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*Araştırma Makalesi*

## **AGENT-STRUCTURE RELATIONS IN FOREIGN POLICY: AN ANALYSIS OF TURKEY-SYRIA RELATIONS DURING THE ARAB SPRING ON A DYNAMIC FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS MODEL**

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### **Abstract**

*The main focal point in this study analyzing the change of Turkey-Syria relations during the Arab Spring is the agent-structure problem. The change that took place in Turkey-Syria relations is analyzed in the light of “the beginning of the demonstrations in Daraa and the Siege of Hama”, “shooting down of Turkish RF-4E reconnaissance aircraft”, “violation of rules of engagement”, and “Operation Euphrates Shield” in the framework of Dynamic Foreign Policy Analysis Model (DFPAM) developed by Carlsnaes based on Margaret Archer’s Morphogenetic Approach. It is concluded that Turkey’s Syria policy changed in the process as a result of the interaction with the “structure” and that these foreign policy actions led to a new structuring at the same time.*

**Keywords:** *Agent-Structure Problem, Turkey-Syria Relations, the Siege of Hama, Engagement Rules, Operation Euphrates Shield.*

## **DIŞ POLİTİKADA AKTÖR YAPİ İLİŞKİSİ: ARAP BAHARI SÜRECİNDE TÜRKİYE SURIYE İLİŞKİLERİNİN DİNAMİK DIŞ POLİTİKA ANALİZİ MODELİ BAĞLAMINDA ANALİZİ**

### **Öz**

*Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinin Arap Baharı sürecinde değişime uğramasını analiz eden bu çalışmada temel dayanak noktası aktör-yapı sorunudur. Carlsnaes’in, Margaret Archer’in Morfogenetik Yaklaşımını baz alarak geliştirdiği Dinamik Dış Politika Analizi Modeli (DDPAM) çerçevesinde, Türkiye-Suriye ilişkilerinde meydana gelen değişim, “Dera’da gösterilerin başlaması ve Hama Kuşatması”, “RF-4E keşif uçağının düşürülmesi ile angajman kurallarının değiştirilmesi” ve “Fırat Kalkanı Harekatı” ışığı altında analiz*

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edilmiştir. Türkiye'nin Suriye politikasının, süreç içerisinde "yapı" ile karşılıklı etkileşimi neticesinde değiştiği ve bu dış politika eylemlerinin aynı zamanda yeni bir yapılandırmaya yol açtığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye Suriye İlişkileri, Aktör Yapı Sorunu, Hama Kuşatması, Angajman Kuralları, Fırat Kalkanı Harekâtı.

## INTRODUCTION

Adana Protocol in 1998, which was considered a milestone in relations between Turkey and Syria, accelerated mutual interactions. Abdullah Gul visited Damascus (as Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2003 and 2006 and in 2010 as President) and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2004, 2006 and 2011. In return, Bashar Hafez al-Assad (the first Syrian President who visited Turkey after a period of 57 years) came to Ankara in 2004, 2007 and 2010. In 2004, the Free Trade Agreement was signed between the two countries. The rapprochement between Syria and Turkey reached the peak point with Erdogan and Assad taking a vacation together with their families in Bodrum in 2008, the joint exercise of the two countries' armies in 2009, removal of the visas mutually and the joint cabinet meeting (in Aleppo and Gaziantep). As a result of these diplomatic contacts, Turkey's exports to Syria increased from 266.7 million dollars (2002) to 1.8 billion dollars (2010) with an approximate seven-fold increase (www.tuik.gov.tr, 10 August 2017).

Bashar al-Assad frequently stated that some states such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, including Turkey, were responsible for arming the opponents and making Syrian civil war more complicated. The Syrian army shot down the Turkish RF-4E reconnaissance aircraft on June 22, 2012. Thereupon, Turkey changed its rules of engagement and shot down two military helicopters of Syria on September 16, 2013 and May 16, 2015 and a warplane on March 23, 2014. After the death of many Turkish citizens because of the fire opened from Syrian territory, Turkey launched Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) which includes the Azez-Jarabulus-Al-Bab line on August 24, 2016.

Considering the above-mentioned puzzle, it is seen that Turkey and Syria, which have come closer so as to gather around the discourse the emphasis of *common destiny*, *common history* and *common future* (Oktav, 2009: 71-90) by 2000s, regard each other as *the other* starting in 2011. The main question here is that "what is the reason for this foreign policy change?" To ask it theoretically, despite the fact that there is no change in the leadership of both countries, is the reason for turning the relationships between Ankara and Damascus in reverse because of the *agent's* own preferences or effect of the *structure* on the agents?

This article discusses the question of whether foreign policy is shaped by the agent or the structure theoretically in the context of Arab Spring and specific to Turkey-Syria relations. In this context, the study consists of two main section. In the

first part, the Dynamic Foreign Policy Analysis Model (DFPAM) developed by Walter Carlsnaes based on Margaret Archer's Morphogenetic Approach will be discussed after putting forward the approaches of Anthony Giddens and Margaret Archer who tried to reveal the agent-structure problem. In the second chapter, the relations between Turkey and Syria (crisis years) will be categorized and examined in the *structural*, *dispositional* and *intentional* dimensions in accordance with DFPAM from 2011 to 2017 and then an answer to the question of whether the change in relations between the two countries is caused by *agent* or *structure* will be sought. Also it should be emphasized that the relations carried out directly with the Syrian state will be the focus of this article, rather than non-state actors or terrorist organizations (Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Tahrir al-Sham, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Democratic Union Party (PYD) fighting in Syria or third countries (Iran, USA and Russia) that support fighting groups. In the conclusion, the findings obtained from the connection between the theory and the case study will be presented.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW: AGENT OR STRUCTURE?**

A great majority of the international relations theories that help us in understanding and interpreting international relations try to explain how the state acts in the international system. Although there are some commonalities in the proposals of structural theories (Neorealism and World System Theory), system (structure) understandings and structural explanations can vary considerably. The most important feature of Neorealism, which appeared as a distinct approach in the international relations literature thanks to the *Theory of International Politics* by Kenneth Waltz in 1979, is its pretense to be *structuralist*. Waltz, who laid the foundations of neorealism by classifying the theories of international relations as reductionist and systematic theories according to the ways of analysis firstly, put the *structure* at the center of his theory (Waltz, 1979: 60). Whereas neorealism, which does not include an *agent* as a structuralist theory, stated that the agents who set out the foreign policy outputs were states, it did not attribute an agent feature that can act on the *structure* and change it to these states (Waltz, 1979: 80-81).

Immanuel Wallerstein, who introduced the World System Analysis (WSA) to the International Relations literature, reduced the agent to the outputs of this structure, as well as giving an ontological priority to the structure in the agent-structure problem (Wallerstein, 2004: 18). According to Wallerstein, as is the case with the individual and the state, other agents are merely products of the international structure. On the other hand, Alexander Wendt, who set up his own approach against the flaws of neorealism in large measure, stated that there were two realities on the basis of the agent-structure problem. The first reality is that people are intentional agents who help to transform and rebuild the society they live in. The second reality is that society is made up of relationships that shape the interaction between the

agents whose intentions are certain. In other words, the agent and structure are necessary to make sense of social relations (Wendt, 1987: 337-338).

On the other hand Doty (1997: 365-392), aims to bring a post-structuralist elucidation on the agent-structure debate as she thinks that it is the best respond to this issue. Hereby she contradicts Carlsnaes' gaze that agent-structure debate should be considered beyond the post-structrualism (1997: 388-389). In this context, Doty states that, despite the detailed examination of the "structure" of the current debate, the "agent" has been taken less attention. Because of this, Doty (1997: 376) asserts that the ontology of the agent and the structure should be replaced by the ontology of practices. Doty (1997: 375) also positions the agent in the uncertainty of his practices. Conversely Colin Wight (1999: 109-142) strongly criticize the fact that Doty handles agent and structure independently and claims that separation of agent and structure is impossible. Wight (1999: 110) also argues that the agent always brings the structure together and highlights that agent has inseparably ties to structures and they co-constituted nature (1999: 136).

Jonathan Joseph (2008:109-128) deals with the agent-structure problem with conceptualizing of "hegemony". He evaluates this term on agent-structure debate in two ways: First is a mediating between agent and structure, second as a factor in securing the unity of structural combinations. He also says that these arguments are in turn dependent upon a scientific realist ontology that sees structure as more than just intersubjective relations (2008: 109). Hereby Joseph tries to find a new way of understanding of hegemony and its role in international relations. He says that international relations theorists use the concept of hegemony in two different ways. First of them is the realistic perspective which deal with hegemony in terms of state dominance or leadership in international relations. Second way is the neo-Gramscian approach which evaluate hegemony as an ideological or consensual element (2008: 110). However he propose a third way and he illustrates "hegemony" is not only about praxis, but also necessarily related to the reproduction of social structures. That is hegemony has both agential and structural aspects (2008: 120) Joseph also emphasize that he understands the notion of structure in a more sociological approach as a set of underlying social relations rather than a neorealist sense and hegemony comes to represent the political moment in the reproduction of social structures (2008: 110-112).

Considering the context of neorealism, WSA and other approaches, the fact that the constructivist approach emphasizes equality ontologically unlike the holistic ontology giving priority to individuality and structure and bringing the agent to the primary position, leads us to the theory of *structuration* of Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 1979: 53-57). Structuration theory draws attention to the interdependence of the agent and structure, and indicates that the agent is a consequence of the structural features and practices of social systems. Giddens who did not consider the agent and structure as separate entities considered *duality* as an analytical tool in understanding the relationship between agent and structure instead of *dualism*

(Carlsnaes, 1992: 257-258). According to this view, structures and agents cannot be separated from each other ontologically. The agent and structure are interrelated and mutually constructed.

Cohen who evaluated the agent-structure relationship also supported Giddens's views and stated that the structure was both a result and a tool of the reproduction of the practices (Cohen, 1989: 42). The concept of *duality of structure*, which expresses interdependence like a two sides of a medallion, is at the center of Giddens's theory, and this concept holds important functions in explaining the continuity and change in social life (Giddens, 1979: 69). Giddens acted by centering the *duality* concept in human life instead of *dualism* which gives priority to either the agent or the structure and considers these as independent from each other (Giddens, 1979: 24).

Giddens touched on the relationship between agent and structure in his theory, but he considered that the structure consistently constructs the agent. However, the fact that the time-dependent relationship between the agent and the structure is not taken into account inevitably indicated that Giddens missed the possibility that the structure and the agent may influence each other at different times (Archer, 1995: 72). On the other hand, the agent may also have the effect of modifying and transforming the structure. Margaret Archer, who argued that Giddens could not find a solution to the problem of the agent-structure by the theory of structuration, sought a solution by placing time element into the agent-structure question. Archer stated that both the structure and the agent follow each other temporally so that the agent has the possibility of transforming or changing the structure, but this structure to be formed may then limit the agent or lead to conditions that may cause the agent to behave differently (Archer, 1995: 63-66). Archer, who stated that the agent and the society are related to each other, was ontologically approaching to both. Here Archer evaluated Giddens' theory of structuration in terms of time by using the *analytical dualism* approach and developed the *Morphogenetic Approach* (Archer, 2010) to explain the subject.

Archer, who stated that the structure and agent were not *two sides of a medallion* as discussed by Giddens in structuration theory and this problem cannot be reduced to such a duality, mentioned dualism of structure and agent ontologically in the Morphogenetic Approach (Carlsnaes, 1992: 257). There is an emphasis on the mutual independence of structure and agent ontologically and an objection on prioritization the agent or structure. According to Archer, the agent and structure must be analytically separated, because assuming that the agent and structure are the engaged pieces as in the theory of *structuring* of Giddens causes to miss the effect exerted separately by agent and structure (Archer, 1985: 72).

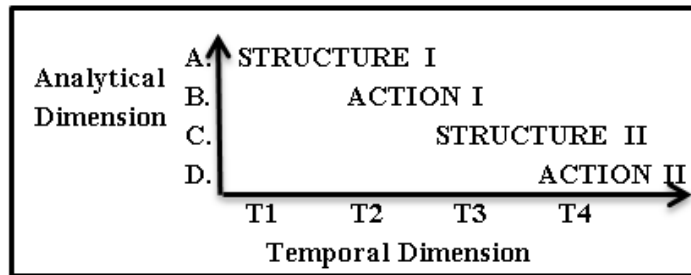
According to Archer, social structures exist for the agent before itself. That is, the structure is the precondition of human action and makes the action possible. However, these possibilities are limited and these limits are determined by social structures. The agents at the borders defined by the social structures transform or

change the structure (King, 1999: 202). The interaction between agent and structure which are different layers takes place over time. The characteristics and powers of the layers formed by mutual interaction of the agent and structure over time precede the other layers and cause the latter. When this emergence takes place, the characteristics and powers in the two layers gain autonomy relative to each other. The agent and structure are two layers and here “dualism” emerges (Erker, 2010: 29). Despite the increase in studies on the agent-structure problem, there are still shortcomings in terms of explaining this problem especially in the field of foreign policy or analyzing the changes in the foreign policies of states through this theoretical perspective. DFPAM developed by Walter Carlsnaes on the basis of Margaret Archer’s Morphogenetic Approach will help us to fill this void.

### Dynamic Foreign Policy Analysis Model

Carlsnaes contributed to the agent-structure problem by analyzing foreign policy through four different approaches. He examined the *collectivist/individualistic* approaches ontologically and *objective/subjective* approaches epistemologically dealing with the problem in this framework and argued that these acted on the basis of the dualism of the agent-structure and gave priority either one of the agent or structure and therefore argued that such approaches could not analyze foreign policy action (Carlsnaes, 1992: 256). According to Carlsnaes, the reason for the deficiencies of these approaches to explain foreign policy was the fact that foreign policy took place as a result of a dynamic process in which agent and structure affect each other over time. Carlsnaes emphasized that foreign policy should be examined only with a dynamic model. In this context, Carlsnaes examined the structural factors such as institutions and rules that the action affected logically before and after. He also illustrated actions such as policy that restricted or allowed to occur before or after its occurrence in a context involving Archer’s critique of the agent-structure and underlined the rationality of the analytical approach (Carlsnaes, 1992: 260).

**Figure 1:** Carlsnaes’ Model of Morphogenetic Cycles

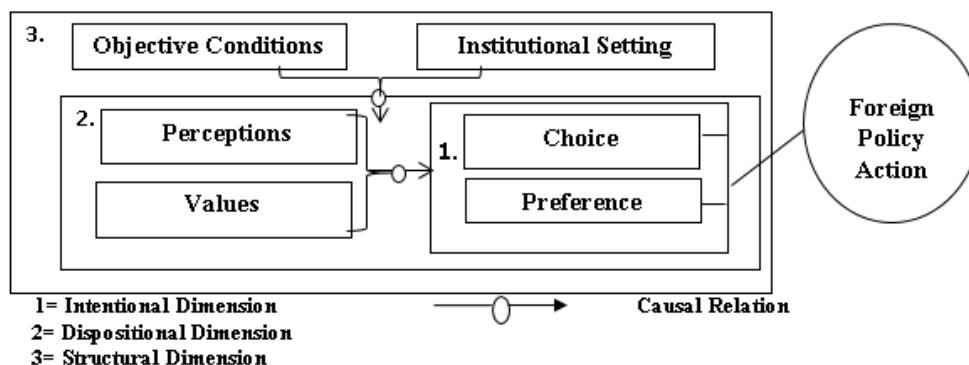


**Source:** Carlsnaes, W. (1992). The agency-structure problem in foreign policy analysis. *International Studies Quarterly*, 36 (3), September, 260.

Foreign policy actions-specific policies can be explained in the *ACTION I-II* section within the framework of the dispositional and intentional purposes.

Carlsnaes used an analytic concept analyzing foreign policy actions in broader systemic contexts against the nature of this framework implying that structural factors had a limiting impact only on the *STRUCTURE I-II* agents. In this context, Carlsnaes not only stated that structures ( $A \rightarrow B$ ), ( $C \rightarrow D$ ) affected and limited agents, but also expressed that they also affected each other consecutively ( $B \rightarrow C$ ), ( $C \rightarrow D$ ), ( $D \rightarrow \dots$ ) and there was an interactive interaction between them. For example, in order to be able to explain an action of T4 time period, Carlsnaes' dynamic model suggested that it would not be enough to just look at the structure, but also the actions of the agents in the previous time periods and the effects of these structures on these actions should be examined (Carlsnaes, 1992: 264). In this context, Carlsnaes introduced a new model by combining Margaret Archer's Morphogenetic Approach with his own cycle model to study foreign policy dynamically.

**Figure 2:** Description of Foreign Policy Action



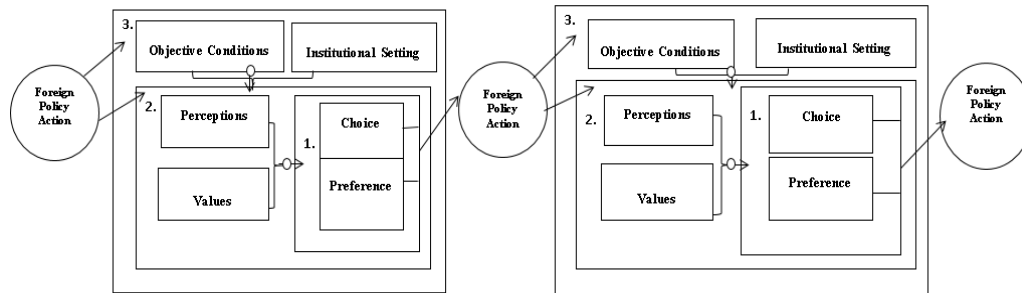
**Source:** Carlsnaes, Walter (1992). The agency-structure problem in foreign policy analysis. *International Studies Quarterly*, 36 (3), September, 254.

Dynamic foreign policy analysis developed by Carlsnaes based on morphogenetic approach has three dimensions: These are intentional dimension, dispositional dimension and structural dimension. Examining these three dimensions can provide us with a comprehensive explanation of foreign policy action (Carlsnaes, 2007: 16-19). *The intentional dimension* covers the underlying causes and intentions of foreign policy behavior. It basically explains *why* the agents choose foreign policy practices. This dimension is teleological because it is the dimension in which the purposes and intentions of the agents are explained. The agents are faced with material possibilities and limitations in the intentional dimension. This dimension also helps to understand the *causal* relationship of foreign policy actions. The agent performs foreign policy behavior for a purpose (in order to) based on a reason (because of) and takes the previous action as a reference. First intentional behavior is the causal mechanism underlying the second intentional behavior. *The dispositional dimension* refers to causal mechanisms underlying the agent's foreign policy behavior. These are the deeper factors that guide intentions and preferences. These factors and mechanisms are *values* that motivate the agents to achieve their

goals and “perceptions” which are the reflections of belief systems and agents into the world. This is also the cognitive and psychological approach to the explanation of foreign policy action. *The Structural dimension* refers to causal structures underlying the first two dimensions. These structural factors (national, international, social, cultural, economic or material) influence preferences and attitudes of agents. Structural factors not only limit the actions of agents, but they also make these actions possible, that is to say, they can offer opportunities for the actors (Carlsnaes, 2007: 11-14).

Carlsnaes’ model aimed at revealing the action in foreign policy as outlined above is insufficient to explain the agent-structure relationship in foreign policy. Because this model consists of intentional, dispositional and structural dimensions, shows action but it cannot explain the change of foreign policy over time. From this point of view, Carlsnaes put his first model (Figure 3) side by side and turned them into sequences (Figure 4) that affect each other in order to overcome the shortcomings of the above model and to better analyze foreign policy change. Thus, Carlsnaes tried to show the dynamic mutually relationship dimension of the agent-structure problem. With this dynamic model, when discussing a subject in the foreign policy field, the changes in the process can be explained and the related reasons affecting the foreign policy event / decision can be understood (Carlsnaes, 1992: 264-265).

**Figure 3: Dynamic Foreign Policy Analysis Model (DFPAM)**



**Source:** Carlsnaes, Walter (1992). The agency-structure problem in foreign policy analysis. *International Studies Quarterly*, 36 (3), September, 264.

Carlsnaes, who turned his model into mutually influential sequences by making his model shown in Figure-3 side by side in order to demonstrate foreign policy change, stated that this model can explain the change between actions and the reasons for this change (Hollis&Smith, 1994:243). He tried to show whether any changes had taken place by showing three foreign policy actions at the same time in order to show the change of foreign policy from the past to the present day. Additionally, Carlsnaes, who stated that the changes occurred in the intentional, dispositional and structural dimensions of this change process should be evaluated within itself, suggested that this would indicate whether the foreign policy applied and to be applied is intentional or unintentional (Carlsnaes, 1992: 265). Thanks to

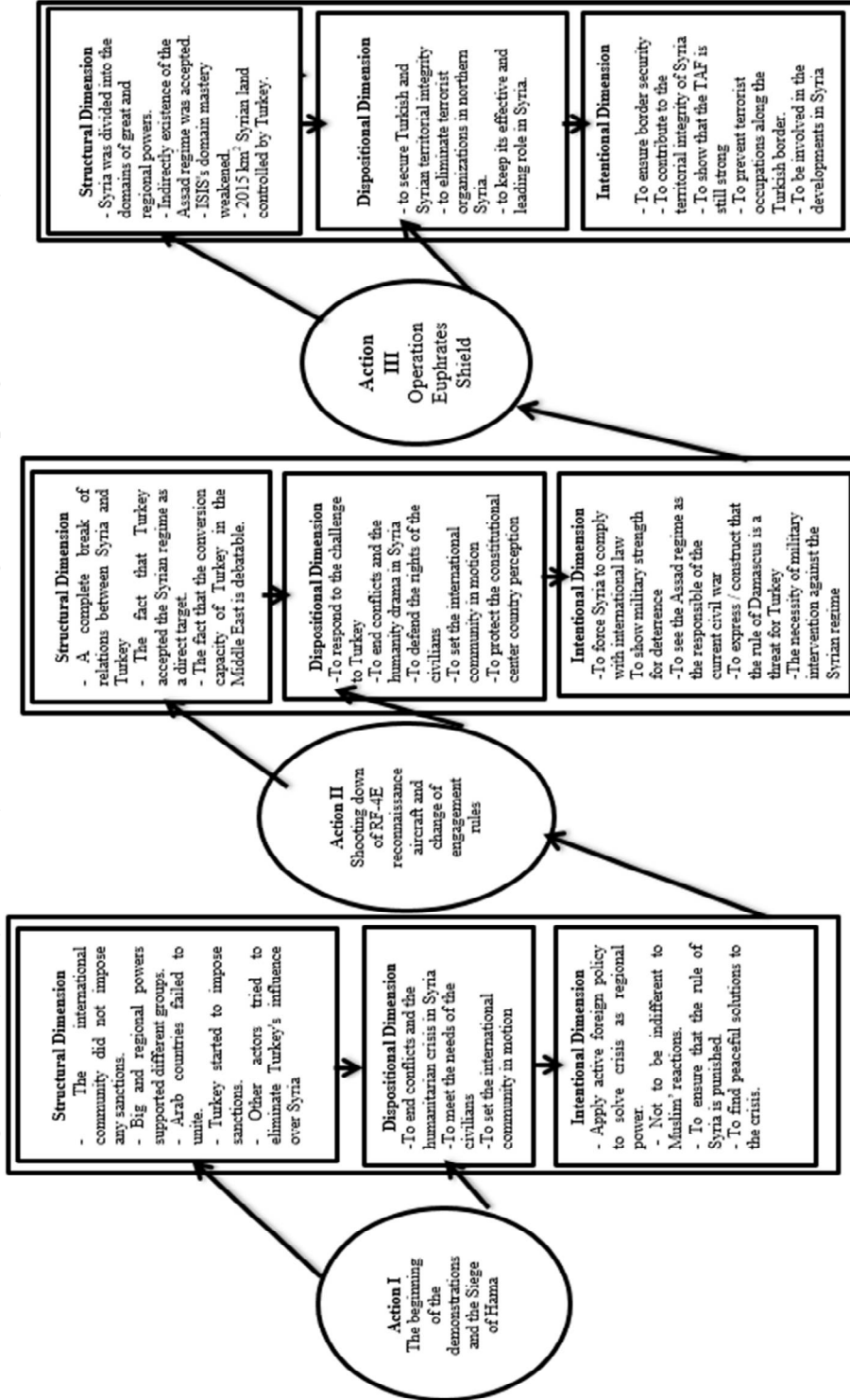


this model, which moved Margaret Archer's Morphogenetic Approach one step further and aimed at explaining the foreign policy change at the same time, the reasons behind the foreign policy decision and how the decisions to be taken in the future will be affected can be explained. Carlsnaes argued that it would not be easy to use such a model because three different dimensional planes need to be analyzed, but although it is troublesome, a more accurate and realistic result can be obtained with this model (Carlsnaes, 1992: 266).

### **AN ANALYSIS OF TURKISH SYRIAN RELATIONS AFTER ARAB SPRING IN THE CONTEXT OF DFPAM**

It will be useful to look at what previous structures and foreign policy actions are in order to understand the present situation of Turkey-Syria relations. In this context, foreign policy analysis according to DFPAM will make the process more understandable by dealing with Turkey-Syria relations and the actions of agents through the Cycle Model applied by Carlsnaes to Archer's Morphogenetic Approach. While explaining the Model above, we have shown three foreign policy actions at the same time. Because the foreign policy first applied could be an input for the next action. Therefore, in order to understand the latest action, knowing the first action and structure will guide us in analyzing foreign policy.

Figure-4: Analysis of Turkish-Syrian Relations during the Arab Spring in the Context of DFPAM



## **Change of Turkey-Syria Relations with the Beginning of the Demonstrations and the Siege of Hama**

The good relations between the two countries between 2002 and 2011 started to change in the light of the Arab Spring reality, which began in Tunisia and influenced Egypt and Libya, even leading to the end of the thirty-year-old Mubarak regime. Such civil movements put the Middle East region in an unstable structure (Structure I). It is also necessary to state that Turkey and Syria relations had begun to be addressed in the shadow of the positive atmosphere caught between 2002 and 2010. However, the structural conditions caused by the Arab Spring had negative consequences on bilateral relations between two countries.

In this context, Turkey creating an *order-setting* foreign political vision of regional stability and liberal economic policies in its close geography had started to lose its dynamism to cooperate and act jointly with the Assad regime which used arms against the demonstrators in Syria's Daraa city in March 2011. Foreign policies shaped in the security-stability dilemma led Turkey and Syria to be on different sides in many problems and to have tense relationships.

The rosy picture, which emerged on the basis of economic co-operation in the period before the Arab Spring, began to collapse in March 2011 with the splash of the civil movements on the streets of Syria. After the anti-regime protests began, Turkish decision-makers tried to persuade the Assad government to reform (considering that the close cooperation that was built between the years 2002-2010 would also be effective). The Assad government, on the other hand, called the opponents who came out on the streets as *terrorists* and started to use more intensive military force (Action I). The use of force was put into practice on July 3, 2011 in Hama (where a great uprising against Hafez al-Assad was experienced in 1982). Especially killing of 139 civilians on July 31 caused the anti-Assad voices to grow louder (Ilgit & Davis, 2013: 87-96).

The Siege of Hama, which lasted for about a month and continued during the first week of Ramadan, was criticized by Turkish decision makers. In essence, the dialogue mechanism initiated after the use of weapons against the demonstrators in Daraa began to return to criticism and reaction due to ongoing conflicts. The Siege of Hama forced Turkey to express its side openly/officially. Moreover, there was the fact that the international community did not react adequately against regime's attacks on civilians and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the great powers did not take (/failed to take) strict measures against Syria. This weakness of international community pushed Turkey to follow a more critical and stricter foreign policy towards its southern neighbor. In this context, the statements such as "...we are out of patience... Syria is our internal matter..." (www.amerikaninsesi.com, 7 August 2011) of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and "...the developments causing deaths in Syria during Ramadan are unacceptable..." (www.hurriyet.com.tr, 1 August 2011) of President Abdullah Gül

shows this. Beside this, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu visited Damascus on August 9, 2011 in order to persuade Bashar al-Assad to deter from armed struggle and to realize political reform (Altunışık, 2016: 40). Upon the continuation of military intervention following this negotiation, Turkey announced that it had cut all ties with the Syrian regime as of September 21, 2011 (Action I) (Altunışık, 2016). As of this date, Turkish decision makers made statements that the Assad regime should end. Additionally, killing of 108 people, including 49 children, by regime forces in Hula City on May 25, 2012 led Turkey to further clarify its anti-Assad position (www.bbc.com, 15 August 2012).

On the other hand, it is seen that Turkey has pursued a policy of maintaining dialogue with both sides since the beginning of the armed conflict between the regime and the opponents. Indeed, the fact that the Syrian opposition was allowed to hold a meeting in Antalya on June 1, 2011, giving support for the establishment of the Syrian National Council (SNC) in Istanbul on August 23, 2011 and giving permission for the main headquarters of the Free Syrian Army to take place in Hatay until 2012 shows that Turkey is closely related to the Syrian opposition (Ilgit & Davis, 2013; Aktürk, 2017: 87-96; Ifantis & Galariotis, 27-36). It can be argued that these developments increased the insecurity felt by the Assad regime against Turkey.

In the context of these developments, the political preferences and actions of the two countries created a new structure in relations between the two countries (Structure II) and these two agents had to determine their foreign policy within these new *structural conditions*. Within this new phase, civil war and siege of Hama brought drastic change and many risks in bilateral relations. Main structural reflection of this crisis is that the international community could not impose any effective sanctions on the Syrian government because global and regional powers had supplied different fighting groups in Syria. Beside this, fragmentary nature of the Arab Union also failed to prevent Syrian civil war. In order to change Assad regimes' decisions, Turkey imposed its unilateral sanctions against Syrian government in 2011.

In the aspect of *dispositional dimension*, the decision-makers from the Justice and Development Party (JDP) aimed at implementing a foreign policy that includes ending conflicts and the human crisis and the applying of liberal economic policies that would increase interdependence instead of using military politics and militaristic discourses emphasizing hard power, and being an *active agent* who actively intervenes in the problems experienced in the region. The vast majority of the class governing Turkey in the period of the JDP is made up of persons who attach importance to the historical, cultural and political ties with the Muslim world, and come from the tradition of National Vision (Altunışık & Martin, 2011). Hereby, Turkey tried to meet needs of civilians affected by conflicts and left their homelands.

In the light of structural and dispositional dimensions, Turkey was quite eager to follow active foreign policy implementation in order to solve the problem in conflicts or crises in the region by generally implementing a foreign policy in the

form of “the status quo based on respect for territorial integrity and border protection, regional power balance based on multipolarity and avoiding regional conflicts” (Duran, 2009: 387-389). On the other hand, JDP tried to ensure that the Assad regime would be punished because of its’ attacks on civilians.

### **Shooting Down the F-4 Reconnaissance Aircraft and Changing the Engagement Rules**

Both countries regard each other as *the other/enemy* in the new structural dimension emerged after the breakdown of relations. Whereas Turkey considers the Assad regime as responsible for the ongoing conflicts in Syria and killing of thousands of Syrians, the Syrian government also thinks that Turkey, which supports the opponents in military and financial terms, is supporting terrorism in Syria and responsible for the failure of the struggle with the terrorists. The statement made by Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem during his visit to Russia on April 10, 2012 can be seen as the outcome of this thought. Muallem stated that Turkey supported the armed forces/*terrorists* and provided weapons assistance, as well as became a base for the warriors /*terrorists* who entered the Syrian border through illegal ways and that Turkey was one of the guiltiest parties in the problems in Syrian territory (Radikal, 10 April 2012). Both countries, however, were reluctant to enter into direct military conflict, and formed relations through third agents.

This situation has completely changed with shooting down Turkish RF-4E Phantom reconnaissance aircraft by Syrian army on June 22, 2012 (Action II) and following developments. As a matter of fact, Erdogan stated that “conflicts have entered a new phase and Syria is an open and closer threat for Turkey now (Cumhuriyet, 4 October 2012). Because Turkey stated that the unarmed aircraft was shot down in international waters and during a flight of exploration, the Syrian airspace was violated for a very short period of time and was abandoned immediately but such violations lived all over the world and claimed that shooting down the aircraft by Syria was a hostile act (Hürriyet, 10 July 2012). In furtherance of this discourse, Turkey changed its rules of engagement and announced that it would have military intervention against the threatening elements in the Syrian border.

The first practical reflection of this decision was an artillery fire towards the military spots determined within the borders of Syria, against the mortar shells falling to Akçakale (Şanlıurfa) district on October 3, 2012. At the same time, this reaction, which is important because it was Turkey’s first direct attack targeting the Assad regime, resulted in the death of 34 Syrian military personnel (Cumhuriyet, 4 October 2012; New York Times, 3 October 2012) Turkey’s response means that the Syrian army was targeted for the first time by a state since the period when the regime and the opponents started to fight. Additionally, Turkey forced Airbus 330-type passenger plane from Russia to Damascus to land in Ankara on October 10, 2012 in the context of the rules of engagement that it changed, (New York Times, 4 October 2012) shot down two military helicopters belonging to Syria on September

16, 2013 (Al Jazeera, 17 September 2013) and May 16, 2015 (Reuters, 17 May 2015) and again, shot down a war plane belonging to Syria on March 2014 (BBC Turkish, 23 March 2014).

On the other hand, following the fall of the shells to Akçakale, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) gave authority for cross-border operations to the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) (New York Times, October 2012). In parallel with these developments, Turkey brought this issue to NATO agenda and placed NATO's Patriot air defense systems against the possible attack from Syria in areas close to the Syrian border (Özpek&Demirdağ, 2014: 341).

In the light of these facts, Turkey supported the opponents and tried to unify their structures that displayed a scattered image. Conversely the Assad regime performed some practices providing advantages for PYD which Turkey regards as a terrorist organization. In this way, the Assad regime tried to shift Turkey's attention and energy to the other fields. Indeed, PYD became dominated fully in the eastern region of the Euphrates River and partially up to Tel-Rifaat region in the west of the Euphrates River thanks to the relations that it developed with Russia and US as well as the Assad regime. In this context, violent conflicts between the Assad regime and the opponents (especially the siege of Aleppo) and the actions of the PYD and ISIS on the field have led to a massive refugee flood into Turkey. These developments posed a greater threat for Turkey than the questioning of the existence of the Assad regime.

Based on this information, the actions (shooting down the F4 plane and changing the rules of engagement and the following steps taken by governments) of both agents (Turkey and Syria) revealed a new structure (Structure III) within a period of time in which there is no formal relationship between the two countries and where they place each other at the center of the threat perceptions. Mutual military actions revealed that Turkey's conversion capacity in the Middle East became controversial because of its' low level responsibility against Assad regime on shooting down of Turkish RF-4E reconnaissance plane.

As a result of Syrian aggression on Turkey, JDP government firstly aimed at forcing Syria to comply with international law and strived international community to accept that the Assad regime was responsible for civil war in Syria. Secondly Turkey showed its military strength with changing engagement rules and firing at regime forces within Syrian borders. Lastly Turkey expressed the necessity of military intervention against Assad regime due to the fact that they violated international law attacking on civilians and shot unarmed reconnaissance aircraft in international air space.

### **Operation Euphrates Shield**

In this structure (III) built by Turkey and Syria, the JDP government avoids establishing a direct relationship with the Assad regime. However, the fact that PYD and ISIS terrorist organizations became dominant in the territories near the southern

borders of Turkey and they constituted direct threats for Turkey obliged the Ankara administration to change its political priorities. On the other hand, the Damascus administration, which was in violent clashes with the opponents, preferred to take part in the approaches that would reduce Turkey's influence and support over the opponents. Under these circumstances, Turkey launched the Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) against ISIS and PYD on 24 August 2016 (Action III).

The OES means that Turkey, that started to target the Syrian regime under the rules of engagement in 2012, is directly involved in the Syrian civil war. The target in this operation is not the Syrian regime<sup>1</sup> but the ISIS and the PYD / YPG terrorist organizations that have won the territory due to the regime's failure to provide control over its own territory. However, the fact that Russia, which has the capacity to control the Syrian airspace (especially the western part of the Euphrates), supports the Assad regime and considers him as the legitimate ruler of the Syrian state gave Turkey a hard time.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the difficulties with Russia had to be eliminated in order for OES to be completed successfully.

Because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia stated that Turkey's operation was performed not based on any decision of the UN Security Council or without permission of Syria's legitimate authority (Assad regime) and it posed a threat to the territorial integrity of Syria (Russia Today, date). Similarly, the Sham administration stated that the OES violated international law and damaged Syria's territorial integrity. The Damascus administration also did not consider Turkey's operation as an operation against terrorist organizations, on the contrary, deemed that it brought a new terror wave into Syria (www.rt.com, 24 August 2016).

In parallel with the progress of the FSA forces supported by Turkey towards the city of Al-Bab, the regime forces started to move towards the same target from the south. Although the two parties reached the common border on 24 January 2017 (www.syrialiveuamap.com, 24 January 2017), they did not enter into a major conflict until 9 February. However, 3 Turkish soldiers lost their lives as a result of Russian air force shot down "accidentally" Turkish soldiers in the conflict occurred

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<sup>1</sup> Erdogan, in his initial statements on the Operation Euphrates Shield, said that this operation was launched against terrorist organizations and to end the rule of the Assad regime. However, he later stated that the operation had not such a goal. (www.bbc.com, November 29, 2016; Cumhuriyet, 29 November 2016)

<sup>2</sup> One reason for Russia's obstruction in front of Turkey is the fact that Sukhoi Su-24M war plane belonging to the Russian air force was shot down by the Turkish Air Force. According to the statement made by the Turkish Armed Forces, the Russian war plane which departed from Hmymim Air Base in Lazkiye on November 24, 2015 violated the Turkish airspace for five minutes and did not change its course even though it was warned ten times. For this reason, it was shot down by Turkish F-16 war planes in the context of "engagement rules". (Radikal, 25 November 2015).

during controlling Deir Qaq and Al Sammoyah villages (www.bbc.com, 9February 2017).

Turkey, which has been in communication and coordination with Russia during this period, appears to have taken the second plan to remove the Assad regime from power indirectly. Because the expression *Assad should go* was replaced by the destruction of terrorist organizations like ISIS and PYD in the statements of the Turkish government. Indeed, the rapprochement of Turkey and Russia resulted in the fact that the Russian air force attacked ISIS targets in Al-Bab region in coordination with Turkish army (Russia Today, 30December 2016).

Ending the OES created a new structural dimension in terms of Turkey-Syria relations (Structure IV). Following this operation, Turkey's Syrian policy aimed at protecting the territorial integrity of this country and ending the civil war to ensure lasting settlement. In this context Turkey mediated between the Sham administration (indirectly) and the opponents and led the Astana negotiations together with Russia. As a result of the negotiations, it was decided that de-escalation areas were created in Syria and these regions would be under the guarantee of Russia, Turkey and Iran. Therefore, in the emerging new structure, it is seen that Turkey has taken the first plan to struggle with the terrorist organizations instead of removing the Damascus regime from power. Another and the most important reality of this Structure IV is that Syria is divided into the domains of great and regional powers and Turkey accepted the existence of Assad regime indirectly.

Dispositional dimension of JDP was that territorial integrity of Turkey was at risk due to terrorist organizations controlling most part of the Turkey-Syria border. This would create of a terrorist network in Syria that affects directly Turkey. Another tendency of decision makers of Turkey was that Turkey should intervene or exist militarily so as to play an active role in Syria. Primary objective of Turkey implementing these policies was to ensure its border security and to contribute to the territorial integrity of Syria. Last but not least Turkey's presence in Syria also aimed at showing TAF's strength enough to perform a cross-border operation even a clique tried to make (failed) coup one month earlier than OES and tens of pilots and hundreds of commanders and soldiers were removed from his posts.

## CONCLUSION

It is concluded that Turkey was acting as result of restrictive and enabling effects of the structure while shaping its relations with Syria. The perceptions as well as objective and institutional factors also influenced decision makers' foreign policy preferences within this structure, as shown in the DFPAM example by Carlsnaes. The *structural conditions* that are fundamental to the change in the relations between Turkey and Syria go through the *perception* and *value* prisms of decision makers and become foreign policy actions. Such a foreign policy constitutes the structural conditions of new foreign policy actions.



In the period when relations between the two countries developed in a positive atmosphere, the Assad administration imposed a policy of armed suppression of these demonstrations against the start of anti-regime demonstrations (March 2011). The current structure as the result of the agent's own political choice was influenced by this action and this led Turkey to develop policies in the context of new structural conditions that have already begun to emerge. Hereby, Turkey tried to persuade the Damascus administration, but when it could not get any result, it chose policies aimed at removing Assad regime from power. The actions of both agents completely changed the structural conditions before 2011 and revealed a structure with tension and mutual accusations between the two countries. The concept of *security*, *threat* and *use of force* were used frequently after 2011 instead of the concepts of *common fate*, *common history* and *common future* used by the two countries' decision makers to describe relations between 2002 and 2011 in this framework.

Turkey and Syria, that considered each other as enemies under changing conditions, targeted directly each other between 2012 and 2015 with the actions such as shooting down the RF-4E reconnaissance aircraft belonging to Turkey, two helicopters and a Sukhoi Su-24M type of Syrian fighter jet. This changed the structural dynamics of the relations between the two agents. Under these new circumstances, while Turkey was increasing its interaction with opponents for the removal of the Assad regime from power and calling international community to make military intervention, Syria was trying to consolidate its own position over the alliance with Russia and Iran and making it easier for the PYD to gain territorial control in regions near the Turkish border in order to restrict Turkey's influence.

Turkey, considering that the domination of terrorist organizations on the borders would threaten its own territorial integrity, launched OES (24 August 2016) targeting PYD and ISIS terrorist organizations instead of actions aimed at removing the Assad regime from power by taking into account the Russian factor. This military intervention changed the existing balances in Syria and revealed a structure in which Turkey appeared with its military elements.

As a result, it is concluded that structural conditions restricted agents or opened new maneuvering areas for them, the agents who acted under these circumstances shaped the structure in which they involved with their actions and led to its transformation/structural detailing.

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