

**RECONSTRUCTING GEOGRAPHICAL VISION AND IDENTITY VIA  
FOREIGN POLICY AFTER THE END OF THE COLD WAR: THE  
EXAMPLE OF ISMAIL CEM (1997-2002)**

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## ABSTRACT

### RECONSTRUCTING TURKEY'S GEOPOLITICAL VISION AND IDENTITY VIA FOREIGN POLICY AFTER THE END OF THE COLD WAR: THE EXAMPLE OF ISMAIL CEM (1997- 2002)

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MA in Modern Turkish Studies

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This thesis seeks to reveal how civilizational discourse influences foreign policy-making and undertakes a comprehensive content analysis of the foreign policy discourse of Ismail Cem, Turkey's foreign minister from 1997 to 2002, who made major contributions to the civilizational geopolitical discourse of Turkey as well as the identity discussions in foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. The thesis attempts to answer the question of whether it is possible to construct civilizational geopolitics that can coexist with pluralities (ethnic groups, nations, or civilizations) by minimizing boundary-producing practices, and, at the same time, by casting an active and "central" role to Turkey in foreign policy. This analysis is a critical examination seeking to reveal how and with what consequences Cem used the civilizational discourse in Turkey in order to justify his foreign policy practices. In accordance with this purpose, the first phase of this study has examined the historical background of the emergence of geopolitics and civilizational discussions and their introduction to Turkey from the perspective of critical geopolitics. In the second phase, the influence of the changing international conjuncture with the end of the Cold War over Turkey's geopolitical value and identity perception have been discussed focusing on Ismail Cem's tenure in office. Cem's redefinition of Turkey's identity, civilizational belonging and geopolitical vision have been deeply evaluated emphasizing the impact of national identity and history over the perception of geopolitical visions.

Keywords: Ismail Cem, history, civilization, identity, foreign policy, geopolitical vision

## ÖZ

### SOĞUK SAVAŞ SONRASI TÜRKİYE’NİN JEOPOLİTİK VİZYONUNUN VE KİMLİĞİNİN DIŞ POLİTİKA YOLUYLA YENİDEN İNŞASI: İSMAİL CEM ÖRNEĞİ (1997-2002)

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Bu çalışma, medeniyet söyleminin dış politika yapımı üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır ve 1997-2002 yılları arasında Dışişleri Bakanı olan ve Soğuk Savaş sonrası Türkiye’deki medeniyet jeopolitiği ve kimlik tartışmalarına önemli katkılar sağlamış olan İsmail Cem’in dış politika eserlerinin kapsamlı içerik analizini yapmaktadır. Bu analiz, aynı anda hem Türkiye’ye dış politikada aktif ve merkezi bir rol biçen hem de değişik milletler ve medeniyetlerle bir arada olabilmeyi mümkün kılan ve yapay sınırları aşan bir medeniyet söylemi kurmanın mümkün olup olmadığı sorusunun cevabını aramaktadır. İsmail Cem’in hangi amaç ve sonuçlarla medeniyet söylemini dış politika uygulamalarını meşrulaştırmak için kullandığını çalışması açısından eleştirel bir çalışmadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda çalışmanın ilk aşaması jeopolitiğin ve medeniyet söyleminin ortaya çıkışlarının ve bunların Türkiye’ye uygulanmalarının arka planını eleştirel jeopolitik perpektifinden incelemektedir. İkinci aşamada ise Soğuk Savaşın sona ermesiyle değişen uluslararası konjonktürün Türkiye’nin jeopolitik değerini ve ülkedeki kimlik tartışmalarını nasıl etkilediği İsmail Cem dönemine odaklanılarak incelenmektedir. Cem’in Türkiye’nin kimliğini, ait olduğu medeniyeti ve jeopolitik vizyonunu ne şekilde yeniden tanımladığı detaylı şekilde analiz edilmekte ve kendisinin Türkiye’nin kimliğini ve tarihini nasıl algıladığının onun jeopolitik vizyonu üzerindeki etkisinin üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsmail Cem, tarih, medeniyet, kimlik, dış politika, jeopolitik vizyon

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU: European Union

JDP: The Justice and Development Party

PKK: The Kurdistan Workers' Party

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty

OIC: Organization of Islamic Conference

WWI: World War I

WWII: World War II

EEC: European Economic Community

TRT: Turkish Radio and Television Corporation

ANAP : Motherland Party

DSP: Democratic Leftist Party

DYP: True Path Party

EBU: European Broadcasting Union

UN: United Nations

US: United States

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The geographical location of Turkey puts the country in a unique position which has both advantages and disadvantages. Although Turkey's geographical position offers a wide sphere of opportunities in terms of political and economic assets as a bridge between the European and Asian continents, it also brings along several threats specific to this geography. In addition to security concerns regarding the continuous turmoil in the Middle East and terrorism threats on a political level, the difficulty in determining whether Turkey is a European state or a Middle Eastern state causes another handicap on an ideological level. Turkey has historically been neighbors with both Europe and Asia as the country's geographical territory lays between these continents and has been inevitably influenced by their cultures. On one hand, the country has rich cultural, historical, and religious ties with Asia and on the other hand, its interaction with Europe has increasingly continued since the Ottoman modernization period. As a consequence of this ambiguity, an identity crisis, caused by Turkey's geographical location, arises and goes parallel with a debate about which civilization Turkey belongs to. This discussion is closely linked to the problem of how to save Turkey from a decline against the superiority of Western civilization since the late Ottoman period. In that sense, almost all of the political currents of Ottoman-Turkish modernization, ranging from Islamists, Westernists, and Nationalists to Liberals and Socialists have centered on different conceptualizations of civilization. Two major competing discussions of the notion of civilization have been between the Kemalists, who insisted on the European identity of Turkey with reforms to Westernize the country since the foundation of the Republic, and the Islamists who embraced Islam as a source of resistance against Westernization and the West itself. The different conceptualizations of civilization by these two competing parties have resulted in the construction of their own subjectivity by othering the opposite side. This kind of different conceptualizations of civilization and the othering practices have inevitably been reflected in their vision of both domestic and foreign policies.

Among many international relations theories, in relation to what has been discussed above, Richard Ashley introduced foreign policy as a “boundary producing political performance”<sup>1</sup> in 1987. The idea was later borrowed by David Campbell, who suggests that foreign policy should be retheorized as boundary-producing practices referring to the production and reproduction of identity via foreign policy by means of making “others” and “foreigners” for yourself such as Europeans and non-Europeans.<sup>2</sup> In that sense, Campbell defines the essence of foreign policy as an effect of the states’ discourses of danger faced in the case of interaction with “others,” thus making foreign policy a concept giving rise to boundaries rather than acting as a bridge.<sup>3</sup> With reference to Campbell’s arguments, Pinar Bilgin indicates that these kind of practices hint at a return to the civilizational geopolitics of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe<sup>4</sup> –one of the three geopolitical discourses periodized by John Agnew. According to Agnew, the discourse of civilizational geopolitics categorizes different parts of the world “in people’s mental maps according to the civilization to which people that inhabited that region were perceived to belong.”<sup>5</sup> Both the Kemalists’ attempts to locate Turkey in Europe by ignoring its Eastern connections and the Islamists’ tendency to criticize the West as the colonialist other are similar boundary-producing practices with competing discourses of civilizational geopolitics.

The approval of the Western civilizational discourse, which was produced by the West to emphasize its superiority over other civilizations, and the struggle to integrate into that “superior” civilization were central to the civilizational discourse followed by the traditional Kemalist foreign policy. This tendency resulted in the West-oriented characteristic of Turkey’s foreign policy approach. However, the civilizational discourse of Turkey went beyond a one-dimensional attitude in the 1990s as part of a changing international order following the end of the Cold War.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “Foreign Policy as a Political Performance” *International Studies Association Notes* 13, (1987): 51-54.

<sup>2</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 75.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Pinar Bilgin, “A Return to ‘Civilizational Geopolitics’ in the Mediterranean? Changing Geopolitical Images of the European Union and Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era” *Geopolitics* 9, no. 2: 269-271, 273.

<sup>5</sup> John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Revisioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 1998) as quoted in Bilgin, “A Return to ‘Civilizational Geopolitics’ in the Mediterranean”: 270.

Metaphors such as “leadership” and “centrality” were put into use while constructing a new civilizational discourse for Turkey in the 1990s. While traditional Turkish foreign policy was West-oriented, the 1990s witnessed new approaches that created an active and multidimensional foreign policy for Turkey.

This thesis seeks to reveal how civilizational discourse influences foreign policy-making and undertakes a comprehensive content analysis of the foreign policy discourse of Ismail Cem, Turkey’s foreign minister from 1997 to 2002, who made major contributions to the civilizational geopolitical discourse of Turkey as well as the identity discussions in foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. The thesis attempts to answer the question of whether it is possible to construct civilizational geopolitics that can coexist with pluralities (ethnic groups, nations, or civilizations) by minimizing boundary-producing practices, and, at the same time, by casting an active and “central” role to Turkey in foreign policy. This analysis will be a critical examination seeking to reveal how and with what consequences Cem used the civilizational discourse in Turkey in order to justify his foreign policy practices.

Ismail Cem, the minister of foreign affairs of Turkey from 1997 to 2002, realized that a change of approach in Turkish foreign policy was of vital importance as a result of the emergence of a multipolar world after the end of the Cold War. He was aware of the need for the renewal of the country’s identity, history, and culture, and their introduction into foreign policy discourse and practices. As a consequence, a multidimensional foreign policy paradigm was developed with the objective of putting Turkey in a central position in its surrounding geography.

Cem was convinced that Turkey had to reconstruct its traditional foreign policy paradigm for its own benefits because he envisioned Turkey as a “world state.” It was not possible to reach that aim with an isolationist foreign policy approach lacking historical and cultural parameters. Thus, two major elements of the new foreign policy paradigm would be Turkey’s historical and cultural parameters. Cem considered Turkey’s history and culture as two primary agents in foreign policy-making and he utilized Turkey’s historical and cultural ties to create a broader sphere

of influence in Turkey's surrounding region. He formulated a civilizational discourse emphasizing Turkey's historical and cultural ties with Europe and Asia and defined Turkey as a bridge between European and Eastern civilizations. In that sense his civilizational geopolitics diverged both from traditional Kemalist and Islamist stands.<sup>6</sup>

### **1.1. Theoretical Background**

Ismail Cem's foreign policy discourse will be examined in the light of the discussions of critical geopolitics, a critical approach towards classical geopolitics trying to reveal how statecraft envisions space and constructs global politics. Critical geopolitics originated in the 1980s with reference to the criticism that geopolitics had been formulated with the heavy influence of Western political thought and Eurocentric ideas. It aims to reveal the existing hierarchical power relations and the geographical formulation of world politics. In other words, critical geopolitics is a critique of classical geopolitics trying to figure out how the perception of space has been constructed by states serving the interests of foreign policy-makers. It emphasizes that classical geopolitical representations, visions, concepts, and discourses have been formulated as a means of foreign policy-making for the interests of states. The decline of geopolitics after World War II until the 1970s, as it was associated with wars and the Nazis, paved the way for the emergence of critical geopolitics. Rather than being an entire new theory, critical geopolitics attempts to bring about awareness by revealing how the existing system -geopolitical formulation of world politics- has been shaped. The theoretical discussions in this study will also benefit from the National Identity and Geopolitical Visions theory of Gertjan Dijking, a scholar of critical geopolitics, who indicates the link between the identity of policy-makers and their geopolitical visions. Dijking argues that the foreign policy-makers' perception of their history and national identity influence how they sense the

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<sup>6</sup> Kemalist and Islamist classifications in this thesis are referred according to the categorization of Ismail Cem. For detailed analysis of Ismail Cem's ideas on Kemalism and Islamism please check : Ozan Örmeci, "Ismail Cem's Views on Kemalism" *Journal of Arts and Humanities (JAH)* 1, No. 1 (August 2012): 33-40 and Ozan Örmeci, "A Turkish Social Democrat: Ismail Cem" *Turkish Studies* 12, No. 1 ( March 2011): 191-114.

geography of their country and where they imagine their country in that geography.<sup>7</sup> He adds that all these causes contribute to foreign policy-making.

As the foreign policy-makers' perception of the country's history, national identity, and location influences how they plan and execute the country's foreign policy, Ismail Cem's emphasis on Turkey's historical and cultural ties give us clues about his imagined geography and the role he envisioned for Turkey in the international politics. Key concepts such as "center", "bridge", or "world state"<sup>8</sup> in his discourse hint towards his geopolitical vision and the plans he intended for Turkey to play in international politics.

## **1.2. Motivation Behind The Study: Why Ismail Cem?**

When the historical depth of Turkey is taken into account, it is inevitable for foreign policy-makers to avoid an exceptionalist discourse highlighting centrality, leadership, and success. However, Turkey's foreign policy-makers traditionally and practically followed a West-oriented, isolationist, and relatively passive attitude although their discourse over the years included hints of a desire for Turkey's leadership role as a consequence of its "glorious" history. Turkish foreign policy has undergone a major transformation since the beginning of the 1990s as Turkey moved beyond being a buffer, bastion, or front country -the terms associated with Turkey as a NATO member during the Cold War- with a new vision and discourse seeking new areas of influence and leadership. The dissolution of the USSR is the primary reason for a search of change but it is not a comprehensive answer as the dissolution brought change to the entire international system and cannot explain the specific aspects of Turkey's case. Recent studies of Turkish foreign policy mostly focus on the Justice and Development Party (JDP) era and attribute the transformation to the JDP's vision and actions. However, the roots of the transformation in the 1990s and at the turn of the millennium is understudied. There were several politicians such as former President Turgut Özal and former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan who uttered assertive

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<sup>7</sup> Gertjan Dijckink, *National Identity & Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> *Merkez ülke, köprü ülke, dünya devleti*.

speeches with a new vision and discourse seeking new areas of leadership for Turkey in global politics. Different from their undertheorized and partial claims, İsmail Cem came up with a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the problem. Having grown up in a Kemalist family and being acquainted with social democratic ideas during his university education in Europe both influenced his worldview and enabled him to see Turkey's democracy problems, which he believed were mostly caused by the top-down modernization process of the Republic. He was convinced that the European Union membership process of Turkey was of vital importance, as it would promote the democratization course of Turkey. However, Cem refused the ultimate superiority of the West/Europe and aimed to participate in Europe without ignoring or denying Turkey's culture and history. He always considered Turkey's national interests from the standpoint of a realist politician.

In this context, his discourse and actions differ both from traditional Kemalist and Islamist stands with regard to foreign policy-making. He neither ignored Turkey's European and Eastern identities nor favored a one of the two and othered the rejected one. On the contrary, he put emphasis on the "Eurasian" identity of Turkey as a "bridge" between civilizations. In this sense, he is one of the early prominent precursors behind the transformation of Turkey's traditional foreign policy paradigm from passive and one-dimensional into active and multidimensional. His vision and attempts to transform Turkish foreign policy are not only an outcome of the changing international conjuncture of the 1990s but also his worldview, personality, capabilities, and agency. Additionally, his strong belief in solving Turkey's domestic problems in parallel with foreign policy problems in terms of reconciling with the country's history and culture contributed to his foreign policy understanding. He tried to avoid the boundary-producing practices of the Kemalist and Islamist circles to a great extent as a reflection of his social-democrat mindset. He neither identified Turkey with the West blindly nor ignored its history and culture. Moreover, he did not deny the Ottoman heritage and even stated "Ottoman-Turkish civilization and its moral values contributed to the evolution of the Middle Ages into modern times."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> İsmail Cem, "Turkey and Europe: Looking to the Future from a Historical Perspective." <http://sam.gov.tr/tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Ismail-Cem.pdf>

Last, but not least, Ismail Cem, served as foreign minister for 5 years from 1997 to 2002, one of the longest-tenured in Turkey's history, and had the opportunity to direct Turkish foreign policy firsthand, making him a reasonable case to be analyzed in terms of foreign policy-making. Although majority of academic works written on the transformation of Turkish foreign policy after the end of the Cold War focus on JDP era, a considerable number of these works indicate that the transformation was indeed rooted in the Ismail Cem's tenure.<sup>10</sup> However, the number of comprehensive studies analyzing Cem's contribution to identity discussions and the transformation of Turkey's geopolitical vision is scarce and insufficient. In that sense, this study offers new information about Cem's perception of Turkey's national identity, history and civilizational belonging and how it influenced his foreign policy discourse and civilizational geopolitics in addition to the role he desired Turkey to perform in a wide geography.

### 1.3. Literature Review

Academic works written on Ismail Cem's foreign policy discourse and practices evaluate his tenure from different perspectives. Lerna Yanık in "The Metamorphosis of Metaphors of Vision: 'Bridging' Turkey's Location, Role and Identity After the End of the Cold War"<sup>11</sup> analyzes Turkey's bridge metaphor in foreign policy and evaluates the term as a discursive strategy to emphasize Turkey's geographical

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<sup>10</sup> Some academic works referring that the transformation of Turkish foreign policy during the JDP era was rooted in the tenure of Ismail Cem include: For the roots of concepts such as "historical asset", "opening", "lack of vision", "inter civilizational cooperation" and "developing relations with neighbours" please see: Murat Yesiltas and Ali Balci "AK Parti Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası Sözlüğü: Kavramsal Bir Harita" *Bilgi* 23, (2011 Kış): 9-34. For the roots of new framework of Turkish foreign policy for repositioning Turkey within the international system during the immediate post-Cold War era please see: Ahmet K. Han, "From "Strategic Partnership" To "Model Partnership": Akp, Turkish – Us Relations And The Prospects Under Obama, *Unisci Discussion Papers, No 23* (May 2010) 77-113. For paralleling the views of Ismail Cem on historical dimension and Ottoman past with those of Ahmet Davutoğlu please see: Talip Kucukcan and Mine Kucukkeles, "Understanding Turkish Foreign Policy, Special Report" *The New Turkey*, Accessed on May 17, 2012 <http://www.thenewturkey.org/understanding-turkish-foreign-policy/new-turkey/82> And finally for a view referring to the JDP's foreign policy as representing a continuity with that of Ismail Cem please see: Menderes Çınar, "Turkey's 'Western' or 'Muslim' Identity and the AKP's Civilizational Discourse" *Turkish Studies* (2017): 176-197.

<sup>11</sup> Lerna Yanık, "The Metamorphosis of Metaphors of Vision: 'Bridging' Turkey's Location, Role and Identity After the End of the Cold War" *Geopolitics* 14 (2009): 531-549.



“exceptionalism. She indicates that Cem’s use of the term emphasizes a degree of commonality with the West and Europe in cultural and historical terms with a less religious discourse. On the contrary, Murat Yesiltas in “The Transformation of Geopolitical Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy”<sup>12</sup> depicts Ismail Cem’s civilizational discourse in foreign policy as an assertive kind and emphasizes Cem’s ideal to transform Turkey from a bridge to a destination country and a World state with the use of its historical and cultural dimensions in a wider geography. Meliha Benli Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin in “Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East Under AKP”<sup>13</sup> focus on Ismail Cem’s perception of the Middle East and his initiatives to develop the relations with this region, especially with Syria and Iran, on peaceful grounds. Similar to Yesiltas, Altunışık and Martin read Cem’s foreign policy attitude as an assertive one and his vision of Turkey’s foreign policy in the Middle East as in harmony with Turkey’s relations with the West, as a requirement to become a World state. In this regard, they put forward the idea that Cem tried to transform the antagonism between Turkey and the Middle by stressing the positive experience of centuries. They also highlight Cem’s use of Turkey’s historical and cultural assets, his emphasize on Turkey’s multi-civilizational identity and also his focus on the importance of Turkey as a role model in the Middle East. Ali Balci in *Turkish Foreign Policy: Principles, Actors, Practices*<sup>14</sup> points out two aspects of Turkish foreign policy during Ismail Cem’s tenure. The first one is the Europeanization of foreign policy in line with the demands of the Helsinki Summit and the second one is the economic concerns. Balci underlined that Cem’s tenure aimed at resolving problems with neighbors in order to become the economic center of its surrounding geography.<sup>15</sup> Mehmet Ali Tuğtan in “Cultural Variables in Foreign Policy: Ismail Cem and Ahmet Davutoğlu”<sup>16</sup> stresses Cem’s realist and pragmatist mindset prioritizing Turkey’s interest while formulating foreign policy. Tuğtan refers to Cem’s emphasis

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<sup>12</sup> Murat Yeşiltaş, “The Transformation of Geopolitical Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy” *Turkish Studies* 14, No.4 (2013): 661-687.

<sup>13</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin, “Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy I the Middle East Under AKP” *Turkish Studies* 12, No. 4, 569-587.

<sup>14</sup> Ali Balci, *Türkiye Dış Politikası : İlkeler, Aktörler, Uygulamalar* (Istanbul: Etkileşim, 2013)

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>16</sup> Mehmet Ali Tuğtan, “Kültürel Değişkenlerin Dış Politikadaki Yeri: İsmail Cem ve Ahmet Davutoğlu” *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 13, No.49 (2016): 3-34.

on the country's historical and cultural dimensions as components of his pragmatist approach to foreign policy. Ozan Örmeci in "Ismail Cem's Foreign Policy (1997-2002)"<sup>17</sup> defines Ismail Cem's tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs as a breakdown from classical Turkish foreign policy and summarizes the transformation foreign policy towards the United States, the European Union, Greece, Eurasia and the Middle East. He indicates Cem's emphasis on Ottoman legacy to act assertive in foreign policy and defines Cem as "the first man who opened Turkey's doors to multi-dimensional foreign policy and broke the limits of classical Turkish foreign policy of Cold War."<sup>18</sup> He also evaluates Cem's multi-dimensional foreign policy as one avoiding Islamic aspirations and being non-ideological, which, according to Örmeci, aimed at using Turkey's Ottoman legacy in a rational and secular manner.<sup>19</sup>

This thesis, however, aims at revealing Ismail Cem's position between Kemalist and Islamist civilizational geopolitics in Turkey and how he constituted a third way trying to exceed boundary producing practices. The second purpose is to figure out how he employed the country's historical and cultural assets for different foreign policy justifications and the impact of his perception of Turkey's historical legacy over them. Apart from its theoretical contribution by making an in-depth analysis of the roots of the transformation in Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s, particularly under Ismail Cem in light of critical geopolitics, this study also offers a conceptual contribution to the operationalization of civilization discussions and civilizational geopolitics in Turkey. Moreover, this research will compile an original dataset based on Ismail Cem's texts and speeches rather than being a single systematic study of the civilizational discourse backed by data.

#### **1.4. Methodology of The Study**

After choosing the main problematic to be analyzed in a study, it is nearly as significant to select what sort of research method will be used for data collection and interpretation as it will directly influence the course of the research. First of all, it is

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<sup>17</sup> Ozan Örmeci, "Ismail Cem's Foreign Policy (1997-2002)" *SDU Faculty of Arts and Sciences Journal of Social Sciences* No. 23 (May 2011): 227-249.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

essential to determine whether the researcher will use a qualitative or quantitative method for the analysis. As this study deals with words, texts, and meaning rather than numbers and statistics, it is more appropriate to use qualitative research as the qualitative method “is an approach used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations.”<sup>20</sup> My basic research will be based on the qualitative content analysis of the primary sources. The content analysis method may be indeed both qualitative and quantitative as it enables the researcher to transfer the textual data into a numerical and statistical evaluation and is widely used as a qualitative research method. Content analysis is the “study of the content with reference to meanings, references, and intentions contained in the messages.”<sup>21</sup> Content analysis can cover large volumes of data. However, by making a clear statement of the research question or questions, the researcher can ensure that the analysis focuses on those aspects of content which are relevant to the research.<sup>22</sup>

Content analysis basically aims to answer the questions “Who says What to Whom with What Effect?”<sup>23</sup> The principal theory utilized in this study, critical geopolitics, indicates that “statecraft” constructs “geopolitical representations and visions” to convince “international society” of the “justification/legitimization of foreign policy practices.” It focuses on the messages behind terms regarding geographical space and claims to display a transparent picture of global politics hidden behind metaphors; in other words, to show the world as it really is. Thus, content analysis is the most relevant research method for this study to reveal and interpret the messages behind Ismail Cem’s emphasis on particular terms dominating his discourse.

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<sup>20</sup> Aldon M.H.P. Sinaga, “Difference between Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research and How It Should Be Applied in Our Research” (Yogyakarta, Dec. 2014) accessed March 19, 2019, [https://www.academia.edu/10722206/Difference\\_Between\\_Qualitative\\_And\\_Quantitative\\_Analysis\\_And\\_How\\_It\\_Should\\_Be\\_Applied\\_In\\_Our\\_Research](https://www.academia.edu/10722206/Difference_Between_Qualitative_And_Quantitative_Analysis_And_How_It_Should_Be_Applied_In_Our_Research)

<sup>21</sup> B. Devi Prasad, “Content Analysis: A Method in Social Science Research,” in *Research Methods for Social Work* ed, D. K. Lal Das and Vanila Bhaskaran (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2008), 173.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

Ismail Cem left many books behind regarding both Turkey's democracy problems and Turkish foreign policy. As my research question aims to reveal the interconnection between civilizational discourse and foreign policy-making, I will conduct a purposive sampling for an in-depth content analysis of four books written by Ismail Cem : *Türkiye'de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi* (A History of Underdevelopment in Turkey); *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya I, Strateji-Yunanistan-Kıbrıs* (Turkey, Europe, Eurasia I, Strategy-Greece-Cyprus); *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya II, Avrupa'nın Birliği ve Türkiye* (Turkey, Europe, Eurasia II, Union of Europe and Turkey); *Turkey in the New Century*. The prime consideration in the selection of the books were their relevance to Turkish foreign policy and Cem's identity discussions. I will also use purposeful sampling while analyzing the speeches made by Ismail Cem. I use the term "purposeful" because I will search for and use the speeches related to my research questions. I will give particular attention to expressions and terms such as "leader", "bridge", "center", "model", "hegemon", "civilization", "history", and "culture" which dominate his discourse. The symbolic meaning of these terms will be analyzed and their relevance to Cem's civilizational discourse will be interpreted.

After explaining the research questions, it is essential to determine the time period to be surveyed. This research will cover the particular time period from the end of the Cold War until 2002, the end of Ismail Cem's tenure in office as minister of foreign affairs. I have chosen to study the time period starting from the end of the Cold War because the Cold War era more or less represented the traditional Kemalist foreign policy paradigm with a tendency to identify Turkey with the West (NATO membership) and a considerably passive role that is visible through the words "buffer/bastion/front state" used to define Turkey's position within regional order. There were some deviations from Kemalist foreign policy paradigms such as the assertive foreign policy of the Democrat Party in the period of the 1950s, discussions about membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in the 1970s, and the Turkish military operations in Cyprus in 1974, etc. However, the end of the Cold War was an impetus for Turkey to redefine the country's role in the new international order with the construction of a new foreign policy identity. The collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War also meant the end of the bipolar international system.

A new area emerged for Turkey to create a sphere of influence. Although the analysis of the post-Cold War period from 1991 to 1997 is necessary to give an insight and background on Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s, the main focus of this thesis will be from 1997 to 2002.

This study will not merely be a single standardized study of the civilizational discourse backed by data. On the contrary, an original dataset based on Ismail Cem's speeches and texts will be compiled. The conceptualizations of the interpreted dataset will, I believe, contribute to the operationalization of the civilization discussions in Turkey.

### **1.5. Thesis Outline**

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory text specifying the research question(s) and gives brief information about the methodology, limitations, and organization of the study in addition to a brief theoretical background. The introduction also examines the reason for the study and the case selection. The second chapter draws the theoretical framework of the study based on the discussions of critical geopolitics literature. The theory chapter first examines the emergence of geopolitical imaginations and classical geopolitics as a discipline and then reveals the relation between the notion of civilization and geopolitics. After the background information, the chapter discusses the role of civilizational discourse on foreign policy-making from a critical geographical perspective after arguing the relationship between geopolitics and civilizational discourse. The third chapter highlights the introduction of the notion of civilization into Turkey and how competing parties have perceived the concept. This chapter also gives a historical background on Turkey's civilizational geopolitics the position of Turkey in the new world order after the end of the Cold War. The fourth chapter covers the analysis of the selected case, Ismail Cem's foreign policy discourse and practices in light of the critical geopolitics. This chapter includes the content analysis of the books and speeches of Ismail Cem pointing out his emphasis on Turkey's culture and history and their introduction to foreign policy as part of his civilizational discourse and imagined geography for Turkey. It also highlights Ismail Cem's position among traditional Kemalist and Islamist civilizational geopolitics while formulating

foreign policy. The chapter aims to interpret Cem's geopolitical vision in several different areas such as Turkish-EU relations, Turkish-Middle Eastern relations, Latin America and Africa openings and the relations with Greece and Syria. Finally, chapter five is the conclusion in which the findings and limitations of the research are summarized.



**CHAPTER II**  
**TOWARD A THEORY OF CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS: RECONSTRUCTING GEOGRAPHY**  
**AND IDENTITY**

“While the geopolitical imagination of the State may be determined from within, it’s actual positioning within the regional and global systems is largely determined from without. (...) The geopolitical imagination of a country’s population or political elites may often contrast with the geopolitical positioning of that State by other States within the system, resulting in inter-State tension on the one hand, and attempts to become accepted on the other.”<sup>24</sup>

David Newman

Geography is, and historically has been, a constructed phenomenon first formulated in people’s mental maps depending on several variables such as their identity and the civilization they belong to rather than being an independent, concrete fact. Therefore, geopolitical imaginations have contributed substantially to the formulation of geopolitics as a modern science and, as a consequence, to the drawing of lines beyond borders and territories. As the reflection of such a tendency on the political level, foreign policy emerged as a boundary-producing practice between the “self” state and the “other” states. Although this fact is not explicitly uttered all the time, geopolitical codes and representations in the discourses of states give the audience clues about the imagined geography of countries and the international role they aspire their countries to play in world politics.

There are two assets of the process of civilizational geopolitics moving simultaneously in two different directions while nourishing from the same source: a sense of superiority over “other” civilizations. On one hand, this sense of superiority excludes “other” civilizations and states with absolute borders; on the other hand, it

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<sup>24</sup> David Newman, “Citizenship, Identity and Location: The Changing Discourse of Israeli Geopolitics,” in *Geopolitical Traditions? Critical Histories of a Century of Geopolitical Thought*, ed. K. Dodds and D. Atkinson (London: Routledge, 1998), 2-3.

strives to broaden the zone of influence by claiming to civilize those excluded societies. This study analyzes the place of civilizational discourse in geopolitics and foreign policy-making and undertakes a comprehensive content analysis of the foreign policy discourse of İsmail Cem, Turkey's foreign minister from 1997 to 2002. The study attempts to answer the question whether it is possible to construct civilizational geopolitics that can coexist with the pluralities (ethnic groups, nations, or civilizations) by minimizing boundary-producing practices and, at the same time, by casting an active and "central" role to Turkey in foreign policy. It will also discuss to what extent Cem's geopolitical imagination for Turkey is acceptable in its surrounding geography and geopolitical traditions. This analysis will offer a critical examination seeking to reveal how and with what consequences Cem used the civilizational discourse in Turkey to justify foreign policy practices. The current chapter is devoted to the study's theoretical framework.

The first part of the chapter examines how geopolitical imaginations of the West originated in 16<sup>th</sup>-century imperial Europe and constituted geopolitics as a discipline at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century within the framework of the Foucauldian power/knowledge relationship and as a means of governmentality. It will look at the emergence of critical geopolitics in the 1980s with the aim of reconceptualizing world politics through revealing the governmentalist origin of the discipline by studying it as a discourse. This section will also reveal the role of national identity on the geopolitical vision of a state.

The last part analyzes the emergence of the notion of civilization in parallel with the emergence of geopolitics and how civilizational discourse served to the justification of colonial activities and constituted civilizational geopolitics.

### **2.1. Mapping the Earth: The Emergence of Classical Geopolitics**

Geopolitics is an outcome of the relation between international politics and geography. It originated during an era of colonial rivalry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the centers of learning of colonial empires as a consequence of the increased activity in imperial expansionism and territorial acquisition. The theorists of geopolitical



discourse “presupposed the superiority of their own national variant of European or Western civilization, superiority of white race over other races.”<sup>25</sup> Modern geopolitical discourse originated from distinctions of self and other, European and non-European, and such separations/binary oppositions were reflected in politics as our place/their place. The term “geopolitics” was first coined by Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen (1864-1922) in 1899 and refers to the influence of geography over power relations in world politics. It signifies the struggle and strategies of states for control of spaces. According to geopolitics, the geographical location and its control of spaces and territories are the decisive factors of a state’s power in international relations.

The term evolved and spread throughout Europe and the United States between World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII). Although the term “geopolitics” was first used by Rudolf Kjellen, his discussions were mainly based on the ideas of German scholar Fredrick Ratzel, who is considered as the father of classical geopolitics. Ratzel defined the state as a living organism, which neither could be contained within rigid limits nor had a definite territory for all time.<sup>26</sup> He developed the term *Lebensraum*, referring to the geographical space necessary to support the current population of a living species.<sup>27</sup> Thus, a state with a growing population had to expand its *Lebensraum* in order to sustain and nourish its civilization and Ratzel considered territorial size as an indicator of the ability of a nation to become a world power. He claimed that Russia, China, and the United States were destined to become world powers since they had large territorial space.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Germany had to expand its territory to secure world power. However, Ratzel argued that as Europe was a relatively small continent, the most reliable way of expanding territory was through colonization in Africa by advancing the German navy. His expansionist vocabulary would later become the backbone of Nazi foreign policy.

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<sup>25</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (London: Routledge, 1996), 17.

<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Ratzel, “The Territorial Growth of States,” *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 12 (July 1898): 351.

<sup>27</sup> Woodruff D. Smith, “Friedrich Ratzel and the Origins of Lebensraum,” *German Studies Review* 3, No. 1 (1980): 53.

<sup>28</sup> Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 29.

The United States naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) had worldwide influence with his emphasis on the significance of sea power for world domination. He devoted his book *The Importance of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*,<sup>29</sup> which was published in 1890, to the importance of sea power, claiming it was the most effective means for world domination as it provided the best means of mobility during that era. Mahan suggested that control of sea routes was decisive for both transportation and for control of states' colonies. His ideas had great impact on the naval race among European imperial powers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and helped the United States navy to expand its overseas activities.

English geographer Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) is one of the most prominent geostrategists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and known as one of the founding fathers of classical geopolitics. Unlike his American counterpart Mahan, Mackinder argued that land power would triumph over sea power with the advance of railroads. In his famous article "The Geographical Pivot of History,"<sup>30</sup> Mackinder introduced the heartland theory. He defined heartland as the core area of Eurasia controlled by the Russian Empire and suggested that the key for world dominance was its control. Mackinder's heartland had 3 features: a vast population, rich resources, and a wide territory. Although vast territories within the Russian Empire and Mongolia had big potential in population and resources, that region was inaccessible to oceanic commerce. However, Mackinder insisted that a vast economic world would develop there once the area was covered with railways making transportation possible.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the region's natural barriers such as mountains and vast steppes would make foreign invasion highly difficult, making the heartland a secure place. Mackinder states:

*Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland*

*Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island*

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<sup>29</sup> Alfred Tahan Mahan, *The Importance of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1890).

<sup>30</sup> H J Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23, No. 4 (April 1904).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 434.

*Who rules the World-Island commands the World*<sup>32</sup>

Mackinder's attribution of great importance to the heartland and to its value as the key for world domination is credited by some as the inspiration behind Germany's invasion of Russia during WWII.

As an alternative to Mackinder's heartland, Dutch-American scholar Nicholas John Spykman (1893-1943) came up with the rimland theory. Spykman challenged Mackinder's heartland theory; the rimland theory presented having coastal areas as an advantage and claimed that location was far more important than size. Otherwise, he claimed, Russia would not have struggled to reach coastal areas throughout its history. Spykman's rimland definition covered Eurasia stretching from Europe to East Asia. He stated that control over the rimland would ultimately lead to world domination. Spykman also considered geography as the most decisive factor in foreign policy-making as he believed that geography was the most permanent phenomenon. "Ministers come and go, even dictators die, but mountain ranges stand unperturbed."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, states could succeed in world politics if they were able to read the geographies thoroughly and construct their foreign policies accordingly.

German military officer Karl Haushofer (1869-1946), who became a geographer after retiring from the army, combined his military experience with political geography and made major contributions to the German school of *Geopolitik* (geopolitics). The widespread geopolitical ideas of the era were focused on either a vast territory or control over colonies. However, Germany was deprived of both because of the Versailles Treaty after WWI. Thus, Haushofer was convinced that Germany needed *Lebensraum* more than ever to keep up with the great powers and categorized the world within pan-regions under the influence of a particular core power. He had great admiration for Mackinder and was in favor of an alliance with heartland power Soviet

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<sup>32</sup> Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction, With a New Introduction by Stephen V. Mladenio*, NDU Press Defense Classic Edition (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1996), 106.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholas Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942), 41.

Union in order to create a block stretching from Germany to Japan<sup>34</sup> against weakening France and Britain.<sup>35</sup> Although not aligning himself with Nazi ideology, he conceptualized German geopolitics in a way that supported Nazi foreign policy, proposing the broadening of the German people's vision of global space after being convinced that Germany was "castrated by the Versailles Treaty."<sup>36</sup>

It was important to give a brief insight into these prominent geopoliticians of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century because their ideas had a great impact on the strategy-building and foreign policy-making of imperial powers during the colonial and naval rivalry as well as during the two World Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They theorized geopolitical imaginations for the very best interest of their states: either as a requirement of producing the state ideology and discourse for territorial expansion, or to justify them. Although they had different ideas for strategy-building, they had a common motivation: their countries' world domination. Therefore, after playing a crucial role in world politics until the end of the WWII, the popularity of geopolitics declined due to its bad reputation by virtue of its association with the offensive and expansionist German Nazi foreign policy. In addition to its identification with Nazis, the emergence of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles contributed to the diminishing popularity of geopolitics as they reduced the significance of geographical factors such as mountain ranges and vast steppes in the balance of power. Geopolitics was discredited and was perceived as a corrupted ideology and was not the subject of serious academic study until the 1980s.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Haushofer served in Japan during his military years and was influenced by Japan's politics and state system.

<sup>35</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby, and Paul Routledge, *The Geopolitics Reader 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 24

<sup>36</sup> Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 37.

<sup>37</sup> Jason Dittmer, *Popular Culture, Geopolitics, Identity* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 8.

## 2.2. Unearthing the Mapping of the Earth: Critical Geopolitics as the “Critique of Classical Geopolitics”

Geopolitics is already about more boundaries than those on a map.<sup>38</sup>

Based upon the criticism that geopolitical discourse is a form of Foucauldian power/knowledge theory, Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew in the late 1980s claimed that geopolitics “should be critically re-conceptualized as a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft ‘spatialize’ international politics in such a way as to represent a ‘world’ characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas.”<sup>39</sup>

What Ó Tuathail and Agnew called the reconceptualization of geopolitics was to be put into practice through “critical geopolitics” which originated in the United States in the 1980s focusing on the studies of foreign policies by means of discourse analysis.<sup>40</sup> “Critical geopolitics can draw attention to how places and peoples are scripted by foreign policy discourse. Instead of seeking to legitimate or encourage these discourses, we can actually begin to challenge them.”<sup>41</sup> In order to challenge geopolitical formulations, “instead of focusing on how, for example, the external environment influences foreign policy, critical geopolitics seeks to examine how geographical representations are constructed and how those representations in turn structure the perceived reality of places.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, although classical geopolitics analyzes the way the world is, critical geopolitics tries to figure out and identify how and why we have come to think of the world in a certain way.<sup>43</sup> In this respect, critical geopolitics is an opposing approach, which seeks to reveal the existing hierarchical power relations and the geographical formulation of world

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<sup>38</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby, eds., *Rethinking Geopolitics* (London and New York: Routledge); 1998: 4.

<sup>39</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, “Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy,” *Political Geography* 11 (1992), 190–204.

<sup>40</sup> V. D. Mamadouh, “Geopolitics in the Nineties: One Flag, Many Meanings” *GeoJournal* 46 (1998): 237-253.

<sup>41</sup> Dodds, “Geopolitics, Experts, and the Making of Foreign Policy,” 70-74.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Dittmer, *Popular Culture, Geopolitics, Identity*, 11.

politics. Critical geopolitics focuses on the relationship between geography and power. It highlights the constructed aspect of geography as a means of states to organize space to fit their visions and interests; as the outcome of the centuries of struggle of the imperial powers to organize, occupy, and administrate space; and defines geography as a verb “geo-graphing”: an active writing of the space of earth by expansionist states starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, rather than a natural given.<sup>44</sup> Foreign policy is identified as a boundary-producing phenomenon by creating “us” and “them” binaries and producing national, cultural, civilizational, and racial boundaries.

The main arguments of critical geopolitics are the following:

- 1- Classical geopolitics should be analyzed as an ideology and discourse for the justification of foreign policy practices as well as for the management of space.
- 2- Classical geopolitics has a Eurocentric foundation as its roots date back to geopolitical imaginations of 16<sup>th</sup>-century imperial Europe.
- 3- Geographical knowledge and “socially constructed” space should be deconstructed as they draw boundaries rather than borders by constructing binaries such as “we” and “others”, “civilized” and “uncivilized.”
- 4- Statecraft and elites are the main agents of geopolitical discourse and spatial practices and their identities are of vital importance.
- 5- The state as a living organism idea is very problematic and dangerous as it provided justification for expansionist policies.

Discourse is the key element of critical geopolitics. “The ways in which discourses shape and are shaped by foreign policy is central to critical geopolitics.”<sup>45</sup> The redefinition of geopolitics is a highly discursive one seeking to analyze the role of politicians and foreign policy experts on foreign policy-making. The theorists of critical geopolitics review policy acts, the speeches of politicians, as well as mass media. Its substantial emphasis on the relationship between discourse, geography,

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<sup>44</sup> Ó Tuathail , *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> Pinar Bilgin, “‘Only Strong States Can Live in Turkey’s Geography’: The Uses of ‘Geopolitical Truths’ in Turkey” *Political Geography* 26 (2007): 740-756.

and power is one of the most significant contributions of critical geopolitics to the study of global politics. Scholars of critical geopolitics emphasize that the study of geopolitics is the study of geopolitical discourse because “one of the seductive qualities of geopolitical discourse is how it transforms the opaqueness of world affairs into an apparently clear picture.”<sup>46</sup> Ó Tuathail defines geopolitics as “the representational practices by which cultures creatively constitute meaningful worlds.”<sup>47</sup> He adds that this process of constructing meaningful world politics has been carried out by creating narratives, images, representations of space, and metaphors, and that critical geopolitics identifies the ways in which “global space is labeled, metaphors are deployed and visual images are used in this process of making stories and constructing images of world politics.”<sup>48</sup>

### **2.2.1. History of Geopolitical Representations as the Basis of Spatial Practices**

Based on the argument that critical geopolitics displays a transparent and apparent picture of world politics, John Agnew in *Mastering Space* claims that it is best viewed through a historical-geographical lens.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, he explains how geopolitical imaginations date back to 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe although geopolitics as a modern political theory emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Together with the beginning of European explorations and the politics of expansionism of that century, Western civilization’s geopolitical imaginations began to take shape. The primary source of the expansionist policies was Western civilization’s Eurocentric mindset. Eurocentric ideas led Europeans to look at the rest of the world from a European perspective and to see themselves as superior to other cultures and make a categorization of “self” and “other.” Eurocentrism was the main and the most influential justification for Europeans during the period of colonialism because imperial Europeans claimed that they brought civilization to other “primitive” cultures. What Rudyard Kipling called “the white men’s burden” - the so-called burden that comes from being superior and

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<sup>46</sup> John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003) as quoted in Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby, and Paul Routledge eds. *The Geopolitical Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby, and Paul Routledge, eds., *The Geopolitical Reader*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>49</sup> John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 1995), 13.

more civilized than anyone else - justified the intervention in the affairs of “uncivilized” and “immature” states in order to bring the rule of law and discipline to such regions.<sup>50</sup> Europeans believed in the availability of the rest of the world for use by Europeans because their history destined them for greatness with a burden of spreading the light of the European civilization.<sup>51</sup> These geopolitical imaginations, nourished by the civilizational discourse of the European states, have structured and framed world politics ever since. Although the geopolitical order, which Agnew defines as the worldwide political economy of spatial practices, is subject to change, geopolitical imaginations and the representation of space remain largely the same. He claims that geopolitical imagination “still remains prevalent in framing the conduct of world politics.”<sup>52</sup>

In *Mastering Space* Agnew and Corbridge also explain how these representations of space turned into matching spatial practices during three different eras of modern geopolitical history. They name three different geopolitical orders with three different geopolitical representations. The first era is the British Geopolitical Order (1815-1875) in which Britain dominated the growing world economy inside and outside of Europe with a great sea power allowing control over colonies.<sup>53</sup> This period corresponds to “civilizational geopolitics” representing European uniqueness and superiority over other civilizations as well as drawing hard lines around the European homeland and preventing the participation/inclusion of any other civilization.<sup>54</sup> The second period is the Geopolitical Order of Inter-Imperial Rivalry (1875-1945) and corresponds to “naturalized geopolitics” whose geopolitical representations and discourse focused on biological processes and defined states as living organisms needing territory and resources for the maintenance of their growing populations. In this period, British dominance was challenged by other states and the imperial rivalry

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<sup>50</sup> Ó Tuathail, Dalby, and Routledge, *The Geopolitics Reader*, 22.

<sup>51</sup> Agnew and Cordbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy*, 53-54.

<sup>52</sup> John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Revisioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 1998) as quoted in Gearóid Ó Tuathail “Postmodern Geopolitics? The Modern Geopolitical Imagination and Beyond” in Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby, eds., *Rethinking Geopolitics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 6.

<sup>53</sup> Agnew and Cordbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy*, 19.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



led to the two World Wars. The third period is the Cold War Geopolitical Order (1945-1990) and coincides with “ideological geopolitics.” The geopolitical discourse of this period was determined by the United States and the Soviet Union and the world was divided into two ideological blocs. These three geopolitical discourses have risen to match and to provide the rhetorical understanding of three contested geopolitical orders.<sup>55</sup> They all had their motivation from “self” and “other” binaries and had a continuing, persisting theme of the geographical projection of “backward-modern.”<sup>56</sup>

### **2.2.2. Geography and Governmentality**

In parallel with the rising power of the European imperial states, notions of an art of governing started to emerge in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in order to “govern” the growing population. What Michel Foucault names “governmentality” is something beyond the governing of the state; it is the governing of everyday lives of citizens and their souls for the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end with instruments of government.<sup>57</sup> These instruments, he argues, are a range of multiform tactics rather than laws through which the aims of government are to be reached.<sup>58</sup> As Foucault indicates with his “governmentality” theory, the idea of the state and laws have been internalized by citizens sufficiently enough to reproduce the state without being aware of it. “In the art of government, then, governing ceased to be seen as existing on the external boundaries of the state; it was inside the state, inside society [...] it invoked not law or the imposition of rules, but rather ‘the right disposition of things.’”<sup>59</sup> It is the governing of the mentality of the people. The state does not need to enforce laws or rules after implementing the idea of the state into the minds of people through specific governmental apparatuses.

Production of the state knowledge was one of the crucial elements of the art of government. According to Foucault, power and knowledge are interrelated, “power

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>57</sup> Michel Foucault, “Governmentality” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 94.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>59</sup> Bruce Curtis, “Foucault on Governmentality and Population: The Impossible Discovery,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 27, 4 (Fall 2002) 505-533.

itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge [...] conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power.”<sup>60</sup> Power relations and the power itself are the sources of existence, the formation and the progress of knowledge. In other words, “[f]ar from preventing knowledge, power produces it.”<sup>61</sup> The connection of this power and knowledge relationship to state power was through the employment of this relationship to increase and advance both state power and governing apparatuses.

This relationship between power and knowledge held an important place in the governing of space, as well. Since geography is a product of the imperial powers’ endeavor to organize and govern the space of the earth, they produced apparatuses to that end as well. In other words, geography, “as an active writing of the earth by an expanding, centralizing imperial power”<sup>62</sup> is not the source but the outcome of that writing. Since the practices of governmentality were designed to produce the state knowledge and interpenetrate it into the society and upon other cultures, it enabled states to impose their visions of space and geography upon ambivalent cultures. Colin Flint refers to the Gramscian notion of power to make the reader consider how geopolitical practices and visions were spread across the world so as to make them appear normal and to justify them.<sup>63</sup> Based on the discussions on the relationship between power and knowledge and its influence on the governing of space, Ó Tuathail introduced the term “geo-power,” which he defined as “the functioning of geographical knowledge not as an innocent body of knowledge and learning but as an ensemble of technologies of power concerned with the governmental production and management of territorial space.”<sup>64</sup> His conceptualization of the relationship of power and knowledge over geography demonstrates how the management of space was carried out through the production of geographical knowledge by the state.

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<sup>60</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 51-52.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>62</sup> Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 40.

<sup>64</sup> Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 5.

These geopolitical visions and the geopolitical discourse that was produced to make the masses “believe colonial expansionism was in everyone’s interest”<sup>65</sup> were the major governmentalized apparatuses states employed for the organization and governing of the space of the earth. The most important elements in the imperial states’ vision of space were the superiority of the European civilization over other civilizations and the justification of expansionist policies. The construction of geographical visions and their imposition on the rest of the world by the great imperial powers were achieved through geopolitical discourse.

### **2.2.3. Critical Geopolitics and National Identity**

In addition to its emphasis on the historical formulation of world politics, the impact of national identity and historical experiences over foreign policy-making and how discourses and visions of foreign policy-makers are influenced by their national identities is another major theme discussed in critical geopolitics. National identity and national history contribute to how states perceive their geography and where they locate their country in that geography. As a scholar of the school of critical geopolitics, Gertjan Dijkink in his book *National Identity & Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain* conceptualizes the interconnection between geopolitical visions and national identity. Lerna K. Yanik writes,

Geopolitical visions are the ways in which a state relates itself to the world order. This relating process, Dijkink argues, comes as a result of how a state’s elites perceive their history, think of their national identity, and imagine their country’s location, eventually, all affecting how these elites plan and execute a country’s foreign policy.<sup>66</sup>

What Dijkink means with geopolitical vision is the imaginative geography of a country and it requires at least a “Us vs Them” distinction and emotional attachment to a

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>66</sup>Dijkink, Gertjan. *National Identity & Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) as quoted in Lerna K. Yanik “The Metamorphosis of Metaphors of Vision: ‘Bridging’ Turkey’s Location, Role and Identity After the End of the Cold War” *Geopolitics* 14 (2009): 531-549.

place.<sup>67</sup> In this theory, statecraft/elites are the agents of creating geographical visions, which sink to a subconscious level through repetition by politicians and media.<sup>68</sup> Dijkink also raises the question of “[h]ow experience and discourse together create an ‘imaginative geography’”<sup>69</sup> and implies that not only identity and cultural codes construct discourse but also discourse constructs a country’s imaginative geography and metaphors such as “bridge” and “center” in the discourse of leaders “give us clues to the international role and the identity that a state aspires to, or plans to become.”<sup>70</sup> That is why Dijkink argues that foreign policy is sometimes the only, or the most explicit indicator, of the prevailing visions of a country<sup>71</sup> because the mechanisms of statecraft often produce a foreign policy which simply enacts the domestic ideals of identity.<sup>72</sup>

The theoretical discussions reviewed so far have covered the emergence of classical geopolitics and geopolitical imaginations by focusing on power over the geographical formulation of world politics from the perspective of critical geopolitics. These discussions not only emphasized the occurrence of several concepts in the discourses of statecraft to reveal both their visions and justifications of foreign policy practices but also indicated the influence of the perception of national identity and history on such visions. As we have argued, civilizational discourse has been the founding ideology behind geopolitical imaginations as the root of classical geopolitics since European civilization considered itself destined to civilize “other” so-called primitive communities. The motivation behind the colonial activities of the European imperial powers has been referred as a “civilizing mission.” They believed in the superiority of their own civilization in terms of culture, religion, governing of the state etc. and claimed to be delivering the light of their civilization to develop other “primitive” civilizations. Such a belief of superiority not only justified their expansionist activities

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<sup>67</sup> Gertjan Dijkink, *National Identity & Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 11.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Lerna K. Yanik “The Metamorphosis of Metaphors of Vision: ‘Bridging’ Turkey’s Location, Role and Identity After the End of the Cold War” *Geopolitics* 14 (2009): 531-549.

<sup>71</sup> Dijkink, *National Identity & Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*, 143.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

but also motivated them to further their activities with an increasing self-confidence in addition to bolstering constructed boundaries beyond borders. In other words, civilizational discourse has been the boundary-producing apparatus of foreign policy practices. Civilization was used as a proper/convenient means for the justification of Eurocentrism and European colonialism.<sup>73</sup>

### 2.3. The History of the Concept of Civilization and Civilizational Discourse

“Civilization appears in the eighteenth century at a critical juncture point when Western reflexivity became obsessed with its secular perfectibility. The invention of the term “civilization” is put to use in viewing connections linking people together – and also in separating them; that is, in separating “non-civilized” from “civilized”.”<sup>74</sup>

Edward A. Tiryakian

From Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* to Norbert Elias’s *The Civilizing Process* and Arnold Toynbee’s *A Study of History*, a 12-volume study on the rise and fall of civilizations, the term “civilization” has been a deeply debated issue in social sciences in recent history. Both a means of collective identity construction and an instrument of “self” and “other” definition at the same time, what is civilization and how did it turn into a concept shaping world politics so directly and effectively?

“It would be pleasant to be able to define the word ‘civilization’ simply and precisely, as one defines a straight line, a triangle or a chemical element”<sup>75</sup> – these are the opening words of French scholar Fernand Braudel in his famous work *A History of Civilizations (Grammaire des Civilisations)*, one of the most comprehensive publications about the concept of civilization. Although the definition of civilization is vague and ambiguous, the term has mostly been associated with notions such as

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<sup>73</sup> Ibrahim Kalin, “Dunya Gorusu, Varlık Tasavvuru ve Duzen Fikri: Medeniyet Kavramına Giris” *Divan* 15, No: 29 (2010/2) 1-61

<sup>74</sup> Edward A. Tiryakian, “Civilizational Analysis: Renovating the Sociological Tradition” in Said Amir Arjomand and Edward A. Tiryakian eds *Rethinking Civilizational Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004), 32.

<sup>75</sup> Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*. Translated and edited by Richard Mayne, (New York: Penguin, 1994), 3.

kindness, grace, moral, and material values,<sup>76</sup> and is the obverse of barbarism. It was first coined by French economist Victor Riqueti Mirabeau in 1757 deriving from the Latin word *civitas* which means “relevant to the city.”<sup>77</sup> Progress and development have been the keywords of the concept of civilization and have been inseparable parts of it.

The term “civilization” has mostly been associated with the West and the process of civilizing “was conceived as a universal phenomenon characterizing the Enlightenment of eighteenth-century Europe, at one with universal reason and natural laws applicable in the physical sciences, economics, law, and morality.”<sup>78</sup> It first emerged as a singular concept. However, it would be used in plural during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when cultures and civilizations other than our own came to be recognized.<sup>79</sup> But imperialism and the accompanying scholarship now defined the non-European civilizations as objects of knowledge, passive, and fixed while European civilization was to be taught as dynamic, an active agent inspired by the doctrine of progress.<sup>80</sup> In this Eurocentric understanding, although Europe was viewed as one among several civilizations, it was also the “brain” of the world, i.e. the part that directs the world.<sup>81</sup> It was the time when Europe with a superiority complex over all other civilizations that appeared backward, believed it had been given the mission of bringing true civilization to the savages, barbarians, and primitive peoples of the world, and this was illustrated by the unbridled rivalry that sprang up over colonies, markets, raw goods, and *Lebensraum*.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Mehdi Mozaffari, “Globalization, Civilizations and World Order: A World-Constructivist Approach” in *Globalization and Civilizations* ed. by Mehdi Mozaffari (London: Routledge, 2002), 26.

<sup>77</sup> Necmettin Doğan, “İlerleme ve Medeniyet Kavramlarının Türk Düşüncesinde Etkileşimi,” in *Medeniyet Tartışmaları* ed. Süleyman Güder and Yunus Çolak (İstanbul: İhlas Gazetecilik, 2013), 247.

<sup>78</sup> Robert W. Cox, “Civilizations and the Twenty-First Century: Some Theoretical Considerations” in *Globalization and Civilizations* ed. Mehdi Mozaffari, (London: Routledge, 2002), 2.

<sup>79</sup> Edgar Morin, “European Civilization: Properties and Challenges” in *Globalization and Civilizations* ed. Mehdi Mozaffari, (London: Routledge, 2002), 132.

<sup>80</sup> Cox, “Civilizations and the Twenty-First Century: Some Theoretical Considerations,” 2.

<sup>81</sup> Jan Ifversen, “The Crisis of European Civilization: An Inter-War Diagnosis” in *Globalization and Civilizations* ed. Mehdi Mozaffari, (London: Routledge, 2002), 153.

<sup>82</sup> Morin, “European Civilization: Properties and Challenges, 129.

As well as originating in the West, the term also expresses the self-consciousness and the superiority of the West according to Norbert Elias.<sup>83</sup> Nilüfer Göle contributes to this discussion by indicating that the term civilization “designates the historical superiority of the West as a producer of modernity rather than referring in a historically relative way to each culture -French, Islamic, Arabic, African.”<sup>84</sup> This is the core of the civilizational geopolitics of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, which categorized the world and people according to the civilization to which they belonged. The primary binary opposition of this kind of categorization is the “West and the rest” or “West and non-West” binary. The West constitutes the civilized self while the non-West refers to the non-civilized other. We can infer that both geopolitics and civilizational discourse were constructed from a mindset, which claimed the superiority of the West. They were nourished by the Eurocentric thought and the principles of Enlightenment such as progress and development. The implication of the relationship between geopolitics and civilizational discourse is that civilizational discourse provided the philosophical and conceptual framework of geopolitical and foreign policy practices. “Part of the legitimation of colonialism was achieved via a vast colonial literature which imparted to Western readers a sense of the worth of Western civilization.”<sup>85</sup>

Non-Western civilizations have been constructed by the West in a process that has come to be known as Orientalism. Additionally, this process has the added effect of emphasizing the authenticity of Western civilization.<sup>86</sup> Thus, the notions of modernization and Westernization are identical. Modernization, in the words of Samuel Huntington, is a civilizational conversion that is exactly the same as Westernization as identified by the agents of the dominant civilization.

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<sup>83</sup> Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners: The Civilizing Process. Vol. 1.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 3.

<sup>84</sup> Nilüfer Göle, “The Quest for the Islamic Self within the Context of Modernity.” In *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997): 81-94.

<sup>85</sup> Tiryakian, Edward A. “Introduction: The Civilization of Modernity and the Modernity of Civilizations” *International Sociology* 16 (September 2001) 277-292.

<sup>86</sup> Dabashi, H. “For the Last Time: Civilizations.” *International Sociology* 16 (2001): 363-366 as quoted in Necmettin Doğan, “İlerleme ve Medeniyet Kavramlarının Türk Düşüncesinde Etkileşimi,” 247.

Although the term “civilization” first emerged in Europe and had Eurocentric connotations such as the universality of European values and the doctrine of progress, counter approaches against the universality of European civilization began to rise within Europe. Europe presented itself as the synonym of progress and power, freedom and science, and struggle against despotism.<sup>87</sup> However, the situation was different. Especially the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when imperial rivalry led to WWI, witnessed doubts about the universality of European civilization. According to Prasenjit Duara:

At the heart of the critique of Civilization, launched by both Western and non-Western intellectuals after the Great War, was the betrayal of the universalizing promise of the "civilizing mission" a mission which exemplified the desire not (simply) to conquer the Other, but to be desired by the Other. In this critique, Civilization had forfeited the right to represent the highest goals or ultimate values of humanity and was no longer worthy of being desired, or even recognized, by the other.<sup>88</sup>

WWI was the climax of an imperial rivalry starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and which led to cynicism about the universality of European civilization and values. As a confrontation against the universality of European civilization as the peak of human values, democracy, and freedom as well as technology, science, and industrialism, some intellectuals advocated the existence of diverse and challenging civilizations. According to Arnold Joseph Toynbee, Islamic civilization was one of several living civilizations and it had a potential to be an alternative to Western civilization, which he believed would not have a long-lasting hegemony.<sup>89</sup>

Starting from this point of view, the second challenge against European civilization was the questioning of its most profound feature: progress. The trauma of WWI contributed to the doubts not only about the universality but also the continuity of

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<sup>87</sup> Djamshid Behnam, “The Eastern Perception of the West” in *Globalization and Civilizations* ed. Mehdi Mozafferi. (London: Routledge, 2002), 178.

<sup>88</sup> Prasenjit Duara, “The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism” *Journal of World History* 12 (Spring 2001, Issue 1): 107-8.

<sup>89</sup> Doğan, “İlerleme ve Medeniyet Kavramlarının Türk Düşüncesinde Etkileşimi, 248.



European civilization. German scholar Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West*<sup>90</sup> argued that civilizations rise and fall to be replaced by other civilizations and the European civilization was in its final phase. “The future of the West is not a limitless tending upwards and onwards for all time [...] but strictly limited and defined as to form and duration, which covers a few centuries.”<sup>91</sup>

Last but not least, there was a group of German romantics who objected to the mechanical understanding of nature and to materialism. They expressed criticism against enlightenment, technology, progress, and modernity for failing to represent the soul and depth of human nature. Such criticisms increased in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>92</sup>

After giving the historical background and frame of civilizational geopolitics in this chapter, the next chapter will analyze the introduction of civilization discussions to Turkey and will examine the evolution of Turkey’s civilizational geopolitics.

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<sup>90</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality*. Translated by Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1926).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>92</sup> Doğan, “İlerleme ve Medeniyet Kavramlarının Türk Düşüncesinde Etkileşimi,” 249.

## CHAPTER III

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TURKEY'S CIVILIZATIONAL GEOPOLITICS

#### 3.1. The Spread of Discussion of Civilization to the Ottoman Empire

The notion of civilization and how to perceive the Western/European civilization, which was more developed technologically and militarily, have been among the main problems discussed by intellectuals over the past 150 years starting from the Young Ottomans of the 1860s to the era of the Republic of Turkey.<sup>93</sup> The discussions about civilization spread to the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the Tanzimat period. The term civilization (*medeniyet*) was first coined as the definition of kindness and grace. However, in time it turned into a notion that was equivalent to that of Western civilization.

Werner Caskel defines two conditions to be met “to make a civilization ready merely to receive cultural stimuli: first, a consciousness of being inferior; second, contact between the two cultures at more than one point and for some length of time.”<sup>94</sup> The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the period when the state elites of the Ottoman Empire realized the superiority of the West not only in terms of economy, military, and technology but also in social and intellectual terms. Having accepted this and being in interaction with the West for three centuries, the Ottomans directed their attention to Western civilization.

Debates revolved around two main approaches to civilization - imitation vs. reinvention - advocated by two different groups. The first group of intellectuals, mainly Tanzimat state elites, proposed the integration of the Ottoman Empire into Western civilization through imitation, as the common trend of the civilizing project was “a continuous effort to imitate, to modernize, and to position themselves in

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<sup>93</sup> Nurullah Ardic, “Modernity, Identity, Politics: Ahmet Davutoğlu’s Civilizational Discourse,” in *Stratejik Zihniyet: Kuramdan Eyleme Ahmet Davutoğlu ve Stratejik Derinlik*, ed. T. Köse, A. Okumuş and B. Duran (İstanbul: Küre, 2014), 82.

<sup>94</sup> Werner Caskel, “Western Impact and Islamic Civilization.” in *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization* ed. Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955): 335-360.

relation to presumed Western superiority.”<sup>95</sup> They considered Westernization of the country as the only way of survival and *Terakki* (progress) – a key term of the era. Another group called *Garpcilar* (Westernists) furthered the discussion of Tanzimat intellectuals and advocated a total conversion and cultural Westernization of the country. The second group of intellectuals including the Young Ottomans, on the other hand, put forward the idea of reinvention and modification of some aspects of Western civilization to be consistent with Islam and the Islamic identity, rather than a total imitation of the West. Otherwise, “encounters between East and West result not in reciprocal exchanges but in the decline of the weaker, typified in the Middle East by the decline of the Islamic identity.”<sup>96</sup> In this respect, this group of intellectuals did not want a decline or weakening of the Islamic identity. In their civilizational discourse, modernization should be carried out in a way compatible with Islam.

In the same manner, Ottoman Islamist intellectuals directed criticisms towards the West and admiring Tanzimat bureaucrats and resisted cultural Westernization. They objected to secularization and to the idea that Westernization was the only path to progress and survival. Additionally, they claimed that the reason for backwardness was the inertia of people and Westernization itself - not Islam. Furthermore, they reiterated the scientific developments in the history of Islam by emphasizing the idea that Islam was not an impediment to progress and claimed, with a defensive tone, that Muslims brought civilization to Europe.<sup>97</sup> The defensive tone and mood would become one of the major elements of the Islamist intellectuals’ discussions on the notion of civilization in the Republican history as well.

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<sup>95</sup>Göle, “The Quest for the Islamic Self within the Context of Modernity,” 85.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>97</sup> Doğan, “İlerleme ve Medeniyet Kavramlarının Türk Düşüncesinde Etkileşimi,” 254.

### 3.1.1. The Republican Era and the “Level of Contemporary Civilizations”

Turkey will continue to be a battlefield of two civilisations depending on Islamic and Western value system.<sup>98</sup>

Ahmet Davutoglu

The modernization process that began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century continued with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. The primary goal of the newly founded Republic was to create a new “modern” and “Westernized” Turkey with a West-oriented foreign policy. The process proceeded in a way so as the new regime would not repeat the policies of the old system and would carry out projects that the previous rulers would not undertake. This strategy of modernization was intended to contribute to the rupture from the Ottoman *ancien régime*. These goals served the nation-building process of the newly founded Republic. Hans Kohn summarizes the spreading trend of the period’s Westernization and transformation with the following statement: “The entire east is in process of transition from one cultural stage to another. It is a process which deeply affects all categories of social and industrial life; it works great changes in human beings and in their habits and ideas. Turkey in the forefront of the movement.”<sup>99</sup> Necmettin Doğan adds that the Kemalist understanding of civilization presumed backwardness and backward people as merely objects to be transformed as modern science transformed nature.<sup>100</sup> This was the main paradox of the Turkish modernization process as such an understanding underestimated the cultural and religious realities of society and resulted in a top-down manner.

Thus, the reforms were destined to remain superficial and unable to interpenetrate society. Three major dimensions of the Kemalists’ perception of the notion of civilization were the universality of Western civilization, the elimination of Islam from the public sphere, and the intolerance of the nation-state towards diversities.

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<sup>98</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, “The Re-emergence of Islamic Thought in Turkey: Intellectual Transformation.” A paper presented at the International Conference on Middle Eastern Studies at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 6-9 July, Brims Proceedings (1986): 237.

<sup>99</sup> Hans Kohn, “Ten Years of the Turkish Republic.” *Foreign Affairs*, 12 (1933). 141-155.

<sup>100</sup> Doğan, “İlerleme ve Medeniyet Kavramlarının Türk Düşüncesinde Etkileşimi,” 255.

The civilizational discourse of the republic was identified with Westernization and a “universal Western civilization” to a great extent and the motto of the reforms was “to reach the level of the contemporary civilization.” Niyazi Berkes defines the main goal of the republic as “to develop the country along the lines of Western civilization. (...) The reforms to be undertaken would imply nothing but a total revolution - the appropriation of Western civilization.”<sup>101</sup> The transformation of the country’s social and economic life so as to reach the level of contemporary Western civilization was accelerated with intensive and multidimensional reforms. These reforms were introduced both to modernize and Westernize the country and citizens, and to sever the ties with the *ancien régime* quickly.

The second dimension of the Kemalist civilizational understanding was the elimination of Islam from public and state affairs. The formal break of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s government from the Muslim concept of the state and sharia was considered a break with Islam altogether.<sup>102</sup> Reşat Kasaba indicated that the reason behind this break was the supposed link between Islam and the backwardness of society.

The nationalist elites defined the thoughts and deeds of this group (Islamist) as inherently and categorically opposed to their civilizing mission. In their discourse, Islam became an all-purpose bogey representing everything that reform, progress and civilization were not.<sup>103</sup>

The third dimension was the structure of modernization and Westernization, which was determined in accord with the necessities of a nation-state not pluralistic but monist, serving the unity and collective progress of society.

For the ruling Kemalist elites, the unity of society achieved through “progress” of a Western sort is the ultimate goal. Thus, throughout

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<sup>101</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Canada: McGill University Press, 1964), 463.

<sup>102</sup> Caskel, “Western Impact and Islamic Civilization,” 338.

<sup>103</sup> Reşat Kasaba, “Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities.” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997): 15-36.

republican history, all kinds of differentiation- ethnic, ideological, religious and economic- have been viewed not as natural components of a pluralistic democracy but as sources of instability and as threats to unity and progress. Such a perspective permits Turkish modernist elites to legislate and legitimate their essentially antiliberal platform.<sup>104</sup>

Since the Republic of Turkey was founded as a nation-state after the War of Independence against imperial powers, the unity of the society was of vital importance. Additionally, unity was significant for the collective and rapid progress of society. This experience resulted in an authoritarian attitude towards diversities in society. Furthermore, the implementation of the reforms was carried out in a top-down manner without trying to transform people's mentality. This was an outcome of the disconnectedness between the Kemalist elites and society.

Last but not the least, although the Republic aimed at rupture from the *ancien régime*, its perception of Westernization and civilization represented continuity with that of Tanzimat bureaucrats. Islamist intellectuals have offered the most substantial alternative to the civilizational discourse of the Kemalists, who shaped the modernization process.

### **3.1.2. An Alternative Perception of Civilization by the Prominent Islamist Intellectuals of the Republican Era**

There are two major dimensions to the Islamic intellectuals' approach towards the notion of civilization: the critique of Westernization/Western civilization and the need for the revival of Islamic civilization. The prominent Islamist intellectuals of the Republican era such as Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Nurettin Topçu, and Sezai Karakoç embraced Islam as a means of resistance against the perception that claimed the universality of Western civilization, and, as I indicated before, they used a defensive, as well as self-confident, tone in their discussions. They also continued with the criticism that the civilizational understanding and practices of Kemalism were unable to permeate Turkish society because of the hierarchical top-down structure and the inability of the governing elites to comprehend the values of the people of Anatolia.

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<sup>104</sup> Göle, "The Quest for the Islamic Self within the Context of Modernity," 84.

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek directed heavy criticisms not only against Western civilization in terms of lacking a soul and being in a moral decline, but also against the tendency of Republican elites to imitate the West. He pointed out that the civilization that Turkey needed to reach was not the Western civilization, but the Islamic civilization.<sup>105</sup> Another prominent Islamist intellectual of the Republican era, Sezai Karakoc, approached Western civilization in the same critical manner claiming that pursuing Western-style civilization alienated Turkey from its essence, culture, and history. He used the concept of “revival” frequently referring to the revival of the Islamic civilization. He stated that Islam, as a worldview, was the original source of civilization. Nurettin Topçu proposed the construction of a philosophy based on the culture and history of Turkey. He argued that, imposing the reforms, which originated in the West, would not work in Turkey since they were disconnected from Turkish culture. The common theme in Karakoc’s and Topcu’s discussions is the need for the construction of a worldview and soul for Turkey, which is coherent with the culture and history of the Turkish people. Kısakürek and Karakoç gave particular attention to the revival of Islamic civilization and used opposition to the West as a source of resistance and energy.

The main discussions about civilization in Republican history have been produced by the Western-oriented Kemalist elites and the Islamists resisting the Westernization and seeking the revival of Islam. While Kemalists had a general tendency to ignore Turkey’s historical and cultural ties with Eastern civilizations while emphasizing a Western-oriented modernization process and foreign policy, Islamists’ disposition was resistance against the West and Western civilization. Both of their civilizational discourses created their own subjectivity with boundary-producing manners. Both the Kemalists’ attempts to locate Turkey in Europe by ignoring its Eastern connections and the Islamists’ tendency to criticize the West as the colonial other are similar boundary-producing practices with competing discourses of civilizational geopolitics. These discussions about civilization have not remained within Turkey but

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<sup>105</sup> Doğan, “İlerleme ve Medeniyet Kavramlarının Türk Düşüncesinde Etkileşimi,” 256.

have influenced the foreign policy discourse of state elites during the Republican history.

### **3.1.3. The History of Turkey's Civilizational Geopolitics**

The civilizational discourse and civilizational geopolitics followed in the Kemalist foreign policy were based on the approval of the Western civilizational discourse, which was produced by the West to emphasize its superiority over other civilizations, and the struggle to integrate into that civilization. This tendency resulted in a unilateral foreign policy. Nothing else could have described the traditional Kemalist foreign policy towards the Middle East better than the statement of Tevfik Rüştü Aras, Turkey's Foreign Minister from 1925 to 1939: "Turkey is now a Western power; the death of a peasant in the Balkans is of more importance to Turkey than the death of a king in Afghanistan."<sup>106</sup> However, Turkey was at crossroads to make a decision whether it would take advantage of the changing conjuncture as part of a changing international order following the end of the Cold War to increase its influence area; which would require a change of the unilateral Western-orientation to extend the country's foreign policy options. Metaphors such as "leadership" and "centrality" were put into use while constructing a new civilizational discourse for Turkey after the 1990s. Remembering Gertjan Dijkink's national identity and geopolitical visions theory, it is not surprising to find the traces of leadership and centrality in foreign policy-makers' civilizational discourse whenever they find the opportunity. Every Turkish citizen grows up listening to the glorious Turkish history in history lessons starting from the Xiongnu Empire (*Büyük Hun İmparatorluğu*) (220 BC) and its great leader Mete Khan who defeated and imposed a duty on historical rival, China. These lessons, which cover more than one hundred Turkic countries, start at primary school and continue until the end of high school, which creates, in the citizens, a vision of Turkey as a hegemonic state with the potential to be a leader in its surrounding region. And this two-millennial "dignified" Turkish history is eternalized on the political level by using the sixteen most "glorious" of those states/empires on the presidential flag of Turkey. It is very predictable that there would be traces of the

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<sup>106</sup> William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy Since 1774 3rd Edition*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), 42.



historical achievements in political campaigns or in the context of the speeches given by the political leaders. "Living somewhere means being exposed to the continuous stream of discourse produced by a local society and experiencing events which differ in kind from those happening elsewhere in the world."<sup>107</sup> Being exposed to such a stream of discourse in Turkey makes it inevitable to aspire to an active role in the region.

To better illustrate how experience and discourse together create an "imaginative geography,"<sup>108</sup> it would be interesting to exemplify four political figures from Turkey with different identities who have been able to construct a vision and civilizational discourse in Turkish foreign policy deconstructing traditional Kemalist foreign policy paradigms: Turgut Özal, Necmettin Erbakan, İsmail Cem, and Ahmet Davutoğlu.

As a liberal conservative, although Turgut Ozal prioritized the West, in particular the USA, he still believed that the harmony between the West and the East could be achieved. He was "among the first of the Turkish statesmen not to have hesitated to stress the 'Islamic' dimension of the Turkish national identity."<sup>109</sup> As opposed to "Kemalist Turkish leaders who perceived themselves as Western rather than Islamic, Asian and Middle Eastern,"<sup>110</sup> he aimed to create a multidimensional foreign policy dependent on mutual interests transforming Westernism from "ends" to "means"<sup>111</sup> which would help Turkey's leadership interests. "For Özal, the Islamic 'connection' could be useful as a foreign policy instrument to turn Turkey into a regional power."<sup>112</sup> While the first of Özal's desire was to become a "big brother" to the Central Asian and Caucasian states, the second was a claim for hegemony in the Islamic world.

As a leader with an Islamist background and as the first Islamist prime minister of Turkey, Necmettin Erbakan's major foreign policy objective was the provision of the

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<sup>107</sup> Dijkink, *National Identity & Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>109</sup> Berdal Aral, "Dispensing with Tradition? Turkish Politics and International Society during the Özal Decade, 1983-93." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37 (2001): 72-88.

<sup>110</sup>, Muhittin Ataman, "Özalist Dış Politika: Aktif ve Rasyonel Bir Anlayış." *Bilgi* 7 (2003): 49-64.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Aral, "Dispensing with Tradition?"

reunion of Muslim states with Pan-Islamist policies. In 1994, Erbakan visited the U.S. as the guest of the American Muslim Council where he talked “about creating ‘a new Muslim world order’ consisting of an Islamic United Nations, an Islamic NATO, an Islamic United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, a common Islamic currency and an Islamic Common Market. ‘When we came to power’, Erbakan declared with characteristic bluster, ‘Turkey will start such an Islamic Union.’”<sup>113</sup> That characteristic bluster, which belongs not only to Erbakan but also to all four leaders that I will refer to, emphasized that Turkey would not be an ordinary member but the founder and the leader of that union. However, he could not reach his desired objectives since “he was not able to turn his anti-Western discourse into a consistent political, social and economic program.”<sup>114</sup>

Different from Özal and Erbakan, İsmail Cem had a background closer to Kemalism. However, he had a liberal perspective and “did not share the nationalist foreign policy perspectives of Kemalism.”<sup>115</sup> In other words, he had a constructivist perspective towards Kemalism. Although his orientation was towards the West, he did not identify himself and Turkey blindly with the West. Moreover, he did not deny the Ottoman heritage and even stated “Ottoman-Turkish civilization and its moral values contributed to the evolution of the Middle Ages into modern times.”<sup>116</sup> The attraction to the past is also a characteristic of his discourse. He stated, “The Ottoman Turkish presence in Europe during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought forward new ideals and new patterns of social relationships, introducing human values and a highly egalitarian, efficient and sophisticated organization in an era when feudalism, a lack of tolerance and exploitation of the people prevailed,”<sup>117</sup> stressing the times when the Turks were superior to Europe.

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<sup>113</sup> Philip Robins, “Turkish Foreign Policy under Erbakan.” *Survival*, 39 (1997): 82-100.

<sup>114</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*. (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2010), 90.

<sup>115</sup> Hasan Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism and Globalization*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 142.

<sup>116</sup> İsmail Cem, “Turkey and Europe: Looking to the Future from a Historical Perspective.” <http://sam.gov.tr/tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Ismail-Cem.pdf>

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Ahmet Davutoglu, foreign minister of Turkey from 2009 to 2014, was credited as the architect of the AK Party's foreign policy paradigm, which went beyond the Republican Western orientation, from 2002 until the end of his tenure in office as the prime minister in 2016. He managed to reconstruct the self-confident foreign policy identity of the country which shifted towards the Middle East. Davutoglu had a post-Islamist identity which embraced Islamic civilization without directing criticisms as harsh as other Islamist intellectuals such as Sezai Karakoç and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek at Western civilization. The shift was interpreted as "the biggest regional strategic shift since the Iranian Revolution."<sup>118</sup> However, neither Davutoglu's background in academia nor his strategist approach was able to prevent him from repeating the metaphors denoting Turkey's leadership and centrality. On the contrary, the country's rising self-confidence paralleled the use of these metaphors and he formulated civilizational geopolitics that positioned Turkey as a center state within its surrounding geography utilizing the country's historical and geographical depth.

The identities of these political figures as individuals affected their foreign policy visions, discourses, and practices. What is common in their discourse is the way they offer an active and central role to Turkey as a consequence of their national identity which is nourished by a rich history. Their national identity not only influenced their foreign policy vision and discourse but also impacted the production of their foreign policy practices.

They all had different advantages and disadvantages in implementing their civilizational geopolitics at the juncture when they held office. Although Necmettin Erbakan had assertive claims, he did not have the chance to theorize and put his claims into practice because he was a policy-maker in coalition governments only for short terms in 1974 and from 1996 to 1997, lacking a political stability. Turgut Özal's disadvantage was that most of his tenure in office first as prime minister and then as president was during the Cold War, during a two-polar international system.

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<sup>118</sup> Barry Rubin, "Turkish Regime Changes Sides, West Averts Eyes." *The Rubin Report*. June 6, 2010. Available at: <http://rubinreports.blogspot.com/2010/06/turkish-regime-changes-sides-west.html>.

And his Motherland Party lost the majority in the parliament with the October 1991 elections, only two months before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, preventing his direct influence on policy-making. He passed away in 1993 without having substantial time to theorize the circumstances of the post-Cold War period. Ahmet Davutoglu was foreign minister for 5 years during a one-party government providing him the most stable period to come up with an assertive civilizational discourse among these four political figures. However, he overestimated the capabilities of Turkey to meet those expectations and underestimated the reaction of regional states to Turkey's claims. Moreover, the unexpected circumstances after the Arab Spring did not proceed in accordance with Davutoglu's idealist and assertive discourse and policies. Despite the fact that Davutoglu is credited as the most prominent agent of civilizational discourse in foreign policy in the recent history of Turkey, Ismail Cem deserves to be referred to as the precursor of Turkey's civilizational geopolitics after the end of the Cold War. As a realist foreign minister, Cem formulated Turkey as a "world state" among civilizations utilizing the country's historical and cultural ties with both Western and Eastern civilizations. What we can infer from all the above discussion of geopolitics, civilizational discourse, and foreign policy-making is that state elites' mental maps are directly influenced by their identities and they position people's geopolitical location according to the civilization they belong to. European civilization should be given specific attention in this regard because the emergence of the notion of civilization took place in Europe and was based on the universality/superiority of European civilization. Precisely because of the latter Europe's geopolitical identity has severe borders against "others." On the other hand, Turkey, as a country which has territory both on the European and Asian continents, has been endeavoring to define where it belongs in a geography where geopolitical location and civilizational identity are bound to each other so deeply. Although the discussions of different intellectual currents such as Tanzimat bureaucrats, Young Turks, Kemalists, Westernists, and Islamists have varied regarding Turkey's civilizational identity since the late Ottoman period, the attitude of the Kemalist elites as the dominant agents of Turkish politics has historically been Western-oriented. However, the geopolitical imagination of a country's population or political elites may often contrast with the geopolitical positioning of the state by other states within the

system because while the geopolitical imagination of the state may be determined from within, its actual positioning within the regional and global systems is largely determined from without.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, Turkey's Western oriented civilizational geopolitics was challenged with the end of the Cold War which changed the whole international system.

### **3.2. The New World Order after the End of the Cold War**

The beginning of the 1990s witnessed the end of the Cold War and the bipolar system in world politics. The fall of Berlin Wall in 1989 was followed by the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. Regional powers immediately started formulating policies and attempts to secure their positions and to fill the power gaps in a "new world order." First of all, the newly independent states in the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia took to the stage of international politics in a pursuit of gaining a place for themselves in regional politics after seven decades of Soviet rule. On the other hand, member states of the European Economic Community (EEC) signed the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, changing the EEC into the European Union (EU) and strengthening European integration and institutions. The fall of the Berlin Wall was an impetus for a four-decade-long division, the so-called Iron Curtain, in Europe both geographically and ideologically. The EU's enlargement towards Eastern Europe started with the 1995 enlargement and finally with the 2005 EU enlargement, former Soviet Republics joined the union. Another important development in international politics included Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 to take advantage of the power gap in the Middle East, starting the Gulf Crisis. Meanwhile, the United States strengthened its hegemony in the Middle East first with its intervention in the Gulf Crisis and then with its operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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<sup>119</sup> David Newman, "Citizenship, Identity and Location: The Changing Discourse of Israeli Geopolitics" in K. Dodds & D. Atkinson (eds), *Geopolitical Traditions? Critical Histories of a Century of Geopolitical Thought*. Routledge: London. 1998.

### 3.2.1. Turkey Loses Its Buffer Zone Status

The dissolution of the Soviet bloc meant simultaneously new hopes and new dangers for Turkey.<sup>120</sup> There were two main competing camps about the influence of the aforementioned at changing conjuncture over Turkey's position within regional and international system. The first group of theorists proposed the idea that Turkey's geopolitical and geostrategic importance diminished with the elimination of the Soviet threat. "Policy makers in Ankara were apprehensive that the demise of the Soviet threat and East-West rivalries would undermine their country's geo-strategic role in the Western alliance."<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, Turkey's natural bond/alliance with the West thanks to its North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) membership, which represented the Western-oriented ideology of the country since its foundation, ended. As ambassador Ömür Orhun<sup>122</sup> pointed out, "Turkey's membership of NATO has been one of the main pillars of her foreign policy and security policy; not only because of NATO's important security guarantee, but also because this membership is a clear manifestation of her Western vocation."<sup>123</sup> Turkey had been a part of the West and the Western security concerns since WWII, in specific during the Cold War with the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and its NATO membership. Moreover, Turkey's buffer zone status to a certain extent to its advantage because it enabled Turkey to remain under the protective security umbrella of the West and, at the same time, was used as a bargaining tool. Thus, the new conjuncture created disappointment and despair in this camp as they believed that NATO lost its founding purpose and Turkey lost its privilege as a NATO member.

The second camp interpreted the changing conjuncture in Turkey's advantage and advocated the need for a change in the geopolitical vision of the country exceeding the boundaries of traditional Western orientation. Although Turkish foreign policy

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<sup>120</sup> Eric Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, Translated by Yasemin Saner Gönen, (Istanbul: İletişim, 1995), 442.

<sup>121</sup> Sabri Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54, No. 1 (Fall 2000):169-182.

<sup>122</sup> Ömür Orhun is the former director general of International Security Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey.

<sup>123</sup> Ömür Orhun, "The Uncertainties and Challenges Ahead: A Southern Perspective" *Perceptions* 4, No. 1 (March-May 1999): 23-31.

was founded on the principle of protecting the status quo,<sup>124</sup> the traditional one-sided orientation began to change with the end of the Cold War, parallel to the new geostrategic horizons, threats, and opportunities in the regions surrounding Turkey.” The end of the Cold War changed Turkey’s neighboring region as much as WWI and WWII with newly emerging independent states relatively weaker than Turkey.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, Turkey’s main geostrategic rival and threat, the Soviet Union, disappeared and consequently a newly assertive Turkey promoted itself as the natural leader of the Muslim world largely on the basis of its imperial legacy from the Ottoman Empire, making Turkey see itself as “an important international actor that had more to offer than simply its military and economic capabilities.”<sup>126</sup> Turgut Ozal, whose tenure in office from 1989 to 1993 was marked by new regional foreign policy initiatives, was the pioneer of the attempts to transform Turkish foreign policy and his leadership proved to have a lasting influence on Turkey’s pursuit of activist and assertive policies during the rest of the decade.<sup>127</sup> “Geography and geopolitics served as the main reference point in defining Turkey’s role in the new international order”<sup>128</sup> in both camps.

Accordingly, Turkey needed to redefine its identity and status between the West and the East in the new global context. The end of the Cold War meant something beyond the change of international power balances for Turkey because Turkey’s position as a NATO member was a natural bound representing the country’s Western-oriented foundation. It was an ideological rather than simply a geographical orientation. Thus, the discussions about the identity of Turkey and which civilization it belongs to, which had marked intellectual discussions for more than 150 years, were on the agenda again as the country lost its “frontier country” status. Therefore, Turkey had to first

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<sup>124</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *Bir Kimlik Peşinde Türkiye* Translated by Sedat Cem Karadeli (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006), 124.

<sup>125</sup> William Hale, *Türk Dış Politikası: 1774-2000*, Translated by Petek Demir (Istanbul: Mozaik, 2003) 202.

<sup>126</sup> Joshua W. Walker, “Turkey’s Imperial Legacy: Understanding Contemporary Turkey Through its Ottoman Past” *PGDT* 8 (2009): 494-508.

<sup>127</sup> Sayarı, *Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era*.

<sup>128</sup> Bir, Çevik. “Turkey’s Role in the New World Order.” *Strategic Forum*, No. 135 (1998): 1–6, Quoted in Murat Yesiltas, “The Transformation of the Geopolitical Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Turkish Studies*, 14, No. 4: 661-687.

redefine its identity to be able to figure out a consistent agenda to be able to keep up with the circumstances of the new world order.

### **3.2.2. Political Instability as a Challenge against Identity Discussions**

Turkey faced the challenge of redefining its identity and foreign policy options in an environment where political instability struck the country at the domestic level. The instability of the governments prevented/restricted the formation of sustainable policies while the difficulties stemming from the rising Kurdish nationalism affected both domestic and foreign policy negatively.<sup>129</sup> The main problems at the domestic level were the political instability as a result of coalition governments and the personal controversies among political party leaders throughout the 1990s; the rise of political Islam that resulted in a “postmodern coup d’état” and the closure of the Islamist Welfare Party with nationwide protests; the Kurdish issue and the armed conflict with the PKK; and, finally, the ensuing economic problems. Turkey met the new millennium with 10 governments in a decade and a huge economic crisis, leading the period to be referred to as a “lost decade.”

In addition to political instability caused by coalition governments, early elections, political bans, party closures, vote of confidence problems and finally a coup d’état, Turkey had to deal with terrorism in the 1990s. The armed conflict with the PKK that started in August 1984 reached its peak in the 1990s. Turkey took an active stand during the armed conflict with the PKK and aimed at eliminating the terrorist organization. On the other hand, the PKK problem exceeded Turkey’s borders and became a foreign policy issue as a result of the Gulf Crisis during which the Baghdad government lost its hegemony in northern Iraq, enabling the PKK to become mobile between southeast Turkey and northern Iraq.

### **3.2.3. The Framework of Turkish Foreign Policy in the 1990 and Ismail Cem**

In terms of the developments in Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s, Turkey remained a strategic ally of the U.S. and “relations with the United States and Israel constituted

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<sup>129</sup> Hale, *Türk Dış Politikası: 1774-2000*, 210.



the primary axis of Turkish foreign policy.”<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, Turkey-EU relations followed a changing and ambiguous path during the decade.<sup>131</sup> Turkey’s long journey of EU membership process was a reflection of the country’s long-term wish to be a part of the Western civilization. Although Turkey joined the Customs Union in 1996, its full membership application to the EU was rejected soon thereafter at the 1997 Luxembourg Summit. On one hand, the EU took initiatives for Eastern Europe enlargement during the Essen 1994 meeting, and, on the other, the union decided that Turkey could not be declared eligible for full membership for cultural (religious or racial) reasons in addition to economic concerns.<sup>132</sup> Europe’s exclusive policy towards Turkey caused both the Turkish public and policy-makers to begin to question Western double standards.

The next chapter will focus on the civilizational geopolitical discourse of Ismail Cem and his position among traditional discussions of admiration (Kemalists) and reaction (Islamists). How and with what consequences Cem used civilizational discourse and how he defined Turkey’s identity in order to justify foreign policy will be examined thoroughly.

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<sup>130</sup> Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, “Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism During the AKP Era,” *Turkish Studies* 10, No.1 (2009): 7-24.

<sup>131</sup> Hale, *Türk Dış Politikası: 1774-2000*, 248

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

## CHAPTER IV

### REDEFINING TURKEY'S IDENTITY AND GEOPOLITICAL VISION VIA FOREIGN POLICY- MAKING AFTER THE END OF THE COLD WAR: THE EXAMPLE OF ISMAIL CEM

Ismail Cem, the minister of foreign affairs of Turkey from 1997 to 2002, was one of the most stable policy-makers of such an unstable political environment for he held the office for 5 years. His tenure in office came in a period when Turkey was struggling to redefine its identity both domestically and internationally. The rise of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism at the domestic level and the doubts about the European Union at the international level challenged the founding principles of the secular, unitarian and Western-oriented Turkish state. The discussions whether Turkey was a Western or Eastern country came to the agenda again and the exclusive policies of Europe contributed to the search for alternatives in foreign policy for the country.

Ismail Cem considered Turkey's position between the West and the East as a source of privilege rather than an obstacle causing an identity crisis. "Turkey does not have to make a choice between being Asian or European: Turkey has the privilege and the uniqueness of being both Asian and European. This is the source of our cultural and historical assets, of our geo-strategic advantages."<sup>133</sup> He added, "Turkey must go beyond the artificial divisions/boundaries such as 'Islamist vs secular' in domestic politics and like 'East vs West' and 'Europe vs Asia' in foreign policy in order to protect and develop its own interests."<sup>134</sup> His approach was a challenge both against the boundary-producing feature of foreign policy-making and against the Eurocentric origin of civilizational geopolitics. However, his realism was the primary determining factor here, as he desired to expand Turkey's foreign policy options and to extend its zone of influence accordingly; rather than moralist or idealist concerns as he clearly stated to "leave the over-emphasis on idealistic concepts and concentrate more on

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<sup>133</sup> Ismail Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 2nd Edition, (Rustem Publishing: Mersin, 2001), 22.

<sup>134</sup> Ismail Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Strateji, Yunanistan, Kıbrıs* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), 24.

interests, on plans and details.”<sup>135</sup> Cem believed that “realism was the precondition of success for a supra-regional state like Turkey in a geography where many world states compete for hegemony.”<sup>136</sup> He described foreign policy as “a mathematical calculation of the country’s interests”<sup>137</sup> and he was quite determined in terms of assuring Turkey’s national interests as he stated “foreign policy is looking out for your own interests even among friends.”<sup>138</sup>

He proposed that Turkey needed a **redefinition of its identity** and ideological and conceptual **renewal** of its foreign policy in order to become a **world state** exceeding the boundaries of a nation-state with the introduction of the **cultural** and **historical** assets of the country into an **assertive** foreign policy-making to benefit from the **geostrategic advantage** of being at the **center** of European and Asian civilizations, both as a **bridge** and as a **role model** to the Islamic world. As a consequence, he believed, “at the down of the millennium, we are confident that Turkey will have a **leadership** role in her wider region.”<sup>139</sup> Cem presented Turkey as the representative of a huge **historical geography**, of several centuries of civilizations founded on that geography, rather than having only the 70-year-old legacy of the Republic.

As a consequence, a multidimensional foreign policy paradigm was developed with the objective of putting Turkey in a central position in its surrounding geography. Two major elements of the new foreign policy paradigm were the historical and cultural parameters of Turkey. Cem stated: “Given that we are a people who participated in the formation of several great civilizations and that we have a huge historical geography, which endured centuries, I believe this advantage should be put in practice in our present-day endeavors.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 91.

<sup>136</sup> Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Strateji, Yunanistan, Kıbrıs*, 21.

<sup>137</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 13.

<sup>138</sup> İsmail Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Avrupa’nın “Birliği” ve Türkiye* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009): 78.

<sup>139</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 59.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

Cem considered history and culture as the elements of a realistic assessment and power balance analysis.<sup>141</sup> He regarded the historical dimension of Turkey as the most valuable asset of foreign policy-making and stated that the introduction of the historical dimension to the country's geostrategy was his "modest contribution" to Turkish foreign policy.<sup>142</sup> The historical and cultural parameters of Ismail Cem's civilizational discourse were employed as different justification elements in different policy spheres. They were utilized in order to formulate an active foreign policy with the objective of becoming a "world state" as an essential requirement of Turkey's national interest in various areas. These areas ranged from the justification of Turkey's Europeanness by referencing the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the European continent in relation to membership in the European Union to the justification of the unitary feature of minority definition and the policies implemented for minorities by proposing them as Ottoman heritage and tradition against the pressure of the European Union on Turkey on ethnicity issues; and also to the counter argument against the declining strategic value of Turkey after the end of the Cold War by asserting that Turkey was to have a central position in the newly emerging Eurasia by virtue of its historical and cultural links with the newly independent states in the region. He offered intercivilizational cooperation between the European and Eastern states that would put Turkey in a central position.

This chapter seeks to analyze from a critical geopolitical perspective how Ismail Cem redefined Turkey's identity, civilizational belonging and national interests, how he transformed the geographical vision of the country with the redefinition of the West and the Middle East, as well as his initiatives such as the openings towards Latin America and Africa. Finally, the chapter seeks to discuss how Cem altered the roles attributed to "friends" and "foes" by developing relations with Greece and Syria exceeding the understanding that Turkey is surrounded by enemies. All the above contributed to a reimagined geography for Turkey exceeding the fixed boundaries of the nation-state. While analyzing Ismail Cem, it should be kept in mind that "there is

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<sup>141</sup> Mehmet Ali Tuğtan, "Kültürel Değişkenlerin Dış Politikadaki Yeri: İsmail Cem ve Ahmet Davutoğlu", *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 13, No. 49 (2016): 3-24.

<sup>142</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 49.

a sense of greatness, in the common Turkish mind, based on belonging to a nation which has established empires and been master of a world empire, which was only brought down by a world war.”<sup>143</sup> Therefore, Ismail Cem’s emphasis on Turkey’s historical and cultural ties gives us clues about his geographical vision, his reimagined geography, and role for Turkey in international politics and how he planned and executed the country’s foreign policy accordingly. Key concepts such as “center”, “bridge”, or “world state”<sup>144</sup> in his discourse hint at his geopolitical vision and his plans for Turkey in international politics.

Before starting an analysis of Cem’s policies as minister of foreign affairs, it is significant to offer some brief information about his life as his intellectual journey and personal transformation in time impacted both his mindset and his decision-making process.

#### **4.1. Cem’s Political Life, Political Thought, and Transformation**

Ismail Cem, born in 1940, graduated from Robert College in Istanbul before earning a Bachelor’s degree in Law from Lausanne University in 1963 and a Master’s degree in Political Sociology from the Political Sciences Faculty of the École Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris in 1983. Having been educated in Europe, he was closely acquainted with Western culture and politics. He started his career as a journalist when he returned to Turkey in 1963. He worked at several newspapers, including *Milliyet*, and was the head of the Istanbul Office of the Turkish Journalists Union between 1971 and 1974. He served as the general manager of the national public broadcaster Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) between 1974 and 1975.

Cem became involved in active politics in the 1980s and was elected as an MP (Social Democratic Populist Party, SDPP) in 1987 and 1991. He left the SDPP soon after the 1991 elections and joined the Republican People’s Party. He served as the minister of culture in 1995. Cem held the office of the minister of foreign affairs between 1997

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<sup>143</sup> Mustafa Aydın, “Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35 No.4 (1999): 152-186.

<sup>144</sup> Merkez ülke, köprü ülke, dünya devleti.

and 2002. After serving as foreign minister for 5 years, he resigned from his office and became one of the founders of the New Turkey Party in 2002. He was then elected as the head of the party. After failing in the 2002 elections, the New Turkey Party joined the Republican People's Party in 2004. Cem was appointed as the chief advisor to the chairperson of the RPP. Soon thereafter he left politics when he was diagnosed with lung cancer.

At a young age in the 1960s and 1970s, Cem was influenced by Marxist-leftist-socialist ideas. However, after the September 12, 1980 coup in Turkey, parallel with the transformation of the country towards a neoliberal free market economy, Cem's ideas were influenced, too. He combined his 1970s leftism and socialism with the neoliberal trend in Turkey in the 1980s and argued that a neoliberal economy should include a social state and equality for everyone within a pluralist democracy.

Cem's intellectual journey revolved around analyzing the Turkish modernization and the problems of Turkish democracy. He devoted his ideas to the solution of Turkey's democracy problems as well as increasing Turkey's status in the international arena with an active foreign policy paradigm. He strongly believed in the significance of Turkey's European Union membership process because he believed that the EU process would carry Turkey to the standards of European democracy, which was a reflection of his social democrat personality. However, he advocated a multidimensional foreign policy discourse and practice in the best interests of the country - rather than an EU obsession.

Cem had special interest in the Ottoman history and legacy and sought to find bonds between the past and the present. These brought a sense of pride in his discourse while talking about Ottoman history and legacy –for example, he stated, “the Ottoman-Turkish civilization and its moral values contributed to the evolution of the Middle Ages into modern times.”<sup>145</sup> Thus, it is possible to find traces of his

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<sup>145</sup> Ismail Cem, “Turkey and Europe: Looking to the Future from a Historical Perspective” <http://sam.gov.tr/tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Ismail-Cem.pdf>

interpretation of the Ottoman imperial legacy on his geopolitical vision and decision-making process as he promoted the legacy as a source of self-confidence. Another important point of his emphasis on Ottoman history is that he believed in the importance of deconstructing the negative perception of Ottoman history in Turkey and in Turkish people's mind in order to convince European and Middle Eastern states of the contributions of the Ottoman Empire rather than viewing it as the ultimate 'other' and an "antithesis"<sup>146</sup> of the Western civilization.

As a reflection of his 1970s leftism and post-September 12 social democrat identity, Cem had a deconstructive perception towards the intolerances of Kemalism, ignorance of Ottoman legacy in addition to Eurocentric thinking and Turkey's blind EU obsession. They all contributed to his redefinition of Turkey's identity and national interests. On one hand, Cem defined Kemalism as a "kind of radicalism depending on petty bourgeois segments including urban people, intellectuals, bureaucrats and local notables and principles of republicanism, secularism positivism with a pragmatic character."<sup>147</sup> He tried to formulate a "moderate" Kemalism in 1980s and 1990s "in order to embrace pious segments of the society and to prevent anti-democratic acts (such as coups) made in the name of Kemalism"<sup>148</sup> On the other hand, he defined the Islamic movement in Turkey as a "metaphysical reaction of suppressed masses" and "nothing but unconscious class-based reaction."<sup>149</sup> Particularly in terms of his definition of Kemalism, Cem resembled the civilizational geopolitical discourse of Young Ottomans who advocated a form of Westernization that was compatible with Islam. In that sense, Cem's civilizational discourse constituted a third way beyond traditional Kemalist and Islamist stands as he desired to avoid radical aspects of both of them in order to create a coexistence mainly because of his social democrat understanding.

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<sup>146</sup> Ismail Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Avrupa'nın Birliği ve Türkiye*, 241.

<sup>147</sup> Ozan Örmeci, "Ismail Cem's Views on Kemalism" *Journal of Arts and Humanities (JAH)* 1, No. 1 (August 2012): 33-40.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ismail Cem, *Türkiye'de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi*, (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1979): 362-3 in Ozan Örmeci, "A Turkish Social Democrat: Ismail Cem", *Turkish Studies*, 12, no.1 (March 2011): 101-114.

## **4.2. Ismail Cem's Redefinition of Turkey's Identity and National Interests**

### **4.2.1. Ismail Cem's Perspective on Identity and Civilization**

The discussions about whether Turkey is a Western or an Eastern state between the two major competing camps, the Kemalists and the Islamists, have marked the intellectual debates on Turkey's identity since the foundation of the Republic. While the Kemalist elites featured Turkey's connection to the Western civilization, the Islamist scholars advocated the revival of Islamic civilization for the country's development. Therefore, the debates about Turkey's identity have not been independent of the discussions about which civilization it belonged to. And there have been a tension and exclusive attitude between secular ruling Kemalist elites and the Islamist intellectuals both in social and political terms from both camps to each other. Although the Kemalists had been the country's ruling camp since 1923, the 1990s witnessed the rise of political Islam as a challenge to the secular foundation of the state. The 1994 local elections witnessed the rise of the Islamist Welfare Party under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan, winning 28 municipalities throughout Turkey. Erbakan won the 1995 early general elections, too. However, his attempts to form a coalition government with the Motherland Party (ANAP) failed, resulting in a coalition government between the Democratic Leftist Party (DSP) and the ANAP. That coalition government ended with the cancellation of the vote of confidence by the Constitutional Court. Later on, on July 8, 1996, a coalition government was formed between the Welfare Party and the True Path Party (DYP), making Erbakan the first Islamist prime minister and making the 54<sup>th</sup> government the first Islamic-led coalition in the history of the Turkish Republic. Only seven months after the establishment of the 54<sup>th</sup> government, Erbakan, who was accused of following a fundamentalist agenda, was forced to resign on February 28, 1997, as his policies faced reaction from the Kemalist elites and the military who consider themselves as the guardians of secularism in Turkey. That so-called postmodern coup d'état was followed by the headscarf ban at universities and the closing of religious *imam hatip* schools causing demonstrations and deep turmoil in society. Thus, Turkey spent the 1990s not only in search of its international identity but also in search of its domestic identity.



Ismail Cem considered binaries such as secular vs Islamist, European vs Asian, or West vs East as “forced alternatives that needed to be overcome.”<sup>150</sup>

The most fundamental of these ‘imperative’ choices found expression in the dichotomy of ‘Islam vs secularism.’ The foreign policy extension of the ‘Islamic’ side consisted of the ‘Asian’ and ‘East’ options; the ‘secular’ side had ‘European’ and ‘West’ to offer. In a real sense, the Islam vs secularism dichotomy that plagued the country internally was being replayed in foreign policy and unduly influencing Turkey’s view of the world. This is because this particular imperative choice (secularism vs Islam) defines, to a large degree, mindsets, approaches, and domestic politics –and, as a result, it has shaped the traditional foreign policy as well.<sup>151</sup>

As stated above, Cem considered Turkey’s West vs East dichotomy in foreign policy as an extension of the secular vs Islamist distinction at the domestic level. Therefore, he suggested that Turkish foreign policy had to go beyond that traditional approach and arrive at syntheses that were in harmony with Turkey’s history, culture, and realities, and which would be of greater benefit to the country and to others.<sup>152</sup> But the first step of overcoming the West vs East dichotomy was the redefinition of Turkey’s national identity. According to Cem, identity consciousness was a self-directed, personal issue of Turkey. Turkey needed to comprehend where the country had come from and where it was heading, its privileges, accumulations, and its position; in other words, Turkey needed to identify and define itself correctly. Because, he believed, “to share in and to contribute to human civilization, one must first be one’s own self.”<sup>153</sup> He emphasized identity consciousness and stated that “in the development of any policy – but particularly in the shaping of foreign policy- a nation’s culture and self-perception are fundamental elements.”<sup>154</sup> He defined Turkey as a supra-regional big power with its history, culture, relations, civilizations, strategical location, industrial infrastructure, and with its accumulations which it could either handle or not.<sup>155</sup> He added that all the civilizations that have been a part of our history and our geography need to be reconciled with one another and with

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<sup>150</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 14.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>155</sup> Cem, *Türkiye Avrupa Avrasya: Avrupa’nın “Birliği” ve Türkiye*, 80-81.

modern Turkey as a prerequisite for cohesion in Turkish society and foreign policy.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, the Ottoman legacy constituted a historical model for tolerance and coexistence of different religious and ethnic groups and he believed that the legacy of Turkey's Ottoman past was an example to overcome boundaries and dichotomies. According to Cem,

The contemporary Turkish Republic should consider its identity as the expression of all cultures, which have thrived in our land; as the possessor of a great cultural heritage that can be traced to Ion, Byzantium, Central Asia, the Seljuks and the Ottomans. In a historical dimension, our present day republic should be the representative and bearer of all these cultures that flourished within our geography. Thus, what seems to me as the main factor of identity of Turkish culture might appear in a clearer vision: To be an original culture and to be specific to our geography on one hand; and, on the other, to be the cultural expression, the means of cultural dialogue and interaction, sometimes of synthesis, of a much wider geography ranging from Central Asia to the shores of the Aegean, to the Balkans and to Central Europe.<sup>157</sup>

After defining Turkey's identity as the unique accumulation of all civilizations in the country's historical geography, Cem explained what he meant by civilization. He gave particular attention to the features and the origin of the Western civilization as he called the West and the Western civilization the "*fikr-i müşir*"<sup>158</sup> and "*Kaaba*" of all ruling elites of the country for 200 years.<sup>159</sup>

Ismail Cem argued that civilization was a controversial concept; however, he believed that the purpose of civilization should be the ability to "provide people with security and assurance, to offer the freedom they need, and to supply justice, equality and order in which they can live comfortably."<sup>160</sup> The remarkable concepts in his definition were those of freedom, security, assurance, justice, and equality which are not only identified with Western democracy and included among the Copenhagen Criteria, but also fit into his social democratic ideas. What we can understand from

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<sup>156</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 12.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>158</sup> It is an Ottoman-Turkish expression referring to profound ideas or thoughts

<sup>159</sup> Ismail Cem, *Türkiye'de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), 270.

<sup>160</sup> 2.kitap 243

his definition is that his understanding of civilization represented the values of European democracy and that it was identified with social democracy. As Cem's perception of civilization represented the West's democratic values, development and urbanization, Turkey's EU membership process was vital in his discourse for Turkey's development in social and economic terms.

Although Cem emphasized the West's democracy/human values as the core principles of civilization, he added that those values had been generated not only by Europeans but also with the contribution of all humanity over hundreds of years. He stated that especially the contribution of the Ottoman Empire -as the representative of a more egalitarian and humanitarian order- to the formation of European democratic values in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries when Europe was struggling with feudalism, should not be ignored.<sup>161</sup>

In his book *The History of Underdevelopment in Turkey (Türkiye'de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi)* written in 1970, İsmail Cem had a very critical perspective towards Western civilization. As part of his '70s leftism, he stressed the class-based origin of the Western civilization depending on slavery since Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, which he referred as the sources of the Western civilization in addition to Christianity.<sup>162</sup> He defined the two major traits of Western civilization as materialism and individualism. He referred to the West's materialism as the ultimate purpose of its civilization and quoted from Karl Marx: "Bourgeoisie society has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous cash payment."<sup>163</sup> Cem added that all other value measurements are secondary compared to that purpose<sup>164</sup> and humans had no other value than being simply a means of production.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, he believed, that the Western culture and economic system was not likely to emerge in a society whose structure, habits, or members did not

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<sup>161</sup> Cem, *Türkiye Avrupa Avrasya: Avrupa'nın "Birliği" ve Türkiye*, 151.

<sup>162</sup> Cem, *Türkiye'de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi*, 271.

<sup>163</sup> Karl Marx, "The Communist Manifesto" *The Political Philosophers*, (New York: Modern Pocket Library, 1953), 498 as quoted in İsmail Cem, *Türkiye'de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi*, 274.

<sup>164</sup> Cem, *Türkiye'de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi*, 274.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 276.

attribute extreme importance to the “material.”<sup>166</sup> His opinion about the formation of Western civilization outside the West hints towards a critique of the superficial and top-down implementation of Westernization reforms in Turkey, which were not likely to find a ground in society.

The second trait of Western civilization, namely individualism, was referred to as the basis of the bourgeoisie and was presented as the basis of the development of the West.<sup>167</sup> He defined the individualism of the West as depending on inequality, on the law of the jungle; however, the rich countries of today’s world would not have emerged without those “lonely but strong” individuals. Although Cem directed heavy criticisms against the essence of Western civilization in the 1970s, EU membership became his primary goal when he became the minister of foreign affairs in 1997. However, he objected to a blind obsession with the EU and instead advocated highlighting Turkey’s potential contributions to the EU if it became a member. While still criticizing the West as a civilization “which commits Vietnam, which abets massacres in innocent countries, which displays racism and xenophobia, or which applies double standards is of course still ‘the West’: but it is not ‘contemporary civilization.’”<sup>168</sup>; he still greatly valued EU membership for its democracy initiatives. Cem questioned the concept of “contemporary civilization,”

‘Contemporary civilization’ was certainly not ‘the West and nothing but the West’ nor was it ‘the West and everything that it incorporates.’ To assert such a thing would be doing a grave disservice not only to the progressive movements of both empire and republic but also to all those who have aspired to share in progress and change. The founders of the republic most certainly were not thinking of the European Imperialism and injustices which they were intimately familiar when they used the phrase ‘contemporary civilization.’<sup>169</sup>

Although he criticized Western civilization’s imperialist origin in addition to its materialist and individualist feature lacking humanism and equality, Cem still gave a

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>168</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 29-30.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 29.

lot of credit to its most prominent foundation of the present day: the European Union. Cem summarized why the EU deserved that credit,

What features and criteria does the West bring to the definition of contemporary civilization? The West is, in a very real sense, the principal benchmark by which 'contemporary civilization' is measured. It has earned that status because of the sensitivity that it is today able to display towards human rights, because it has bound human relations to principles of personal liberty and mutual respect, because it created legal and political infrastructures and mechanisms that can make these ideals a reality, and because of its special attention to rationalism and productivity.<sup>170</sup>

While defining which civilization Turkey belongs to among these discussions, Cem stated that rather than being a civilization on itself or belonging to a certain civilization, Turkey has a "geostrategic function of bringing civilizations together."<sup>171</sup> Turkey belongs both to European and to Asian civilizations. Historical and cultural ties with both civilizations are the ways of substantiating Turkey's unique identity based on synthesis. Asserting to belonging to both civilizations means generating a sphere of influence in a broader geography. He offered Turkey, as a country at the crossroads of civilizations and as the successor of an empire which was the representative of a tolerant, equalitarian and humanist system in Central Europe and the Balkans during the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, as a foreign dynamic impacting other countries and as a role model to the Muslim countries.<sup>172</sup> He also emphasized what Turkey could "contribute to the EU thanks to its cultural identity that could bring additional dynamisms to Europe and make it easier for Europe to further broaden its horizons and range of experiences."<sup>173</sup> Cem created a wide sphere of influence with this discourse and vision.

His endeavors regarding the coexistence of civilizations did not remain only in theory. Cem was the architect of the first intercivilizational forum that took place in Istanbul with the participation of delegates from 71 countries from the European Union and

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>172</sup> Cem, *Türkiye Avrupa Avrasya: Avrupa'nın "Birliği" ve Türkiye*, 144.

<sup>173</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 31.

the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) on February 12-13, 2002. The date of the forum was remarkable in terms of coming only a few months after the September 11 terror attacks, which rose the discussions about the clash of civilizations. Therefore, the motivation behind the organization of the forum was to create an environment of tolerance, coexistence, cooperation, and a better understanding between the members of the EU and OIC as a counterweight to the idea of the clash of civilizations. The opening speeches and all the sessions were broadcasted via TRT and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) reaching people all over the world. Ismail Cem held a press conference the day before the forum and expressed Turkey's central position and role in the organization of such a joint summit as the only associate country of both the EU and the OIC. Cem continued, "Turkey has an important function in terms of being not only a bridge but also a pivotal center that can ensure such a meeting with its history, identity and status in the present day."<sup>174</sup> Cem also delivered the forum's opening speech along with Turkey's President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, President of the Council of the EU and Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Piquè, and Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasim Bin Jabr Al Thani, Qatar Foreign Minister representing the OIC Presidency. Ismail Cem evaluated the joint forum as the first significant meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and stressed Turkey's Eastern and Western cultural identity in addition to the attainability of harmony and understanding between Eastern and Western civilizations avoiding prejudices.<sup>175</sup> The meeting venue, Ciragan Palace, had a symbolic meaning for being an Ottoman palace on the shores of the Bosphorus, where Europe and Asia meet.<sup>176</sup> It represented Cem's long-standing emphasis on Turkey's unique identity of being both Eastern and Western in addition to his particular attention to Ottoman legacy as the representative of coexistence and tolerance.

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<sup>174</sup> "Medeniyetler Boğaz'da Buluşuyor" *Milliyet Arşiv*, February 11, 2002. Accessed on August 3, 2019. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/medeniyetler-bogazda-bulusuyor-38349235>

<sup>175</sup> "Medeniyetler İstanbul'da Buluştu" *NTV Arşiv*, 12 February 2002. Accessed on August 3, 2019. <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/135075.asp>

<sup>176</sup> "Joint EU Islamic Conference to address tensions between Islam and West", *YouTube*. Video File. July 21, 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYITb9OGLfM>

#### 4.2.2. Turkey's National Interests

The Republic of Turkey was founded as a nation-state after the War of Independence against the imperial powers. Therefore, the Republic's primary concern was its ultimate independence and sovereignty. "The new republic was no longer an empire, but a nation state. It had no desire for territorial conquest and had no power to do so even if it had desired it. It needed a new, realistically sound foreign policy which would respond to the challenges of the new international system without endangering the existence of the state."<sup>177</sup> The country needed unity for sovereignty at the domestic level and peace for independence at the foreign policy level. The second objective of the Republic after consolidating sovereignty and independence was to *reach the level of contemporary civilizations*. That contemporary civilization was the equal of Western civilization for the ruling elites. "Turkish modernizers had readily identified modernization with Westernization—with taking a place in the civilization of Europe."<sup>178</sup>

That project of the Republic was carried out with social reforms at the domestic level and resulted in a Western-oriented foreign policy paradigm. "The leaders of the new Turkish state sought to break with the Ottoman past which they identified with ignorance, corruption, backwardness and dogmas."<sup>179</sup> Thus, Turkey's national interest understanding was founded on three principles: complete independence, sovereignty, and a modernization process which would be carried out in a Western respect. The reflection of these three principles on foreign policy resulted in a non-assertive, static and Western-oriented attitude.

Ismail Cem directed heavy criticisms against such a traditional foreign policy understanding in Turkey, which he claimed, "lacked depth with respect to time, and lacked 'breadth' with respect to space."<sup>180</sup> However, he made a clear distinction

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<sup>177</sup> Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy".

<sup>178</sup> Çağlar Keyder, "Whither the Project of Modernity? Turkey in the 1990s" in Sibel Bodoğan and Reşat Kasaba eds *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, (The University of Washington Press, 1997), 37.

<sup>179</sup> Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy".

<sup>180</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 2.

between the foreign policy practices in the Ataturk period, which he called the natural necessities of that conjuncture, and the post-Ataturk period foreign policy orientation which he defined as a deliberate choice that deprived Turkey of enormous resources.<sup>181</sup>

#### **4.2.2.1. Interpretation of the Foreign Policy of the Republican Era**

Ismail Cem distinguishes the Republican Era foreign policy between the Ataturk period and the fifty years of post-Ataturk period from Turkey's NATO membership until the end of the Cold War. The common major themes of foreign policy during both periods were Westernism and the ignorance of the historical and cultural dimensions of Turkey. However, he interpreted the Westernism of the Ataturk period as a pragmatist attitude which had to be followed for the best interests of society at the conjuncture of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the ignorance of the history and the culture as a reasonable and understandable requirement of the revolution. On the other hand, the Westernism of the next fifty years, that was followed blindly although the revolution was already institutionalized, turned into, according to him, an ideological orientation. He added that as a result, the alienation of Turkey from the country's historical and cultural dimensions deprived the country of a wide sphere of influence in foreign policy.

#### **4.2.2.2. Interpretation of The Ataturk Period**

The foundation of the Republic of Turkey was more than the foundation of a new state. It was rather a complete nation-building with radical ruptures from the *ancien régime* which was the Ottoman Empire that ruled over its people for more than six centuries. The primary goal of the newly founded Republic was the country's modernization. It would be (and should have been) a vis-à-vis modernization. Cem defined the rupture from the Ottoman past as a natural component of the revolution.

Turkey is a society that pulled itself into the modern world through revolution. There is a peculiar – indeed universal, and in a sense inevitable – logic to revolutions: in order to create the future it is necessary to break with the past. Turkey's republican revolution necessarily and naturally

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 3.



followed this path. The experiences and distinctive assets provided by history shunned in order to shape a new order. That is the reason for the consistent efforts during the early republican period to isolate Turkey from her past and to define the past in terms of a limited time frame and a narrow cultural scope. Given the compelling circumstances of the social and national renewal that was the foundation for the republican revolution, this was a rational choice.<sup>182</sup>

Cem explained the ideal of Westernism of the early Republican era as a pragmatist attitude and a necessity in that conjuncture and under those circumstances. It was such a pragmatic approach that Turkey was able to leave behind the biases against the European imperial powers, which had recently invaded the country, and to adopt Western concepts and institutions in order to create a modern, secular, and democratic state system and society during the nation-building process. He argued that the Westernism that followed during the Ataturk era was a pragmatist manner in a quite realist framework rather than the ideological approach alleged by the predominant literature of Kemalism. He depicted Westernism as a necessity for a newly founded state that was based on the principles of secularism and modernism. “The foundation of the future Turkish Republic in the early 1920s was primarily based on the masterly and realistic assessment of international equilibria. What history rendered as an ‘achievable goal’ was identified, its strategy was devised, and its mission was accomplished.”<sup>183</sup> He quoted former President Suleyman Demirel who defined “the achievable goal rendered by the history as Westernism since the Western judicial system was a manifestation of Ataturk’s worldview which was based upon the value of individuals and their rights.”

In addition to his conceptualization of the Westernism of the early Republican era as the necessity of constructing a modern state with a pragmatist attitude rather than an ideological orientation, Cem also objected to the perception that interpreted the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey as a rupture in political and social terms. “Ataturk is the leader who bound Turkey’s history with her age by not allowing Europe to open a parenthesis and to create rupture in Turkey’s historical

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 21.

continuity. He put the distance between the past and the present as the requirement of revolution as a revolutionist, but he did not let Western Europe to create a rupture in Turkey's historical dimension."<sup>184</sup> The predominant perspective towards the Turkish Revolution interprets the revolution as a rupture from the *ancien régime*. However, Cem called it a distance rather than a rupture by claiming that Atatürk prevented the construction of a semi-colonial Turkey that was completely dependent upon Europe. He added that the victory against the Entente Powers, who had imagined to embed Turkey in history with the Treaty of Sèvres, and the foundation of the Republic of Turkey with the leadership of Atatürk were sufficient grounds for the denial of the theory of rupture.

The mindset behind that kind of justification was based on historical continuity and integrity rather than considering political or social dimensions. He exclusively stressed the maintenance of the historical continuity with the foundation of the Turkish Republic by ignoring the ruptures in terms of the political and social spheres and justified the "distance" from the *ancien régime* as the requirement of revolution instead of focusing on the nation-building process. Such a justification effort was a reflection and extension of Cem's Kemalist background and identity.

Cem also justified Turkey's rupture from its historical ties in foreign policy by arguing that it was a short-term distance from the Ottoman legacy as the requirement of revolution.

#### **4.2.2.3. Interpretation of the The Post-Atatürk Period**

In Ismail Cem's perception, the traditional foreign policy covers the period from the post-Atatürk era until the end of the Cold War.

What happened however was that this break with the past was perpetuated long after any such policy ceased to be either a revolutionary necessity or an intelligible choice, even after the republic had become an acknowledged and accepted fact of life. The prevailing view that took hold was that Turkey was a country that had no historical depth, that lacked a unique cultural identity, and that had never, in its history, been a 'European power.' Such misguided attitudes naturally hamper Turkey's

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<sup>184</sup> Cem, *Türkiye Avrupa Avrasya: Avrupa'nın "Birliği" ve Türkiye*, 247-248.

ability to function at every conceivable level. They also facilitate and mediate the process whereby Turkey is distanced from and even deprived of any historical/cultural priorities that she might take advantage of in her foreign relations.<sup>185</sup>

Different from his approach to the Ataturk period, Cem defined the Westernism objective of the post-Ataturk period as an ideological one. In Cem's own words, "The periods of Adnan Menderes and Celal Bayar passed with the endeavor of proving Turkey's Europeanness to the West and the most common theme of Demirel period's political sphere was the West."<sup>186</sup>

The three principles of the foreign policy in the Ataturk period were 'peace at home, peace in the world; undertaking the duty of protecting the oppressed and the suffering; and the pursuit of independence.' These three principles were described as the "correct characteristics" of Turkish foreign policy by Cem. However, the post-Ataturk Turkish foreign policy, which was limited to the characteristics of only 50 years, embraced neither the duty of protecting the suffering nor any reflection of the Saadabad and Balkan Pacts.<sup>187</sup>

The five main criticisms of Ismail Cem towards the traditional foreign policy can be summarized as follows:

- 1- The deprivation of historical dimension, and its alienation from its roots. This attitude not only deprived Turkey from a historical depth but also from a geographical wideness.
- 2- The perception that Turkey is surrounded by enemies which contributed not only to the dependence upon the West and NATO with security concerns but also to the immutability of the traditional foreign policy from a one-dimensional vision.
- 3- The supposed need to express a preference between 'compulsory' alternatives, binary oppositions such as West/East and Asian/European which resulted in the

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<sup>185</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 28.

<sup>186</sup> Cem, *Türkiye'de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi*, 270.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

absolute obedience and dependence on the preferred binary, the West. This understanding condemned Turkey to a one-dimensional foreign policy.

- 4- As a consequence of the 'compulsory' preference and dependence on the West, there came a rejection and disparaging of everything associated with the East and Asia. This policy not only deprived Turkey of political and economic advantages the country could enjoy through historical connections but also left to a great extent that huge geography under the influence of the Soviet Union.
- 5- The deprivation of a cultural dimension. Cem calls the tradition that ignored the cultural heritage of the pre-Republic period as cultural racism. That tradition not only resulted in an inferiority complex towards the West like a "colonial mind" allowing the West to decide and think on behalf of Turkey but also deprived Turkish identity of a rich cultural accumulation and self-confidence.

He proposed the need for a renewal, for a new vision in Turkish foreign policy after criticizing its mistakes and wrongdoings. Therefore, he redefined Turkey's national interests and developed a new vision to take advantage of the changing conjuncture after the end of the Cold War in Turkey's best interests, and figured out strategies to elevate Turkey's position in the regional and international arena and politics. He praised the contribution of Turkey's shared history to the present day after the dissolution of the USSR and the emergence of newly independent states and with the change of the conjuncture.<sup>188</sup>

#### **4.2.2.4. Ismail Cem's Redefinition of Turkey's National Interests**

On July 18, 1997, during his first press briefing as the minister of foreign affairs, Cem declared Turkey's foreign policy goal to make the country a "**world state**"<sup>189</sup> and introduced some concepts and strategies to be pursued to that end. The roles he attributed to Turkey in that briefing included "that Turkey is both European and Asian; that Turkey derives her European dimension from her history and culture; that

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<sup>188</sup> Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Strateji, Yunanistan, Kıbrıs*, 15.

<sup>189</sup> "Dışişleri Bakanlığı İsmail Cem'in İlk Basın Toplantısı" July 18, 1997, Accessed on August 1, 2019. <https://ismailcem.wordpress.com/2017/01/29/disisleri-bakani-ismail-cemin-ilk-basin-toplantisi-ankara-18-temmuz-1997-cuma/>

membership in the EU is a goal but not an obsession; and that contemporary Turkey has an important part to play as a 'role model' for societies with an Islamic dimension."<sup>190</sup> He summarized three dimensions of a "consistent, rational, creative foreign policy,"<sup>191</sup> which were classical diplomacy focusing on the country's **peace and security**; economic diplomacy aiming at the contribution of foreign policy to the **economic development** of the country; and, finally, cultural diplomacy emphasizing the strengthening of Turkey's **international image and prestige** which would ultimately contribute to international cooperation and communication.<sup>192</sup> He depicted a "world state" as follows,

A world state, positioned among the major centers of the world and representing a unique blend of civilizational assets, historical experiences and strategic attributes. A world state, one that is not a sole importer of foreign science and technology but contributes as well to science and technology. One that is not a mere observer of others' success stories but has its own achievements that sometimes make them envious as well. One that consistently develops its special relations with the regions with which it shares a common history. One that, in line with Atatürk's legacy, constitutes a role model for nations with parallel cultural backgrounds.<sup>193</sup>

Economic concerns had a significant proportion in Cem's national interest understanding. "He was a leader that put considerable emphasis on the importance of economics for Turkish diplomacy."<sup>194</sup> Kemal Kirişçi focuses on the role of economic factors while trying to convey the motivations behind the transformation of Turkish foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. What he calls "trading state" is the consideration of export-oriented economic cooperation and interdependence while forming foreign policy. He refers to diplomacy as a means of finding new markets for Turkish exports. "Turkish policy makers welcomed the opening of the Turkic world for equally pragmatist manners – they believed that closer ties with the new republics would enhance Turkey's regional power and role, prevent Russia and Iran from

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<sup>190</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 20.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>192</sup> "Dışişleri Bakanlığı İsmail Cem'in İlk Basın Toplantısı" July 18, 1997, Accessed on August 1, 2019. <https://ismailcem.wordpress.com/2017/01/29/disisleri-bakani-ismail-cemin-ilk-basin-toplantisi-ankara-18-temmuz-1997-cuma/>

<sup>193</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 21.

<sup>194</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State," *New Perspectives on Turkey* No. 40 (2009): 29-57.

expanding their influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia and offer Turkey new economic and business opportunities that could benefit the country's export-oriented growth strategy."<sup>195</sup> Thus, economic concerns had an important effect on Cem's national interest perception and on shaping foreign policy decisions during his tenure in office. Cem sought new markets for Turkish goods by means of economic alliances with the newly emerging economies especially in Eurasia in addition to Latin American and African countries because he knew that Turkey needed a strong economy to become a world state. He pointed out the impact of newly emerging states to the increasing geostrategic position of Turkey:

Quite a few of the 'new' or 'recently' independent countries that appeared in the geography of the former Soviet empire in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia were those with which Turkey has historic and cultural ties. This provided Turkey with an opportunity and a relative advantage and it is a matter of record that Turkey has since developed strong political and economic relations with the great majority of these nations. In nearly all these countries, Turkey ranks either first, second or third in terms of foreign trade, foreign investment and infrastructure development. The discovery of energy resources in areas with which Turkey has historical and/or cultural affinities (especially in the Caspian basin and Central Asia) further increased Turkey's strategic value.<sup>196</sup>

Last but not least, full membership to the EU held a considerable place in Cem's national interest understanding. He stated that two main objectives of Turkish foreign policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century were being a pivotal, decisive center of Eurasia and a member of the EU. Cem gave so great importance to Turkey's EU membership as he believed it would contribute to the implementation of the rule of law, human rights, and pluralist democracy in the country as well as having an enormous impact on the development of the Turkish economy. However, he often declared that the EU constituted only one dimension of a multidimensional foreign policy and it was not an obsession anymore.

What Cem envisioned for Turkey in international politics can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>195</sup> Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era".

<sup>196</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 36.

1-From dependence to an actor which can influence the region with its cultural accumulation, dynamic economy, and strategically important geography.

2-From the attitude of an embarrassed child to a self-confident state.

3-From a Western- and European-oriented foreign policy to a vision that sees Europe as one of multiple components of foreign policy; that can read the international power balances thoroughly and can evaluate the big picture.

4-In conjunction with all the above, Cem aimed to construct a realist, rational foreign policy vision and discourse that would enable Turkey to become an actor capable of producing the strategy and politics to increase its status in the regional and international balance of power.

To be able to achieve these goals, a new geopolitical vision had to be constructed putting Turkey in a central position and enabling the country to influence its surrounding geography. Turkey's historical and cultural assets were the main apparatuses to be utilized to create the expected impact. In that regard, Cem redefined the West, the Middle East, and Turkey's relations with these regions. As part of a reimagined geography for Turkey, he implemented Latin America and Africa openings. Last but not least, he redefined the roles attributed to Greece and Syria and made efforts to transform them from ultimate "foes" to "friends" for Turkey.

### **4.3. The Place of Turkey in the International Order**

#### **4.3.1. Perception of Westernism and the European Union**

Ismail Cem objected to both Kemalist elites' top-down manner to Westernize the country and the traditional attitude towards Europe lacking self-confidence. Cem defined traditional foreign policy towards the European Union as the politics of squeezing into the back compartment of the EU with a second-class ticket and acting as a distant relative, continuously embarrassed and acting as a docile child.<sup>197</sup> However, according to him, Turkey was already a European state with its geography, history, and contemporary cultural standards defined by the EU and needed neither

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<sup>197</sup> Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Avrupa'nın Birliği ve Türkiye*, 9-10.

confirmation nor announcement of its Europeanness by another European institution.<sup>198</sup>

He highlighted the democracy initiative of the EU while discussing the significance of Turkey's EU membership. While stressing that Turkey was a natural part of Europe historically, he pointed out that the country needed membership for a better and rapid implementation of democratic standards rather than proving its Europeanness. "Interestingly, the Turkish state elite (the military, bureaucracies such as the foreign ministry) as well as the leadership of mainstream secular political parties have always been supportive of membership to the EU. They have actually seen it as a natural outcome of Atatürk's westernisation project."<sup>199</sup>

One of the most significant expressions in Cem's discourse is that he defines Turkey's identity both as European and Asian which ultimately results in the transformation of the traditional vision and discourse towards Europe from obsession to objective, from diffidence and embarrassment to self-confidence. I can summarize six approaches in Cem's discourse for carrying out this transformation:

- 1- Changing the vision of Europe from obsession to objective and leaving the politics of requests from Europe which would take Turkey to a more respected position.
- 2- Membership in the EU would definitely contribute to Turkey's dynamism; however, it is not the end-all of its future aims and goals if we cannot become an EU member. No one would take a country seriously which always states the weakness of its democracy and its fear of dissolution without the EU.<sup>200</sup>
- 3- Being aware of the interests of Turkey.
- 4- Renewal of Turkey's identity.
- 5- Highlighting Turkey's potential contribution to the EU.
- 6- Turkey's success in the West is parallel to its success in the East.

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>199</sup> Kemal Kirisci, "The Enduring Rivalry between Turkey and Greece: Can Democratic Peace Break it?" *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 1, No.1, (Spring 2002), 38-50.

<sup>200</sup> Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Avrupa'nın Birliği ve Türkiye*, 78.



Consequently, Turkey gained full membership candidacy status to the EU at the 1999 Helsinki Summit and Cem became popular in international media “mostly as the architect of Turkey’s acquisition of full membership candidate status to join the European Union. He was largely credited with Turkey’s declaration as a full member candidate during the Helsinki summit in 1999.”<sup>201</sup>

#### **4.3.2. Perception of the Middle East**

Cem criticized traditional foreign policy for bolstering enmity towards the Middle East Arab states by stressing their revolt against the Ottoman Empire during WWI. He claimed that the ones who betrayed the Ottomans during the war were only 2,000-3,000 Bedouins.<sup>202</sup> Therefore, traditional foreign policy condemned itself to Western Europe, NATO and the U.S. for security concerns because of the assumption that Turkey was surrounded by enemies.<sup>203</sup> He proposed a need for the transformation of the image of Arab countries from enemies to a part of Turkey’s historical geography that could provide the country with economic and political alliances.

In addition to seeking new alliances to broaden Turkey’s geographical vision, Cem saw another advantage of developing relations with the Middle East. As a reflection of his realist foreign policy perspective, he considered that Turkey being both a European and Asian state was an advantage to be used against Europe.<sup>204</sup> And he proposed abandoning the traditional Middle East policy of the country -which segregated cultural and historical ties with the Middle East- on that purpose. In that sense, Cem’s mindset regarding the Middle East was not independent of his European Union goals. He aimed to create a foreign policy discourse emphasizing Turkey’s cultural and historical ties with the Middle East not only to project Turkey as a bridge opening to different civilizations but also to convince the EU of Turkey’s credibility as an influential ally and negotiator with the Middle East. He could understand the region and the international power balances and knew the potential

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<sup>201</sup> Ozan Örmeci, “Portrait of a Turkish Social Democrat: Ismail Cem” (PhD diss., Bilkent University, 2011).

<sup>202</sup> Cem, *Türkiye Avrupa Avrasya: Strateji, Yunanistan, Kıbrıs*, 17.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>204</sup> Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Avrupa’nın Birliği ve Türkiye*, 75.

outcomes of having close relations with a strategically vital region like Middle East against the EU and the USA.

#### **4.3.3. Perception of Eurasia**

In conjunction with the emergence of Caucasian and Central Asian states and the discovery of energy resources in those countries, and as part of Cem's economic and geostrategical concerns about Turkey, Cem put great emphasis on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project. "What is essential for us is the strategic link Baku-Ceyhan provides for Turkey, and, for the West through Turkey. This strategic choice will bring together all the Caucasus and Central Asia around the same strategic project."<sup>205</sup> Cem insisted on the establishment of the project for two main reasons: firstly, it would lessen Turkey's energy dependence on Russia; and secondly Turkey's emergence as the central pipeline link in the potential East-West energy corridor for the export of Caspian gas and oil to Western markets would enhance its geostrategical importance to Europe and the United States.<sup>206</sup> Cem also believed that the pipeline project would revive the Silk Road and further increase Turkey's strategic value.<sup>207</sup>

#### **4.3.4. Friends vs Foes**

Ismail Cem believed that the positive sides of the shared history with Turkey's neighbors should have been emphasized to go beyond the understanding of traditional foreign policy that pictured Turkey as being surrounded by enemies. He accused that understanding of being the guardian of the status quo both in domestic and foreign policy.<sup>208</sup> In that sense, he developed relations with Greece and Syria. The common trait of Greece and Syria in the 1990s was their support of PKK terrorism, while Turkey was at the climax of armed conflict with the terrorist organization. Therefore, it was impossible to predict any improvement of relations with these countries at the end of the decade.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>206</sup> Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Era".

<sup>207</sup> Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Strateji, Yunanistan, Kıbrıs*, 65.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 16.

However, Cem criticized “classical lack of pragmatism of Turkish politicians in foreign policy as well as their habitude of stigmatizing countries as friend or foe instead of thinking rationally and realistically about Turkey’s interests.”<sup>209</sup> The ongoing tension with Greece and Syria put the national security and sovereignty of Turkey at danger with instances such as the Kardak crisis of 1996 and Syria’s logistic support to the PKK in addition to hosting Ocalan. Thus, Cem believed in the significance of diplomacy with these countries for peace and cooperation so that Turkey could concentrate on its goal of becoming a “world state.” He also stated that, if any country takes a positive step for the reconciliation, the Turkish government was ready to return the favor twofold.<sup>210</sup>

#### **4.3.4.1. Greece**

Kemal Kirişçi applies the ‘prisoner’s dilemma’ theory to the Turkey-Greece relations while analyzing the enduring conflict and tension between the two countries. The prisoner’s dilemma refers to the failure in cooperating and making a decision that would ensure the best payoff for both sides because of a sense of mistrust or a lack of confidence.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, decision makers avoid taking risks as they feel the pressure to reconcile both their counterparts and their domestic audience and take a conservative stance to keep away from being considered weak or vulnerable.<sup>212</sup> Kirişçi added that the positive attempts of Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal and Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou in 1988 to break away from that dilemma did not bear significant fruits and the 1996 Kardak crisis, that brought the two countries to the brink of war, demonstrated the difficulty of breaking established taboos.<sup>213</sup>

Turkey and Greece have deeply established negative stereotypes about each other. The two countries were founded as nation-states, Greece after gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire and Turkey after fighting against Greece during the War of

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<sup>209</sup> Örmeci, “Portrait of a Turkish Social Democrat: Ismail Cem”.

<sup>210</sup> Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Strateji, Yunanistan, Kıbrıs*, 65.

<sup>211</sup> Kirişçi, “The Enduring Rivalry between Greece and Turkey”, 38-50.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

Independence. Therefore, the enmity towards each other has been an integral part of their national identities, which makes a chance of reconciliation even harder. Turkey has since the War of Independence considered Greece in pursuit of the “Megali Idea” aimed at conquering Istanbul and Greece has perceived Turkey as seeking to conquer Greece with a neo-Ottoman agenda. Moreover, the Cyprus issue worsened the situation and kept the tension permanent.

Despite all of negative history between Turkey and Greece, when we speak of Ismail Cem, one of the salient memories of him as minister of foreign affairs was his friendship with his Greek counterpart George Papandreou. They even spent a weekend together on the Greek island of Samos and Turkey’s Kusadasi, dancing Greek traditional folkdance *syrta*ki and Turkish traditional folkdance *zeybek* in addition to planting an olive tree. The Associated Press covered the weekend and commented: “A few years ago Greek Foreign Minister called Turks bandits. Today, the foreign ministers of these countries spent the weekend together, which is thanks to friendship between Cem and Papandreou.”<sup>214</sup>

Cem credited Papandreou as a trustworthy person and considered this an important factor for the progress of relations between two countries.<sup>215</sup> He added that their personal relationship and positive diplomacy for mutual understanding began to transform public opinion in Greece.<sup>216</sup> So, did that mean a break of the prisoner’s dilemma for Turkey and Greece?

Cem believed that both Turkey and Greece would benefit from the progress of mutual relations which would ensure the maintenance of peace and stability in the Aegean region and in the Balkans in addition to contributing to economic development in both countries. He also stated that the Turkey-Greece rapprochement in 1999 neutralized the biggest handicap before Turkey’s EU

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<sup>214</sup> “Ege’de Önemli Buluşma” NTV Arşiv, June 22, 2001. Accessed on August 4, 2019. <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/90123.asp>

<sup>215</sup> Cem, *Türkiye Avrupa Avrasya: Strateji Yunanistan Kıbrıs*, 130.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

membership,<sup>217</sup> which was Cem's top priority and ideal for Turkey. Cem considered Greece as the main obstacle for Turkey achieving its rights in the EU with actions such as imposing an embargo on payments to Turkey.<sup>218</sup> Thus, it is likely that the basic motivation behind Cem's rapprochement with Greece was Turkey's national interests. In his book *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Strateji, Yunanistan, Kıbrıs*, devoted to his memories, speeches, and observations about Greece and Cyprus, he concluded with the following passage:

The decisive factor of the foreign policy is one's own interests. The impact of abstract notions such as "friendship", "respect" or even "animosity" on foreign policy making is usually much less limited than assumed. What is important is first to determine our country's interests correctly and then to read the interests, expectations and concerns of the other side properly in certain times and circumstances. If this is achieved, you can find the ways to develop your relations in accordance with your interest with almost every country on almost every subject.<sup>219</sup>

#### **4.3.4.2. Syria**

Turkey experienced the peak of the armed conflict with the terrorist organization PKK in the 1990s, when most of its martyrs gave their lives. There was a growing anger and impatience in the Turkish public, military and policy-makers. At the time, Syria was hosting PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, making the issue a very important foreign policy case.

Although Turkish military officials were making harsh announcements hinting of a military operation against Syria, Ismail Cem believed in a diplomatic solution of the problem, avoiding actions that would bring the countries on the brink of war. However, he used such announcements and Turkey's military power as a means of threat and pressure to convince Syria of cooperation against terrorism.<sup>220</sup> At the time, Egypt became a mediator between Turkey and Syria to prevent a war. Consequently, the Adana Protocol was signed on October 20, 1998, between the Turkish and Syrian

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>220</sup> Örmeci, "Portrait of a Turkish Social Democrat: Ismail Cem".

delegations and Syria undertook several commitments regarding Turkey's security concerns.<sup>221</sup> Soon thereafter, Ocalan had to leave Syria and was captured in Kenya on February 15 1999. That was the turning point for Turkey-Syria relations.

Cem emphasized a peaceful solution with Syria so that he succeeded in avoiding a potential war with the country and the bloc of Arab countries formed by Syria against Turkey. That bloc and the tension with Syria meant obstacles for Turkey's new vision of the Middle East and Turkey had to overcome the problems with Syria in order to implement its initiatives in the Middle East. Cem stated, "I hope that what we achieved through Adana Protocol will pave the way to a thorough change. We look forward to a new understanding of neighbourhood. Both Syria and Turkey have great interest in forging new political and economic relations."<sup>222</sup>

#### **4.3.5. New Horizons: Africa and Latin America**

The rejection of Turkey's EU candidacy status at the 1997 Luxembourg Summit and the disappointment it caused Turkish policy-makers contributed a great deal to Turkey's search for alternatives for international cooperation. Yet, it was still a radical move in terms of transforming decades of Western-oriented geopolitical vision. Ismail Cem's consideration of foreign policy from the perspective of a "trading state" and his dynamic personality made it possible to widen Turkey's geographical vision. In addition to economic concerns as part of a multidimensional foreign policy, the potential of Latin American and African countries to impact a United Nations (UN) decision over the Cyprus issue motivated Turkey in pursuing openings towards these continents.<sup>223</sup> The Africa and Latin America openings in 1998 were landmarks that marked the beginning of Turkey's current considerable presence in these continents.

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<sup>221</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 85.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>223</sup> Elem Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu, "Afrika'ya Açılım Kararından 20 Sene Sonra Türkiye-Afrika İlişkileri Nerede?" *Bilgesem Analiz/Afrika* No:1395 (Ocak 2019).

<http://www.bilgesam.org/Images/Dokumanlar/0-1514-20190104531395.pdf>

#### 4.3.5.1. The Africa Opening

Turkey's existence in Africa today is undeniable. With strategic moves such as opening an embassy in almost every African country (42 out of 54 as of 2019), humanitarian aid activities, and Turkish Airlines extending its flying destinations to a great deal, in addition to economic alliances and investments, Turkey is one of the leading regional powers in Africa today.

The roots of Turkey's Africa opening go back to 1998 when Foreign Minister Ismail Cem appointed retired ambassador Numan Hazar to prepare a comprehensive Africa Plan, an opening policy which was in accord with Cem's foreign policy vision grounded on developing relations not only with neighboring countries but also with different regions.<sup>224</sup> Turkey aimed at developing diplomatic relations with African countries via increasing the number of consulates in the continent as well as paying official visits. In terms of economic relations, Turkey decided to become a member of the Abidjan-based Africa Development Bank and the Cairo-based African Export-Import Bank, in addition to encouraging mutual investments between Turkey and African countries.

In 1999, after a meeting in Ankara with Turkey's diplomatic representatives in African countries as part of the Africa Action Plan, Cem underlined that Turkey-Africa relations would have a "boom."<sup>225</sup> He considered the African continent, especially Northern Africa in addition to Sudan and Yemen, as a part of Turkey's historical geography. During a session of the Turkish National Assembly in 2002, Cem evaluated the progress of the economic relations with Africa as "extraordinary."<sup>226</sup> He said that despite the numbers being small, the progress was "extraordinary" because the trading volume increased from 2 million USD to 20 million USD and the increase pace was remarkable.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> İbrahim Gündüz, "Türkiye Afrika'ya Açılıyor." July 1, 1998. <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1998/07/01/r06.html>

<sup>226</sup> Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Tutanakları, dönem 21, yıl 2, 82. Birleşim, April 18, 2000. <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem21/yil2/ham/b08201h.htm>

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

Although the Africa opening did not give the expected results and did not experience a “boom” during Cem’s tenure due to the political and economic instability in the country, it was a milestone in terms of sowing the seeds for Turkey’s visibility and activities in the continent today.

#### **4.3.5.2. The Latin America Opening**

When Ismail Cem started initiatives for a Latin America opening as the minister of foreign affairs of Turkey in 1998, it caught the attention of mainstream international media. Stephen Kinzer of *The New York Times* published an article entitled “A Dynamo Redefines Turks’ Role in the World” on August 2, 1998, praising “Cem’s energy and sweeping new visions that have come as an unexpected but welcome dose of adrenaline.”<sup>228</sup> A few months later, *The Economist* credited Cem for “chalking up some impressive achievements” in an article entitled “Ismail Cem, A Turkish Strategist.”<sup>229</sup>

However it was a surprise development for the international community who had been accustomed to Turkey’s static foreign policy; it was not so for Cem, though, who had traveled to more than 30 countries during his first year as foreign minister, seeking new alliances and to present Turkey as a prestigious and trustworthy partner in economic and political cooperation. As part of the Latin America opening, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held meetings in Ankara with the participation of Turkey’s ambassadors in Latin American countries and the consul agents of Latin American countries in Turkey in September 1998, resulting in the “Latin America and Caribbean Action Plan.”<sup>230</sup> Consequently, Cem paid an official visit to Cuba and Venezuela in 1999 to develop political and economic cooperation.

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<sup>228</sup> Stephen Kinzer. “A Dynamo Redefines Turks’ Role in the World” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1998, Accessed on August 3, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/02/world/a-dynamo-redefines-turks-role-in-the-world.html>

<sup>229</sup> “İsmail Cem, A Turkish Strategist” *The Economist*, February 3, 2000. Accessed on August 4, 2019. <https://www.economist.com/europe/2000/02/03/ismail-cem-a-turkish-strategist>

<sup>230</sup> “Türkiye’nin Latin Amerika ve Karayiplere Yönelik Politikası ve Bölge Ülkeleri ile İlişkileri,” MFA, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i\\_-turkiye\\_nin-latin-amerika-ve-karayiplere-yonelik-politikasi-ve-bolge-ulkeleri-ile-iliskileri.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i_-turkiye_nin-latin-amerika-ve-karayiplere-yonelik-politikasi-ve-bolge-ulkeleri-ile-iliskileri.tr.mfa)



Traditional foreign policy had a peaceful but static relationship with Latin American countries resulting from geographical distance and different priorities.<sup>231</sup> However, Cem - as part of a multidimensional foreign policy and the transformation of the geographical vision of the country- stated that Turkey needed to expand its political and economic relations to the widest geography possible.<sup>232</sup> He also stressed his multidimensional approach to foreign policy and his wider geographical vision for Turkey. He stated,

As the Turkish economy strengthened, the scope of its operations in the World has expanded. We will improve the political infrastructure for new economic openings, not to replace the existing ones, but to complement and diversify them. In this context, closer relations will be sought with countries with large-scale economies like India, Russia and China. A concerted effort will be made to improve economic ties with the American continent.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ankara'nın Hedefi: Latin Amerika. Milliyet: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/ankaranin-hedefi-latin-amerika-5348108>

<sup>233</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 64-65.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to conceptualize the relationship between civilizational discourse, national identity, and foreign policy from the perspective of critical geopolitics. The purpose of the study was to reveal how civilizational discourse influences and, in turn, is influenced by foreign policy-making. To this end, the study undertook a comprehensive content analysis of the foreign policy discourse of Ismail Cem who made significant contributions to identity discussions in foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. The study attempted to answer the question if it is possible to construct civilizational geopolitics that can coexist with the pluralities (ethnic groups, nations, or civilizations) by minimizing boundary-producing practices, and, at the same time, by casting an active and “central” role to Turkey in foreign policy. This analysis was a critical examination seeking to reveal how and with what consequences Cem used civilizational discourse in Turkey to justify his foreign policy practices both to domestic and foreign audiences. Particular attention was given to how Cem transformed Turkey’s geographical vision in foreign policy, how he constructed a reimagined geography and a role for Turkey in international politics, and the impact of his perception of Turkey’s history and identity on both.

A deep and comprehensive content analysis of Cem’s books and speeches has revealed that the most frequently repeated concepts are Turkey’s “history”, “culture”, “strategic position”, “identity consciousness”, “interests”, “historical geography” as part of its “geostrategy”, “Ottoman legacy”, geographical and civilizational “centrality”, and its unique and geostrategic function at the “crossroads of civilizations”. Within a realist and pragmatist framework, Cem mostly emphasized the following important subjects: the critique of traditional foreign policy; the importance of Turkey’s historical geography and legacy; the redefinition of Turkey’s national and civilizational identity and national interests; the need for Turkey’s European Union membership without making it an obsession; and the contribution of Eurasia’s emergence to Turkey’s geostrategic importance.

Before starting to evaluate the geopolitical vision of Ismail Cem, it should be kept in mind that critical geopolitics, as part of its governmentalist origin, focuses on the discursive feature of world politics and tries to reveal how discourse influences foreign policy-making and public opinion. In relation to the discussion of critical geopolitics, Cem once hinted that his discourse and policies aimed at shaping a bigger picture.

However innocent these policies (Turkey is both Asian and European) might seem, they were significant in the particular Turkish environment. To confirm that Turkey is Asian was a courageous assessment, given the fact that for decades aspiring or mentioning anything but “Europe” was almost considered as a sacrilege, especially in the “intellectual milieu”. On the other hand, anything with an “Eastern or Arab connotation” was, again for decades, synonym for “backward”, “unfriendly”, “untrustworthy”, etc. We liberated our foreign policy from those long-standing misconceptions.<sup>234</sup>

Cem’s tenure in office came at a time when there were challenging opinions about whether Turkey’s strategic value decreased or increased after the end of the Cold War. He regarded the changing conjuncture in Turkey’s advantage in terms of the emergence of new independent states and Turkey’s historical and cultural ties with those regions. However, Turkey needed to redefine its identity, civilizational belonging, and foreign policy orientation in order to formulate a consistent foreign policy with a new vision. Therefore, he deconstructed the basic features of traditional foreign policy which he condemned as being static and non-assertive.

Cem’s criticism of traditional foreign policy focused on its lack of historical and cultural depth; which were first ignored as a requirement of the revolution and the nation-building process during the Ataturk period, and later as a deliberate choice in Cem’s mind. Cem added that the lack of historical dimension resulted not only in Turkey’s loss of a wide range of opportunities but also in the country’s Western obsession and lack of self-confidence. Cem insisted that the introduction of Turkey’s historical dimension to the foreign policy discourse and practices was of vital

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<sup>234</sup> Ismail Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, (Mersin: Rustem Publishing, 2001): 221.

importance to revive the country's ties with its historical geography. He employed Turkey's historical dimension and Ottoman legacy to justify and legitimize his foreign policy practices in three main areas. First, he desired to create a wide sphere of influence over the countries in Turkey's historical geography. He aimed to develop political, economic, and social ties with those countries for alternative alliances. Secondly, he aspired to justify his claim over Turkey's Europeanness by emphasizing the Ottoman presence - historically, culturally, and geographically - in Europe since 1453. However, as I have discussed in theory chapter, while the geopolitical imagination of the state may be determined from within, its actual positioning within the regional and global systems is largely determined from outside. Therefore, it is disputable to what extent his claims about Turkey's Europeanness were recognized by Europe. The third area was presenting Turkey as the sum of all the civilizations founded on its geography, from Ion to Byzantium, and the Seljuks to the Ottomans. As the representative of such a rich legacy, he positioned Turkey at the center and saw it as a bridge between the EU and the Middle Eastern countries, and tried to convince the EU in favor of Turkey's membership. He claimed that Turkey as the only member of both the EU and the OIC could constitute a role model for the Middle Eastern states for the development of democracy in the region.

To be able to apply the legacy of the Ottoman Empire effectively, he tried to transform its memory from an absolute "other" to an integral part of European culture and history. He repeatedly persisted on the empire's geographical presence in Europe since 1453 and while addressing both domestic and international audiences, tried to highlight its contributions as the representative of tolerance and coexistence to the development of human values from the Middle Ages onward. This was an attempt to overcome European prejudices against Turkey as the successor of the Ottoman empire. Cem was determined to eliminate the obstacles before Turkey's EU membership.

After all these discussions about the historical dimension of Turkey, Cem redefined Turkey's identity as being both Western and Eastern, both European and Asian, and thus having the privilege of bringing civilizations together. He believed that Turkey

needed to renew its identity with self-confidence, for which the reconciliation with the Ottoman legacy was important. Cem employed Turkey's historical legacy both for foreign policy justifications and for the identity redefinition in Turkey. Moreover, he constructed a flexible and multi-oriented civilizational discourse by presenting Turkey both as European and Asian, enabling the country with a considerable number of foreign policy options. He repeatedly stressed this "unique privilege" from his first press briefing as the Minister of Foreign Affairs until the end of his tenure in office.

Cem closely associated the country's national identity with its civilizational belonging and attributed a sense of uniqueness to them both. He aimed to decrease the feeling of enmity and increase the self-confidence of the Turkish public while formulating policies particularly towards Europe, the Middle East, and Greece. He wanted to "give a correct picture of Turkey not merely to foreign observers but to the Turkish people as well."<sup>235</sup> He believed that renewal would enable Turkey to overcome its inferiority complexes and would lead to the elimination of the psychological barriers to formulating and following an assertive foreign policy. He finally aimed to present Turkey's redefined identity and civilizational belonging to the regional and international powers, and particularly to the European Union.

Remembering Gertjan Dijking's arguments about how policy-makers' perception of their history and national identity impacts their geopolitical visions and foreign policy formulation, Ismail Cem's emphasis on Ottoman legacy hinted at his perception of the role Turkey should perform in world politics. Cem stated, "At the dawn of the millennium, he was confident that Turkey would have a **leadership** role in her wider region."<sup>236</sup> Moreover, his discourse on Ottoman legacy justified his policies not only to the Turkish public but also to international audiences.

When it comes to Cem's perception of boundary-producing practices, he suggested to go beyond constructed boundaries and othering practices both at the domestic level (secular vs. Islamist or Kurdish vs. Turkish) and in foreign policy (West vs. East

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 59.

or European vs. Asian) as he considered such boundaries obstacles in front of Turkey's interests. However, his approach for the elimination of such dichotomies was superficial and incomprehensive. He disregarded the social and political dimensions of Islamic movement in Turkey as he mainly focused on class-based explanations. Regarding the Western vs. Eastern dichotomy, he offered Turkey's Ottoman legacy as a clear example of the coexistence of different religious, ethnic, and racial communities. On the one hand, his emphasis on the Ottoman legacy as a model of coexistence was a practical and valuable step in terms of transforming the negative connotation of the empire both for the domestic secular and international audiences. On the other hand, his understanding of the source of that tolerance were problematic, as he highlighted the materialistic and pragmatist reasons (being tolerant as the only way of survival for a strong empire and the special tax paid by non-Muslims as a significant part of the state budget)<sup>237</sup> and did not evaluate the influences stemming from Islamic thought and teaching. Therefore, his conceptualizations for overcoming boundaries remained to a great extent unfulfilled.

Cem attributed too great a value to historical legacy, which sometimes misguided his perception and choices, although he was a realist policy-maker. When he was asked if there was a danger for Turkey to be pulled in too many directions simultaneously, he answered that "as a country, which for centuries has dealt simultaneously with several continents and geographies, I do not see such a danger."<sup>238</sup> However, he underestimated the fact that Turkey was no longer an empire and that the international conjuncture was than that of the Ottoman times. Therefore, the concrete outcomes did not meet his assertive expectations such as casting Turkey as a world state. The Africa and Latin America openings did not give the awaited fruits either. Moreover, his geopolitical vision and civilizational discourse focused mainly on the positive outcomes and disregarded the potential challenges and crises ahead of the implementation of the policies related to his assertive civilizational discourse and how to overcome them. Recently during the rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP), we have witnessed challenges after the Arab Spring, such as the crises

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<sup>237</sup> Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, 50-51.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

with Egypt and Syria - this has held true despite the country being ruled by a one-party government. In other words, the application of an assertive civilizational discourse would be even harder during a coalition government, which was underestimated by Cem. Therefore, the political and economic potentials of the country were not able to keep up with the implementation of Cem's assertive civilizational discourse.

The reason behind the above was the country's political instability in addition to the economic crisis at the end of the millennium rather than Cem's agency. On the contrary, Cem still deserves credit for transforming Turkey's geopolitical vision beyond the boundaries of a nation-state, redefining the country's national identity, and increasing its self-confidence by emphasizing its historical legacy and casting Turkey in an active and central role in a reimagined geography. Ismail Cem is a significant example of how individual agency at the micro level can transform the foreign policy tradition of a country at the macro level. His personality brought a new wave of dynamism to Turkish foreign policy. For example, his friendship with George Papandreou paved the way for the normalization of relations with Greece. He was also personally credited for enabling Turkey's declaration as a full member candidate for the EU at the 1999 Helsinki Summit after carrying out decisive and successful negotiations and "a night trip by EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana and the then EU Commissioner Günter Verheugen to Ankara to iron out the last details."<sup>239</sup> That was particularly thanks to his emphasis on the redefinition of Turkey's national identity in line with its civilizational belonging and orientation.

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<sup>239</sup> Ozan Örmeci, "Portrait of a Turkish Social Democrat: Ismail Cem" (PhD diss., Bilkent University, 2011).

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