

UDK: 316.334.3:297  
323.233:297  
Pregledni rad  
Primljeno: 24. rujna 2012.

## Davutoğlu: Thinking Depth and Global Political Activism as New Grand Strategy

ALI PAJAZITI

South East European University, Tetovo

This paper is an analytical synopsis of Ahmet Davutoğlu's pro-civilizational activism, an essay on this globally recognized diplomat and expert in the field of international relations, history of political thought and political philosophy. Davutoğlu is an author of the strategic doctrine of new Turkey as global actor with neo-Ottomanist *Geist*. It shows his multidimensional approach to civilizations and their world views (*Weltanschauung*), to their truth perceptions and cultural other/otherness, as well as his diplomatic discourse that generates security, peace and democracy that made him one of the main initiators of the Alliance of Civilizations in an era of Huntingtonian macro-conflictualism as new global disorder. This article focuses on non-rational differentiation in the West and the rest in the era of post-modern "international sprint", when the world is transformed into a global village and when the only solution is in finding common values, a social philosophy that ties different culturological perspectives. In this context, Davutoğlu's geopolitical doctrine is based on principles of security for all, dialogue, economic (inter)dependence and cultural coexistence and pluralism, which can especially help the Balkans area to avoid being a field of post-Ottoman historical tragedies.

**Key words:** global politics, civilizations, dialogue, neo-Ottomanism, interdependence

"Bookish character with a formidable knowledge in history!"  
*The Economist* (2010)

"Davutoğlu is one of the most brilliant intellectuals not just in Turkey but in the whole Muslim world as well. His intellectual CV is impressing."  
Arbën Xhaferri, late President of the Democratic Party of Albanians in Macedonia

### 1. Introduction

Ahmet Davutoğlu, a scientific and diplomatic celebrity, intellectual, a "great man", the most important personality of Turkish diplomatic history, a deep thinker who is the author of a practical and efficient geo-political doctrine, with a "planner" who aims to create a new world order based on universal standards and values to establish the

contours of a polycentric world, to build a dispassionate diplomacy (Pajaziti, 2009: 105-106); Davutoğlu the author of the major Turkish strategy (*Turkish Grand Strategy*) which constitutes "the ideological depth constant of the Turkish foreign policy" (*Novi Standard*, 2010), the author of the book that is the foundation of Turkish foreign policy vision – which, more independent than ever, takes Ankara as its axis and not others – that made this country an actor and not an issue (Judah, 2011), a country that has power and the wind on its back and which is being represented ever more strongly in international institutions.<sup>1</sup>

1 Secretary General of the Islamic Conference Organization (Ihsanoğlu), NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning (Dirioz), President of European Council's Parliamentary Assembly (Çavuşoğlu).

I consider Davutoğlu, who has launched a new era in Turkish foreign policy and diplomacy, a teacher of mine for the moment, for one day (i.e. at a university lecture) I have been his “student”, as a student of sociology and anthropology MA (1997). Since that academic meeting Davutoğlu has “tied me to himself” as a distance learner, has made me his student for life, has made me constantly dependent his writings, books, interviews, statements. My first meeting with him as an external (guest) student from the group of economists, as far as I remember, made me interested in his article *Self-perception of Civilizations*, and there was born the initiative for translating Davutoğlu’s discourse, for conveying a different discourse on the perception of civilization, sociology and international relations, unlike the dialectic (Marxist) and dialogical (Morin) ones, much more flexible and constructive, a diplomatic discourse that “generates” security, peace and democracy and is among the initiators of the Alliance of Civilizations.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Towards a normalization of history: Alternative self-perception

The renowned Turkish intellectual, thinker, scientist, the famous expert of international relations, the diplomat and professor Ahmet Davutoğlu is the man who has reached global fame by his own creative ideas. Here is concrete evidence to the universality of the opinion of this scientist-diplomat. According to the prestigious US magazine *Foreign Policy*, he has managed to position himself among the ten most influential thinkers in the world according to the second annual list of *Top 100 Global Thinkers*, as the seventh, ahead of Kissinger (25), Paul Krugman (26), Fareed Zakaria (27), Thomas Friedman (33), Jacques Attali (47), etc. This magazine sees 2010 as a crucial year when the signs of the rise of “the rest of the world” (rise of the rest) were seen, through accelerated economic growth of China and the diplomatic rise of Turkey and Brazil (*Foreign Policy*, 2011).

As a good connoisseur of social sciences in general and psychology among them, Davutoğlu, so fascinatingly uses the self and ego (self-perception), taking it on the sociological level, on nation-building and state-building (state-building: super-states, large states, regional powers and small states), and does not stop there, but passes on global dimensions, in a macro concept of civilizations. The globally recognized expert in the field of international relations, history of political thought and political philosophy shows a multidimensional

approach in this work to and civilizations and their world views (*Weltanschauung*), by dealing with how they see the truth, how they perceive themselves and the other/otherness and what stance they take vis-à-vis other cultures and civilizations.

Speaking of civilizational self-perception and awareness he offers five kinds of perceptive typology:

1. Strong and severe civilizational self-perception: The Aryan self-perception of the Indian civilization, which constitutes the basis to the exclusionary system of the castes.
2. Strong and flexible civilizational self-perception: Two examples of this self-perception we find in the eclectic civilizational basin formed under the political power of Alexander the Great and in the different forms of Islamic civilization displayed under Abbasid, Andalusian, Ottoman and Indian axis.
3. Strong and local civilizational self-perception: The traditional self-perception of the Chinese who considers his country to be the center of the universe. China’s traditional name *Zhongguo* that means “Central Kingdom” testifies to this.
4. Poor and harsh civilizational self-perception: A par excellence example is the Mongolian self-perception displayed by Genghis Khan, who by gathering all nomadic elements under one political authority blew like a hurricane or tornado over all the basins of ancient civilizations.
5. Poor and flexible civilizational self-perception: It is based on a simple and “bare” world view with no universal claims. We find examples of this self-perception among natives of America, Africa and Australia (Davutoğlu, 2010a: 39-56).

He also elaborates phrases such as *homo islamicus* and *homo occidentalis oeconomicus* and examines Westocentrism (West and rest), the issue of *mission civilisatrice*, and that of one-line or linear flow of history. He has been among the first to challenge the distinguished names of global theoretical science and policy-making like Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington who offer endist, confrontational-conflictual and armageddonian-cataclysmic paradigms. Let us just recall the following phrase in an article by Davutoğlu where he says that the Bosnian crisis is the end of the “end of history” (Davutoğlu, 1997-1998) raising his voice as a deep analyst against the voices of philosophers who end history. So history has not ended, there is no endism. The author rejects Fukuyama by claiming that the human searching process has not ended. The most vivid proof of this is the revival of local

<sup>2</sup> Launched by Erdoğan and Zapatero in 2005 with support from the United Nations.

values in a form of settling the accounts with the global superficiality, giving meaning to areas of ontological freedom and confidence that represent ancient requirements of man. He calls for the so-called normalization of history process. He stresses the importance of eliminating the Cold War and colonial abnormalities. Fukuyama says that history has ended, while Davutoğlu claims that history has started, having been in an unnatural state during its preliminary period that should be normalized (*Today's Zaman*, 2011).

He criticizes Huntington's concept of the clash of civilizations as a mental parameter that directly represents strategic recommendations to United States against the others, which creates a climate of anti-Americanism (remember the book by Ziauddin Sardar and Meryll Wyn Davies, *Why Do People Hate America?*) and anti-globalism, of post-Americanism (Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*), a climate against the *Pax Americana* as a paradigm of our time. Huntington's dealing that shows the cultural or civilizational revival of non-western basins as a strategic threat and recommends that western strategists should manipulate civilizational contradictions among the basins in question, was not only subjected to serious reactions by non-Western civilizations, especially by the Islamic and Chinese civilizations, but at the same time it raised many serious doubts among the Western elite and builders who felt the dangers of a categorical differentiation in the West and the rest (Davutoğlu, 2010b: 16). According to Davutoğlu "confrontational categorizations based on provoking civilizational differences like West against Islam and West against the others cannot in any way contribute to global peace and security, nor to the readjustment process of the international system. Erroneous strategic calculations based on confrontational categorizations will continue to be the main obstacle to global peace. Colonial ambitions and anti-colonial feelings of the last century could occur again with such strategic misuse of civilizational differences and all this will harm the west in general and USA in particular (Davutoğlu, 1997-1998)".

Davutoğlu is a thinker who through "proactive policy and multidimensional international policy (Keyman, 2009, cited in Öktem, 2010: 25)", instead of a clash of civilizations and conflict, offers the world a message of understanding, coexistence and dialogue as indispensable alternatives. Unlike dogmatic strategists he is an impartial analyst and interpreter of the world in crisis we are living in, a supporter of constructive policies for a functional globe despite global conflictuality apologists. He works for realizing in the micro plan, as well as in

the macro plan, his mission of creating a positive political climate. He is not an anti-globalist but an alter-globalist, as he says: a different world is possible. And he tries to realize it by activism in hot areas as well as by soccer diplomacy (Gül in Armenia for the Turkey-Armenia football match in 2008).

He also deals with the issue of the Muslim world and concludes that this inferior, colonized, confused world as a peripheral element of world politics, "which has lost its status as a determining civilizational power can regain this status on the basis of time's circularity. This would require a renewal of Islamic civilizational parameters and values rather than a withdrawal of them in favor of adopting Western ones" (Davutoğlu, 2005). According to him, the Muslim world could create a new civilizational vitality, if the intellectual, economic and political elites could reformulate the stability of the historical wealth of Islamic civilization for achieving an efficient activation in the social, economic and political arena (Davutoğlu, 2005).

### 3. Albanosphere, neo-Ottomanism and strategic depth

For the Albanian reader Davutoğlu is a familiar name. His works *Self-perception of Civilizations*, *The Global Crisis* and *Civilizational Transformation and the Muslim World* have been read with delight for some time now by our scholars, especially by those who want to look at things through a multidimensional approach and not only from a ego-centric illusion or from the position of *idola specus* (idol of the cave). His ideas have found resonance and have encouraged the local intellectual circle as well (A. Xhaferi, T. Arifi, S. Pendarovski, etc.).

The most voluminous and popular work of the author, *Strategic Depth: The International Position of Turkey* (2001), whose nucleus in my opinion is to be found in the *Self-perception of Civilizations*. Through the doctrine of "strategic depth", revealed in detail in the work bearing the same title which was named by Graham E. Fuller as the most detailed systematic vision ever drawn about Turkey's strategic position, and was called "the Bible of modern Turkey (*Novi Standard*, 2010)" by a Serbian diplomat and scholar (D. Tanasković), Davutoğlu has brought a new spirit in Turkey's relations with the outside world. In this work, which has seen 43 publications in Turkish,<sup>3</sup> Davutoğlu foresees that Turkey, from a marginal state has the capacity to become a central state and finally into a global player or global power. According to him, Turkey has the geographical and historical depth as a

3 Also translated in Arabic, Albanian, Persian and Greek.

European, Balkan, Mediterranean, Asian, Middle Eastern, Caucasian, Black Sea state that also has an imperial historical background (as heir to the Ottoman State) and it includes a mix of various elements of the spaces mentioned above, which meet under the roof of the modern Turkish state (*The Economist*, 2007: 60; *Koha*, 2009: 14).

This doctrine based on Davutoğlu's innovative approach on geopolitics is based on these principles:

- a) Security for all,
- b) Dialogue as the primary way to resolve the crisis,
- c) Economic (inter)dependence,
- d) Cultural coexistence and pluralism.

It is interesting to note that some experts oppose thinkers who describe this doctrine as an Ottoman or neo-Ottoman challenge, as neo-Ottomanism, holding that the doctrine in question contains a vision that transcends the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire and extends the historical ties and Turkish interests to Asia, Africa and the West. According to Davutoğlu Turkey cannot be compared with national states formed in the twentieth century; its position can only be compared with the position of former empires such as England, France, Germany, Russia, China, Japan, etc. According to him, its geographical depth is part of the historical depth because the position of Turkey makes it a state of many geostrategic areas the same time. According to Davutoğlu Turkey also holds quite an important place in "East-West, North-South tensions. Seen from the East it is an outgrowth of the West, while from the West it appears as an extension of the East" (2001). The basic principles of this doctrine are: Balance between security and freedom, zero problems with neighbors, development of good relations with close and far regions, multidimensional diplomacy, rhythmic diplomacy and stronger representation in international organizations. In this regard have Turkey's relations with NATO, OSCE, OIC, the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the G8, D20 etc. been analyzed on the plane of this doctrine. The book also includes reflections of strategic depth doctrine on marine basins, effective water policy in the Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, Aegean Sea, and Caspian Basin, Cyprus, in the straits, in the Indian Basin and in the Persian Gulf. It also deals with the intercontinental strategy of Turkish foreign policy - based on the doctrine of strategic depth - regarding Europe, Asia and Africa and plans and strategies towards regions of mutual

intercontinental influence.

This doctrine of the "Turkish Kissinger", besides the extraordinarily raised image all around the world (as the "moderate Islamic actor"), includes the Arab countries that for a century have squinted on Turkey while today they look at it as an example and leader of the Islamic world. This has brought economic benefits to Turkey like the growth of export and these developments have led to an expansion of relations in culture and other vital areas. The facts show that all these countries have interests in cooperating with one of the twenty largest economies in the world (foreseen to be 10th by 2020) with a country that is growing in reputation day by day.<sup>4</sup>

Let us get back to the title of my article for this promotion: Davutoğlu is truly *sui generis*, he is one who connects opposites, antipodes, and sometimes hardly compatible or incompatible paradigms: within a day he can meet with the Taliban and Obama, with Ahmadinejad and Bush (Obama), with Putin and with the Chechen leadership, with Tadić and Taçi or Bakir Izetbegović, until recently with Netanyahu and Abbas, with representatives of East Turkistan and Chinese leadership.

One thing that I regret and that worries me as knowledge seeker is that diplomacy is taking Davutoğlu from the field of science, a concern he has also expressed to me in meetings that we have had. But in a recent TV interview, he replied to journalist's question about "what he'd recently read?" by saying that he had finished a literary book (İskender Pala, *The Shah and the Sultan*), indicating that he is accumulating in order to distribute and what is more interesting, that he has no complex in reading texts by coeval colleagues, which a good part of us does not do for various whims. Impressing in this statement was the fact that he had read it in the plane during the round trip to America due to the lack of time because of diplomatic traffic (*TRT Haber*, 2010). The facts indicate that Davutoğlu is a localist as well as a globalist, he stands for "glocalism", recognizing both the material values (civilization) as well as spiritual ones (culture); he is eclectic and stands for a symbiosis of values.

*Strategic Depth* - based on Özal's neo-Ottoman policies and Erdogan's multidimensional diplomacy - has been dubbed a "naive concept

4 With a GDP per capita of 13.392 \$ *Vestel* is the biggest TV producer in Europe, THY is the fourth biggest flight company in Europe, after *British Airways*, *Lufthansa* and *Air France-KLM* (officially announced as the best for 2011), the fourth producer of cars, one of the five biggest world producers of furniture (*Istikbal*), of sweets (*Ülker*), 11 of 100 world's best hotels are in Turkey (*Financial Times*, 2011).

and radical thesis” by some analysts under the sky who criticize it for creating a “virtual Ottoman Empire” and seeing the Balkans as the center of world politics and not as a blind loop. A Turkey abstracted from the hinterland called Balkans, Middle East and Caucasus can have no influence at all in the international arena. This is why Balkans has been one of the most visited regions by Davutoğlu since 2009 when he was offered the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is the region where the pacifying concept is promoted. In the meanwhile Turkey’s economic and cultural activism in the region is not lacking too (TAV, THY, Ramstore, Acibadem Hospitals, Epoka University, IBU, colleges of the Gülen Movement, restoration of Ottoman monuments, the opening of Turkish cultural centers, etc.).

When we talk about this doctrine and the Albanian reality my dilemma is whether we and Albanian lands in general and Albania in particular could become a pivotal country from a torn country in the Balkans and implement the zero problems policy with our neighbors (against the phrase “surrounded by enemies on all sides”), whether we could increase our confidence in our cultural, historical, political, economic, scientific and other capabilities. We believe that it depends on a new intellectual spirit that knows how to make synthesis and eclecticism between time and space, between yesterday and today, who understands the totality of national values with which we can compete in the post-modern “international sprint” and that of a third wave society.

#### 4. Conclusion

Only the qualitative human element can give geography and history new meanings and perspectives - Davutoğlu says (Davutoğlu, 2010b: 56). According to him, every society must enter the process of self-renewal, of rediscovering the cultural references, of reinstating the social and moral-ethical reflections and must avoid the false self. In this regard, we remind remember that the institutional “cultural terrorism” which attempts by any means to alienate Albanians from its substantive components has to be avoided.

Through its selection of weighty works and by shaking the Albanian erudition ground, the *Logos-A* publishing house aims to give the mind momentum to new horizons, to carry out in maximum the motto promoted on the occasion of the 20-year jubilee “being the subject of free thought”. We believe that this work will take its place in the annals of building the tower of major translations and will particularly enrich the Albanian academic field of international relations and diplomacy and that it will become the manual of every Albanian politician.

## References

- Ali, M. (2010): Stratejik Derinlik Doktrini ve bu Doktrin Balkanlara Yansımaları, *Balkan Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 1 (2)
- Davutoğlu, A. (2010a): *Vetëperceptimet e qytetërimeve*, Skopje: Logos-A
- Davutoğlu, A. (2010b): *Thellësia strategjike: Pozita ndërkombëtare e Turqisë*, Skopje: Logos-A
- Davutoğlu, A. (2005): *Transformimi qytetërimor dhe bota muslimane*, Skopje: Logos-A
- Davutoğlu, A. (1997-1998): The Clash Of Interests: An Explanation Of The World (Dis)Order, *Perceptions: Journal Of International Affairs*, 2 (4)
- Öktem, K. (2010): *New Islamic actors after the Wahhabi intermezzo: Turkey's return to the Muslim Balkans*, Oxford: European Studies Centre, University of Oxford
- Pajaziti, A. (2009): *Fjalor i sociologjisë*, Skopje: Logos-A
- Walker, J. W. (2009): Turkey's Imperial Legacy: Understanding Contemporary Turkey through its Ottoman Past, in Harris, J. (ed.): *The Nation on the Global Era: Conflict and the Transformation*, Leiden: Brill

## Newspapers

- Davutoğlu, A. (2009): Njeriu nën hije i Turqisë, *Koha*, 27 May
- Lauer, C. (2010): The man behind Turkey's strategic depth, *Asia Times*, 20 February
- Novi Standard*, 4 February-26 June 2010
- The Economist*, 21 October 2010
- TRT Haber*, 26 December 2010

## Web sources

- Turkey says returning to 'normal' in ties with China, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-225717-turkey-says-returning-to-normal-in-ties-with-china.html> (28 January 2011)
- The FP Top 100 Global Thinkers, <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/2010globalthinkers> (28 January 2011)
- What Turkey Wants, <http://grayfalcon.blogspot.com/2009/11/what-turkey-wants.html> (29 January 2011)
- FT Reports: Turkish Airlines: Expansion during Recession pays off, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8b1d3bac-00d8-11e0-aa29-00144feab49a.html#ixzz1DHc4grsg> (27 January 2012)
- Judah, B. and Bechev, D. (2011): *Turkey: An Actor not an Issue*, [http://www.ecfr.eu/blog/entry/turkey\\_an\\_actor\\_not\\_an\\_issue](http://www.ecfr.eu/blog/entry/turkey_an_actor_not_an_issue) (1 March 2011)

## Davutoğlu: misaona dubina i globalni politički aktivizam kao nova velika strategija

ALI PAJAZITI

South East European University, Tetovo

Ovaj članak analitički je sinopsis procivilizacijskog aktivizma Ahmeta Davutoğlua, esej o ovom globalnom priznatom diplomatu te stručnjaku u polju međunarodnih odnosa, povijesti političkih ideja i političke filozofije. Davutoğlu je autor strateške doktrine nove Turske kao globalnog aktera s neoosmanističkim Geistom. Ona pokazuje njegov multidimenzionalni pristup civilizacijama i njihovom svjetonazorima (*Weltanschauung*), njihovim percipijama istine i kulturnoj drugosti, ali i njegov diplomatski diskurs koji generira sigurnost, mir i demokraciju te koji ga je učinio jednim od glavnih inicijatora Saveza civilizacija u eri Huntingtonovskog makrokonfliktualizma kao novog globalnog nereda. Ovaj članak fokusira se na neracionalnu diferencijaciju na Zapad i ostatak u eri postmodernog „međunarodnog sprinta“, kada se svijet transformira u globalno selo i kada je jedino rješenje u pronalaženju zajedničkih vrijednosti, socijalne filozofije koja će povezati različite kulturološke perspektive. U ovom kontekstu Davutoğluova geopolitička doktrina temelji se na principima sigurnosti za sve, dijaloga, gospodarske (među)ovisnosti i kulturne koegzistencije i pluralizma, što posebno može pomoći balkanskom prostoru kako bi se izbjeglo da on postane poljem postosmanskih povijesnih tragedija.

**Ključne riječi:** globalna politika, civilizacije, dijalog, neoosmanizam, međuovisnost