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Two Modalities of Foreign and Domestic Policies in Turkey: From Soft Power to War Rhetoric

Ömer Turan

In June 2018, the Turkish political system went through an unusually important double election for the presidency and parliament. With these elections, the shift from the parliamentarian to a presidential system was officially put into effect and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became the elected leader of the new system, with a cabinet fully detached from the legislature. In addition, 2018 has witnessed a Turkish-American diplomatic crisis and a currency crisis in Turkey. On the foreign policy level, Turkey is deeply embedded in the Syrian crisis. It has drifted away from its former EU membership bid and stopped acting as a regional actor providing stability. Turkey is no longer able to have strong diplomatic relationships with South Caucasus' governments and offer them some new perspectives to strengthen cooperation with each other. This article overviews how Erdoğan's new one-man foreign policy has replaced that of his own political party, AKP, indicating a significant shift from the earlier promise of "zero problem with neighbors" to a policy that sustains itself through war rhetoric. This article argues that Erdoğan attempts to replace the former AKP's more balanced policy with a new challenging alliance with Russia. The difficulty of this alliance has several layers, which will be discussed below.

This article, drawing on the critical International Relations literature and looking closely at the AKP's journey since its establishment in 2001,

emphasizes the impossibility of dividing the foreign and domestic policy perspectives. I name the AKP's particular way of connecting foreign and domestic policies as a certain modality, with a series of repercussions in both spheres. This is a moment in Turkish history, especially since the July 15 coup attempt in 2016, when "de-democratization" (Somer 2016), or in other words "exit from democracy" (Öktem and Akkoyunlu 2016), has a direct implication for rearranging international alliances, reinforcing Erdoğan's choice towards an alliance with Russia. Unlike in the AKP era, at least until 2011, when there was a commitment to democratic reforms and steps were taken toward the EU bid, in Erdoğan's "new Turkey," a regime where principles of rule of law and separation of powers have been severely damaged, European integration is no longer a feasible target. The prevailing authoritarianism in Turkey thus finds its natural counterpart in Putin's authoritarianism.

This article puts forward its argument in four sections. First, it focuses on the AKP's former policy characterized by a civilizationist approach and democratic reforms. Second, Erdoğan's war rhetoric is discussed within the context of new authoritarianism in Turkey. The third section sheds light on Turkey's rapprochement with Russia. The article concludes with an evaluation of prospects for the future and makes three recommendations. These three recommendations put the emphasis on responsibilities of European institutions at various levels, including the role of the ECHR of Council of Europe. In this sense, the article provides a panorama on how the former modality of the AKP in connecting foreign and domestic policies. Democratization, multilayered cooperation, and soft power have been replaced by a new modality that prioritizes securitization and military measures and does not have a democratization agenda.

The AKP's Former Foreign Policy

How can we make a periodization of the AKP-led foreign policy? Fethi Açıkel's (2016) periodization names the first period as "Islamic Liberalism." Between 2002 and 2009, by adhering to the idea of Islamic liberalism, the AKP followed a pro-EU perspective and initiated democratic reforms. This first period ended in Davos World Economic Forum in 2009, where Erdoğan had a clash with Shimon Peres over Gaza. For Açıkel, the second period, between 2009 and 2014, was marked by

pan-Islamist populism. It starts with the flotilla crisis with Israel in 2010 and the strengthening of ties with the Islamists in the Middle East. According to Açıkel, the third period that started in 2014 is “Islamic Nationalism.”

In the first period, a peculiar fusion of domestic and international affairs based on an Islamic identity gave the founders of the AKP, formerly (less moderate) Islamist politicians, the opportunity to make claims with reference to this identity. Their new formula was based on a civilizational identity and the idea of dialogue among civilizations, opening for the AKP new grounds for foreign relations prioritizing peace and cooperation (Adak and Turan 2016). The party program of 2001 envisaged Turkey as an element of stability in the region where it is situated, with its democracy, economy, and attitude of respect for human rights. Before the general elections in 2002, the AKP’s first campaign promoted the idea of universality of human rights, the Copenhagen criteria, freedom of thought and expression, and economic liberalism. With the vision of Ahmet Davutoğlu, the AKP internalized the EU membership bid, within the dialogue among civilizations framework. In 2005, this was converted into an alliance of civilizations discourse, which indicated to the AKP’s supporters and allies in the Middle East that the EU bid did not necessarily mean a weaker Islamic identity in Turkey; on the contrary, the EU would accept Turkey with full membership thanks to its Islamic identity. Davutoğlu also championed the perspective of “zero problems with neighbors.” Although the AKP’s civilizational foreign policy was explicitly based on a non-secular logic, it was welcomed by several European politicians and opinion leaders as it was a new mindset, helping Turkey improve its relations with the neighboring countries as well as the EU. The AKP government was pleased to position itself as a government able to talk to every government in its region (including Tel Aviv until 2008 and Yerevan until 2010). This specific modality also had a vision about achieving a high level of soft power within the region and beyond. In the AKP’s vision, soft power included an eagerness to play third party roles in the management and resolution of regional conflicts (Benli Antunışık 2008). Exporting Turkish TV series, especially to Arab countries to show Turkish lifestyle as desirable, and opening schools affiliated with Gülenist networks abroad were taken as influential tools of soft power. As a Muslim

preacher, Fethullah Gülen supported the idea of inter-faith dialogue. In the following years, however, it became evident that the Gülenist sponsorship of soft power was truly paradoxical, as the alliance with the Gülen network later appeared as the main weakness of the AKP.

Despite its promises, the AKP's civilizationist vision failed to have a consistent plan for different cases of the popular uprisings in the Middle East. Put differently, the civilizationist vision was too idealistic, and eventually the AKP government was unable to find a consistent balance between its civilizational ethos and concrete interests. Ziya Öniş (2012) observed this inconsistency with Libya and Egypt. While in the context of Libya the AKP government hesitated to support the uprising due to Turkish business investments, they immediately supported the protestors in Cairo where there was no Turkish investment. In addition to the crisis with Israel, Ankara was no longer able to talk to several other governments in the region by 2011. This was the first major shortcoming of the civilizationist foreign policy of the AKP.

The second shortcoming was related to the crisis in Syria. The core of any civilizationist argument is attributing coherence to a large unit at the expense of denying the inner diversities and tensions. The Syrian crisis made visible that the Islamic civilizational identity is not inclusive enough to embrace Shia faith and the Kurds with a secular orientation. From 2012, the AKP government chose to support one specific side in Syria's civil war, and this choice was made based on the denominational identity. Some observers named this choice as Sunnification of Turkish foreign policy (İdiz 2013). With this perspective, the AKP government did not hesitate to support radical Islamist groups, who are fighting against the Assad regime. Formerly, the AKP government was proud with its dialogue capacity with every government in the region. And during the Syrian crisis, they considered radical Islamist groups as their dialogue partners. Even when the Mosul consulate of Turkey was captured by ISIS, the Turkish government considered these radical groups within their dialogue network and supposed that the AKP leaders had a persuasive power over them. All in all, despite these contradictions in relation to recent developments in the Middle East, foreign policy had a certain level of consistency on a macro level, especially compared to the aftermath of the upcoming shift based on Erdoğan's whimsical style.

Erdoğan's War Rhetoric and Authoritarianism

The shift from “pan-Islamist populism” towards “Islamic nationalism” on a foreign policy level corresponds to the decline in democracy on the domestic level. In this shift, an important milestone was the Gezi Park resistance in 2013 and the AKP government's brutal response by using police violence as a key leverage. During the Gezi Park occupation and in its aftermath, Erdoğan solidified an “us versus them” discourse. In March 2014, Erdoğan declared that he was leading Turkey's “second War of Independence” (Hamid 2017). If this was a new War of Independence, who was the enemy? In Erdoğan's political rhetoric the enemy was defined in a rather ambiguous way, by mixing all kinds of conspiracy theories with some facts. “The enemy” in his rhetoric implied the Gülenist network, the West in a broad sense, the Gezi Park resisters, “the domestic admirers of the West” (Erdoğan's description of advocates of EU-oriented policies), and an amalgam of all of these. With the suppression of the media, restriction of freedoms, and growing intolerance of opposition, by 2015 the AKP became an authoritarian-hegemonic party, blurring the dividing lines between party and state (Somer 2016).

This de-democratization period was consolidated by the decline of the AKP as an institution. Especially after the rise of the conflict with Gülen's network, starting in 2014 with the large-scale corruption investigation targeting the AKP government and culminating in the coup attempt in 2016 mainly led by this network, Erdoğan reorganized the party with low-profile entourage loyal to his leadership. The strong figures were excluded from the party and the political scene, including former President Abdullah Gül, former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (also former chief EU negotiator) Ali Babacan, the leading founding figure of the party Bülent Arınç, as well as Efkân Ala and Yalçın Akdoğan, who represented the AKP government during the Kurdish peace process. The exclusion of Davutoğlu and the broken alliance with Gülen consolidated the abandonment of soft power. Another facet of the AKP's decline is that it lost the majority in the parliament as a result of the June 2018 elections (Cizre 2018) and had to make an electoral alliance with the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), which means drifting even further away from a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish conflict.

At this point a nuanced analysis of de-democratization is needed, emphasizing the direct relevance of the developments in the Kurdish conflict. In 2013-2015, the AKP government initiated a peace process, attempting to resolve the Kurdish armed conflict between the security forces and the PKK. With the fall of the peace process in 2015, Erdoğan returned to a strict militarist logic. Among several reasons for the failure of the peace process, the developments in Rojava within the context of the Syrian crisis fuelled more and more mistrust between the main parties of the Kurdish peace process. Ankara chose to avoid antagonistic relations with ISIS for a long time, while the PYD was defending Rojava against ISIS. The return to the militarist logic meant an unprecedented urban war in Kurdish provinces in Southeastern Turkey, including military operations and clashes between security forces and the PKK-affiliated militants carried out under round-the-clock and open-ended curfews (Hakyemez 2017). While a Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV 2016) report details the human cost, the report by the Office of the UN Higher Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is particularly revealing in terms of depicting how the urban landscape was damaged and even totally annihilated in some localities. The urban war dominated the second half of 2015 and the early months of 2016. The war rhetoric and concrete violence totally occupied the political sphere.

Another factor in Turkey's de-democratization was the putsch in July 2015 organized mainly by Gülen-network affiliated soldiers, leading to the death of 248 resisters. Although the putschists failed to take the control, the repercussion of the coup attempt was paradoxical. Under normal circumstances, when a civilian government takes over putschists, what is expected as a result is not usually the rise of militarism. In this case, however, even before the coup attempt, when the political sphere in Turkey had not been geared towards a stabilized democracy due to the escalating violence in the civilian urban sphere in the Kurdish provinces, the coup attempt furthered the on-going de-democratization process during the state of emergency period from July 20, 2016 to July 18, 2018, allowing the government to restrict the freedoms and rights of the citizens and turn the parliament into a non-functional institution through the Turkish-style presidential system.

During these two years, a "state of emergency-type government" model was implemented, which contributed to the institutionalization of

undemocratic practices. As I have discussed elsewhere (Turan 2019), four characteristics define the state of emergency-type government. First, the system is based on powerful leadership, underestimating even the ruling political party. The system excludes strong political figures from the party and turns the state apparatus into a tool working for the advantage primarily of the leader and also of his party. Second, the state of emergency-type government is based on emergency decrees with the force of law (*kanun hükmünde kararname*), bypassing the parliament and any checks and balances mechanism. The decrees published by the prime ministry essentially involve decisions on behalf of the judicial apparatus, especially evident in the decisions on dismissal of more than 100,000 public servants and academics (Amnesty International 2017). Although the current constitution orders that the decrees be exclusively related to issues of the state of emergency and that their effect be limited to the duration of the state of emergency, the state of emergency-type government issued decrees with permanent effect that are not directly related to the state of emergency. Third, the state of emergency-type government underestimates principles of democracy and European standards for freedom and human rights. Fourth, the emergency-type government justifies itself with the existence of a war atmosphere. Not only every decision of the government, but also each characteristic of the new government style, namely the need for a strong leadership and prompt decision-making, is justified with the extraordinary conditions enforced by a war context. Many dissenting voices were put into jail, including hundreds of Kurdish political figures, most notably the HDP co-leaders Figen Yüksekdağ and Selahattin Demirtaş. In order to make permanent some characteristics of the state of emergency-type government, the AKP held a constitutional referendum in April 2017 although it was highly problematic to do it under the state of emergency as noted in the report by the Venice Commission of Council of Europe (2017). The result was a tiny margin of victory for Erdoğan and his dream project of presidentialism, which constitutionalized a one-man system, jeopardizing legislative and judicial independence.

Within this new rising authoritarianism in Turkey, the AKP government preferred to restrict what had been normalized during the earlier period of democratic reforms and the peace process. For instance, the government intervened in the public commemoration of the Armenian

Genocide. For the last 10 years, these commemorations had been organized by a limited number of activists, but in 2018 policemen did not allow the activists to display the banner with the word genocide in Sultanahmet Square in İstanbul, and eventually members of the Human Rights Association opted to cancel the event. By the same token, the perspective towards normalization with Armenia has been silenced since the rise of authoritarianism in Turkey. On several occasions, AKP governments with the second modality of linking domestic and foreign policy expressed that their priority in the South Caucasus is Azerbaijan and a trilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey especially in the areas of economy, transportation, and energy (Gamaghelyan and Sayan 2018). And since the June 2018 election, the AKP does not have the majority in the parliament, and thus it depends on the support of the nationalist party, the MHP. This makes any political opening with Armenia in the short term very unlikely (Gamaghelyan and Sayan 2018).

Turkey's Challenging Rapprochement with Russia

Erdoğan's new foreign policy perspective was developing while Turkey was undergoing a process of de-democratization. Improving relations with Russia is central to this perspective. When Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu visited Moscow at the end of August 2018, he declared that Russia is a strategic partner for Turkey, with deepening and multi-layered cooperation. This statement summarized Ankara's effort to search for a new diplomacy venue, rather than depicting the actual situation.

Although the two leaders, Erdoğan and Putin, have similar political visions and personal acquaintance, the Turkish-Russian relations have never been without tension. Turkey has been a member of NATO since the early 1950s, and a hidden tension between NATO's sphere of influence and Russia has existed. In War of August and in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, Turkey took sides with Georgia and Ukraine, respectively. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, these two countries in the same region, one an old super-power dreaming about a revival and the other a medium-sized power with an over-ambitious leader, have been in adverse camps. Russia is openly supporting the Assad regime, and Turkey stopped talking to Damascus in 2011 and

began supporting the rebellious groups. In November 2015, when Turkish Air Forces downed a Russian fighter jet, the peak point of crisis between the two countries was reached. The Russian response was sanctions on Turkish export and tourism and turning the Syrian airspace into a no-fly zone for the Turkish Air Force. However, right after the coup attempt, Erdoğan made his first international visit to St. Petersburg in August 2016, and this bilateral summit opened a new chapter. The ground for rapprochement was ready when Erdoğan had penned a letter to Putin, expressing regret for the fighter jet incident (Walker and Rankin 2016). When Erdoğan arrived in St. Petersburg, he was under the pressure of Western leaders voicing their concern about a possible re-enforcement of the death penalty. Under these circumstances, Putin's support, which does not involve any conditionality based on human rights issues, was a relief for Erdoğan. This visit brought concrete results: the leaders agreed to speed up the nuclear power plant construction in Akkuyu, increase the budget for TurkStream natural gas pipeline, enhance cooperation in the defense industry, and, in order to avoid conflict in the Syrian context, establish a mechanism for bringing soldiers, diplomats, and intelligence service staff (Özcan et al. 2017).

Right after Erdoğan's visit to St. Petersburg, Turkey started military operation "Euphrates Shield" in the Kurdish region of Rojava, in northern Syria, in alliance with the rebel Free Syrian Army (FSA). This was the first concrete result of rapprochement with Russia, and it gave two opportunities to Ankara: an attack against ISIS and blocking any possible unification of the Kurdish cantons, Afrin and Rojava, governed by the PYD. Turkish troops first brought the border town of Jarablus under control, then entered Al Bab, an ISIS stronghold. That was an important moment for the AKP government, whose policy is in visible tension with the US policy towards Rojava, and now thanks to Russia's approval, Turkey appropriated a military leverage in the zone. Within this context, Erdoğan voiced a contentious suggestion, arguing that "The EU at all costs" is a wrong formula and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization could function as an alternative plan to supersede Turkey's EU membership bid (Hürriyet Daily News 2016).

If Erdoğan's statement on Shanghai Five was a symbolic gesture, Turkey's talks with Russia to purchase S-400 surface-to-air missile batteries pointed to a much more concrete policy shift. This investment

of \$2.5 billion marks a major shift in Turkish foreign policy and the national defense framework, simply because the system cannot be integrated into NATO's military architecture (Gumrukcu and Toksabay 2017). This indicates a major difference between the former AKP's foreign policy and Erdoğan's new maneuvers, parallel with his authoritarian rule. The former policy was more consistent and based on a framework of ideas, whereas the latter is not concerned about consistency. The current government aims to proceed with the purchase of F-35A stealth fighters from the US, as a NATO member, although the US Senate voted for a clause in the 2019 defense budget blocking the transfer of aircrafts to Turkey. It is obvious that Erdoğan's efforts to mix F-35s and Russia's S-400 air defense system further escalate the tension between the two governments.

Another important indicator of Turkish-Russian rapprochement was the Astana Talks, a summit between Russia, Iran and Turkey in October 2017. The main idea of these talks was to establish four "de-escalation zones" in Syria, observed by Russia, Turkey, and Iran to calm the conflict situation. Idlib province was accepted as one of the "de-escalation zones," with more than one million civilians and rebel factions dominated by Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), under Turkish observation. As of September 2018, three out of these four zones are under control of the Syrian government. In August 2018, during the summit for BRICS country leaders held in Johannesburg, Erdoğan arrived as a guest from a non-member state. And he put forward another alternative to EU membership, stating that he would be happy to see Turkey as a member and suggested a new acronym for the organization: BRICST.

While analyzing the Russo-Turkish rapprochement, similar trajectories in the domestic political careers of Putin and Erdoğan need to be noted. At the beginning of the 2000s, both leaders enjoyed support of the West and they assumed the role of initiating neoliberal reforms in their countries. Then, both of them converted themselves into a role of "challenger" of the West (Birdal 2017). Both leaders have a high record of repressing the media freedom and opposition in their countries (Öney 2017). In the context of challenging the West, the tension between Turkey and the US escalated drastically in August 2018. It was related to an American citizen, Pastor Andrew Brunson, who had been detained since October 2016, on charges of espionage and links to terror organizations

(implausibly, both to the Gülenist network and the PKK). In August, during Brunson's second year in detention, Trump severed his tone towards Ankara, and the US government declared sanctions against Turkish Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul and Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu for playing leading roles in Brunson's detention. Fueled by this crisis, in August 2018, the Turkish lira crashed, enduring a significant loss in its value. It would be a mistake to assume the Brunson crisis as the only reason for the currency crash. More importantly, several market players (in Turkey and abroad) have started to see Erdoğan's one-man ruling style as a source of risk. When Erdoğan met international investors in London in May 2018, he voiced his utterly irrational idea that low interest rates deliver low inflation in such a way that suggests the investors knew it all wrong. On a regular basis, Erdoğan states that interest rates are the "mother of all evil." Investors have interpreted these messages as a sign of incompetency in Turkey's economic administration. For *Financial Times*, the result of Erdoğan's London meeting was that "Investors lose their appetite for Turkey" (Financial Times 2018). Following his electoral victory, Erdoğan appointed his son-in-law as the Minister of Finance and Treasury, becoming a further message to market players about the absence of a sound economic perspective as well as of a checks and balances mechanism. On top of this continual decline, the crisis with the US on the Brunson case further weakened the value of the Turkish lira. In total, the Turkish lira lost 37 percent of its dollar value since January 2018 (Wheatley 2018). In addition to the problems caused by the second modality of linking domestic and foreign policy, with a gradually weakening economy, Turkey's ability to contribute to regional stability in the South Caucasus has become more limited.

Obviously, no economic crisis or a currency crash cannot be understood by focusing only on the level of politicians' discourse. What needs to be remembered is that the AKP government pursued the policy of limiting the interest rates as much as possible and having high exchange rates. This policy has its limitations in the medium run. But Erdoğan once again devised his war rhetoric. In mid-August, he stated that "The West is waging economic war on Turkey." For him, the fall of the Turkish lira's value necessitated a national struggle comparable to Turkey's war of independence against Western powers (Erdoğan 2018a). He described

the situation as an “economic assassination attempt” and an “external attack.” He also labeled rating agencies as “impostors” and “racketeers.” In other words, he did not accept the fact that global markets have their own logic, and that it is futile to have a discursive clash against them. Moreover, this is a very good case illustrating how Erdoğan utilized the economic crisis, caused mainly by his own wrong policy to demonize the western world and thus reinforce the general political orientation away from the EU and US.

Erdoğan have recently penned two op-ed essays for the American press, which provide further evidence for Turkey’s search to recalibrate the international partnership framework, which is hardly consistent. In his op-ed to *New York Times*, Erdoğan (2018a) addresses the White House and states that Washington must give up on the misguided notion that the Turkish-American relationship can be asymmetrical and must come to terms with the fact that Turkey has alternatives. A month later, in the *Wall Street Journal*, Erdoğan made a call to the international community and to the US, to understand their responsibility for the resolution of the crisis in Idlib, by tacitly accepting the indispensability of a more balanced foreign policy vision. In this essay, Erdoğan emphasized the obligation of the West to prevent a “humanitarian disaster,” together with Turkey’s partners in the Astana peace process—Russia and Iran—which are also responsible for the same target. In a way, he was accepting the fact that without having a fine-tuned balance between the West and Russia, it would not be possible for Turkey to claim its foreign policy perspective in a convincing way (Erdoğan, 2018b).

Prospects for the Future

The overall picture presented in this article demonstrates that, since 2002, the AKP government has had two modalities of bridging domestic and foreign policy. The first modality was the civilizationist foreign policy vision, which was coupled with democratic reform agenda on the domestic level. As of 2018, the first modality has been replaced. The new modality is a search for positioning Turkey within BRICS or even Shanghai Five, and this foreign policy vision is coupled with the shift to a presidential system on the domestic level, a system of “one strong man.” The analysis put forward here does not argue for the priority of foreign policy level over the domestic one, nor does it attribute a

determining power of foreign policy on the domestic issues. The analysis of these two modalities offered here indicates that during the AKP period in Turkey, the preferences of the governing party and its leader in terms of foreign and domestic policies are not separable. And how these two are bridged to make a totality is an indication of Turkey's inner stability and its capacity to provide regional stability. It is important to emphasize that the second modality corresponds to the current de-democratization path for Turkey, where the "state of emergency-type government" is normalized with constitutional amendments. The first modality had a more or less consistent framework; however, regarding the second modality the situation is different. The second is based on a consistently rising authoritarianism on the domestic level; yet when it comes to the foreign policy it fails to have a consistent plan. Erdoğan-style foreign policy attempts to purchase S-400 missiles from Russia and F-35 stealth fighters from the US at the same time, or to have a joint plan with Russia about the future of Syria, although Turkey and Syria do not have a common understanding about which groups are to be labeled as terrorist. The second modality also aims to show some progress on the EU relations, but without taking the necessary steps for a comprehensive European integration of Turkey. This inconsistent foreign policy vision disables Turkey's already limited chance to contribute towards regional stability.

What is then the impact of this new modality led by Erdoğan on the South Caucasus? First of all, with the second modality, Turkey is much more preoccupied with its internal agenda. In this sense, regional stability and the South Caucasus corresponds simply to an absence in Turkey's agenda. In the early 2000s, the US predicted that without achieving a normalization process between Ankara and Yerevan, there would be little hope to achieve a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Then, the US government initiated a track-two diplomacy process. Although public opinion in Armenia and in the diaspora expressed doubts about this dialogue channel, which failed to achieve a concrete outcome, it was still an important attempt in bringing some former diplomats and experts from Armenia and Turkey to the same table. As of 2018, this formula still holds validity: normalization between Ankara and Yerevan would significantly contribute to de-escalating the tension in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As Ankara gets closer to

Russia and intensifies the authoritarian ruling style domestically, there is no realistic hope for normalization with Yerevan and the initiation of a positive contribution to regional stability in the South Caucasus. Moreover, the ties between Ankara and Baku are not limited to ethnic identity, but also to energy and trade, which make these two countries strong allies in the realm of realpolitik.

When it comes to prospects for the future, although the “state of emergency-type government” and one-man ruling style seem powerful today in Turkey, international observers in the Caucasus and Europe need to note that this authoritarian phase in Turkish politics is not a viable path in the long run. Today’s economic crisis in Turkey is only one of the reasons for a sustainability issue for the *à la turca* authoritarianism. Equally important, the current constitutionalized authoritarianism lacks institutional basis, which will turn out to be the major problem for the sustainability of this ruling style. Within this framework, this article concludes by making three recommendations.

First, the European institutions need to take the de-democratization of Turkey seriously, together with their responsibility of taking action towards re-democratization. Their first responsibility is not to reduce Turkey to a country with which to negotiate only about the issue of refugees. The European institutions should openly address Turkey’s de-democratization as a serious problem, and they need to show that disregarding basic principles of freedom and rule of law will bring certain costs and consequences for Ankara. The motion recently accepted by the European Parliament to pursue unprecedented disciplinary action against Hungary for violating the EU’s core values, should be taken as benchmark. After the motion against Hungary in September 2018, the European Parliament decided in October to cut financial support to Turkey by €70 million. The aid was supposed to be paid under the condition that Turkey make improvements on the rule of law, democracy, human rights, and freedom of press. Significantly, the AKP government preferred not to turn this decision into a new crisis between Ankara and the EU. This shows that current actions taken by the European institutions do not necessarily lead to new tensions and hence further isolationism of Erdoğan’s government, which is necessary to tackle the de-democratization issue.

Second, the European institutions need to find innovative methods to engage with the regions outside of its borders. This new perspective has to include more direct engagement with the Middle East and the Caucasus and hence should give Erdoğan the message that the only viable option for Turkey to overcome its current crisis is bridging its domestic and foreign policy perspectives in a reasonable manner, which means undoing the war rhetoric.

Third, taking the current authoritarianism in Turkey seriously, the European institutions need to act on various levels, including strengthening the ties with the NGOs in Turkey. The responsibility is not limited to the EU—the Council of Europe’s share is equally important, if not more. The ECHR has recently decided not to have a judgment on the Turkish government’s dismissal of public servants under the post-coup attempt state of emergency, by stating that the domestic remedies are not yet exhausted. This decision is not compatible with the Court’s procedure as long as it takes the domestic commission of government, an explicitly administrative body, as a legal process. With this perspective, the ECHR opted not to guide the Turkish government to act in accordance with the rule of law and other European principles. All the European institutions, and above all, the ECHR, need to consider how Turkey will go beyond the “state of emergency-type government.” And reminding Ankara of the principles already undersigned by Turkey will be a strong start for this purpose.

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