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STRATEGIC DEPTH IN SYRIA – FROM THE BEGINNING TO RUSSIAN INTERVENTION

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The article was prepared before the SU-24 incident that sharpened the bilateral relations between Russia and Turkey. Still, it's intention of the author to publish it with a hope to contribute to restore a constructive dialogue between two countries.

In 2002, AKP government came to power, multidimensional and active foreign policy has been their vision. AKP government took politically and economically unstable country that's why first years of AKP period, TFP was not active as they assumed. Ahmet Davutoğlu can be considered as an architect of new Turkish foreign policy under AKP period. Until he became MFA he worked as an advisor of Prime Minister Erdoğan, then Davutoğlu was appointed to Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009.¹ He is academician who worked in different universities in both Turkey and foreign countries. His book "Strategic Depth" can be considered as a summary of vision of new Turkish foreign policy. Most of scholars claim that Ahmet Davutoğlu and his political paradigms would have been completely new and fresh area in Turkish foreign policy. On the other hand, through the years, Turkish foreign policy has been criticized with "shifting" or unreal policies. "Criticism towards Turkey about axis shifting from West to East have been used as pressure on Turkey" (Bağcı and Erdoğan, 2010). When Arab Spring was started and especially after Syrian crisis, criticism majored on Turkish foreign policy because of shifting paradigm. So, through this paper, there will be short summary of Strategic Depth and then unique characteristics of Syrian civil war, Turkish foreign policy in Syria before and after the Arab Spring, emergence of new actors and Russian intervention and its implications.

From Theory to Practice of Strategic Depth

As Davutoğlu mentioned in the introduction part of book, Turkish Foreign policy and power parameters need to be revisited. For him, there are some tools which are must for Turkey to use to achieve Turkey's real power capability in dynamic international system. Firstly, as a third type of societies, Turkey should understand and transform dynamic interpretation of her power parameters. In other words, in order to have transition of Turkey from chaos to cosmos can be only provided by her dynamic parameters. Secondly, depends on the dynamic interpretation, Turkey should have multidimensional foreign policy. Turkey's constant and potential parameters can turn into kinetic and dynamic parameters by only multidimensional foreign policy formulation.

Ahmet Davutoğlu continues that two methods can be only understood and realized by historical assets and geographical depth in geography of Turkey because history and geography make Turkey unique. "The analysis of an international relations sphere without penetrating its historical depth is similar to a psychological analysis ignoring the person's memory records"

¹ Currently – the Leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Prime Minister of Turkey – Ed. note

(Davutoğlu 2001). In his book, Davutoğlu defined Turkey as neither history maker nor outcome of existing system. Turkey is unique country as an outcome of Ottoman Empire. As an inheritor of Ottoman Empire, Turkey was the monoreligious country with multiethnic population. While religious leadership and imperialism replaced by nationality based transformation when Turkey was founded. These domestic changings reflected as a Westernization in foreign policy. Not only Turkey's domestic sphere but also global scale events such as soviet aggression and cold war made Turkey a part of the Western block. In other words, Davutoğlu claim that in his book, Turkey had to leave its influential zones which inherited from Ottoman Empire. He call this situation of Turkey “break off from historical continuity” and he further that this break off caused instabilities in domestic policy of Turkey.(2001). Although Turkey had this unnatural transformation, he notes that on the historical assets of Ottoman Empire can still potential assets for Turkey.

Geographical depth of Turkey is second vital element of new Turkish Foreign Policy in dynamic international relations. According to Davutoğlu, geography is stable power parameter when it combines with politics which is potential power parameter, they both compose geopolitics. “Geopolitics” as a term and a body of knowledge was introduced to Turkey for the first time during World War II in a series of articles published in the newspapers (Bilgin 2007). That's why geopolitics as a potential power assessment cannot deal with static behavior choice. Davutoğlu links Turkey's historical assets with her geographical depth, Turkey lies at the crossroads of many geopolitical dynamic areas from her historical inheritance. In other words, Turkey's geopolitical depth based on her identity which basicly Turkish, Ottoman and Islam (Bilgiç and Bilgin 2011). In light of these, Davutoğlu explain three major “regional areas of influence” which are 1) near land basin, the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus; 2) near maritime basin, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf and the Caspian; 3) and near continental basin, Europe, the Northern Africa, the Southern Asia, the Middle and Eastern Asia (2001). In the near land basin, the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus, Turkey ought to increase its cultural, economic and political power by transitivity and interdependency in these regions. That's why regional cooperation and cultural integration are necessary to strengthen Turkey's power in the near land basin. Davutoğlu suggests that Turkey's influence power in the near land basin is guarantee of politics in near maritime basin and near continental basin.

Within this theoretical and practical framework of Strategic Depth, Davutoğlu conclude that Turkey with her unique history and geographic position, it requires comprehensive and complex foreign policy (Bağcı and Sinkaya 2006). Also, he furthers that new Turkish foreign policy should meet requirements of time and place dimensions. As Davutoğlu suggests that Turkey needs to establish a widespread network of interrelations, which include maximum diversity with sufficient co-operational depth and harmony (2001). In other words, Turkey should have highly complex and effective foreign policy making to transform and manage chaos to cosmos. Syrian crisis in Arab Spring would be the first and toughest test for Davutoğlu.

Syrian Crisis – The Most Chaotic Case of Arab Spring

Just three years ago since Arab Spring started with Muhammed Bauzazi burned himself named ordinary uprising in Tunisia however it was more than that. It was only kind of trigger of upcoming events (Açıklan and Bölücek 2014). Arab Spring was result of demand for democracy, human rights and economic justice. As same as other Arab Spring countries, Syria has been ruled by Assad family for a long time. From Hafız Assad, Syrian people lived under oppressive regime. Although there are many similarities between Syria and other Arab Spring countries, uprisings in Syria surprised. There are three important reasons why Syrian people's uprising can be considered as surprise. Firstly, actually no one really expected to Bashar Al Assad as president after his father however when his older brother was death in car accident, Bashar Al Assad was called from Damascus. The new era of Bashar Al Assad expected to be "Damascus Spring" because he has been known as reformer in his country(Gelvin 2013). Secondly, in the beginning of Arab Spring in Tunisia, even Bashar Al Assad did not expect uprisings would spill over to his country because young population which has been the backbone of uprisings did not become popular in Syria in first times(Gelvin 2013). Thirdly, after Hama Massacre as a regime reaction to uprisings in 1982, no one really expected any rebellion movement. So, unpredictability is also part of chaotic nature of Syrian crisis. Also, the analyzing of Syrian crisis with chaos theory will highlight Davutoğlu's categorization of countries in the Strategic Depth, which imply Turkey should be the center state who can transform chaos to cosmos.

In Syrian case, two important features of Syria should be prioritized. There have been different and independent elements in the system. Although imprisonment of group of children triggered to civil war, there are numerous and effective interests groups which can be categorized religiously, ethnically and politically. Basicly, Syria is kind of heterogeneous country in terms of religious. Despite Assad family and elites which are %11 of population belong to Alawites, %75 of Syrian people are Sunni and also there are Christianity minorities too. Also, ethnically Syria has been the homeland of Kurds, Turks, ethnic Armenians, Arabs and Circassians. So, ethnic and religious breakdowns are just one part of Syria's complexity (Fisher 2013). This diversity of ethnic and minority groups in Syria turned a nightmare because not only local groups but also some other regional and foreign interest groups intervened conflicts in Syria. Also, this ethnic and religious diversity composed political groups. In Northeast Syria, there is de facto Kurdish Autonomy which also gained power after Syrian army retreat from this area. Free Syrian Army is the forces group which emerged from the street protests and former Syrian army members, there are also some fractions within the itself. Interestingly, majority of Free Syrian Army composed from Sunni population of Syria. Jabhat Al Nusra is a radical Islamic force that has pledged allegiance to al Qaeda, composed from militant Muslims from around the world they also received money and weapons from supporters, and become the rebels' most effective fighting force. They aim to impose Sharia law in areas they occupied.

There are also two different political opposition bodies in Syrian case which are Syrian National Council and National Coordination Council. Syrian National Council is based in Istanbul, they emerged as the main political opposition to Assad and searching for international recognition as the legitimate representative of the uprising, despite rifts with other Syrian factions. On the contrary, National Coordination Council is kind of opposition of Syrian National Council. There are main differences between SNC and NCC. Members of the National Coordination Body are committed to three principles: "No" to foreign military intervention, "No" to religious and sectarian instigation, and "No" to violence and the militarization of the

revolution(Carnegie, 2012). Diversity of opposition groups make nature of Syrian civil war more chaotic, these groups have different independent interests while they had same and interdependent interests.

Secondly, like in the starting point of Arab Spring which was burned himself of Muhammed Bauzazi. Damascus demonstration did not make so much noise too in the beginning. However a few days later a group of children aged between 10-15 were prisoned because of they wrote “Down with the nizam” on the wall which used in Egypt revolution. Their families tried to take their children and took out people to streets, during protests opening a fire caused to casualties. As expected but also unexpected by government, the next day funerals became the scene of 20,000 protesters. Next days, protests were started in city of Bania and it spread almost all cities of Syria. So, children in a small city of Daraa were never expected to be reason of a huge civil war. Thus, Syrian’s multilayered social and political structure is the main reason behind how small protests in Syria turned into chaos. In such a diverse and complex social strata, a sparkle from the Daraa would be enough to fire whole country. The importance of Syria for Turkey is unquestioned that’s why Turkish foreign policy would have been influential in Syrian crisis. Next part will be about Turkish foreign policy in Syria since AKP government came to power until today.

Turkey’s Foreign Policy in Arab Spring

Although Turkey’s foreign policy has been both criticized and praised, it is also important to understand how Turkish foreign policy changed in Middle East after Davutoğlu until Arab Spring. It was direct implications of Davutoğlu’s Strategic Depth book and its framework “It would be a pivotal state with global significance. Turkey would become not only Europe and North America’s bridge to the Middle East, but also the world’s civilizational conduit to the Muslim East”(Waldman 2011). Turkey started to pursuit more proactive foreign policy in the region. Turkey became popular within Arab countries, regionally and internationally. Turkey has signed numerous political initiatives and cultural agreements with its Arab neighbors, has enhanced its role in the Organization of Islamic Conference and has joined the Arab League as an observer(Ennis and Momani 2013). Turkey’s proactivity can be considered result of Davutoğlu and his assumptions. Especially, Turkey had had good relationship with Syria as one of the longest border country of Turkey. Both countries initiated cooperations and agreements in almost all level of cooperation. Military-Education Cooperation treaty was signed in June 2002. Also, they signed bilateral Free Trade Agreement together. Also, Turkey and Syria had agreement to build common dam on Asi River issue which was totally problematic for a long time. “In conclusion there have been agreements upon the developments of banking service, tourism, highways, energy, transportation, custom trade and construction field”(Özer 2007). Even the year of 2011 two countries during the last meeting, in the Northem Syrian city of Aleppo, the two countries’ leaders were inaugurating the “friendship dam,” straddling the

Syria-Turkey border, to be built jointly(Ayman 2013). Even both countries decided to organise common council of ministers.

When Arab Spring started in Tunisia and spill over in other countries of the region Turkish government rhetorically supported anti-regime groups but practically designed different policies to different regimes. During this time, Turkey showed different attitudes towards each regime according to her interests (Ennis and Momani 2013). According to the West, thanks to successful Turkey's economic and political performance in last ten year make her as a model country to Arab countries. We can say that Arab Spring enhanced Turkey's role model in the beginning. "The Arab Spring in particular has vaulted Turkey into a key regional role"(Paul and Seyrek, 2011). AKP government and its moderate Islam model became much more desirable for people in those countries who demand more freedom and human right. Until Tunisian protests spread to Syria who has the longest border with Turkey. The all situation changed for Turkey. "The case of Syria is perhaps the most difficult one for Turkey, given the considerable investment of the AKP government in building good relations with Bashar al-Assad over the past decade"(Dalacaura 2012).

Historical and political ties of Turkey with Syria make unique and different for Turkey. According to Prof. Bağcı, Turkey had three main national interests in Syria 1)to prevent of establishing any Kurdish government in Northern Syria 2)to control radical Islamists group in Syria 3)to have a new government in Syria which can be controlled by Turkey.(<http://aybekgazete.com/yazarlar/prof-dr-huseyin-bagci/suriyeye-mudahale-kararinda-akil-mi-vicdanmi-daha-agir-basiyor/61/>). So, Turkey's attitude mainly shaped by this three national interest in Syria. "The Turkish government wanted to prevent an environment that would lead to the dissolution of the Syrian state that would trigger ethnic and sectarian conflict and its spillover effects to Turkey"(Ayman 2013). It can be considered the main reason why Turkey has been vigilant in case of Syria. So, from the beginning until now, within two years, Turkish foreign policy in Syria has experienced ups and downs in Syria. As Davutoğlu mentioned in his book, can Turkey managed to be transformed from chaos to cosmos? or Will Syrian uprisings become vicious circle of Turkish foreign policy? In next part, there will be Turkish Foreign policy in Syria choronologically since beginning of protests until today.

From March 2011 Until 2014

In March 2011 when Syrian uprisings started Turkey- Syria relations reached peak level everyone knows that Syria would not be same as other Arab Spring countries for Turkey. Paralleling to Strategic Depth assumptions and new era in TFP, since 2005 Erdoğan demanded political and economic reforms from Bassar Asad and suggested to have more better relations with opposition groups in Syria. 2005 was the first time Erdoğan used "reform" word to Bassar Asad.(Davutoğlu 2011; interview-09.12.2011). However, Syria had been the slow on reform

making. In the wake of the Arab Spring in February 2011, Erdoğan once more tried to convince him to make reforms as soon as possible. One month later in March 2011, protests against government spread to all regions of Syria. In April 2011, Davutoğlu visited Syria and he had three suggestions three which were abolishment of state of emergency, giving national identity to Kurdish population and prevent any military intervention to protests. Even Turkey sent a task of speech for Assad based on his request. Actually, Davutoğlu was not so optimistic about Assad's promises. In other words, failure of making reforms was not surprise for Turkey. However, Erdoğan as a close friend of Bassar Al Assad, announced that he would talk with Assad and counseled implementation of social, economic, and political reforms, while offering Turkish help to achieve the changes. "Erdoğan hoped that his close friendship could be effective in the regional change" (Taşpınar 2012). Unfortunately, Erdoğan's demand for reforms from Bassar Al Assad in Syria left unanswered. "Ankara realized that the Syrian government was unwilling to resolve the problems through reforms and would continue to use force against its citizens." (Aras 2009).

November 2011 was remarkable because, Erdoğan changed his rhetoric very sharply and declared clearly against Assad regime in Syria. Erdoğan declared that "Without spilling any more blood, without causing any more injustice, for the sake of peace for the people, the country and the region, finally step down" (Reuters 2011). Not rhetorically, but also practically Turkey started to support opposition group in Syria and build up refugee camps in border cities. In 29 th April 2011, the first group of refugee which is 252 Syrian citizens entered the Turkish border. Although Davutoğlu officially said that they still support reform period in Syria, in same month opposition groups which consisted from different groups such as Kurds, Muslim Brotherhood and young Syrian people gathered in Antalya (Davutoğlu, TRT Mayıs 2011;). In June, many of army officers started to escape and formed "Free Syrian Army". In August 2011 when was the last time, Davutoğlu visited Damascus, after six hours meeting, they agreed fourteen point reform road map which is about reform schedule and action plan of Syrian government. However, the news from Syria and events Hama were completely disappointed for Turkey. However, Turkey's optimism would be ended, once more Syria made upset about the reforms even they increased the level of violence against Syrian people.

After August 13, Turkey and Syria demerged each other. It was a kind of turning point for Turkey, Turkey started to search support from United Nations, NATO and of course United States. UNSC meeting in October 2011 couldn't draft any imposing decisions due to Russia and China veto. In February 2012, after the most bloody event was happened in Hama almost 500 people were killed. Next day, UNSC gathered for the second time with two vetos but UNSC announced that they would agree on Arab League' decisions about Syria. So, Turkish foreign policy towards Syrian crisis changed its face during this period.

Between March 2011 and May 2012, Turkey's overall Syrian policy can be separated into 3 periods: a) pressure on the Bashar al-Assad government for constitutional reform b) attempts at unifying dissident groups under a single roof and promoting international sanctions c) a return to efforts towards a UN-based solution (the Annan Plan) (Ertuğrul 2012).

Since June 2012, Turkey and Syria relations got worst. Next month Turkish fighter jet was shot down by Syrian air forces. As expected, Turkey requested consultations under article 4 of NATO's founding Washington Treaty. It was important to internationalize of Syrian crisis, it means that Syrian problem became directly related with Turkish security and sovereignty rights which is member of NATO. Since June 2012 until May 2013 when Reyhanlı bombing was happened. Turkey's insisting to US or NATO intervention to Syria became the priority of Turkey's agenda. Turkish officials said that Syrian intelligence service is responsible of Reyhanlı bombing. Even Davutoğlu blamed the world's inaction on the Syrian conflict for the "barbarian act of terrorism" that claimed dozens of lives near the border. Then, Turkey tried to manipulate the situation about chemical weapons which was redline of Obama administration. Davutoğlu obviously said that "We call on the international community in this situation where the red line was crossed long ago to intervene as soon as possible". However, Geneva meetings did not give any concrete results for anyone. "Although meeting is vital between Assad regime and opposition groups, nobody really expect any result from them". (Bağcı, http://tr.sputniknews.com/turkish.ruvr.ru/2014_01_24/Suriye-krizinden-yeni-bir-Versailles-doguyor/)

Emergence of New Actors in Syria: DAESH and YPG/PYD

Actually, because of security concerns and economical ties with Syria makes it as a unique that's why Turkey wanted to be more active. Turkey faced new actors in Syria; DAESH, YPG/PYD and more importantly Russia. There are new actors in Syria as an opposition groups. DAESH and YPG/PYD became main actor in terms of local conflicts and ideological and ethnical differences. DAESH (ISIS) also was established in 2003 in Iraq. This terrorist group aims to establish caliphate without geographical limits. After beginning of civil war in Syria, DEASH expanded its territory and today terrorist organization consider city of Raqqa as their capital city (Laub and Masters, 2015). They were formerly part of Al-Qaeda however they declared their autonomy from Al-Qaeda. Also, compare to other jihadist groups, DAESH has completely new characteristics of a terrorist organization. DAESH has also active foreign jihadist from all over the world, they use social media tools effectively, have oil produce money almost cost 500 billion US Dollar per year with trained military forces. "ISIS, on the other hand, boasts some 30,000 fighters, holds territory in both Iraq and Syria, maintains extensive military capabilities, controls lines of communication, commands infrastructure, funds itself, and engages in sophisticated military operations. If ISIS is purely and simply anything, it is a pseudo-state led by a conventional army" (Cronin, 2015).

Although PYD was established in 2003 as a political organization and YPG (since 2004) which is military power of PYD, as well as DAESH they involved conflict zones since 2011 actively. In June 2012 YPG, began building up checkpoints in northern Syria, then large parts of Ayn al-Arab (Kobane), Afrin, Amuda, and al-Malikiyah in northern Syria fell in rapid succession to the Kurds after limited conflicts against regime.

In other words, Assad power doesn't fight against only one group but also ethnically and ideologically different groups fight each other. Their emergence completely changed the fate of country. International Coalition against DAESH was set up in 2014 and Turkey joined this coalition in the end of July 2015. On the other hand, YPG and PYD as an actor in Syria is much more complicated because YPG/PYD are considered as another branch of PKK that Turkey has been suffered its terrorist attacks in last 20 years. They declared autonomy in northern Syria based on Ayn al-Arab(Kobane) and they have been fighting against DAESH. There is no doubt, leading with USA also other coalition countries directly support YPG/PYD. Although Turkey joined the airstrike international coalition against DAESH, officially announced that Turkey see YPG/PYD as a terrorist organization. President Erdoğan in his speech in 24th of September 2015 clearly states that “ US declaration made me disappointed, we see YPG/PYD as a terrorist organization” (Liderlerden namaz çıkışı bayram mesajları,2015). Furthermore, President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu officially says that Turkey would never accept any Kurdish state next to its border.

Russia in Syria: Is It End of Game or Just “Beginning”?

We think it is an enormous mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian government and its armed forces, who are valiantly fighting terrorism face to face (Vladimir Putin, UN General Assembly 2015).

President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin clearly stated his support to Assad in fighting against just a day before Russian's military intervention in Syria. All news from UN General Assembly was immortalized with photo of President Obama and President Putin toasting in dinner. Actually, Putin's political and military support to Assad is not new but it seems Putin was waiting the best time to intervene Syria. Whereas international coalition against DAESH was formed almost a year ago, advancement of DAESH couldn't be hindered. As mentioned in the above, due to post-jihadist characteristics of DAESH, the concrete and easy success against DAESH is impossible. As President Obama said in his speech at Andrews Air Force Base “Coalition of nations allied against the militants should understand that this is going to be a long-term campaign”. In other words, timing of Russian intervention is eloquent in three dimensions; global, regional and in the context of Turkey's relationship which are interdependent and indispensable from each other. Also, Russian intervention pushes people to ask a simple question “Is it end of Syrian war or just beginning?”

First dimension of Russian intervention should be analyzed in the context of global politics level. Actually, world was not surprised when Russia directly involved Syrian civil war in the end of September 2015 because deployment of military equipment of Russia in Syria has been continued for a long time. However, unexpected point of this intervention will be about

implications for world politics and there is no doubt implications will be controversial for a long time. We can talk about two implications in global power politics; filling of power vacuum in Middle East and new political leverages. Firstly, power vacuum in international relations basically means that absence of authority and filling by undesirable actors such as Central Asia after dissolution of USSR (Avelino and Rotmans, 2009). Since 2011, Syria has suffered from power vacuum and it led to emergence of new actors as mentioned in previous part. Until today, DAESH, PYD/YPG and Syria National Coalition filled power vacuum, however it led more violence and conflict. After intervention in Syria, Russia became sole actor who filled power vacuum. It should be remembered that it is the first time Russia using its military force outside of Russia and Russian effective regions after USSR collapse. Albeit both international coalition lead by US and Russia have shared policy in the name of “fighting against terrorism” and US has tacit support approach to Russia, the vital difference between rely on policy choice and future design for Syria. Russia stood with Assad regime against terrorism and suggest transition period with Assad, contrary to Western approach which supports moderate opposition groups and no more Assad policy. “The Russian approach is diametrically the opposite of the Western approach” (Russian military in Syria: ‘Diametrically different approach, 2015). After failure of international coalition relatively and Russian involvement, US seems more positive to transition period in Syria with Assad. So, while Russia is filling power vacuum in Syria, it showed that Russia came back global power politics and fuelled the conspiracy about the new Cold War era.

A) Russia As a Game Changer Not Only in Syria but Also in World Politics

Furthermore, Russia is not only coming back global power politics but also have chance to use Syrian card as leverage in vital issues such as Ukraine, sanctions, refugee crisis and energy. In other words, possibility of turning proxy war to any conflict engagement between coalition and Russia is actually great leverage for Russia. One by one, in Ukraine case, West has been directly oppose Russian expansionism and legalizing sanctions against Russia include expelling Russia from G8. In other words, Russian proxy war in Ukraine has been costly for Putin. However, Russia became one of the main allies of West against terrorism in Syria, so Putin put West in a contradictory situation and it make their arguments in Ukraine hypocritical. “In Ukraine and in the Middle East—in order to force the West to have to partner with Russia to “resolve” the crises it has created” (Kross and Mckew, 2015). It looks completely traumatic trap for West and especially European countries who have faced economic and refugee crisis deeply. Until now, Putin seems to be successful to his aim. “Kremlin’s latest gambit as it seeks an exit strategy in Ukraine is both bold and baffling” (Matthews, 2015).

Also, Russian involvement in Syria would led to serious consequences on refugee crisis. As mentioned EU countries now faced not only refugee crisis but also social and identity crisis. While discussions over founding values of EU have been peaked, Russian air striking would led new wave of refugees from Syria to first Turkey and then EU. According to last news from Aleppo, 100.000 people are on the way to Turkey’s border. “Raising the prospect of a new wave of refugees knocking on Europe’s door for sanctuary” (As Aleppo offensive continues fear rise over a new exodus of refugee, 19.10.2015). When President Putin clearly states that Russian soldiers will be on the ground of Syria until end, new refugee flux will be ahead to Europe.

To wit, while Russia is supporting its ally also undermine European project and take down of European leaders who hit Russian economy with sanctions.

Energy might be the most important aspect of Russian existence in Syria. There are two main issues related with Russian energy politics. Oil and gas are the essence elements of Russian economy with almost %30 of GDP and one of them is falling trend in oil prices damaged Russian economy through 2015 and probably Russia has -%3,8 at the end of the year stated by Andrey Kostin who is CEO of VTB. There is no doubt, along with sanctions after Ukraine crisis low oil prices harmed Russian economy. Only having increased oil prices would be the exit strategy of Putin from recession. Russian intervention in last day in September can be considered as an attempt to increase oil prices. It can be said that Russia was successful because same day as a reaction oil prices increased to 50 US Dollar but then it decreased to 46, however Russian economy needs at least 60 US Dollar to be recovered. “Yes, this is about Russia’s international standing, but more importantly it is also a long-term play for higher oil prices and, ultimately, a flow of oil dollars into Russia to strengthen his popularity at home” (Temerko, 2015). Second dimension of energy card is Soyuzneftegaz which signed agreement with Syrian government in 2013 to oil of Syrian cost for 25 years. Research activities of Soyuzneftegaz has been suspended because of security concerns in regions called Block 12 and Bloc 26 which are near to border of Turkey and Iraq (Shurmina and Lyrhickova, 2015). If sanctions against Iran lifted, there would be two route options to transfer oil to West which via Turkey or Iraq. For Russia, securing Iraq-Syria route would be more profitable because of escalating with Saudi for oil market such Poland and China. As expected, Russia is not going to give up its right through Soyuzneftegaz in Syria, so, Russia aims not only fighting against DAESH but also secure its energy route.

B) Russia As a New but Old Comer in Middle East

As mentioned above, Russian intervention in Syria cant be understood in only one perspective so regional dimension is also part of it. There is no doubt, global and regional dimension interdependent each other. Religion effects can be analyzed in two ways ethnic and religious sect. Ethnic diversity of Syrian population had been unique in Middle East, it might be the one of the reason behind how Syrian civil war is getting so bloody and triggered different terrorist group existence. As mentioned above especially, Kurds gained power after Syrian civil war as YPG/PYD. “Amid the Syrian Civil war, Kurds unilaterally declared self rule in these areas in 2012 and have since protected them from Islamic States”(The Time of The Kurds, 2014). Russian intervention in Syria was welcomed by Kurds because of common enemy of DAESH. Salih Muslim officially declared their support and pleasure about Russian air strikes. Paradoxically, although Russia directly support Assad regime which Kurds have fought against them. Kurds also believe that Russia never let DAESH or other actors to attack. It is to early to say about future of Kurds and Russian prospect relationship because now they have common enemy but it can be changed related with energy issue(which related with Soyuzneftegaz) and other regional actor such as Turkey. When Kurds seems happy about Russian existence, Turkmens have worried about their future. Omer Ceren, an advisory board member at the Ankara-based Turkmen group, said that Russia’s intervention was a “pretext” to support the Assad regime (Russia saved Assad

from “execution”: Turkmen Group,04.10.2015). So, Russian air striking wont end the tension between ethnic groups but also more escalating conflicts within them.

Not only ethnic diversity but also different religious sects have shaped course of Syrian civil war. Iran and Gulf countries became main player of religious politics after Syrian crisis. The main division in Syrian war actually characterized by Sunni opposition and Alawite Assad family and from very beginning of Syrian war, Sunni dominated Gulf countries blamed Alawite Assad family(Wehrey,2014). Along with energy disputes between Russia and Gulf countries, Russia and Gulf countries have completely different positions in future making of Syria. Also, Gulf countries were united against DAESH and their position is so clear about Assad and Shia Iran and Hezbollah on the other hand Russian support to Assad and Iran is not a secret at all. Saudi ambassador Abdallah Al-Mouallimi expressed “profound concern regarding the military operations which Russian forces have carried out in Homs and Hama today, places where ISIS forces are not present. These attacks led to a number of innocent victims. We demand it stop immediately and not recur.”(Saudi Arabia Demands Russia end Syria raids, criticizes Iran, 2015). So, albeit Russia, Iran, US, Gulf countries seems to have de facto coalition against DAESH, they are polarized and fueled tension between Sunni and Shia sects and its allies. Furthermore, Russia will also brings Iran to peace desk because Russia and Iran are in the same camp and FM Lavrov clearly state that “When we agreed to this format of negotiations on Syria, we said we were convinced that the idea to set up circle of support for a Syria settlement without Iran had no prospects”(Lavrov Stresses Iran’s Role in Efforts to Resolve Crisis in Syria, 2015). After nuclear agreement, Iran once more have chance to sit with vital players to shape region future.

C) Turkey and Russia: So Ambitious Partners

There is no doubt, Turkey is a key player in both region and global politics. Especially, last refugee crisis put Turkey in a more vital position. Under this atmosphere, implications of Russian intervention in Syria for Turkey would analyze separately. In order to understand these implications, general information about Turkey and Russia relationship in Ak Party period is required. Mainly, Russia and Turkey became regional partner in economics and energy. Simplified Customs Line was established in 2009 and trade exchange reached \$32 bn in 2013. At the same time, Turkey and Russia agreed that time on visa free travel. Also, along with intense economic relations nuclear projects and especially energy projects were signed include student exchange. Furthermore, Turkey and Russia established High Level Cooperation Council in 2010 and although President Erdoğan and President Putin have some disagreements on Ukraine or Crimea, they had close contacts in many issues (Saunders, 2014). In other words, in last 12 years Turkey’s relationship with Russia was getting more sophisticated. “The economic dynamic (and more specifically the energy dynamic) that is developing between Russia and Turkey sheds considerable light on the political relationship between the two countries”(Bourgeot,2013).

Because of intense economic and political relations, interdependence is imperious which constraints political maneuvers of both countries. As well as other coalition members Turkey and Russia have different positions for Syria future.

Turkey suggested a formation of safezone (DAESH-freezone) first time after Suruç bombing. Safe zone would be located between Kilis borderline and Aleppo with 80 km by 40 km(Moore,2015). The idea resurfaced after PKK attacks in July 2015 and when Turkey joined coalition against DAESH and then letter by Prime Minister Davutoğlu to European Union as a way of solution. After Russian intervention, the idea of safezone seems to be weaker in near future because Russia wont support such a safezone when they clearly said that Russia's first priority is fighting against DAESH and other terrorist groups with especially airforce. "...It has raised concerns that if a no-fly zone or safe zone were established, as Turkey has pushed for, it could be challenged by Russia"(Arango,2015). In other words, safezone plan wouldnt be on the table unless Russia wasn't convinced and Turkey need to freeze the plan once more.

As noted above, Turkey has been supporting the transition period without Assad and it didn't change within four years that's why Turkish foreign policy was criticized so harshly. US, France and most of Western bloc agreed on Assad wouldn't be part of transition period. Nevertheless Russia once more changed parameter also politically. They suggest Assad would be part of transition period and as expected US was getting softer on Assad and new peace talks will be around the idea of transition with Assad. Thus, it is not expected to position shifting by Turkey but at least Turkey would show low profile for insisting its own discourse.

Last but not least implication would be about Kurds for Turkey. As mentioned in the regional part, Kurds and Russians are in same camp to fight against terrorism but they seem indifferent to each other. In other words, Kurds and Russians have de facto agreement in Syria. Last week, there was unconfirmed news about possible office of PYD might be opened in Moscow. As all know, Turkey declared PYD as a terrorist organization too. "Turkey has summoned separately the American and Russian ambassadors in Ankara to complain about their countries acting in support of the military forces of the Syrian Kurds"(Turkey takes Russia and US to task over their backing of Kurds in Syria,15.10.2015). Until now, Russia never implemented possible direct contact and coordination with Kurds however it is possible in near future. It will be huge obstacle for Turkey and Russia relationship as President Erdoğan said in his Brussels visit, Turkey will be important lost for Russia and Prime Minister Davutoğlu clearly say that Turkey wouldn't hesitate to defend itself if YPG threaten its national security. However, there is any expectation for any confrontation between YPG and Turkey and indirectly Russia.

Energy projects between Russia and Turkey might be the most conspicuous issue after Russian intervention. Turkish Stream is length 910 km which will costs almost \$12bn. There is no doubt, it is crucial Project for energy routes in all over the world. Main fear after Russian intervention in Syria and Turkey's reaction is freezing TurkStream Project. Let's hope that disagreement on Syria would not hinder energy projects.

Epilogue

Arab Spring can be considered a test for Davutoğlu's center state vision, Arab Spring is the most chaotic and complex event in new Turkish foreign policy. In the beginning of Arab Spring protests, Turkey's position to support democracy and human rights, against authoritarian regimes. However Syrian case would be different for Turkish foreign policy makers. Turkey had long and bumpy relationship with Syria. AKP era foreign policy had been kind of reconciliation and enhancement in case of Syria. Spreading of protest to Damascus and whole Syria alarmed Turkey. Although Turkey supported possible reforms by Assad in Syria in the beginning, Syria seems far from any reforms even protests turned into civil war. Turkish have had more voice reaction against Syrian regime since March 2011, even Turkey called UN, NATO and especially US to take action in Syria. However, agreement between US and Russia on destroying chemical weapons in Syria disappointed and left alone Turkey. As mentioned above, Davutoğlu should be central state and have complex web of relationship with all actors. However, the period between March 2011 and May 2012, Turkey tried to play central state to convince Assad regime with her soft power ability however Erdoğan and his close friendship was not enough to convince Assad to make reforms. "Clearly, the biggest disappointment for the Turkish government has been the Assad regime's refusal to set the country on a peaceful course and its brutal crackdown on non violent demonstrators" (Cebeci and Üstün, 2012).

Four years in world politics is quite long period especially in case of any civil war in Middle East. Within four years, there have been challenges and opportunities for each actor specifically Turkey. Although, hosting 2 million Syrian refugee was criticized, it became joker card for Turkey with EU relations. In other words, it is hard to say any equilibrium in Syria which is getting more complex day by day. New actors emerged and it affects discourse of Syrian war. Russian military intervention in 30th September is a completely game changer move. Syrian civil war wouldnt be same anymore. Military balance, political and economic balance completely shifted. This shifting can be realized in three dimensions; global, regional and Turkey.

In global scale, military intervention in Syria can be considered as a chance to fill power vacuum in Middle East but it would have implications on Ukraine, sanctions, refugee crisis and energy politics. It is not secret that after Ukraine crisis Russia had been isolated by economic and political sanctions. That's why, Russian military intervention and position with West against terrorism image somehow illegalized sanctions of West. Then, Russian military intervention happened when refugee crisis peaked and it can cause another refugee wave from Aleppo, which would be completely catastrophic for Europe. Energy is one of main component of its economy and due to low oil prices and sanctions, Russian economy shows downward performance, well the only way exit is rising of oil prices. As all and President Putin know, any military escalation in region directly rises oil prices that is one of possible implication. Also, agreement of Soyuzneftegaz's with Syrian government to establish new energy route via Iraq is an important reason for Russia to be in Syria. If this route was secured, it would be new options for Europeans besides Gulf countries. That's why implications of Russian intervention in Syria on energy politics is one the most vital.

Regional implications of Russian intervention is also related with global politics but also fueling for religious conflict between Shia and Sunni and as expected future of Kurds in the region. However more interesting dimension is Russia and Turkey perspective. As noted, both countries have intense and depth relations in last 13 year which include TurkStream, Akkuyu

nuclear projects. Four main areas would be affected by Russian intervention in Syria which are safezone plan, transition period policy, Kurds and energy. Because of Russian position, safezone plan will be postponed or at least swept under carpets for a while. As well as, Turkey have insisted on transition period without Assad which Russia opposed it. A week after Russian military, new peace talks arranged by US, Russia, EU, Turkey and Iran to reconsider transition period. So, as well as safezone policy Turkey will show signals of policy changing. In case of existence of YPG in the region Turkey's position is not going to be change and will do its best to hinder any rapprochement between Russia and Kurds.

To sum up, after Russian intervention in Syria all parameters changed completely. Turkish foreign policy should be more diverse and chaotic in all sense because new parameters dragged Syrian civil war far from cosmos but the last situation is unexpectedly at the edge of chaos at the same time. In other words, Syria at the edge of the chaos might be ended up with peace in soon. Under such an chaotic atmosphere, there is no doubt Turkey is still vital player in region and it will be.

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