2-1-2012

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THE CHANGES IN THE ARAB POLICY OF TURKEY FROM 2002-2010: WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE TURKISH POLICY TOWARDS SYRIA

A Thesis Submitted to

Public Policy and Administration Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Public Policy and Administration

By
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Under the supervision of
Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Awad

Fall 2011

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this work to my mother who is the main source of inspiration and encouragement to carry out this project till the end. The love, care and devotion that she provided me is the reason for what I am now.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

After long decades of estrangement since the establishment of the republic, the Arab policy of the AK party manifested visible changes that broke up with the state establishment mindset by underlining a sort of rapprochement on the regional level. This study aims to identify and understand the political and economic aspects of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries by according specific attention to Syria that constitutes for the current Turkish leadership a prototype for the Turkish policy towards its neighbors notably Arab countries. By taking account of the context within which these changes in the policy formulation occurred, the power structure model presents the analytical tool that enabled this study to explain how the new elitist configuration that was bourgeoning since the 80's in the Turkish society reconsidered the formulation of the Turkish foreign policy tenets in light of the domestic and international conditions. In addition to the various literature dealing with the ruling elite socioeconomic structure and their evolution on the political scene in Turkey, the contributions provided by various respondents, addressed by a questionnaire, from the ruling party, the opposition, academic scholars and journalists about the current elite's cognitive map in terms of perceiving Arabs and addressing them highlighted different reasons for the changes in the Turkish Arab policy. By relying on the literature and the respondents' reactions, the Arab policy of Turkey since 2002 seemed to be controversial since it not only concretizes Turkey's national interests but also contributes to the empowerment of the its role as a regional actor that seeks a permanent presence and influence on the international level.

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I. Introduction

The Arab policy under the rule of the AK party constitutes the central interest in our study. After long decades of normalization between both Turkey and Arab countries, psychological barriers and ideological disparities distanced them from each other and disabled the development of a strong course of relations. Therefore, our research departs from a surprising observation which is the visible rapprochement initiated by Turkey with the different Arab countries starting from 2002. The breakdown with the mutual estrangement that dominated their relations for decades and the development of visible and intense interaction in various fields of cooperation increased our attention.

Since the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923 till the 1990's, the Turkish elite were dominated by an ideological determinism that marked their domestic and foreign policy throughout these seven decades[1]. The pursuit of a wide-ranged process of modernization on the national level aimed to reshape the nation's identity on a Western model that breaks up with the historical legacy. This modernization wave extended to the Turkish diplomacy that was mainly formulated through the exigencies of world politics. The domestic instability and the vulnerability of the Turkish territorial integrity oriented its foreign policy towards a consistent alignment with the West[2], especially the United States. There was a dominating concern to consolidate the Turkish sovereignty on it territories notably after the First World War I that compelled Turkey to follow a modernizing path. Accordingly, the rapprochement towards the west through secularism and the rupture with the ottoman past formulated the traditional/secular elite identity and self perception.

Turkey supported an American intervention in different Arab countries like Lebanon in 1957 and in Iraq during its revolution which crystallized an explicit antagonism. The Arab policy was marginalized in the Turkish foreign policy and was formulated in light of the western-Turkish alliances exigencies in the region.[3] A clear indicator of such antagonism was the Turkish-Syrian confrontation as a result of an armament treaty that was signed by the Syrian regime at the time with Czechoslovakia in 1955 in reaction to the Bagdad pact (Jung and Piccolo, 2001). In spite of the Turkish derogation from that

alignment in the 1960's and the 1970's, Turkey developed a line of conduct that was mainly focused on the consolidation of its partnership with the United States and Europe without manifesting a similar pattern with other regional and neighboring countries. After the Cypriot crisis in 1963 where Arab countries voted in the United Nations for the Greek side, Turkey started to revisit its conduct towards Arab countries. Such reconsideration was considered as a necessity in light of the American position that didn't support the Turkish stance towards Cyprus while opposing its military intervention and protection in the island. In the 60's and the 70's, Turkey deviated from its pro-western conduct in the region by refusing to open its military bases for the American and Israeli forces at the time of the 1967 and the 1973 wars (Hale, 2000). Besides, protection and different types of aid were provided from the Turkish side to Syria in addition to the diplomatic support for the resolution 242 concerning the retreat of the Israeli forces to the 1967 borders. In these two decades, the relations with Israel were minimized at a low level of diplomatic representation that only started to be strengthened at the 90's in light of the Kurdish threat emanating from the national and the regional levels (Karaoglu, 2007).

However, these positions were taken in reaction to a Turkish resentment towards its western allies since it wasn't accompanied by a structural change in the Turkish foreign policy or in the elite's cognitive map. The traditional elite were mainly constituted of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military that had a dominant position on the secular ruling parties in terms of formulating a cautious and neutral policy towards Arab countries. The traditional elite constituted a minority that occupied the center of the decision making process while alienating the public and the conservative actors that were kept in the periphery in terms of influence and power share (Onis, 1997). This elite's perception towards Arab countries didn't evolve in parallel with the mentioned changes that occurred in the 60's and 70's. Turkey adopted a nationalist stance regarding the water issue towards Syria and Iraq, two downstream countries that were badly influenced by the construction of the Keban dam on the Euphrates in 1964. By refusing to recognize the Tigris and Euphrates rivers as international waters, the equal partition principle, advocated by Syria and Iraq, was refuted by the Turkish side that emphasized water sharing and then efficient management as the main solutions for this trilateral problem

(Karaosmanoglu, 1983). The water issue was considered as a matter of sovereignty in which Turkey shouldn't comply with its neighbors' demands in terms of constructing dams that were necessary for different development projects in Turkey. Besides, the Turkish elite created a sort of link between the water crisis issue and the Syrian support to the Kurdish separatist groups by considering the Kurdish card as a pressure tool deployed by Syria against Turkey.

In light of the binary division of the world order into two antagonist ideological blocks and the rise of some nationalist exacerbation on the national scene where the Kurds and the Islamists were portrayed as the first enemies of secular Turkey, the Arab-Turkish relations would be normally perceived as problematic. Being part of the historical legacy that reflects lateness and superstition for modern Turkey, the Arab countries weren't among the priorities of the Turkish foreign policy. The cultural and the religious identification that were formulated and regulated by the state in conformity with the modernization process were still dominating in different Arab countries which incited Turkey to distant itself till the consolidation of its nation building. The construction of a strong national identity in a Western style was not only a domestic priority but also an exigency that influenced the Turkish foreign policy till the 1990's. Therefore, the Turkish policy in the Middle East was formulated in terms of its national interests in alignment with the West which was clearly manifested in the 1930's and 1950's with the Saadabad and Baghdad Pacts[4] that were denounced by many Arab countries.

On the other hand, the communist threat was another factor that marked the Turkish attitude on the international level since the Soviet Union made claims on the Turkish north eastern territories and the leftist parties had a strong presence on the national scene that was marked by frequent confrontations between leftist and rightist groups which disturbed the government stability and led to a military intervention in 1980. The decolonization process that affected the Arab countries created a nationalist repulsion of the liberal ideology and eased their integration into the socialist camp that was mainly distrusted by the Turkish elite at the time.

This estrangement between Arab countries and Turkey persisted throughout long decades although there were some moments of interaction especially on the economic

level in light of the Western embargo imposed on Turkey in the 1970's[5] and the European rejection of the Turkish candidacy to join the EU in the late 1980's. The economic level was approximately the domain that visibly flourished in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's where Turkey started to import natural resources like oil and gas from Arab neighbors as well as Iran. However, on the political level, both sides didn't manage to develop a consensus on several issues due to the aforementioned reasons related to the disparities in their respective ideological identification within the bipolar systemic configuration that kept both sides apart. In light of these observations, the rapprochement between Turkey and the Arab countries raises many questions in terms of motivations and future expectations from both sides especially the Turkish one.

In 1983, Turgut Ozal, the head of the leading party of the center right, The Mother Land Party-Anavatan Partisi (ANAP), started a rapprochement with Arab countries on the economic and political levels but it was an incomplete attempt due to the political divisions on the national scene and the deterioration of Ozal's health which ended with his death in 1993. Therefore, the Turkish-Arab relations were still frozen since the main psychological barriers and factual problems weren't discussed seriously and explicitly between both sides. Ozal's religious affiliations and his deployment of a conservative discourse coated in a pragmatic view didn't manage to break the ice between Arabs and Turks. The antagonism reached its peak in 1998 where Turkey mobilized its military troops on its common borders with Syria in an attempt to deter the Syrian support to separatist groups' militants like the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in terms of providing shelter, logistic assistance and training. The political transition between 1998 and 2002 didn't achieve a lot in terms of pacification; however, a strong willingness of rapprochement was manifested by the head of the governmental coalition at the time, Bulent Ecevit to start a new policy towards Arab countries while nothing was materialized in terms of improving the mutual relations.

In 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AK party) gained a parliamentary majority and acceded to power with a pragmatic agenda while manifesting a tendency towards the preservation and the promotion of the cultural and religious values in the Turkish society that were marginalized by the state establishment. The Party's members

were busy at the first three years in consolidating their roots and liberal character on the national and the international scene. Hence, there was an attention accorded to the completion of the European Union membership candidacy and the fulfillment of the required conditions in order to adopt the "acquis communautaire" in the legal and institutional dispositions in Turkey. The military was at first a challenge that has to be monitored so that that party won't be compelled like the previous conservative and Islamic parties to resign or to be prohibited from political participation by the constitutional court. Different liberalizing reforms were adopted which emphasized the modern and pragmatic appeal of the party and allowed its sustainability till nowadays.

By strengthening its domestic and international basis, the party started to materialize its ideological premises in the Turkish foreign policy by according an importance to the regional surroundings including Arab countries. The willingness to reconsider the Turkish approach towards Arab countries was manifested by the party's leaders whose speeches underlined a tendency towards enhancing the Turkish Arab policy. An active Turkish role was manifested within various tribunes like the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab League where some sessions and forums like the Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum[6] were mutually held by both sides and where Turkey expressed its concerns for Arab countries and how their destinies were tied to each other in the region. The mutual problems between both sides like the psychological impasse, the territorial disputes and water management issues were relegated and more emphasis was accorded to the intensification of economic and commercial exchanges as well as the political consultation on the bilateral and multilateral levels about the most important issues in the region like the peace process and the Middle East stability. In light of this evolution in the Arab policy formulation that was not sufficiently treated by scholarly studies, the motives and the expectations for such an intense rapprochement in comparison with the past decades deserve to be deeply investigated and explained. Besides, the current Turkish elite's discourses underline an explicit sympathy for the Arab world by referring to it with an emotional lexicon that goes beyond a simple rapprochement to solidarity. As a result, we decided to formulate our **research question** as follows:

Why is the Arab policy of Turkey that visible and what are the relevant changes that were introduced into this policy in comparison with the one adopted by previous ruling parties? In other terms, what enabled Turkey to launch such a rapprochement by a series of concrete measures and what expectations does it draw on such a rapprochement?

By observing the Turkish modern history, we remarked that the Arab policy of Turkey was subordinated to the Turkish Western paradigm[7] in terms of its relations with the West. Therefore, most of the interactions that occurred between Turkey and Arab countries were motivated either by the importations of some necessities like raw materials and alimentary products or by the disturbance of its alignment with the West. The Turkish resentment towards the US opposition to Turkey's nationalist claims on Cyprus in the 1960's and the Western condemnation of the human rights violation committed by the military establishment towards Kurds which contributed to the European rejection of the Turkish candidacy in 1989, incited Turkey to adopt an open policy towards Arab countries. As a result, two remarks would be inferred: in these periods of tension between Turkey and the West, the former improved its relations not only with Arabs but also with the Soviet Union which might indicate the absence of any specificity for a particular rapprochement with Arab countries at these moments.

On the other hand, the Turkish conduct towards Arab countries in these periods was a sign of normalization and not a rapprochement[8] since all other countries develop such a pattern of relations with Arab countries in terms of importing raw materials and asking for their political support in the different international institutions in relation to certain issues of concern. The increase and the diversification of the Turkish economic relations that took place in the 1980's was under the exigencies of the liberalization and stabilization program imposed on Turkey by the IMF which compelled the state elite to diversify foreign relations and benefit from the existing potentials in various partners notably Arab countries. Here again the specificity is denied.

Under the rule of the AK party, the Arab policy of Turkey seems to be approached in a different way. First, the AK party's leaders took the initiative to materialize their speeches on various levels of cooperation by the creation of a series of institutions and partnerships to regulate the bilateral and multilateral relations in different economic and

political domains. The creation of the High Council of Strategic Cooperation and a free trade zone with six Arab countries as well as a Turkish-Arab cooperation forum on the ministerial level within the Arab League in 2008 underlines a remarkable shift in the Turkish policy in the region especially towards its Arab neighbors. Second, the ideological framework "the Strategic Depth Doctrine" laid by Davutoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, expresses specificity for Arab countries in the region. This doctrine by being based on the investment of the ottoman legacy and its rediscovery through the different innovative and creative principles of the new foreign policy vision which are balancing between freedom and security, multidimensionality, proactivism, relations' diversification and the consolidation of areas of priorities and common interest, rhythmic diplomacy as well as zero problems with neighbors manifests an additional turning point in the Turkish-Arab relations.

This turning point seemed to have alleviated to a considerable extent the psychological barriers that impeded their rapprochement and froze their relations in a set of stereotyped ideas that marked for long decades their mutual perception. For balancing between freedom and security, Davutoglu listed this principle as the first tenet of the Turkish foreign policy by emphasizing how Turkey's active regional policy wouldn't have been concretized unless its national authorities protect their citizens' security without undermining their civil liberties and rights. This principle is important since it provides the basic platform for the Turkish activism in the region in terms of legitimacy towards the neighboring countries which enables Turkey to have a considerable zone of influence on the regional level. Concerning multidimensionality, it refers to the establishment of simultaneous and proportionally equal relations with all countries in the region and on the international scene which breaks with the Turkish foreign policy's traditional centrality accorded to its alliance with the West. Besides, this term emphasizes the notion of complementarity in the Turkish foreign policy where Turkey adopts a consistent attitude that harmonizes its various and diversified relations.

In addition, proactivism is a term that underlines the Turkish willingness and readiness to take the initiative towards the different events that occur in the region as well as in the world in order to either contribute to the resolution of a potential crisis or to collaborate

in ensuring peace and stability with its neighbors and the international community around the world. On the other hand, relations' diversification and the consolidation of areas of priorities and common interest in the Turkish foreign policy refer theoretically to the fact that Turkey tends to multiply its relations with its neighbors and other countries around the world while according an equal priority to all of them. This principle is justified by the existence of areas of interests between Turkey and the different countries which deemphasizes bilateral conflicts and underlines the importance of each partner Turkey deals with due to the existence of common interests for both sides.

Besides, according to the strategic depth doctrine elaborated by the current Turkish foreign minister, a rhythmic diplomacy refers to Turkey's ability to develop an active and outreaching diplomacy through its presence in various regional and international organizations. Turkey has an observer status in the African Union and created the Turkish-Arab Forum in addition to hosting numerous meetings that involved a wide array of countries in order to discuss important issues like the Iranian nuclear program, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the Afghani-Pakistani dialogue. As for the zero problems with neighbors, this principle depends mainly on the adoption of a rapprochement policy towards neighboring countries based on trust and cooperation through the intensification of economic and diplomatic relations within a framework of mutual respect of states' sovereignty.

Third, while Central Asia, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe particularly Greece were accorded some importance in the Turkish foreign policy in the late 1980's and 1990's, Arab countries didn't have any priority on the Turkish agenda except for some antagonistic issues related to the Kurdish threat and water partition. Consequently, the attention given to Arab countries nowadays seems to illustrate a sort of specificity since such an attention didn't exist before. Accordingly, the change in the Turkish perception towards Arab countries underlines this specificity in light of the new foreign policy dynamics that manifest a paradigm shift adopted towards the different countries on the external level.[9]Turkey's diplomatic conduct is based on the adoption of soft power tools regarding the different issues of contention while abandoning the security approach that favors the recourse to violence and force in intimidating antagonist states. Thus, although

the Arab countries are addressed by this paradigm change, their relations with Turkey don't seem to be subordinated to the Turkish Western line of conduct. A sort of autonomy is on its way of development and manifests itself on the political level especially in light of the AK party's differences with Israel.

Fourth, the regional condition and the disorder perpetrated by the Iraqi invasion in 2003 is a serious situation that complicated the Middle East politics and shed light on further areas of coordination between Arabs and Turks where the former appeared as partners with whom Turkey can collaborate to stabilize the region. Within the Iraqi Neighbors Initiative meeting that was held in Istanbul in 2007, Turkey signed an agreement with Arab countries for institutionalizing relations and creating the Turkish Arab Forum (Davutoglu, 2008). Besides, the Iraqi war raised the Turkish interest in the Middle East especially in light of the existence of the economic constituency of the AKP that is engaged in the Iraqi reconstruction efforts like TUSIAD and MUSIAD as well as the Turkish local businessmen working in Gaziantep and Diyarbakir (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011).

Again, this dimension underscores the perceptual factor and how Turkey perceives Arab countries and vice versa which is a major element of specificity in the Turkish-Arab relations. Therefore, it would be illustrative to determine how Turkey managed to develop such autonomy in world politics in terms of keeping equal distances in its relations with the different countries including the US which led to a visible activism towards Arab countries in spite of the American reserves on its relations with Hamas, Hezbollah and Syria. Hence, even if this autonomy is favored by the prosperous economic situation and the achievement of a sort of domestic stability regarding the Kurdish issue as well as the fall of the Soviet Union, it underlines a notion of partnership with Arab countries. Accordingly, the emergence of the common historical and religious legacy broke up with the Turkish exclusive identification to the Western bloc that resulted in a sort of superiority in the previous elite conduct towards Arabs.[10] On the other hand, we have to take into consideration that regionalism gained a central focus in the Turkish elite's agenda.[11] In spite of the interest accorded to neighboring countries in the 1980's and especially in the 1990's, the regional dimension has more implications in

the Turkish foreign policy under the rule of the AK party. The incomplete experience that started with Ozal didn't manifest the same magnitude of influence and concretization as it is nowadays.

Regionalism was a partial reform undertaken in the foreign policy dynamics in the 1980's and 1990's since it was manifested on the economic level only. However, under the rule of the AK party, regionalism started to entail further levels of cooperation in terms of economic, political and societal interactions that are intermingled together on the elite's agenda in the Turkish external conduct. The elite change and the ideological shift are underlined in this new foreign policy paradigm where the AK party by manifesting a different posture than its predecessors developed a new perception of foreign policy and started to materialize it with different partners like Arab countries. Therefore, our main research question will tackle the Arab policy of Turkey from 2002 till now by focusing on the arrival of the AKP to power as a turning point and the regional juncture, notably the Iraqi invasion, as an important contextual change that favored the implementation of this elite's foreign policy paradigm that presented a better understanding towards Arabs. Limiting our study to this contextual framework will help in defining the major changes that occurred in the Arab policy of Turkey and the reasons for introducing new behavioral patterns especially on the political and the economic levels.

The implications of the Iraqi war and the regional disorder it resulted in has primarily affected the regional intra-relations including Turkey's formulation of its Arab policy. The Iraqi invasion was detrimental to the Turkish national interest from two interrelated perspectives. First, the institutionalization of an independent Kurdish region in Northern Iraq crystallizes a national security dimension related to the exacerbation of the Kurdish separatist tendencies in the Turkish South Eastern region that is heavily populated by Kurds. On the other hand, the vacuum of power left in Iraq after the institutional dissolution undertaken by the American interim governor has considerable repercussions on the regional balance especially between Turkey, Iran and Israel. In order to cope with these regional challenges, Turkey preserved its security-based national interest conception that was no longer achieved through an antagonistic approach towards neighbors, notably Arab countries, but within a comprehensive and inclusive policy

based on the institutionalization of collective action mechanisms on the regional level like the Turkish Arab Cooperation Forum and the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (Davutoglu, 2008).[12] Hence, Turkey's security is no more confined to its national borders but it is more widened in terms of being tightly related to the regional stability and well-being. Therefore, Turkey has to solve not only its problems but also the different sources of disturbance on the external level by integrating the entire region into formal networks of dependency through the visa abolition, the free movement of people, goods and services and the multilateral consultation mechanisms. Due to the wide scope of the manifestation of the changes in the Turkish policy towards Arab countries, it would be better to emphasize these transformations by providing an analysis of the Turkish policy towards Syria since 2002 as an empirical support to the study of the Arab policy of Turkey under the AK party's rule.

Our choice of Syria as an illustrative case study for the changes in the Arab policy of Turkey is justified as follows. First, the Turkish-Arab relations entail significant evolutions on various levels of interaction. Accordingly, Syria as a neighboring country will underline the paradigm shift in the Turkish foreign policy since the geographical contiguity made Syria an important partner for modern Turkey since its establishment in 1923 till nowadays. Therefore, by relying on Syria, we will have a wide historical background that portrays in details the interactions that occurred on the economic and the political levels as well as the evolution of Turkey's approach towards various areas of contention like the Kurdish issue, water management and territorial disputes. Second, Syria is one of the most important countries for Turkey in the region due to the various problems that culminated by the military mobilization on the common borders in 1998 which impeded Turkey to develop normal relations with Arab countries. Third, by adopting an autarchic policy on the political level and by having a stagnant economy that was unable to develop through an effective liberalization policy, Syria was isolated by the West particularly the United States that is still the main strategic partner of Turkey.

Therefore, the Syrian case will identify how Turkey managed to adopt a sort of an autonomous policy towards Arab countries without undermining its unchanging priorities and alliances with the West. Fourth, through the Turkish policy towards Syria, it would

be easier to identify the Turkish expectations from changing its Arab policy in terms of gains and benefits on a wider scope of action that might exceed the regional level. The Turkish engagement into a wide array of entrepreneurial projects with Syria helps to some extent to lessen the Syrian alienation and favors its integration into the world order. Moreover, the AK party's figures illustrate the Turkish-Syrian reconciliation as a prototype and a starting point that would be emulated to other Arab countries. Consequently, in spite of the strategic importance of other Arab countries like Egypt and Iraq, the focus on Syria will be more effective and direct in terms of indicating the changes in Turkey's foreign policy in general as well as in its Arab policy since 2002.

In light of this research background, **our hypothesis** in response to the main research question would be as follows:

Changes in the Turkish policy towards Arab countries through the improvement of mutual relations on the economic and the political levels and the contribution to regional conflicts' settlement result in a better position for Turkey on the regional and the international level notably towards its Western allies like the US and the European Union.

In other words, Turkey, by developing economic and political relations with Arab countries is trying to widen the areas of mutual interests that would constitute an infrastructure for better relations. This betterment is beneficial for Turkey since the idea of the mutual exploitation of economic and political potentials in the region would relegate differences by avoiding their discussion and deemphasizing their centrality. According to the AK party's intellect, the increase of mutual interests will give no chance for the emergence of new areas of contention and will reduce the importance and the magnitude of the existing antagonism that will be overwhelmed by cooperation. However, Turkey's agenda is not confined to the Middle East, it has a geographic position that is surrounded by important regions other than the Middle East and it is also a strategic partner for some global actors like the United States.

Therefore, by managing conflicts with Arab countries and increasing mutual reliance by initiating economic projects, Turkey would decrease regional inequalities and reduce the sources of disenchantment and violence. Besides, the liberal paradigm adopted by

Turkey on the political and economic levels would be emulated to Arab countries which would increase Turkey's importance for the West as a key actor in the region. Moreover, the energy sector which is accorded an important place in the Turkish foreign policy would render Turkey as an energy hub between Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. Different projects in the energy sector were initiated by Syria and Iraq and most of them are planned to be designed in a way to enable the oil and natural gas distribution to Europe and Central Asia. Accordingly, Turkey would enhance its economic and financial situation in the region and would emphasize its importance for the West especially the European Union. By having good relations with Arab countries and increasing the areas of cooperation in strategic issues like energy, Turkey would use Arab countries as a pressure card on Europe in the negotiations for accession to the European Union. Since the Arab policy of Turkey entails various dimensions like the European security, the decrease of migration and the promotion of liberal values like democratization and free markets in Arab and central Asian countries, it would enable Turkey to become a strategic and reliable partner for Europe even if it couldn't institutionally join its union.

On the other hand, the reconsideration of the Arab policy would enable Turkey to counter some regional rivals like Russia and Iran which pursue a competitive policy with Turkey to ensure their share of energy in the Middle East and Central Asia. Such assertive agenda adopted on the regional level would be not only a maneuver to protect the Turkish interests in the region but also a leverage for pressuring the European Union either to accept Turkey as a member country or to be faced to the reality of a regional leader that empowers its neighbors against the West by developing an agenda that looks for marginalizing the US and EU's interests in the region. The EU's inability to take a firm decision about Turkey's membership request sheds the light on many speculative scenarios about Turkey's orientation towards another pole of interest that would be a regional leadership protecting its own area of influence. The various resources in the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Newly Independent States in Central Asia could be a puzzling research issue especially in light of the political role that Turkey develops towards solving these regions' problems which can confirm the aforementioned concerns.

In order to answer the research question, it will be important to highlight how the Arab policy is formulated in comparison with the other different external partners in the region in two parts. In light of the aforementioned manifestations of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries since 2002, the first part will focus on examining the mains factors that led to these changes in the Arab policy as well as the context and the tools of its implementation on the regional level. In light of the paradigm shift that illustrates new approaches towards soft power, the arrival of the AKP and the emergence of conservative economic actors constitute the main reason of changes in the foreign policy formulation due to the ideational background that they shared with Muslim and Arab countries. Therefore, this part will consist of examining the Arab policy of Turkey as a branch of the Turkish foreign policy since 2002 in order to identify the changes it manifests in comparison to the mainstream policy adopted by the previous ruling parties in terms of ideological shift and tools of implementation on the international and the regional level. Accordingly, it would be illustrative to indicate how the domestic changes in terms of the emergence of a new configuration of constituency, the elite change and the institutional balance on the national level would design the Turkish foreign policy's orientations and priorities especially towards Arab countries. The second part will examine the changes in the Turkish policy towards Syria and how these changes are manifested in the bilateral relations through intensive economic cooperation and political consultation. On the other hand, this part will try to show the importance of the rapprochement towards Syria for Turkey in terms of its position on the regional and the international scene as well as its effect on the Middle East pacification.

A. Literature Review

Most literature developed by Arab scholars that tackled the Turkish policy towards Arab countries since 1930's focused on the analysis of the Western dimension of the Turkish attitude on the domestic and the international scenes as the main cause of the ideological and psychological barriers between Arab countries and Turkey. On the other hand, many of the Turkish scholars' literature mainly before 2000's emphasized the security approach in the analysis of the Turkish attitude towards its areas of contention

with Arab countries. Besides, a third type of literature was developed about the paradigm shift that occurred in Turkey's foreign policy in general and was reflected in its Arab policy by relying on empirical studies and elite statements that were analyzed by various scholars specialized in the Middle Eastern region including Turkey and the Arab world. Accordingly, we decided to rely on a historical review that combines all these studies in understanding the evolution of the Turkish foreign policy in terms of its orientations and tools of implementation as well as the different approaches that were adopted towards external issues especially towards Arab countries.

This review is going to be narrowed by giving more attention to the Turkish foreign policy in the 1990's. The choice of this point of time is relevant since it marked the emergence of political Islam as an influential actor on the domestic scene especially in light of its arrival to power in 1996. Besides, in the 1990's, the world order started to change due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the weakening of the communist ideology. Therefore, by considering the Turkish foreign policy starting from the end of the bipolar system, the world structure and the ideological strives won't constitute an impediment but a favorable context for the amelioration of the Arab policy of Turkey. Moreover, in the 1990's, Turkey has already started to manifest some changes towards its regional surroundings by according an importance to them especially on the economic level. Thus, by reviewing on the literature elaborated on the Turkish foreign and Arab policies in 1990's, we will be able to focus our analysis to the reasons of the changes that occurred in the Turkish external conduct.

Most of the Arab scholars tackled **the evolution of the Arab policy of Turkey** by adopting a defensive approach[13] in their analysis of the Turkish national and foreign policies. Scholarly studies dating from 1930's to 1990's accused Turkey of rejecting its Islamic identity while launching an aggressive nationalist policy on the national level (The Center of the Arab Unity Studies, 1995). The Kemalist elite adopted a repressive modernizing policy that curbed the religious groups' influence in national politics while manipulating the evolution of religion on the social level by creating a directorate of religious affairs "Diyanet" that formulated an adaptive version of Islam the promotes modernization (Lee, 2009). Accordingly, the military is the secular shield that maintained

the secular character of the state while impeding the emergence of any religious identification on the national scene. Not only the religious schools were closed but also a comprehensive legal and educational system was promoted in a way that empowers a social cultivation in line with the secularization process (Nur Al Din, 1997).

In addition to the development of a conspiracy theory as an explanatory framework for secularization in Turkey, the Western orientation advocated by the Kemalist elites was considered as the turning point that drove Turkey away from Arabs. By considering Ataturk and many of his surrounding groups in the military apparatus as Jews who hid their real identity and converted to Islam in order to prove their loyalty to the Sultan[14], many Arab scholars expressed a sense of disdain towards secular elites in Turkey while emphasizing an Arab superiority (Salt, 1989). Many scholarly writings elaborated by Turks where Arabs were referred to as inferior creatures and Turkey as a superior nation that constitutes an integrative part of the West were translated by many Arab and Western scholars which contributed to the increase of the psychological gap between Arab countries and Turkey (The Center of the Arab Unity Studies, 1995). Besides, the Western orientation adopted by Turkey on the external level and its alignment with the US and many European countries contributed to the misperception of the Turkish state that was considered as a Western ally that implements a Western agenda in the region. Therefore, the Saadabad and the Bagdad pacts were boycotted by some Arab countries since they were perceived as imperialistic tools deployed in the region.

On the other hand, the Turkish-Israeli relations constituted a considerable problem in the evolution of the Arab policy of Turkey. In light of the Turkish recognition of the Jewish state, it was the first Muslim nation to take such step which constituted an additional rupture between Turkey and Arab countries. In spite of the Turkish opposition to the Israeli aggressions that were undertaken against Arab countries in the 1950's and 1960's as well as its support to the PLO and the inauguration of its delegation headquarter in Istanbul in 1976, Turkey was still misperceived and suspected by Arab countries (The Center of the Arab Unity Studies, 1995). However, the Turkish-Israeli relations were pragmatic and went through various fluctuations (Bengio, 2004 and Karaoglu, 2007). Therefore, they weren't clearly manifested except in the 1990's,

especially with the strategic alliance in 1996, in order to deter Syria and Greece from their support to the Kurdish separatist movement in Turkey. Besides, Turkey had recourse to such an alliance as a result to the European and American embargo imposed on Turkey since they contested the usage of their imported weapons against Kurdish citizens. The Israeli and the American factors in the Turkish foreign policy weren't permissible by many Arab countries that persisted till the 1990's to perceive Turkey as an opportunistic country that acts on the behalf of a Zionist and American agenda (Nur Al Din, 1997). This conspiracy theory nourished the Arab misperception towards Turkey and it was endorsed in the Arab scholarly writings in the 1990's after the second Gulf War that was launched by an international coalition against Iraq after its annexation of Kuwait. In 1991, Turkey participated in the Operation Provide Comfort especially in Northern Iraq where the Kurdish elements of the PKK found safe haven since 1983. The military participation with the international coalition in bombarding northern Iraq till the 1997 increased the Turkish-Arab antagonism (Ataman, 2002).

Although Turkey had considerable economic relations with Iraq as well as with different Arab countries, the security approach based on power politics and the recourse to violence in the realization of national interest was detrimental for Turkey in its relations on the regional level (The Center of the Arab Unity Studies, 1995). This approach reached its peak in 1998 when Turkey mobilized forces on the common borders with Syria and threatened to go into war with it unless it stops its support to the PKK and other terrorist elements. This suspicious perception from the Turkish side started to change in 2003 when the Turkish parliament opposed the participation in the Iraqi invasion (Hale, 2007). Moreover, the arrival of the AK party to power was another element of enchantment in many Arab countries which perceived it as a positive transformation in the Turkish national politics that would have favorable repercussions on Arabs. Although the Islamic legacy of the AK party was the main reason for such welcoming, it didn't have the same effect for the ANAP and the Welfare party that had Islamic roots and deployed a religious rhetoric. The ANAP created a coalition with various Islamic elements in Turkey in order to enlarge their constituency and support to power.

Therefore, the religious rhetoric was coated in a conservative and ideological lexicon in order to appeal to Islamic groups and increase the probability of their success (Yilmaz, 2007). Most of this rhetoric was implicitly displayed in its public discourse since the party manifested a pro-Islamic stance that advocated for more religious freedom for the pious citizens. Accordingly, the Islamic rhetoric deployed by the ANAP was limited to a national scale for a specific objective which is gaining in elections. Moreover, this party has the same security and conservative approach in dealing with external issues by having recourse to power. On the contrary, the Welfare party led by Erbakan deployed an explicit and visible Islamic rhetoric based on the Just Order slogan that is not only confined to the national level but also encompasses the Islamic world (Onis, 1997). However, this rhetoric was authoritarian in its character in terms of underlining a Turkish leadership that would reinvest its ottoman legacy negatively perceived by many Arab countries.

The AK party as the heir of Erbakan's party deployed a pragmatic discourse that didn't explicitly rely on a religious rhetoric that is not always positively received by Arab countries. In addition to its refusal to participate in the Iraqi invasion, the success of its experience on the national level in terms of economic development and political openness increased the Arab countries' admiration especially on the public level (Hale, 2000). Starting from 2002 and after the Iraqi invasion, Turkey deployed pragmatic tools of action in the region while making discourses that emphasize the importance of Arab and the Muslim countries. The diplomatic activism that Turkey implemented under the rule of the AK party gained to include the different regional partners and create areas of mutual interests especially in terms of according importance to some Arab concerns like the Palestinian issue, the Israeli-Syrian talks and the Iranian nuclear program (F. Houaidi, Personal communication, 2011).

Concerning the Turkish studies led about **the security approach** towards the different issues of contention in the region especially with Arab countries, most of them were justified by the world order and instabilities on the domestic level. Therefore, some scholars emphasized the vulnerability of the Turkish national scene especially on the economic and political levels as the main reason for adopting the conservative and power

politics approach on the national and the external levels. The resistance that the Kemalist elite faced on the domestic level from the Kurds as well as the Islamic movements "tariqat" forced the military to adopt repressive mechanisms against these elements by having recourse to force (Zubaida, 1996 and Yavuz, 1996 and Onis, 1997). Besides, any attempts to infiltrate into domestic politics by Islamist groups were interrupted by a military intervention that is supposed to preserve the national cohesion of the newly built state. Most of these scholars indicated that Turkey was vulnerable and weak since the beginning of its creation. The series of treaties signed with several European countries in the 1920's and 1930's underline such vulnerability. Most of these treaties were the means by which Ataturk managed to preserve the territorial integrity of Turkey and counter many regional rivals and ethnic groups from attacking Turkish lands since they had claims on many of its territory (The Center of the Arab Unity Studies, 1995).

In addition, Western secularism was illustrated as the dominant state ideology that preserved the country and enabled it to lessen the Western worries and suspicion about Turkey's intentions as the descendant of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, this ideology had to be preserved by two dynamics; the first consists of repressing any internal attempt to defy that order and the second is the alignment to the Western block on the international level (Aydin, 2000; Ates, 2003 and Karaosmanoglu, 1983). Consequently, the national scene was dominated by a secular elite and the military whose power was ensured after the 1960 coup d'état where Menderes was executed due to his adoption of some pro-Islamic policies that violated the Turkish constitution.[15] This coup d'état led to the creation of the national security council that is an instance dominated by military figures who are supposed to deliberate and have the final say on the main politics undertaken by the government on the national and the international levels in order to preserve the national unity (Yavuz, 1996). Accordingly, the army intervened through the 1971 and 1980 coups d'état as a result of the political and economic instabilities that reigned at the time in addition to the last military coup in 1997 called the post modern coup where the Welfare party was compelled to resign due to its Islamist rhetoric and anti-secular activities for which the constitutional court decided to close the party and prevent Erbakan from politics for five years (Koker, 1995 and Onis, 1997). Therefore, the

recourse to power and the repression of the outlawed groups was the persistent mechanism deployed by the military to preserve the country's stability and secular character.

However, these power politics dynamics were alleviated by the adoption of the harmonizing legal package by the Turkish parliament since 1999 under Ecevit's rule. This reform aimed to conform the Turkish legal structure and mechanisms to the acquis communautaire in order to start the accession negotiations (Aydin and Acikmese, 2007). These reforms ensured more freedom for the minority groups especially the Kurds and enabled them to express their rights and culture publicly. In addition, the military power was also undermined by these reforms since the military interventions exhibited clear violation to the democratic rule which would harm Turkey's accession to the European Union. Furthermore, the pursuit of these reforms under the rule of the AK party contributed to the redesign of the National Security Council whose prerogatives and competencies where reduced and its members according to the reforms ought to be in their majority civilians. As a result, the domestic scene manifested a paradigm shift and an institutional balance which impeded the pursuit of the security approach and replaced it by a liberal one that deploys political and economic means to resolve any problem that would erupt on the national level.

On the international level, the same logic of the domestic power politics would apply especially towards Arab countries. The Kurdish problem wasn't unique to Turkey since a large Kurdish population lives in Syria as well as in Iraq. Turkey wanted to curtail any Kurdish influence since any changes in one of these two countries with regard to Kurds would stimulate the PKK movement and threaten Turkey's security (James, 2009). As a result of the no flight zone regime established in Northern Iraq that is heavily populated by Kurds, Iraq wasn't able to maintain its authority on it which made this area a safe haven for many separatist Kurds (Hale, 2007 and Tokel, 2006). Therefore, Turkey launched several continuous air and land raids against the PKK elements in Northern Iraq till 1996 where a treaty was signed under the auspices of the United States where the Iraqi Kurds representatives agreed to manage this issue by abandoning any coalition with PKK elements and refusing to receive them (Ertem, 2006; Gurkan, 1999 and Brown,

2007). On another occasion, in 1998, Turkey was ready to launch a war against Syria as a result of its support to Kurds (Soysal, 2001 and 1991; Saruhan, 2003). In 2003, some military troops went through the Turkish-Iraqi borders and launched attacks against the PKK elements especially in light of the US promise to grant them an autonomous rule in Northern Iraq (Park, 2007 and Altinsik, 2005).

Starting from 2005, Turkey developed a series of free visa regimes and free trade agreements with Syria and Iraq as well as Lebanon and Jordan. This approach of liberalizing the commercial exchanges between the neighboring countries contributed to the elimination of a lot of risks to Turkey's integrity by being an effective alternative to hard power in dealing with the regional threats that emanate from neighbors through the intensification of common interests especially in trade and economic benefits. Accordingly, in spite of the autonomous regime granted to Kurds and the persistence of the PKK movements in Turkey, the intensification of the economic and commercial relations with Iraq presented an opportunity for overcoming these problems in light of the benefits that such exchanges provide for both sides. On the other hand, the development of energy projects by the creation of natural gas and oil pipeline that links Syria to Europe and Central Asia through Turkey relegated any prospect of conflict and misperception between Syria and Turkey (Iskit, 1996 and Demir, 2010).

Regarding the literature treating **the paradigm shift in the Turkish foreign policy**, the interconnectedness between the national and the external scenes was underlined by scholarly studies too (Robins, 1989). Accordingly, the end of the ideological polarization on the international level enabled Turkey to pursue an autonomous foreign policy especially towards Arab countries. The absence of the ideological division in world politics allowed Turkey to develop a further autonomous policy that is not only confined to the consolidation of the Turkish ties with the West but also aims to develop its relations with its regional neighbors while preserving its main interests and strategic alliance with the European Union and the United States (Keyman, 2009 and Kramer, 2000). Therefore, the regional dimension emerged in the Turkish foreign policy and gained a lot of significance in terms of realizing the Turkish interests (Robins, 2006). Hence, many cooperation treaties were signed with East European countries, Central

Asian republics as well as Arab countries. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Shanghai Cooperation Organization are visible example of the importance of the regional dimension in the Turkish foreign policy (Ulusoy, 2002). By being member in both organizations, Turkey started to develop economic relations with its neighborhood in an attempt to achieve a better management and realize a strong economic position in the region (Nazchamani, 2003; Jung and Piccolo, 2001).

This regional dimension that started by the economic cooperation was highlighted in Davutoglu's book about Turkey's strategic depth where he emphasized how Turkey would invest its central position by rediscovering its historical and cultural legacy with its neighborhood in order to exploit all the existing potential for the benefit of the region (Davutoglu, 1998). Therefore, the idea of regionalism underlines the interdependence and the connectedness that exist between Turkey and its surrounding regions due to historical and cultural ties. By constituting a wide geographical contiguity, the ex-Ottoman space is a vital area where all regions have the same destiny which implies the necessity of deploying cooperative and regulative mechanisms between Turkey and these different countries (Murrison, 2006 and Oguzlu, 2007). As a result, the ideological vacuum in the foreign policy's intellect after the end of the binary structure of the world incited for the invention of a new idealism that Turkey would pursue in order to preserve its national interests (Kirisci and Rubin, 2002).

However, this idealism requires new tools and a new approach that is different than the conservative one that was deployed by Turkey on the national and the international scenes. Such exigency implied the use of soft power in order to achieve peace and stability in the region through the different pillars of the Turkish diplomacy advocated by Davutoglu. (Davutoglu, 1998). This intellectual paradigm developed by the current Turkish foreign minister was considered by many scholars as the turning point in the Turkish foreign policy where new dynamics, orientations and tools are manifested. As a result, the tactic that was used by Turkey regarding its surrounding threats especially those emanating from Arab countries especially Syria and Iraq in terms of supporting the Kurdish militants and providing them a safe heaven on their own territories was substituted by a diplomatic activism deployed by Turkey with different Arab countries

like Syria and Iraq. The free trade agreements and the bilateral and multilateral consultations with Arab countries dominated the Turkish policy since 2005 till nowadays (Demir, 2010). Therefore, these areas of cooperation on the economic and political levels enabled Turkey to widen its common interests with these countries which would reduce any prospect of war and impede the reemergence of the Kurdish issue as a threat in their relations.

In order to identify the changes in the Turkish approach towards Arab countries under the current ruling party in comparison with its predecessors, we will rely on literature that focus on the Arab policy of Turkey starting from the 1990's. In spite of the liberal atmosphere that started to emerge in Turkey in the 1990's and the end of the bipolar era that enabled some parties to start a regional policy, many problems impeded its visibility (Marcou, 2009 and Jenkis, 2008). In addition to the Kurdish factor, the Turkish neighborhood was marked with various areas of contentions. Accordingly, the water difference with Syria persisted in the 1990's and the mutual agreements that sometimes included Iraq in order to agree on the water management process didn't succeed in ending the problem. Hence, the negative consequences from the development projects undertaken by Turkey in its South Eastern parts undermined the Syrian and the Iraqi interests for long decades especially in the 1980's and the 1990's.

The Syrian dependence on its water resources in its economic activities and urban development compelled it to support the PKK elements as well as Armenian extremist groups that were used as a pressure card on Turkey in order to incite it to change its position towards the Syrian claims in water rights by sheltering them in Syria and Lebanon and giving them training and financial support (James, 2009 and Soysal, 2001). Besides, in spite of the Islamic identification of the ruling party at the time, the Welfare party that refused the Turkish alliance with Israel, the army was still powerful to impose such alternative in order to counter the aforementioned threats and substitute the European rejection of the Turkish membership negotiations. In 1998, Turkey caught Ocalan, the head of the PKK, with the support of Israel and threatened Syria to wage a war against it if it doesn't stop harboring the PKK elements. Our focus on the 1990's is important since it indicates the occurrence of a turning point in the Turkish system in

terms of political liberalization while the AK party was still in a process of creation under the leadership of Gul after it broke up with the Virtue party (Kramer, 1999). In addition, it is the period of time where the repercussions of the EU reforms started to be manifested into a visible change on the domestic scene on the socioeconomic and political levels.

The visible activism in the Turkish foreign policy especially with the arrival of the AKP to the power can be interpreted in light of the socio-economic booming that the country testified from the mid 1980's till nowadays (Yilmaz, 2007 and Onis, 1997). The transformation of the domestic context in terms of security and liberalization paved the way for the introduction of new non-state actors who developed their own business and integrated the national economy thanks to liberalizing efforts (Onis, 1997). These new actors have ambitious economic plans about establishing larger companies and corporations that would extend their activities beyond the national borders. Accordingly, the eruption of the domestic scene with multiple private actors with particular expansionist agendas paved the way for their inclusion in the foreign policy formulation especially in issues related to economic and business relations as well as to cooperation in the energy sector with external countries and neighboring ones (Wolf, 2000). Most of these middle ranged companies called "the Anatolian Tigers" were essentially from Central Anatolia and their leaders had a conservative and religious background. The economic shift undertaken by the state in the 1980's favored the emergence of these companies that constituted the economic backbone of the Islamic and conservative parties. In 1990's, an industrialist and businessmen association was created under the name "MUSIAD" and regrouped most of these small and middle ranged organizations (Yilmaz, 2007).

Most of the owners of these companies were politically and economically marginalized by the secular elite and they were negatively affected by the urbanization process that left numerous inequalities in the society. Therefore, once the state decided to step back from the economic activity and give the opportunity for the individual initiatives to manage Turkey's economy, these marginalized groups started to create mutual solidarity and develop their economic corporations by having their own market-based industry parallel to the traditional business class. Besides, many elements from

these groups participated in politics and constituted a considerable electoral support for conservative and pro-Islamic parties like the center right, the Welfare and the AK parties. Empowered by the links that they have with the AK party, many of these private business actors started to multiply their business in the neighborhood where they created private companies in Central Asian countries, Russia as well as different Arab countries which started to host many of these private businesses[16] (Wolf, 2000; Demir, 2010 and Fuller, Lesser, Henze and Brown, 1993). This socio-economic turnover let some political analysts to assume that the multiplication of commercial and financial relations between Turkey and Arab as well as Muslim countries is tightly related to the party's identity and the emerging conservative business class that encourages promoting a broad scale of economic activities with Islamic countries (Mason, 2000 and Bozagioglu, 2008).

In addition, this liberalizing tendency is supported by a large and wide research centers and think tanks that started to promote ideological basis for this accelerating liberalization in the foreign policy by providing the theoretical framework and analyses that justify the establishment of more commercial and financial relations with neighboring countries including the Arab ones (Alacakaptan, 1998). The AK party was a unique political actor with an Islamic background since it started to adopt a pragmatic discourse that is no longer based on the religious and the ideological rhetoric (Somer, 2007). Accordingly, it aimed to reformulate the Islamic stance into a moderate and pragmatic one that tries to satisfy the public demands which incited the party to rely on think tanks' reports and researches in order to identify the public needs and tendency in elections (Ghanim, 2009). As a result, the AK party's rationale manifested by the pragmatic discourse laid the foundations for the adoption of a better foreign policy especially towards Arab countries (Evin, 2003).

In light of these changes, some journalistic speculations shed light on the development of some policies which tend to favor Islamic countries. Accordingly, Turkey's initiatives started to be motivated to manifest a sort of a regional regulatory dynamic based on the multiplication of its initiatives towards neighboring countries like the Arab ones (Jenkis, 2008 and Murrison, 2006). On the other hand, the staunch position taken by AKP's leaders especially Erdogan against Israel shown in its official public

declarations underlines, for some analysts, a revisionist dynamic in the Turkish foreign policy that looks for not only a simple regional management but also a distinguished position with an Islamic character on various levels (Cilek, 1999; Demir, 2010; Iskit, 1996). In the 2000's, multiple agreements have been signed with different Arab countries with which Turkey had the opportunity to establish strong connections that were consolidated by its opposition to Israel and its readiness to be a regional shield against its aggressive attempts. This Islamic appeal in official declarations is perceived as a political maneuver in empowering the Turkish interests in the region especially after the destabilization that occurred in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion and the emergence of the Iranian role as a regional power (Metinulu, 2009).

On the other hand, many prominent figures of the ruling party endorsed some international theories in the formulation of the Turkish foreign policy like economic interdependence by creating a circumstantial analogy between the region's countries and the European ones' experience in the attainment of their union (Murrison, 2006). Hence, Davutoglu, the Turkish foreign minister appointed to office since May 2009 keeps on stressing the necessity for establishing an economic interdependence in the form of a regional integration that would empower the mutual relations and decrease any probability of resorting to war. In spite of giving the economic factor a leading position in reconciling the different countries together, the AKP leaders promoted the idea of common interest as a solid basis for mutual understanding, assistance and solidarity in facing threatening challenges (Oguzlu, 2007). Thus, this openness can be related to a democratization process where more freedom was given to some local communities especially in light of the binding conditions that were set to Turkey to join the European Union (Ozcan, 2008). Accordingly, Turkey chose to abandon its security-based approach in its foreign policy and adopt the liberal one in dealing with the critical regional issues that deeply affect its interests. The paradigm shift in foreign policy in terms of abandoning conservative and military solutions towards threats can be considered as the main reason for the expansion of the scope of action towards various regions and countries as well as the diversification of the domains of interaction with them (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

Hence, the Turkish foreign policy is no more a reactive one that depends in its definition, design and implementation on the conservative military approach that developed a defensive pattern in response to threats. On the contrary, foreign policy issues turned to be a public matter, a disclosed process where several interest groups are interacting in carrying out the different phases of the policy making regarding major external affairs. It is more a dynamic and proactive process that is involved in several domains of interests all over the neighboring regions in order to openly pursue its vital interests. This remarkable change led to a visible activism that takes part in the formulation of foreign relations affecting national interests instead of just relying on conservative projections and preventive violent and repressive solutions (Aras, 2009). One of the manifestations of the paradigm shift in the Turkish foreign policy towards Arab countries would be the mediation efforts that the ruling party deploys visibly and permanently between many antagonistic countries in the region in order to reconcile them (De L'Etang, 2009). This capacity relies on Turkey's credibility that it acquired by having good and equidistant relations with different parties in the region (Alacam, 1995 and Alantar, 2002). Accordingly, Turkey acted and still acts as a mediator between regional belligerent countries like Syria-Israel since 2008, the different Palestinians factions since the parliamentary elections held in January 2006 that led to the arrival of Hamas to the power and Iraqi factions since the Iraqi war in 2003 and contributed to the settlement of the Lebanese presidential crisis. In addition to these mediatory efforts, Turkey tries to develop an active conduct in its foreign policy that would give it a central role in the region especially on the political and the economic levels including the energy sector. This conduct is mainly based on the involvement of the AKP's officials in the different disruptions that would occur in Turkey's neighborhood based on the integrative Turkish identity that is inclusive to several cultural and ethnic dimensions which imposes on Turkey the responsibility to intervene in settling regional insecurities.

In light of the Turkish reconsideration of its position and its geopolitical and vital space of action in foreign policy, its dynamic diplomacy doesn't usually stop at its surrounding regions but extends to the international scene (Hale, 2000; Jung and Piccolo, 2001; Kirisci and Rubin, 2002). Accordingly, Turkey is developing a mediating dynamic

between its regional countries that are considered by the West as radical and revisionist countries like Syria, Iran as well as Hamas from one side and the Western countries like the US and the European Union from the other side. These reconciliatory efforts are necessary for the regional stabilization and the confirmation of the Turkish presence in the critical issues that can directly threaten its vital interests (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000). Turkey as a secular country with a long experience of nation building process that tries to some extent to conciliate between its Western basis and its important Islamic legacy can play this mediatory role between countries in the Islamic world and the West. The ruling party's identity and the regional disorder paved the way for Turkey to lessen the gap between both sides and enhance understanding by promoting democratic and liberal values. This position has been recently reaffirmed by some AKP leaders like Erdogan who emphasized the importance of Turkey's mediation in stabilizing the region.

Besides, in "the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations" promoted by both Erdogan and the Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero, the Turkish role was conceived as a symbolic representation of the Islamic world that would be ready to rectify any negative presumptions and ideas about Islam (Nis and Bali, 2008; Oguzlu, 2007). Besides, this initiative highlighted the Turkish new complex role as an active Muslim country that can invest its multicultural Islamic heritage[17] in its liberal premises on the political and the economic levels. In addition, the Turkish position in Lisbon in the occasion of the NATO summit in 2010 where Turkish diplomats refused the direct and explicit condemnation of Iran reemphasized this symbolic role. The inability to explicitly consider Iran among the regional threats by the NATO members was perceived as a diplomatic success for Turkey who indicated its refusal to condemn any of its neighboring countries (Zaman, 2010). Such a position could be considered as an indicator of a shift in Turkey's policy especially in light of the discourses that refer to religious appeal that support the different Islamic countries vis-à-vis some Western condemnations. The same position was manifested in the Iranian nuclear issue when the US wanted to impose sanctions on Iran and Turkey intervened as a mediator to convince Iran to adopt a more flexible alternative that would enable it to develop its peaceful program without incurring sanctions.

Therefore, Turkey participated in the Iranian-Brazilian agreement on the enriched-Uranium in a way that conforms to the IAEA proposal (Zaman, 2010).

On the other hand, in order to determine the theoretical framework of this study, a comprehensive review was made on the literature that treated the different approaches adopted in the foreign policy analysis. Generally, foreign policy is considered as the continuation of the national politics beyond the state borders by other means and hence in its analysis, the same tools of examining the policy-making dynamics of domestic politics are deployed (Hill, 2003). Accordingly, it would present a wide array of tactics adopted by the regime in reaction to the opposition (Hudson, 2008). As a result, the ruling elite may discard the opposition in foreign policy-making by ignoring its criticism and refusing to react to it or by adopting different direct and indirect tactics in order to gain a domestic support on a specific issue of concern. Some of these tactics include rewards and punishments, the underestimation of the opposition arguments, forming alliances and disorienting the public attention towards a popular foreign policy concern (Hudson, 2008).

Generally, Foreign policy analysis aims to understand the different decisions made by actors who are deciding either singly or within a group regarding their state's strategy and approach towards foreign governments (Smith and Al., 2008). This field is mainly based on three paradigms in analyzing the actors' decisions which are the decision-making approach (Synder and Al., 1954 and 1963), the different theories of foreign policy elaborated by specialists in International Relations (Rosenau, 1966) and the interaction between actors and their context of decision-making on the national and external level (Sprout, 1956). Therefore, this discipline explains foreign policy in terms of decisions and behaviors that emanate from actors in light of their references and theoretical background (Smith and Al., 2008). Accordingly, it relies on various analytical levels in explaining actors' behavior by focusing on information about the national actors, their interaction with the context of decision-making, the development of causal relations by having recourse to social science theories and the attribution of a similar attention to the decision-making process and the decisions. Thus, foreign policy analysis is based on the actor-specific theory in explaining and providing an in-depth analysis about the decision-

makers' behavior. Besides, nation-state has traditionally occupied a primordial level of analysis in terms of identifying the determinants of an action that concretizes a dual nature that stems from the interaction between internal and external factors that influence decision-making (Synder and Al., 1954).

However, foreign policy analysis lacked the existence of a general theory that encompasses the different analytical levels in which it is interested. It seems as a discipline that provides tools for a fragmented analysis of different determinants in foreign policy making without including them into a comprehensive framework that could be confronted to the different empirical studies (Rosenau, 1966). As a result, Roseneau and Snyder pleaded for the mobilization of a middle range theory that would deploy the different analytical tools borrowed from social sciences in order to adapt the foreign policy analysis to the complexity of the real world. Various cross analysis levels, multi-causal and multilevel tools of analysis that incorporate information from different disciplines would provide an accurate study of the policy-making reality by combining the different influential parameters in policy-making into one comprehensive study.

Another contribution to this field was developed by Harold and Margaret Sprout who underscored the importance of the study of the psycho-milieu and the context that surrounds policy-makers. They emphasized the necessity to combine the examination of power capabilities in terms of influencing decisions in foreign policy with the study of the strategies and intentions deployed by the different actors in order to have a clear understanding of the foreign policy outputs. Therefore, this contribution tries to bypass the actor-general theory that dominated the foreign policy analysis in terms of developing a more actor-specific theory that enriches the understanding of the actors' behavior. By decomposing the unitary vision of the state as the sole actor that aggregates a wide array of actors involved in the foreign policy making on the national level, the actor-specific theory makes an insightful analysis of the changes in the policy-making process (Hudson and Vore, 1995). Hence, the national dimension of the formulation of the foreign policy was added to the analysis of the actors' behavior in terms of identifying the specificities of the policy-makers, their perception of their context of action and the degree of compatibility between their perception and reality. Consequently, the micro and macro

levels of analysis are integrated into a large category of variation in explaining the foreign policy outputs by the means of a cross-national and a middle ranged theory. Therefore, the national specificities were considered as the starting point in examining and understanding the variations in the foreign policy choices and behaviors (Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 1995).

By considering the psychological and societal factors, more insightful analyses would be provided regarding foreign policy making. The importance of the psychological factors emanates from the complexity of the policy-makers' cognitive map that is principally derived from a variety of emotions, national and self conceptions as well as memories and experiences. Moreover, culture, ideology, history, geography and politics were considered as societal factors that influence the milieu where the different actors are operating (Sprouts, 1956). In addition to approaching either the psychological or the societal factors' influence in policy-making; some integrative approaches may be adopted in understanding the effect of both factors in the formulation of a nation's foreign policy (Brecher, 1972 and Brecker and Al., 1969). For example, some studies were led on the national role conception in terms of how a nation, in light of its societal evolution, perceives itself in terms of identity, role on the international level and national attributes (Holsti, 1970; Hess, 1963; Merelman, 1969 and Walker, 1987). The reliance on the personal and individual characteristics in analyzing foreign policy as a discipline that investigates actors endogenously accords a specificity to foreign policy analysis as a discipline that is distinguished from the IR domain (Hermann, 1974; Hermann and Pretson, 1994 and Kegley, 1994).

By considering cognition and information as the comprehensive paradigm that includes the different explanatory factors of foreign policy analysis, further contributions aimed to adapt psychology to the study of foreign policy (Lasswell, 1930; Rivera, 1968). Moreover, additional studies underlined the importance of the leader personality's effect which is an angle of study that aims to determine the leader's political belief, his self-perception, his means and style in pursuing goals (Leites, 1951; Johnson, 1977; Holsti, 1977; Walker, 1977). Besides, some contributions highlighted the perceptual factors like the stereotypical images as well as the cognitive constraints on policy-makers and the

effect of cognitive maps, style and leaders' experiences in policy-making (Jervis, 1976; Cottam, 1977; Herrmann, 1985; Simon, 1985; Heuer, 1999, Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky 1982; Shapiro and Bonham, 1973 and Stewart, 1977). Other studies focused on culture that influences foreign policy making through its direct effect on cognition, attitudes on the international level especially towards crises and the structure of state institutions (Almond and Verba, 1963; Pye and Verba, 1965, Holland, 1984 and Cushman and King, 1985). The role of societal groups and opposition was examined in terms of determining their effects on policy-makers and the degree of the state's autonomy in foreign policy formulation (Dahl, 1973; Putnam, 1988 and Hagan, 1993). Among these societal groups figures the public and elite opinion as an important factor in influencing the foreign policy-making especially in terms of ideological orientations (Holsti and Rosenau, 1979; Cantril, 1967; Verba and Brody, 1970).

According to the cognitive and psychological approach, the actor is not a passive agent who because of its beliefs and personality traits is unable to adapt to the different institutional and bureaucratic changes, on the contrary, the actor turns to be a problem-solver (Rosati, Hagan and Sampson, 1995). Due to the rational model deficiencies in explaining the actors' attitudes in foreign policy, the psychological model emerged as an explanatory framework for the inability of the former model to conform to the human reality by relying on four factors (Dawes, 1998; Hogarth and Goldstein, 1996). First, actors most probably have recourse to simple creations of a worldview that can be easily received by the audience which explains the permanent use of analogies with historical events to explain realities (Dawes, 1998). Second, actors may sometimes deny reality when there is contradicting information to their beliefs. Accordingly, policy-makers mobilize some defensive cognitions in order to defend their decisions even if they would have recourse to incremental and superficial modifications to their system of beliefs especially in its marginal components (Tetlock, 2006). Therefore, long term beliefs are difficult to change especially when they are related to animosity towards others since images don't change easily. Third, the loss aversion is another explanatory factor deployed by the psychological approach in explaining the actors' attitudes in foreign policy especially in the moment of crisis and losses (Kahneman and al., 1992).

Moreover, experts in foreign policy take decisions that deviate from the objective calculations of probability due to their human nature that refuses the fact that errors are ineluctable as well as their inability to account for the events' frequency in world politics (Tetlock, 2006). Therefore, actors have recourse to different types of heuristics, cognitive biases and fundamental attribution error while taking the different decisions (Fiske and Taylor, 1984).

Besides, the international context after the cold war paved the way for the emergence of national identity and culture as basic components of the foreign policy formulation more than the exigencies of the world balance of power (Hudson, 2008). This notion of cultural hegemony in policy-making sheds the light on the importance of the socialization process in shaping the leaders' system of belief in terms of heroes, enemies and legends. Therefore, the course of action deployed in foreign policy will depend on how a nation perceives itself, the other and its role on the international scene. The emergence of a cognitive psychology seemed by then necessary in order to explain how these variables in terms of preferences and beliefs are formulated by the different actors in the foreign policy-making on the national level (Rosati, 2000). Instead of assuming rationality as the explanatory framework in interpreting the human behavior, actors have to be approached in terms of their subjective construction of the environment according to their beliefs (Rosati, 2000). Aside from the national level, the psycho-social milieu approach extends to analyze the international scene as a context of foreign policy-making by relying on the different International Relations theories. Therefore, the world structure and the distribution of power among nations play a determinant role in shaping the foreign policy attitude adopted by the different states (Kaplan, 1957; Hoffman, 1961; Singer, 1972). This double structure in the foreign policy making that presents a bounded interrelation between the national and the international scene in terms of actors and structures complicated the foreign policy analysis (Neak, 2003). Therefore, foreign policy is a dynamic process that involves the interaction of a wide array of actors that originate from different structures (Hill, 2003). This complexity impedes researchers from making a clear typology of actors in foreign policy-making since not only the responsible decision-

makers intervene in the name of their political mandate but also other actors from the civil society, the state bureaucracy and experts (Smith and Al., 2008).

The study of the decision-making group was underlined as the nucleus of the foreign policy analysis where the group structure that ranges from small groups to large organizations informs how the policy is formulated and produced (Synder and Paige, 1958; Paige, 1959, 1968). According to some studies led on the group structure, the groupthink sheds the light on the effect of the group consensus, its size, and the autonomy of its participants as well as the role of its leader on how to understand and formulate foreign policy (Janis 1972 and 1989; Semmel, 1982, Semmel and Minix, 1979; Tetlock, 1979; Hermann, 1978). Besides, the organizations and bureaucracies were considered as another potential actor in influencing the decision-making process since it puts its survival as the most important priority especially in terms of preserving its raison d'être (Allison, 1971; Halperin, 1974; Hilsman, 1967; Neustadt, 1970 and Schilling and al, 1962).

As a result, two approaches emerged in defining the object of foreign policy analysis; one is process-oriented and the other is policy-oriented. According to the process-oriented approach, some scholars approached the foreign policy analysis as a long process that involves a series of decisions that were taken through the time towards a specific situation. It underscores the importance of the different stages carried out for taking these decisions in order to identify the changes in the foreign policy (Hudson, 2005). Thus, actors in foreign policy are not aggregated into a unitary form concretized by the state as a hegemonic institution but they are individual agents who operate within the state. Hence, to explain the foreign policy as a process, the effects of both actors and structures are analyzed separately where actors are examined at the lower levels of analysis and structures at the higher and more abstract ones (Hudson in Ziv, 2008). The policy-oriented is another perspective in approaching foreign policy that stresses the importance of analyzing the policy choice itself as a resulting product of the decision making process and not only as an integrated part of it (Hermann, 1978). Therefore, this approach aims to analyze the foreign policy as a purposive policy due to the fact that the focus of study is the set of actions adopted by a particular government (Allison and

Zelikow, 1999). This policy-centered approach doesn't have a specific view towards actors and structures since the focus is on the policy itself and not the way a particular actor formulated the policy within a specific structure.

In light of the tensions that existed in terms of analyzing foreign policy by combining both actors and structures or referring to one of them, various approaches emerged related to the study of foreign policy by focusing either on actors or structures as explanatory factors. Therefore, realism, neoliberalism, organizational behavior and the social constructivism were more centered on the structural dimension while the cognitive, the bureaucratic politics and the liberal or societal actor approaches focused on actors (Smith and Al., 2008).

Concerning the different actors that dominate foreign policy formulation, there are two explanatory frameworks that explain the power structure between the different policy-makers on the national level. Accordingly, the pluralist model perceives power as distributed among the different societal actors that are nearly equally influencing the policy-making process and that they are immune from the governmental constrains that would be deployed on them (Robinson in Smith and Al., 2008). On the other hand, the elite model, on the contrary to the pluralist model, presumes that one ruling elite dominates the policy-making process while influencing media and public opinion to support their policies. Hence, liberalization and the involvement of public opinion in the foreign policy formulation explain the shift in the states' attitude on the external level (Robinson in Smith and Al., 2008).

Starting from the 1970's, Rosenau, Holsti, Goldmann and Hermann started to accord importance to foreign policy restructuring and change (Rosati, Hogan and Sampson, 1995). According to Rosenau, foreign policy changes have to be studied as a form of political adaptation to contextual changes that occur on the internal and the external levels. Therefore, the need for change rises from an internal evolution that emphasizes new needs as well as from external changes that represent potential threats which incite governments to reconsider their behavior in order to preserve the state survival (Rosenau and Rosati, 1981). On the other hand, Holsti shed light on changes in the foreign policy by distinguishing between incremental and gradual changes from one side and complete

alteration from the other side (Holsti and Al., 1982). He identified a foreign policy typology that entails a variety of external relations patterns that would be adopted by different countries on the international scene. Therefore, there exist five patterns which are isolation, self-reliance, dependence, non-alignment and diversification that illustrate how a foreign policy alteration occurs by moving from one policy orientation to the other in a cyclic dynamic. However, most of these studies remained probabilistic in terms of explaining the reasons of foreign policy restructuring in response to external penetration, dependency and the perception of vulnerability.

Goldmann studied changes in foreign policy as a permanent antagonism between tendency to keep previous practices and the necessity to adapt to environmental changes (Goldmann, 1988).[18] Thus, he established different phenomena that he called stabilizers related to cognitive, administrative, international and political factors whose persistence impedes changes in the foreign policy's orientations. Hermann underscored the gradual change in foreign policy that goes from adjustment in its scope and nature of action to a radical change in terms of role and activities through a progressive modification in tools and objectives (Hermann, 1990). Accordingly, he considered that foreign policy change is embedded in the decision-making process where leadership and bureaucracy reshape its structure in light of a contextual alteration. All these perspectives were integrated into a comprehensive framework that studies foreign policy as a system that is influenced by inputs that shape its process and produce outputs (White and Clarke, 1989). However, in addition to this behaviouralist approach, foreign policy would be examined as a process of actions and procedures where decision-making is only a constituent part that partially explains its changes. Consequently, the psychological aspects and the operational environment on the internal and the external levels are considered as intertwined factors in understanding and analyzing foreign policy. The foreign policy as a national process formulated towards the realization of the state interest is generally, in various scholarly writings, analyzed in light of five explanatory decision-making frameworks that were developed by many scholars in different disciplines as follows:

1**. The power structure** is a model that focuses on the policy-making process from the perspective of the elitist structure of power from which stems the actors' orientations,

interests and policy agenda. Therefore, the priority is given to the nature of the political system as the essential factor that determines the actors' profile as well as their engagement into the decision-making for particular purpose serving them as elites. The term structure of power underlines the importance of the power position in influencing the policy-making process. Different scholars elaborated 6 approaches of power structure on which actors depend in the policy-making process like the elitism, pluralism, Marxism, corporatism, professionalism and technocracy. Each category refer to a particular actor profile, ideology, values, facts and source of power that are all interrelated in the policy-making process (Dror, 1968; Etzioni, 1968 and Smith, 1993). This model emphasizes the principle of the concentration of power within the highest hierarchy since the ability to contribute in the decision-making stems from the position. Thus, the focus is always on the individual interest or the group interest that seems to be exclusively defined without including the interests of other actors that don't occupy high positions.

2. **The rational model** involving rationality as the working guideline of policy-makers wasn't widely supported by the different scholars due to the human shortages and inability to have all the available information about a particular problem. Its assumptions are essentially based on Weber and Simon's reference to the centrality of human logic in the achievement of the optimal solutions that are formulated on the basis of the legal and institutional bonds between the different actors and state organizations. According to Allison, Morgenstern and Neumann, the rational approach is adapted to foreign policy analysis through the expected utility theory where actors' rearrange preferences in terms of their ability to maximize their goals (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010). This model is evident in terms of expecting actors to have consistent goals that they aim to apply through a set of alternatives. However, human shortages in decision-making were highlighted by different concepts like the bounded rationality and incrementalism which shed light on the various techniques that decision-makers have to adopt in order to bypass the human inability of disposing of all the necessary information to reach the optimal solutions (Simon, 1985 and Steiner, 1983). To overcome the complexity of decision-making, the muddling through and the mixed scanning approaches were developed by

Lindbolm and Etizioni respectively in order to underline the necessity of broadening the scope of action that decision-makers rely on by adapting it to the problems they are facing (Lindblom, 1972 and Etizioni, 1968). Both of them tried to overcome decision-making complexity by combining the rational and other abstract values advocated by the poliheuristic model which would give more opportunities for decision-makers to choose among a wider array of alternatives that are not necessarily optimal but plausible (Steinbruner, 1974).

3. **The institutional model** sheds the light on the decision-making context in terms of interest definition and resource mobilization for formulating the necessary policies. In order to understand decision-making, the institutional influence, according to Selznick and Easton, has to be perceived as an organic system that has to adapt to the external environment instead of being mechanically oriented towards predetermined objectives. Thus, decision-making in different institutions takes into consideration the values and interests that are manifested by its agents in order to adapt to the required goals (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1990). This adaptation was emphasized by the prospect theory as an institutional arrangement that makes the decisions more effective in achieving the best outcomes regarding a specific issue in terms of risks avoidance (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979). This institutional context where actors' interests are shaped is important in order to understand how decisions are made inside an institution that is influenced by its historical experience.

4. **The public choice model** also emphasized the context and the bureaucrats' behavior as variables that underline the decision-making process. By relying on the rational choice and bureaucratic theories, it assumes that employers seek their own interest instead of the public's one. Accordingly, bureaucrats try to increase their department budgets and bureau size (Downs, 1967 and Niskanen, 1971). Conversely, the bureau shaping and the unorthodox economics approaches assume that the human motivations are the sole determinants of the human behavior inside organizations. For example, Maslow and Mayo indicated that the group context plays a critical role in decision-making. On the other hand, the unorthodox economic theories like those supported by Boulding and Galbraith, emphasized the importance of abstract factors in the decision-making like the

integrative power that comes at the top of other influential factors like threat and economy (Boulding, 1958 and Parsons, 1995). Accordingly, the conventional wisdom and image influence the different actors' motivations towards particular decisions in order to solve certain problems. This model accords importance to the irrational aspects related to perception, notoriety and legitimacy before the public.

5. **The psychological and the informational models** rely in their analyses on the personality and other subjective factors in the decision-making. For example, Lasswell, Vickers, Simon and Deutsch were interested in determining the perception of the different problems as well as the organization and the flow of information within institutions (Parsons, 1995). The behavioral manifestation is the key word for any policy analysis relying on this model where cognitive consistency is ensured by the actors' decisions (Jervis, 1976). Besides, facts and values are present in this model since they are the main factors that formulate the actors' perceptions of the different problems. Consequently, goals are assigned an important role in orienting the actors' behavior in terms of interests and problems' definition in light of immediate concerns that events evoke (Cashman, 1993 and Jervis, 1976). Furthermore, Lasswell, Greenstein and Kaplan linked between the environment, the actors' personality, emotions, images, belief system and their effects on their contribution in the decision-making process (Kaplan, 1957 and Laswell, 1930).

B. Methodology:

   After reviewing the previous literature written about the Arab policy of Turkey as well as the shift in the Turkish foreign policy approach in general and towards its Arab neighbors in particular, we found that less attention was accorded to the analysis of this transition's features especially in light of the regional context after the Iraqi war. Most of the examined literature focused on the reasons of this shift without analyzing the manifestations of this change and its effect on the regional level. Although the transition process constitutes the starting point of our analysis to underline how the Arab policy of Turkey gained such visibility within its global and regional diplomacy, this study relies on examining two features of this transition to answer the main research question and

verify the hypothesis. Hence, in addition to the importance of the economic interactions between Turkey and Arab countries especially its neighbors, the political dynamics would be relevant in illustrating the originality of our analysis in studying the Arab policy not only from a regional approach but also in terms of tackling new interactive features. The combination of the economic and the political interactions between Turkey and Arab countries would emphasize the reasons for which the Arab policy of Turkey would have served the Turkish national interests. Besides, these features would help in examining the possibility of their transformation into sustainable tools that would build confidence and enhance security between Turkey and Arab countries as well as on the regional level. Therefore, the economic and the political relations will be examined in terms of Turkey's formulation of a favorable policy towards Arab countries while more attention will be accorded to the Syrian case.

First, economic relations will focus on the flows of goods and services as well as the human and capital mobility between Turkey and Arab countries. Besides, it will be verified to what extent the trade volume between Turkey and some Arab countries would be developed into an economic interdependence. On the other hand, political relations will be studied by focusing on the analysis of the Turkish presence in some regional conflicts by according importance to mediation as a diplomatic tool frequently utilized by Turkey in several crisis like the mediation between Syria and Israel. Accordingly, this feature will try to examine whether Turkey manages to develop conciliatory mechanisms by its mediation policy between antagonist parties in order to stabilize the region and empower mutual confidence and security on the regional level.

This study will adopt the qualitative approach in order to identify the motives and the expectations of the ruling party from the adopted changes in the Arab policy of Turkey. Therefore, we chose to formulate a questionnaire addressed to several personalities that would inform us on the different issues and aspects that would answer the research question. The survey seemed to be difficult since the research relies on a new issue of study which means that we had a lot of questions that needed to be clarified through a series of open-ended questions. Besides, in order to ensure consistency and obtain the required information we opted for a face-to-face interview conducted through a field

research in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep which addressed a wide array of politicians from the AK party, the Republican and the Kurdish Peace and Democracy parties as well as members in the Turkish parliament. In addition, an interview was conducted with several journalists from Zaman, Taraf and Yeni Safak as well as businessmen, employees in the MFA, the Prime Ministry, Chamber of Commerce and some university professors which added different perspectives to the research and helped to reach a better formulation for our study's main question, hypothesis and main concept. The questions were designed according to the research structure and were divided into three categories that deals, each respectively with the AKP's specificity, the policy formulation process in light of the changing power balance between the different actors on the domestic level and the implementation of the Turkish Arab policy.

C. Conceptual framework:

Policy Analysis is the main concept of this study since it focuses on the analysis and the interpretation of the changes that occurred in the Arab policy of Turkey since 2002 in light of two contextual variables: the arrival of the AKP to power and the regional destabilization in the aftermath of the Iraqi war. The focus will be on the emergence of new actors in terms of type and influence in the formulation of the Arab policy as a part of a dynamic and active foreign policy developed by Turkey. The AKP's agenda called for the acceleration of the Turkish membership in the EU and the implementation of a series of constitutional reforms that would pave the way for a better assessment of the Turkish liberalizing efforts from the European Union. This agenda was progressively implemented since the arrival of the AKP following the adoption of a harmonizing legal package at the end of the 1990's concerning many domestic matters which created a suitable environment for reforming the Turkish foreign policy. However, the Iraqi war presented the optimal opportunity for the party to manifest a drastic shift in its foreign policy approach. In spite of the vitality of the US relations for Turkey especially for the military, the parliament refused the entry of the US forces to Iraq via the Turkish territories. Besides, the AKP leaders decided to take into consideration the resentment of

the public opinion that plays an important role in the electoral success of the party and would stigmatize the government if the parliament hadn't refused the US request.

In addition, since the parliamentary decision in March 2003, many issues related to the Arab policy started to be visibly manifested like the autonomy of the Turkish foreign policy and the changes in its approach especially towards issues related to Turkey's national interests. Therefore, the Arab policy of Turkey is relevant to our analysis since it highlights a major makeover in the foreign policy formulation in terms of priorities and tools of action as well as self perception. As a result, policy Analysis is a dominant concept in this research and it is going to be analyzed in light of the interaction of two variables which are the Iraqi war and the AKP in the formulation of the Arab policy of Turkey. However, the policy analysis involves a broad study since it cares about the existing problems in a particular context and how the different policies deal with these problems. Therefore, an attention is accorded to the policy context, inputs and its various stages as well as its results in terms of outputs and outcomes.

Consequently, policy analysis would rely on a wide array of disciplines like political science, sociology, welfare economics, political philosophy, comparative politics, the political process and management. Accordingly, various disciplines would intermingle in the analysis of the Arab policy of Turkey in light of our research question that involves formulation, decision-making and implementation. In identifying the various changes that occurred in the Arab policy of Turkey in terms of its agenda structure, formulation, scope and modality of implementation, we chose to rely on the political/policy process. This framework includes by its turns various approaches like the stagist, elitist-pluralist, sub-system, neo-Marxism, institutionalist and policy discourse approaches. In light of our case study related to the Arab policy in general and the Turkish policy towards Syria in particular, the elitist-pluralist approach[19] seems to be the most accurate cognitive framework in explaining the changes in the Arab policy of Turkey especially in light of a destabilized regional context and the arrival of a political party with a strong religious background that managed to conciliate it with the liberal values.

On the other hand, the AKP occupies an important position in terms of decision-making, it is almost the main actor which has the final deliberation on different policies

initiated on the domestic and external levels. The AKP's influential role in the policy-making process would be understood in light of the alleviation of the military power in the decision-making process and the AKP's sufficient majority to create a government without any elements from the opposition. As a result, we will try to focus on a decision-making framework that includes explanatory tools for the elitist-pluralist approach.

In order to answer the main question and verify our research hypothesis, this study will rely on the power structure theory as an analytical framework in developing the changes that occurred in the Turkish foreign policy towards Arab countries. Although the power structure will constitute the basic explanatory paradigm of our study we might have recourse to some elements from the informational system that would be complementary to the power structure model. This model seems to be the one that suits our study in terms of answering our research question in light of the literature review led on the evolution of the Turkish foreign policy since 1923.

Accordingly, in examining the changes that occurred in the Arab policy of Turkey, we will focus on the political and the economic levels. The emergence of a new structure of political actors as well as the existence of an economic elite that is considered as the main constituency of the ruling party would be better analyzed in light of the power structure model. This economic and political elite's structure emphasizes how the common religious values and circumstances from which they suffered cemented their internal cohesion and formulated their political and economic preferences in terms of choosing foreign partners and modalities of action. By the arrival of the AK party to power, it started to adopt a pragmatic agenda that copes with the national exigencies without undermining its Islamic roots. This pragmatism promoted by the party and strengthened by the pursuit of the EU membership negotiations empowered the party and enabled it to be released from the army's domination. These features would be clearly understood by relying on the power structure since it will examine how the adoption of the reforms advocated by the EU would pave the way for a new formulation of the foreign policy that influenced the Turkish approach towards Arab countries. Besides, it will determine how the party retrieves its power both on the national and the international scenes and what are the sources from which stems the party's influence in policy-making.

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On the other hand, this theoretical framework would be beneficial in indicating how Turkey managed to undertake visible changes in its policy towards Arab countries in spite of the existence of various intellectual writings that promoted such changes in the 1990's. By choosing the AK party as a variable of study in answering the research question, the power structure would examine the organizational framework of the party, its ideology, modalities of action and constituency by situating them in the domestic and regional context.

However, due to the ideational factor that is linked to the ruling party's structure and power, the psychological and the informational model would be partially used in identifying the effect of the party in terms of political background, cognitive map, personal traits as well as the surrounding environment on the adopted approaches and tools in implementing its policies towards Arab countries. Therefore, the informational and psychological models would underline some aspects in our analysis in order to support the power structure model and enable it to determine further elements that are theoretically out of its scope of analysis like ideology, the personal character and the environment related to decision-makers. Hence, our study variables which are the AK party's arrival to power and the regional context of destabilization played a considerable role in identifying the adequate frameworks on which we will rely in analyzing the Arab policy of Turkey.

II. Changes in the Arab policy of Turkey under the Rule of the AKP

This part tries to give an overview on the main reasons behind the visibility of the Turkish Arab policy between 2002 and 2010 by relying on an actor-based approach, the power structure model, in analyzing changes in the Turkish foreign policy notably towards Arab countries. The different theories elaborated within the power structure model, elitism, pluralism, corporatism, Marxism and professionalism illustrate various features of the actors who are involved in the formulation of the Arab policy of Turkey on the national scene. Accordingly, by focusing on the outcomes of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries as a starting point, the study's interest will be accorded to the main factors that contributed to the formulation of the Turkish policy in such a visibility both on the official and the public levels. These factors were determined in light of a field research that was conducted in the ruling party's headquarter, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and universities where most of the respondents highlighted the contextual effect on the visibility of the Arab policy of Turkey by emphasizing on two basic elements that constitute the main changes. The first factor is the arrival of the AKP as a majority-ruling party with Islamic roots rallying a large array of actors who influence the policy formulation process. The second factor is the policy-making environment where these actors operate and formulate their policies in light of global, regional and national exigencies. From these two factors are derived some sub-elements that influence the formulation of the Arab policy of Turkey like the actors' identity and interests that are tightly intermingled in the policy-making process.

Accordingly, these sub-elements were also decisive in the foreign policy-making since the establishment of the republic; however, they started to have different significations since 2002. The cognitive map of the new ruling elite that traces the Turkish foreign policy potential from a historical and cultural investment breaks with the traditional elites' defensive attitude towards neighboring countries. The inclusion of the religious factor as well as the shared historical background as determinants of the ruling elite's self-perception favored a psychological rapprochement with Arab countries and created a sense of a communitarian solidarity from which stems the essence of the Turkish national

interest. Therefore, the traditional meaning of national interest as the preservation of the physical integrity of the state from any external threats turned to have a transnational formulation that transcends the hard-power exigencies previously declared by the state. Thus, the idea of common interests and threats started to evolve through a social process that reformulates their significance and would by then create a sort of security communities where the representation of identity and security is shared between Turkey and Arab countries. The changes in the elitist cognitive map in terms of self-perception, the definition of the other notably the Arabs as well as the reformulation of a new mission for Turkey on the regional and international levels led to the deployment of new tools of action in terms of intensity and variety as means of strengthening the Turkish new ideational representation of itself, its role and the other.

A. The main actors of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries.

1. The main political and economic actors on the Turkish national scene.

By relying on the power structure model in identifying the changes in the Arab policy of Turkey, the analysis of the actors' influence in its formulation is illustrative for two reasons. First, the progressive liberalization of the political scene since the 1980's led to the emergence of a wide array of actors that influenced the policy-making process in terms of their interests and ideological orientations. Second, another aspect related to liberalization is the interaction between these different actors regarding various foreign policy issues that started to be publicly debated which changed the Kemalist restricted vision of democracy where diversity was only expressed within the framework of the state doctrine.

In addition to the emergence of new actors on the national scene, the other factor that emphasizes the paradigm change in the Turkish foreign policy-making is the retreat of the military power (M. Mercan, personal communication and E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011). The army's influence has decreased in light of the importance accorded to the negotiations for accession to the EU and the adoption of further liberalizing reforms that empowered democracy and limited the military intervention

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through the National Security Council (NSC) which was the major instance for decision-making (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the civil authority started to regain its autonomy vis-à-vis the army and turned to be stronger in terms of its ability to manage the domestic problems which was manifested by the democratic opening initiated by the AKP that underlines a visible ideological change in approaching Arab countries (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010). The Turkish foreign policy was dissociated from the national security approach that dominated its formulation especially towards Arab countries by the arrival of the AKP that adopted a series of constitutional reforms in 2002 that restricted the NSC authority (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). Hence, when the military influence dominated the policy-making process on the domestic level, Turkey had a self-image as a threatened state that was permanently under siege in the region.

Accordingly, the AKP worked on alleviating this self perception that was referred to by some respondents as "the siege mentality" by focusing on democratization and decreasing the military power which consolidated the Turkish conduct in the region as a cooperative dynamic instead of the adoption of a confrontational policy (I. Dagi, personal communication, 2011). The AKP adopted a favorable policy towards Arab countries that eliminated the psychological barriers by increasing the mutual interactions that enabled each side to have a direct idea and perception about the other (S. Turan, personal communication, 2011). Unlike its predecessors, the AKP doesn't have the same nationalist prejudices against Arabs and accords importance to the economic and humanitarian dimensions in its orientation towards Arab countries (M. Esayan, personal communication, 2011).[20]

In November 2002, the AKP gained a sufficient majority for creating a government without having recourse to coalitions with other parties. The parliamentary majority obtained in the following elections that took place in 2007 and 2011 enabled the AKP to become practically an influential actor in policy-making notably foreign policy which reflects a sort of a power concentration that coincides with the elitist approach in explaining the policy-making process. Accordingly, the party's charismatic leader, Erdogan, has a dominating role in formulating a favorable and visible policy towards

Arab countries whose importance was underlined by the Prime Minister on different occasions (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011 and Karan, 2011). Some opponents expressed a critical position towards the Arab policy of Turkey under the rule of the AKP that is accused of being an autocratic instance that marginalizes other parties from the decision-making process (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011 and Oymen, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, according to the Republican Party (CHP), the heir of the Kemalist tradition, the Turkish policy towards Arab countries is not credible and against the Turkish national interest since there are persistent problems that prevent both sides from going beyond normalization. The main difference that impedes the evolution of such policy is divergence in identity and political reference crystallized by the secular system in Turkey in contrast to a lagging nation-building process in Arab countries (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010).[21] Moreover, the AKP changed the basics of the Turkish policy in the Middle East by breaking with its traditions in terms of neutrality by taking sides with different radical groups in the Arab world as well as adopting an antagonist position towards Israel (O. Oymen, personal communication, 2011).

On the other hand, the Saadet, the Turkish Islamist party, adopted the same critical position towards the Arab policy of the AKP since it perceives it as subordinate to the US policy towards the region and that Turkey as a Western ally is compelled to adopt it (T. Karamullaoglu, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, Turkey keeps its Western alignment and orientations in its foreign policy while diversifying its relations with different partners including Arab countries in order to harmonize the latter's attitudes and policies with the world order and empower their strategic ties with the West especially in a post cold war context (T. Karamullaoglu, personal communication, 2011). Hence, the party's leading figure expressed some doubts about the sincerity of the AKP policy towards Arab countries especially in terms of its intentions in undertaking an intensive economic policy in the region.[22] Thus, in accordance with Saadet, the Arab policy of Turkey is a maneuver that ameliorates the AKP's position towards the West (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the adoption of an integrative policy towards Iraq by developing strong economic ties and undertaking political consultations with the different Iraqi factions compensates the Turkish absence in Iraq as a result of its

refusal of the deployment of the US forces through its territories (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011). On the other hand, the zero problems policy pursued by the AKP for the stabilization and the pacification of the Turkish neighborhood conforms to the EU conditionality for accession and increases the bargaining position of the ruling party towards the EU (M. Mercan, personal communication, 2011 and M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, by having better relations with Iraq and other neighboring countries, Turkey turns to be a strategic asset for both the US and the EU in terms of managing the regional deficiencies in security and development through permanent bilateral cooperation and consultation.

Most of the critiques addressed to the AKP were formulated in terms of opposition to its Arab policy as a specificity that emanates from its ideological and religious background. However, the party relies on pragmatism in its policies instead of adopting ideological stances that weren't successfully received by the conservative constituency in the 1990's (Yilmaz, 2005). In spite of the existence of further factors that influence the policy-making like the cultural and religious aspects, the Turkish foreign policy was visibly influenced by a mentality shift and started to reflect Turkey's strategic depth in the region in terms of ensuring peace and stability (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). A sort of mentality change is revealed by the neoliberal outlook of the party that conforms to the world order and the deployment of suitable tools that enable it to be integrated on the domestic and external levels (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). The pragmatic character of the Arab policy of Turkey resides in its responsiveness to some changing circumstances that incited for a reconsideration of the state policy regardless the identity of the ruling party (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the increasing trends of economic liberalization and the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the development of an active and liberal regional policy that is essentially based on market expansion in neighboring countries.

Besides, the occurrence of the 9/11 incidents paved the way for the development of a pivotal role for Turkey in the Middle East through the betterment of its relations with Arab countries (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Hence, the pragmatic character of the Turkish policy helps in guaranteeing the power balance in the region in light of the

existence of a regional vacuum[23], an Israeli-Iranian antagonism as well as a wide array of radical groups (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011).[24] The tenets of the Turkish policy coincided with the US interests in the region in terms of pacifying a turbulent neighborhood through the zero problem principle and the expansion of economic ties. Accordingly, the AKP is formulating a favorable policy towards Arab countries by having recourse to trade and political consultations with neighbors regarding the different crises that emerge on the regional scene which contributes to some extent to the rapprochement between Arab countries and the West (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011 and I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011).[25] Thus, there is a sort of continuity between the Turkish conduct towards the Arab world and the West especially the EU (M. Mercan, personal communication, 2011). Hence, although Turkey feels closer to the Arab world especially in light of the troubles it had with the US and still has with the EU and Israel, it adopts a pragmatic policy on the political and the economic levels that have benefits for Turkey as well as Arab countries (Y. Aktay, personal communication, 2011 and T. Kucukcan, personal communication, 2011). These benefits constitute the common interest on which the Arab policy of Turkey is based by envisioning a win-win interaction that aims principally to achieve peace through the exchange of values and goods (Y. Aktay, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, in spite of the fact that the Turkish policy towards Arab countries is an AKP policy, it would easily turn to be a state policy especially in light of the wide support for the Arab policy of Turkey on the public level (Y. Aktay, personal communication, 2011 and A. Asan, personal communication, 2011).[26]

On the contrary to the elitist theories developed in the study of policy analysis, the new parliamentary organization created a favorable context for a power concentration for the AKP but without the exclusion of the public that was implicitly engaged in the policy making through permanent consultations with MPs affiliated to the ruling party (A. Asan, personal communication, 2011 and O. Turkone, personal communication, 2011). According to Lasswell and his definition of elitism in terms of influencing the policy making process, there is a shift in the domination struggle from a class conflict to a competition on the tools of influence like authority, propaganda, business and knowledge.

By observing the AKP structure, Lasswell's definition applies as both a class conflict and a competition on the tools of influence. The ruling party encompasses different elites that possess various influential tools notably businessmen, think tanks and popular figures who had previous experiences in localities from which spurs their popularity (Onis, 1996).

On the other hand, the party also presents a class struggle by rallying the marginalized elements in the previous regimes where the secular elite dominated the national scene and the state establishment. Accordingly, even if previous conservative governments made some steps of rapprochement towards the Middle East and Arab countries, the AKP is more visible (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011). The AKP is a more religious and conservative party that has roots from Central Anatolia like the Middle-ranged enterprises associated with the Middle Eastern markets which explains the open door policy towards this region (A. Karabat, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, the AKP had to take into consideration the sensibility of the Middle East in terms of culture and belief since it is related to its conservative constituency that reflects its unique structure that has trade relations with the East as well as the West (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011). Consequently, business community is an important tool in developing an active policy towards Arab countries since it creates reciprocal confidence and trust between both parties and contributes to the formulation of the Arab policy of Turkey (Y. Aktay, personal communication, 2011 and I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011).

Furthermore, according to Lindblom and Dahl, pluralism is generated by the economic and social development that destabilizes the power balance within the policy making process between economy and politics where the former is dominant (Lindblom, 1972 and Dahl, 1973). However, in light of Davutoglu's emphasis on the role of non state actors like individuals, enterprises and civil society that complements the Turkish external conduct, the Arab policy of Turkey illustrates a comprehensive signification of pluralism that is not only restricted to an economic significance. Some private actors with Islamic affinities became active in mobilizing their own tools of action that add to the Turkish foreign policy potentials (Babacan, 2010; K. Balci, personal communication,

2011 and A. Emre, personal communication, 2011).[27] Thus, another specificity of the AKP is the formulation of a policy that is not only addressed to Arab countries on the official level but also to the public where Arab societies are considered as actors that started to emerge in the Arab world[28] (S. Genc, personal communication, 2011). The mobilization of the cultural factor by some organizations and movements underscores the Turkish soft power in terms of deploying new modalities of actions like the establishment of wide social networks and developing various cultural activities and educational institutions in different countries in the Middle East (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011 and S. Genc, personal communication, 2011).[29]

   According to some influential figures in the AKP, the party's ideological background and dominating position on the national scene have visible effects on the formulation of a favorable policy towards Arab countries. Therefore, the president of the committee of foreign affairs in the parliament indicated that the AKP's perception towards Arab led to the redefinition of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries on the basis of mutual respect and the establishment of peace and stability in order to enhance relations that were forgotten for a long time (M. Mercan, personal communication, 2011). Thus, the Arab countries occupy an important role in the Turkish foreign policy vision that refers to the development of a regional integration based on a sort of economic, cultural and social relations as well as the establishment of a constructive dialogue between nations (M. Mercan, personal communication, 2011). The singularity and the potential of the Islamic reference between Turkey and Arab countries would contribute to the regional empowerment by giving an example of a humanitarian civilization. The deputy's discourse emphasized collectivity by referring to Muslims with "we" and indicating that Muslims can create a peaceful world especially in the Balkans and the Middle East that would have democratic values in their societies like Turkey (M. Mercan, personal communication, 2011). Besides, he considered Turkey as the only state that can achieve this regional vision with Arab countries that have important potentials in terms of demography, religion, resources and strategic position (M. Mercan, personal communication, 2011).

Hence, the AKP counters Lasswell's fears of a pure autocracy through the emergence of a ruling elite that concentrates most of the power since this party acquires its tools of influence from various sources (Lasswell, 1930). This party manifests a grass root politics dynamic that strengthens its relations with citizens on the public level and engages different decision-making instances like academicians and scholars through think tanks (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the ruling party has recourse to professionalists and technocrats in the different state institutions especially the Prime Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to facilitate and enhance the foreign policy-making process where scientific concepts and principles are applied in light of a clear understanding of the modern world (Bell, 1995). Furthermore, the liberalization of the domestic scene in Turkey led to the emergence of different informal actors like think tanks and research centers in the policy-making process (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010). Therefore, many think tanks hold public debates by organizing sessions, conferences and publishing reports on several foreign policy questions where different intellectual, academic and political figures participate in analyzing the Turkish policies towards various issues. Moreover, they produce academic and scholarly studies about the different contemporary concerns on the domestic and external levels (USAK, SETAV and TASAM's websites, 2010). All of these nongovernmental institutions were founded in the 1990's and their main goal is to serve to analyze the different policies adopted by the government as well as guiding the policy-making process. These think tanks encompass a wide array of intellectuals from different backgrounds and with various ideological orientations that permanently not only criticize the state policies but also develop multiple perspectives for decision-makers. Various reports and analyses were published by these think tanks about the new Turkish foreign policy dynamics on the regional level and towards Arab countries. By conducting nation-wide surveys, different research centers and think tanks depicted the public visions and attitudes towards different issues including Arab countries and Arab image in Turkey. Consequently, the public began to be engaged in open debates about different issues of concern in state policies including foreign policies through these different think tanks that increased the public consciousness about the changes in the foreign policy approach.

On the other hand, the existence of different technocratic instances that participate in policy formulation in addition to the economic actors underlines the notion of policy networks and communities that was largely debated by pluralists and Marxists (Dror, 1968; Etzioni, 1968 and Smith, 1993). Moreover, the power structure as developed by further analyses that refer to the structuralist and instrumentalist approaches perceives the policy-making process as dominated by actors sharing similar backgrounds and cognitive perceptions of their environment and who act in light of the exigencies of the economic factor. Therefore, the dominance of capitalism in the policy formulation is perceived as a necessary tool for the regime sustainability and legitimacy within the state. Accordingly, the AKP, as its predecessors in the 80's and 90's, deployed the economic factor notably capitalism both on the national and external levels. The public ties that the party has with its constituency are principally based on welfare activities and services directed towards the marginalized classes which manifested a specific type of economic domination that derogates from the pure capitalist hegemony in light of the state's intervention side by side to the individual initiatives. Most of these classes turned to be one of the biggest entrepreneurial elite that have an interest in developing positive relations on the external level notably with Arab and Muslim countries.

The favorable economic situation on the national level following the structural reforms that were introduced into the banking sector coped with increasing growth rates in its neighborhood and constituted a main source of support and popularity for the party both on the national and regional levels (Onis, 1996). Despite of the importance of the economic factor in policy formulation, it manifests a sort of consistency since the ruling elite's interests expressed at the higher level doesn't contradict with the public ones at the lower levels. Therefore, another category of actors that influences the foreign policy-making towards Arab and Muslim countries in Turkey are the economic enterprises that emerged in the 1980's with the liberalization policy and the economic shift towards exportations. In light of an interview conducted with some members in the MUSIAD, a sort of an ideological superposition with the AKP was manifested in their justification of the ruling party's policy towards Arab countries. These different enterprises constituted an important part of the Islamic parties' constituency as well as their socioeconomic basis

(Gulalp, 2001). Hence, in its foreign policy formulation, Turkey deploys two levels of interaction; the first one is the strategic engagement that is concretized by a set of policies and instruments as well as the practical and tactical steps that are taken in order to enhance the diplomatic and economic relations (Babacan, 2010).[30] Some business groups engage into the second level of interaction like TUSKON and MUSIAD that are two business groups involved in economic and commercial relations with African and East Asian markets as well as with Arab countries (Babacan, 2010).

Another approach of power structure studied policy-making as a division of labor between different actors who are the sole representatives of their own interests within a state control on their organization and demands articulations (Schmitter, 1974). Accordingly, this sort of power relation is considered as a functional dynamic in policy-making since it enables the ruling elite to obtain the required collaboration for their policies implementation (Grant in Parsons, 1995). In the Turkish case, there is a sort of an ideological compatibility between the different political and economic actors which turns corporatism to be an integrative mechanism of interests instead of a conciliatory tool between different demands through the division of labor (Dunleavy, 1995). Although the national scene is marked by a wide array of actors, the ideological convergence between the ruling party, the think tanks and the public opinion revealed the AKP as the main and the dominant actor that prevails in the policy-making process (O. Oymen, personal communication, 2011).

In examining the Turkish case, the existence of important business groups doesn't imply the supremacy of a particular interest since the business groups' interests converge with the ruling party's ideological orientation. Hence, various groups are supporting the AKP like the Muslim conservative companies that accept its political rapprochement towards Arab countries (S. Dincsahin, personal communication, 2011). After the Iraqi war and the development of an active and visible foreign policy especially in the Middle East since 2002, new doors and opportunities were opened for businessmen in the region and Northern Iraq in particular (MUSIAD, 2011).[31] Besides, many MUSIAD members even conduct business in different Arab countries by their own initiatives like in Northern Iraq and Syria where they are expanding their markets, concluding trade agreements and

holding exhibitions (MUSIAD, 2011). Hence, a common consent appears between many MUSIAD enterprises and the different conservative governments notably the AKP whose political stance endorses the deployment of economic tools in the Turkish conduct towards the Middle East.[32] Accordingly, there is a shared conviction that Business will help in achieving stabilization which explains the governmental engagement in securing roads and borders for commercial transactions (MUSIAD, 2011).

Different figures from the MUSIAD had reference to similar arguments used by the AKP representatives in explaining the factors that contribute in formulating a favorable policy towards Arab countries. Both businessmen and AKP members referred to common religion and culture as well as geographic proximity in explaining the importance that Arab and Middle Eastern countries occupies in foreign policy notably in terms of trade transactions (MUSIAD, 2011). On the other hand, most of the Anatolian enterprises that emerged in the 80's and 90's in Turkey needed new markets and wanted to avoid Western competition which oriented them towards Arab countries (S. Ozel, personal communication, 2010). Although Turkey has economic relations with the US and the EU, the Western markets don't seem to be sufficient[33] for the Turkish exports which underlined the need for the development of an active policy on the regional level, as indicated by many think tanks reports (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011).[34]

Therefore, even if the AKP is a conservative party that entails some Islamic elements, it adopts a pro-business and pragmatic policy in its conduct on the regional level which undermines the different allegations about the possibility of an Islamic agenda (A. Karabat, personal communication, 2011and I. Dagi, personal communication, 2011). As a result, Turkey reaped the benefits of its liberal orientation in the 1980's by having a vibrant economy that reached the 16th rank among the largest economies in the world in 2010 and hence constituted its main tool of soft power (Babacan, 2010).[35] Therefore, the Turkish policy stems from its need for a better Middle East that constitutes an economic potential where the AKP is in a better position to go for an economy-centered regional policy that increases the Turkish shares in Arab markets as well as its assertiveness on the regional level (I. Dagi, personal communication, 2011).

2. The AKP singularity in terms of its external conduct towards the Middle East and Arab countries.

Before 2002, under the rule of the secular elite, the Arab policy of Turkey was mainly developed for practical reasons related to economic exchanges and the provision of oil. As a result, any rapprochement with Arab countries had a volatile character in response to national exigencies and was only feasible at the time of crisis with the West like in the 1960's and 1970's.[36] However, by the arrival of the AKP to power, the changes that occurred on the national and external levels created an opportunity for the formulation of a visible policy on the regional level notably towards Arab countries (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, in spite of the similarities that the AKP shares with the centre right parties in foreign policy in terms of relying on the economic tools towards Arab countries, this party explicitly evokes a shift in the elite's perception towards neighbors that is manifested by the emergence of new dynamics in its regional policy especially towards Arab countries. Accordingly, the AKP is a unique actor in comparison to the secular and the conservative elites that governed Turkey from the establishment of the Republic till 2002.

The AKP singularity in foreign policy stems from its specific sociopolitical profile on the national level that influenced its perception and attitude towards Arab countries. The popularity of the party originally stems from the experience of some AKP figures in governing different municipalities in the 1990's (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010). Accordingly, the AKP is uniquely considered as the representative of the people's will on the contrary to the previous regimes that considered people unable to determine their own interests and hence have to be commanded in an autocratic way towards modernization (Bayraktar, 2007). Besides, unlike the Kemalist regimes that minimized the influence of the Islamic community, the AKP claims more rights and freedom in religious matters (M. Esayan, personal communication, 2011). By adopting a political rhetoric that is based on rendering public services and distributing resources to citizens

instead of ideologies, the AKP gained a large maneuver not only in policy formulation but also in decision-making on the domestic and the external levels.[37] In light of the large Islamic and conservative constituency of the AKP, the formulation of a visible Arab policy enables the AKP to bypass the secular state bureaucracy through the adoption of bold positions that rallies the public opinion on the national level (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011 and C. Oktay, personal communication, 2011). In light of the one minute crisis in Davos in 2009 where the Turkish Prime Minister attacked his Israeli counterpart and the Mavi Marmara incidents in 2010[38], the adoption of a just and equal position in international instances enabled Turkey to reveal a sort of understanding in its attitude towards Arab countries before Western countries (M. Esayan, personal communication and E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011). In other words, the AKP is distinguished from its predecessors in its Arab policy in terms of the negative perception towards Israel as a real threat due to its destabilizing and oppressive policies in the region and the Islamic character that plays an important role in the Turkish rapprochement towards Arabs as well as the economic cooperation (C. Karan, personal communication, 2011).

In addition to the public support and the misperception of Israel as the main sources of policy change towards Arab countries, the neoliberal character of the AKP's policies on the domestic and regional levels and the abandon of the nationalistic rhetoric constituted a favorable context that highlighted the AKP's success and singularity in its Arab policy. Some changes were introduced towards problems facing Turkey on the regional level in terms of approach and modalities of action. The concretization of these changes was plausible in light of the international context that is marked by the end of the cold war and 9/11 which paved the way for the crystallization of the AKP uniqueness. Accordingly, there is a tactical difference that occurred in the Turkish policy-making process where problems are differently perceived by the new ruling elite (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011 and T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). Arab countries were not welcomed under the rule of the previous Kemalist regimes in light of their perception of Islamists as the main threats to the national integrity of the country (M. Esayan, personal communication, 2011).

The AKP started to approach the domestic issues differently like the Kurdish problem and political Islam by considering them as normal political issues on the contrary to the previous elites who perceived them from a national security perspective (Aras and Akpinar, 2010). In light of the democratic atmosphere that started to prevail in Turkey, this change in perception helped in developing a better Turkish policy towards neighboring countries like Syria and Iran which was manifested by cooperation and consultation in terms of resolving common problems like the Kurdish issue (Aras and Akpinar, 2010). Consequently, Turkey started to adopt a different approach towards the Middle East that emanates from its self-vision and mission in its new strategic and geopolitical environment after the end of the cold war where Turkey can play a pivotal role as a regional power (G. Cetinsaya, personal communication, 2011).

Furthermore, the AKP developed a global agenda where Turkey occupies a central role as a regional power through its equidistant relations with the different countries on the contrary to Ozal who developed an active economic policy towards Arab countries in light of its alliance with the West (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the Turkish foreign policy deployed since 2002 envisions Turkey as a central power that acts with its neighbors based on the zero problems policy which accorded Turkey a vast maneuver in its surrounding environment that turned to be an area of influence (Babacan, 2010). On the contrary to the previous governments especially the ones that came to power after the cold war that were still conservative in terms of preserving the status quo and following power balance policies, the AKP took successful and consistent actions in its foreign policy (MFA, personal communication, 2011).[39] By increasing its domains of action on the external level by the means of the zero problems approach, Turkey is able to develop relations, in particular on the economic level, with the East including the Middle East and Central Asia in addition to Latin America while maintaining its ties with the West (Babacan, 2010). Therefore, the AKP's interest in its Arab policy is to create opportunities for regional peace and stability through economic integration, the zero problems policy as well as a proactive diplomacy (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011).

By examining the old administration that was mainly constituted of the traditional secular elite, diplomacy was always considered as an important foreign policy tool since Ataturk till the AKP. However, the way this diplomacy is utilized was a matter of difference between the AKP and its predecessors. Under the rule of the secular elite, the Turkish foreign policy was prudent, cautious, and careful as well as based essentially on reciprocity that encompasses the previous characteristics (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010). Consequently, the main difference resides principally in reciprocity where the traditional elite were prudent and cautious enough not to make any concessions in terms of the Turkish national interest unless they are confident about their adversaries' responsiveness especially concerning thorny issues like the Cypriot question, and the differences with Armenia, Syria and Iran (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010). In contrast, the AKP decided to take some initiatives towards its neighborhood even if they won't be reciprocated which is a clear violation of the mainstream policy that was adopted under the rule of the traditional elite. This new strategy set by the current ruling elite in light of the Turkish regional responsibility[40] as a new mission implies its intervention with some initiatives that don't necessarily have to be reciprocated by some gains.

This mission is additionally emphasized by a permanent effort to keep the region out of any external influence by strengthening ties with the different neighboring countries which incited Turkey to stop its neutral attitude towards regional conflicts. Accordingly, Turkey not only started to take initiatives without gains in return but also manifested the will to take sides in these conflicts in favor of its neighbors on the expenses of its Western alliance (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2011).[41] For example, in the case of the Palestinian issue, the AKP insisted on the necessity of including Hamas in the negotiations which underlined a new tactic towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that illustrates a derogatory perspective from the previous administrations that tended to conform to the international community's position. The same attitude was also replicated towards the Sudanese president Omar Al Bashir to whom Erdogan showed sympathy against foreign interferences in light of the Darfur genocide in which the international

community accused Al Bashir of being involved (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010).

Besides, the AKP is also unique from the previous conservative regimes like those of Mendres, Ozal and Erbakan since it succeeded to sustain in power without having major constraints in its policy formulation on the external level (C. Karan, personal communication, 2011). This ability to face the state bureaucracy's resistance to changes allowed the party to concretize its vision of investing history and culture in order to come up with real changes in Turkey's role on the domestic, regional and international levels. Accordingly, the AKP approaches Arab countries as an asset that wouldn't minimize Turkey's relations with the West but on the contrary it would increase its bargaining force and autonomy vis-à-vis the major powers like the US and the EU (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011).[42] Although the AKP may resemble to the Milli Gorus movement created by Erbakan in terms of relying on historical and religious ties in formulating its policies towards Arab and Muslim countries, it adds a liberal and democratic dimension that emphasizes the importance of the Turkish ties with both Arab and Western countries (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). This conciliation of the liberal and conservative aspects in the party's identity was manifested by its ability to have access to power without having recourse to coalitions and to gain a wide popular support not only from conservative and Muslim constituencies but also liberal tendencies among which figures some non-Muslim elements (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011).

The main factor that underlines the AKP singularity is its foreign conduct in light of the adoption of the philosophical framework developed by Davutoglu where many foreign policy initiatives that broke with the traditional attitude were taken by the AKP which changed the Turkish mainstream track on the external level and introduced new strategies for approaching external issues (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2011). For the AKP, foreign policy is based on a win-win approach and not on the sum zero vision that induced a rigid nationalistic policy especially with its neighborhood in the Middle East (Y. Aktay, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, in light of the new principles of the Turkish foreign policy under the AKP, the main aim of the party is to

break up with the previous rigid practices of the traditional elite and adopt new initiatives in order to alleviate the circle of animosity that was created around Turkey (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2011). These bold attitudes drove some political opponents, the US and the EU to consider that the AKP policies underline an ideological shift where the axis of interest is no longer the West but the regional neighborhood and the Islamic world (Babacan, 2010).

On the other hand, some journalistic speculations considered these policies as a continuation of the traditional foreign policy while manifesting an Islamic appeal that can be considered as a new ottomanism[43] or a pan-ottoman policy that underscores a Turkish leadership. However, these speculations were denied according to some assertions that Turkey is investing its historical and geopolitical assets in a way where relations with Muslim countries and the West are established on equal basis (Aras and Akpinar, 2010). Therefore, this ideological investment is a sort of a soft power that is mainly based on political, social and economic interactions as well as societies' interdependence. Accordingly, this power enabled Turkey to play the role of a mediator that reduces the gap between the East and the West which is a unique role in the Middle East that it hadn't played before throughout its modern history.[44] This role of mediation is enhanced by the Turkish attempts to increase solidarity on the regional level while defending justice. Such a position was clearly manifested in different regional issues[45] where the AKP accorded more importance to justice than his predecessors who defended order and complied with the international community positions (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2011). This attitude shows to what extent the Turkish foreign policy under the rule of the AKP is a sort of syncretism that entails pragmatism, nationalism and Islamism (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010 and Karan, personal communication, 2011).[46]

B. The Arab policy of Turkey within its foreign policy and its evolution since the arrival of the AKP to power.

1. The context of the Arab policy's formulation under the rule of the AKP.

The emergence of a new ruling elite on the national scene by the arrival of the AKP to power and the remarkable economic development are the main factors that constituted a favorable domestic context for changing the Turkish foreign policy, in particular towards Arab countries (Aras and Akpinar, 2010 and MFA, personal communication, 2011). The need to expand towards new markets to absorb the national economic production and the public support for a rapprochement towards Arab and Muslim countries underscore the visibility of the Turkish foreign policy in terms of manifesting a radical change. On the other hand, according to the current foreign minister's vision, by the end of the bipolar order and the occurrence of 9/11 domestic factors like religion, culture and identity started to influence the foreign policy formulation in addition to the military, economic and geostrategic concerns which favored Turkey's emergence as a country that deploys soft power tools in its conduct on the regional and global levels (MFA, personal communication, 2011 and Kardas, 2010).[47] Moreover, the EU decision to open the negotiations for Turkey's membership in 2005 empowered the democratic transition in Turkey, limited the authoritarian practices and arbitrary interventions of the army and enabled Turkey to adopt a regional vision that aims for stabilization and securitization in its neighborhood (Aras and Akpinar, 2010 and C. Karan, personal communication, 2011). Hence, the existing global context started to put pressures on the Turkish foreign policy in terms of balancing its relations with the West as well as with neighboring countries notably the Arab ones.

The Ottoman legacy had a negative effect on the republic elite that was marked by the fear of conspiracy against the Turkish modern state which drove decision-makers to follow a security approach that alienated the different political, economic and societal milieus from participating in the foreign policy formulation (Aras and Akpinar, 2010). Accordingly, the authoritarian regime that existed after the establishment of the Republic where the military had a considerable influence considered the foreign policy as a tool for the preservation of the Turkish territorial integrity and security. As a result of the referential and ideological gap, the Turkish policy towards Arab countries was marked by a psychological repulsion, bilateral struggles and closed borders (Aras and Akpinar, 2010). However, the economic and political stability that reached their peak under the

rule of the AKP combined with the acceleration of the democratic transition enabled the ruling elite to overcome these barriers and increased their confidence on the external level (I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the arrival of the AKP to power had an impact on the Turkish foreign policy formulation through its conservative identity as well as its economic and multi-level liberal policy (Aras and Akpinar, 2010).

Moreover, the adoption of some EU criteria that increased the social and cultural freedom contributed to the eradication of the culture of fear and its substitution by political openness, diversity and freedom in national politics especially in terms of the relation between the military and civil institutions which empowered the AKP's position on the domestic level (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010).[48] Besides, by relying on the wide popular support and in light of the structural and political weaknesses of the other parties, the AKP became the sole decision-maker in foreign policy and its initiatives towards Arab countries are formulated by figures from the party and influential interest groups among its constituency (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010 and Karan, personal communication, 2011).[49] Therefore, the traditional elite represented by the judiciary power, the army and the secular parties aren't a major impediment for the implementation of the AKP policies either on the domestic or the external levels.

Furthermore, the arrival of the AKP to power enabled the formulation of a new version of foreign policy that reflects a mentality change on the national level where the emergence of Islamic groups that contested the republic traditions favored the revival of the Ottoman Empire norms in terms of more freedom and liberty of religion on the social level (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, the foreign policy has incurred some modifications in terms of communication content and interaction on the external level with different countries including the Arab ones (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011). For a long term, Turkey considered history and geography as a burden which made it unable to deal with different security issues; however, this is no longer the case. In light of the eruption of various ethnic and religious conflicts in the region, Davutoglu's new geographic imagination where history, geography and culture are considered as assets in the Turkish foreign policy helps in creating a true model of multicultural coexistence in the Middle East where nation states' borders become

artificial (I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011). As a result, Turkey started to develop bilateral relations with Arab countries by the means of trade, visa elimination with Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan where the borders between them became blurred in addition to the establishment of a High Level Strategic Council as an important platform where major issues are discussed (I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011).

The bipolar order has limited the interregional relations and Turkey developed a foreign policy based on balancing the different regional actors in light of their ideological references (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, it institutionalized its relations with the West on the cultural, strategic and security level and prioritized its territorial integrity against the Soviet threat in its foreign conducts (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Due to changes on the international level since the end of the cold war era, the Turkish foreign policy started to change its security approach by adapting itself to the new world structure especially in terms of global economy structure (Babacan, 2010). Accordingly, by the end of the bipolar order, Turkey started to invest its cultural and historical affinities with its neighborhood which was manifested under the rule of the AKP that adopted an active, dynamic and bold policy towards its surrounding regions as a sphere of influence and opportunity (Davutoglu, 2010 and MFA, personal communication, 2011). This assertiveness was favored under the rule of the AKP as a confident party that wants to accelerate its integration into the EU by having an active role in the Middle East (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011). As a result, a new perception of the Turkish foreign policy as a priority emerged on the national level especially after the end of the cold war that changed mentalities and favored the adoption of equality and justice towards the different countries all over the world (I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011).

This structural change in the foreign policy framework after the demise of the Soviet Union coincided with additional contextual factors that influenced the formulation of a visible Arab policy. In addition to the disappearance of the ideological blocks and the unity of the world configuration, the liberalization dynamics that occurred in Turkey since the 1980's, the party's conservative and entrepreneurial constituency and the vacuum of power in the Middle East since 2001 all paved the way for the AKP to

develop active policies towards Arab countries (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the AKP is instrumental and more comprehensive in its foreign policy in addition to the existence of a regional context that constituted an opportunity for the development of better relations with Arab countries like the Iraqi war and the Kurdish issue. (M. Ozcan, personal communication 2011 and M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011). Instead of relying on its strategic alliance with Israel, the military encouraged the adoption of an open policy towards the Middle East in the aftermath of the Iraqi war due to its suspicion of the Kurdish status in Iraq as well as the Iranian influence in the region (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).[50] Besides, the acceptation of the Turkish candidacy for membership in the EU as well as Ocalan's imprisonment reduced the Turkish dependency on the security approach and enabled it to normalize its relations on the regional level especially with Israel (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011).[51] Therefore, the Arab resentment against the strategic alliance that took place in 1996 between Turkey and Israel was alleviated which paved the way for the receptivity of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries notably on the public level (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011).

On the other hand, in light of the tensions manifested in the Middle East politics especially in Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine and the existence of a wide array of crises related to instability and underdevelopment, Turkey started to be more involved in the region (I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, since 2002, Turkey was able to develop an influential role towards the different states and actors in its neighborhoods in terms of adopting effective initiatives for peace and stability (Davutoglu, 2010). Besides, the emergence of the civil societies' dynamics in public spheres in Turkey and their involvement in humanitarian and social relations on the external level enabled the development of better relations with neighboring countries like Syria, Iraq and Lebanon with which Turkey invested its historical and cultural ties. Hence, the different business organizations in Turkey participate in supporting the state policies by developing further steps and actions that endorse the Turkish position as a global actor (Davutoglu, 2010). Therefore, a rhythmic diplomacy was manifested on the regional level which allowed Turkey to turn from a central state into a global power

where there is a compatibility and harmony between the state policy and the civil society's strategies (Davutoglu, 2010).[52]

In its regional policy, Turkey aims to have a more secure and prosperous Arab world since the latter's stabilization will have positive repercussions on its national scene and its relations with its neighborhood especially with Iraq and Syria (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011). In addition, the domestic stability as well as the economic development favored the concretization of a Turkish potential in the world order through the development of an active policy towards Arab countries (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, this Turkish potential manifested the need to be supported by the ability to play a role model in the region as a referee that would guarantee regional stability while controlling its dynamics to avoid their derogation from the world order (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011). In light of the power shift on the international scene where importance is more accorded to cities and regions, the regional dimension was emphasized in the Turkish foreign policy whose scope of action coincides with the borders of the Ottoman Empire in order to add a new dimension in world order (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011).[53]Therefore, Turkey broke with its traditional role as a bridge country between different parties and started to develop a central role on the international scene in terms of adding new values and taking effective initiatives (Davutoglu, 2010). The metamorphosis of a regional reference that is credible for Arab countries in terms of providing a liberal example that conforms to the world order's exigencies on the political and economic levels and copes with the Western inability to successfully intervene in the region underlines the Turkish centrality in response to the world's needs (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011).

2. The different tools of action deployed by the Turkish regional policy in the Middle East and their influence on the formulation of the Arab policy of Turkey.

The reconstruction of the Turkish self perception as a central power that encompasses several identities based on its geostrategic location between different regions incited for a

change in the Turkish foreign policy's framework (Aras and Akpinar, 2010). Consequently, Turkey has equal and simultaneous interest in maintaining and developing a multidimensional and balanced policy towards the different countries in its surrounding regions (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, within the geographic area that extends from the Balkans to Central Asia, Turkey doesn't accord any priority for a particular region but looks forward being influential by adopting a comprehensive policy towards its neighborhood. This regional dimension emerged in the Turkish foreign policy since the 80's and was more crystallized in the 90's after the demise of the bipolar system that accorded a larger political maneuver for Turkey especially on the regional level due to the disappearance of the Soviet threat. As an exigency of a contextual change in world politics, the regional dimension emanates as a prerequisite for Turkey's perception of its own role as a regional power that is responsible for the development of its neighborhood through the adoption of a holistic vision of joint regional development based on shared interests, spaces and destinies (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010 and T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the Turkish national interest started to have a transnational formulation that is no longer confined to a nationalistic and egocentric vision which implies the recourse to soft power tools towards neighbors in order to achieve it.

This regional dimension illustrates a "new Ottomanism" where Turkey tries to overcome security threats by having good relations with neighbors and adopting a transnational look in its surrounding region.[54] This transnational look is manifested by the abandonment of the national security approach that dominated in the Turkish foreign policy since the establishment of the republic. Accordingly, the AKP developed a common security approach with its regional partners in order to cooperate in curbing transnational threats that concerns the whole region and not only Turkey. Hence, the nationalist and unilateral approach in the Turkish regional policy was substituted by the creation of common interests between Turkey and neighbors among which not only common gains in terms of economy and spaces are shared but also common destinies are better managed through the limitation of regional threats on the political level (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010).[55] Thus, common interests in the region are

materialized in the Turkish regional policy through the empowerment of trade on the bilateral and the multilateral levels as well as the construction of national firms and energy pipelines in different regional countries (E. Isler, personal communication, 2011). [56] On the other hand, the development of consultation mechanisms on the different issues and the involvement in the resolution process of many crises through mediation help in emphasizing the image of a regional common destiny projected by the Turkish elite where all countries are keen to solve their own problems. Therefore, the intensification of the economic cooperation through trade, the recourse to political consultation and mediation are the main concrete tools that Turkey deploys as a soft power facilitated by its historical, socioeconomic and human ties with its surrounding regions (MFA, personal communication, 2011).

In spite of the equidistant policy adopted by Turkey towards its neighbors, the shift from focusing on common problems to common interests underlines a sort of particularity towards the Middle East. The Turkish definition of Middle East is not fixed but mainly includes North Africa, Arab countries, Israel and Iran (U. Ulutas, personal communication, 2011). The Turkish policy towards the Middle East is a preventive policy that stems from a pure Turkish perspective based on its geostrategic, historical and geographical position between different regions among them figures the Middle East (Davutoglu, 2010). It designs its policies towards the Middle East according to a geographical perspective that perceives this region as partitioned into four groups which are the neighboring countries, Iraq, Syria and Iran, Arabia as well as Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and North Africa (Davutoglu, 2010).

However, Turkey looks forward for a peaceful and secure Middle East through the establishment of an intense dialogue, the empowerment of cultural, ethnic and religious ties between societies by the means of mediation and the activation of trade among its countries through economic interdependence (Davutoglu, 2010). Accordingly, several official visits made by the Turkish President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to Arab countries enabled Turkey to be a trustworthy channel of communication between different actors like countries, people and NGOs (Davutoglu, 2010). These visits were developed as an integrative part of the bottom-up policies deployed towards the Middle

East that focus on the public level as the factor that would increase the interactions between states on the official level.[57] Besides, the economic tool was the first and primordial tool in the Turkish policy since capital is believed to induce a political harmonization as an equivalent for the public's effect on the social level in terms of enabling a better integration (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, interdependence that is basically crystallized on the economic level may extend to the consolidation of further ties on the social, political and cultural levels (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010).

Interdependence in the Turkish policy towards the Middle East has a double soft power manifestation on the economic and political levels. On the economic level, Turkey has intensified its commercial and economic relations with Arab countries due to the fact that they are considered as efficient tools in solving the different political problems between both sides (M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010). Besides, the Middle East is considered as an opportunity for Turkey in terms of having a market diversity that would assimilate the Turkish products that resulted from a long process of an economic development and a liberalizing policy in the 1980's (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010).[58] Turkey increased its trade volume with different Middle Eastern countries since 2002 where 11.9 billion out of 86.1 billion dollars were the Turkish exports to the Middle East in 2007 (Kucukcan, 2010 and Babacan, 2010). Therefore, the Turkish trade volume had remarkably increased with Syria and Iran between 2002 and 2009 where it went from 773 million and 1.254 billion to 1.752 billion and 5.430 billion dollars respectively (TIM, 2011).[59]

Various steps concretized the economic tool in the Turkish foreign policy on the regional level with Arab countries. On the institutional level, the creation of the Turkish-Arab forum provided a common multilateral platform for the conclusion of several economic projects and free trade agreements with different Arab countries like Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan (Davutoglu, 2010 and Babacan, 2010   ). Turkey signed 40 and 48 agreements with Syria and Iraq respectively in a matter of a week in 2009 (Candar, 2009). Most of these agreements deal with the economic and commercial ties between Turkey and these countries as well as the construction of a railroad that joins

Europe with the Eastern part of the Middle East and the facilitation of oil and gas transfer across the different regions by the creation of a series of pipelines as a projected vision for the future (Candar, 2009). Accordingly, The Middle East represents a commercial specificity for Turkey not only in terms of economic trade but also in terms of energy resources (Babacan, 2010). Turkey's location between several regions enables it to play the role of an energy hub by which passes energy transportation from the Middle East, Caspian region and Russia to Europe.[60] This dependence in energy resources between Turkey and Middle Eastern countries is supplemented by an increasing intra-regional trade that has been facilitated by the visa-free agreements signed with different Arab and regional countries (Babacan, 2010). Moreover, investment is another side of Turkey's economic policy in the Middle East where it has the largest business volume that comes after China especially in Iraq (Babacan, 2010). Accordingly, Turkey needed to benefit from the strategic assets in the Middle East in terms of markets and energy resources which incited for the deployment of the economic tool in order to create more equality and justice in the region.

On the other hand, political coordination is another tool that the Turkish policy deploys towards Arab countries in terms of discussing the most important issues in the region (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the Turkish soft power on the political level manifests a sort of an identity reconstruction in terms of creating a new role and image of Turkey in world politics. After being a strictly Western ally in the region during the bipolar era where a rapprochement towards Arab countries was a function of its alignment exigencies, Turkey now plays a significant role of an ineluctable regional leader that manages its surrounding neighborhood through mediation in terms of empowering peace and security (Babacan, 2010). Accordingly, Turkey created a multilateral instance for political coordination with Arab countries which is the High Council for Strategic Cooperation where regular ministerial meetings are held between Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon (E. Isler, personal communication, 2011 and I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011). This initiative highlights the Turkish policy's potential in the region as a zero problems' dynamic that establishes a win-win approach between Turkey and Middle Eastern countries. Thus, the Turkish policy formulation has

changed towards the Middle East as well as Arab countries in terms of approach and style of actions where a rhythmic and pro-active diplomacy is deployed with neighbors especially with Syria and Iraq in terms of managing common areas of contention like the water issue and the Kurdish threat (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, the main principle in this policy is to resort to dialogue as a basis for apprehending a problem instead of having recourse to conflicts. Consequently, Turkey develops a mediation role where it acts as a regional broker between the different belligerent parties as illustrated by the Israeli-Syrian talks and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Babacan, 2010 and Aras and Akpinar, 2010). By relying on its model role as a successful liberal democracy and its economic and commercial ties with the different countries as well as its willingness to take part into the management of many regional problems related to sectarian and ethnic conflicts, natural resources distribution, mass destruction weapons and lack of democracy associated with human rights violations, Turkey creates a new order based on peace, cooperation and consultation (Aras and Akpinar, 2010).[61]

In spite of its comprehensiveness, the Turkish policy towards the Middle East manifests some structural and practical deficiencies that create a gap between the Turkish regional vision and policy implementation. Accordingly, the Turkish policy seems to manifest not only an antagonist and exclusive approach in the region but also a lack of clarity in terms of its structure and final goals (S. Ozel, personal communication, 2010).[62] The Turkish leadership perceives Israel as a predator that disturbs the regional order that the AKP aims to promote in the Middle East in terms of ensuring peace and security between the different countries. In light of the open criticism adopted towards Israel, Turkey looks forward deemphasizing its importance in the regional politics for the US by playing a strategic role in the region that would protect its interests on the economic and security levels (S. Ozel, personal communication and Y. Aktay, personal communication, 2011). The Israeli war on Gaza in 2008 followed by the Mavi Marmara incidents led to a regional instability that is detrimental to the Turkish interests in terms of guaranteeing the commercial flows and securitizing the energy pipelines.

Besides, Turkey fears a revival of a Kurdish separatism that would emanate from Iraqi Kurdistan as a result of an Israeli assistance (S. Dincsahin, personal communication,

2011). On the other hand, Iran, in light of the historical rivalry and regional competition in the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia as well as the controversial nuclear program, would be a potential source of a regional unrest with which Turkey prefers to cooperate instead of opting to a direct confrontation. Although Turkey refused a direct condemnation of the Iranian nuclear program at the NATO summit in Lisbon in 2010, it accepted to install the anti-missile bases as a defensive measure for any attacks that would threaten its security (MFA, personal communication, 2011). In addition, according to a confidential source in the MFA, Turkey tries to balance the Iranian sectarian policy in the region in order to preserve the regional integrity (MFA, personal communication, 2011).[63]

Moreover, it is worth noting that the Turkish vision for the Middle East is based on the promotion of peace, security and joint regional development through interdependence on the economic and political levels. However, the word interdependence that was repeatedly advocated by the Turkish Foreign Minister, Davutoglu, is not clear in terms of structure and final goal (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011 and M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). According to some respondents, interdependence is mainly of economic nature and is inspired by the European experience and therefore they give a reductionist vision for interdependence by referring to the visa release and free trade agreements. Besides, some manifested some hesitations about the main goal of interdependence by underlining its flexible nature that may extend to a political union (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). On the other hand, interdependence can be considered as a synonym for a regional integration and it consists of establishing a good neighborhood and peaceful relations based on an economic and social rapprochement (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011).

Accordingly, Turkey is on its way for the creation of a regional integration since it intensifies its economic and strategic relations with its neighborhood, eliminates visa, increases the cooperation between civil societies [64] and develops common projects in education, industry, culture and tourism (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). Besides, another respondent added another dimension for interdependence by considering it as an equivalent for regional integration by indicating that the notion of political

borders starts to lose significance in terms of allowing states to overcome their problems and increase their interactions (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). In addition, it may also refer to the development of stable relations through different mechanisms like free commercial exchange and economic integration like ASEAN, NAFTA and EU (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, in light of the various answers obtained from the different respondents, it can be inferred that integration is essentially of economic nature that strengthens the bilateral and multilateral relations highlighted by the official visits that include businessmen from both sides to conclude treaties (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011).

According to some figures in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, regional integration is a sort of a regional synergy where the different countries solve their own problems through a regional ownership dynamic that is developed by the AKP through its attempts to solve problems and increase the regional peace and stability (MFA, personal communication, 2011). This dynamic would increase the dialogue between societies and ameliorate the bilateral relations in terms of developing high levels of cooperation on different levels of interaction especially Tourism and Business (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, it is a high level of cooperation on the political, economic and cultural levels that Turkey tries to adopt in order to reach synergy that signifies a spillover effect between the different levels of interaction in terms of cooperation and benefits (MFA, personal communication, 2011). In addition, the interviewed personnel established a sort of a vision where interdependence and integration are the two main complementary steps that illustrate the Turkish policy in the Middle East through their occurrence in a sequential order. Hence, in light of the respondent's answers, economic interdependence means that each country complements the other on the economic level through trade and investment. This complementarity on the economic level paves the way for a more cooperation on the political level where Turkey tries to develop consensual relations in the region by conciliating between the different regional countries through the mediation process.[65] Turkey, by according importance to the political dialogue between countries, ensures the crystallization of an economic interdependence that leads to an economic integration that would be supplemented by the intensification of cultural relations in

terms of ensuring a cultural coexistence and security in the region (MFA, personal communication, 2011).

On the other hand, some respondents emphasized that illusive character of the Turkish vision in the Middle East by indicating that in spite of the existence of an ambition of uniting the region economically, the idea of economic interdependence was not well founded according to a pre-determined institutional framework (M. Akgun, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, the AKP looks for what is applicable like the visa release and the establishment of free trade zones in terms of creating a regional rapprochement instead of a regional integration or interdependence. Accordingly, he added that Davutoglu aspires to enhancing bilateral and multilateral relations while integration is an institutional scheme that is not a necessity due to the absence of a common external threat for Arabs and Turks (B. Dedeoglu, personal communication, 2011). Besides, the AKP's policy in the Middle East would be considered as a regional partnership that consists of holding a series of multilateral consultations in order to solve some common problems.

Furthermore, the idea of regional integration advanced by Davutoglu at least on the economic level was considered as a naïve idea since the Middle East can't be integrated in the international economy because of its chronic and unstable political situation that makes it only central for the West in terms of energy resources (C. Oktay, personal communication, 2011).[66] Besides, the Turkish vision is not reciprocated by many Middle Eastern and notably Arab countries since their interests are divergent and can't be harmonized by the Turkish efforts in terms of mediation especially in light of the failure of the Turkish intervention in the Lebanese presidential and governmental crises where Turkey wasn't able to convince all the political actors. Moreover, the interdependence vision seems to be advanced on ideological premises without being supported by institutional and concrete infrastructure for its realization. Accordingly, many countries signed visa release and free trade agreements with Turkey; however, the Turkish trade volume is still low especially with Syria in comparison to the Turkish priority accorded to its economic and commercial relations with the EU (C. Oktay, personal communication, 2011). He concluded that any step towards an integration scheme with Arab countries

will be as an alternative to the custom union that Turkey signed with the EU that would be applicable in case of a rejection of the Turkish candidacy (C. Oktay, personal communication, 2011). Furthermore, he emphasized that an economic interdependence would be plausible especially in light of the joint regional development vision advanced by Davutoglu but it can't evolve into a political framework of integration (C. Oktay, personal communication, 2011 and E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011).

Generally, in light of the respondents' reaction to the Turkish policy in the Middle East as a tool of action and a visible maneuver of the AKP, a sort of progress in the Turkish policy formulation towards the Middle East and Arab countries was underlined although the party's vision in the region is neither complete nor realistic. Accordingly, Turkey started to communicate directly with Arab countries and abandoned the zero sum game approach that dominated the bilateral relations that were marked by a psychological barrier between both sides. Besides, according to the Foreign Affairs Committee in the AKP, the premises of a regional integration started to be concretized by the conclusion of strategic agreements with Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey in many domains like security, economy and energy (E. Onen, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, Davutoglu's vision is perceived as a bourgeoning communication process with neighbors in order to establish common spaces and interests in light of a win-win approach that would lead a regional stabilization as a common regional destiny (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). Such stabilization is hence based on a comprehensive and realistic cooperation scheme in various levels of interaction like economy, politics and security (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011 and E. Onen, personal communication, 2011).[67]

III. Changes in the Turkish Policy towards Syria

By having an overview on the changes that the new ruling elite introduced into the Arab policy of Turkey, the Syrian case would be illustrative in examining how these changes in the foreign policy formulation were reflected on the practical level with one of the most important regional partners for Turkey. By highlighting the dynamics of the Turkish policy towards Syria, the study will shed light on the centrality of the contextual factor in shaping and favoring a rapprochement between both sides on the regional and international levels. Accordingly, the collapse of the bipolar system, the absence of efficient mechanisms that would deal with the erupting regional conflicts in light of a power vacuum and the emergence of a wide array of Turkish elite that shares a conservative ideological orientation paved the way for an openness towards Arab countries notably Syria. Thus, the Turkish policy towards Syria has to be understood within the same parameters of changes in the Turkish foreign policy in general. Through these parameters, the different particularities related to the Syrian case that constituted the main motivation for the ruling elite to start a change in its policy formulation would be examined and analyzed.

    A. The particularity of the Syrian case for Turkey
        1. Reasons for changes in the Turkish policy towards Syria

Despite of the permanent attempts to strengthen common interests with Syria especially in terms of developing economic cooperation and investment in the petroleum sector at Ozal's time, both sides couldn't manage to overcome their respective concerns. Accordingly, Syria under the rule of Hafez Al Assad considered Turkey as an antagonist neighbor and neither an agreement on a common system for an equitable water repartition nor a consensus on the Alexandretta/Hatay province was reached (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). The bilateral antagonism culminated in October 1998 when Turkey was on the verge of a war with Syria as a result of the latter's continuous support for Kurdish factions affiliated to the PKK that were trained in its territory and under its supervision in Lebanon. However, after Ocalan's detainment by the Israeli

secret service agents and its delivery to Turkey and the signature of Adana Protocol [68] between Turkey and Syria, the Turkish policy started to manifest a sort of normalization towards Syria (MFA, personal communication, 2011). In 2000, on the occasion of Al Assad death and in an attempt to consolidate the Syrian national scene, the Turkish president, Necdet Sezer visited Syria which favored the acceleration of the conciliation between both sides in spite of the expression of some American objections on the visit (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). Besides, due to the Syrian isolation on the international scene, its new administration under the presidency of Al Assad's son was more receptive to the Turkish rapprochement and its normalization initiatives (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).

Changes in the Turkish policy towards Syria can be explained by referring to the national circumstances both in Turkey and Syria as well as to the regional context. Under the rule of the AKP, the relations between Syria and Turkey started to be more visible for two reasons. First, the liberal outlook and the pragmatic discourse of the AKP favored the alleviation of the Syrian fears of the Islamic ideology previously held by Erbakan who revived the Arab fear of the Turkish domination through its Islamist project under a Turkish leadership that tried to develop further relations with some religious opposition groups like the Muslim Brotherhood (Zarcone, 2004).[69] Therefore, the moderate and pragmatic character of the AKP dissolved these suspicions before the Syrian establishment and enabled it to be accepted by its neighbors that were receptive to his initiative to solve their common problems. Accordingly, the conciliation of the state secular character with the party's religious background favored a Turkish rapprochement towards Syria as a common political reference for their respective regimes. Moreover, some prominent figures in the AKP are interested in developing better relations with Syria and consider it as an important gate for Turkey to the Arab world.[70] This willingness for betterment resulted from the Turkish democratization and liberalization process on the national level that emphasized the uselessness of the recourse to the threat imaginary towards Syria as a source of disorienting the public attention from domestic deficiencies since the ruling elite's credibility is sustained through democratic mechanisms (Aras, 2004). This domestic change enabled Turkey to gain the public

opinion in Syria which in addition to the Sunnite factor constitutes a source of credibility for Turkey towards Syria (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011 and Altunisik and Labbad, 2009).[71]

Second, the openness of the AKP in its foreign relations and its ability to maintain strong relations with its Western partners notably in light of Turkey's admission as a candidate for membership in the EU constituted a suitable context for the receptivity of the Turkish policy by the Syrian establishment that wanted to break with its isolation on the international scene by having a rapprochement with Turkey (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). As a result, Syria stopped to raise the Hatay/Alexandretta province question in its bilateral relations with Turkey and started to accept the Turkish initiatives in terms of solving the water issue through the High Level Strategic Council meeting in 2009 where lots of Memorandum of Understanding were signed [72] since it wants to develop close relations with Turkey as a gate to its reconciliation with the international community (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011 and Kuri, 2008).[73]

The formulation of a favorable policy towards Syria stemmed mainly from the disappearance of the Arab-Turkish antagonism that resulted from the positivist approach adopted by the early secular elites in the development of the Westernization process that stigmatized Arabs as a source of backwardness (Aras, 2004). Therefore, the Turkish-Arab formula turned from the perception of the latter's subordination to the former in an exchanged vision of disdain towards a normal relation based on equality. Consequently, the abandonment of the cognitive map shaped by the Ottoman past in Turkey favored an alleviation of the anti-Turk nationalism version despite the existence of some reticence in the Syrian Foreign Ministry regarding the development of stronger relations with Turkey that would bypass those with Iran (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). However, these concerns were decreased to some extent by the development of a unified strategy for political consultations with several regional partners that joined Turkey and Syria in the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council like Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (I. Kalin, personal communication, 2011). In addition, the adoption of the common interests' strategy by the AKP in terms of intensifying relations in beneficial domains that would have a spillover effects on other fields of cooperation and contention as well presented an

opportunity for the recovery of the Syrian economy that has severely suffered in the last twenty five years (Kuri, 2008).

The changes in the Turkish foreign policy in terms of its strategies and approaches were reflected on its Arab policy in general notably towards Syria that was the first Arab country approached by the Turkish neighborhood policy (E. Onen, personal communication, 2011). The changes that occurred in the actual Turkish establishment incarnated by the AKP in terms of the cognitive map that forms the elite's identity and hence their political maneuver on the external level influenced the policy-making process towards Syria (Aras, 2004). The AKP identity represented a shift from the ethnic nationalism that dominated the mentalities of the Republican elites who were mainly influenced by the last years of the Ottoman past where Arabs and Kurds' separatism shaped the Kemalists' perception of Arab countries. Hence, there was a tight link between Turkey's self perception and insecurity that were intermingled in the formulation of the state identity and its foreign policy (Weldes in Aras, 2004). Consequently, Turkey's attitudes on the external level were dominated by the notion of foreign threats that were constructed on the basis of the prevailing security culture.

By breaking with this cautious mentality and the adoption of a comprehensive and confident framework in the policy-making process especially on the regional level, Turkey was ready to restart a new policy towards Syria based on goodwill and equality. The adoption of different initiatives with neighboring and antagonist countries like Syria crystallized the peak of these changes and highlighted the importance of Syria for Turkey. In order to eliminate their problems related to the PKK, the water issue and the controversy over the Hatay province, Turkey started to create a ground of common interests with Syria to facilitate their rapprochement and distract their attention from their mutual problems of the past (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, Turkey focused on increasing its economic and cultural relations with Syria while giving a particular attention to the humanitarian issues that would help both Turkey and Syria to overcome their mutual problems. By introducing different initiatives to Syria related to the facilitation of human and trade movements through borders as well as increasing the economic treaties and political consultations, Turkey and Syria were able to overcome

the psychological barrier that impeded their cooperation throughout the previous decades. The Turkish formulation of a policy based on reciprocal economic interests was considered as the tool for constructing a new ideational positive element that would replace the negative historical imagination that dominated both countries' bilateral relations. As a result, in 2002, the bilateral relations started to evolve and biannual meetings were held with Syria as well as other regional countries like Iraq and Iran in order to discuss common concerns especially the ones related to the Kurdish issue (S. Ozel, personal communication, 2010). On the commercial level, the visa was eliminated and therefore businessmen movement was facilitated especially between neighboring cities like Gaziantep and Aleppo (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). Hence, the binary formulation of a Turk-Syrian/Arab antagonism was substituted by a notion of continuity in terms of generating common interests and shared regions of prosperity through the consideration of the Syrian and the Turkish territories as a common space of influence. The process of visa elimination from the Turkish side helped in formulating an informational consciousness both on the elitist and public levels in Syria about an important change in the Turkish reality that is no longer an imperialist danger in the region which reduced the degree of enmity between both countries.

On the other hand, the regional context helped in breaking with the elitist manipulation from both sides about the external reality and hence paved the way for enhancing the Turkish policy of rapprochement towards Syria. Therefore, different regional factors contributed to the elimination of the filtering mechanisms that persisted between Syria and Turkey by breeding their mutual misperception and sustaining the psychological barriers. On the occasion of Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri's assassination in 2005 that resulted in a wide international condemnation of the Syrian influence in Lebanon, Turkey started to develop a better policy towards Syria without being impeded by the threat imaginary previously developed by the Kemalists and frequently reciprocated by the Syrian leadership (S. Ozel, personal communication, 2010). Accordingly, Turkey manifested its ability to understand the Syrian concerns through the creation of areas of common interests and willingness to save Syria by the means of liberalization and democratization in order to integrate it into the world order

(B. Dedeoglu, personal communication, 2011). Besides, it developed a sort of a political rapprochement as an attempt to balance Iran's influence on Syria which contributed to the change of the US approach towards Syria especially by alleviating the Syrian-Iranian alliance and inciting Syria to adopt a flexible policy regarding its rejectionist stance in the region (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011).

The abandonment of the defensive approach and the adoption of a different paradigm regarding the Kurdish issue deemphasized the importance of the Turkish-Israeli alliance for the military establishment which paved the way for better relations with the Syrian policy-makers that had some resentments against this alliance (Aras, 2004).[74] Till 1999, the Kurdish presence in the Syrian territories was a major concern for Turkey which explains the tensions that dominated its relations with Syria especially in light of the dominance of the security approach deployed by the army (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011). However, the Kurdish issue was tightly related to the EU accession negotiations which incited Turkey to adopt a societal and political opening as well as a series of reforms towards Kurds in order to be admitted as an EU member. In addition, the Iraqi war context helped to alleviate common tensions that existed between Turkey and Syria since both of them shared common views about some security concerns and criticized the US policy towards the Middle East (Ulutas, 2009). As a neighboring state that shares the common longest borders with Turkey, both sides manifested common interests in terms of containing the Kurdish threat as a security concern that incites for the development of further cooperation patterns that goes beyond economy (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). This opening appeased the tensions between Turkey and Syria and allowed Turkey to change its approach towards the latter.

In addition, the Turkish policy towards Syria enabled the AKP to put an end to the burden of the strategic alliance that was imposed by the military establishment and to the security paradigm that coincided with the Israeli regional concerns especially regarding their common enmity manifested towards Syria (Ulutas, 2009 and Aktay, 2011). Thus, the change in the Turkish foreign policy in the 2000's in terms of the development of a new regional role that implies an openness with several neighboring countries like Syria

and Iran led to the realization of the party's conservative constituency's will in terms of normalizing the Turkish-Israeli relations (Y. Aktay, personal communication, 2011).

2. The different dimensions of the Turkish policy towards Syria and their importance within the Arab policy of Turkey

No sooner had the Adana Protocol been signed in 1998, Turkey proceeded to engage into an active policy that has remarkably evolved towards Syria in terms of overcoming bilateral problems by establishing a constructive atmosphere of dialogue and cooperation (MFA, personal communication, 2011). This policy approach consists of developing and multiplying the areas of common interest in their mutual relations which would enable both sides to forego their issues of contention that would be dissolved as soon as benefits are disseminated (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, the Turkish policy towards Syria starts with intensifying economic and political relations as the first step for creating common interests and spaces that would lead to the convergence of their national destinies and therefore the eradication of their bilateral problems. Hence, in addition to the various projects that were initiated in many domains between both sides, the signature of the Free Trade Agreement followed by an increasing rate of trade volume and the political openness manifested by the exchange of frequent visits on the official level underscore the main dimensions of changes in the Turkish policy towards Syria (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Most of these visits started in 2000 after the death of the Syrian president and began to gain importance especially between their respective Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, a Syrian consulate was opened in Gaziantep in 2004 which enabled the strengthening of the economic, parliamentary and public relation with Syria as well as coordinating their positions in international instances (Kuri, 2008).

Besides, in October 2007, the former Turkish foreign minister, Ali Babacan signed a "Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation" with his Syrian counterpart about the development of different potential projects in many domains notably politics and

security, economy as well as energy and water (MFA website, 2011). In light of this memorandum, Turkey managed to transform the areas of contention into possibilities of cooperation. Therefore, instead of maintaining a persistent suspicion towards Syria regarding border management in light of the persistence of the Kurdish issue, Turkey engaged Syria in fighting against terrorism in addition to renovating the existing border gates and transportation networks as well as eliminating entry visas and landmines from borders which would lead to an increase in trade and tourism (MFA website, 2011).

The mentality change in the Turkish leadership paved the way for a better understanding from Syria that not only abandoned its demands on the Hatay province but also started collaborating with Turkey in fighting the PKK militants among which figured four thousand Kurdish militant from Syria (M. Esayan, personal communication, 2011). This perspective sheds the light on the shift in the nationalistic and unilateral approach that was previously adopted towards bilateral issues of contention like the Water problem and the Kurdish crisis. Accordingly, Turkey emphasized the necessity of the Syrian engagement in fighting the Kurdish rebellion by holding joint operations and exchanging necessary information in light of various agreements signed in 1998, 2003 and 2010. In addition, both sides agreed to be responsible for controlling their respective borders, restricting the acquisition of explosives by Kurdish militants and ensuring a continuous and direct contact through special envoys and direct telephone lines.[75]

Besides, further initiatives were launched and manifested a Turkish openness like the Arab Natural Gas Pipeline as a joint project between the Turkish Petroleum Corporation and the Syrian Oil Company that unifies the natural gas pipelines as well as the insurance of exchanging mutual expertise in water management (MFA website, 2011). In light of the detrimental effects of the GAP project that Turkey started to develop in 1983 on Euphrates, Turkey changed its water policy by emphasizing the necessity of sharing benefits through the development of further regulatory mechanisms.[76] Therefore, joint meetings, researches and training programs especially after the Iraqi invasion and changes in regional balances were held in order to emphasize the Turkish willingness to cooperate with Syria (Daoudy, 2010). Consequently, the Euphrates and Tigris Initiative for Cooperation was initiated in 2005 as a track II channel by scholars from Iraq, Syria,

Turkey and the US as well as a joint technical committee in order to discuss the different possibilities to solve the water issue between the riparian countries through dialogue. However, the water repartition between Syria and Turkey remains in a stalemate since Turkey insists on the national character of the Euphrates and accordingly refuses the application of the equitable repartition principle with Syria (Kuri, 2008). Therefore, Syria ignores this problem and avoids to raise it before Turkish officials (MFA, personal communication, 2011). Hence, the water issue is reformulated in terms of technical problems in water repartition that needs the adoption as well as the development of further mechanisms for water collection and transfer in order to rationalize water usage. Therefore, the issue started to be identified by new terminologies used by the state bureaucrats in the AKP headquarter and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where "water conflict" is substituted by "water management" through common projects like the project of the friendship dam on the Orontes River (MFA website, 2011).

Moreover, further tools were established in terms of endorsing the Turkish openness towards Syria like the signature of a series of treaties and protocols that resulted in the creation of the Nusaybin-Qamishli customs gate, a Syrian-Turkish joint bank, a train line linking between Aleppo and Gaziantep as well as developing a natural gas network between the two countries (MFA website, 2011). On the other hand, Turkey had recourse to the High Level Strategic Council in order to lay the foundations of its new constructivist approach towards Syria. This council concretized an evolution in the Turkish policy towards Syria since it paved the way for the concretization of many mutual agreements. Accordingly, in its first and second meetings that took place in Damascus and Ankara respectively in 2010, 51 and 11 treaties were signed in different domains especially in trade and fighting terrorism (MFA website, 2011). Besides, the Turkish policy towards Syria is more embedded into a comprehensive vision that encompasses the regional well-being in terms of establishing and ensuring peace and stability. Thus, the formulation of better relations towards Syria is deemed to have a positive spillover effect on the region which explains the series of consultation held with Syria in order to discuss and solve the different regional issues. Consequently, a dialogue was established between the Syrian and the Turkish leaders (Gul-Asad; Erdogan-Asad) in

addition to the mediation role that Turkey plays between Syria and Israel built on Turkey's credibility as an honest broker between the different parties in its neighborhood which is an additional aspect of Turkey's constructivist approach (MFA website, 2011).

According to Gul, Syria is the starting point in the reformulation of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries since it is considered as a gate for Turkey towards the Middle East in addition to the common historical ties (Mansura, 2009). The emphasis on the investment of the economic, social and cultural ties that highlight similarities instead of differences would enhance the peace process in the region and increase mutual understanding (Yaman, 2009). Most of the Turkish economic initiatives towards Syria are launched on the basis of complementarity in terms of products exchange which enables a further potential increase in the bilateral trade volume that is expected to reach 5 billion dollars in 2012 (MFA website, 2011). Turkey mainly exports industrial and electrical products to Syria in return for importing raw materials and food products. According to the Minister of Industry and Trade, Turkey is trying to expand markets in its neighbourhood for its flourishing industry in various sectors like electric energy, steel, textiles, electrical home appliances, glass industry, fertilizers, petro chemicals, cleaning materials, paint industry, building and construction industry and railroad (Ministry of Industry and Trade website, 2011).

Therefore, the pacification of the Turkish attitude towards Syria in terms of creating areas of common interests is intertwined with the state responsibility to ensure a better atmosphere for the different businessmen and national companies to develop trade relations with their counterparts in Syria (Ministry of Industry and Trade website, 2011). The trade volume between Turkey and Syria has remarkably increased between 2002 and 2009 by reaching 1.174 billion dollars in 2007 and where the Turkish exports occupied an important share by going from 266.771 million to 1.4 billion dollars and the Turkish investments reached 800 million dollars in 2006 (TIM and TUIK, 2011). Besides, in 2006 Turkey was listed as the first country that receives Syrian exports that constitute 64.94% of its total exportations (Kuri, 2008). This increase in trade relations is tightly linked to the conclusion of several treaties like the Free Trade Agreement and the visa elimination (2007), the prevention of double taxation (2004) and the mutual promotion and protection

of investment (2006) that led to the formulation of further mechanisms[77]that are held by the ministries of industry and trade from both sides in order to ensure sustainable economic and commercial relations as well as technical cooperation on the bilateral level (MFA website, 2011 and Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce website, 2011).

Furthermore, Syria was listed as the most important neighboring country for Turkey with which it started the formulation of a prototype Arab policy by emphasizing common interests like the facilitation of the families' movement across borders by lifting visas and eliminating customs between both countries.[78] Besides, in 2006, a program of regional cooperation was launched towards Syria and financed with 10 million dollars by the counsellor of the State Planning Organism in Turkey in order to develop projects related to infrastructure, technical cooperation and skills' development as well as culture and tourism promotion across borders. As a tool for expanding economic development in the region, Turkey underscores the connection between regions along the borders in order to secure neighboring spaces and enhance their joint economic development. Therefore, these projects were jointly adopted in borders' governorates as a means of mutual rapprochement like in Gaziantep, Kilis and Aleppo (Madenoglu, 2009). This program illustrates the evolution of the economic, cultural and social interactions between Turkey and Syria as the main dimensions of the betterment of cooperation within a framework of solidarity and consent (Madenoglu, 2009). It is the first funding program that is run by national expertise from both sides and it financed 55 projects within different domains (Yaman and Mansura, 2009). The program has positively influenced different sectors like trade, culture, tourism and energy which vitalized the economic, social and cultural domains in the region especially in light of the Turkish willingness to replicate it with all regional countries (Madenoglu, 2009).

Besides, Syria is an important trade partner and is the second state to which Gaziantep exports. The volume of the Turkish exports to Syria from this city reached 77 million dollars in the first half of 2009 (Kocer, 2009). The Chamber of Industry in Gaziantep works within the program of regional cooperation for the implementation of a series of projects between Gaziantep and Aleppo that focus mainly on production quality and abundance (Kocer, 2009).[79] This regional cooperation that started in 2007 aimed to

ensure a better development in border regions and making them attractive points for further investments as well as an example for regional cooperation. Accordingly, with a budget of 25 million dollars that is basically accorded by the Turkish side, four more border regions from both sides were added which are Al-Raqqa, Al Hasaqa, Urfa and Mardin.

B. Turkey's policy towards Syria within its overall foreign policy and its implication on the Middle East.

1. The importance of the Turkish policy towards Syria for Turkey on the regional and international levels in light of the mediation tool.

The Turkish policy towards Syria as an example for its rapprochement with Arab countries have many positive returns for Turkey on the regional and international levels since it shows to what extent Turkey can implement its regional policy in accommodation with its Western partners' interests in the region (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010). The Turkish policy towards Syria incarnates the Turkish potentials that the Western powers lack in the Middle East especially in light of the deadlock reached in the Palestinian issue and Iraq reconstruction in the wake of the US invasion in 2003. The Turkish regional policy towards Arab countries started first with Syria and was then emulated to the other countries which enabled Turkey to relocate itself in the regional and international balance of power (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010 and M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010). The possession of a visible and diffuse soft power that is supported by a strong military force strengthens the Turkish position on the external level in terms of stabilizing the Middle East and coordinating between Arab countries and the Western powers notably the US and the EU (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010).

The changes in the Turkish policy towards Syria contributed to the limitation of the Israeli power and its isolation especially after the attacks on Gaza that highlighted the

Israeli antagonist approach in the region. As a result, Israel that used to consider Turkey as an ineluctable shield that balances the Arab antagonism in the region through its liberal orientations highlighted by its strategic alliance and political alignment with the West has lost an important regional partner which contributed to its isolation (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011). However, Israel by its recourse to a hard power policy in Gaza obstructs the implementation of the Turkish vision in the Middle East. Besides, in spite of the Turkish efforts to mediate between Syria and Israel, the latter's government misperceives the AKP and considers it as a bridge for Islamist factions and hence a source of threat for its national security in the Middle East (O. Oymen, personal communication, 2011). As a result, the freeze of the Turkish mediation efforts between Syria and Israel coincided with the development of further cooperation with Arab countries which emphasized a visible shift on the external conduct that is not always supported by the military.

In December 2008, while the Syrian-Israeli negotiations took place under the auspices of a Turkish mediation, the Gaza incidents occurred without any previous notification to Turkey which angered the AKP that harshly condemned the Israeli acts in Gaza and led to the end of the negotiations (S. Ozel, personal communication, 2010 and T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). The Turkish policy towards Syria is an illustration of its comprehensive paradigm that it deploys on the external level in particular with neighboring countries. Mediation as a soft power tool developed on the regional level in order to manage conflicts and ensure stability reflects the Turkish willingness to ensure its autonomy as a regional power on the international scene (Candar, 2009). Being among its visible political dynamics in the region, mediation exhibits the Turkish success in accommodating democracy and achieving a considerable level of economic power under the leadership of a party with Islamic roots (Candar, 2009 and B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, this uniqueness led to the creation of a role model in the region that is solely manifested by Turkey that grasped a visible admiration and support in the Arab and Muslim world especially on the public level (Candar, 2009).

Hence, mediation allowed the concretization of the Turkish potential into functional dynamics in terms of settling conflicts between belligerent parties like Syria and Israel

and bridging gaps between them. Even this singularity presented by Turkey in the Middle East as the sole modern, secular and developed country on the political and economic levels marks, from the Turkish president's point of view, the beginning of a Turkish century in the region (Gul in Candar, 2009). The adoption of an active policy with Syria as a neighboring country especially in terms of settling its differences with Israel is an important step for the securitization and the stabilization of its surrounding markets that it needs in light of its incredibly growing GDP that approaches one trillion dollar (Candar, 2009 and E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010). Consequently, the political aspect of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries illustrated by its important role as a mediator between Israel and Syria increases Turkey's importance in the region and enhances its position towards the EU (G. Cetinsaya, personal communication, 2011).

Although this mediation dynamic would benefit Turkey in its negotiations for accession to the EU it has some limits since it would raise a negative reaction from Arab countries (S. Ozel, personal communication, 2010 and Kardas, 2010). Accordingly, Turkey can create a zone of interest in the region through the deployment of economic means as well as acting as a mediator between belligerent parties but if this zone of interest turns into a zone of influence it will lead to the increase of the Arab countries' suspicions about Turkey's regional intentions (S. Ozel, personal communication, 2010 and Kardas, 2010).[80] Besides, the Turkish rapprochement with Syria was criticized by the Bush administration that opposed the Turkish openness towards some elements that are perceived as radical in the region like Syria (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). For this administration, Turkey is a strategic partner that is utilized as a political, cultural and military leverage for the US interests in the region. However, Obama positively perceives the Turkish policy towards Arab countries and encourages Turkey to develop its economic and political tools with its neighborhood within a multilateral approach based on the division of power between Turkey and the US in the region (B. Dedeoglu, personal communication, 2011).

The Turkish participation in the mediation efforts presents a new image for Turkey on the external level where it acts as a moderate country that intervenes between belligerent

parties to alleviate their tensions in addition to resolving its problems with its neighbors which conforms to the EU accession terms (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). Accordingly, the development of a mediation role in the region between Syria and Israel contributes to the Middle East securitization which is not without positive effects in terms of favoring the Turkish access to the EU. Therefore, the Turkish policy towards Syria manifested new values that Turkey can bring for the EU by its foreign policy potentials that stem from its historical, cultural and religious affinities from which the EU state members can benefit in order to consolidate their political union (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).[81]

   With the changes that occurred on the international scene after 9/11 and the increase of islamophobia, Turkey has always an influence and credibility before the West. By being institutionally affiliated to the North in addition to the common mentality and values that it shares with the Arab and Muslim countries, Turkey was able to extend its mediation efforts between regional countries from one side and between the region and the West from the other side (O. Turkone, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, the Turkish policy towards Arab countries in general and Syria in particular is a credit for Turkey in its relations with the US and the EU since as a Muslim country it is aware of the sensitivity of these societies (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011). The US and the EU can't establish connections or interact with the Middle Eastern countries as Turkey that is able to initiate a discussion with Middle Eastern countries and hence can establish a mediation role between Arab countries and the West. According to Erdogan's declaration "we are the same people", Turkey departs from a common identity factor that can contribute in bringing the Middle Eastern countries and the West together.

   Consequently, the Turkish involvement in some regional issues in light of its powerful position in the Middle East constitutes a pressure on the EU for accelerating the access negotiations especially in terms of having a bargaining power in facing some thorny issues like the Cypriot problem (A. Karabat, personal communication, 2011 and M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011).[82] Thus, the Turkish policy in the region through its mediation between Syria and Israel would give credit to Turkey since it complements its relations with the EU in terms of fulfilling the integration objectives (I. Dagi, personal

communication, 2011). Therefore, the Arab policy of Turkey doesn't contradict with the Turkish interests with the West notably the EU especially in light of the absence of a clear and coherent Arab policy adopted by European countries in the region (I. Dagi, personal communication, 2011). Moreover, the more Turkey is engaged in the Middle East, the more the global profile of Turkey is empowered and the more cooperation the US will have with it since it doesn't have a clear idea about how to solve many regional issues like the situation in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Palestine (I. Dagi, personal communication, 2011 and K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).

Although the Turkish policy in the region may manifest a sort of autonomy in its foreign conduct, it can't lead to a competition with the US since Turkey is balancing its foreign policy on the regional and global levels in order to deemphasize the East-West duality in its identity (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011 and I. Dagi, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, Turkey is an actor on its own right; it develops an equidistant policy in the region instead of adopting a strict alignment with the Western powers which was manifested in the frequent visits on the official level between Turkey and Syria and the coordination of their mutual positions towards different regional issues like the war on Iraq and the Iranian nuclear program (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011). Thus, Turkey appears as an emerging country that possesses military power, acts as a mediator in Iraq in accordance with the US and develops relations with Syria and Iran despite of the American objection (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011). Besides, by deploying an active policy towards Syria whose leadership has strong ties with Iran, Turkey acts as a regional balance towards Iran in terms of maintaining stability and power balance in the region (K. Balci, personal communication and E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2011).[83] Furthermore, by strengthening its relations with a marginalized country like Syria, Turkey acquires different alternatives within its multidirectional foreign policy and increases its power as well as its choices on the external level (Y. Aktay, personal communication, 2011). Moreover, on the domestic level, this policy would boost the AKP's popularity since its constituency supports the Turkish policy towards its neighbors in terms of increasing mutual trade like the case with Syria.

Although this policy enables Turkey to include the different belligerent parties into a comprehensive integration scheme, this vision may face some limitations. Some respondents emphasized the inability to conciliate between an economic integration in the region with the EU custom union in which Turkey is an active member (O. Oymen, personal communication, 2011). Moreover, in the Middle East, it is not possible to develop an integration scheme that would go beyond a free trade zone due to the absence of a common denominator between Turkey and its neighbors in terms of political development that is rarely manifested in Arab countries due to deficiencies in the rule of law, democracy and human rights (O. Oymen, personal communication, 2011).

In addition, the Turkish policy can't be a step towards the creation of an alternative integration with Arab countries in case of the rejection of its membership since the European countries are important trade partners for Turkey and its policy aims only to diversify its relations and not to change its orientations (A. Karabat, personal communication, 2011). Thus, the Turkish policy towards Syria as a prototype of its dynamics in the Middle East will be reduced to the formulation of favorable and neutral policies that conciliate between its Western ties and regional affiliations and the presentation of a role model for Arab countries in terms of democratization and economic development (O. Oymen, personal communication, 2011). As a result, Turkey emerged as a wise state that develops a preventive policy in the region through its engagement as a mediator in order to limit the spillover effect of the different crises on the domestic and regional levels (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, the Turkish mediation consists of facilitating discussions, providing a safe space for Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Palestinian talks as well as developing a prevention structure action based on economic aids (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011).

On the other hand, the effects of the Turkish openness towards Syria for Turkey on the regional and international levels may seem controversial due to the existence of some impediments that may inhibit their concretization. Accordingly, in spite of the fact that some state members in the EU are satisfied with the new Turkish role in terms of securitizing the energy corridors and stabilizing the region, there is some reticence to the Turkish candidacy especially from France and Germany (C. Karan, personal

communication, 2011 and T. Karamullaoglu, personal communication, 2011). In addition, although the EU positively perceives the Turkish policy in the Middle East, the negotiation stalemate still persists and there isn't any progress in terms of discussing further chapters related to the Turkish candidacy while the Cypriot case turned to be a frozen issue (M. Akgun, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, even if the US and the EU are not ready for the different steps taken by Turkey towards Arab countries, they are aware of the Turkish foreign policy and want to control it (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011).

Davutoglu is convinced that there is a mutual understanding between Turkey and the regional countries which makes the former reliable in mediation. However, there exist a lot of issues of difference between Turkey and the US regarding the Turkish role as a mediator that it developed in the region. For example, the Turkish-Israeli contention and the recognition of Hamas as an element of the Palestinian government and a democratic partner by the AKP constitute a point of difference between Turkey and the US. Besides, Turkey developed further relations with Syria despite of its isolation by the US because of its relations with Iran and Hezbollah and managed to reduce the gap between the Syrian leadership and the international community (S. Ozel, personal communication, 2011). On the other hand, Erdogan's stance towards Israel seems to be radical for some secular academicians who perceived it as detrimental to Turkey in terms of negatively influencing its credibility and ability to be a mediator in the region. Thus, according to them, Turkey has to preserve its relations with Israel in order to keep the balance between Arab countries and Israel and work as an effective mediator that would contribute to the success of a peace process in the region since this balance is a basic requirement that ensures the Turkish conformity to the world order and the international community's stances (S. Dincsahin, personal communication, 2011).

2. The contribution of the Turkish policy towards Syria to peace-making in the Middle East

Turkey's rapprochement towards Syria since the arrival of the AKP to power is a clear crystallization of the Turkish initiative for a better regional management in the Middle East. The Syrian case underlines to what extent the Arab policy of Turkey has been reformulated into a neighboring policy that aims to develop intense cooperation that leads to the relegation of the common issues of belligerency and the deployment of pacific and diplomatic tools such as mediation in solving the regional stalemate like in the Syrian-Israeli peace process in 2008. According to different experts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and journalists, Syria has given up its claims on Hatay and water rights and started to adopt a different attitude towards these problems. The visa release between both sides helped to alleviate the territorial dispute especially in light of the creation of a common space that stretches over the Turkish and the Syrian territories that became accessible to citizens from both sides (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011 and S. Touran, personal communication, 2011). Concerning the water issue, Turkey manifested some flexibility regarding water management while expressing its readiness to adapt its water provision to the Syrian needs by increasing the quantity of the released water especially in case of droughts (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). In addition to the importance of the free trade agreements, the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council is a complementary multilateral platform that includes Turkey, Syria and Iraq where regular biannual meetings are held between these countries' cabinets (MFA, personal communication, 2011). The coordination of their common policies in different domains of cooperation through these meetings contributed to the alleviation of their mutual problems concerning the water and the Kurdish issues. In these meetings journalists can participate and a journal forum is issued about the different problems that concern the three parties (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).

The problematic nature of the Middle East politics and the existence of various economic potentials including cooperation in the energy sector present two sources of attraction that incite Turkey to be involved in the region and act as a mediator not only

between Syria and Israel but also in Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq and between Iran and the West (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). The Turkish credibility as a mediator is built on its rank as one of the 20 richest countries, the 15th country with the highest GNP as well as its identification to the North while voicing at the same time the different regional causes before international instances (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).

Turkey's objectives in terms of alleviating the regional unrest, ensuring its stability and power balance coincide with the basic tenets of its foreign policy notably the rhythmic diplomacy in terms of harmonizing its external conduct with the international community exigencies. Accordingly, these objectives are conceivable through economic integration and mediation that are the main principles entailed in Turkey's policy towards the Middle Eastern countries including Syria at first place (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011 and U. Ulutas, personal communication, 2011). These two principles render Turkey more neutral and capable to concretize its rhythmic diplomacy by intervening whenever they are threatened by a third party towards which the Turkish leadership is ready to display a harsh and critical position as it was illustrated in Davos and Mavi Marmara incidents. However, these principles may have some limits especially towards Syria's problems in the region and the Palestinian issue in light of the US opposition of the Turkish rapprochement towards Syria and Hamas as well as the Turkish resistance vis-à-vis the US policy in the Middle East that was manifested in the UN resolution against Iran and the parliamentary decision in 2003 (U. Ulutas, personal communication, 2011and K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).

However, in spite of the Iranian perception of the Middle East on sectarian basis and the Syrian rejectionist policy in the region, there is more convergence than difference between Iran, Syria and Turkey especially in trade, energy, and openness towards the EU as well as in increasing contacts on the public level (C. Karan, personal communication, 2011).[84] Moreover, Turkey is convinced that it can defend both countries by convincing them through the deployment of the aforementioned principles to comply with the international community demands in order to avoid sanctions.

Besides, the Turkish assertiveness towards its neighborhood is due to the fact that its relations with Syria, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq constitute the center of its national interest (O. Turkone, personal communication, 2011). Consequently, the Turkish policy towards Syria in terms of deploying the zero problems policy was adopted with other countries in the region in addition to the economic integration factor based on the interactions between businessmen in terms of trade that was facilitated by the common religion and culture shared between Arab countries and Turkey. In spite of the inability of the Turkish efforts to solve the Iraqi issue and limit its repercussions on the region through the Neighboring Countries Initiative, it was a step that underlines dialogue and direct contact as a common culture between Arabs and Turks in the regional conduct in order to manage the various emerging problems (S. Turan, personal communication, 2011). As a result, the US don't resist to the Turkish regional policy but on the contrary it perceives Turkey as a key factor in the region in terms of developing relations with Arab countries especially the radical ones like Syria in a way that would enable the integration of their systems in terms of promoting democracy in Syria and the harmonization of their positions with the world order on the economic and political levels through the different dynamics of the Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East (E. Onen, personal communication, 2011).

Furthermore, the Israeli-Syrian talks are considered as an integral part of the peace process in the Middle East and Turkey played an important role in hosting the last bilateral talks in May 2008 (Ulutas, 2009). The main Syrian claim in these negotiations is the return to the June 1967's borders and the withdrawal from the Golan Heights (Ulutas, 2009). The peace talks took place due to the Israeli fear of the Iranian threats and the Syrian willingness to end its isolation on the international level (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011 and M.B. Aykan, personal communication, 2010). This process is important in terms of putting an end to borders conflicts and the regional security concerns. Therefore, the existence of a third party like Turkey in addition to the US was important in inciting both sides to abide by the resulting agreement and its implementation so that its positive effects would spill over the entire region. Turkey has an important role in alleviating the tensions between both parties in terms of helping them

to come up with a consensual agreement (Ulutas, 2009 and E. Isler, personal communication, 2011).

Obama's arrival to power favored a Turkish rapprochement with Syria as well as the development of Syrian-Israeli talks since he adopted a constructive policy in the Middle East that is distinguished from the one pursued by the previous administration (Ulutas, 2009). Accordingly, the US was ready to intervene in the peace talks between Israel and Syria in light of the betterment of the US-Syrian relations. However, the rise of the Ultra right parties in Israel accompanied by the weakness of the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert as well as the attacks against Gaza launched in 2008 stopped the negotiations (Ulutas, 2009). The Turkish mediation between Israel and Syria was initiated in June 2004 after the consent of both the Syrian president and the Turkish prime minister to start talks through the Turkish ambassador in Israel (Zaman, 2008). Therefore, in May 2008 the Israeli-Syrian talks were officially declared and Turkey was announced as a mediator between both parties. Turkey was present in five rounds of indirect talks between Syria and Israel and it helped them to carry out negotiations which had positive effects on Turkey as an influential and close country to both parties (U. Ulutas, personal communication, 2011 and T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011). Syria and Israel were about to come up with a formal agreement by the end of 2008 when the Gaza operations were launched and led to the emergence of tensions between Israel from one side and Turkey and Syria from the other side (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011 and K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).

The Turkish engagement in facilitating the conclusion of a peace treaty between Syria and Israel would enable the creation of a better pacification atmosphere in the Middle East for different reasons. First, the conclusion of this treaty would encourage a further liberalization in Syria since the Muslim Brotherhood, the main opposition facing the Syrian leadership, by opposing this treaty will have a large mobilizing power against the regime on the national level which will destabilize the Baathist party and alleviate its rejectionist policy in the region since it won't be the sole decision-making instance in Syria (Ulutas, 2009). Second, it would favor a rapprochement between Syria and the US which would lead to the elimination of the economic and political sanctions imposed on

Syria since the amelioration of the Syrian relations with both Israel and the US is intertwined and evolve in parallel. Moreover, as a result of the Turkish attempts to encourage the conclusion of such treaty, the Syrian-Iranian alliance would be ended since it will lose its raison d'être once the Syrian regime is accepted and legitimized by the international community. Besides, by ending its relations with Hezbollah, Iran and Hamas, Israel may trust Syria and comply with its demands by withdrawing from the Golan Heights especially in light of a Syrian-American reconciliation (T. Ozhan, personal communication, 2011 and Ulutas, 2009). Therefore, these factors altogether would contribute to the normalization of the Syrian policies and the alleviation of the regional deadlock through the resolution of the Golan Height issue. However, the inability to cope with the regional complexity in the Middle East impeded the realization of the aforementioned results. By refusing the Israeli antagonist policy in the region through the adoption of an open criticism and the broadcast of a pro-Palestinian TV series stigmatizing the Israeli behavior in Gaza, Turkey suspended its talks with Israel in addition to the cancellation of an international air drill that was supposed to be held in Konya (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). Israel replied by conveying its objections to the Turkish ambassador and its refusal to resume the negotiations under a Turkish sponsorship (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). Consequently, the Turkish foreign minister declared that the Turkish mediation in the Israeli-Syrian talks will be conditioned by the amelioration of the relations between Turkey and Israel that has to apologize for its offense addressed to the Turkish ambassador and the assassination of 9 Turkish citizens in the Mavi Marmara convoy (Aljazeera, 2010).

The better atmosphere that will result from the success and the advancement of these talks would positively influence the Middle East by the enhancement of the Syrian-American relations through Turkey.[85] Thus, the Israeli-Syrian indirect talks are considered among the factors that might change the US perception towards Syria and favor its acceptance as well as its integration as a regional actor (U. Ulutas, personal communication, 2011).[86] Some respondents even went further by asserting that by enabling Syria to launch a negotiation process with Israel, Turkey contributes to regional pacification through the alleviation of the Arab-Israeli conflict intensity and the limitation

of the Iranian impact on the Syrian regime (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). This assertion was based on the fact that by taking the responsibility for the attenuation the Israeli-Syrian conflict through mediation, the Turkish government would contribute to a positive evolution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in light of the relations between the Syrian regime and some Palestinian factions like Hamas. As a result of a probable appeasement of the main regional deadlock, it would be expected that many regional actors especially Hamas would gain an international legitimacy as a partner in the Middle East peace process which would pave the way for the creation of a Palestinian state (Ulutas, 2009). The Turkish facilitation of an intra-regional dialogue through a policy based on values and principles between antagonist partners presents a prospect for normalization of the region politics in light of the possible resolution of the Palestinian issue that would be followed by an Arab recognition of Israel through a successful peace process that would be fair towards the different countries in the Middle East (K.Balci, personal communication, 2011). The feasibility of the Syrian-Israeli peace process in comparison to the Palestinian-Israeli one would lead to a fast solution that would be the starting point of a paradigm shift in interstate relations on the regional level which would contribute to the regional stability that Turkey looks forward achieving it through its active policy with its neighborhood.

VI. Conclusion:

The Arab policy of Turkey is a dimension of a bourgeoning dynamic on the regional level that aims to develop an integrative vision of stabilization that would include the different states into regulatory mechanisms transcending the persistent regional stalemate regarding the different crises. The economic interdependence and the collective intraregional consultations are the main mechanisms that were generalized with different regional countries as well as Arab ones (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011). A comprehensive analysis of the Turkish foreign policy would negate the existence of any specificity towards Arab countries that are perceived as neighboring and regional partners among others in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. The inclusive character of the Turkish foreign policy is even underlined by the elite's rhetoric where different operational and theoretical concepts are formulated and conceived to be projected from Turkey and diffused towards different countries starting by the neighboring ones (Davutoglu, 2010). Accordingly, Turkey started to implement an active and visible policy in the region in terms of eliminating barriers to trade and human movement as well as increasing interactions on the political level with different countries in various regions surrounding its territories. Thus, the Arab policy of Turkey is a part of a gradual policy based on the promotion of common interests with neighbors on the political and the economic levels that favors a further rapprochement that underlines the sense of collective imaginary where space and regional problems are commonly shared (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011).

However, the Arab policy of Turkey manifests not only an activism on different levels of cooperation but also a radical shift in the Turkish establishment's imaginary towards Arabs. In spite of the persistence of bilateral conflicts between Turkey and neighboring countries like Greece about the borders demarcation, the same nature of conflict with Arab countries like Syria has taken a wider amplitude (Aras, 2005). This amplitude mainly refers to the Turkish establishment that adopted a nationalist ideology based on an ethnic identification that claimed superiority over Arabs in the Kemalist traditional elite's mental map. In addition to the defensive character of the state in terms of preserving its

territorial integrity, a sort of aversion culminated at the beginning of the 20th century towards Arab countries which increased the Turkish repulsion from the Arab world in comparison to its neighboring countries. Therefore, the traditional elite abandoned Islam as a source of identification by considering it as a means of backwardness that Turkey has inherited from Arabs. On the other hand, Arab countries had a negative memory about the Ottoman Empire that was considered as an oppressive colonial power that led to the increase of an Arab consciousness that was politically and culturally opposed to the Ottoman hegemony. The same occurred in Syria where a strong nationalist identification began to crystallize against the Turkish administration that adopted discriminatory rules on the Syrian territories against Arabs. Accordingly, the Arab nationalism was generally shaped by anti-Turkism but was more exacerbated in Syria due to the territorial dispute over the Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay). The domination of a negative representation of the other on the Arab and the Turkish sides impeded the formulation of a favorable policy towards Arab countries as well as its receptivity by the latter.

The historical imagination and the Kemalist elite's world view and identity that were the main source of the persistence of a psychological barrier between Arabs and Turks were reversed by the arrival of the AKP (Aras, 2005). In light of the end of the cold war and the redefinition of the Turkish policy in terms of scope and levels of action, the Turkish activism was manifested in the region in alignment with the exigencies of its Western alliance like in the Balkans. However, this activism was accentuated in the Middle East especially towards Arab countries in terms of public attention and importance for both Turkey and Arab countries due to the lack of such positive contacts on the official level that started to visibly increase since 2000's (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). The arrival of the AKP to power constituted a major favorable context for positive changes in the Arab policy formulation in light of the new synthesis presented by the party's identity, self-perception in terms of mission and the image it has towards the other especially the Arabs. As the heir of the ex-Islamist party, the Virtue Party, the AKP presented a reforming wing that incorporated liberalism side by side to its conservative moral and ethical system (Onis, 1996).

Accordingly, the party identified itself as a conservative liberal actor on the national scene that manages to conciliate its religious background and affiliations with those of the liberal and the non-Muslim groups living in Turkey. Thus, the party manifested an identity revival by reintroducing the historical and cultural elements into its policies especially on the regional level where Islam is an inspiring reference in formulating the Turkish policy with its neighbors without being a political instrument that defies the state's secular character. The reformulation of the Turkish foreign policy by reinvesting the historical, cultural and religious factors manifested a syncretism of various identities that stems from its geographic position as a meeting point between three major regions and continents (Davutoglu, 2010). Its historical ties and cultural background shared with its neighborhood started to emerge as an exigency for the development of a Turkish mission on the regional level. Hence, Turkey developed the zero problems policy in order to overcome its regional problems and started to implement a policy of values where Turkey maintains equidistant and equal relations with all countries while expressing its neighborhood problems before global actors and international instances (T. Kucukcan, personal communication, 2011).

Moreover, under the rule of the AKP that conserved strong ties with citizens on the public level in light of its experience in localities, Turkey has abandoned its prejudices against Arabs and started to develop normal policies that sometimes converge with Arab stances especially in some regional conflicts like the Palestinian issue (A. Asan, personal communication, 2011). The acceptance of Islam as a reference in the party's identity reduced the gap between Turkey and the Arab world since religion is no longer conceived as a source of backwardness that is tightly linked with Arabs. This new mentality emphasized by the AKP's elite represents an inevitable factor that favored a rapprochement towards Arab countries based on pragmatic tenets in terms of providing the suitable atmosphere for a sustainable active policy that would be continuing even after the departure of the AKP (A. Asan, personal communication, 2011 and F. Houaidi, Personal communication, 2011). The investment of cultural, historical and identical factors in the development of an equidistant, multidimensional, rhythmic and a balanced policy between security and freedom exigencies that aims to reduce its problems with

neighbors has been manifested in the Arab policy of Turkey through the creation of areas of common interests. Therefore, the success of the Arab policy of Turkey through the application of these principles towards Arab countries emphasized the visibility of an active Turkish foreign policy and contributed to its credibility which makes it difficult for any political elite to change radically the Arab policy of Turkey adopted by the AKP.

By observing the environment within which the AKP formulated the Arab policy, it would be important to underline the contextual role in favoring such a rapprochement for many reasons related to developments on the national, regional and international levels (A. Emre, personal communication, 2011). The strategic depth, the current foreign minister's book about the Turkish foreign policy, describes the structure of a new foreign policy that in spite of its preservation of its balancing attitudes on the external level, presents new potentials within a new world order. In light of the demise of the bipolar system where culture and more precisely religion became an influential dynamic in interstate relations, the investment of the Turkish geostrategic and historical heritage comes in riposte to the power balance changes that modified the states' self perception and roles on the international level.

Besides, the liberalization process has evolved on the Turkish national scene and shaped the relations between the different institutions in terms of the rules of the political game and power balance (B. Koroglu, personal communication, 2011). Therefore, the army's role was normalized and reformulated in light of the democratic mechanisms adopted by the political system. As a result, more freedom were accorded to a wide array of social movements that were previously marginalized but now emerged as socioeconomic powers on the national scene and started to develop networks that increase their influence on domestic and external policies (Onis, 1996). Moreover, the power vacuum and the absence of leadership in the Middle East notably in the Arab world favored the acceptation of the Turkish activism on the regional level especially in light of its Sunni character and its equidistant and rhythmic policy that preserves the power balance between the different states. On the other hand, the Turkish tools adopted in the implementation of the Arab policy are consistent with the world order and aim to develop common interests on the bilateral and multilateral levels with Arab countries

which coincides with the Western interests in terms of regional stabilization and pacification (Davutoglu, 2010).

All the aforementioned factors indicate that the Arab policy of Turkey is an important initiative that should be reciprocated by Arab countries especially in light of the political and economic stalemate from which they suffer on the domestic and regional levels. The engagement into economic relations marked by an intensification of commercial exchanges constitutes a potential for a regional prosperity among the different Arab countries that would hence have a better access to the international markets in addition to gaining expertise from the Turkish side in different domains. Besides, Turkey didn't penetrate the Arab world through a threatening political project but through the development of reciprocal interests which would alleviate the Arab countries suspicion related to regional hegemony and domination (F. Houaidi, Personal communication, 2011). Turkey by operating into a multilateral scheme through its simultaneous policy developed with different countries on the regional and international levels as well as its role as a facilitator and mediator in regulating conflicts underlines its aversion to a regional hegemony but a collective empowerment of the different countries (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011 and O. Oymen, personal communication, 2011).

On the other hand, the rise of the Israeli operations in the occupied territories without a balancing power highlighted the Arab countries' inability to play an active role in terms of changing a persistent status quo that is detrimental to the regional stability. Therefore, the Turkish firm position towards the Israeli operations against Palestinians paved the way for the expression of a wide public opinion in Arab countries that started to contest the status quo in terms of authoritarian regimes and their inability to achieve their citizens' needs and representing their will (S. Genc, personal communication, 2011). The AKP as a symbol of a Turkish democratization by incarnating a new party in terms of ideological reference that acceded to power in a secular state with an overwhelming majority and adopted an active regional policy underlines the effect of the political liberalization on the Turkish confidence in its conduct on the external level. Therefore, what is interesting in the Turkish policy towards Arab countries is the way by which it is

perceived and inciting reactions in the Arab world. A public awareness started to consolidate its presence on the public sphere and started to be stimulated by a role model that can denounce the regional injustice incurred by an international passivity towards Arab causes (S. Genc, personal communication, 2011).

However, there is an exaggeration in the estimation of the Turkish role. Turkey has proved to be a central country that plays an active role in dealing with different issues on the regional level but it didn't achieve its role in terms of solving all its problems with neighbors (F. Houaidi, Personal communication, 2011). Besides, the regional political and economic instability impedes the Turkish role in expanding its active policy towards Arab countries especially in light of its contrasting position towards the different revolutions that erupted in the Arab world. Turkey has developed better relations on the public level in the region more than on the official level which is an increasing and promising potential for the Turkish policy towards Arab countries especially in the ones where the authoritarian regimes that were suspicious towards the Turkey's role collapsed (S. Genc, personal communication, 2011). Although Turkey's policy was well received by different neighboring countries like Syria and Iraq, some important Arab countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia were suspicious and uncomfortable with the Turkish regional policy that they perceived as a threat to their domestic and regional legitimacy (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).

Turkey has to readapt and restructure its Arab policy in light of the actual regional context especially in terms of conciliating its interests with the different Arab countries that experienced a public revolt. In light of the differences between the Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan, Syrian and Yemenite revolutions, the harmonization of the Turkish policy towards Arab countries seems to be a necessity for Turkey on the global level before its Western allies and the international institutions. Therefore, in light of the turbulent events in the different Arab world and the Turkish interests invested in the region, Turkey has to develop a neutral policy on the official level especially towards the five countries where revolutions stroke. Accordingly, it has to put the emphasis on another type of policy where social actors have to be more active in terms of developing relations with their counterparts in these countries. The recourse to social actors in

maintaining relations with the aforementioned countries would avoid any political confrontation since they would deploy different activities on the humanitarian, educative and economic levels that would enable Turkey to resume its relations after stabilization. This alternative would be beneficial for the Turkish policy-makers especially towards countries with which Turkey had good relations on the official level like Syria and Libya.

The other potential that Turkey has in these circumstances is emphasized by the concretization of its critics towards authoritarian regimes since the elimination of authoritarian regimes illustrated the Turkish role in terms of contesting the excess of repression and security concerns in Arab countries as well as developing a liberal policy where social actors like civil societies participate in the formulation of the Turkish foreign policy (S. Genc, personal communication, 2011). Now, some Arab countries have eliminated their authoritarian regimes and have opposition groups that start to perceive Turkey as a model for the future regimes. Therefore, authoritarianism as a major impediment for the Arab policy of Turkey is eclipsing and new opposition groups started to be active and visible on the political level with which Turkey can engage into a dialogue. Turkey can develop an instructive policy towards Arab countries by helping these opposition groups and guiding them in light of the Turkish experience. Besides, the social interaction is an important factor that has to be emphasized towards the different countries like Tunisia and Egypt where Turkey can build alliances with future leaders which would enable a better implementation of its tools on the regional level. Economic interdependence and strategic consultation can even evolve into a more institutionalized framework in the region with the different Arab countries which would preserve the regional power balance. Moreover, the Arab policy of Turkey would focus on mediation as an effective tool especially in countries where the old guards are no more in power. By being involved between the different political and social actors on the national level in these countries, Turkey would accelerate the process of building a national consensus and bridge the gap between the military and the opposition especially the youth.

The reformulation of the power balance structure in the Middle East in light of the occurring revolutions is a contextual opportunity for the different Arab countries to reconsider their regional policies. Therefore, the adoption of flexible attitudes in terms of

enhancing their communication with Turkey especially on the educational and the cultural level develops a solid base for the crystallization of the Turkish vision in the Middle East. By empowering social relations and cultural ties on the public level as a bottom-up policy for a "grass root integration", a rapprochement on the public level would incite for changes in the policy-making mechanisms in the Arab world. Such level of integration would favor the convergence of the political institutions' visions which would lead to the development of common policies on the domestic and the regional levels. Accordingly, the intensification of social relations would cope with the political openness on the national scenes in the Arab world where public opinion would gain influence as an actor in the foreign policy-making.

In light of the public participation, Arab countries would be able to reciprocate the Turkish initiatives by developing an open policy towards Turkey in terms of facilitating the economic exchanges through different dynamics that can go beyond eliminating customs and lifting visas to the creation of a common market. Moreover, by engaging into regular consultations with Turkey, Arab countries can bypass the regional stalemate and develop common regulatory mechanisms as the premises for an intraregional diplomacy where foreign policies are harmonized regarding common issues. Hence, the Arab-Turkish Cooperation Forum would be the embryo of a multilateral mechanism not only for discussing issues related to cooperation on various levels of interest but also as a more developed instance for decision-making in terms of harmonizing the Turkish and Arab countries stances and actions regarding the different political issues on the regional level especially towards the most aching issues in the Middle East.

[1] Determinism is a term that describes the mentality of the Turkish establishment at the time of the Birth of the Turkish Republic where the elite were previously among the Young Turks that were opposed to the authoritarian Sultanate regime at the beginning but started to adopt a nationalist rhetoric at the beginning of the 20th century especially after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, this intellectual and the political elite since 1920's emphasized a "Turkishness" that is ethnically exclusive and aims for strengthening the basis of a Turkish state based on a Western tradition. The duty of the state consolidation in the aftermath of the ethnic revolts in Anatolia and the international treaties that divided the Empire was to protect the Turkish territories by deemphasizing its identity as an ottoman and Islamic empire through the adoption of a rigid secular regime inspired from the Jacobinist French tradition and the alignment with the West.

[2] The term "West" here refers both to an ideological and cultural orientation in the Turkish establishment that started to develop a nation-state based on a modernization process that introduced a different life style than the traditional one on the domestic level that coped with a rapprochement with Western countries and a repulsion from Arab and Islamic countries. On the other hand, during the period from 1923 and 1990, the Soviet Union, by having claims on the Northern East territories in Turkey, presented a geostrategic eastern threat that was counterbalanced by an official adherence to the liberal Western bloc under the US hegemony.

[3] In spite of the Syrian official demand addressed to Turkey in terms of opposing the creation of the Israeli state, Turkey was keen not to lose its candidacy to NATO as well as the American support against the Soviet threat which made it recognize Israel in 1949.

[4] The Saadabad Pact was signed in 1937 between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan as an initiative to consolidate relations between oriental countries in the Middle East under the auspices of the Afghani king. For the Baghdad Pact that was signed in 1955 in the context of the cold war, it had more geostrategic goals in terms of creating a defensive coalition on the Southern borders of the Soviet Union. It was signed between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, the UK and the US joined its military committee in 1958. Turkey joined the first treaty in order to create a sort of rapprochement with its neighbors especially at that period of time when it was recovering from the World War I's effects. On the other hand, the Turkish engagement in the second coalition was due its security concerns in the region notably vis-à-vis the Soviet Union whereas many Arab countries at the time adopted a socialist system and engaged into the Soviet eastern bloc. Therefore, most of them didn't welcome such a move made by the Turkish government since it was aligned with the US and supportive to Israel in the region. Both treaties didn't include Arab countries that were under occupation except for Iraq that was independent in 1932.

[5] There was an aid suspension and arms embargo imposed by the US on Turkey due to its military intervention in Northern Cyprus in 1974. .

[6] This forum was created in 2007 after the signature of a framework agreement between Turkey and the Arab League. It consists of a regular and permanent ministerial forum that is held each year in order to discuss cooperation and common concerns on the different levels and to come up with the necessary recommendations for enhancing relations between both sides.

[7] Western paradigm refers to the Turkish elite's orientation towards the enforcement of a secular state on Western basis that coped with an institutional and ideological alignment with the West. The word paradigm is used here in order to underline an official and decisive conduct that is related to the State security and

survival both on the national and the international scenes whose abandon is out of question among Turkish state establishment.

[8] Normalization and rapprochement express sequential steps in the Turkish policy towards Arab countries. Accordingly, normalization is the manifestation of a willingness to keep good and friendly relations with Arab countries in terms of breaking the stalemate in their bilateral relations that persisted till late 1960's. Therefore, normalization that was undertaken under the rule of the traditional Kemalist elite is different from rapprochement that emphasizes a turning point in both the Turkish policy and the Arab receptiveness of the Turkish state image and role in the region which has many repercussions on their bilateral relations. Accordingly, Turkey by initiating a rapprochement approaches Arab countries both on the official and public level as partners with whom it shares common interests and destiny.

[9] The paradigm shift is an intellectual concept elaborated by different academicians in their analysis of the Turkish foreign policy changes in terms of deemphasizing the security approach in their external relations notably with regional countries and according a priority to the common interests that would be the basis of bilateral relations instead of focusing on areas of conflicts. Therefore, common interests is the key word of the paradigm shift in terms of shaping the Turkish foreign policy that deploys economic tools and social relations on the public level through NGOs instead of using threats. Therefore, neighboring Arab countries are not perceived as a threat for the Turkish security but as potential partners in the region's development and prosperity. Besides, the introduction of the cultural factor in the Turkish foreign policy conduct is a sort of manifestation of a paradigm shift that contributed to the elimination of the psychological gap between Arab and Turks.

[10] The Turkish refusal to resolve the water problem with Syria and Iraq while considering the Euphrates water as a national river and not an international one in contradiction to the international law emphasized a kind of superiority in the Turkish conduct towards Arab countries especially in light of the ignorance of the Syrian and Iraqi losses as a result of the Turkish projects on the Euphrates.

[11] Regionalism is a notion that emerged on the elite's political agenda in Turkey after the demise of the Soviet Union in order to emphasize a change in the Turkish vital space that is no longer confined to its borders but it extends towards its neighboring countries with whom Turkey started to adopt an active policy in terms of engaging in bilateral agreements in various domains of cooperation.

[12] The collective action mechanisms refer to initiatives that are taken by Turkey in terms of developing regional institutions that enable the different countries to meet, exchange their points of view and adopt collectively the necessary decisions that would enhance the regional condition and relations between Turkey and the concerned Arab countries. The High Strategic Cooperation Council and the Arab-Turkish Cooperation Forum are the main instances that highlight the notion of collective action through institutional bodies that try to empower the regional ownership principle that consists of developing an active policy of engagement with the different neighboring countries in order to solve the regional problems while preventing any external intervention. These are instances where the different problems and concerns are discussed and they aim to conclude different agreements and come up with general recommendations that constitute a road map for improving the multilateral relations.

[13] This approach dominated the Arab scholars' position towards the mentality map of the Turkish ruling elite since 1923 till the 1990's where Turkey, according to some Arab scholars on the contrary to some Turkish official and academic declarations about the Turkish neutrality in the Middle East, adopted an

interventionist policy in alignment with its western alliances. This approach was defensive because it was in reaction to changes that occurred in the elite's structure and ideology that was, by its turn, reflected in the Turkish attitude towards Arab countries. The Arab intellect underlined the Turkish alienation from its Islamic roots and started to develop scholarly writings that accuse Turkey of being antagonist to Arab countries both on the international and regional levels. Turkey voted against the UN resolution for the declaration of the Algerian independence in 1962 and was the first Islamic country to recognize Israel in 1949. Besides, Turkey's policy on the regional level was confined to geostrategic consideration that were mainly related to the preservation of its territorial integrity and stability through intervention in case of the emergence of a threat to its security by deploying threats and military forces either for deterrence or in reaction to any attempt to violate its security like in the case of the Syrian support to the PKK. As a result, by reading different scholarly books in the Arab world about Turkey, it would be easy to realize how they emphasize the righteous of the Arabs' position and causes and how Turkey deceived them by denying its roots, aligning its policies and orientations to the West and deemphasizing its relations with Arab countries while illustrating Arabs in a negative way in its national literatures since the beginning of the 20th century.

[14] This factor contributed to the psychological gap between Arab and Turks more on the public level than one the political and intellectual one since different scholars in the Arab world called for the adoption of a secular system in the Arab world especially in the aftermath of the nationalist wave in Arab countries where the Sultanate was perceived as the main source of the Arab backwardness.

[15] Some of these policies are related to his support for traditional lifestyles that were constrained by the Turkish constitution in 1924 like the show of tolerance towards the Islamic practices, the opening of thousands of mosques that were closed by the State and the legalization of the call for prayer in Arabic.

[16] These links were implicitly manifested by the close relations between some political leaders in the ruling party and some of figures that are members in these business associations

[17] One of the new concepts that were associated with the active foreign policy under the rule of the AKP is "the new (neo) ottomanism." This concept emerged due to the Turkish investment of its historical, cultural and religious bonds in the region in consolidating its relations with its neighbors that lie in the geographical area of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, this multicultural heritage emphasized in the Turkish foreign policy enabled Turkey to have more receptiveness from its neighboring countries in terms of extending its policy on the political and economic levels with several countries in the Balkans, the Middle East and Eastern Europe in addition to Central Asia.

[18] This perception of change in foreign policy is interesting for analyzing the Arab policy of Turkey in light of the rupture with the animosity that pertained between both sides and its substitution by a policy of amity. The contrast between animosity and amity is illustrative since this perceptional shift implies a destabilization in the foreign policy pattern followed by a stabilization that ensures better bilateral terms.

[19] This approach fits with the power structure model in terms of determining how the policy making in a political system would involve a variety of elite that take part into the formulation, the decision-making and implementation of the different state policies. Hence, the elitist-pluralist approach is an explanatory sub-category among other approaches in analyzing how the power structure in a political system influences the policy-making process.

[20] The redefinition of the Turkish foreign policy and the adoption of a multidimensional approach where Turkey is perceived as a central geostrategic country influenced its trade. Therefore, the Turkish exportations manifest a continuous increase from 2002 where they were 36 billion dollars by reaching 85.5 billion dollars in 2006 (The Turkish Exportation council (TIM), 2011). The visibility of the Turkish trade and exports with new partners other than the Western ones like Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and China is explained by the conformity of the Turkish foreign trade structure with the global economy changes marked by the emergence of the Eastern markets since 1990's rather than by a change of axis (Babacan, 2010).

[21] The supporters of this party mainly constitute a secular constituency that is not pleased with the Islamic rhetoric deployed by the AKP in its foreign policy since they perceive it as a threat to their way of life. Both the army and the opposition notably the Kemalists are concerned with the Turkish policy towards the Arab countries since it's an indicator of an increasing Islamic solidarity that threatens Turkey's secular character (I. Dagi, personal communication, 2011).

[22] According to the vice president of the Saadet Party, Turkey should develop a common market policy by encouraging investment with Arab countries in influential sectors like the steel industry that is according to him the most important tool that would ensure the development of the Muslim world. However, the AKP's trade and investment flows are basically hot money that doesn't improve infrastructure either in Turkey or other in Islamic countries.

[23] The regional vacuum refers to the absence of the leading role that was played by the traditional regional powers especially Egypt which led to the lack of the regional balance between Arab and non Arab states and the manifestation of power politics by Iran and Israel that threaten the regional stability especially in light of the Arab countries' inability to play an active role concerning the regional crises.

[24] The respondents even went further by indicating that the US would prefer to have alliance with Turkey rather than Israel in order to control the radical groups as well as Israel's independent policy in the region. According to them, the US doesn't plan its foreign policy in compliance with the Israeli interests since its power has limits in the region which implies that it has to rely on new regional powers like Turkey and Egypt.

[25] On the contrary to the nationalist discourse adopted by the previous regimes since the World War one, Turkey started to reduce the nationalist fervor on the domestic scene which helped in alleviating the psychological gap not only between the Arab states and Turkey on the official level but also between their respective societies (E. Kelesoglu, personal communication, 2010).

[26] According to Meliha Altunisik, professor of International Relations at the Middle East Technical University, the Turkish policy towards the Middle East is institutionalized in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs due to the fact that it can't be ignored in light of the economic benefits retrieved from it.

[27] For example, the Islamist groups that participated in Mavi Marmara flotilla were openly against the Israeli policy in Palestine and underlined the AKP sympathy towards Palestinians (Karaman, 2011).

[28] Accordingly, the AKP policy manifests a sort of a role model for Arab societies through its position both on the national and the international level. First, the party succeeded to combine between the liberal values and its religious and conservative background in terms of realizing a visible economic development and a political openness on the domestic scene especially regarding the religious rights. On the other hand, the

party's position in the region towards the Palestinian issue in Davos and in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara incidents has increased the party's ability to address the public opinion.

[29] One of these movements is the Fethullaci that has a strong existence in Turkey especially in Media where a wide array of newspapers and TV stations are affiliated to the movement and endorse a religious orientation in the Turkish society. The cultural dimension diffused by this movement supports the Turkish foreign policy in spreading the cultural influence of Turkey on the regional and international levels

[30] In light of the WTO statistics, Turkey occupied the 22nd position in exports from 2004-2006 after being the 25th in 2002. Besides, exports increased by 25.3% in 2007 and 23.1% in 2008 while the trade volume was 107.2 billion dollars in 2007 and 132 billion dollars in 2008 (Babacan, 2010).

[31] This information was confirmed by a businessman in MUSIAD who underlined the interplay between the arrival of the AKP to power and the Iraqi war in increasing trade with neighboring countries like Northern Iraq. Accordingly, in spite of the existing regional instability, trade reached 5 billion dollars and the intermediate companies and NGOs that Turkey had in Iraq after 2003 have increased remarkably.

[32] The Middle East is the second most important partner for the MUSIAD after the EU in terms of importation and exportation especially Syria and Iran. The interviewed businessman underlined that the AKP policy related to visa release and free trade agreements between Turkey and neighboring countries increased tourism and stimulated trade especially in light of the stable economy in Turkey.

[33] In spite of the importance of the European and the American markets for Turkey, there is a preference to look for different markets in neighboring countries in light of the high competitiveness that the Turkish products face and the obstacles that impede the businessmen to have an easy access to the European markets like the visa procedures (Kirisci, 2011). Besides, the need of the Arab markets are much more than those of the European and the American ones especially in products where Turkey has a comparative advantage more than Arab countries like electronics, machinery and construction.

[34] The EU is the first trade partner for Turkey in light of the increase of the industrial sector's weight in its exports by being 115.2 billion dollars in 2008 (The Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), 2011). The exports to the EU in 2008 were 63.4 billion dollars and occupied 48 % of the total Turkish exports with an increase of 4.9% (TUIK, 2011). However, since the 2000's, Turkey's exports to the Middle East in general and to the Gulf Cooperation council in particular as well as to African countries manifested a visible increase (Babacan, 2010).

[35] The increasing rates of FDI, the revenues generated from privatization, mergers and acquisitions constitute an important source of economic growth in Turkey.

[36] Accordingly, the 1980's and 1990's were marked by a rapprochement with Arab countries under the rule of the center right parties (the ANAP and the Right Path Party) that needed to rally Islamic groups among their constituency and the state bureaucracy (Onis, 1997 and M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011). On the other hand, at the time of the Cypriot crisis in 1964-1965, Turkey tried to gain the support of Arab countries at the UN General Assembly for a resolution that condemns Greece and calls for the partition of the Island.

[37] The active foreign policy adopted by Turkey since 2002 is justified according to some figures in the AKP by the confidence that the party gained on the national level in terms of empowering its position and

gaining the necessary public support. The AKP domestic empowerment vis-à-vis the different secular establishment was manifested by some changes that were undertaken in the different core institutions of the State like the constitutional court and the Higher Education Council where many of their members are pro-AKP in addition to the presidential post that was occupies by Gul since 2007.

[38] These incidents consisted of a humanitarian assistance sent by an Islamic organization (IHH) for Palestinians who were under siege in Gaza.

[39] These policies consisted of creating alliances in order to counterbalance any potential external threat in terms of ensuring neighboring countries' neutrality or amity towards Turkey.

[40] Regional responsibility means that Turkey as a regional country has to develop an active role that stems from its new foreign policy principles "proactivism" and "Zero problems with neighbors" in order to prevent crises escalation and enable a pacific resolution of the different problems between its neighbors to ensure peace and stability in its surroundings.

[41] For example, this respondent indicated that Turkey refused to vote for a UN resolution that condemns Iran which put its interests with the West at stake. At the conference of Lisbon that took place in June 2010, Turkey refused to accept the anti-missile convention if it would explicitly mention some terms against Iran's nuclear program. Such an attitude wasn't that visible at the time of the traditional elite since the foreign policy tended to be neutral especially if Western allies are involved in the question of concern.

[42] On the contrary to the CHP that thinks that the Turkish policy towards Arab countries would distant Turkey from its Western ties, the AKP perceives its Arab policy as complementary aspect in its external conduct notably towards the EU that brings more liberalization and democratization to Turkey while the Arab countries increase Turkey's political power on the regional and the international levels (M. Ozcan, personal communication, 2011).

[43] New Ottomanism is a concept that emphasizes Turkey's assertive diplomacy within the limits of the Ottoman Empire with which it shares common identity, culture and values that imply it to intervene for regional stability and the increase of mutual interest.

[44] In addition, although the AKP was associated with Islam, its policies are different from Islam. Its leaders are conservatives and practicing Muslims but on the contrary to former Islamist parties, the AKP doesn't refer to Islam in the foreign policy formulation. Islam is reinvested as a cultural dimension of the Turkish identity and conciliated with its Western character which constitutes a considerable potential in Turkey's policy in the Middle East.

[45] Regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, Turkey condemned the double-standard policy adopted by the international community towards the Weapons of Massive Destruction question in the Middle East and called for a just policy that refuses the possession of nuclear weapons by any regional country. The same position was adopted in the Palestinian issue after the Gaza war and in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara incidents where the Israeli policies where openly criticized by the AKP in international instances.

[46] The development of a new mission for Turkey as a central country responsible for the regional stability through the deployment of a proactive policy towards crises illustrates a pragmatic character that was intermingled with a nationalist and Islamic fervor in Mavi Marmara incidents where Turkish citizens affiliated to an Islamic civil organization were killed on their way for saving Palestinians.

[47] Most of these soft power tools consist of diplomacy on both the political and public levels, economic interdependence and cooperation on the regional level.

[48] The military power is decreasing and therefore it tries to develop better relations with the AKP especially in light of the formulation of a new constitution for the Turkish Republic in which the army is looking forward having more rights (E. Mahcupyan, personal communication, 2011).

[49] By referring to the AKP as the sole decision-maker, it is meant to underline that it is the party's ideology and stance that dominates the decision-making process. The same applies to the policy-making although other actors like public opinion, businessmen and some think tanks influence this process, since the weight of conservative civil societies including humanitarian and charity organizations as well as businessmen associations support the AKP policy in light of the economic prosperity, the political openness and the increase of public freedom on the domestic level.

[50] This stance was adopted by the army as a result of the alleviation of the security threats on the national level especially after the capture of Ocalan. Besides, in light of the weakening of the military position after the adoption of the EU reforms and the successive cases that condemned some military officers for their involvement in a planed coup d'état against the AKP, the military tries to avoid confrontation with the ruling party while aiming to be accorded more competencies in the new constitution. By being more concerned with the national security on the domestic level, the military may adopt a harder stance once the emergence of a potential threat on the external level would shake the state's national integrity and security.

[51] Different members in the AKP underlines the necessity to keep the Turkish-Israeli relations at a normal level without having a specific privilege or priority in the Turkish regional policy as in 1996 where a strategic alliance took place.

[52] Turkey has an active and visible role as mentioned before in regional and international organizations by being responsible towards its neighbors as well as the different countries by raising their cases of suffering and injustice in these multilateral instances. This policy is not only followed by state officials but also is complemented by many civil societies actors in Turkey which are involved in providing material help and support for needy countries and communities around the world. Therefore, this active policy is a direct and concrete expression of the rhythmic policy in terms of developing a visible and outreaching diplomacy on the international level which empowers Turkey as a global actor.

[53] The Turkish activism on the external is manifested by a proactive and multidimensional policy adopted towards the different countries around the World where Turkey acts as a global power that intervenes in the different international issues through a wide array of actors that extends from the government to NGOs. However, according to Mr.Davutoglu's vision, the Turkish regional policy is mainly addressing the countries that lie in the geographical area that coincides with the borders of the Ottoman Empire except for Iran, Morrocco and Mauritania (K. Balci, personal communication, 2011).

[54] This transnational look refers to the adoption of an inclusive approach that is not only confined to the national concerns but also entails those expressed by the neighboring countries in a way where Turkey adopts a stance that underlines a sense of collectivity in formulating its regional policy. Hence, it emphasizes the abandon of the nationalist discourse especially towards Arab countries which led to an ideological transformation that alleviated mutual prejudices between both sides. The Islamic character of

the AKP helped in the development of this transnational dimension in the Turkish policy on the regional level in general and among Arab countries in particular.

[55] The region destiny is a term that is used by M. Davutoglu in his book and his public speeches in reference to the Turkish foreign policy potential in developing a preventive dynamic that aims to limit the regional insecurities and instabilities by intervening at the earliest stages of crises instead of being a reactive policy that seeks remedies to regional unrests. Here the word regional destiny refers to the extent to which the Turkish foreign policy manifests an outward activism that assigns considerable importance to the whole developments that occur in Turkey's neighborhood which implies the necessity to intervene to prevent the escalation of the regional problems into serious crises. Therefore, the regional management in terms of preventing crises and solving problems at their earliest stages in the neighboring regions is referred to as "the regional common destiny" since any problem that would start in any country in the region would have a spillover effect on the others which underlines the notion of commonality that not only includes sharing problems' effects but also their prevention through the regional cooperation mechanisms.

[56] An economic forum was hosted in Turkey and gathered Central Asian and Arab countries that held a multilateral discussion about the construction of oil pipelines that would pass from these countries to Turkey in order to be sold to Europe. Here the idea of mediation is crystallized in a different dimension where Turkey doesn't only promote reconciliation between belligerent countries but also acts as a central hub for energy transfer across regions.

[57] According to this respondent who is an MP and member in the AK party committee of foreign affairs, if people can cross borders easily, trade, tourism and common policies would be better and easily developed and formulated between Turkey and Arab countries (O. Turkone, personal communication, 2011).

[58] The Turkish exports tripled between 2000-2009 in the Middle East especially towards Lebanon and Northern Iraq where in the latter the Turkish products constituted 80% of the goods in the local market.

[59] The Turkish exports to the Middle East went from 9% to 18% from 2002 to 2009 and hence represent 20% of the Turkish trade relations.

[60] Turkey perceives itself as a center that creates circles around it; hence, Turkey focuses on the Middle East as the source of its power in other regions like Europe, Africa, Caucasus and Balkans where Turkey tries to create a securitized energy corridor (A. Karabat, personal communication, 2011).

[61] A clear example of managing regional problem is Iraq for which Turkey utilized its presence in international institutions in order to plead for the preservation of the Iraqi unity and stability. Besides, it initiated the Iraq Neighboring Countries Process in 2003 that was enlarged afterwards to entail the P5, the G8, the Arab League, the OIC, the UN and the European Commission in order to bring together the ministers of Iraq and its neighboring countries for consultations, helped the Sunni to integrate the Iraqi elections in 2005 and enabled the different belligerent parties to meet and talk together (Aras and Akpinar, 2010).

[62] The Zero problems with neighbors principle conceived by the Turkish foreign policy as an ultimate vision seems for some respondents to be violated by the Turkish leadership attitude in the region towards Israel where an open confrontation after the war on Gaza and the Mavi Marmara incidents had many negative drawbacks on the Turkish policy by rendering too idealistic to cope with the regional reality.

[63] According to an influential respondent in the MFA, Turkey is against the adoption of an ethnic or sectarian policy in the region. However, in Iraq and in response to the Iranian support to Shiite politicians in the parliamentary elections, Turkey supported the Sunni political leaders while inciting them to stop their abstentionist policy and take part into the political life in Iraq.

[64] The social relations are materialized by the creation of a series of a cultural center "Yunus Emre" in different countries and regions surrounding Turkey. Besides, Turkey highlights the humanitarian dimension in its regional policy towards Arab and African countries through the mobilization of some economic institutions and conservative civil society organizations.

[65] Here a respondent from the MFA compared the Turkish role in conciliating between different parties through mediation to the role of a commonwealth power that is keen to preserve its ties and influences with the old colonies. Some illustrative cases for this mediation in addition to the Turkish role in facilitating the Israeli-Syrian talks is the facilitation between Arab countries and Iran where Turkey gathered the Iraqi neighbors for discussing possible solutions for containing the Iraqi instability as well as between Islamic countries like the ECO Summit that took place at the end of 2010 in Istanbul between Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asian countries where Turkey brought together Iran and Pakistan after the occurrence of a mosque blast in Iran where Afghanistan was accused of being reluctant in fighting al Qaeda members (Aljazeera, 2011).

[66] Here the notion of regional integration as advocated by M. Davutoglu didn't have a precise definition and seemed instead as a term that underlines the potential of creating better relations on different levels without having a particular final vision to be attained or achieved. Accordingly, some academic respondents highlighted that the main goal of the Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East is to integrate this region's countries into the world economy through the development of an economic interdependence between these different countries and Turkey that has already achieved a high ranking position in terms of economic development by being among the 20 largest economies in the world.

[67] With the Levant states like Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, Turkey developed an economic integration framework for cooperation by the conclusion of a quadrilateral free trade agreement. Besides, the Iraq's neighborhood initiative on the foreign and the interior ministries' level was promoted as an additional leverage for regional management (M. Altunisik, personal communication, 2011).

[68] The Adana protocol is a bilateral agreement signed between Turkey and Syria where Syria renounced to provide any help or assistance to the Kurdish militants from the PKK and declared its engagement with Turkey in fighting its elements by establishing a security system on the borders and a direct contact between the high level security authorities from both sides.

[69] Erbakan's policy was badly received by Arab countries which was manifested by his visit to Egypt and Libya where the leaders of both regimes in 1996 criticized Turkey especially in the former for Erbakan's relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and its advocacy for according them more rights in Egypt.

[70] According to a Turkish ambassador who served in Syria in the 1990's, the Syrian-Turkish conflict over the Euphrates' water basin constituted a persistent barrier between Turkey and different Arab countries that took side with Syria in its water conflict with Turkey.

[71] The Sunnite factor is considered by many academic writings in Turkey as an element that favored the rapprochement between Turkey and several Arab countries especially on the Public level. Different

academicians didn't hesitate to highlight the Iranian danger in terms of dominating the region through the so called the Shiite Crescent by supporting Shiite elements in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Gulf Countries, Iraq and Lebanon and also because of its nuclear program. Besides, in spite of the fact that the official level in Turkey tries to avoid any reference to a sectarian or an ethnic tendency in its policies, some journalists emphasize the Sunni character of the Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East especially towards Syria and Iraq where the Sunni are alienated from power and where Shiite and Alevi dominate the political system (Hurriyet, 2011). Besides, according to a prominent Turkish journalist, many Arab countries fear the Iranian threat and need Turkey to counterbalance it especially in light of its development of a nuclear program.

[72] Turkey continues its water provision to Syria according to the terms of the protocol that was signed with Syria in 1987 according to which Turkey provides an amount of 500 m/s to Syria. In 2009, Turkey signed 4 memorandums of Understanding with Syria for the construction of a joint dam "the Friendship Dam" on the Orontes River, the establishment of a pumping station in Syria and for the efficient utilization of water resources as well as the remediation of water quality. Besides, there is "Al Asi Dam project" that consists of a common initiative undertaken by both sides for a better management of water resources.

[73] The Syrian poor economic performance and the leadership change after the death of Al Assad father pushed for the necessity to start reforms in Syria in order to strengthen the regime credibility that was weakened in light of the emerging domestic demands that call for a more democratization. In addition to the regime's fragility after Al Assad death, Al Hariri's assassination was another conjuncture that increased the international community pressure on Syria to change not only its national policy but also its regional one in order to end its isolation. Therefore, Turkey by taking the initiative for a rapprochement with Syria in 2000, the existing circumstances at that time allowed for the betterment of their bilateral relations and the decrease of the Syrian isolation especially on the regional level. Accordingly, Syria started to have intense economic relations with Turkey and negotiated some projects for gas exportation to Europe through Turkey in addition to launching indirect talks with Israel.

[74] The different paradigm refers to the change that occurred in the elite's mental map towards the Kurdish issue. Throughout long decades, the ruling elite in Turkey considered the Kurdish factor as a main threat to the national security of the state and deployed repression and covert missions in countering the Kurdish activists. However, this perception has changed especially after the capture of the PKK leader and the adoption of the liberalizing reforms imposed by the EU. The AKP has proceeded to a democratic openness towards Kurds where more cultural rights and freedom of expression were accorded to them. By the improvement of the democratic conditions in Turkey where the civil-military relations where reconfigured in accordance with the liberal democracy where the supremacy is for the people's choice incarnated by the rule of the government, the end of the Kurdish threat as well as the Syrian support to their operations against Turkey, the need for a strategic alignment didn't have a reason to exist anymore. This Israeli-Turkish alliance was a reason for the superficial and confrontational relations between Syria and Turkey due to the fact that parts of the former's lands were and are still occupied by Israel. On the other hand, the Turkish Israeli relations underlined the western orientation of the Turkish establishment which contradicts with the Syrian rejectionist policy in the region.

[75] In 2010, Syria arrested 20 people who were convicted of being involved in suicide-bombing operations that attacked synagogues and HSBC bank in Istanbul and delivered them to Turkey.

[76] The GAP project is an initiative that dates back from the 1980's and aims for the elimination of development inequalities between the different regions in Turkey. GAP is an acronym that stands for "Guneydogu Anadolu Projesi" in Turkish which means the South Eastern Anatolian project that was launched for 9 cities located on the Tigris and Euphrates basins in South Eastern Turkey in order to increase their production and employment capabilities as well as enhancing their economic and social conditions through the creation of 22 dams and 19 power plants. This project is mainly based on the utilization of the Tigris and Euphrates water for generating electricity and improving irrigation, agriculture as well as the infrastructure of the rural areas in the South Eastern region. The Turkish needs for development were confronted by a Syrian and an Iraqi demand for more water for irrigating agricultural lands that constitute the main source of revenue for both countries which created tensions between Turkey from one side and Syria and Iraq from the other side.

[77] Most of these mechanisms consist of the Joint Economic Commission, the Industry Follow-up Committee, the Business Council and the Joint Commission for Land Transportation.

[78] Both countries signed a treaty of visa release in November 2009.

[79] The president of the Chamber of commerce in Gaziantep underlined the importance of the Turkish openness towards Syria since it would allow Turkey to bridge the gap between the Arab free trade zone and the EU custom union.

[80] Most of the respondents referred to the Turkish mediation as a kind of facilitation that Turkey provides for belligerent countries in terms of conciliating between them and inciting them to talk together in order to solve their problems through peaceful means. By limiting its policies into defined areas of interests like economy, political rapprochement and dialogue as well as mediation in the neighborhood, Turkey would be able to act as an acceptable and welcomed regional power. However, if these zones of interest turn into some extended ambitions of influence and control over the region, Turkey might be trapped into a security dilemma in the Middle East since any attempt of leadership or ideological, anti western or Islamic role would be opposed by many Arab countries that are keen to preserve their ties with global powers. Accordingly, for the mediation role if it would turn from a facilitation platform to an anti-western arena, Turkey won't be able to pursue its policy due to the objection that would raise not only from some regional countries especially the Gulf ones but also the US (Kardas, 2010).

[81] The respondent mentioned this factor as an incentive that would motivate the European Union to admit Turkey as a member. Besides, he added that this factor could also be considered as an asset that would enable Turkey to be a self-sufficient power on the international and regional levels and that is no more in need for being a member in the EU.

[82] The bargaining power according to different scholars in Turkey refers to the Turkish ability to overcome the different obstacles that impede its accession to the EU through the development of strong ties with Arab countries. By multiplying its economic relations with the Middle East, Turkey would be managing different issues related to the European security like the migration issue, underdevelopment and authoritarianism in Arab countries as well as securitizing the energy corridor since Turkey is a central hub in transporting the natural resources from the East notably Arab countries to Europe and the west. The Turkish rapprochement with Arab countries deals with each of these issues since Turkey for many Arab countries is considered as role model state especially in light of the ties it develops on the public level through official and social actors who have direct contact with people in the different surrounding countries. On the other hand,

Turkey has multiplied its cultural and economic agreements with different countries in the neighborhood in various fields which contributes to the increase of the development level in the Middle East which would decrease the illegal migration and terrorist threats that emanate from the region (Demir, 2010; Aydin and Acikmese, 2007 and Evin, 2003).

[83] According to the notion of regional responsibility coined by M. Davutoglu, Turkey aims to achieve stability and peace in the region through the deployment of the aforementioned principles of the Turkish foreign policy. Among these principles figures the establishment of strong neighboring ties in the regions that surround Turkey in order to diffuse the different threats that may harm its security. By developing better relations with Syria, Turkey would be able to reduce the regional tension that is due to the Syrian isolation from the international community and ties with Iran. Hence, not only would Turkey reduce the probability of a Syrian support to the PKK but also by having good relations with Syria, Turkey would be able to enhance the former's relations with the international community and reduce the Iranian influence on its leadership. As a result, by having good neighboring relations with the different countries and maintaining dialogue with them regardless their religious affinities or ethnicities, Turkey would take part into the preservation of the power balance in the region. According to Hurriyet, many Arab countries are afraid of the Iranian nuclear program and the probability of its development into a nuclear weapon that would threat the whole region in particular Gulf countries, Egypt and Jordan which make them support a Turkish balancing role versus Iran. On the other hand, the US has a declining role in Iraq and needs to control the nuclear program which was ensured through the installation of the anti-missiles shield on the Turkish territories after the NATO summit in Lisbon that was held in late 2010. Therefore, by having a rapprochement with Syria from one side and developing a cautious policy towards Iran by accepting the NATO summit decision, Turkey would balance the perceived Iranian threat in order to prevent a Sunni-Shiite clash which the Turkish leadership tried to avoid the most (Hurriyet, 2011).

[84] As mentioned before, Turkey by refusing the sectarian policies tries to prevent the occurrence of a Sunni-Shiite clash in the region by pursuing an active and dynamic diplomacy through talks and mediation. Iran by being perceived as a threat by the US, Israel and some Arab countries, may not be perceived the same by Turkey but this doesn't deny the fact that Iran, for many analysts and academicians in Turkey, is a potential threat for the whole region including Turkey, through its persistent support to Shiite elements in the Middle East and its nuclear program. Therefore, in order to maintain the regional balance, Turkey is keen to preserve its ties with Iran, Syria as well as all the neighboring countries. Accordingly, here the respondent emphasizes the priority of common interests between Turkey, Iran and Syria in spite of some differences between them especially on the sectarian policy deployed by the Iranian regime in Iraq in terms of supporting Shiite factions which contradicts with the Turkish stance that refuses to develop cooperation and ties based on ethnic or sectarian relations.

[85] The Syrian isolation on the international scene and the worsening of its relations with the US since 1981 was due to its relations with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, its interference in Lebanon, its opposition to the Iraqi war and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US-Syrian tensions culminated by the rise of Al intifada in 2000, the assassination of Al Hariri and the US invasion of Iraq and hence increased the Syrian political isolation and the economic restrictions imposed on it (Aljazeera, 2011).

[86] The other factors are related to the decrease of the sectarian violence in Iraq as well as the limitation of the Syrian influence in Lebanon especially in light of the US, EU and Saudi weakness in countering the Syrian influence in Lebanon that were underlined in the Doha agreement concluded in 2008.

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