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Theory or Attitude? A Comparative Analysis of Turkish Newspaper Articles on Turkish Foreign Policy, June 2008–June 2011

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ABSTRACT *Turkish Foreign Policy (FP) has seen a paradigmatic transformation. This study presents a comparative analysis of 1535 articles, written by more than a hundred columnists and published in ten Turkish newspapers between June 2008 and June 2011. Results show a strong polarization of opinion such that articles with realist theoretical stance are highly likely to be critical of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) FP for Turkey, whereas articles with liberal and constructivist theoretical stance are highly likely to have pro-government positioning. In this close association, the question is whether attitude to government policy precedes or follows theoretical stance. Results suggest that newspapers employ mostly whatever theory will support their stance for or against the AKP's new-era FP. In addition, results suggest little attention to Turkey's bid for European Union membership and little attention to world problems outside the Middle East.*

If there were only one truth, you couldn't paint a hundred canvases on the same theme.

Pablo Picasso, 1966

Introduction

Turkish Foreign Policy (FP) has been in a period of transformation in recent years, as Turkey has experienced important changes in both internal and external political relations. In parallel with the increase of the visibility of Turkish FP both in the international and domestic domain, there has emerged a great curiosity to understand the dynamics of these changes. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, who has made a great contribution to the paradigmatic shift, asserts that “over the past seven years, Turkey has been able to formulate a systematic and

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cohesive methodological approach to world affairs because its political party (Justice and Development Party (AKP), *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) has been able to govern, resulting in real political stability at home.”¹ Davutoğlu suggests three methodological and five operational principles that drive Turkey’s FP today.

The methodological principles include “visionary approach to the issues instead of the crisis-oriented attitude that dominated FP during the entire Cold War period,” “basing Turkish FP on a consistent and systematic framework around the world,” and “the adoption of a new discourse and diplomatic style, which has resulted in the spread of Turkish soft power in the region.”² The operational principles are: a “balance between security and democracy, zero problems toward neighbors, proactive and pre-emptive peace diplomacy, multi-dimensional FP which sets Turkey’s relations with other global actors aim to be complementary, not in competition,” and finally “rhythmic diplomacy which aspires to provide Turkey with a more active role in international relations.”³

It is not a hyperbole to state that this ambitious vision of a new Turkish FP intends to transform both Turkey and the region not merely politically, but also in economic and cultural ways. The self-reliance of the AKP, its independent tailoring of FP parameters, and the increasing visibility of Turkish FP in the global arena are significant indicators of the transformation of FP in the new era. The question is then, in *Zaman* columnist Ekrem Dumanlı’s words, “while the vision of Turkey has been broadening, is the media ready for this wider vision?”⁴ The findings of this study suggest that the answer may be that the media are not ready.

Methodology and Research Question

In this study, a qualitative content analysis is applied to examine the corpus of Turkish mass media coverage of Turkish FP. Content analysis is a research method for making replicable and convincing inferences from a corpus of texts with the aim of providing knowledge and new insights.⁵ To perform a content analysis on a given text, the text is coded or broken down into convenient categories on a variety of levels, word, phrase, sentence, paragraph or theme, and then scrutinized, using conceptual or relational analysis.⁶

Qualitative content analysis, a type of content analysis, is designed for “subjective interpretation” of the content of a text through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.⁷ Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or digging out “objective” content from texts to study meanings, themes and patterns that may be latent or buried in a particular text. It enables researchers to realize social reality in a subjective but scientific manner.

In this study, a manual qualitative analysis is conducted to capture overall argument, supportive explanations, theoretical stance and pro/anti-government positioning of each article. Titles, arguments and supportive explanations that establish the meaning in the context are examined to produce both a thematic structure for each article and to obtain the latent context, where the meaning is materialized. Although manual analysis would be insufficient to extrapolate specific details, the abundance

and decisiveness of themes highlighting the theoretical stances and attitudes of newspaper columnists on the performance of Turkish FP make it possible to grasp the latent context of the samples.

One should note that all words or phrases used in this study are direct quotations from the articles. The name of the columnists, the name of the newspapers and the exact publication date (mm.dd.yy) of the articles from which the direct quotations are taken, and attached to the quotations to provide greater reliability of citations.

Step 1: Collecting data

To obtain the corpus, a search was conducted in the database within the archive of the author by entering the key word “*dış politika* (FP)” among columnists’ articles. With this search, all articles that include the key word “*dış politika*” in content were filtered. Then, selected articles were further screened to select articles for analysis. In this further screening, the following criteria were applied to enhance the quality of the sample.

- (a) The articles in the sample should solely be on FP (articles addressing other topics along with the FP have not been included)
- (b) The articles in the sample should propose a sound argument and lay out sufficient explanations to support this argument (therefore, articles that contain only comments have been omitted)

Step 2: Classification of the corpus

After coding the themes in all articles, the corpus is first classified according to the theoretical stance. In this step, the articles direct quotes of which some are presented below, for instance, are classified in the *realist camp*.

- “Russian-Georgian War Still Is A Proof That Realist Doctrine Prevails Over The International System.”⁸
- “Lisbon Summit Is A Triumph And Breakpoint Of Practical Politics In The Clash Of Pragmatist/Idealist.”⁹
- “There Exist Turkey’s Expansions, Rising Economical Force, Ascending International Profile, Even More Strategic Efforts To Be A Global Force But Not Enough Capacity To Sustain His Dream.”¹⁰
- “Power Should Be Viewed In A Realistic Manner.”¹¹
- “Is Turkey A Global Force? We Should Not Forget That The Means-Objective Relationship Is The Basic Rule Of Strategy.”¹²
- “Turkey Should Abstain From Sanction To Iran. What If Iran Produces Weapons In The Future?”¹³
- “Collapse Of The Davutoglu Legend: Conflict Is A Clear FP Fact In International System.”¹⁴

- “After The Gaza, Sudan And Iran Cases, Now Is The Time For Taliban Mediation. What A Fallacy.”¹⁵
- “Ottoman Society Of Nation Seems Classy, But The Question Is Whether It Is Realistic.”¹⁶

The following commonly used phrases defining the Turkish FP are, for instance, good indicators in classifying the articles in which they appeared in the realist camp: *realpolitik*, outcome-based FP, FP respectful to the geopolitical necessities, concrete, non-populist, traditional, axis shift in FP, FP respectful to the national interests, pragmatist, Westernist, rationalist, effective, [when criticizing the FP] Jihadist solidarity in the FP, Islamist, Middle East-centric, drifting, illusionist, confused, romantic, treacherous, FP with neo-Ottoman fantasies.

In contrast, the articles presented below, for instance, are classified in the *liberal camp*:

- “Future Belongs To Soft Power.”¹⁷
- “Regional Vision of Turkey at Mesopotamia Economic Basin.”¹⁸
- “Turkey That Shaking Off The Burdens In Its History And Ripening Its Identity.”¹⁹
- “In the new era, Turkish foreign policy has the properties of zero challenge with neighbors, carrying out a proactive reconciliation diplomacy, sustaining relationship with the US and EU based on mutual respect, acting a part at international organizations actively, taking role in global conflicts.”²⁰
- “On A Liberal Perspective, Turkey Has An Intention To Convert Its Economical Force Into Diplomatic Influence. But The Main Point Is That Do The Israel Really A Necessary Cost?”²¹
- “If Tyrant Has Nation-State, Oppressed Ones Have Internationalism.”²²

The following commonly used phrases helped to classify articles as liberal: *moralpolitik*, FP with global vision, econo-centric FP, multi-dimensional, FP with soft power, FP with the mediator role, multilateral, idealist and principled, pacifist, humanist, FP changing traditional perceptions, playmaker, proactive.

The articles the direct quotes of which some are presented below are, for instance, classified into the *constructivist camp*:

- “Turning Back To Middle East Has Psychological Extents In Terms Of Turkey’s Leadership.”²³
- “Cultural And Emotional Territory” Has Gained Importance Much As “Physical Region.”²⁴
- “We need to get rid of the indoctrinated apprehensions and geographical determinism.”²⁵
- “Davos outburst of Erdogan is not getting stubborn but standing staid. Pride is the thing what the Arabian world needs.”²⁶

- “We should transform Israel by the hands of Turkey to solve regional problems.”²⁷
- “The traditional rigid, outcome-based definitions of FP have been out. It is not the outcomes but processes and identities that shape the FP nowadays.”²⁸
- “Turkey is a hybrid country with both Islamic and Western Identities.”²⁹
- “When traditional pillars of international system are changing, arguments on axis shift are merely illusions.”³⁰

The following commonly used phrases are good indicators of the constructivist camp: process-based FP, identity-driven, FP of honor, imperial Neo-Ottomanist vision, transformative, FP delivering change and hope, fearless, Turkish FP as the guardian of oppressed ones, trustworthy, courageous FP, FP restructuring the Wider Middle East, FP transforming Israel.

After the classification in terms of the theoretical stance, the corpus, this time, is classified according to the attitude of the columnists toward government’s performance on Turkish FP. Six sub-categories: strongly pessimist, pessimist, cautiously pessimist, cautiously optimist, optimist, strongly pessimist are set for this classification. The tone of pro/anti government themes, the degree of praises/criticisms and the nature of praises/criticism (explicit/implicit) are taken as the references for this classification. While, for instance, articles with explicit praises of the personalities of Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu and articles that explicitly portray a grand success story in FP are classified in the strongly optimistic camp; the articles that depict the Turkish FP in the new period as a “success story” are classified in the optimistic camp. The articles with an implicit success story and some reservations are classified in the cautiously optimistic camp; and the articles with the tone of an implicit failure but with some pro-government stipulations are classified in the cautiously pessimistic camp. The articles that explicitly portray a failure and openly criticize the government’s performance are classified in the pessimistic camp while the articles with explicit criticisms toward decision makers and that openly depict the shift in the new period as a “systemic break down of Turkish FP” are classified in the strongly pessimistic camp.

Step 3: Analysis

Among the reviewed articles in each newspaper, the ones with explicit theoretical stance are filtered, sorted and analyzed. Second, among the reviewed articles in each newspaper, the articles with explicit pro/anti government stance are filtered, sorted and analyzed. And then, the filtered articles are cross-tabulated in terms of their theoretical stances and attitudes toward the performance of the government.

Below is the cross-tabulation of articles with explicit themes in terms of attitudes of the columnists toward the Turkish FP’s performance and the columnists’ theoretical stances:

Table 1 shows that a great majority of realist articles are pessimist on the Turkish FP’s performance between June 2008 and June 2011, and a great majority of liberal

Table 1. Cross-Tabulation of Attitudes toward Turkish FP and Theoretical Stances

Attitudes toward Turkish FP	Theoretical stances		
	Realist	Liberal	Constructivist
Pessimist	162	12	–
Optimist	21	80	66

and constructivist articles are optimist in this period. What can be inferred from this positioning? Since the columnists have inherently pro-government or anti-government attitudes, do they prefer realist themes to attack government's FP performance or liberal and constructivist themes to defend it?

To answer these question;

- (a) The section titled Theoretical Framework will first provide a brief review of what realist, liberal, and constructivist approaches mean.
- (b) Analysis section will highlight the findings of the study.
- (c) Conclusion will lay out the quantitative and qualitative findings

Theoretical Framework

If one were to categorize the theoretical themes in the articles analyzed, one may easily find out that these themes can be classified in terms of three widely accepted theories of international relations: traditional realist and liberal theories and the constructivist approach.

Realism

Like the inhabitants of a wild jungle, in which anarchy and chaos prevails, states in the international system must be self-interested, self-helping, ready for war and must always watch the balance of power.³¹ In this jungle-like international system shaped by anarchy, there is no definition of a good or bad state. That is why, for the states, first survival and then maximizing relative power and hegemony is the ultimate goal. Balance of power and diplomacy, the two most influential instruments in international relations, can correct the imperfections of world politics rooted in the inherently existing malicious nature of man.

The principles of realism are;

- Politics is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature, and the history and cumulative experience of mankind proves that human nature has not changed. Nonetheless, if statesman act rationally and understand the law of nature, policies would be better and the world would be a safer place.³²

- Interests are defined in terms of power and thus motives and ideas matter little.³³
- The political sphere is autonomous: economic, legal, moral and all other interests are subordinate to interests defined as power.³⁴ Politics, therefore, is not a function of ethics. There could be no effective morality where there was no effective authority.

Liberalism

The primary assumption of the liberal school is that conflict is not caused by the nature of man, but by the imperfections of the society of states. Reasoning, morality, and rationality could improve the world, which is regarded as a “cultivable land” by this school.³⁵ The dependent variable that this school seeks to understand is the degree of institutionalization among states.

There are mainly three different strands of liberalism.

- Economic interdependence makes states less likely to fight.³⁶ Stability flows not from military power, but from the creation of a liberal economic order, which is in fact for the wellbeing of everybody in the system. A liberal order fosters economic interdependence, a situation in which states are mutually dependent on each other.
- Democracies do not fight with each other.³⁷ Like birds of a feather flocking together, ideological solidarity among democracies prevents conflict.
- International institutions enhance cooperation and therefore reduce the likelihood of conflict.³⁸ They could help overcome selfish state behavior by encouraging states to forego immediate gains for the greater benefits of enduring peace.

Constructivism

The central idea of this approach is that much of the reality in world politics is socially constructed and thus can change, that is, ideas, norms and identities are important.³⁹ For constructivists, anarchy, for instance, the primary institution in realist thinking that should be accepted as a pre-determined fact, “is what states make of it”.⁴⁰ In contrast to the realists, who define material power (military and economic) as the single most important source of influence and authority in world politics, constructivists suggest that power is more than brute force. To understand how power is distributed in world politics is not the key factor to understand international relations; rather the key is what states understand about that power.⁴¹ Knowledge, culture, ideology may also be great sources of power.⁴² The real power of social practices, for this approach, lies in the efficiency and rapidity of their meaning-making capacity to first deconstruct conventional meanings and then to reconstruct new meanings in a new socially constructed community.⁴³

Analysis

When the articles are categorized and prioritized in terms of the issues they addressed (Tables 2 and 3);

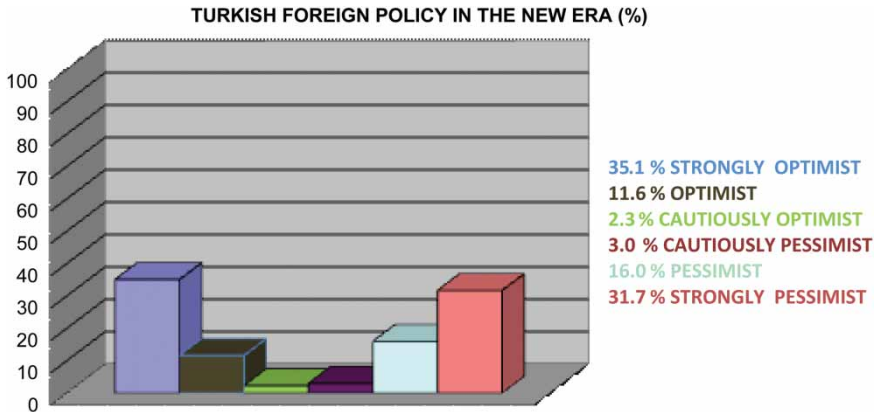


Figure 1. The Perception of the Columnists in Turkish Print Media on the Turkish FP's Performance.

The corpus suggests that there exists a major polarization and cleavage on Turkish FP in the print media that have a cardinal role in embodying the perceptions and beliefs of Turkish public opinion. Among 1535, when 629 articles that include explicit judgment on Turkish FP's performance in the new era are classified according to their evaluation on Turkish FP's performance, the extent of existing polarization and cleavage among opinions leaders in Turkish print media may be easily noticed (Table 4, Figure 1).

One may then recognize the strength of Strongly Optimist (31.7 percent) and Strongly Pessimist (35.1 percent) categories, and the weakness of the intermediate ones. This is the clearest indicator of polarization. In the same vein, the fact that while the articles in *Hürriyet* are substantially Strongly Pessimist ones, whereas the articles in *Zaman* are largely in the category of Strongly Optimist, is another indication of this polarization and cleavage in terms of the stances of the newspapers. One may wonder whether the Turkish FP in the new era is dreadful as *Hürriyet* says, or marvelous as *Zaman* says. Is Turkish FP ascending or descending? Nuray Mert's words, "Overstate and understate spirals"⁴⁴ sums up the dilemma of columnists when positioning themselves relating to Turkish FP in the new era.

On the other hand, when 386 articles with an explicit theoretical emphasis are reviewed (Figure 2 and Table 5).

To answer these questions, the subsequent section will, first, present a brief summary of each newspaper's attitude toward Turkish FP in the new era, and then highlight the negative cases that contradict the general attitude of each newspaper.

Hürriyet

68 articles (30 percent) out of 231 explicitly include realist themes. Therefore, *Hürriyet* is the most realist newspaper examined in this study. It is also worth noting that

Table 2. The Number and Percentage of Selected Articles^a

Newspaper name	Approx. circulation	Number of analyzed articles	Percent of analyzed articles
<i>Milliyet</i> , wide circulating newspaper owned by <i>Karacan</i> Media Group and has a publication policy close to a secularist, liberal centralist stance	130,000	260	16.9
<i>Radikal</i> , newspaper owned by the <i>Dogan</i> Media Group and has a publication policy close to a leftist and liberal stance	35,000	247	16.09
<i>Hürriyet</i> , the widest circulating newspaper owned by the <i>Dogan</i> Media Group and has a publication policy close to a secularist centralist and has a anti-government stance	415,000	231	15.04
<i>Sabah</i> , newspaper owned by <i>Çalık</i> Group that has close ties with JDP and has a pro-government stance	350,000	202	13.15
<i>Zaman</i> , newspaper owned by Islamic-oriented <i>Gülen</i> movement and has a pro-government stance	900,000	147	9.57
<i>Star</i> , the newspaper with a liberal publication policy and ultra pro-government stance	125,000	111	7.23
<i>Yeni Şafak</i> , the newspaper with a Islamist and ultra pro-government stance	110,000	106	6.90
<i>Cumhuriyet</i> which has a publication policy close to a secularist statist-leftist and has a anti-government stance	50,000	103	6.7
<i>Taraf</i> , the newspaper which has a ultra-liberal publication policy	55,000	78	5.08
<i>Yeniçağ</i> , the newspaper with a ultra-nationalist publication policy and has an anti-government stance	50,000	50	3.25
Total	2,286,611	1535	100%

^aThe Circulation Report was taken from <http://www.medyatava.com/tiraj.asp> (accessed September 15, 2011). The total newspaper circulation of 35 different newspapers in Turkey is roughly 3.5 million. The total number of 2,286,611 circulation of these 10 newspapers (as of October 12, 2011) comprise therefore roughly 65 percent of the total newspaper circulation. In this sense, the scope of this study covers around 70 percent of total circulation in Turkey.

Table 3. The Distribution of the Articles in Terms of Topics They Addressed

Nu.	Topics	Number of articles	Percentage
1	US FP and the Turkey–US relations (2008 US Presidential Elections, Global Crisis, Obama’s visits to Turkey and Egypt, “Obamania” debate, US FP priorities, Wikileaks documents)	240	15.63
2	Israel’s FP and the Turkey–Israel relations (Israel’s Gaza attack, <i>Mavi</i> Marmara raid, the termination of Anatolian Eagle Exercise, the broadcast of serial “Separation” by TRT, Davos outburst, Israel–Hamas and the Israeli–Iranian and the Israeli–US relations, the Israeli lobby in the USA)	175	11.40
3	Turkey–Middle East relations, Arab Reforms, Libya	135	8.79
4	Praises or critiques on the performance of foreign minister Ahmed Davutoğlu	102	6.64
5	Debates on axis shift and identity of Turkish FP	82	5.34
6	Iran and Turkey–Iran relations (Iran’s Presidential Elections and political violence during the elections, Iran–Syria and Iran–Lebanon relations, Iran’s Nuclear Program, Turkey’s “no” vote in the SC of UN)	81	5.27
7	Armenia (Armenian Opening, the so-called Genocide Debate)	80	5.21
8	Turkey–EU relations and EU candidacy process	69	4.49
9	The Russian–Georgian War	52	3.38
10	Conceptual and theoretical discussions on international relations and Turkish FP (IR theory, the concept of power, results-oriented process-oriented understanding of the idealist-realist understanding of constructive conflict, sub-headings, such as strategic depth in case)	47	3.06
11	Cyprus (Turkey–Cyprus relations, the EU candidacy process and Cyprus)	37	2.41
12	Wikileaks documents	30	1.95
13	Turkey–Iraq and Turkey–Northern Iraq relations	26	1.69
14	Energy (oil–gas pipelines, energy security, energy-political)	25	1.62
15	“New Ottomanism” and “Ottoman Commonwealth of Nations’ debate”	24	1.56
16	Iran–US relations	21	1.36
17	Crisis in Darfur, Sudan, Omar al-Bashir	20	1.30
18	Missile shield project and the NATO summit in Lisbon	20	1.30
19	Syria	17	1.10

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued).

Nu.	Topics	Number of articles	Percentage
20	Russia’s FP, Turkey–Russia relations	15	0.97
21	Republican Peoples Party (RPP) FP	14	0.91
22	Greece (Greek economic crisis, Cyprus)	14	0.91
23	Afghanistan	12	0.78
24	Turkey and Hamas	12	0.78
25	Turkey–France relations	10	0.65
26	Global economic crisis	9	0.58
27	China	4	0.26
28	Other (Turkey–India relations-4, Turkey–Azerbaijan-4, Germany-1, Brazil-2, Africa-3, the Kirkuk question-3)	17	1.10
	Total	1403	91.40%

Table 4. The Categories of Articles on Turkish FP’s Performance

Nu.	Categories	Numbers of articles	Ratio
1	Strongly optimist <i>Hürriyet: 1 Taraf: 16 Star: 9 Yeniçağ: 2 Zaman: 96 Radikal: 20 Milliyet: 9 Sabah: 13 Yeni Safak: 53</i> Optimist	221	35.1
2	<i>Hürriyet: 7 Taraf: 12 Star: 1 Yeniçağ: 1 Zaman: 13 Radikal: 13 Milliyet: 12 Sabah: 17 Cumhuriyet: 1 Yeni Safak: 9</i> Cautiously optimist	73	11.6
3	<i>Hürriyet: 2 Taraf: 2 radikal : 2 Milliyet: 2 Sabah: 2</i> Cautiously pessimist	15	2.3
4	<i>Hürriyet: 11 Taraf: 1 Zaman: 4 Yeni Safak: 3</i> Pessimist	19	3.0
5	<i>Hürriyet: 35 Taraf: 7 Zaman: 22 Radikal: 22 Milliyet: 97 Sabah: 4</i> Strongly pessimistic	101	16.0
6	<i>Hürriyet: 102 Cumhuriyet: 42 Star: 1 Yeniçağ: 36 Radikal: 8 Milliyet: 11</i> Total	200	31.7
	Total	629	100%

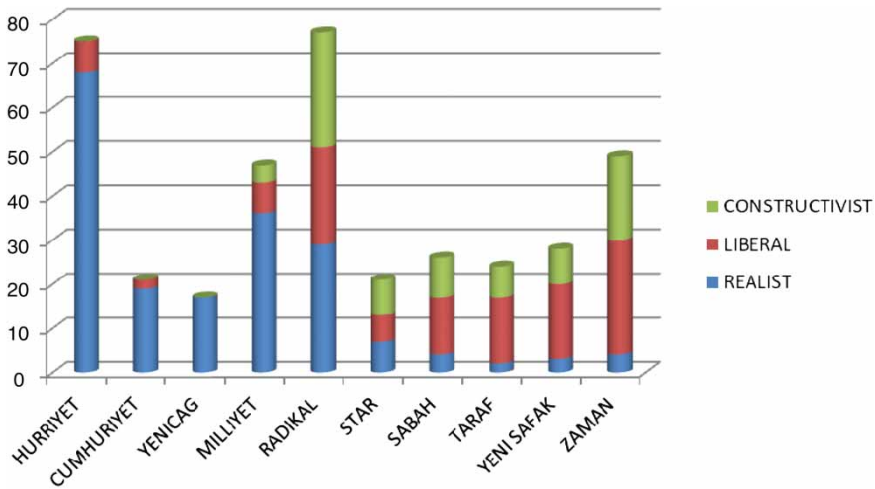


Figure 2. The Theoretical Stances of the Newspapers.

102 articles from the “strongly pessimist” category (44 percent of the total articles in *Hürriyet*) belongs to *Hürriyet*.

According to *Hürriyet*; Turkey, “surrounded by Caucasus Middle East and Balkans, sits in a rough neighborhood.”⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Turkish FP in the new era, “pursues populist policies for the average man on streets,”⁴⁶ is “ill-advised, provocative,”⁴⁷ “uses Islamic references,”⁴⁸ “facilitates FP issues as instruments for domestic politics,”⁴⁹ is “US fan to the extent of Obamania,”⁵⁰ “ineffectively focuses on futile

Table 5. The Categories of Articles on Their Theoretical Emphasis

Newspapers	Realist articles	Liberal articles	Constructivist articles	Total
<i>Hürriyet</i>	68	8	–	76
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	19	2	–	21
<i>Yeniçağ</i>	17	–	–	17
<i>Milliyet</i>	36	7	4	47
<i>Radikal</i>	29	22	26	77
<i>Star</i>	7	6	8	21
<i>Sabah</i>	4	13	9	26
<i>Taraf</i>	2	15	7	24
<i>Yeni Safak</i>	3	17	8	28
<i>Zaman</i>	4	26	19	59
Total	189	116	81	386
	48.9%	30%	20.9%	100%

processes rather than outcomes,⁵¹ “is moving away from the EU and NATO, two traditional instruments anchored Turkey to the West,”⁵² “focuses on interpersonal relations rather than institutionalized foreign policy making,”⁵³ “follows an imperial vision rather than national interests,”⁵⁴ “has shifted to the Islamist ideological ground and embracing global jihad,”⁵⁵ “has lost traditional western direction,”⁵⁶ which “moves back and forth between fantasy and reality,”⁵⁷ has been disseminating “We are enough for us” message to the Arabs,⁵⁸ is “reckless and irresponsible,”⁵⁹ “plays the role of U.S. regional subcontractor and neo-Ottoman-looking.”⁶⁰ Moreover, *Hürriyet*, which contends that the new setting in Turkish FP has kept it in an “aimless” and “distant” manner,⁶¹ “proposes that Turkey’s tutelage of Omar al-Bashir of Sudan.”⁶² Prime Minister Erdoğan’s visit to Iran,⁶³ “the mediator role” of Turkey between the USA and the Taliban⁶⁴ has changed “the perception of the West regarding Turkey.”⁶⁵ This provocative stance in world politics even if there is no gain for Turkey, has raised some questions such as “Are we still in the western camp?” in the mind of Turkish public.⁶⁶

In *Hürriyet*, only 13 articles (five percent) in 231 are pro-government and have optimistic themes. A great majority if these negative cases are about President Abdullah Gül’s visits to Armenia⁶⁷ Gül’s Latin America visit,⁶⁸ Turkey’s No vote in the UN Security Council on the sanctions against Iran,⁶⁹ Turkey’s Northern Iraq opening⁷⁰ and Turkey’s growing influence in the Wider Middle East region.⁷¹

Also phrases such as “Kasımpaşa bully,”⁷² “populist FP,”⁷³ “ Hamas’s speaker,”⁷⁴ “Sultan Erdoğan,”⁷⁵ “Erdoğan is Europe’s Hugo Chavez,”⁷⁶ “Islam’s Mujahedeen Davutoğlu,”⁷⁷ “Mujahedeen James Bond Davutoğlu,”⁷⁸ “Davutoğlu’s ideological schizophrenia,”⁷⁹ “U.S.’s Neo-Ottoman looking sub-contractor,”⁸⁰ “government’s global Jihadist ideology,”⁸¹ “Jihadist mentality in Turkish FP,”⁸² are persuasive indicators that show the extreme anti-government attitude of *Hürriyet*.

In conclusion; it is likely that *Hürriyet*’s negative attitude toward government’s performance in FP is the primary driver of its publication policy in the period of June 2008–June 2011. When reviewing *Hürriyet* articles, the realist themes look like a theoretical background to persuasively disseminate this negative stance, which suggests that, in the strong association of negative attitude toward government’s FP making and realist stance, negative attitude precedes the theoretical stance. The attacks in *Hürriyet*’s articles to the personalities of AKP’s political leaders such as Prime Minister Erdoğan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu support this assumption as well.

Cumhuriyet

Realist themes triumph in the 103 articles examined in *Cumhuriyet*. In this regard, after *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet* is the second most realist newspaper. One should also note that the number of Strongly Pessimist articles in this newspaper is 42 (40 percent). According to *Cumhuriyet*, “Turkish FP has erroneously and treacherously slipped from the interest-centric approach to the ideal-centric approach in the new era.”⁸³ Turkey has “moved quickly away from the West and excessively influenced

by the US.”⁸⁴ Many Turkish economic enterprises have been sold to foreigners with an “econo-Islamist” understanding⁸⁵ and Turkey has eventually been drawn to the “the Middle East quagmire.”⁸⁶ Turkey, “which has changed her ideological stance by befriending to Hamas, Sudan and Iran,”⁸⁷ “has ended her enthusiasm in the EU membership process.”⁸⁸ Put simply, Turkish FP has been “intoxicated” by the new Ottoman “fantasies,”⁸⁹ and strategic depth “drunkenness” on the brink of the Arab Spring.⁹⁰

Among the 103, it is interesting to see only one pro-government article that emphasized “some of the policies of Davutoğlu are true since the US has been a withdrawing power.”⁹¹ The phrases such as “Davutoğlu’s new Ottoman fantasies,”⁹² “strategic confusion in the FP”⁹³ are commonly used, which demonstrate the extreme anti-government attitude of this newspaper. Like the ones in *Hürriyet*, therefore, the negative attitude on government’s performance prevail the theoretical stance in the articles in *Cumhuriyet*. The attacks in *Cumhuriyet*’s articles on the personalities of AKP’s political leaders support this assumption, a point that one can witness in the *Hürriyet* case as well.

Yeniçağ

Among the 50 articles examined in *Yeniçağ*, 36 were anti-government and 17 were with realist orientation. *Yeniçağ* claims that the Ottoman *millet* system, a dream in terms of the objective-means balance.⁹⁴ “The Armenian opening, forced by the US,”⁹⁵ “at the expense of alienating Azerbaijan,”⁹⁶ was a “gamble.”⁹⁷ In this new era, Turkey, which has been drafting in “treacherous waters,” could not “get any significant result,”⁹⁸ on many vital issues such as the “question of Cyprus.” The “romance” currently noticed in the FP of Turkey, “which is currently navigating in foggy seas,”⁹⁹ will eventually lead to heavy consequences that will be paid by the Turkish nation.¹⁰⁰

There is only one optimistic article as the negative case in *Yeniçağ*; this article states “Turkey has tailored a wise foreign policy that balance the US and Russia.”¹⁰¹ In this sense, it is likely to assert that the negative attitude toward government’s performance is obvious in the case of *Yeniçağ*.

Milliyet

In the light of 260 articles examined in *Milliyet*, one may contend that *Milliyet* has substantial realist themes, yet they are fewer than the ones in *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet* and *Yeniçağ*. Although they are fewer than realist articles, *Milliyet* has some liberal themes as well. On the other hand, 26 pro-government articles in *Milliyet*, most of which were liberal orientations, are worth mentioning. For this reason, this newspaper could be placed between Pessimist and Cautiously Pessimist categories.

According to *Milliyet*, the Turkish FP makers have been tailoring its policies not by “rationality” but by “emotions.”¹⁰² Yet Turkish FP is excessively courageous against Israel, a good example of which is the “One Minute” outburst in the Davos

Summit;¹⁰³ “its reluctance to show same courage on Darfur,”¹⁰⁴ or Hamas¹⁰⁵ or Iran tempts one to explain this contradiction as “the mujahideen solidarity.”¹⁰⁶ In this new era, which reflects “imperial aspirations,”¹⁰⁷ one notices not only “declining interest in the EU candidateship”¹⁰⁸ but also shifting the axis of traditional FP.¹⁰⁹ In the same vein, the “Islamic identity” of Turkish FP has become very visible,¹¹⁰ and “generates its political energy from Turkey–Israel conflict.”¹¹¹ This new approach that disrupts the principles of traditional FP¹¹² has “fallaciously” failed to recognize that there are no “eternal friendships” in international relations, and “interests of the states are the sole determinants of world politics.”¹¹³

In the pessimistic camp, unlike *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet* and *Yeniçağ*, in which negative attitude toward government’s performance is likely to lead the realist positioning of the articles, *Milliyet*’s articles seem less likely to directly attack the government. In this sense, it would be convenient to position *Milliyet* in the Cautiously Pessimist camp. When the thematic structures of the articles are reviewed, the theoretical stance in *Milliyet* seems to lead the columnists’ attitudes on government’s performance. The writing style of the majority of the columnists in *Milliyet*, that first portrays a theoretical truth and then efforts to criticize government’s performance with cautiously selected and theoretically convenient words, is also worth mentioning as a supportive indicator that underlines *Milliyet*’s grasp of theoretical supremacy rather than the negative attitude toward government’s performance.

Radikal

The first notable finding on *Radikal* is that the numbers of articles that include realist, liberal and constructivist themes, are almost equal among the 247 articles examined. *Radikal*, which is usually preferred by more intellectual readers who seek a more critical and investigatory approach, is, therefore, the most neutral newspaper among the 10 examined in this study in terms of both its theoretical stance. Similarly, while 32 articles are optimistic ones, 31 articles negatively address the Turkish FP, which means that *Radikal* is also the most neutral newspaper among those examined in terms of attitude toward government’s performance.

According to *Radikal*; Turkey has been transforming the wider Middle East region as “Obama’s peaceful regional vanguard.”¹¹⁴ “The regional weight and thus assertiveness of Turkey has drastically increased.”¹¹⁵ “The new interpretation of her Ottoman root and multi-dimensional characteristics originated from her soft power” has provided Turkey a new setting to play a more “positive role” in the region.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, while “business-oriented and principled mindset of the Turkish FP”¹¹⁷ enables modern references in FP making, “recalling the imperial past has made Turkey more assertive.”¹¹⁸ The pillars of this assertive role are: “the utilization of rhetoric ‘Islamic world should be self-sufficient’ to reconstruct self-confidence of the Islamic world,”¹¹⁹ the utilization of soft power to facilitate process-oriented approach to produce “credibility” and “reliability” in the FP,¹²⁰ utilization of Israel as the “ceaseless regional rival,”¹²¹ and finally utilization of Turkey’s economic power to influence Middle East, Caucasus and Balkans.¹²² “One should

notice that it is a great fallacy and nonsense to argue that the axis of traditional Turkish FP has shifted while the very fundamentals of political system of the world has been changing."¹²³ To gain a respected place in the new world order, Turkey should, first, emphasize "moral obligations rather than national interests."¹²⁴ If Turkey realizes these dynamics, she may "live the golden era." Turkey is actually a waking "giant."¹²⁵

It is evident that the theoretical stance is more important than the attitude on government's performance in *Radikal*'s publication policy in this period and thus articles are shaped accordingly. *Radikal*'s equal distribution of articles in terms of their theoretical stance, not attitude toward government, seems to support this argument.

Star

111 articles examined in *Star* had mostly liberal and some constructivist themes. According to *Star*, the "Turkish sun" has emerged in the Middle East¹²⁶ and Turkey, which has started to play "mediating and facilitating role in solving problems," has become increasingly visible in the region.¹²⁷ Erdoğan's Davos outburst shows that Turkey, which has "unshackled herself from her groundless fears such as Arab-phobia,"¹²⁸ has become the country that oppressed "ones look for justice."¹²⁹ Turkey also reads changing regional and global dynamics well, "craftily and steadily makes Israel irrelevant"¹³⁰ and "broadens her field of maneuver to be able fill the power gap caused by the economic and political withdrawal of the US from the wider Middle East."¹³¹ Particularly, "economy-oriented policies of Turkish FP in the new era has shattered our traditional perception of geography"¹³² and caused the emergence of a "Turkish Spring" in the region.¹³³ *Star*, on the other hand, "emphasizes that the Turkey-EU relations has increasingly been weakening"¹³⁴ and Turkish FP has been sailing dangerous in waters with the "New Ottomanism comedy."¹³⁵

The pro-government stance of *Star* is evident in the articles and thus optimistic themes outweigh the theoretical background.

Sabah

Two hundred and two articles examined in *Sabah* are generally in the Optimistic category and possess liberal and econo-centric themes. Furthermore, *Sabah*'s special effort to explain Obama-led US FP is evident. In total, 42 articles in *Sabah* specifically focus on Obama's FP, a focus that makes *Sabah* the leader in covering US FP among the newspapers examined. According to *Sabah*, Turkish FP in the new period,¹³⁶ with the support of Turkey's "raising economic profile,"¹³⁷ endeavors to "open up new markets"¹³⁸ *Sabah* also emphasizes that, parallel to increased self-confidence of Turkey, "her ambition towards the EU membership has waned"¹³⁹ since Turkey, with both Western and Islamic identity, has the advantage of being a "hybrid country,"¹⁴⁰ and seeks to play a "more assertive role in the region."¹⁴¹

For *Sabah*, the Obama administration sees Turkey as a “model partner since Turkey’s Muslim identity is crucial for US interests.”¹⁴² The fact that the “US and Turkey have identical interests”¹⁴³ “opens Turkey’s opportunity venues in the region.”¹⁴⁴ “The US, in fact, aims to transform Israel by means of Turkey”¹⁴⁵ and legitimizes “Turkey’s regional leadership.”¹⁴⁶ “However, the most important obstacle between the US and Turkey is Iran.”¹⁴⁷ Moreover, the strained Turkey–Israel relations that has come to the “point of breaking apart after the Mavi Marmara raid is another dilemma for the US to address.”¹⁴⁸

Although *Sabah* strongly emphasizes liberal themes, the pro-government stance of this newspaper triumphs over its liberal theoretical background. Therefore, positive attitude toward government’s performance seems to lead the theoretical positioning of the articles. The fact that there is only one negative article (pessimist) among 202, which argues that the government has some limitations when tailoring the Turkish FP¹⁴⁹ supports the prominence of *Sabah*’s pro-government attitude.

Taraf

Twenty-eight of seventy-eight articles (35 percent) examined in *Taraf* address US FP or US domestic politics and thus are not directly related to the Turkish FP. According to *Taraf*, Obama’s presidency has created a revolutionary impact in the world; and with Obama’s victory, the politics of fear that ruled the world is over.¹⁵⁰ For the Obama administration, the question of “Who is Turkey?” has become more important than the question of “Where is Turkey?”¹⁵¹ “Traditional elite in Turkey, representing the status quo, dislikes Obama since he represents hope and change.”¹⁵² US–Turkey relations, however, especially on the issues of Israel, Iran and the PKK, have some “thorny” points.¹⁵³

Taraf also pays attentions to “the EU candidacy and asserts that EU process should not be seen as a matter of FP and should immediately be internationalized”¹⁵⁴ so that the pace of the adoption of the EU reforms would be faster.¹⁵⁵ It is evident that *Taraf*’s liberal stance triumphs over its attitude toward government’s performance. Among newspapers in the liberal and constructivist camp, *Taraf* is the harshest when criticizing the government. “The withdrawal of the government from Ermenian opening,”¹⁵⁶ AKP’s not criticizing Iranian government during the Iranian presidential elections,¹⁵⁷ “AKP’s Islamist agenda that separate people as Muslims and non-Muslims when approaching any FP issue,”¹⁵⁸ Turkey’s close stance to Iran, Hamas and Omar el-Bashir¹⁵⁹ and JDP’s pro-Asad and pro-Kaddafi stance at the onset of crises in Syria and Libya¹⁶⁰ are, for instance, severely criticized. It is, thus, highly likely to assert that the theoretical stance of *Taraf* leads to its attitude toward government’s performance.

Yeni Şafak

With 53 articles among 106, *Yeni Safak* contributes to the Strongly Optimistic category, which shows its extreme pro-government stance. Interestingly, 27 articles

out of 106 (24 percent) are about Israel and all severely criticize Israel, which makes this newspaper the one with the sharpest criticism toward Israel among 10 newspapers. According to *Yeni Safak*: in the new era, “Turkey has different FP priorities.”¹⁶¹ Turkey is “shaking off the burdens in its history luggage and reconstructing its identity”¹⁶² “has become a primary player in the region,”¹⁶³ “with a motivation of responsibility towards its history.”¹⁶⁴ Turkey recalls that she has “cultural and emotional area of influence beyond her borders”¹⁶⁵ and eventually has reverted back as a “leading country” of the Middle East,¹⁶⁶ become a “play maker” in the region¹⁶⁷ and even become a global power.¹⁶⁸ Turkey, by searching for new markets in the Mesopotamia economic basin and “Caucasus economic basin”¹⁶⁹ by undertaking a role in global conflicts, taking part in International organizations, by proactive reconciliation diplomacy and “zero problem” policy with neighbors¹⁷⁰ offers “exciting, self-reliant and vigorous FP vision, and promises prosperity, stability and peace.”¹⁷¹

On the other hand, according to *Yeni Şafak*; Turkey criticizes Israel because of the Gaza assault¹⁷² has gained status due to her attitude at Davos;¹⁷³ “Israel has been trapped by the US–Turkey–Iran trio,”¹⁷⁴ and “has isolated itself”¹⁷⁵ by virtue of Obama’s restraining policies,¹⁷⁶ therefore the rules of the game in Turkey–Israel relationships have drastically changed.¹⁷⁷ The Mavi Marmara Assault which is the “9/11 of Turkey,”¹⁷⁸ has become a turning point in Turkey–Israel relations,¹⁷⁹ Turkey holds a de jure position in this case¹⁸⁰ and should immediately break off with Israel¹⁸¹ a “rogue state” that has lost her reason and morality.¹⁸²

It is evident that the pro-government stance prevails over its theoretical stance in *Yeni Şafak*. The fact that there is only one negative article (Pessimist) among 106 that criticizes the Armenian opening¹⁸³ supports this argument. Furthermore, the theoretical shifts of columnists are visible in *Yeni Şafak*. That is, some columnists, who have a strongly realist stance on the Turkey–Israel relationship, write strongly liberal pieces when it comes to Turkey’s role in Wider Middle East. These theoretical contradictions are also good indicators of the prominence of the pro-government attitude over the theoretical stance in the *Yeni Şafak* case.

Zaman

Zaman is the main contributor both to the Strongly Optimistic category and the constructivist camp. While 96 articles among 106 are strongly optimistic, 32 articles among 106 are in the constructivist camp. In this context, *Zaman* is the most constructivist among the 10 newspapers analyzed. For instance, *Zaman* has 12 articles that scrutinize the phenomenon of power in world politics. According to *Zaman*, the changing balance in the international system “has made the traditional realist-centered power definition, that is materially defined military and economic power, alter.”¹⁸⁴ *Zaman*, emphasizing “the rise of soft power”¹⁸⁵ and explaining this phenomenon as a consequence of Obama’s new strategy in the evolving the world¹⁸⁶ asserts that the time has come for “questioning the traditional power definitions in Turkey.”¹⁸⁷ Soccer play would be used to melt the frozen conflicts between Turkey and Armenia as a means of “soft power”¹⁸⁸ and “Turkish TV serials that

have been exported into the Middle East”¹⁸⁹ are two good examples of Turkish soft power.

Besides, according to the *Zaman*, examining the phenomenon of fear in Turkish FP, the fundamental characteristics of the new world system are versatility and diversity.¹⁹⁰ Claiming that a static axis has already vanished in world politics, for *Zaman*, the time has come to face “the ungrounded fears of geographical determinism”¹⁹¹ and “Turkey should immediately need to liberate herself from her pointless anxieties.”¹⁹² The dilemma that Turkey currently faces, for *Zaman*, is mainly based on fear of breaking apart the traditionally set but nonetheless “meaningless boundaries.”¹⁹³

According to *Zaman*, Turkey has evolved from “a wing country of Cold War years to a central country in the post-Cold War era”¹⁹⁴ and turned from “object into subject.”¹⁹⁵ *Zaman* claims that this changing role is not the choice for Turkey, it is in fact an “obligation to play.”¹⁹⁶ By redesigning FP, Turkey; has “appeared on the scene” again after waiting its turn for a long time¹⁹⁷ and has “started to play a mediator role between Islamic and Western world”¹⁹⁸ which might eventually lead to a “Pax Ottomana”¹⁹⁹ based on economic dependency in the region.²⁰⁰ On the other hand, “while Turkey’s vision expands, Turkish politics and press has not yet been ready to this wider scope.”²⁰¹

Moreover, both EU and Turkey are responsible for declaration of the EU candidacy process.²⁰² Still, it may be useful to open the ports in Cyprus and withdraw soldiers partially as a gesture if EU candidacy is a main FP concern for Turkey²⁰³ which “has already got bored with EU candidacy.”²⁰⁴

Although there are five negative articles (Pessimist) that criticize government’s relationship with Omar el-Bashir,²⁰⁵ Kaddafi²⁰⁶ and Turkey’s diminishing appetite for the EU membership,²⁰⁷ most articles have pro-government stance in *Zaman*. *Zaman*’s not taking a Hawkish stance when it comes to the Turkey–Israel relations, as *Yeni Safak* does, also deserves notice. In *Zaman*, the positive attitude on government’s performance, therefore, seems to be the main driver of thematic structures rather than the theoretical stance driving attitude.

Conclusion

This analysis clearly shows that, among opinion leaders in Turkey, there continues a harsh debate about Turkish FP in the new era. This analysis also illustrates that Turkish FP has been in a paradigmatic transformation, defined by some as a grand failure and by others as a grand success. In terms of theoretical stance, however, the trend of this transformation would be described as a declining influence of traditionally set realist orientations in Turkish FP and the rise of liberal and constructivist ideas about the FP making process. Results also indicate that opinion leaders in the Turkish print media, who seem to be stuck in a “overstate/understate spiral” when assessing the AKP-run government’s performance, have not been fully ready for theoretical reconstruction of Turkish FP. Relying on the analysis in this study, it appears that while some among 1535 articles take a negative or positive stance to this transformation because of the ideological/theoretical positioning of the

columnists, the pragmatic pro/anti government attitude prevails and thus primarily shapes the thematic structures in a great majority of the articles.

Turkish FP in the new era, according to a hawkish realist and anti-government camp that includes *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeniçağ* and *Milliyet* newspapers, is: imaginative and adventurous, situated amongst fact and fiction, sheared off and axis shifted, incautious, moving by senses not by reason, over individualized, careless of EU process, facing ideological shifts, populist, over integrated on internal politics, raising to the bait fast, has surrendered to the US track, romantic, imperial, pro-Iran, pro-Omer al-Bashir and pro-Hamas, not idealist on an universal perspective, new Ottomanist, having a lot of words to say but being futile, show oriented, causing crisis by spontaneous and sharp scolding performance. On the other hand, According to a dovish liberal/constructivist pro-government camp that comprises *Star*, *Sabah*, *Taraf*, *Yeni Şafak* and *Zaman*, the Turkish FP is multi-directional, multi-dimensional, principled, benign, standing with change and transformation, process oriented, mainly based on soft power, proactive and rhythmic, more independent, having regional and even global vision, economy oriented, coordinated with the US, aiming to be a bridge amongst Islam and the West, liberated from past fears, principled, the putting forward of moral politics, having historical responsibilities, getting harmonious with her Islamic identity, going to new markets such as Africa–China–South America–India, becoming protector of the helpless and a voice of the oppressed, honorable, standing strong and staid, not needy to the EU, an awaking giant, a rising sun.

One may, therefore, easily notice from the above-presented analyses of the newspapers that a great majority of the articles appeared in *Zaman*, *Star*, *Sabah*, *Yeni Şafak* and *Taraf* are the ones that seek to present an optimistic interpretation of Turkish FP. By contrast, a great majority of the articles that appeared in *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Yeniçağ* and *Cumhuriyet* are the ones that endeavor to spread pessimistic interpretation of the story. *Radikal*, however, which equally gave place for articles that includes realist, liberal, and constructivist themes, is found to be the most neutral newspaper among 10 newspapers examined.

One notable finding is that only a small number of articles address system-level changes such as the US–China rivalry, rising of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries, effects of the global economic crisis on the international system, tension between Pakistan–India, Afghanistan, global warming, global security and terrorism. For instance, only 4 out of 1535 articles touch on China's rise and systematic effects of this rising, three articles deal with the Pakistan–India relationship, six articles talk about Afghanistan, and five articles mention events in Africa. In the light of these numbers, it seems that international issues are severely underrepresented in the articles analyzed, a disregard that contradicts the regional and even global vision of the Turkish FP in the new era. It is also interesting to note that only 69 articles (4.49 percent) among analyzed articles, the eighth mostly addressed issue in the corpus, are written on the EU and Turkey's candidacy process. The fact that the amount of articles related to the EU in the corpus is

extremely low would be a good indicator of the fading interest of Turkey's opinion leaders on the EU in the new era.

In conclusion, conventional wisdom holds that "politics stops at the water's edge", that is, partisan politics concentrates on domestic affairs, whereas FP is (or maybe ought to be) governed by a domestic consensus on what is in the national interest. Relying on the analysis of the study, since domestic consensus has not been achieved in the print media, Turkish FP remains in the eye of the beholder. This study, nonetheless, suggests that Turkish FP in the new era is neither dreadful as hawks portray, nor marvelous as doves claim. To avoid the overstate/understate spiral, it would be convenient not to interpret every incident on Turkish FP through the lenses of pro-versus anti-government positioning. One should note that portraying of every incident either as an absolute victory or an absolute defeat does not help shape a healthy public opinion about FP.

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