three principles: "No" to foreign military intervention, "No" to religious and sectarian instigation, and "No" to violence and the militarization of the revolution (National Coordination Body for Democratic Change 2014). Diversity of opposition groups makes the nature of Syrian civil war more chaotic, these groups have different independent interests while they also have similar and interdependent interests.

Secondly, sensitiveness to initial conditions- with the famous name butterfly effect. Like in the starting point of Arab Spring which was of Muhammed Bauzazi burning himself, the Damascus demonstration did not make so much noise too. However a few days later a group of children aged between 10–15 were imprisoned because they wrote "Down with the Nizam" on the wall which was used in the Egyptian revolution, their families tried to take their children back and took out people to streets, during protests opening a fire which caused casualties. As expected but also unexpected by government, the next day funerals became the scene of 20,000 protesters. Next days, protests started in the city of Bania and it spread to almost all cities of Syria. So, children in a small city of Daraa were never expected to be a reason for a huge civil war, it is definitely butterfly effect of Syrian protests. Thus, Syrian's multilayered social and political structure is the main reason behind how small protests in Syria turned into chaos. In such a diverse and complex social strata, a sparkle from the Daraa would be enough to fire the whole country. The importance of Syria to Turkey is unquestioned that's why Turkish foreign policy has been influential in the Syrian crisis. The next part will be about Turkish foreign policy in Syria since AK Party government came to power until today.

## 2.5 Turkey's Foreign Policy in Arab Spring and Syria-Far from Cosmos

Although Turkey's foreign policy has been both criticized and praised, it is also important to understand how Turkish foreign policy changed in Middle East after Davutoğlu until Arab Spring. It was direct implications of Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth book and its framework "It would be a pivotal state with global significance. Turkey would become not only Europe and North America's bridge to the Middle East, but also the world's civilizational conduit to the Muslim East" (Waldman 2011). Turkey started to pursue more proactive foreign policy in the region. Turkey became popular within Arab countries, regionally and internationally. Turkey has signed numerous political initiatives and cultural agreements with its Arab neighbors, has enhanced its role in the Organization of Islamic Conference and has joined the Arab League as an observer (Ennis and Momani 2013).

Turkey's proactivity can be considered a result of Davutoğlu and his assumptions. Especially, Turkey had had good relationship with Syria as one of the longest border countries of Turkey. Both countries initiated cooperation and agreements at almost all levels of cooperation. Military-Education Cooperation treaty was signed in June 2002. Also, they signed bilateral Free Trade Agreement together. Also, Turkey and Syria had agreement to build common dam on Asi River issue which was totally problematic for a long time. "In conclusion there have been agreements upon the development of banking services, tourism, highways, energy, transportation, custom trade and construction field" (Özer 2007). Even in the year 2011 during their last meeting in the Northern Syrian city of Aleppo, the two countries' leaders were inaugurating the "friendship dam," straddling the Syria-Turkey border, to be built jointly (Ayman 2013). Even both countries decided to organise common council of ministers.

When Arab Spring started in Tunisia and spilled over in other countries of the region, Turkish government rhetorically supported anti-regime groups but practically designed different policies for different regimes. During this time, Turkey showed different attitudes towards each regime according to her interests (Ennis and Momani 2013). According to the West, thanks to Turkey's successful economic and political performance in the last ten years, it has made her a model country to Arab countries. We can say that Arab Spring enhanced Turkey's role model identity at the beginning. "The Arab Spring in particular has vaulted Turkey into a key regional role" (Paul and Seyrek 2011). AK Party government and its moderate Islam model became much more desirable for people in those countries who demand more freedom and human right until the Tunisian protests spread to Syria which has the longest border with Turkey and accordingly the whole situation changed for Turkey. "The case of Syria is perhaps the most difficult one for Turkey, given the considerable investment of the AK Party government in building good relations with Bashar al-Assad over the past decade" (Dalacaura 2012).

Historical and political ties of Turkey with Syria make it unique and different for Turkey. According to Bağcı, Turkey had three main national interests in Syria; (1) to



prevent establishment of any Kurdish government in Northern Syria, (2) to control radical Islamist groups in Syria, (3) to have a new government in Syria which can be controlled by Turkey (<http://aybekgazete.com/yazarlar/prof-dr-huseyin-bagci/suriyeye-mudahale-kararinda-akil-mi-vicdanmi-daha-agir-basiyor/61/>). So, Turkey's attitude was mainly shaped by these three national interests in Syria. "The Turkish government wanted to prevent an environment that would lead to the dissolution of the Syrian state that would trigger ethnic and sectarian conflict and its spillover effects to Turkey" (Ayman 2013). It can be considered the main reason why Turkey has been vigilant in the case of Syria. So, from the beginning until now, within 2 years, Turkish foreign policy for Syria has experienced ups and downs. As Davutoğlu mentioned in his book, can Turkey manage to be transformed from chaos to cosmos? Or will Syrian uprisings become a vicious circle of Turkish foreign policy? In the next part, there will be a discussion of the Turkish Foreign policy in Syria chronologically since the beginning of protests until today.

## 2.6 From March 2011 to the Present Day: Turkish Foreign Policy on the Edge of Chaos

In March 2011 when Syrian uprisings started Turkey- Syria relations reached peak level everyone knows that Syria would not be same as other Arab Spring countries for Turkey. Paralleling to Strategic Depth assumptions and new era in TFP, since 2005, Erdoğan demanded political and economic reforms from Assad and suggested having better relations with opposition groups in Syria. However, Syria had been slow on reform making. In the wake of the Arab Spring in February 2011, Erdoğan once more tried to convince him to make reforms as soon as possible. One month later in March 2011, protests against government spread to all regions of Syria. In April 2011, Davutoğlu visited Syria and he had three suggestions which were abolishment of state of emergency, giving national identity to Kurdish population and preventing any military intervention in the protests. Even Turkey sent a task speech to Assad based on his request. Actually, Davutoğlu was not so optimistic about Assad's promises. In other words, failure of making reforms was not a surprise for Turkey. However, Erdoğan as a close friend of Bassar al-Assad, announced that he would talk with Assad and counseled him on implementation of social, economic, and political reforms, while offering Turkish help to achieve the changes. "Erdoğan hoped that his close friendship could be effective in the regional change" (Taşpınar 2012).

Once more, Turkey believed that Turkey's historical and geographical position and proactive policies in the last years were enough to play a central state role in the Syrian crisis and region. Unfortunately, Erdoğan's demand for reforms from Bashar al-Assad in Syria was left unanswered. "Ankara realized that the Syrian government was unwilling to resolve the problems through reforms and would continue to use force against its citizens." (Aras 2009).

November 2011 was remarkable because, Erdoğan changed his rhetoric very sharply and declared a clear stance against the Assad regime in Syria. Erdoğan declared that “Without spilling any more blood, without causing any more injustice, for the sake of peace for the people, the country and the region, you should finally step down” (Burch 2011). Not rhetorically, but also practically Turkey started to support opposition groups in Syria and built up refugee camps in border cities. On 29th April 2011, the first group of refugees comprising 252 Syrian citizens crossed the Turkish border. Although Davutoğlu officially said that they still support reform period in Syria, in the same month opposition groups which consisted of different groups such as Kurds, Muslim Brotherhood and young Syrian people gathered in Antalya (Davutoğlu, TRT May 2011). In June, many of army officers started to escape and formed the “Free Syrian Army”. In August 2011, the last time Davutoğlu visited Damascus, after a 6 h meeting, they agreed on a fourteen point reform road map which is about reform schedule and action plan for the Syrian government. However, the news from Syria and events in Hama completely disappointed Turkey. Turkey’s optimism would be ended, once more Syria failed the reforms initiatives and even increased the level of violence against Syrian people.

After August 13, Turkey and Syria demerged each other. It was a kind of turning point for Turkish foreign policy, Turkey started to search support from United Nations, NATO and of course United States. UNSC meeting in October 2011 couldn’t draft any imposing decisions due to Russia and China veto. In February 2012, after the bloodiest event happened in Hama, almost 500 people were killed. Next day, UNSC gathered for the second time with two vetos but UNSC announced that they would agree on Arab League’ decisions about Syria. So, Turkish foreign policy towards Syrian crisis changed its face during this period.

Between March 2011 and May 2012, Turkey’s overall Syrian policy can be separated into 3 periods: a) pressure on the Bashar al-Assad government for constitutional reform b) attempts at unifying dissident groups under a single roof and promoting international sanctions c) a return to efforts towards a UN-based solution (the Annan Plan) (Ertuğrul 2012).

Since June 2012, Turkey and Syria relations got worse and the next month a Turkish fighter jet was shot down by Syrian Air Forces. As expected, Turkey requested consultations under article 4 of NATO’s founding Washington Treaty. It was important to internationalize the Syrian crisis since the Syrian problem had become directly related with Turkish security and sovereignty rights as a member of NATO. From June 2012 to May 2013 when Reyhanlı bombing happened, Turkey’s insistence on US or NATO intervention in Syria became the priority of Turkey’s agenda. Turkish officials said that Syrian intelligence service was responsible for Reyhanlı bombing. Even Davutoğlu blamed the world’s inaction on the Syrian conflict for the “barbarian act of terrorism” that claimed dozens of lives near the border. Then, Turkey suggested the situation about chemical weapons which was ‘*the redline*’ of Obama administration. Davutoğlu obviously said that “We call on the international community in this situation where the red line was crossed long ago to intervene as soon as possible”. Geneva meetings and developments showed

that Turkey didn't find any support for international intervention. Even US and Russia agreed on destruction of chemical weapons in Syria, directly showing that unfortunately Turkey became much more lonely in her Syrian policy.

## 2.7 Challenges to Turkish Foreign Policy in Syria

Actually, security concerns and economic ties with Syria make the situation quite unique that's why Turkey wanted to be more active; however, it is not as easy as imagined. As easily noticed in last two years in the Syrian crisis, Turkey faced three main challenges. Firstly, Turkey built a very sensitive relationship economically since 2002 with Syria because of this, when Turkey pursued her national interest, it faced an interest versus ethical dilemma. "First in the direction of political reform within the parameters of the existing al-Assad regime and, once this solution proved to be unworkable, changing course and promoting regime transformation by active support for the opposition forces" (Öniş 2014). Öniş claims that having a pro-democracy position and providing active support for popular resistance to the established regimes may jeopardize Turkey's important economic relations in the region.

On the other hand, possible support to the authoritarian regimes, when protests reached peak point, would undermine Turkey's popularity within Arab people to play a regional leadership role. In the chaotic environment, interest versus ethical dilemma put Turkey in a tough position because as mentioned due to various elements and butterfly effect in Syria. In other words, Turkey's economic interests hindered Turkey to have more multidimensional foreign policy. Even in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, Turkey jeopardized its economic interests in order to pursue ethic-based foreign policy. Some scholars claim that Turkey actually endangered economic relations in Syria because compared to other Arab Spring countries, Turkey had more intensified economic relations with Syria and Syria is the opening door to the whole region of trading.

Secondly, similar to the first challenge, Turkey faced discourse versus capacity problem. From the beginning, Turkey has been showed as a model country or main actor who can persuade al-Assad. Furthermore, contrast to Turkey's powerful position in UN and NATO, Turkey could not find any support for international intervention. US, Russia and EU took a different position which tends to be a more diplomatic way of solutions rather than any military intervention. Unfortunately, Turkey's soft power but also hard power capacity became questionable because of Turkey's insisting on peaceful foreign policy. Especially Reyhanlı blast and jack down of Turkish fighter jet opened Turkey's deterrence power to discussion.

Turkey's inability to retaliate in the face of an escalating crisis shaped by the crashing of a Turkish fighter jet near Syria's territorial waters, the terrorist attacks on Turkey's border gate in Reyhanlı, and the casualties of citizens in Ceylanpınar due to shelling by forces loyal to the Assad regime all but left a black mark on Turkey's image and deterrence (Kınıklıoğlu 2014)

The last challenge to Turkish foreign policy is the “precious loneliness” paradigm. Davutoğlu said that Turkey’s ethical stand in Syrian crisis can be named as precious loneliness in the international system. Divergence between Turkey and US positions on Syrian crisis is the main reason behind Turkey’s precious loneliness. As mentioned in the last six months of Turkish foreign policy, it is obviously revealed that Turkey and US became apart in the Syrian crisis. Actually, US had been skeptical about reconciliation of Turkish- Syrian relations since 2002. Especially from the Bush era, Syria had been considered as pillar of axis of evil that’s why reconciliation of Turkish- Syrian relationship really disturbed the US policy makers for a long time. In 2005, American diplomats shared their views with US policy makers in Washington “Turkey share US strategic goals on Syria but they have different tactics” (Çongar 2005 qtd in Zengin). Also Soli Özel claims that Turkey pursued her Syrian policy despite US’s position (Özel 2012). However, within the next years American diplomats noticed that Turkey’s Syrian policy had been consistent with American interests. Again in Yasemin Çongar’s book, WikiLeaks documents of Charles Hunter note that “In the long term, increasing confidence between Assad and Erdoğan will be the only way to protect Syria from Iranian influence”. Just a year later in 2010, US removed travel warnings to Syria and Robert Ford was appointed as an ambassador after a long time.

The 2010 winter protests in Tunisia would reverse the atmosphere in the Syrian, Turkish and American relations. Although Obama administration recognized SNC and opposition group legitimacy, since the Syrian protests began, US seems not to be involved in Syria after Iraq and Afghanistan disappointment. Including US citizens, this time no one was willing to intervene in Syria. Even Obama’s redline was crossed by Syrian government in case of chemical weapons. US has been more negative to any intervention or military actions such as no fly zone. Actually, divergence between US and Turkey on Syria started from the very beginning. Proactive Turkish foreign policy and passive Obama administration draw fragmented positions. Also, after use of chemical weapons by Assad regime, somehow Obama ignored his redline and accepted to deal with Russia in order to destroy chemical weapons. It can be considered as momentum between Turkey and US. Once more Turkey was left alone in case of Syria in the eyes of Davutoğlu. Of course, long term policy differences between US and Turkey drag Turkey to deadlock because although Davutoğlu started to have more flexible and independent foreign policy, US is still the key alliance of Turkey in foreign policy. It is impossible to expel US influence on Turkish foreign policy. So, interests and attitudes differences of those old friends left Turkey alone in the international system.

## **2.8 Epilogue—No Cosmos for Syria and the Region**

There is no doubt Davutoğlu has changed Turkish foreign policy in terms of theory and practice. His book *Strategic Depth* mainly suggests a new Turkish foreign policy that would be more flexible and more active. Davutoğlu categorized states as

actors in the international systems and he pointed out some characteristics of foreign policy attitude. He suggests that these countries can have complex and deep foreign policy which can transform chaos to cosmos. Furthermore, these countries should consider foreign policy depending on both potential dynamics of international system and their internal dynamics. According to his classification and suggestions, Turkey should be center a state that has capability to transform chaos to cosmos. In order to be a center state, Turkey should redefine its power parameters and annotate paralleling with dynamics and parameters of the international system. In addition to this Turkey should have multidimensional and proactive foreign policy. Davutoğlu suggests that there are two methods to achieve idealized Turkish foreign policy, historical depth and geographical assets. Turkey's historical legacy and geographical assets would give a unique advantage to Turkey in policy making.

Arab Spring can be considered a test for Davutoğlu's center state vision, Arab Spring is the most chaotic and complex event in new Turkish foreign policy. At the beginning of Arab Spring protests, Turkey stood position to support democracy and human rights, against authoritarian regimes. However the Syrian case would be the most different and tough for Turkey. Within such a chaotic movement in MENA, Syria is the most chaotic case for Turkey. How we define Syria as a chaotic environment is the key to understanding Turkish foreign policy in Syria. Chaos is generally associated with physics, mathematics and weathercasting. Two important features of chaos have been applicable in the Syrian case;

Firstly, all actors in the system have the potential to lead to major consequences. It is known as sensitiveness to initial conditions which make forecasting impossible. In other words, initial conditions of any event would be determinant of a system. The famous butterfly effect was derived from this unpredictability characteristic. Use of a slogan from the Egyptian protests by a group of children in Daraa was the beginning of Syrian protests. They were arrested then killed in prison. Their funerals turned into mass protests then it went like snowball. Unexpected children's' death would lead to massive protests and then civil war. Syrian butterfly effect story went like that.

Secondly, non-linearity of system is another feature of chaotic systems. Variety and interdependency of actors also influence predictability. Syrian protesters include different ethnic minority and religious sectarians. Not only Syrian citizens but also different interest groups have been fighting against Assad regime in Syria. Kurds, Al Nusra, Turkmens and other groups have different interests and influence. In light of these, Syria can be defined as a chaotic environment. Furthermore, Assad regime never expected such uprisings in Syria because despite his father, Bashar Al Assad had been considered a reformist in his country. Also, Assad family belongs to minority Alawite sect of Syria but rights of minority groups have been under guarantee of government.

Syria has been always different for Turkish foreign policy makers. Turkey had long and bumpy relationship with Syria. In the AK Party era foreign policy had been kind of reconciliation and enhancement in case of Syria. Spreading of protests to Damascus and whole Syria alarmed Turkey. Although Turkey supported possible reforms by Assad in Syria in the beginning, Syria seemed far from any reforms and

even protests turned into civil war. Turkey has had a more vocal reaction to the Syrian regime since March 2011; even Turkey called on the UN, NATO and especially US to take action in Syria. However, agreement between US and Russia on destroying chemical weapons in Syria disappointed and left Turkey alone. As mentioned above, Turkey should be a central state and have a complex web of relationships with all actors. However, in the period between March 2011 and May 2012, Turkey tried to play a central state role to convince Assad regime with her soft power ability however Erdoğan and his close friendship was not enough to convince Assad to make reforms. “Clearly, the biggest disappointment for the Turkish government has been the Assad regime’s refusal to set the country on a peaceful course and its brutal crackdown on non-violent demonstrators.” (Cebeci and Üstün 2012). It is obvious that Turkey’s zero problem policy doesn’t work anymore.

There are realities for Turkey, which is 600,000 Syrian refugees and wastage of almost 2 billion dollars on them. Turkish cities which are located on the Syrian border of Turkey have security issues and even sometimes conflicts threaten Turkish sovereignty and national security. “Turkish foreign policy prioritized soft-power, aimed at a state of “zero-problem” with neighbors and established dialogue with all actors; however, this policy has dramatically changed with the Syrian crisis and taken a direction to adopt a sharp discourse although it suffers the capacity of implementation and has been nurtured by ideological motives rather than a strategic mind” (Dalay 2014)

So, despite the rigorous efforts of Turkey unfortunately Syrian case turned into dead end in Damascus Street. Unfortunately, Turkey’s position is far from being a soft power and model country. In other words, at least in the Syria couldn’t be a center state or third model of Davutoğlu’s categorization which can have capacity to transform chaos to cosmos and seize the dynamics of the international system. Partially, based on Turkey’s position in Syria also would cause continuity of instability and unpredictability of the whole region. In 2011, when protests reached the peak in Syria Davutoğlu said that “Turkey never let Syria in chaos” however, just two years later because of ethic vs dilemma, capacity versus rhetoric and divergence between Turkey and US challenges.

## References

- Açıkalın ŞN, Bölücek C (2014) Understanding arab spring with chaos theory—uprising or revolution. In Banerjee S, Erçetin ŞŞ, Tekin A (eds) Chaos theory in politics, Springer, Germany, pp 29–47
- Aras B (2009) Davutoğlu era in turkish foreign policy (SETA policy brief). Türkiye, SETA-Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, Ankara
- Ayman SG (2013) The arab upheavals and the Turkish perception vis-à-vis the west. Arab Stud Q 35(3):305–323

- Bağcı H, Sinkaya B (2006) Büyük Ortadoğu Projesi ve Türkiye: AK Partinin perspektifi (trans. Greater Middle East Project and Turkey: perspective of the justice and development party). Doğudan Batıya Dış Politika: AK Partili Yıllar, pp 97–114
- Bertuglia CS, Vaio F (2005) Nonlinearity, chaos, and complexity: the dynamics of natural and social systems. OUP Catalogue
- Bilgin P (2007) Only strong states can survive in Turkey's geography: The uses of geopolitical truths in Turkey. *Political Geogr* 26(7):740–756
- Bilgin P, Bilgiç A (2011) Turkey's new foreign policy toward Eurasia. *Eurasian Geogr Econ* 52(2):173–195
- Burch J (2011, Nov 22). Turkey tells Syria's Assad: Step down! Reuters
- Cebeci E, Üstün K (2012) The Syrian Quagmire: what's holding Turkey back? *Insight Turk* 14(2):13–21
- Çongar Y (2005) Artık sır değil: Amerikan gizli telgraflarında Türkiye. Hemen Kitap, İstanbul
- Dalacoura K (2012) The 2011 uprisings in the Arab Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications. *Int Aff* 88(1):63–79
- Delay G (2014, January 14). Is Turkey winner or loser in foreign policy? *Star Açık Görüş*
- Davutoğlu A (2001) *Stratejik derinlik*. Küre Yayınları, İstanbul
- Ennis CA, Momani B (2013) Shaping the middle east in the midst of the Arab uprisings: Turkish and Saudi foreign policy strategies. *Third World Q* 34(6):1127–1144
- Ertuğrul D (2012) A test for turkey's foreign policy: the Syria crisis. Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), p 1
- Fisher M (2013, August 27) The one map that shows why Syria is so complicated. *Washington Post*
- Gelvin JL (2012) *The Arab uprisings: what everyone needs to know*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Grebogi C, Yorke J (eds) (1997) *The impact of chaos on science and society*. United Nations University Press, Tokyo
- Kınıklioğlu S (2014, January 20) Turkish foreign policy in 2013: evaluation and suggestions. *Analist J*
- Kirişçi K (2009) The transformation of Turkish foreign policy: the rise of the trading state. *New Perspect Turk* 40:29–56
- Kissane D (2006) The balkan bullet with butterfly wings. *CEU Polit Sci J* 1(4):85–106
- Kissane D (2010) Mapping international chaos. *Contemporary Issues* 3(1):17–27
- National Coordination Body for Democratic Change (2014) <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48369&reloadFlag=1> Accessed from 21 April 2014
- Lorenz E (1979) On the prevalence of aperiodicity in simple systems. In: Marsden J, Gmela M (eds) *Global analysis*. Springer, New York
- Öniş Z (2014) Turkey and the Arab revolutions: boundaries of regional power influence in a turbulent Middle East. *Mediterranean Politics*, (ahead-of-print) pp 1–17
- Özer D (2007) Syria and Turkey relations: the changing face of Turkish foreign policy. *Civil Acad* 5(3):15–31
- Paul A, Seyrek M (2011) *Turkish foreign policy and Arab spring*. European Policy Centre, Brussels
- Richards D (1993) A chaotic model of power concentration in the international system. *Int Stud Quart* 37(1):55–72
- Taşpınar Ö (2012) Turkey's strategic vision and Syria. *Washington Q* 35(3):127–140
- Waldman SA (2011, May 18) Turkey and the Arab Spring: Strategic Depth becomes strategic abyss. *Hürriyet Daily News*
- Walker JA (2007) Learning strategic depth: implications of Turkey's new foreign policy doctrine. *Insight Turkey* 9(3):32–47