

Athens Institute for Education and Research
ATINER



ATINER's Conference Paper Series
MDT2012-0061

***"Zero-Problems" in Current Turkish Foreign
Policy: Cases of Syria and Greece***

Muhammed Hüseyin Mercan
Research Assistant,
Erciyes University,
Turkey

Nazlı Usta
Research Assistant,
Erciyes University,
Turkey

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209
Email: info@atiner.gr URL: www.atiner.gr
URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm

Printed in Athens, Greece by the Athens Institute for Education and Research.
All rights reserved. Reproduction is allowed for non-commercial purposes if the
source is fully acknowledged.

ISSN: 2241-2891

An Introduction to ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. The papers published in the series have not been refereed and are published as they were submitted by the author. The series serves two purposes. First, we want to disseminate the information as fast as possible. Second, by doing so, the authors can receive comments useful to revise their papers before they are considered for publication in one of ATINER's books, following our standard procedures of a blind review.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

This paper should be cited as follows:

Mercan, Muhammed Hüseyin and Usta, Nazlı (2012) "Zero-Problems" in Current Turkish Foreign Policy: Cases of Syria and Greece" ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: 2012 MDT -0061.

**“Zero-Problems” in Current Turkish Foreign Policy:
Cases of Syria and Greece**

Muhammed Hüseyin Mercan
Research Assistant,
Erciyes University,
Turkey

Nazlı Usta
Research Assistant,
Erciyes University,
Turkey

Abstract

Turkish foreign policy acquired a new dimension after the 2002 general parliamentary elections with the new Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Government. Ensuing years Turkey adopted a new role on its region as being a role model to the developing countries and changed its foreign policy understanding on acting more proactively. In this study, the change on Turkish foreign policy will be examined in the context of AK Party’s new perception which was built with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu’s influence. At this juncture, Syria and Greece were chosen for being the example, because the both states had controversial relations with Turkey on account of historical problems and both of them are in different regions. All the problems which were experienced have been affecting current economic, political and social relations. In this context, the aim of this study is to put forth the altered relations among these states through “zero-problems” perception. In conjunction with the policy change, it is sayable that the relations are in progress and developing with each passing day. The studies, such as this one, are important for showing the alterations on policy understandings of states and with the help of these studies; the chances for states which have controversial issues to iron out can be reachable.

Contact Information of Corresponding author:

Mr. Mercan: mercanmh@yahoo.com and mhmercanterciyes.edu.tr

Ms. Usta: naz.usta@gmail.com and nazliu@erciyes.edu.tr

Introduction

Relations with neighboring states in Turkish foreign policy are among the most important key factors for policy-makers to determine how to be shaped. Governments in Turkey should develop specific policies towards neighbors and put these policies into practice carefully as a consequence of Turkey's geographical location. At this point, Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has developed many specific policies to get rid of the bad heritage of past years in mutually relations within the scope of Zero- problems policy with neighboring countries. The Government has aimed maximization of interests and increasing of cooperation and coordination among parts of same region via this way of policy in foreign affairs. Problem solving characteristic of new policy brought some opportunities into Turkey to isolate crises, tensions and problems of the near past. Therefore, the Zero-problem policy has become one of the fundamental pillars of foreign policy under the AK Party Government.

In this paper, 'Zero-problems policy' perception of the AK Party Government will be discussed in the cases of Syria and Greece through a comparative perspective. Syria and Greece are very important neighbors for Turkey in both foreign and domestic politics. Historical background of mutual relations and the number of problems between parties shows us why the cases of Syria and Greece are so important for Turkey. Here is why; as vital neighboring countries, Syria and Greece were chosen to examine and understand functionality of Zero-problems in current Turkish foreign policy. In this paper will also try to find out the differences for policy-making perception towards both countries regarding to their geographical locations. Syria as a Middle Eastern country and Greece as a part of Europe will help us to see the dimensions of differences if any in the mutual relations.

AK Party and Zero Problems with Neighboring Countries

The concept of zero problems with neighbors is the most known principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and most apparent on the agenda. (Erhan, 2010:16). It is observed that two contiguous states are in conflict often due to various reasons or two neighboring countries are problematic in bilateral relations when briefly having a look at the histories of these countries. This situation might be valid almost in all regions of the world; however, it is more fragile and has high tension lines that could be very easily escalated in the Middle East basin having geo-politics importance.

Turkey has pursued the policy of very low levels of relationship due to its problematic relations with its neighbors prior to 2000. It has come to a point near to declaring war because of the reasons such as "Imia Crisis" with the Greece in 1995 and "Ocalan Crisis" with Syria in 1998. At that time the both countries were at the brink of war which provides us clear information about the course of bilateral relations with Turkey. The idea of living peacefully without problems with the neighbors has led Turkey to follow a new and different strategy. In this context, initiative of developing relations with contiguous states and solving the problems has become the most popular foreign policy agenda of the AK Party Government in 2002.

The notion of "Zero-problems with neighboring countries" that is conceptualized by Ahmed Davutoglu current Foreign Minister and former chief advisor to the Prime Minister R. Tayyip Erdogan has become one of the fundamental principles of Turkish Foreign Policy. In fact, the essence of relationship with neighbors started by AK Party Government which set out the policy of zero problems with neighbors can be found at the following statement of Davutoglu: "You are performing more defensive reflects rather than maintaining initiatives when you are completely surrounded by the

enemies in psychological terms. We will have an enormous maneuver field in foreign policy making thanks to zero problems with neighboring countries.”(Zengin, 2010: 88).

Principle aim of “zero problems with neighbors” which was not seen very realistic at first period is Turkey’s will to increase its influence at the region through intervention to the regional and global matters. Of course a Turkey having problems with its neighbors will consume a significant portion of energy to deal with threats that may come from these countries. Because it was aimed to reflect Turkey a country beleaguered and surrounded by enemies that was instrumented for a long time by means of domestic matters. Instead of that with this new approach claimed by Turkey, it is aimed to develop economic, commercial and peaceful methods with neighbors that will benefit both sides.

This policy known briefly as “zero problems” that is conceptualized and its content was expanded after 2000 of Turkey, it would be wrong to say that it has not become state policy with the AK Party although it is known there were steps taken for improvement of relations (Uzgel, 2009: 72). For instance we cannot underestimate positive developments that took place at the relationship with the Greece that was most problematic neighboring country with the initiative of Ismail Cem who was Foreign Affairs Minister for a long time (30 June 1997 - 11 July 2002) before AK Party Government. Undoubtedly this situation cannot reduce the value of “zero problems with neighboring countries” policy followed by Turkey. A policy previously limited to near areas and considered to be individual has become a stable state policy with new conceptualization. This is of course an important development not to be neglected in terms of foreign policy.

Finally, one of the important issues discussed within the context of “zero problems with neighbors” is the discussion of reality-idealism. Remarkable researcher has serious question in their mind on how this policy is realistic and applicable (Hale, 2009: 8). Despite a significant portion of these concerns are important, such criticism have often not gone beyond collective and ideological approached assessments. It is unfair to say that decision makers of Turkish Government have completely gone after an idealistic policy ignoring the reality on the applicability of this policy. Although Davutoglu has indicated this parameter as an ‘ideal’ form, in our opinion, it is a situation where real political situation was taken into account but not be captive of the real politics and its main objective is to minimize the problems in bilateral relations. In this regard, the importance of zero-problems policy for Turkey should not be ignored.

This important initiative for Turkish Foreign Policy to neighboring countries has many positive ways despite the expected recovery has not been completely provided in practice (Özdal, 2009: 5-6). Problematic areas in relations with Greece, Syria and Armenia have not yet been eliminated in context of foreign policy opening. In recent times, with start of the Arab Spring process, this initiative has been seriously facing stability problem in foreign relations as it is witnessed in Turkish-Syrian Relations. Developments in Syria and specifically Syrian regime’s policy are main reason of the change in Turkey’s policies towards Syria. At this point, it can be said that both Turkey’s initiative in foreign policy to neglect problems and increase solidarity and cooperation was damaged by Syrian side. This means that even if a county puts an initiative in foreign policy into practice, this can be changed because of non-expected developments. For this reason, Syrian case, and Greece as another sensitive balance point for Turkey, is good to examine Turkey’s policies and understand continuity and change in foreign policy dealing with zero-problems.

Zero Problems and Turkish-Syrian Relations

The characteristic of Turkish and Syrian relations have always been fluctuating as a result of these types of relations, these two neighbor countries had many serious crises. For instance; Syria supported the PKK, the terrorist organization and the problems of Hatay and water¹ issue were the most important point of the tension between the two states. Nevertheless, Syria stopped supporting the PKK within the framework of Adana Protocol, which was signed in 1998; the relations of these two countries got normalized. The Turkey and Syria relations had gained a momentum after the dissolution of the problem of Syrian support to the PKK. Moreover, the participation of Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the former president of Turkey, in the funeral of Hafiz Al Assad, former president of Syria, created a great positive effect on the relations between the two states. The policy of Turkey towards Syria became deeper and the relations have started to transform from normal to alliance after the AK Party became the government party in 2002.

We realize that Turkish and Syrian relations came to a very important point nowadays. The aim of relations is to maximize their benefits from both the Turkish and Syrian points of view. In this sense, to understand and explain the relations of Turkey and Syria especially in the recent years, reading about the perception of national interest seems to be quite meaningful and functional. In addition, the process of Turkey foreign policy within the framework of perception of zero problems is one of the main factors on the mutual relations between the two states. The most important turning point was for Syria foreign policy and Turkey-Syria relations the assassination of Lebanon's former Prime Minister, Rafik Al Hariri (Merçan, 2010: 113). Bashar Al Assad the prime suspect by the international community about Hariri's assassination adapted to a radical opening policy and he also started to build close relations with many European Union countries especially with Turkey to end this diversity.

In recent years, the structure of Turkish foreign policy, which was based on zero problems and economic diplomacy, and the policy of outward opening (Davutoğlu, 2008:79-81), which became the dominant foreign policy in Syria, was another positive impact on their relations. Hence, Turkey strongly appreciated Bashar Al Assad's outward opening policy after the assassination of Al Hariri. As a result of this, Turkey turned the face to Syria which became the key country of opening policy of Turkey towards the Middle East.

As a result of this rapprochement between the two countries, Turkey and Syria became common-moving states in many areas. Comparing to previous years, they gave a special importance to the development of economic relations and started to work to raise the trade volume up to 5 billion dollars (Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology, w.d.). As a result of Turkish foreign policy, which is based on improving the economic relations especially with neighbors, Turkey and Syria tried to improve the economic relations between each other. To maximize the benefits from corporation, a lot of Turkish companies started investments in many different areas and raised their activities in Syria as a consequence. In contrast, one of the most important problems was in the past the water problem between Turkey and Syria. However, along with era of new relations, they made a plan to build a dam together and this is an important indicator to understand that Turkey and Syria did not see their former problems as problems any more.

¹For more details, see; Muhammed Dayfullah ve Muhammed Matiri, "Müşkileta'l Mevsıl ve'l İskenderune ve'l-Alâkâtü'l-Arabıyyeti't-Türkiyye", Kuveyt: Şeriketü'l-Asriyye, 2003.

A lot of mutual official visits between the two states at high level government officials made a positive effect on both states and the citizens of those countries. Turkey and Syria realized that the borders between them are unnecessary so they made a new implementation to ease their border policy. In addition, a free-pass agreement was signed and the visa necessity was also cancelled by the two states (Güneş, Akkoç, 2009). Therefore, the rate of travel between two countries rose immediately without any problem because of unlimited and very good political relations. The main motivation was the Turkey's new policy and its discourse throughout the Middle East on the recent developments between the two countries (Mercan, 2010: 114). Comparing to the other neighbor countries, Turkey has spent much more effort on Syria to build good and close relations with it due to the regional interests and aims of Turkey. Moreover, Syria is the key state and it is like an opening door to the region. As a natural result of this, Turkey and Syria started special relations.

On the other hand, Turkey-Syria relations, which got developed and became deeper in the period of AK Party, were much affected by the Arab Spring. As we know, Syria has been controlled by the Baath Party and they followed repressive policies over all Syria. One of the countries which was most affected by this situation was no doubt Turkey. However, Turkey built an alliance relationship with the Syrian repressive regimes for the sake of national interest and opening policy of foreign policy and never intervened on the repressive side of Syria. In spite of some political demands of Syrian oppositions which were based on foreign countries, from Turkey to involve the repressive characteristic of Syrian regime, Turkey did not consider those demands. In contrast, Turkey preferred maximum co-operation with Syrian regimes rather than forcing them to build a new non-repressive government. As mentioned above, Syria is very important in Turkey's point of view. Thus, it followed a poised policy at the beginning of the Syrian uprising. On the other hand Turkey tried to use good relations with Syria and Bashar Al Assad to solve the problem of the Syrian uprising. Turkey also warned Syria many times and suggested urgent and effective reforms on the legislations. However, the worry of Turkey was that any unexpected changing in Syria regimes would be dangerous for Turkey regional interest so Turkey preferred status quo at the beginning of this process. On the other hand, another important factor on Turkey's decision is that the Syrian regime supported by Russia, China and especially Iran.

Recently, Turkey has started to give tough messages and call Bashar al Assad to leave the power because of Syria's neglect to stop killing and put reforms into practice. In this process, Turkey separated the way from Syrian regime through stepping back from constructed policy for several years, recognized the Syrian Opposition and started to support them in diplomatic ways as Syrian Government has not given up killing people and rejected the demands of Syrians. Mutual economic sanctions and Syrian Government's attempt to block Turkish businessmen in the country prove that Turkey's lose could reach Huge amounts. Killing innocent people by the regime, however, and Turkey's perform against the massacre in Syria caused arriving of bilateral relations. Although Turkey constructed good relations towards Syria as a result of Zero-problems policy, maintaining of massacres in Syria and reject of Syrian Regime to calls for reforms became fundamental reason of Turkey's stance on Syria. In this process, Turkey as a state which emphasized on historical and cultural heritage, has declared many times that its stance on the Syrian side not the Regime's. At this point, last developments in Syria and its direction would completely affect Turkey's regional policy and this situation has been bringing up many questions

and uncertainties about Turkey's future in the Middle East as well as Syria and Syrian's tomorrow.

Zero Problems and Turkish-Greek Relations

Turkey and Greece are known to be in conflict with each other from the establishment processes of the both states. Greeks are said to be the leaders of civilization from the ancient and medieval period to the conquest of Greek Empire in Istanbul in 1453 (Toynbee, 1917: 8). Then “Turkokratia” period, which was last about 400 years and differed in the several parts of the country, had experienced (Erdem, 2010: 24). 1821 War of Independence of Greece which is alleged that the country had no political history before then (Abbott, 1916: 201) and the announcement of independence caused unrest within the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand The Republic of Turkey which was founded in 1923 had some problems with the Balkan states because of the efforts to exist with the diminishing lands after the Balkan Wars. Especially it got up against the nearest neighbor Greece, over the ethnic groups (Greek minority in Turkey and Turkish minority in the Western Thrace), patriarchy which is in the territory of Turkey, sovereignty rights in the Aegean, Cyprus,.. etc. Here the opinions that advocate the idea that the main problem between the two states was the not filling of the gaps in the Treaty of Lausanne are remarkable. Besides 1923 population exchange which was a result of this agreement was the first large and effective crisis experienced between Turkey and Greece. Rıza Nur who was a member of Turkish delegation at Lausanne mentions in his memoirs that they wanted the population exchange and were happy that the idea of it presented by the British delegation (Nur, 1991: 78, 79).

Beyond any doubt, the whole history of the states cannot be read through conflicts. It can be said that there were three detente era at the relations between Turkey and Greece. Accordingly, the states became closer in the government of Atatürk and Venizelos (Hatipoğlu, 1997: 107–157), the ministry of Cem and Papandreou and the government of Erdogan and Papandreou. In some analyzes the dialogue between Turgut Ozal and Andreas Papandreou at the 1987 Davos Summit is considered as one of the periods of détente (Vatansever, 2011a: 6); but this view was not accepted in here because the process didn't continue. It is known that the Ocalan/PKK crisis that showed up just after the 1998 Madrid Declaration badly affected Turkish-Greek relations (Aksu, 2006). But in the end of 90s, there was a rapprochement process by the effects of 1999 Marmara earthquake and the friendship of Ministers of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem and Georgios Papandreou. In this part, to be examined “zero problem policy” which is Turkey's new foreign policy approach, Erdogan-Papandreou rapprochement and the last decade of Turkish Greek relations will be analyzed.

AK Party which came to power through 2002 general elections and is the current administrator of Turkey, chose to solve country's problems in foreign policy in the context of economic, social and respectful to human rights relations. The first step for developing economic relations had been taken by Turgut Ozal in the 80s. However, in that period, Turkish-Greek Business Council which was established in the Board of Foreign Economic Relations didn't work hard till the civil initiatives at the end of the 90s. Here of course, prejudices due to the historical problems and Greece's reluctance with the EU membership played a role. It is known that the economic convergence between the two countries, made visible by the attempts of Izmir Chamber of Commerce. “Turkish Aegean Coast-Greek Aegean Islands Economy Summit” which the first one held in Lesvos in 1998 by Izmir and Lesvos Chamber of Commerce was

the first and ongoing step for the two countries to meet each other's economy. The last (ninth) summit held in Athens in February 2010. Until the eighth summit held in Messinia (2007) these meetings remained at the level of civil conversations for both Turkish and Greek sides. However the participation of ministers and bureaucrats of the two countries' for the first time was a signal that the "civil" summits were being became a challenging force to the states (İzmir Ticaret Odası, 2010).

Except for the economy summits, it can be said that the most important progress at the state level in 2003 was "the natural gas pipeline project". The project that prepared by the Turkish Ministry of Energy and the Greek Ministry of Development was completed in 2007. The Turkish Prime Minister R. Tayyip Erdogan and the Greek Prime Minister of that period Kostas Karamanlis had inaugurated the pipeline at the end of 2007 (BOTAS, w.d.). Moreover, over the last decade there also have been some significant improvements on foreign direct investments between the two countries. National Bank of Greece purchased the 77.22% shares of Finansbank (Ekonomi Servisi, 2011). The second largest investment of Greece is to 45 partnered Intralot got into a partnership with 45% of Iddia (Barış Karayılanoğlu, 2007). Also 70% stake of Tekfenbank was sold to EFG Eurobank of Greece (Hürriyet, 2006).

In May 2010 the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan visited Athens with a delegation of ministers, bureaucrats and businessmen. Aftermath of this visit "High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC)" was established, held the first meeting and a total of 22 bilateral agreements on economy, environment, education, transportation and culture signed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, w.d.). The trip organized by the Board of Foreign Economic Relations was the first organization which made tremendous impact. In the summer of 2010, Greece became the latest EU member state which lifted the visa requirements from the green passport holders of Turkish citizens. Particularly the economic relations of the two countries are aimed to be interdependent over the Aegean tourism and the investments. In the context of zero problem policy, Turkey who is avoiding the shadows of historical problems is in a process of alteration of perception. Here, the answer of Prime Minister Erdogan to the question, why they did not bring the Patriarch Bartholomaios to Athens, shows this alteration. Erdogan explained that they had thought to include the Patriarch and the President of Religious Affairs of Muslims to the trip together, but they abandoned this idea because of the changed program of the President (Birand, 2010). In addition, in the Mediterranean Climate Change Summit held in October 2010, Erdogan's and Papandreou's refer themselves as their "best friends" shows the friendship between the leaders (George A. Papandreou, 2010). As we know today, Cem-Papandreou détente arose from their friendship and the current softening relations between Erdogan and Papandreou give us hope for a Turkish-Greek rapprochement. And on January 2011 Papandreou went to Erzurum as Erdogan's invitee to the opening ceremony of Winter Olympiads.

It should be emphasized that the European Union membership negotiations process is important on Turkey's alteration of perceptions. Accordingly Turkey tried to make the necessary arrangements on social policies, human rights issues and solve the reflections of historical problems with Greece by the help of these arrangements on the EU negotiations process. At this point, the reorganizations on the Greek minority and the Patriarchate affect the relations with Greece. As being an example, in November 2010, the Greek Orphanage of Büyükada (Prinkipos) which had been a symbol of the regulations for the minority foundations was returned to the Patriarchate (Ay, Kömür, 2010). The process related with the refunds of the other realities of minorities already continues. The other issue to be discussed and expected

for the solution is the re-opening of Halki Seminary. The Press Spokesman of Fener Greek Orthodox Church Father Dositheos Anagnostopoulos represented their ideas on the refunds of their realties, remarked that they did not predict this process could progress this fast and added that they thought “God must had been sent Muslim Erdogan” to them (Tezçakar: 2011: 60). On the other side one of the crucial questions had asked to Erdogan on his trip to Athens on May was about the ecumenism of Patriarchate. Erdogan in response to this question said that he was not disturbed by this idea and it was a domestic issue of the Christian world (Birand, 2010). In the process of making the new constitution, Patriarch Bartholomaios had been invited to Ankara on February 2012 and asked his opinions on the regulations related with the non-Muslim minorities (Kathimerini, 2012a). And this shows that the perceptions in Turkey have been altering and security concerns have postponed; because before this alteration, except for the rapprochement processes, Patriarchate was accepted as a threat to Turkish Republic and approached to this issue with nationalist feelings.

On the other hand, there happened an explosion on the Central Electric Unit of Vasiliko in July 2011 which had been supplying the needs of electricity of Greek Cypriots and their electricity purchase from the Turkish Cypriots caused crisis (Yılmaz-Elmas, 2011: 23). This issue should had drawn attention of the common needs of the island and the necessity for Turkish and Greek Cypriots to act together; but in August the Greek Cypriot Administration announced that they will make oil exploration on the south part of the island with Israel. This incident created dissatisfaction on the Turkish side of the Cyprus who intended common work and also the relations between Turkey and Greece were re-tensed. The sentences of Turkey’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and the architect of the zero problem policy Ahmet Davutoglu that Ankara will “show the appropriate reaction” to these kinds of attempts were tensed the relations more. Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Stavros Lambrinidis slammed Davutoglu for his approach and accentuated that this attempt was about the own sovereignty rights of Cyprus (Kathimerini: 2011). And the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc informed the press of a private telephone conversation between Papandreou and Erdogan. Arinc said, Erdogan had offered to postpone the work of Greek side for cooperation with the Turkish side and Papandreou had agreed with the idea and had conveyed that he had to speak to the Greek Cypriots (Arslan, 2011). However it is known that on September 2011 Israel and Greece signed a defense agreement on the security of the Mediterranean (Bakır, 2011: 37).

At this juncture, it has to be said that historical problems have been reflecting today’s relations. In Turkey there exist fractions that support the idea that Greece have been seeking for its “Megali Idea” and in Greece there are some groups who are anxious of Turkish probable attempts to achieve sovereignty on Western Thrace. There is also another fraction in Greece who claims that Davutoglu’s foreign policy paradigm had prepared by the inspiration of Young Turks as shown the roots of many historical problems (Charalambous, 2011). Sum up the developments in Turkey carefully monitored by Greece and there exist positive readings who say that there are many alterations in Erdogan’s Turkey which have positive effects as high growth rates close to China, almost no effect by the global economic crisis, resistance to the dominant power of army, the war against Kemalist “deep state” and trial of Kenan Evren who was the commander of 1980 coup d’etat (Papakonstantinou, 2012). And it can be claimed that, especially during the Davutoglu era, Turkey has been receded the idea of “the Turks only friend is a Turk” (The Economist, 2012).

But it is obvious that zero problem policy can not be a unilateral policy. The state which is addressed by the possible positive steps taken by Turkey needs to respond in the same way. In here due to the deep economic crisis in Greece and the resign of the Prime Minister and leader of PASOK Georgios Papandreou affected the détente plans. All of the planned meeting cancelled during the unstable political process in Greece. It is possible to say that the new coalition government in Greece which established with the general elections in June will choose the way to sustain the existing conditions of the current Turkish-Greek relations (Usta, 2012: 113). When we try to explain today it is not so difficult to see that Greece, who looks for the ways out of the economic crisis, pushes the attempts to develop friendly relations on the basis of the central government into the background, because the economic crisis is the top issue on Greece's policies; but the regional attempts are still ongoing. For example, on March 2012 the region governors and the presidents of chamber of commerce in the Aegean have written a joint letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to impetrate visa facilitation to Turks (Balaskas, 2012). On June 2012 Greece started a new process, Turkish citizens have the chance to get visa easily on the customs of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Rhodes and Kos (Pollatou, 2012). On the other hand, there always have been and will be nationalist reflections to the other side in both countries. The historical problems should be sent away in the recent relations. It can be claimed that this is the only way to contact the two states and the two nations. If we look at the developments in the Middle East, it shows us that Turkey has focused on solving the problems in this territory lately. Turkey's relations with the Middle East are also watched with interest in Greece (Kathimerini, 2012b). As a result, it is obvious that Turkey's forcefulness has been limited in the Balkans. The EU project, even it is examined and criticized, established the stability that sought and succeed to create a common policy (Vatansever, 2011b: 11). Turkey's affectlessness in the area can be explained in this context. Turkey, in its new foreign policy extend, plays role in the regions where can be a leader. Thus, the critics against the Erdogan's administration that they turn their back to the "west" can be revealed and understood. It can be claimed that the effectuation of Turkey's leader role in the Balkans is a slim chanced policy then the effectuation of the leader role in the Middle East.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Turkish foreign policy with its new parameters has become more effective and visional around Turkey's territory. Policies which are economic diplomacy and Zero-problems centered provide increasing of Turkey's position as an emerging power in international system. AK Party's stable agenda and specifically Ahmet Davudoglu's world politics perception and reading have opened doors of a new era and new territories. In this regard, Turkey started to neglect problems of the past with neighboring countries to enlarge its policy practicing areas. At this point, the most important result of Zero-problems policy is effort and attempt to find solutions for previous problems and increasing cooperation and solidarity in mutually relations.

Syria and Greece are very explanatory cases to examine Turkey's success in foreign policy dealing with zero-problems policy. The problems in Turkish-Syrian and Turkish-Greek relations have always become main subjects of Turkish foreign policy. However, with the AK Party Government, a new way of foreign policy which was called "zero-problems with neighboring countries" has been practiced to maximize interests and relations and to minimize problems among them. As a result of this policy, Turkey increased its relations with Syria and also Greece and many agreements and joint projects were signed in this process. AK Party's effort to

increase its influence and attempt to construct Turkey-centered policies in its own region has become important outputs of the zero-problem policy. However, last developments in Syria with ‘Arab Spring’ process turned into a crash point between Turkey and Syria. Although Turkey tried to keep bilateral relations, Syrian regime’s policies and killings against its own people caused a U turn in Turkish- Syrian relations. The attitude of Turkish Government in this case should be interpreted as an implication of human-centered policies. Consequently, in this process, Turkey tried to construct close relations with Greece and Syria to maximize interests and to solve problems in mutual relations. However, Turkey has changed its stance on Syria because of massacres in the country and regime’s non-democratic policies. This is positive step for Turkey to construct more healthy relations among neighboring states as Turkey performed that people of countries are more important than the regimes or governments.

References

- Abbott, G. F. (1916). *Turkey, Greece and the Great Powers: A Study in Friendship and Hate*, London: Robert Scott.
- Aksu, F. (2006). “Rapprochement, Confidence-Building and Cooperation: The Main Difficulties of Turkish-Greek Relations”, Paper presented at the International Conference on Turkish-Greek Relations: Issues, Solutions, Prospects, March 9, in Istanbul, Turkey.
- Arslan, I. (2011). “Nobody knows that conversation, I do”, *Hürriyet*, September 29, Available at: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/18855317.asp>. [In Turkish].
- Ay, H., Kömür, R. (2010). “The orphanage has been restituted to the Patriarchate”, *Sabah*, November 30, Available at: http://www.sabah.com.tr/Gundem/2010/11/30/buyukadadaki_rum_yetimhanesi_tapuda_patrikhaneye_gecti. [In Turkish].
- Bakır, A. H. (2011). “Israel-Cyprus-Greece: Through an Alliance against Turkey”, *Analist*, 1 (9): 35–37. [In Turkish].
- Balaskas, S. (2012). “Finally, reasonable...”, *Empros*, March 1, Available at: <http://www.emprosnet.gr/Economy/?EntityID=a7f4b72f-2f21-4e0a-9a60-27e709d5713c>. [In Greek].
- Bariş Karayılanoğlu, P. (2007). *The Basic Economic Indicators of Greece and Turkish-Greek Commercial and Economic Relations*, Izmir: Izmir Ticaret Odası, July, Available at: <http://www.izto.org.tr/NR/rdonlyres/EA724C51-159E-469D-8454-B11C04BF453F/9058/YUNANISTAN2007EYLUL.pdf>. [In Turkish].
- Birand, M. A. (2010). “When Erdogan hauls the Greek media on the carpet”, *Posta*, May 16, Available at: http://www.posta.com.tr/siyaset/YazarHaberDetay/Erdogan_Yunan_basinini_fircalayin_ca.htm?ArticleID=29820. [In Turkish].
- BOTAS (w.d.). “International Projects”, Available at: <http://www.botas.gov.tr/icerik/tur/projeler/yurtdisi.asp>. [In Turkish].
- Charalambous, S. (2011). “Neo-Ottomanism or megalomania?”, *Empros*, January 18, Available at: <http://www.emprosnet.gr/Current/?EntityID=904cc709-a057-4bac-8d34-581a44791269>. [In Greek].
- Davutoglu, A. (2008). “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assesment of 2007”, *Insight Turkey*, 10 (1): 77–96.
- Dayfullah M. & M. Matiri (2003). *The Problem of Iskenderun and Turkish-Arab Relations*, Kuveyt: Şeriketü’l-Asriyye [In Arabic].
- Ekonomi Servisi* (2011). “Finansbank’s public offering has been postponed”, March 24, Available at: <http://www.ekonomiservisi.com/index.php/bankacilik/6630-finansbank.html>. [In Turkish].
- Erdem, N. (2010). *Regarding Anatolian Campaign by Greek Historiography (1919–1923)*, Istanbul: Derlem. [In Turkish].

- Erhan, Ç. (2010). *Current Problems in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Ankara: Imaj. [In Turkish].
- George A. Papandreou (2010). “Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative”, October 22, Available at: <http://www.papandreou.gr/papandreou/content/Document.aspx?d=6&rd=7739474&f=1721&rf=-1853366823&m=13118&rm=20799661&l=1>.
- Güneş, A. & S. Akkoç (2009). “Turkey and Syria lifted the visa requirements”, September 16, Available at: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Yasam/SonDakika.aspx?aType=SonDakika&KategoriID=15&ArticleID=1140074>. [In Turkish].
- Hale, W. (2009). “Turkish Foreign Policy and the Middle East: Explanations, Assessments and Questions”, Paper presented at the Conference on Turkey and the Middle East, November 10-11, in Damascus, Syria.
- Hatipoğlu, M. (1997). *Turkey and Greece in Recent History 1923–1954*, Ankara: Siyasal. [In Turkish].
- Hürriyet (2006). “Tekfenbank will be bought by Greek EFG”, May 8, Available at: <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=4379049&tarih=2006-05-08>. [In Turkish].
- İzmir Ticaret Odası (2010). “The Ninth Turkish Aegean Coast and Greek Aegean Islands Economy Summit”, February 16, Available at: <http://www.izto.org.tr/NR/rdonlyres/2E545EAD-3A35-482A-84D0-EEDFB667FD7F/14400/1.pdf>. [In Turkish].
- Kathimerini (2011). “Greece sticks by Cyprus over gas exploration plans”, August 11, Available at: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/4Dcgi/4dcgi/ w articles wsite1 1 11/08/2011 402064>.
- Kathimerini (2012a). “Messrs. Bartholomaios is at the National Assembly”, February 21, Available at: <http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/ w articles politics 2 21/02/2012 473270>. [In Greek].
- Kathimerini (2012b). “Official Discussions in Turkey”, February 29, Available at: <http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/ w articles world 1 29/02/2012 474166>. [In Greek].
- Mercan, M. H. (2010). “Continuousness and Change in Syrian Foreign Policy in Bashar Al Assad Era”, *Akademik Ortadoğu*, 4 (2): 103-118 [In Turkish].
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (w.d.). “Relations between Turkey and Greece”, Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-greece.en.mfa>.
- Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology (w.d.). “Turkish-Syrian Industry Monitoring Committee”, Available at: <http://e-imza.sanayi.gov.tr/webedit/gozlem.aspx?sayfaNo=4808>. [In Turkish].
- Nur, R. (1991). *The Memories of Lausanne*, 2nd ed., İstanbul: Boğaziçi. [In Turkish].
- Özdal, H. & B. Dinçer & M. Yegin (2009). *Turkish Foreign Policy Through Interviews*, Ankara: USAK. [In Turkish].
- Papakonstantinou, P. (2012). “Harefield Days in Erdogan’s Turkey”, *Kathimerini*, February 23, Available at: <http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/ w articles world 2 23/02/2012 473574>. [In Greek].
- Pollatou, M. (2012). “Abolition of visa... from the window”, *Empros*, May 19, Available at: <http://www.emprosnet.gr/article/33145-katargisi-vizas-apo-parathyro>. [In Greek].
- Tezçakar, B. (2011). “We climbed down in half from the crucifix”, *Atlas*, 1 (9): 52–61. [In Turkish].
- The Economist (2012). “Turkey’s political in-fighting: Erdogan at bay”, February 25, Available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/21548261>.
- Toynbee, A. J. (1917). *The Murderous Tyranny Of The Turks*, New York: Hodder& Stoughton.
- Usta, N. (2012). “Turkish-Greek economic relations (1980-2010)”. MA diss., Yildiz Technical University.
- Uzgel, I. (2009). “Ak Party in Foreign Policy: From Strategic Position to Strategic Model”, *Mülkiye*, 30 (252): 64-84. [In Turkish].

- Vatansever, M. (2011a). "Enclosing Turkish Greek Relations with Wire Fence", *Analist*, 1 (1): 5-7. [In Turkish].
- Vatansever, M. (2011b). "Turkey's Potential and Limits in the Balkans", *Analist*, 1 (3): 8-11. [In Turkish].
- Yılmaz-Elmas, F. (2011). "Secur(ity) Problem in Cyprus Solution Process", *Analist*, 1 (9): 20-31. [In Turkish].
- Zengin, G. (2010). *Master: "Davutoglu Effect" in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Istanbul: Inkilâp. [In Turkish].