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In This Issue

In this issue of *All Azimuth*, we present three articles that were motivated by a fruitful debate on homegrown theorizing in the International Relations (IR) discipline in Turkey during the first *All Azimuth* meeting in Çeşme, İzmir on May 24, 2013.

The issue begins with an article by Haluk Özdemir, which presents a comprehensive approach built on a critique of system theories in IR and reveals the potential of previous work on the subsystem in explaining change and continuity in the discipline. The author's contribution to the debate on homegrown theorizing in IR in Turkey is important because it presents general assumptions of and major hypotheses on the proposed inter-subsystemic model. His study suggests an intermediary level in the system – below the general system and above the traditional actor level – the subsystem, and focuses on the interactions between subsystems and their effects on the general system. His argument is not only interesting but also has considerable potential to explain change and continuity in IR from a homegrown theory-building perspective. The author claims that dynamics of the system in IR – that is, when the system is stable and when it changes – lie in its inconsistencies, contradictions, and challenges, which are likely to be observed in the contact points of different subsystems, or the so-called borderlands. In fact, he suggests that Turkey and similar countries are like laboratories of subsystemic interactions and might hold the key to understanding the dynamics of change and continuity in world politics. The proposed research agenda utilizes not only previous studies on the subsystem but also presents the essential research questions in a new subsystemic approach.

In the second article, Nilüfer Karacasulu focuses on the debate about the change in Turkish foreign policy. She examines the change by looking at two types, namely tactical and strategic changes in the foreign policy analysis literature. The author provides examples from the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government's foreign policy vision particularly for the Middle East to describe Turkey's regional power typology. She argues that Turkey's quest to be a regional power and its vision in this regard is shaped by tactical changes in the foreign policy, which were constituted through 'value-based' or 'principled' methods. The study presents an interesting regional power typology that can be further studied in a constructive perspective to explain and understand Turkish foreign policy behavior within the context of national identity construction and material interests in Turkey's foreign policy discourse.

Ali Balcı's article contributes to the debate on how IR scholars can develop an alternative method in studying power, and aims to demonstrate the early philosophical conceptualization of power relations in a non-Western context. He uses the arguments of Ibn al-Arabi to illustrate not only the possibility of studying critical and poststructuralist conceptions of power in IR but also the philosophical roots of alternative understandings of the logic of reason, which was traced back into Ibn al-Arabi's ideas. The article describes Ibn al-Arabi's epistemological skepticism, which might help us discuss the absence of a positivist or deductive methodology in the non-Western context. The author emphasizes that rather than relying on Western critical studies for criticism of the realist conception of power, scholars can utilize Ibn-al Arabi's work to understand social phenomena despite the challenges discussed in the article regarding an alternative methodology. Ibn al-Arabi's work suggests that any attempt to understand "the cosmos" is an arbitrary intervention, which strictly reflects power relations among actors. Accordingly, the author argues that it is not knowledge itself but its

repeatability or the repetition of knowledge that is the engine of temporal power. Therefore, any research that aims to illustrate the exercise of temporal power should focus on the repetition and dissemination of knowledge through texts (and images). The study concludes with some preliminary ideas and questions on how an example of non-Western thought, namely Ibn al-Arabi's work, can trigger scholarly questions on not only the methodology but also the sociology of the IR discipline and foreign policy in a non-Western context.

In his commentary, Peter Volten evaluates the implications of complex phenomena such as peacekeeping operations, the rise of violent non-state actors, and the recent Ukraine crisis with Russia regarding the future of the transatlantic alliance. He argues that European policy-makers must differentiate between a military-strategic approach and a political-strategic approach. The experiences of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya have shown that the mere presence of the former approach and the lack of the latter can lead to humanitarian and political disasters. While during the Cold War strategic concerns and defense policies were directly tied to each other, the changing nature of war in the past two decades should, in Volten's view, lead Western states to substantively reform their understanding of security and defense. His recommendation entails embedding the military-strategic view in the political context, which was proposed by Clausewitz as a "golden rule" in the nineteenth century. Volten cautions that reform should not be viewed solely as downsizing military personnel and equipment, but should incorporate conceptual change. In today's world, "security" includes issues such as food security, environmental threats, climate change, land degradation, violence and suppression by domestic rulers, and cyber security. Such conceptual changes should first and foremost refer to deeper cooperation and joint planning within the transatlantic alliance.

The final piece in this issue is a book review by Seçkin Köstem on the recently published *Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorileri* (International Relations Theory), edited by Ramazan Gözen. The author discusses the place of IR theory among scholars in Turkey according to the outline of the reviewed book chapters. In Köstem's assessment of the reasons for the lack of homegrown theorizing among Turkish scholars, he underlines the need for puzzle-driven research rather than becoming trapped in grand theoretical debates. He highlights the gaps and challenges of teaching IR theory, especially for graduate students, in Turkish international relations departments compared to his observations during his doctoral studies in Canada. The author shares his ideas about what should be done to encourage original contribution to IR theory in Turkey as well his suggestions on how to improve theory teaching with other courses in IR curricula.

We believe the authors' contributions to this issue of *All Azimuth* are important in demonstrating the ultimate goal of our journal in enhancing Turkey's scholarship in international relations through constructive work on IR theorizing and linking this region to current knowledge production in the IR discipline.

An Inter-Subsystemic Approach in International Relations

Haluk Özdemir
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Abstract

The main point of departure for this article is the incapacity of current international relations theorizing to explain both change and continuity without shifting between levels of analysis. The previous research agenda on system studies was renounced before it realized its potential. The concept of a subsystem has great potential for resolving this challenge. This article argues that the properties of the international system, including anarchy, are not constant, and show variation. To factor in this variation, first we need to identify subsystems (e.g. geographical or functional) that diverge across issue areas and functions. Then we need to look at the interactions between subsystems, which is a neglected aspect of the literature on subsystems. This article contributes to the debate by setting out a new research agenda to study the interactions between subsystems and their effects on the general system; that is, to identify when the system is stable and when it changes. This agenda suggests a particular focus on the inconsistencies, contradictions, and challenges that lie at the intersections of different subsystems.

Keywords: System, strategic culture, subsystem, crisis, change

1. Introduction

Concepts and theories are born out of specific social contexts. Waltz tells us that constructing a theory requires creative thinking. Nonetheless, thoughts, theories, and perspectives are shaped by life experiences. To postulate a theory of power politics, a person might need to have experiences with the uses or abuses of political power, as Morgenthau did; to be able to talk about dependency, one might need to observe its economic consequences, as the Latin American theorists did. Similarly, constructing a feminist theory requires an engagement with the problems of gender inequality; and developing theories about identity supposes some experience with identity issues or witnessing radical identity shifts, as happened in Europe.

The approach proposed here is also born out of a specific experience. This experience is mainly shaped by a vision of international relations (IR) observed from a unique country, where different systems, cultures, and geographies meet. Turkey is a country where no general categories are valid, and it is always in the grey areas of passages between such categories. It is betwixt and between, neither Europe nor the Middle East, neither East nor West; it is a borderland between post-modern and pre-modern worlds, between Christianity

and Islam, between the dynamics of integration and disintegration, and so on. It always falls between categories, and in that sense it has an “inter-” perspective. It is not a typical Muslim country; neither is it a typical democracy nor a typical nation-state. As it does not fit into conceptual categories, it can be viewed as a hard-to-understand conceptual rebel.

All theories present categories of issues, actors, and interactions to help us create a better understanding of the world. However, since these theories tend to omit certain categories as negligible exceptions, their images of world events are achieved through the creation of conceptual blind spots. Nevertheless, such areas of exceptions or borderlands have unique experiences, which might have systemic consequences. These conceptual blind spots, despite their rebellious and neglected nature, are still at the heart of intense and significant international political, economic, and cultural transactions. In other words, they are not real blind spots. Therefore, they constantly make us feel their discomfiting presence and relentlessly demand explanation. Such outliers, exceptions, or disturbances are left out of our conceptual world, not because they are insignificant or escape our attention, but because they do not fit most of the constructed theoretical categories. This paper argues that such disturbances might carry great and undiscovered potential for understanding significant dynamics.

Within this context, one of the main challenges in IR studies is to keep an eye on such disturbances and anomalies while still working with generalizations. This is an important challenge, because the dynamics of change arises from such anomalies. This paper argues that a focus on subsystems and their interactions with each other hold great possibilities for overcoming that challenge. This focus, however, requires a new concept of the international system, which accounts for qualitative variations, namely the variability in its anarchic structure. It is well known that there are different subsystems and regional orders, showing different qualities of an anarchic nature, and there is no single international system, but an international system of subsystems. For instance, the international system in Europe and the one in the Middle East exhibit different characteristics. This paper takes this finding as a foundation for its conception, and argues that the inconsistencies across subsystems hold great potential for explaining change in the international system, especially in such places where those discordant subsystems border each other.

Current IR theorizing analyzes the dynamics of change at the actor level, such as state, organization, or individual. My approach establishes an intermediary level below the general system and above the traditional actor level, which is a subsystem. There have been a considerable number of studies conducted on subsystems, but they are largely neglected afterwards. Utilizing those studies and based on certain assumptions, the suggested research approach hereby describes preliminary variables and a level of analysis and proposes some hypotheses.

The main hypothesis of this paper is that a closer look at such crossroads and borderlands holds the key to understanding the dynamics of change and continuity in world politics. On the other hand, neglecting such significant categories reduces our understanding of such dynamics. More creative thinking about international relations requires us to take a closer look at such oddities and omissions in our conceptual map rather than leaving them as blind spots.

This article starts by indicating two specific disciplinary problems of IR to point out that the proposed approach can also be a solution for them. The first one is about losing the discipline’s conceptual center of gravity, and the second one concerns the unfruitful

debates about explaining change and continuity in IR. Here, system-level studies are especially emphasized as a possible remedy. However, system studies carry the risk of over-generalization and negligence. After a brief overview of the shortcomings of the systemic studies and a general evaluation of the literature on systems and subsystems, I present the main arguments of and the rationale behind the proposed inter-subsystemic approach.

2. International Relations as a Scattered Discipline

International relations studies have lost their focus since the end of the Cold War, though for some schools of thought, this might not be necessarily a bad thing.¹ However, as a result, we face a discipline with neither identifying features nor clear or aggregate research goals. The interdisciplinary nature of the discipline, despite its advantages, exacerbates this problem. In a world where everything is international or global, the discipline needs more focus. However, as a result of the rising post-modern school, any effort to define disciplinary borders or clear research goals is discredited for being positivistic. The issue we are facing today is more about disciplinary identity than the nature of the discipline.

In the beginning, two apparently opposing schools of IR had defined two clear research agendas for IR scholars. For idealists, the main goal was to prevent further human suffering resulting from wars through changing the nature of international politics. Their remedies were institutionalization at the international level, democratization, and free trade. The realists were not so much about changing world politics, but about understanding its nature and providing guidance for policy makers.

Idealists set change as their goal while realists identified a problem of the lack of peaceful change in international politics. Carr and subsequent realists argued that since there was no peaceful mechanism of change, wars erupt between states, and that this is the nature of international politics. As the balance of power between states changes, war is the only mechanism to adjust to the new balance. Despite their differences, realists and idealists alike were concerned with the issue of change and/or survival in international politics, and viewed power struggles as the core issue.

The following great debates have caused IR to lose its focus: methodological and philosophical discussions have started to take over the discipline. Today, the main focus of IR is no longer international politics, and the discipline looks more like philosophy, sociology, and history. Even though the discipline has been benefiting from these discussions, today there is an urgent need to refocus in the IR discipline and to reconnect its theoretical realm to the real-world issues.

In recent decades, the IR field has expanded from world politics to gender politics, to the environmental issues, social injustices and inequalities, and other problems to capture the complexity of international phenomena.² It is argued that simplistic explanations that serve certain actors or interests should be abandoned, and deconstructive, critical, and multidimensional perspectives are needed. This argument has also raised a group of questions about the discipline: Are social or international phenomena so complicated that a meaningful explanation cannot be achieved without serving the interests of the powerful? Is change so constant that efforts toward revealing the dynamics of continuity are a vain enterprise? Is it enough to explain the working principles and dynamics of international system?

¹ Meghana Nayak and Eric Selbin, *Decentering International Relations* (New York: Zed Books, 2010).

² Stephanie Lawson, ed., *The New Agenda for International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

The new schools, such as critical or post-modern ones, view the realist distinctions between the domestic and international, as well as between political and non-political or even between public and private, as simplistic, misleading, and outdated. These schools have dismissed the theoretical knowledge produced by the old schools of the discipline, as ‘old-fashioned science.’ According to these approaches, there is no clear subject of study or aspect of political or social phenomena that is peculiar to the IR field.

Since the end of the Cold War, the search for the authenticity of IR subjects has apparently hit a dead-end. This inability to find a way out has split the IR discipline into different schools that do not communicate with each other; these schools of thought speak different languages that do not translate in any meaningful sense for other schools. Perhaps it is time to go back to basics, excavate some of the old concepts, and utilize the contributions of the new theories. After all, these theories are not competing ideologies, but different understandings of IR, and they are part of the same endeavor to produce knowledge about international phenomena.

Mainstream IR is lost at the moment. If we cannot find a disciplinary center of gravity, which might establish communication channels between the old and new schools of IR, the discipline will wander in different directions without producing meaningful knowledge, and we will be drifting in the complexities of international phenomena.

3. The Issue at Stake

Besides the loss of direction in the discipline, the main issue at stake is the problem of continuity and change. The reason behind the multiplication and proliferation of new and different schools of thought is the search for good explanations of change and continuity in IR. This search was accelerated with the unexpected ending of the Cold War and its bipolar politics. This unforeseen transformation of world politics highlighted the shortfalls of the current theorizing. However, the main issue, namely the interplays between continuity and change, continues to be salient.

Realists focused on the great powers to understand systemic changes. The shifting balance of power among the great powers was the main reason for change. However, not only great-power politics but the emergence of new international actors (such as multinational corporations), domestic developments (such as the Soviet reformation of glasnost and perestroika), and regional developments resulting from middle power interactions (such as the emergence of the EU) have all also caused systemic changes.

The other challenge for realist thinking at the end of the Cold War was about its distinction between international and domestic politics. Out of this challenge emerged new schools such as constructivism, which rejects such distinctions and suggests that looking only at the great powers, the balance of power, or even actors themselves are not enough; we need to factor in perceptions, relations, and norms as well. The weakness of constructivism is that it can only retrospectively identify the processes and perceptions that cause change. The main questions of when the dynamics of continuity are at play and how the system maintains itself, as well as when the dynamics of transformation take the stage and change occurs are still not answered.

Even though constructivism is an important breakthrough with its inspiring propositions, it still does not solve the puzzles of the timing or direction of change. The processes, relations, perceptions, and identities that constructivism emphasizes are at play everywhere and at every level. Considering that we cannot observe everything to help understand, explain, or

theorize international phenomena, we need to restrict our attention to a feasible scope. An inter-subsystemic approach would guide us in our research effort to focus our attention on empirical and analytical purposes. In our effort to explain change, instead of expanding our research agenda to cover every social relation at any level, we need to focus on critical spots and subjects. Within this context, one of the things that my inter-subsystemic approach aims to do is provide guidance for such focus.

In terms of change and continuity, the agent-structure debate seems to be heading towards a dead-end as well. This debate's promise is nothing more than a chicken-and-egg argument. To put the argument in its simplest terms, structure explains continuity better because it is deterministic in assuming that the system shapes the contours of a behavioral framework. As Waltz suggested, actors must behave according to the structure of the system to survive.³ On the other hand, as the end of the Cold War has shown us, radical systemic changes can be brought about by actor behavior, or choices, as was the case with the Soviet Union and the collapse of the bipolar international system.

But, in explaining change and continuity, we need something more profound than what the agent-structure debate offers. Perhaps the structure better explains continuity and the agent better explains the change. However, IR theories now should be able to tell us when the dynamics of continuity are at work and when change is coming. The IR discipline and its studies must surpass foundational but preliminary debates and move beyond static explanations.

Explaining only change or focusing only on continuity is not enough for the scientific purpose of the field. Instead of restricting our options between two 'narrow' choices of either assuming constant change or stagnant continuity, the proposed approach has great potential to reveal the dynamics of both intermittent change and volatile continuity. We know some structures endure, and change is neither constant nor radical most of the time. We also know that the change is accumulative and not constant. More insights into the tipping points and triggering effects for change are needed.

In the beginning, IR research focused on explaining the underlying forces of continuity and the persistent dynamics of international politics. The realist school did a great job in identifying the forces of continuity in the system, and explained how and through which mechanisms the system maintained itself. This was natural in a sense because IR was a new field, and the early theoreticians needed to establish a basic knowledge of the dynamics of international politics. At this foundational stage, the main goal was trying to understand the working principles of the system. For that reason, the early scholars focused on terms like balance of power, security, alliances, peace, war, etc. However, the failure of mainstream IR studies to predict the end of the Cold War opened a new era of new research agendas for explaining change.

4. The International System and a Critique of the System Approaches

A solution for the above-mentioned disciplinary problems inevitably involves system-level studies. Systems studies have an undisclosed potential to explain both continuity and change on the one hand, and establish a center of gravity for the discipline on the other. However, the IR community dismissed system arguments before uncovering their potential.⁴ The reason

³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), 73-7, 92.

⁴ Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Systemic Theories of Conflict," in *Guide to the Scientific Study of International*

for this quick dismissal was the failure of system studies to deliver expectations and answer criticisms.⁵ Before discussing the dormant potential of these approaches, a brief overview of the concepts of system and subsystem is necessary. Since a very broad range of research has been conducted on international systems between the 1950s and 1980s, a complete review of the systems studies exceeds the scope of a regular article. Therefore, this will be a partial review of the literature, bounded by the specific purposes of my arguments.

Buzan and Little make an analytical distinction between mechanically and socially constructed types of systems.⁶ Mechanical systems work in accordance with physical laws, and understanding such mechanic and almost automatic relations is enough to understand the system. However, the international system is socially constructed, which means there is little or no structural determinism in it, and it is formed interactively through perceptions and reactions. This is the main dilemma that system-level IR studies have not been able to resolve, because any effort at factoring in the perception variables involves actor-level parameters. For that reason, IR theories until recently adopted a mechanistic approach in explaining the international system; based on the assumption of a universal rationality, systemic studies assumed that the conditions of anarchy and dynamics of balance of power were conditioning actor behavior. Here, the main challenge is to incorporate perceptions and interactions into our analysis and still work at the system level. Clearly, the study of socially constructed systems is a challenging, but also an achievable task.

A brief overview of the literature suggests that the theoretical discussions about international systems are generally descriptive rather than analytical. Any definition of a system, in general, involves actors, rules that relate those actors to each other, and the processes through which the rules are implemented. The general approach to systems in IR focused on the actors, that is, the components of the system. Kaplan defines the international political system as “the system of action”⁷ where there are describable behavioral regularities, and a system can be identified as a separate entity from others by these regularities and patterned behavior. However, despite this early definition, the main focus of IR theories centered on the international system as the “system of things,” such as the system of nation-states, rather than actions, relations, and processes.

Kaplan suggested five variables for defining a system: (1) essential rules, which define the general relationship between actors; (2) transformation rules, which determine how the essential rules are applied to certain parameters or situations, and are thus the source of change depending on conditional reactions and variance in behavior; (3) actor classificatory variables, which represent the structural characteristics of the actors, such as nation-states, alliances, or international organizations, and also have significant bearing on actor behavior; (4) capability variables, which refer to the competency of actors to act; and (5) information variables, which denote the actors’ knowledge about what they want to and can do.⁸ In that general scheme, change in the system would occur if the system’s essential rules could not be maintained.

Processes, ed. Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, Paul F. Diehl and James D. Morrow (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 103.

⁵ Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History. Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18-22.

⁶ Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*, 103-107.

⁷ Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1957), 4.

⁸ Kaplan, *System and Process*, 9-12.

Despite this multidimensional definition, subsequent research focused more on anarchy (1), nation-states (3), and the balance of power (4) to analyze the international system, while neglecting its other aspects (2 and 5). Change and perceptions, the neglected aspects of the system, were brought back to the research agenda by constructivists. But this brings us down to actor-level analyses. The main issue here is to insert these neglected variables into our analyses without falling into reductionism, which is indeed the main problem we face in the literature. Like Waltz, Kaplan (despite his own definition) also describes different systems through actor capabilities (power), such as the balance of power, bipolar, tight bipolar, loose bipolar, universal, hierarchical, and a unit veto.

Kaplan's arguments imply the existence of various systems as opposed to a single global international system. He admits that there are different systems, and when one system's output is the input for another system, they are "coupled."⁹ Despite these rich observations, Kaplan's theory has not been fully advanced. System coupling in particular carries great potential in explaining continuity and change in the international system.

System approaches can be criticized from several aspects, such as their neglect of actor-level variables, their insufficient account for change in the system, or their sweeping generalizations. Despite these deficiencies, *system*, as a concept and an approach, cannot be disregarded and is essential for IR studies. Waltz argued that system is the main research topic and the phenomenon that separates IR from non-IR disciplines.¹⁰

The first criticism about system approaches is their *simplistic assumption about homogeneity*. Systemic approaches focus on the actors, processes, and structure in the system. Initial studies assumed a relatively homogenous system, which shows the same global characteristics. The most common attributes of that system are its anarchic nature based on sovereign-equal nation states, and the obligation for self-help and self-security. Waltz further identified that there was no functional differentiation between actors, and variation could only be in the distribution of capabilities, better known as the balance of power.¹¹ In other words, the system shows largely the same characteristics globally, and systems can differ from each other only temporally through their polar structures.

However, the differences across the international system can be more profound than mere variances in polar structures. Even a brief and superficial observation reveals that neither actors, nor processes, nor the structure is the same throughout the system. Until recently, IR theories assumed that the European sovereign-state system established in Westphalia was valid for the whole international system. Since the main principles of that system were accepted globally, this was a reasonable assumption at first glance. However, we know that the European sovereign-state model is not valid everywhere, and further, it works differently in different parts of the world. We have 'failed states,' and states existing with no 'actual' sovereignty. Actors vary not only in their power contingencies, but also in their nature. The differences between the US and Somalia or Afghanistan are more profound than their distributions of power. Relational processes in Europe are not the same as those in the Middle East or Africa. Therefore, it is misleading to speak of a whole international system.

Here, the main problem with system theories is "*a high degree of abstraction,*" which

⁹ Kaplan, *System and Process*, 5.

¹⁰ Kenneth Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," *Journal of International Affairs* 44, no. 1 (1990): 24-30.

¹¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 97-98.

overlooks the differentiation across a system among actors, perceptions, and structures.¹² This thinking is the main reason why system approaches fail in their accounts of different behavior under similar structures. Some argue that the system-level explanations are too parsimonious, but this is a needed quality for theories as long as it does not oversimplify the complexity of international reality. This oversimplification and overabstraction can cause detachment of explanations from real-world events. As a result, we get explanations that are coherent within their own premises, but contradictory when compared to their alternatives. A concrete illustration of this can be found in comparing the arguments of Waltz and of Deutsch and Singer about which bipolar or multipolar system is more stable. Within their consistent premises, Waltz argues that bipolar systems are more stable while Deutsch and Singer think multipolar systems are more stable.¹³

A totalistic and global approach to system theories neglects differences, not only between actors, but between regions and even issue areas. The general hypothesis of anarchy also assumes that anarchy is the same and homogeneously distributed across the system. But we know that anarchy does not create the same conditions everywhere, and even the same conditions can cause completely different behavior. Therefore, anarchy is nothing more than the absence of a higher ruling authority, and the condition does not say much about neither actor behavior nor how the system works.¹⁴

Donnelly levels a more fundamental criticism at the term, and argues that unlike the assumption of anarchy, the international system is stratified, and the things that seem to be the result of anarchy are not actually “the effects of anarchy.”¹⁵ Singer and Small embrace a similar hierarchical (as opposed to anarchical) approach when they argue that there are different groups of interacting states. They call groups of states that take “a vigorous part in global diplomacy” “the central system” or “the central subsystem.” The subsystem formed by such states “generally coincide[d] with the European state system” until the end of World War I. The other states formed “the peripheral subsystem” and were placed below the central subsystem because of their lesser influence over the general system.¹⁶

Despite its superficiality, anarchy is still an important aspect of the international system. Donnelly thinks that the systemic description of anarchy is overly simplistic. Nevertheless, a more sophisticated explanation of the term that accounts for variations also makes the term lose its simplicity and perceptibility. Therefore, we need a better concept of anarchy that considers variations at the system level. In other words, we need to see differences and still not miss the global picture. I suggest that the strategic culture can account for variation in anarchy without losing the analytical benefits of the anarchy concept.

Another point of criticism is the *continuity bias and determinism* of system approaches. System theories have generally focused on properties of the system such as the distribution of power, international organizations, alliances, norms, rules, etc. They explain how the system shapes actor behaviors and maintains itself. However, the inability of current system theories

¹² Thomas J. Christensen, “Conclusion: System Stability and the Security of the Most Vulnerable Significant Actor,” in *Coping with Complexity in International System*, ed. Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis Boulder (Colorado: Westview Press, 1993), 331.

¹³ Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Stability of a Bipolar World,” *Daedalus* 93 (Summer 1964): 881-909; Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability,” *World Politics* 16 (April 1964): 390-405.

¹⁴ Jack Donnelly, “The Elements of the Structures of International Systems,” *International Organization* 66, no. 4 (October 2012): 620-21.

¹⁵ Donnelly, “The Elements of the Structures,” 623.

¹⁶ J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War, 1816-1965. A Statistical Handbook* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), 22, 381.

to produce satisfactory explanations about transformation dynamics is criticized, citing their “static bias.”¹⁷

At the root of continuity or static bias lies the assumption of an all-encompassing single international system. This assumption suggests that there are no outlining borders of the international system, because it includes everything. In the absence of alien civilizations, the world system is all-encompassing. According to Kaplan, system equilibrium is not changed until the system is “disturbed.”¹⁸ This argument implies a necessary existence of exogenous forces that disturb the operational dynamics of the system in order for a change to happen. Similar to Kaplan’s argument, Organski suggested that change is exogenous to the system, meaning that change happens not because of the variables that define the system but for other reasons.¹⁹

If the international system includes everything, where would this disturbance come from? As an answer to this question, this paper suggests that rather than assuming an all-inclusive single international system, we need to develop a new system approach that takes different subsystems and the interactions among them into consideration. An account of these interactions and interconnections is needed for a better understanding of change at the system level. Modelski argues that systems change through evolutionary learning and innovation.²⁰ But he leaves the questions of “What is learned?”, “How is it learned?”, and “In which direction might the system change?” unanswered.

These questions bring us to another deficiency of systemic theories, which can be called the *reductionist trap*. System analyses, as long as they neglect actor perceptions and reactions, are doomed to superficial explanations and ‘made-up stories’ about international politics. On the other hand, actor-level studies of the system fall into the category of what Waltz called *reductionism*.²¹ We need systemic approaches that explain international relations beyond abstract assumptions of rational actor behavior. For example, the balance of power means nothing unless we know the actors’ identities and their perceptions of each other and of a specific power distribution.²²

The theories focus on the descriptive aspects of the system and its operational principles. Nevertheless, we also need to study how systems are transformed and when systemic changes are more likely, in addition to exploring the issues of systemic maintenance. Waltz and neorealists have looked at power struggles between actors and concluded that systemic changes result from the balance of power. However, balance of power dynamics, despite their systemic consequences, work at the actor level. This means that change in the system is explained, even by system theorists, through actor-level transactions. In that sense Waltzian theory also falls, in Waltz’s terms, into the reductionist trap, because the variations across systems are measured through actor capabilities.

The international system is significant in shaping actor behavior. Changes in actor behavior are not important unless the change has systemic consequences or even causes. However,

¹⁷ Stephen J. Genco, “Integration Theory and System Change in Western Europe: The Neglected Role of Systems Transformation Episodes,” in *Change in the International System*, ed. Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), 55.

¹⁸ Kaplan, *System and Process*, 8.

¹⁹ A. F. K. Organski, “The Power Transition,” in *International Politics and Foreign Policy. A Reader in Research and Theory*, ed. James Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1961), 367-75.

²⁰ George Modelski, “Is World Politics Evolutionary Learning?,” *International Organization* 44, no. 1 (Winter, 1990): 1-24.

²¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 60-79.

²² Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca&London: Cornell University Press, 1987).

any endeavor to explain international change involves actor perceptions or behaviors. This fact compels us to move from system-level to actor-level analyses, and fall again into the reductionist trap. Thus, change or transformation of the system is still an unresolved issue that system analyses need to overcome.²³ In order to avoid the reductionist trap, we need to find the dynamics of both persistence and change at the system level. Then, the main question becomes, “How can we explain the multidimensional forces of change at the systemic level without falling into the reductionist trap?” If the system has variance across actors, processes, and structure, are we left with actor-level studies?

Here, I argue that despite all this variance, it is still possible to conduct a systemic study of international relations. According to this argument, the international system consists of units larger than actors, and the relational processes among those units shape the general system and its structure. These units are identified as subsystems or regional systems. Subsystems have both systemic qualities and actor-like capabilities, which enable them to both maintain the current structure and trigger the dynamics of change.

5. Defining System(s) and Subsystems

Kenneth Boulding defines a system, in its simplest form, as “anything that is not chaos.” Therefore, a system is a structure with order and patterned behavior.²⁴ Other definitions of a system involve the elements of actors, structure, processes, and the system boundaries.²⁵ Structure refers to actor positions in comparison to each other. In that sense, the international system is anarchic, where no actor is located hierarchically higher or lower than others, and positional differences are determined by the possession of power. The emphasis on structure inevitably focuses on the continuity and maintenance of the system.

Process, on the other hand, is about patterns of behavior, transaction flows,²⁶ and interactions between actors. Process involves both adaptation and maintenance of the system;²⁷ therefore, to understand both continuity and change, a focus on processes is needed. Kaplan identifies three processes in the system: regulatory, integrative (cooperative learning), and disintegrative (conflictual).²⁸ While regulatory processes are about system maintenance and continuity, the other processes represent the dynamics of change. Kaplan and Boulding add the element of values into their definition of systems, because values are both shaped by the system and also affect the system through their impact on actor behavior.²⁹

States, international organizations, and other non-state actors are considered to be the actors in the international system. However, this definition is not sufficient to understand the international system, not only because the actors in that system have diversified in recent decades, but also because a system consists of parts that are larger than particular actors. Parts of a general system, namely subsystems, can also be considered behavior-shaping components.

²³ Dina A. Zinnes, “Prerequisites for the Study of System Transformation,” in *Change in the International System*, ed. Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), 3-21.

²⁴ Kenneth E. Boulding, *World as a Total System* (London: Sage Publications, 1985), 9.

²⁵ Kaplan, *System and Process*; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (New York: Longman, 2001).

²⁶ Steven J. Brams, “Transaction Flows in the International System,” *The American Political Science Review* 60 (December 1966): 880-98.

²⁷ Kaplan, *System and Process*, 89.

²⁸ Kaplan, *System and Process*, 89-112.

²⁹ Kaplan, *System and Process*, Part 3; and Boulding, *World as a Total System*, 157-75.

It is possible to identify three varying definitions of systems: functional (issue), spatial (geographical), and temporal (chronological). The first two refer to subsystems because they represent different parts of a general system.³⁰ On the other hand, the chronological definition of a system implies that there have been different systems in different periods in history. Subsystems can also be identified horizontally (symmetrically) through mapping groups of states that share a strategic culture, or vertically (asymmetrically) through classifying different kinds of actors, such as state, non-state, or private actors, depending on the research purpose. In vertically or asymmetrically grouped subsystems, actors do not have a common strategic culture but are grouped according to their qualities or nature, such as the state subsystem, the multinational corporation subsystem, or the non-governmental organization subsystem. (There is no hierarchy implied here.) According to Buzan and Little, subsystems are

groups of units within an international system that can be distinguished from the whole system by the particular nature or intensity of their interactions/interdependence with each other. Subsystems may be either territorially coherent, in which case they are regional (ASEAN, the OAU), or not (OECD, OPEC), in which case they are not regions, but simply subsystems.³¹

Because of this multi-perspective on subsystems, there is no conceptual agreement in the literature about how to name them. Some examples include subordinate state system,³² regional subsystem,³³ partial international system,³⁴ central and peripheral subsystem,³⁵ and others.³⁶

Despite the general acknowledgement of the existence of subsystems, the multi-dimensional nature of systemic differentiation has prevented a debate across theories, and has led to different meanings of the term. For example, Singer used it to imply the components of the system and anything below the systemic level of analysis, especially referring to actors.³⁷ Kaplan adopted a similar approach when he referred to the anarchic nature of the international system by describing it as “a subsystem dominant system.”³⁸ However, Kaplan uses subsystem differently in different contexts. He refers to the functional characteristics of the system, such as political or economic, while he also mentions geographical subsystems.³⁹ When he argues that there can be national or supranational subsystems of international system, he actually refers to the levels of analyses.⁴⁰

System analyses, while neglecting the reality of differentiation, also accept it as an implicit assumption. The fact that Morgenthau and Waltz strictly talk about a political system implies the existence of other functional systems at the international level.⁴¹ Therefore, Buzan and

³⁰ For geographical definitions of subsystems see Leonard Binder, “The Middle East as Subordinate International System,” *World Politics* 10 (April 1958): 408-29; Michael Brecher, “International Relations and Asian Studies: The Subordinate State System of Southern Asia,” *World Politics* 15 (January 1963): 213-35.

³¹ Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*, 69.

³² Brecher, “International Relations and Asian Studies.”

³³ George Modelski, “International Relations and Area Studies: The Case of Southeast Asia,” *International Relations* 2 (April 1961): 143-55.

³⁴ Stanley Hoffmann, “Discord in Community,” *International Organization* 17 (Summer 1963): 521-49.

³⁵ Singer and Small, *The Wages of War*, 22, 381.

³⁶ William R. Thompson, “The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory,” *International Studies Quarterly* 17 (March 1973), 92.

³⁷ David Singer, “The Global System and its Subsystems: A Developmental View,” in *Linkage Politics. Essays on the Convergence of National and International Systems*, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 21-43.

³⁸ Kaplan, *System and Process*, 16-17.

³⁹ Kaplan, *System and Process*, 146.

⁴⁰ Kaplan, *System and Process*, 12.

⁴¹ Barry Buzan and Matthias Albert, “Differentiation: A Sociological Approach to International Relations Theory,” *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (September 2010): 328.

Albert, contrary to Waltz, argue that the international system has an aspect of functional differentiation, meaning that it in fact has functional subsystems. However, this functional differentiation representing different subsystems suggests a functional differentiation of the system, not of the actors.⁴²

An analytical system approach, needed for a better understanding of change and continuity, must identify subsystems and define interactions among them through their distinct modes of operation. The difficulty of defining a new world order in the post-Cold War era is closely connected with our inability to define current subsystems. For example, the only defining components of the Cold War international system were not the US, the Soviet Union, or the varying sizes of other states but the different subsystems formed by these states. Without identifying what kinds of subsystems exist in a given system, we cannot understand or interpret the interactions taking place within its boundaries. This is the main difficulty we have faced since the end of the Cold War: we still cannot define a clear new world order, not because we live in a chaotic environment, but because we are not able to clearly identify the emerging new subsystems.

Definitions of subsystems can be developed in different ways depending on the research goal. Different theories define systems differently, and incorporate divergent understandings of them. Therefore, the definition of any system must be contextual and purpose specific. Depending on our research goal, different definitions of a system can be based on different actors and emphasize different processes. In that sense, my approach is substantially different from Waltz's efforts to separate the international system from the non-political realm. In my approach, there can also be non-political subsystems shaping the international system. The concept of strategic culture appears to be a useful conceptual tool in defining political subsystems.

According to Buzan and Albert, system approaches have overlooked the fact that the international system contains different systems, and in that sense it is "the system of systems."⁴³ To understand the whole system, we need to account for its parts and the interactions among them; therefore, its internal differentiation. Buzan and Albert identify three types of differentiation: segmentary, stratificatory (hierarchical), and functional.⁴⁴ Segmentary differentiation refers to geographical variance and is similar to my definition of subsystem. Here, the different parts of the system are separated not hierarchically, but geographically, and have relatively equal positions. Functional differentiation refers to the systems of varying topics. For example, there might be a political system, as well as economic, social, or cultural ones.

Buzan embraces the functional approach and calls subsystems "sectors" of the international system. He talks about five sectors: military, political, economic, environmental, and societal or socio-cultural.⁴⁵ Buzan and Little's analysis of the temporal and functional dimensions of a system stands out in the literature because of its multidimensional approach. In that study, the authors look at different functional subsystems at different times in history.⁴⁶

⁴² Donnelly, "The Elements of the Structures," 623.

⁴³ Buzan and Albert, "Differentiation," 317.

⁴⁴ Buzan and Albert, "Differentiation," 318.

⁴⁵ Barry Buzan, "The English School as a New Systems Theory of World Politics," in *New Systems Theories of World Politics*, ed. Mathias Albert, Lars-Eric Cederman, and Alexander Wendt (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 200-201. Also see Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*, 73-77.

⁴⁶ Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*.

This analysis enables us to identify political as well as economic, military, ideological, and cultural subsystems.

Rosenau also points to the importance of identifying subsystems to understand the functioning of a general system. He mainly focuses on a functional understanding of subsystems, and emphasizes the significance of interactions between them, that is, between different actors in different issue areas (subsystems):

Persuasive evidence is available to show that lesser political systems – that is, local and national ones – function differently in different issue areas, that each area elicits a different set of motives on the part of different actors, that different system members are thus activated on different issues, and that therefore the different interaction patterns which result from these variations produce different degrees of stability and coherence for each of the issue areas in which systemic processes are operative.⁴⁷

Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* is an example of subsystemic definitions. In that study, Huntington identified different civilizational subsystems and analyzed the relations among them.⁴⁸ But since this was not a conscious methodological path taken by Huntington, his analyses lost track and focused on civilizational blocs rather than the relations and borderlands between and/or among them. As a result, he treated countries like Ukraine, Russia, and Turkey as outliers. Conversely, my methodology focuses on the countries that lie between different subsystems instead of treating them as outliers.

Another example that emphasizes subsystemic formations is Cooper's classification of premodern, modern, and postmodern international systems.⁴⁹ However, like Huntington's civilizations, that study also lacks a focus on relational effects.

6. Strategic Culture

Identifying subsystems is essential for a systemic political analysis. Subsystems are separated from each other through their issue areas or standards of behavior. Any generalization neglecting diverse subsystems appears to be oversimplification, and falls into the categories that were criticized in the previous section. The shortfalls of realist generalizations about the balance of power are a good example of this pattern. The balance of power, not as a situation but as a policy behavior, is not sufficient to explain overall systemic operation, and it can explain only intra-systemic dynamics. Since the balance of power does not assume subsystemic differences and is based on universal rationality it does not take the differing behavioral features throughout a system into consideration. Since in each subsystem the qualities of actors, their rationale for behavior, and their concerns and motives are mostly incongruent, the balance of power is not sufficient to explain subsystemic interactions. Since the impact of balance of power on actor behavior depends on perceptions, actors from different subsystems can have varying considerations and perceptions of an already immeasurable power balance.

Defining subsystems on different grounds is possible, and one such ground, which is suggested here, is strategic culture. This concept, in general, refers to a country's foreign policy approach. In that sense, countries have their own strategic cultures that shape foreign

⁴⁷ James Rosenau, "The Functioning of International Systems," *Background* 7, no. 3 (November 1963): 115.

⁴⁸ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

⁴⁹ Robert Cooper, "Post-Modern State and the New World Order," *Demos* (2000).

policy behavior. However, this paper defines strategic culture more as a systemic, rather than an actor's property. In that sense, strategic culture is a common understanding, or interactively shaped standards of, behavior. Strategic culture determines possible, acceptable, and legitimate modes of behavior. In that sense, strategic culture is the context⁵⁰ that shapes the structure of relations. According to Johnston, strategic culture "is an ideational milieu which limits behavioral choices...."⁵¹ It is the general framework of thought concerning strategic behavior.

Variations in strategic culture across issue areas (functions) or geography establish different subsystems. For example, European and Middle Eastern subsystems differ from each other substantially in their behavioral standards and in the way policies are evaluated against their alternatives, perceptions, and considerations. The approach proposed here focuses on these simultaneously coexisting systems and their interactions, especially those that contradict each other. In this approach, regions or issues located between subsystems, and that experience the contradictions of the different subsystems, are the interesting research topics we need to focus on.⁵² The dynamics of systemic change or clues to issues concerning such change are highly likely to emerge from these places. Such contact points carry a significant potential for disturbances that can trigger systemic change. We can gather information from such places about the possible direction and timing of systemic change.

7. The Inter-Subsystemic Approach: An Overview

It is possible to explain change in international relations at systemic levels without falling into the reductionist trap. It is true that change actually happens somewhere below the general system level, but these dynamics are not restricted to the actor level. There are certain dynamics of change operating at the systemic level, and these might be more significant than the interactions between actors. These dynamics might also be shaping the relations among actors. For that reason, the inter-subsystemic approach tries to solve the puzzle of change at the system level.

The main methodological problem that provoked this approach is a major deficiency in current IR theorizing; that is, its incapacity to explain both change and continuity without shifting between levels of analysis. To solve this problem, the proposed model is grounded on three general assumptions:

- Assumption 1: The international system is comprised of several divergent subsystems, and the notion of one whole international system is misleading.
- Assumption 2: There is a common belief that the systemic qualities are associated with continuity in general, but not with change. However, there are dynamics of change operating at the system level as well.
- Assumption 3: We can define different subsystems based on the concept of strategic culture, and these subsystems essentially differ from both the general system and each other.

⁵⁰ Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: the First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 1999): 49-69.

⁵¹ Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 46.

⁵² Haluk Özdemir, "Türkiye'nin 'Sınır-Ülke' Niteliği: Farklı Stratejik Kültürler Arasında Türk Dış Politikası," *Avrasya Etüdüleri* 33, no. 1 (2008): 7-46.

Based on these assumptions, five main hypotheses can be formulated:

- **Hypothesis 1:** The system's general contours are shaped by interactions among different subsystems more so than by relations among actors.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Strategic cultures determine the nature of relations among different subsystems.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Change results from inconsistencies and disturbances to the system. Therefore, the greatest potential for change lies in the crises between the subsystems, and is visible through their impact on the general system.
- **Hypothesis 4:** Not every crisis causes systemic change. Extraordinary crises, which entail strategic, behavioral, and perceptual fluctuations at universal and/or subsystemic levels, are the ones that carry the potential for a systemic change.
- **Hypothesis 5:** The areas of contact or borderlands between conflicting subsystems are the best places to observe both the potential for change and its direction and timing.

Most of the literature on subsystems has focused on their attributes and features; however, a new research agenda is needed for studying the interactive aspects of subsystems and the transformative effects of such interactions on the general system, both of which are largely neglected in the literature. For that reason, the proposed approach mainly focuses on the interactions and inconsistencies that can best be observed at inter-subsystemic intersections. The concepts concerning the main assumptions and the proposed hypotheses can be reiterated as follows:

Multi-layered Systems: The proposed approach posits a multi-layered and multi-dimensional international system. This is the main assumption concerning the international system. Instead of trying to analyze a single international system, I suggest here that the system is structured in multiple layers. Depending on our research purpose, we need to identify those layers as subsystems, either geographically, functionally, or even temporally. Temporal layering of the system refers to the transformation of the system over time and every layer refers to its structure at any given time in history, such as multipolar in the nineteenth century, bipolar during the Cold War, and unipolar now. In any case, we need to first identify these layers of the system so that analyzing the dynamics of continuity and change will be possible at the systemic level. Without this identification, the system as a single entity only provides us with deterministic explanations of international relations.

Incongruent Interaction: I hypothesize that *the international system is shaped and defined by interactions between/among subsystems, not between/among actors as in the traditional sense*. Therefore, in our search for the dynamics of change, focusing only on the actors is as misleading as focusing only on the general system. For a better understanding of the international system, studies of the *interactions* between subsystems are needed. Subsystem studies can utilize the previous studies made at the actor and sub-actor levels. Inter-subsystemic research can also make use of this information about subsystemic premises; however, such knowledge, despite its usefulness and instrumental value, is not our main focus.

Studies of general system or subsystemic properties are important, but such research tends to emphasize coherent and consistent rules and norms. To explain dynamic nature of any given system (change and continuity), we need to discover contradictory aspects, disturbances, discrepancies, and/or 'outside' influences. For this case, world systems theory

and its division of the world into subsystems of core, periphery, and semi-periphery can be a good example. Despite these three different subsystems, world system theory views all of them as part of one coherent system, namely the global capitalist system. From this perspective, the subsystems are just parts of the larger system that work in accordance with its operational principles. The inter-subsystemic approach, on the other hand, suggests that *what is interesting about the international system is not its general consistency, but the discrepancies and incongruent modes of behavior stemming from different subsystems*. This approach looks at the inconsistencies rather than how it all comes together.

Strategic Culture: Another basic assumption is that *what separates a subsystem from others is its strategic culture*, which determines the behavioral standards of legitimate or illegitimate, expected and unexpected, right and wrong. To put it differently, strategic culture is proposed here as a useful conceptual tool to identify subsystems. Strategic culture sets the standards of what is possible, therefore it draws the range of possibilities for change and actor initiative. Actors can take initiative within the allowed limits of a subsystem. In other words, anarchy does not have the same meaning across regions, and its implications also vary depending on the subsystem's strategic culture. Anarchy in the European subsystem and in the Middle East has different consequences. Similarly, from a functional perspective, anarchy, creates different concerns in political, economic, social, or cultural realms. Therefore, subsystems and their strategic cultures have more impact on actor behavior than the supposedly constant conditions of anarchy.

Subsystems as Actors: In inter-subsystemic analyses, subsystems can be treated as actors, despite their differences from traditional actors, because *subsystems can shape relationships and actor (state, organization, or other non-state) behavior more than the general international system can*. For that reason, the main subject of focus in explaining systemic dynamics should be subsystems, not actors per se. The previous research viewed subsystems as mere parts of a larger system, not as elements that shape and transform the system.

Subsystems are not simple groups of states, but living and interacting organisms that form, re-form, and shape the system. Because they and their strategic culture draws the boundaries of what is possible, legitimate, or acceptable behavior, or what chance of success a specific action has, they have a better grasp on state behavior than the actors' own preferences. Subsystems shape behaviors through creating a framework of action based on a strategic culture. In that sense, system and its structure put limitations on actor behavior, and profoundly shape it, if not determine it. In that sense, systemic parameters are more crucial than actor preferences, no matter how powerful the actor is, because even superpowers act according to certain systemic or subsystemic constraints.

Crises and Change: One of the significant hypotheses proposed here concerns the impact of crises. *The greatest potential for systemic change lies in the crises between/among subsystems, and is visible through their impact(s) on the general system*. The idea that the potential for change in a system stems from crises and inconsistencies is nothing new. It is possible to find arguments about crises as the main causes of change in the literature,⁵³ but

⁵³ Michael Brecher and Patrick James, *Crisis and Change in World Politics* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986); P. Terrence Hopmann and Timothy D. King, "From Cold War to Détente: The Role of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty," 163-88, and Charles F. Hermann and Robert E. Mason, "Identifying Behavioral Attributes of Events That Trigger International Crises," 189-210, both articles are in *Change In the International System*, ed. Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M. Svenson, and Alexander L. George (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980). There are also integration theories viewing crises as opportunities

these arguments clearly focus on crises between actors, such as nation-states. Our approach suggests that international crises between actors are necessary, but not sufficient for change. If a crisis is between at least two subsystems and concerns their operational premises, then we can probably start looking for systemic change.

In other words, ordinary international crises between countries might remain regional or even local. When they start affecting other subsystems, however, then we can talk about an inter-subsystemic crisis and the potential for systemic change. How and where can we observe such potent dynamics of change? Such potential lies in the inconsistencies of systemic premises, which can be found at the contact points and conflicts between/among different subsystems. Focusing on these contradictions between behavioral standards, or between the strategic cultures of different subsystems, rather than converging on how the system maintains itself, can elevate systems studies to the next level.

This argument suggests that there are qualitative differences between interstate and systemic crises, despite frequent junctures and overlaps between the two. This distinction can also be found in the literature.

A unit-level crisis derives from perceptions, whereas a systemic crisis is objective. Stated differently, the focus of the former is image and action, while that of the other is reality and interaction. There is no one-to-one relationship between unit and systemic crises: the former occurs for a single state; the latter is predicated upon the existence of distortion in the pattern of interaction between two or more adversaries in a system.⁵⁴

Subsystems interact, and since they are different in nature, such interactions create tensions and reveal discrepancies. Systemic transformation emerges out of these inter-subsystemic contacts. The clues for both the potential and direction of change in the international system lie at the fault lines of the subsystems. Inter-subsystemic contradictions and the crises emerge out of them are the main dynamics of change.

International relations studies are concerned with processes and changes mainly at the systemic level. What makes a change systemic is its general impact on actors, processes, values, and behavior. Change in the international system happens through wars or crises. Actor-level changes most probably would not have such impact on a system. Therefore, the potential for systemic dynamics of change can be found in inter-subsystemic discrepancies and crises. There are frequent and constant changes and crises at the actor level, but most of these have no systemic consequence, and might remain local or regional.

In other words, not every crisis causes systemic change. But if those crises involve and impact different subsystems, their strategic culture, their modes of behavior, and the balance of power between them, we can talk about a systemic crisis or systemic change. Others are just ordinary crises that do not challenge the main premises of the system. Since systemic change occurs through relational processes, we can proclaim that subsystems are the main components of transformation. It is possible to explain change and find clues about its timing and direction by looking at the system's inconsistencies.

A contestation between different subsystemic issues, ideals, or principles carries the potential for new rules and norms for a changing international system. Aspirations of

for intentional systemic change. For these arguments, see Leon Lindberg and Stuart Scheingold, *Europe's Would-be Polity: Patterns of Change in the European Community* (Prentice Hall, 1970); and Haluk Özdemir, *Avrupa Mantiğı. Avrupa Bütüleşmesinin Teori ve Dinamikleri* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012).

⁵⁴ Michael Brecher and Hemda Ben Yehuda, "System and Crisis in International Politics," *Review of International Studies* 11 (January 1985): 30.

inclusion, justice, or struggle between strong ideologies can shape a new international system. For example, the dependency concept has been shaped out of regional/subsystemic issues. The clash of civilizations and the rise of religious extremism are all about inclusion and exclusion issues in the system. Ideologies or cultures of excluded subsystems radicalize, which can shape the agenda of the general international system. System and subsystems by themselves have relatively stable structures. They have their routine conducts of relationships, principles, perceptions, norms, and rules. The potential for change lies not within the system but in its discrepancies with other systems. Such inconsistencies can best be observed in the borderlands. Systemic change, after all, is about changing rules, norms, principles, and perceptions.

Borderlands: The best places to observe the potential for crises and systemic change are at subsystemic intersections. Because of the absence of clear-cut boundaries between subsystems, such areas can be called *borderlands*. For analytical purposes, it is possible to identify certain borderlands, where the conflicting and disturbing effects of different subsystems are felt more strongly than in other places. Those are the areas where we need to investigate the forces of change and the dynamics of continuity. The most interesting effects of and the clues to transformative dynamics are hidden in these borderlands because they reveal the contradictions within each subsystem and challenge their stable existence. Potential dynamics for change lie within these contradictions and challenges, which is we need to focus on such areas to better understand system behavior. This is what most researchers do unconsciously anyway. For example, during the Cold War, Berlin was a much more interesting place than Washington or Moscow because that was where different subsystems contacted and challenged each other. The Balkans is a center of attention in world politics because throughout history it has been a subsystemic borderland and displays the inconsistencies of the bordering subsystems. But to reveal more clues about transformative dynamics, we need more deliberate studies concerning these areas.

Turkey is a typical example of such areas, and for several reasons, it has been an inspiration for this approach. The world looks quite different when it is viewed from the borderlands. Turkey's political experiences, in addition to its geopolitical location, have also been a source of inspiration. For example, its political crises were rarely the crises of domestic politics, but were reflections of systemic contradictions. Experiences ranging from the War of Independence to the crises of democratic transition all resulted from and were shaped by the subsystemic inconsistencies surrounding Turkey. Cultural clashes in the 1970s and the 1980s were reflections of the ideological subsystems shaping the Cold War environment. Turkey and similar countries are like laboratories of subsystemic rivalries, and thus contain clues about systemic dynamics.

These dynamics also include clues to the future of systemic changes. The ideological discrepancies of two different subsystems materialized in Turkey during the Cold War, in the form of cultural clashes between modernism, traditionalism, Westernism, and Islamic movements. Immediately after the Cold War, we saw the first signs of the coming ethno-religious politics in the Balkans, which, like Turkey, are a point of contact for different international subsystems. Interestingly, global conflicts in the 1990s and 2000s were similar to the struggles that had occurred in Turkey before 1991.

8. Conclusion

This article is a preliminary outline of my proposed inter-subsystemic approach. I identified certain assumptions and hypotheses, some variables, and a level of analysis that sketch out a research model. Above, I introduced and discussed certain assumptions and hypotheses. In that presentation, the main level of analysis appears to be the subsystem. The most prominent variables that can be derived from these discussions are strategic culture, crisis, and change. Further research can refine these variables and is expected to produce new ones on the basis of the proposed approach.

This model undoubtedly needs improvement and requires extensive field research to see its applications. In that context, the anticipated next step is to look into inter-subsystemic issues and areas to find interesting clues about systemic dynamics, and focus on the contradictions and interactions between such subsystems, then try to see if those inconsistencies contain any potential for systemic change. Therefore, the short-term research is expected to focus on tensions and inconsistencies between/among the defined subsystems, and to try to discover both the interplays between/among them and their potential impacts on the general system. From these discussions, it is possible to identify several questions to guide future research that might tackle the issues presented here.

- Does strategic culture matter? Which parameters do we need to focus on to define a strategic culture? In what ways do different strategic cultures affect inter-subsystemic relations during both ordinary and crisis times?
- What are the sources of change in international relations that can be identified at the system level?
- What kinds of subsystems can be diagnosed in current world affairs? Which areas or issues are their points of contact?
- What sorts of potential for, or dynamics of, change can be identified in such areas of contact or in the borderlands?
- Can we obtain clues about the dynamics of change in general, and its content and timing in particular, from our observations of borderlands?
- Are there such dynamics currently in progress, and how can we observe and classify them?
- How do we know a crisis can have a systemic effect? What are the empirical indicators of such 'significant' crises implying a systemic change? How can we distinguish them from 'ordinary' crises? Can we construct a crisis typology specifically for this purpose?
- At what level(s) do such crises imply that change is imminent? Can we identify certain characteristics of the coming change by looking at dynamics in the borderlands, and predict the nature of that change?

A great number of research already exists on subsystems. Therefore, our main objective here should be not to replicate them but to focus on the interactions between and among them. This is an overlooked aspect of system research. Geographically, the most interesting starting points would be countries like Turkey, Ukraine, and Russia, or regions like the Balkans or the Middle East, depending on the identification of the subsystems. Having gathered short-term findings, the long-term research goal would be to compare our conclusions with later

developments to determine correlations between our expectations and future systemic transformations.

The initial steps might involve retrospective analyses of certain historical examples to determine the potential of this approach. Then, based on such analyses, future projections could be made and the resilience and validity of the model could be tested. I anticipate that such a research program would reveal more interesting dynamics and produce more fruitful findings about the international system than current research programs do.

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Interpreting Turkey's Middle East Policy in the Last Decade*

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Abstract

Within the Middle East, various forces have tried to impose alternative orders. Turkey is among a number of key players in the region. Since 2002, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party has shown an increasing interest in the Middle East. This article accepts that there has been a change in Turkish foreign policy since 2002 and attempts to contribute to the previous studies on this issue. It argues that Turkey desires to be a regional power in the Middle East, shaping its vision through a value-based and principled approach. To clarify this vision, the article analyzes the core values and principles defined in Turkish foreign policy in the last decade, which constitute Turkey's international identity in the Middle East. The article concludes that there have been mainly tactical changes in Turkish foreign policy in general, and towards the Middle East in particular.

Key Words: Turkey, foreign policy, Middle East, AKP, regional order

*"Just as we aspire for a new Turkey, we also aspire for a new Middle East."*¹

1. Introduction

The debate about the change in Turkish foreign policy over the past decade has been very rich. For instance, there are arguments in relation to the European Union,² geopolitical and ideational factors³, economic factors⁴ and Turkish identity.⁵ There are also arguments rejecting that there is anything 'new' in foreign policy.⁶

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¹The first version of this paper was presented at the *All Azimuth* meeting in Çeşme, İzmir, May 24, 2013. The author would like to thank the organizer of the meeting, Ersel Aydınlı.

² Ahmet Davutoğlu quoted in "Is Turkish Foreign Policy Too Ambitious?," *Al-Monitor*, September 12, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/04/overly-ambitious.html#>.

³ Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Middle East after September 11: The Importance of the EU Dimension," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (2003): 83-92; Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (March 2009): 7-24.

⁴ Şaban Kardaş, "Charting the New Turkish Foreign Policy," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 67 (March 2012): 1-6; İbrahim Kalın, "Turkish Foreign Policy: Framework, Values and Mechanism," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 67 (March 2012): 7-21.

⁵ Kemal Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 40 (2009): 29-57; Özlem Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East under the AKP- Trade Business Community and Reintegration with Neighboring Zones," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011): 589-602.

⁶ Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach* (London: Routledge, 2003); Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, "Modernity, Identity and Turkey's Foreign Policy," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 1 (2008): 55-70; Bahar Rumelili, "Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Socialization in a Post-Enlargement Europe," *Journal of European Integration* 33, no. 2 (2011): 235-49.

⁷ Nur Bilge Criss, "Parameters of Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP Governments," UNISCI Discussion Papers 23 (May 2010); İlhan Uzelçel, "Dış Politikada AKP: Stratejik Konumdan Stratejik Modele" [AKP's Foreign Policy: From Strategic Position to

In general, change in foreign policy involves two types of change: tactical and strategic. *Tactical change* focuses on the methods and instruments of foreign policy, and as such, is more of an adjustment, referring to a change in the level of effort or to a program change. *Strategic change* is more fundamental, such as altering goals and/or the state's position in the international system.⁷ Constructivism is useful for understanding the process of change in foreign policy because it allows examining national identity construction and its impact on change in foreign policy rather than only materialist concerns of power and capability.

According to Altunışık and Martin, there has been an adjustment change in Turkish foreign policy because Turkey's activism has extended in the region and become comprehensive. There has also been a program change because rather than approaching relations only from a security sense, the AKP government began using diplomatic negotiation and economic engagement. 'Goal' and 'international orientation' changes are considered less obvious than the first two shifts, but there have been shifts in those factors also. Further, Altunışık and Martin compared the first term of the AKP government with its second, stating that in the second term there were more policy changes.⁸

Similarly, this article accepts that there has been a change in Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East since 2002 and attempts to contribute to this argument. Thus, the article first addresses changes in foreign policy during the AKP government's time in office. Then, particularly focusing on Turkey's approach to the Middle East, the article emphasizes Turkey's quest to be a regional power, and that its vision in this regard is shaped by 'value based' and 'principled' methods. To clarify this vision, the article analyzes the core values and principles defined in Turkish foreign policy in the last decade, which constitute Turkey's international identity in the Middle East. It concludes that there have been mainly tactical changes in Turkish foreign policy in general, and towards the Middle East in particular.

2. The Changes

There have been several tactical changes in Turkish foreign policy. First, the change from limited Turkish involvement in regional affairs to independent initiatives, as observed in its foreign policy towards the Palestinian issue, might be considered significant. It is frequently expressed that Turkey sides with all people whose dignity has been jeopardized; being a defender of human dignity means defending justice. Ahmet Davutoğlu, currently prime minister, and previously foreign policy minister, argues that recognizing a Palestinian state is a moral, legal and political obligation of the international community.⁹ But Davutoğlu also maintains that while Turkey should defend human dignity with active diplomacy, it must also follow a realist foreign policy,¹⁰ thus Turkey's change to its foreign policy towards Palestine is considered a tactical change rather than a strategic one. Second, Turkey has increased its use of soft power¹¹ due to its increased economic development and its ability to pursue active

Strategic Model], in *AKP Kitabı. Bir Dönüşümün Bilançosu* [The AKP. An Account of Transformation], ed. İlhan Uzgel and Bülent Duru (Ankara: Phoenix, 2009), 364, 379.

⁷ Chris Alden and Amnon Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 92-3.

⁸ Meliha B. Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin, "Making sense of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East under AKP," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011): 572-73.

⁹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Restorasyonu: Güçlü Demokrasi, Dinamik Ekonomi, Etkin Diplomasi," *Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi*, No. 7 (August 2014).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 1 (2008): 79; Tarık Oğuzlu, "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, no. 1 (2007): 81-97; Bülent Aras, "Turkey's Soft Power," SETA, April 14, 2009, <http://arsiv.setav.org/public/HaberDetay.aspx?Dil=tr&hid=5489&q=turkey-s-soft>

diplomacy. Third, in line with its national interests and objectives, Turkey has attempted to develop friendly relations with its neighbors and neighboring regions.¹² In this regard, the AKP government initiated a “zero problems with neighbors”¹³ slogan to help generate new relations.¹⁴ As another example, Turkey has attempted to normalize relations with Armenia¹⁵ and Iran.¹⁶ Fourth, Turkey has focused on improving relations with Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America, regions with which it previously had few interactions, if any. Thus, the aim is to be active not only in familiar areas but also in new ones. In this regard, Turkey has promised to contribute to security, stability and prosperity not only in its immediate neighborhood, but also in territories far beyond its borders. Turkey is attempting to become a ‘central country,’ occupying a strong and an important position in regional systems, as well as to become a ‘world power’ in the long term.¹⁷ Fifth, the influence of the military in shaping Turkish foreign policy has been reduced while the role of independent research centers has flourished, which can be viewed as an attempt for a less-securitized relationship with neighbors. Sixth, a stronger multidimensional foreign policy¹⁸ has become an important new characteristic, particularly in the AKP’s third term. Seventh, Turkey has worked on being more active in international and regional organizations.¹⁹ Eighth, early on there were efforts towards Europeanization in the conduct of foreign policy, though in the post-2005 era, the effect of the EU axis on foreign policy has declined.²⁰ Ninth, there has been an attempt to integrate Turkey’s foreign policy discourse with its domestic political discourse.²¹ The AKP has called for integrating achievements in domestic democratic consolidation and economic stability into the vision of foreign policy.²² In this regard, Davutoğlu stated:

When we talk about [the] Turkish role in international politics ... We can say if there is a way there are three pillars. The political pillar is democracy and reforms. The economic pillar is economic growth and sustainable economic growth. And [the] foreign policy pillar is an active, even pro-active, peace-oriented foreign policy. And these three are interlinked.²³

Davutoğlu also said that “Turkey [has] achieved progress in establishing a stable and peaceful domestic order on which it can build a proactive foreign policy.”²⁴ Its more liberalized political system and its strong economy are opportunities to follow an active foreign policy. Today,

power; “Turkey Ready to Support Peace Talks in The Middle East,” *Turkish Journal*, October 18, 2010, <http://www.turkishjournal.com/i.php?newsid=8499>.

¹² Oniş and Yılmaz, “Between Europeanization,” 13.

¹³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Zero Problems Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2010, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/20/turkeys-zero-problems-foreign-policy/>.

¹⁴ Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision,” 81-2.

¹⁵ Kirişçi, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy,” 32.

¹⁶ Nilüfer Karacasulu and İrem Aşkar Karakır, “Iran-Turkey Relations in the 2000s: Pragmatic Rapprochement,” *Ege Akademik Bakış* [Ege Academic Review] 11, no. 1 (2011): 111-19.

¹⁷ Bülent Aras, “Arabulucu Değil, Oyun Kurucu Dış Politika,” SETA, March 14, 2011, <http://arsiv.setav.org/public/HaberDetay.aspx?Dil=tr&hid=28828&q=arabulucu-degil-oyun-kurucu-dis-politika>.

¹⁸ Heinz Kramer, “AKP’s New Foreign Policy between Vision and Pragmatism,” Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Working Paper (2010); “62. Hükümet Programı,” Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/upload/documents/62nciHukumetProgrami.pdf>, 165-7.

¹⁹ “62. Hükümet Programı,” 177.

²⁰ An alternative status was presented as an option by EU members, causing negative sentiments in Turkey. Furthermore, in 2006, the issue of Cyprus had frozen eight chapters of the EU’s *acquis communautaire*. Oniş and Yılmaz, “Between Europeanization,” 13. Turkey and the EU agreed to restart accession talks in November 2013.

²¹ Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Zero Problems Foreign Policy”; Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Türkiye’nin Restorasyonu.”

²² “62. Hükümet Programı,” 165.

²³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Vision 2023: Turkey’s Foreign Policy Objectives” (speech delivered at the Turkey Investor Conference: The road to 2023, London, November 22, 2011), http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled-_vision-2023_-turkey_s-foreign-policy-objectives_-_delivered-by-h_e_-ahmet-davutoğlu_-_minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa.

²⁴ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring,” TEPAV Turkey Policy Brief Series (2012): 2.

with a GDP of 820 billion dollars,²⁵ Turkey is the eighteenth-largest economy in the world. It has made advances in competitiveness since the last decade, and can further increase those, as well as increase productivity. Foreign direct investment increased from one billion dollars to 13 billion dollars over the last five years.²⁶ As Turkey has become economically stronger, its national confidence has also increased. It has begun to put the nation's economic interests at the forefront, which can be considered as the tenth tactical change.

On the other hand, Turkey's military spending has been decreasing. Turkey spent 3.5 percent of its GDP on defense in 2002, which decreased to 1.71 percent in 2014.²⁷ The government has realized opportunities for regional cooperation through rediscovering cultural ties and common civilization. As Davutoğlu states, there are many potential conflicts, from the Balkans to Caucasia, from the Black Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, from the Gulf to North Africa, yet Turkey aims to turn these regions into a basin of prosperity, stability and security through the assistance of the international community.²⁸ Thus, there has been a change from a confrontational, security-focused foreign-policy discourse to more cooperative one, which could also be considered a tactical change.

Davutoğlu also emphasizes that Turkey has been undergoing a period of restoration over the last 10 years. He notes that restoration first began during the Ottoman period, with the *Tanzimat*. The second period of restoration was the establishment of the Turkish Republic, and the third was Turkey's transition to a multiparty system. Currently, the AKP government is encouraging a fourth complex restoration period in politics, economics and societal aspects, as outlined by Davutoğlu. He states that this restoration requires three interconnected features – a strong democracy, a dynamic economy and effective diplomacy – and argues that once these three features are complete, Turkey will be an active participant in the global system.²⁹

A brief analysis of AKP programs since 2002 shows that while there have been tactical changes in foreign policy, the core realist orientation has remained. The first program implemented stated that a realist foreign policy would be followed, and indicated that policy priorities would be redefined parallel to regional and global transformations. The highest priority would be given to relations with the EU.³⁰ The next party program confirmed the use of a realist foreign policy, emphasizing Turkey's geopolitical importance and specifying regional policies. Relations with the EU were still given high priority.³¹ Relatively different from the first two programs, the third declared that Turkey was to follow a multidimensional foreign policy and had to be more assertive, as well as be willing to develop more relations with its neighbors. It indicated a need to develop relations with Turkic and related states and communities, with particular attention on the Middle East. Further, the significance of

²⁵ "Türkiye - GSYİH – 2014," Trading Economics, <http://tr.tradingeconomics.com/turkey/gdp>.

²⁶ "Turkey Overview," the World Bank, www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview.

²⁷ "Turkish Defense Minister İsmet Yılmaz says defense spending has touched 29.4 billion Turkish lira or \$13.2 billion this year." ("Turkey's defense spending touches \$13 billion mark," *Anadolu Agency*, November 2, 2014, <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/414144--turkey-s-defense-spending-touches-13-billion-mark>.)

²⁸ Bilgehan Öztürk, "Avrupa Birliği'nin İran ve Suriye Politikasının Türkiye'ye Etkisi," *Orta Doğu Analiz* 4, no. 48 (December 2012): 46.

²⁹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Restorasyonu"; Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Foreign Economic Relations and Diplomacy" (speech, Foreign Economic Relations Board, İstanbul, March 9, 2013), http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu-nun-dis-ekonomik-iliskiler-kurulu-tarafindan-duzenlenen-toplantida-yaptiklari-konusma_9.tr.mfa; Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Great Restoration: Our New Political Approach from Ancient to Globalization," (lecture, Dicle University, Diyarbakir, March 15, 2013), <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/foreign-minister-Davutoglu-delivers-a-lecture-at-dicle-university-in-diyarbakir.en.mfa>.

³⁰ "58. Hükümet Programı," Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/upload/documents/58inci-hukümet-programi.pdf>.

³¹ "59. Hükümet Programı," Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/upload/documents/59uncu-hukümet-programi.pdf>.

providing humanitarian aid was expressed for the first time.³² The program also specified that since 2002 the government has tried to strengthen Turkey's international image as a significant regional player.³³ A visionary policy was adopted in the fourth program, which defined the Turkish goal for many regional and global issues and specified a balanced attitude between idealism and realism.³⁴ This program showed that AKP's confidence in its foreign policy attitude had highly increased. The fifth and final program was presented by Prime Minister Davutoğlu in September 2014, calling for a multidimensional foreign policy and normalization of relations with neighbors. In other words, the government does not desire a securitization of relations with regional countries despite the transformations and crises in the Middle East. For the first time, the rhetoric highly emphasized a value-based foreign policy and a new foreign policy.³⁵

3. A Value-Based and Principled Foreign Policy towards the Middle East

In March 2013, then-Foreign Minister Davutoğlu stated that the core principles of Turkish foreign policy are “a balance between security and freedom, zero problems with neighbors, a multidimensional foreign policy, a pro-active regional foreign policy, an altogether new diplomatic style, and rhythmic diplomacy.”³⁶ Key to understanding Turkey's vision towards the Middle East is to understand the AKP government's quest for Turkey to be a regional power or leader in the area. Turkey is also attempting to be seen as a wise country (*akıl ülke*) in the eyes of the international community through its adoption and defense of international norms, values and principles.³⁷ Davutoğlu highlights this goal by stating that:

Especially in times of crises, such as the economic crisis the world is going through or the political transformation in our region, the need for wise countries to deliver such essential functions as conflict prevention, mediation, conflict resolution or development assistance becomes particularly evident.³⁸

The AKP government's regional power outlook is defined within three main dimensions. The first is being an order-instituting country;³⁹ the second is being a game setter; and the third is being a problem solver.⁴⁰

Table 1- Regional power typology

	<i>Regional power</i>
<i>Self-concept</i>	Confident (important country with its own geography, history and economy)
<i>Relations with other actors</i>	Prefers dialogue to improve regional relations; close cooperation with global powers; attempts to be active in international and regional institutions
<i>Policy style</i>	Assertive; increased diplomatic activity; use of soft power
<i>Economic policy</i>	Promotes trade relations; economic cooperation and integration

³² “60. Hükümet Programı,” Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/upload/documents/60inci-hukümet-programi.pdf>.

³³ Kardaş, “Charting the new Turkish Foreign Policy,” 5.

³⁴ “61. Hükümet Programı,” Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/upload/documents/61inci-hukümet-programi.pdf>.

³⁵ “62. Hükümet Programı.”

³⁶ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Zero Problems in a New Era,” *Foreign Policy Magazine (USA)*, March 21, 2013.

³⁷ “İşte, Davutoğlu'nun 2011 Hedefi: Akil ülke Türkiye!,” *Turkish Journal*, December 28, 2010, <http://www.turkishjournal.com/i.php?newsid=8884>; “Avrupa'nın nesnesi değil parçasıyız, Afro-Asya'da merkez olmaya çalışıyoruz,” *Hürriyet newspaper*, December 11, 2010, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/16505065.asp>.

³⁸ Davutoğlu, “Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring,” 3.

³⁹ Murat Yeşiltaş and Ali Balcı, “AKP Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası Sözlüğü: Kavramsal bir harita,” *Bilgi* 23 (2011): 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

Another core principle that Turkey adopted in foreign policy is related to balancing security and freedom. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, governments have felt the need to take greater precautions against international terrorism challenges. There is also a need to protect freedom. Thus, governments must strive to achieve a balance between freedom and security. In other words, while trying to protect citizens against security breaches, countries must also be careful not to limit citizens' freedom. Turkey's approach to this issue is evident from Davutoğlu's words: "The legitimacy of any political regime comes from its ability to provide security to its citizens; this security should not be at the expense of freedoms and human rights in the country."⁴¹

In the discussion of keeping the balance between security and freedom, the Turkish government also comments on military interventions in politics. Davutoğlu argues that Turkey's experienced military interventions were in the name of security but they limited freedom, which hindered the development of democracy.⁴² He underlines that there is no more need for military intervention in Turkish politics. The democratic packages accepted for EU conditionality are considered to have had a positive impact in this regard. Thus, Turkey can acknowledge both democracy and freedom in its strive for balance. The government has extended the democratic discourse to sensitive security issues. For example, the Kurdish problem is no longer considered only a national security problem but also related to democracy. Turkey's efforts to keep this balance will be also be relevant to countries facing similar problems, which is an example of how domestic politics and foreign policy are interacting, as mentioned earlier. Overall, with EU conditionality, Turkey has tried to implement democratic consolidation at home, which in turn assists with security.

Another core principle of Turkish foreign policy concerns an ethical policy towards neighbors. From a realist point of view it is obvious that the AKP government has given importance to security and stability. Yet, the government has also attempted to provide solutions to regional conflicts through being a mediator or a facilitator, and a reliable, honest and strong actor throughout. Thus, the AKP emphasizes that it respects human rights, democracy, the rule of law and social justice. In this regard, Davutoğlu says, "In pursuit of our global objectives, we will endeavor to listen to the consciousness and common sense of humanity, and become a firm defender of universal values," particularly advocating "human rights and such norms as democracy, good governance, transparency and rule of law."⁴³ Kalın states that the AKP has combined values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law with the traditional, conservative values of Turkish-Islamic culture.⁴⁴ Turkey's regional foreign policy vision is described as a value-based (*değer odaklı*) realist foreign policy.⁴⁵ In other words, it is argued that the Turkish government defends universal values, norms and principles, and at the same time aims to bring stability, security and peace through rational means.

What is 'ethical foreign policy'? The realist answer is that 'there is no such thing.' Some might argue that ethical considerations are minor in international politics because of several

⁴¹ Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision," 79.

⁴² Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy" (speech, SETA Foundation at Washington DC, December 8, 2009), <http://arsiv.setav.org/ups/dosya/14808.pdf>.

⁴³ Davutoğlu, "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring," 2.

⁴⁴ Kalın, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 12.

⁴⁵ "62. Hükümet Programı," 165; Nuh Yılmaz, "Değer Eksikli Realist Dış Politika Ve Eksen Kayması," SETAV, November 2009, www.setav.org.tr/public/HaberDetay.aspx?Dil=tr&hid=5486; Kalın, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 9.

factors: politics is understood as a struggle for power; ethical criteria change from one society to another, as understood within communitarian ethics; there is no ethical consensus and ethical choices are personal matters.⁴⁶ Yet a foreign policy does not need to be unselfish to be moral. As Brown argues, “there is nothing inherently immoral in being self-interested so long as the interests of others are also taken into account – an ethical foreign policy will be one that creatively marries these two motivations, not one that suppresses the former in the interests of the latter.”⁴⁷ Thus, pursuing national interests can incorporate ethical goals. Here, ethical foreign policy is considered in the sense of a policy that defines the principles and practice of foreign affairs based on respect for universal rights.⁴⁸

Öniş argues that before the Arab Spring there was lack of ethical Turkish foreign policy, and that the Arab Spring had created a dilemma for Turkey between ethical and self-interested foreign policy. He relates the government's ethical attitude to the support given for a pluralistic political system, and in general, to the support given for democracy promotion.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Dal argues that since 2002, the AKP government has increased the use of normative foreign policy, relating the government's ethical attitude to value-based discourse, international mediation efforts, call for a reform in the UN system and call for inter-civilizational dialogue, as well as active diplomacy in regional organizations.⁵⁰ Overall, it is not possible to argue that Turkey currently possess an ambitious normative foreign policy agenda. Nevertheless, it is possible to highlight that according to Davutoğlu, foreign policy is also related to ethics. The government feels that a realist foreign policy has to be balanced with a humanitarian and conscience-driven diplomacy (*insani ve vicdani diplomasi*). Davutoğlu says, “We hope that God will give us the ability to help the people who are seeking the help of God.”⁵¹ Davutoğlu underlines this approach through these words: “Turkey will continue to follow a foreign policy approach that is based on values, including the protection of human rights, refugees, democracy and helping the least developed countries.”⁵²

As mentioned above, Turkey's regional foreign policy vision is considered a value-based (*değer odaklı*) realist foreign policy.⁵³ An example of values in action was then-Prime Minister Erdogan walking out of 2009 Davos summit in protest at not being allowed to speak for as long as Israel's President Peres did, and as a way of criticizing Israel's policies in Gaza. The walk-out can also be considered a principled position. In 2015, new Prime Minister Davutoğlu attended the Davos summit, yet he also stated that Turkey should continue to say, “One minute,” about Israel's attacks on Palestine.⁵⁴ It seems, thus, that the AKP has put support for the Palestinian issue at the centre of its values agenda. The AKP has shown many other examples of standing up on the world stage for what it believes is right, such

⁴⁶ Mervyn Frost, *Global Ethics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 14.

⁴⁷ Chris Brown, *Practical Judgment in International Political Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 15.

⁴⁸ Studies on ethical foreign policy are limited. For some examples, see: David Chandler and Volker Heins, eds., *Rethinking Ethical Foreign Policy: Pitfalls, possibilities and paradoxes* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Karen E. Smith and Margot Light, *Ethics and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; first published in 2001).

⁴⁹ According to Öniş, AKP foreign policy was not based on the notion of democracy promotion prior to the Arab Spring, which was evident in Turkey's relations with Iran and Sudan. See Öniş, “Turkey and the Arab Spring: Between Ethics and Self Interest,” 46.

⁵⁰ Emel Parlar Dal, “Assessing Turkey's “Normative” Power in the Middle East and North Africa Region: New Dynamics and their Limitations,” *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 4 (2013): 716-18.

⁵¹ “İşte 9 maddelik Davutoğlu manifestosu,” *Haber 7*, August 27 2014, <http://www.haber7.com/ic-politika/haber/1195165-iste-9-maddelik-Davutoğlu-manifestosu>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ “62. Hükümet Programı”; Nuh Yılmaz, “Değer Eksenli Realist Dış Politika”; Kalın, “Turkish Foreign Policy,” 9.

⁵⁴ On the 2015 Davos meeting, see: “Davutoğlu'ndan Davos'ta 2. one minute Çıkışı,” *Aksam Newspaper*, January 22, 2015, <http://www.aksam.com.tr/siyaset/Davutoğlundan-davosta-2-one-minute-cikisi/haber-374964>.

as supporting the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and speaking out against the military coup, demonstrating that it is against undemocratic movements in post-2011 politics; and speaking out against the bloody massacres committed by Assad's internal forces in Syria. Moreover, the Turkish government has supported the development of freedom and democracy in the Middle East by repeatedly saying that regional politicians should develop a vision appropriate to "the soul of the contemporary period."⁵⁵

Overall, the AKP government mainly demonstrates a realist foreign policy. Yet it has also specified a balanced attitude between idealism and realism.⁵⁶ In this regard, the AKP implemented the UN Alliance of Civilizations' initiative, co-chaired by the prime ministers of Turkey and Spain under the UN Secretary General.⁵⁷ Its purpose is to help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism, and encourage instead greater dialogue and understanding. Furthermore, the Turkish government demands reform of the UN system, especially criticizing the decision-making mechanism of the UN Security Council and calling for a more participatory order, underlining again the need to keep a balance between interests and values.⁵⁸ In other words, the AKP shows that it is trying to maintain balance between national interests and ethics; and that it is also trying to combine its interests with the common interests of regional countries based on liberal universal values.

Last, it should be underlined that as a confident regional power, the AKP is driven by economic opportunity and peace interests towards the Middle East, which can be considered a realist foreign policy. In the Middle East, Turkey is considered a significant trade and economic center, and the AKP is trying to enlarge economic cooperation through increasing trade, transportation, and direct and indirect investments.⁵⁹ Turkey's volume of bilateral trade with Middle Eastern countries has gained considerable momentum, reaching 65 billion dollars at the end of 2012, which is a sevenfold increase from 2003.⁶⁰ Before the Arab Spring, Turkey succeeded in developing good economic relations with neighboring countries. The total value of projects undertaken by Turkish contractors in Middle East countries exceeded 65.8 billion dollars by the end of 2012.⁶¹ Further, one of Davutoğlu's greatest diplomatic accomplishments is considered to be creating a visa-free zone linking Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, where the four countries had agreed to move toward free trade as well as free passage among each other. However, these plans have been jeopardized because of the events of 2011.

When analyzing the interaction between foreign policy and trade relations, it is fair to say that increasing trade relations is assumed crucial for Turkey's regional role, based on its aspiration of becoming a soft power. In other words, economic power is expected to stimulate the country's political ability to shape regional relations.

Focusing on post-2011 foreign policy, it is argued that "the AKP eventually came to feel that the Arab upheavals had provided the opportunity to create a new regional order with

⁵⁵ Murat Yetkin, "Ortadoğu'da zamanın ruhu değişirken Türkiye," *Radikal*, October 22, 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/murat_yetkin/ortadoguda_zamanin_ruhu_degisirken_turkiye-1156577.

⁵⁶ "61. Hükümet Programı."

⁵⁷ "2023 Siyasi Vizyon," Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/akparti/2023-siyasi-vizyon>.

⁵⁸ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun Mevlana Değişim Programı Tanıtım Toplantısında Yaptıkları Konuşma, 23 Mayıs 2013, Ankara," http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-mevlana-degisim-programi-tanitim-toplantisinda-yaptiklari-konusma_-23-mayis-2013.tr.mfa; Davutoğlu, "Vision 2023."

⁵⁹ Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy," 29-57.

⁶⁰ "Countries & Regions - Middle East," Republic of Turkey Ministry of Economy, http://www.economy.gov.tr/index.cfm?sa_yfa=countriesandregions®ion=4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Turkey at the center.”⁶² In other words, the AKP government assumes that regimes in the Middle East will be replaced with governments more representative of the people. Davutoğlu states that:

At the regional level, our vision is a regional order that is built on representative political systems reflecting the legitimate demands of the people where regional states are fully integrated to each other around the core values of democracy and true economic interdependence.⁶³

Furthermore, Turkey is willing to play an active role in the transformations of political order in the Middle East. In short, Turkey's desire to create a regional order has not been shelved.⁶⁴

4. Why should Turkey Care about Regional Order?

Regional as well as global dynamics are rapidly changing, and the AKP government thinks that Turkey must be involved in influencing these transformations. The government says that when it is influential in the establishment of a regional order, regional relations will become an asset rather than a burden for Turkey. The government also argues that regional order and peace can only be realized through regional cooperation; although it accepts that the global structure is also important in establishing a new regional order, it does not want the regional order to be solely managed by global actors. Furthermore, the government does not want to limit itself to a regional role determined by the great Western powers.⁶⁵ With this aim, Davutoğlu has carried out intense diplomatic activities in the region and has tried to remove negative sentiments among countries. Overall, a liberalized political system and a strong economy are viewed as providing opportunities to follow an active regional policy.

5. Conclusion

Turkey continues to follow a realist and principled regional foreign policy in the Middle East, and there is a convincing logic to this approach. Turkey's security and economic interests have merged, with economic opportunity and peace the driving forces of its actions, particularly trade promotion. But economic interests and trade promotion are not the sum of foreign policy; there is also value-based foreign policy.

Turkey is pursuing a foreign policy that breaks from the past, the changes have been more tactical in nature. While Turkey's interests towards the EU have decreased, it is engaging more in the Middle East. A value-based and principled policy has been repeatedly proclaimed by the AKP government. Turkey desires to play a leadership position in the Middle East, with two core aims in the regional power discourse. One goal is to build a respectable view of Turkey among the international community and to strengthen Turkey's international image as a regional player. The second goal is to encourage rapprochement between Turkey and its neighbors to develop national interests. However, with the fluidity of the regional situation, it is difficult to tell whether Turkey will reach its goals.

⁶² William Armstrong, “Davutoğlu, the AKP and the pursuit of regional order,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, January 15, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Davutoğlu-the-akp-and-the-pursuit-of-regional-order.aspx?pageID=238&nID=76942&NewsCategoryId=474>.

⁶³ Davutoğlu, “Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring,” 5.

⁶⁴ Şaban Kardaş, “From Zero Problems to Leading to Change: Making sense of transformation in Turkey's regional policy,” TEPAV Turkey Policy Brief Series (2012); Davutoğlu, “Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring,” 5.

⁶⁵ Davutoğlu, “Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring,” 4.

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Knowledge, Repetition and Power in *Ibn al-‘Arabi’s* Thought: Some Preliminary Comments on Methodology

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Abstract

This paper’s major motivation is to contribute to the debate on how international relations (IR) scholars can develop an alternative method for studying power. A focus on Islamic Sufi thinker Ibn Al-‘Arabi is suggested to demonstrate the early philosophical conceptualization of power relations in a non-Western context. For Ibn Al-‘Arabi, in a world in which unrepeatability is the rule, creating repeatability and fixation through interpretation is certainly done for worldly purposes. His work suggests that any attempt to understand “the cosmos” is an arbitrary intervention, which strictly reflects power relations among actors. Therefore, Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s work can trigger scholarly questions on not only methodology but also on the sociology of the IR discipline and foreign policy in a non-Western context. His arguments can be utilized in critical and poststructuralist conceptions of power in IR.

Keywords: Ibn al-‘Arabi, the cosmos, knowledge, repetition, interpretation, delimitation, power

1. Introduction

This paper was inspired by the lack of non-Western theory/method in Turkey’s social sciences. Because of the ambient air of Western texts in formal education, non-Western alternatives in the field of theory/method have been forced into silence (or to the margins) for a long time. As a result, non-Western scholars in Turkey, such as my colleagues and I, have borrowed Western theories/methods in order to understand our own politics and society. However, I believe that this is the case not because of the excellence of Western social science but because the scope of Western theory/method matches the scope of Western hegemony over the rest of the world. As an academic, I am not immune to this relation of domination simply because I write in English and heap my intellectual basket with Western texts. It is a paradox for me that Western texts haunt my mind when I read a non-Western text, by which I mean a text which came out in a world where there was no Western political or intellectual hegemony. I study the concept of power, power relations, and criticism of realist thinking. I, as a reader of Western critical thinkers, developed the following questions: Where should we look to in accounting for the exercise of temporal power? How does temporal power realize itself? If there is nothing but knowledge (or text) at hand, then can it be said that power rests in knowledge? What is the relation between knowledge and its repetition in other texts in terms of power? In this article, I focus on work by Islamic Sufi thinker *Muhyi al-Din*

Muhammad ibn 'Ali Ibn al-'Arabi (1165-1240) because I think his work can shed light on the early philosophical roots of understanding power relations in Islamic and non-Western contexts. In fact, new questions came to my mind throughout reading Ibn al-'Arabi: What is the driving force behind this interpretation, fixation, and repetition respectively? How are these repetitions distributed in a specific historical period? Do these intractable repetitions say anything to us?

Building on Ibn al-'Arabi's work, I argue that it is not knowledge itself but its repeatability or the repetition of knowledge that is the engine of temporal power. Therefore, any research that aims to illustrate the exercise of temporal power should focus on the repetition and dissemination of knowledge through texts (and images). For Ibn al-'Arabi, repetition creating fixations/laws is arbitrary since the ultimate rule of the universe is the unrepeatability of things. Ibn al-'Arabi also gives importance to interpretation (*ta'wil*) in the realization of temporal power. For him, it is only interpretation that makes temporal power possible. Interpretation is the process that makes ever-changing and unrepeatable things fixed and repeatable, on which temporal power bases itself. Ibn al-'Arabi's thought on power has many similarities with that of poststructuralist thinkers of our own time. Then why do we, as non-Western academics, build our theoretical claims on Western thinkers' thought?

While I acknowledge the seminal work on the parochialism of Western IR and its implications, my preliminary work in this article aims to return to authentic texts in existence prior to the domination of Western philosophy.¹ Indeed, there have been studies on "referential homegrown theory building" and early theory attempts by Chinese and Indian thinkers.² For example, as one of the ways to "building IR theory with Chinese characteristics" – as it is often termed in discussions – Chinese thinker Hsun Tzu (Sun Tzu or Xun Zi) and his political teachings are considered a source for understanding and explaining Chinese foreign policy behavior.³ His thoughts on types of great powers and international order especially inspired frameworks to explicate China's "peaceful rise."⁴ Based on Xun Zi's conceptions of power, Yan builds a formula to differentiate forms of power and their contributions to the nation's "comprehensive power."⁵

Likewise, the arguments of Ibn al-'Arabi's works can be utilized in critical and poststructuralist conceptions of power in IR. Therefore, the aim of this article is to illustrate

¹ Stanley Hoffmann, "An American Social Science: International Relations," *Daedalus* 106, no. 3 (1977): 45; Kal J. Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline* (Winchester, Mass.: Allen & Unwin, 1985); Howard Wiarda, "The Ethnocentrism of the Social Science: Implications for Research and Policy," *The Review of Politics* 43 (1981): 163-97; Robert M.A. Crawford, "Where Have All Theorists Gone - Gone to Britain? Everyone? A Story of Two Parochialisms in International Relations," in *International Relations—Still an American Social Science?: Toward Diversity*, ed. Robert M.A. Crawford and Darryl S.L. Jarvis (Albany: SUNY University Press, 2001), 222-23; Tony Smith, "Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies," *World Politics* 37, no. 4 (1985): 532-62; Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 217-313; Ole Wæver, "The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998); Amitav Acharya, "Dialogue and Discovery: In Search of International Relations Theories Beyond The West," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (2011): 619-37; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, "Why is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? An Introduction," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (2007): 287-312; Navnita Chadha Behera, "Re-imagining IR in India," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (2007): 341-68.

² For similar attempts in referential homegrown theory building, its promises, and possible shortcomings, see Gonca Biletekin, "Batı-dışı Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorileri ve Özgün Kuram," in *Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorileri*, ed. Ramazan Gözen (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), 517-64.

³ Dawa Norbu, "Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 11 (1997): 1084; Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought and Modern Chinese Power* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁴ Yan Xuetong, "Xun Zi's Thoughts on International Politics and Their Implications," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2, no. 1 (2008): 135-165.

⁵ Xuetong, "Xun Zi's Thoughts," 161.

the possibility of studying power in a non-Western way. Unfortunately, I am not well versed in Arabic and thus this text would not have appeared without two great translators of Ibn al-‘Arabi. William G. Chittick’s abridged translation made *al-Fütuhat al-Makkiyya* known to English readers⁶ and Ekrem Demirli’s meticulous translation of the *Fütuhat* into Turkish requires a great debt of gratitude.⁷ This paper is mostly based on *Fütuhat* and composed of three sections. First, I attempt to show why repeatability is arbitrary by focusing on Ibn al-‘Arabi’s perception of the cosmos and *Allah*. Second, I explain why repetition amounts to delimitation and fixation. In the last section, I focus on the relation between the jurist (interpreter) and the king to illustrate the fact that it is interpretation that makes temporal power possible.

2. The Cosmos and Unrepeatability

The cosmos (*alam*) is the manifestation of the Divine Presence because everything that exists in this cosmos or universe manifests something from *Allah*, who prefers to reveal Himself in this way. As Chittick says, for Ibn al-‘Arabi, the cosmos is not the He; rather it just manifests the He.⁸ The universe is not for the manifestation of He himself, but is the effects and properties of *Allah*’s divine names. Ibn al-‘Arabi concludes that “in respect [to] Himself, He is ‘independent of the worlds’, but in respect [to] His Most Beautiful Names, [they] demand the cosmos because of its possibility (*imkan*)...for their effects to become manifest within it.”⁹ In other words, the cosmos is “His locus of self-disclosure, within which the properties of His names may become manifest.”¹⁰ This means that “although *Allah* is out of the cosmos, He demands the cosmos for His Most Beautiful Names.”¹¹ What Ibn al-‘Arabi says on this issue is worth quoting at some length:

[*Allah*] brought the cosmos into existence only so that the cosmos might come to know Him. But the cosmos is temporally originated, so nothing subsists within it that is not temporally originated. Knowledge of [*Allah*] subsists within the cosmos either through [*Allah*]’s giving knowledge (*ta’rif*), or through the faculty which He created within it through which knowledge of [*Allah*] is reached, through only in a certain aspect.¹²

Ibn al-‘Arabi rejects any knowledge about *Allah* reached through reason because the only way to know Him is through “a report received from Him.”¹³ “Since It is not similar to anything in the cosmos, nor is anything in the cosmos similar to It,”¹⁴ reason as a created thing that follows “the authority of another created thing” in the cosmos has nothing to know of *Allah*.¹⁵ In other words, the cosmos manifests Him but only to the extent of what “He says about Himself.”¹⁶

Having said that the cosmos manifests Him, Ibn al-‘Arab immediately refuses the repetition of things within the cosmos. For him, “no attribute and no state in the cosmos

⁶ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: Suny Press, 1989).

⁷ Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, trans. Ekrem Demirli, 18 vols. (İstanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2006-2012).

⁸ Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 9.

⁹ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 13:35; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 41.

¹⁰ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 11:259; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 71.

¹¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 13:35; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 41 (this quotation is from Turkish translation. It is same also with the one before the previous quotation).

¹² Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 11:289; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 76.

¹³ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 8:83; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 81.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 8:85; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 166.

¹⁶ Ibid.; see also, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 2:373.

remains for two moments, nor does any form become manifest twice.”¹⁷ This is the case because “*Allah* never discloses Himself in a single form twice, nor does He create similarity in two individuals because of the Divine Vastness.”¹⁸ For Ibn al-‘Arabi, the Divine Vastness (*al-tawassu’ al-ilahi*), the infinity of possible things, forbids repetition because “the Divinity is so vast that it cannot be repeated”¹⁹ and *Allah* is “too exalted to disclose Himself in a single form twice or [as] two individuals.”²⁰ Why is that the case? Ibn al-‘Arabi explains “the cosmos is never fixed in a single state for a moment since [*Allah*] is ever-creating constantly. Were the cosmos to remain in a single state for two moments, it would be described by independence from [*Allah*].”²¹ Ibn al-‘Arabi offers another explanation on this: “[*Allah*] does this so that the entities will be poor and needy toward [*Allah*] at each instant.”²² This need is what shapes the relation between *Allah* and all created things. The repetition in different moments or an existence of the similar for two moments or more would make entities something “qualified by independence from [*Allah*].”²³ Therefore, *Allah* “creates perpetually at each instance”²⁴ and the lack of repetition is the governing rule of the cosmos. As a result, for Ibn al-‘Arabi, “he who knows the Divine Vastness knows that nothing is repeated in existence.”²⁵

In such a cosmos where actual fact “has never any fixity in a single state” or unrepeatability is the rule, the “actual situation cannot be apprehended by reason or the eye.”²⁶ There is no base or fixity on which reason can start to consider *Allah*. Therefore, “when a person rationally considers [*Allah*], he creates what he believes in himself through his consideration.”²⁷ This consideration-cum fixity about the knowledge of *Allah* becomes open to repetition. For Ibn al-‘Arabi, this is not *Allah* itself because “the Divine Vastness... disappear[s] through repetition of the affair.”²⁸ But, on the other hand, “it has been established for us that there is no repetition in the Divine Side.”²⁹ Because of this non-repetitiveness in the Divine Side, it is impossible to comprehend *Allah* through reason. Then, for Ibn al-‘Arabi, every attempt to comprehend Him is “nothing but passage from veil to veil.”³⁰ He continues that “reason cannot delimit Him by one of those forms, since He destroys that limitation by the next self-disclosure.”³¹ As a result, all attempts to fix a sign onto *Allah* or to somehow tie It to reason’s own finite perspective say nothing about *Allah* but about those who create *Allah* through their considerations.

Accordingly, Ibn al-‘Arabi’s ontological position resembles that of Plato, in the sense that actuality is the partial manifestation of reality. There is one crucial difference, though.

¹⁷ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 9:251; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 99.

¹⁸ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 2:78 (this quotation is from the Turkish translation). See also, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 2:180; For Ibn al-‘Arabi, “the root of all things is difference (*tefrika*) (Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 9:300; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 67). He explains the impossibility of similarity by saying the following: “if there is similarity in the facts, nothing would be different from those which are said as similar... the thing which differentiates it from the others is the thing itself” (Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 2:180; see also, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 16:56). However, he warns us that the difference or “what separates two similar things is difficult to comprehend through witnessing” (Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 9:251).

¹⁹ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 8:316 (this quotation is from Turkish translation).

²⁰ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 10:239; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 111.

²¹ Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 98; see also, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 10:190.

²² Ibid; see also, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 12:345.

²³ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 10:190; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 98.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 9:74; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 104.

²⁶ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 15:30; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 231.

²⁷ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 16:46; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 350; see also, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 8:360; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 232.

²⁸ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 2:30; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 219.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 15:297; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 230.

³¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 15:30; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 231.

While Plato's *ideas* serve as constant and absolute essences of actuality, the Divine Vastness of Allah make such essence everchanging. For a researcher whose concern is to understand only the cosmos (or actuality), not Allah *per se*, is that such ontology severely limits even modest generalizations. How this ever-changing quality of the cosmos is to be understood is the subject of the next section, as social research ultimately requires an inference about social phenomena involving actors' behavior and/or socially constructed structures.

3. Repeatability and Delimitation

The lack of repetition (*takrar*) means that *Allah* never displays Himself twice in exactly the same way.³² If the cosmos reflects the Divine Vastness in which there is no repetition, then it can be concluded that repetition is an illusion created by reason. Because the cosmos as a place of manifestations is something that constantly fluctuates, reason as a fetter is dismissed by Ibn al-ʿArabi in his understanding of it. Reason prevents the cosmos from fluctuating and thus opens a space for repetition. In short, repetition is closely related to reason. Ibn al-ʿArabi explains this by comparing the heart with reason. Unlike the heart, which is in “constant fluctuation” because “it does not remain [fixed] in a single state,” reason “delimits.”³³ When he says “the heart is His Throne and not delimited by any specific attribute,”³⁴ Ibn al-ʿArabi attributes fluctuation to the heart and fixity to rational thought (*ʿaql*). He says:

The reality in existence lies in variegation (*telvin*)... The heart longs to witness this reality. [*Allah*] made the heart the locus of this longing to bring the actualization (*tahsil*) of this reality near to man, since there is fluctuation in the heart. [*Allah*] did not place this longing in the rational faculty since reason possesses delimitation. If this longing were in the rational faculty, the person might see that he is fixed in a single state. But since it lies in the heart, fluctuation comes upon him quickly.³⁵

For Ibn al-ʿArabi, the meaning of the word for ‘reason’ (*ʿaql*) derives from the word for ‘fetter’ (*iqal*), which is why “reason comes from the world of delimitation... it obviously and necessarily belongs to the world of delimitation, in contrast to the heart.”³⁶ As for how this delimitation occurs, Ibn al-ʿArabi argues that since “there is nothing in reason by itself,”³⁷ unlike the heart, what reason knows derives from its characteristic of acceptance (or interpretation). This is why reason restricts infinite possibilities to its own interpretation³⁸ (or the one accepted). When something is accepted as something through rational consideration, it automatically becomes fixed and therefore repeatable. This explains why “repetition amounts to constraint (*diq*) and delimitation.”³⁹ Having said this, Ibn al-ʿArabi concludes

³² Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 96.

³³ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 2:377; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 111.

³⁴ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 11:275; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 107; Therefore Ibn al-ʿArabi defines *Allah* as He/not He (*huwa la huwa*). See especially, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 13: 386-87; Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 9:103; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 114. Like this, the cosmos is defined as “unknown/known.” See, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 9:88; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 114.

³⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 9:339; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 108 (the first sentence of this quotation is from Turkish translation).

³⁶ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 6:429; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 109; see also, Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 12:101; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 107.

³⁷ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 2:375.

³⁸ For Ibn al-ʿArabi, the “source of interpretation is... reason” (*Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 9:314). He explains why reason is prone to interpretation instead of truth as the following: Knowledge reached through consideration comes across with suspicion raised again by reason itself through consideration. In this situation, reason has two options; it either gets rid of this suspicion without adding anything to its own previous knowledge or replaces suspicion with previous knowledge. In the second case, suspicion becomes new knowledge. (*Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 12:195).

³⁹ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 10:239; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 111

that “fluctuation in the heart is equivalent to the self-transmutation in divine forms... for this reason knowledge of the Real (*al-Haqq*) from the Real is possible only through the heart, not reason.”⁴⁰

When Ibn al-‘Arabi says that those “who professes similarity [have] also delimited and confined Him in [their] declaration of similarity,”⁴¹ he duly emphasizes the role of similarity and repetition in delimiting and confining something. What is the function of this delimitation or binding? For Ibn al-‘Arabi, the inevitable result of stabilizing unrepeatability or limiting infinite manifestations is to create a mechanism of control for those who fetter themselves to a single image of *Allah*. How this control is actualized is as the following:

Were the Essence to make the loci of manifestation (*mazahir*) manifest, It would be known. Were It known, It would be encompassed (*ihata*). Were It encompassed, It would be limited (*hadd*). Were It limited, It would be confined (*inhisar*). Were It confined, It would be owned (*mulk*).⁴²

This is where the (earthly) power or property (*mulk*) emerges. In other words, willing to know (about *Allah*) is not independent from earthly purposes. For Ibn al-‘Arabi, the regulation of unpredictability, the subjugation of infinite manifestations, or imposing predictability upon the cosmos/*Allah* through rational thinking (*‘aql*) inevitably result in confinement and possession. Therefore, arbitrary construction of repeatability not only makes a scheme of cause and effect possible, but it also evokes dualisms such as good/bad, here/there, superior/inferior, and before/after, on which stable interpretations are based.⁴³ For example, defining *Allah* as ‘immanence’ is to privilege your own definition over others. In *al-Füsus al-Hikem*, Ibn al-‘Arabi says the following:

If you insist only on His transcendence, you restrict Him, and if you insist only on His immanence you limit Him. If you maintain both aspects you are right...[w]hile the one who isolates Him tries to regulate Him. Beware of comparing Him if you profess duality, and, if unity, of making Him transcendent. You are not He and you are He and you see Him in the essences of things both boundless and limited.⁴⁴

Accordingly, the philosophical roots of alternative understandings of rationality or the logic of reason can be traced back to Ibn al-‘Arabi’s rejection of knowledge that builds on repetition because of the ever-creating feature of the cosmos. This epistemological skepticism about rationalism and empiricism might help us discuss the absence of a positivist or deductive methodology in the non-Western context. Thus, Ibn al-‘Arabi’s work is an important contribution to a critical understanding of rationality in a non-Western context, given his arguments above on the relationship between reason and unrepeatability, in which delimitation or dualism is inevitable. The lack of repetition or conscious ignorance on fixation and the emphasis on infinite possibilities in understanding is a serious challenge for a positivist methodology in interpreting social phenomena. For Ibn-Al Arabi, then, repetitions of phenomena, as observed by “the eye” as “facts,” and conceptualized by “the mind” as

⁴⁰ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 2:377; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 112 (this quotation is translated from Turkish version).

⁴¹ Ibid; for Ibn al-‘Arabi, similar things are for those “who know an outward significance of the present life, but of the next they are heedless” and hence these similarities “are veils upon the eyes of the blind” (Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 8:316; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 99).

⁴² Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 10:80; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 60.

⁴³ For Ibn al-‘Arabi’s criticism of those who interpret *Allah* in one way or another, see Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhat-ı Mekkiye*, 11:52; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 63.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. Ralph Austin (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980), 75 (italics are mine).

“patterns,” are more reflective of power relations between the interpreter and the powerful, than of the cosmos itself.

4. Interpretation and Temporal Power

Repeatability makes dichotomies possible, which opens a space for interpretation (*ta'wil*). Why do people interpret things one way or another? To put it differently, what makes it rational to interpret one way rather than another and what makes it rational to advance one conception of *Allah* rather than another? For Ibn al-‘Arabi, interpretation emerges from the relation between the jurist and the king. This is a two-tier process. On the one hand, what prevents people “from ascribing to [*Allah*] that which is ascribed to Him by the revealed books and the messengers is the lack of justice on the part of jurists (*fuqaha*), and the possessors of [worldly] authority (*ulu'l-amr*)”.⁴⁵ Since most kings supported exoteric scholars who were “dedicated to the chaff of this world, to the love of position and leadership, and to accommodating the desires of kings”, the knowers of *Allah* “remain in the lowliness of incapacity and constraint like a messenger to whom not one of them believes”.⁴⁶ On the other, many people interpret the revealed book in order to gain favor with those in power. On this matter, Ibn al-‘Arabi says the following:

When the winds of caprice dominate over souls and the learned seek high degrees with kings they leave the clear path and incline toward far-fetched interpretations. Thus they are able to walk with the personal desires of the kings in that within which their souls have a caprice, and the kings can support themselves by a Shari’ite command. It may happen that the jurist (*faqih*) does not himself believe the interpretation, but he gives pronouncements (*fatwa*) in accordance with it.⁴⁷

Ibn al-‘Arabi calls these jurists “exoteric/formalist scholars” who adhere to the knowledge of external forms (*ashab ‘ilm al-rusum*). They are exoteric “because they devote themselves to love for position, emotion for domination over others, sense of being superior over Allah’s real servants and will-to-see that the common people need them”.⁴⁸ These people are those who “desire to be appointed to posts as judges, notaries, inspectors or teachers in a madrasah”.⁴⁹ They also submit to wealthy and powerful one “because of their coveting his wealth and their fear of his power”.⁵⁰ A Divine intervention into earthly affairs by the Mehdi will clearly illustrate their biased interpretations and the arbitrary construction of commandments for earthly purposes by these scholars. Therefore, “the Mehdi’s coming forth into the world will annihilate any power of domination, exoteric scholars’ privilege from the mass of common, and...the differences [among] the commandments”.⁵¹ The last point is worth exploring in greater detail because, for Ibn al-‘Arabi, differences among the commandments emerge from interpretation, which is where temporal power realizes itself.

For Ibn al-‘Arabi, interpretation emerges from both coercion and consent. On the one hand, the interpreter fears punishment by the possessors of [worldly] authority because of his/her commandment concerning something. On the other hand, the interpreter intentionally

⁴⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 2:329; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 72.

⁴⁶ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 2:329-30; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 72-3.

⁴⁷ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 11:121; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 202. For an analysis of this point, see Ian Almond, *Sufism and Deconstruction: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn'Arabi* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁴⁸ Ibn Arabi, *Fütuhât-ı Mekkiye*, 13:86 (this quotation is from the Turkish translation).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 87 (this quotation is from the Turkish translation).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 87-8 (this quotation is from the Turkish translation).

⁵¹ Ibid., 87 (this quotation is from the Turkish translation).

gives his/her commandment in return for a greater reward by the king. Therefore, there is a tenacious relationship between the [earthly] power and interpretation. In other words, interpretation lies in the core of [worldly] authority/power. Ibn al-‘Arabi says that *Allah* gives exoteric scholars “domination over the creatures *through the pronouncements they make*”, namely interpretations.⁵² Therefore, “the power in the life of this world” belongs to these scholars.⁵³ But they are not really in a power position. On the contrary, scholars whose “hearts have been overcome by love for this world and the search for position and leadership” are condemned to come “needy to the doors of ignorant governors and rulers”.⁵⁴

Ibn al-‘Arabi’s discontent with interpretation (*ta’wil*) is because the interpreter assumes the authority of reason in judging Divine words. For example, reason distorts things that seem impossible to rational faculties, and therefore “reason’s faith [here] is in its own interpretation, not in the report”.⁵⁵ This is why people with rational faculties “diverge in accordance with the measure of their consideration” concerning *Allah* and they accuse each other of not knowing *Allah*.⁵⁶ Since “interpretation is delimitation”,⁵⁷ rational people create a fixation concerning *Allah*, of whom others have no belief. Consequently, true knowledge of *Allah* is not something reached through rational thinking, but is instead thrown by *Allah* into the heart of the knower.⁵⁸ Ibn al-‘Arabi strongly condemns those “who are not moderate but instead plunged deeply into interpretation such that no correspondence (*munasaba*) remains between the revealed words and the meaning”.⁵⁹ He says that “the path of salvation for those who have no insight from Allah is not to interpret”⁶⁰ and “there is nothing more harmful to the servant [of *Allah*] than to interpret things”.⁶¹

Accordingly, the arguments of Ibn al-‘Arabi are fruitful for an alternative understanding of interpretations and to an extent, his texts are early examples of the rejection of “explaining” world affairs or social phenomenon so as not to impose power, given the acceptance that the cosmos is a manifestation of the Divine Presence (*Allah*). In other words, one can perhaps claim that critical and post-structuralist conceptions of power have been in place in a non-Western context for a long time. Rather than relying on Western critical studies to go beyond a positivist understanding of rationality and a criticism of the realist conception of power, we can utilize such texts in understanding social phenomenon despite its challenges for an alternative methodology. The following section concludes this exploration, with preliminary ideas or questions on how an example of non-Western thought, namely Ibn al-‘Arabi’s rejection of repeatability or repetition of knowledge (not knowledge itself), can be a subject for studying IR.

5. Conclusion

Is it possible to develop a method on tracing power using Sufi thinker *Ibn al-‘Arabi*? This

⁵² Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 2:351; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 248 (italics are mine).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 3:35.

⁵⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 2:175; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 201.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 10:90; see also, Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 8:360; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 71.

⁵⁸ Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 2:175; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 170; However, Ibn al-‘Arabi does not completely deny interpretation but says that reality reached through interpretation is just a “coincidence” (Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 9:333). Therefore, he neither rejects the commandment reached through interpretation nor accepts it (Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 11:94).

⁵⁹ Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 10:74; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 201.

⁶⁰ Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 8:109.

⁶¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 9:336; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 269.

is a challenging question not only because *Ibn al-‘Arabi* himself did not propose a specific method for studying power but any attempt to talk about such a method bears the risk of distorting what *Ibn al-‘Arabi* really said. His assumption is quite simple: When “constant change of the Root” in the cosmos⁶² is the rule, delimitation, fixation, and repetition – through which power is exercised – become arbitrary things. While the construction of meaning requires representation, the fixation of this representation in one way or another inevitably necessitates a process of reiteration and repetition. Therefore, there is an immanent relation between meanings and power relations. Fixed meanings are incessantly (re)constructed by centres of power thanks to the latter’s ability to control the process of creating representations and govern repetitions in a specific way. Without repetition (and power), representation has nothing to do with meaning.

As a result, I suggest that IR scholars in the non-Western world can engage in innovative ways to apply the readings of early texts on the relationship between meaning and power in three areas of studying social phenomena in world affairs:

1.) Sociology of the discipline: Looking at repetitions in scholarly work. Are citations repetitions of some sort? Who is the jurist and who is the king in citations? Aside from the original and cited authors, how do reviewers, editors, publishing companies, owner institutions, etc. intervene in this repetition process? How does becoming more cited affect one’s tenure? What governs intertextuality?

2.) Foreign policy: Repetition and its relationship to temporal power can be studied with respect to repetitions of behaviour and discourse in international affairs. How do repetitions in text, such as speeches, manifestos, party programmes, legal texts, and treaties, as well as in non-verbal media, such as gestures and images, inform temporal power?

How can the relationship between scholars of foreign policy and practitioners of foreign policy be constructed in terms of the jurist/king relationship?

3.) Methodology can be used to problematize rationalist modes of thinking (i.e., based on assumptions about rational actors, as well as knowing about them through reason) in IR, in which regularities and patterns are sought across a wide range of phenomena. Are not concepts immanently delimitative as rather simple descriptions of otherwise illimitable idiosyncrasies? For example, how an assumption of repetition in an actor’s behaviour (“This particular decision-maker constantly does the same thing.”) furthers or limits that behaviour’s explanation.

Ibn al-‘Arabi’s work proposes a fundamental rule in terms of methodology according to which any researcher who is interested in tracing temporal power should focus on its arbitrariness, which itself is the logical result of the relation between the jurist (researcher) and the king (the targeted actor?). To put this in a formulation, when a researcher interprets, he/she fixes and delimits; were the thing fixed/delimited, it would be repeated; were it repeated, it would be predicted; were it predicted, it would be governed. Since power operates through a constant repetition of commandment (namely law) and act with the help of researchers, any study of power should focus on the mechanism of the (re)production of fixed things/meanings.

⁶² Ibn Arabi, *Fütühat-ı Mekkiye*, 12:101; Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 107; In *Füsus*, Arabi says that “the whole cosmos is a collection of accidents; hence it undergoes continual change at every moment, since ‘the accident does not remain for two moments’” (Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 97).

6. Postscript

This paper was motivated by the first *All Azimuth* meeting in Çeşme, İzmir, on 24 May 2013, and was written during the summer of 2013. The participants were from the IR departments of different Turkish universities and we discussed the following question: Is a distinct IR theory possible in Turkey? This question is closely related to the following broader questions: Is non-Western theory possible? Is the voice of non-Western theory audible? My take on this question was based on what Martin Heidegger said in his *Der Spiegel* interview: “Everything essential and great has only emerged when human beings had a home and were rooted in a tradition”.⁶³ Therefore, the return to a great thinker in the process of rethinking ontology, epistemology, and methodology could save us from advancing an imitation of the West.

It has been almost two years since that first meeting and the question of how to resist the dominance of Western knowledge still remains a puzzle for me as an IR student. At the time of reading on *Ibn al-‘Arabi* and writing this paper, my conviction was that freeing ourselves from non-Western thinkers’ “tragedy”, according to which only Europe is theoretically knowable and all other histories are only matters of empirical research,⁶⁴ is possible only when we recall the pre-modern sources. In other words, the most plausible way of superseding the Western mode of thought is to return to the authentic texts prior to the domination of Western philosophy. This conviction, however, ignores power relations between the West and the rest, through which all modes of knowledge have been embedded in Eurocentric meta-narratives. For example, the question of why non-Western intellectuals seek approval from the Western academy⁶⁵ is greatly related to existing power relations. This fact explains both how non-Western intellectuals keep failing to develop an alternative theory and why reading pre-modern texts is perpetually interrupted.

What is the use then of reading/remembering *Ibn al-‘Arabi* in developing an alternative mode of thought in social science in general and IR in particular? If the Westernness of IR as shaping what can/not be said is a reality of our time, how is the non-Western voice is to be heard? For Mustapha Kamal Pasha, all attempts to recover the past necessarily result in “naturalizing Western IR as IR”, since the Western mode of thought conditions IR’s “horizon of alternative”.⁶⁶ “The non-West is not permitted to generate narratives of universality” because it can attain “presence only by conceding its alterity or by surrendering its distinctiveness”.⁶⁷ In short, the Western mode of thought lets others speak only when their voice is consumable. If so, a question arises: Is our voice audible if it does not tell a story about the non-Western world to the Western audience? To my wit, that answer lies at the very logic of how a specific mode of thought dominates others.

As Edward Said argues, the will to power of the West over the non-West resulted in non-Western silence and Western writing.⁶⁸ In other words, the domination of Western thought over the rest is possible only because non-Western thought has been forced into silence by the

⁶³ Martin Heidegger, “‘Only a God Can Save Us’: Der Spiegel Interview with Martin Heidegger (1966),” in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (the U.S.: MIT Press, 1993), 106.

⁶⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcoloniality and the artifice of history: who speaks for ‘Indian’ pasts?” *Representations* 37 (1992): 3; Mustapha Kamal Pasha, “Untimely Reflections,” in *International Relations and Non-Western Thought*, ed. Robbie Shilliam (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 218.

⁶⁵ See, Ersel Aydınlı and Julie Mathews, “Periphery Theorising for a Truly Internationalised Discipline: Spinning IR theory out of Anatolia,” *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 4 (2008): 711-12.

⁶⁶ Pasha, “Untimely Reflections,” 218.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 94.

processes of prohibition and alienation. If Said is right, it is certain that the very possibility of “Western thought” is the silence of the non-Western one. Then, the “mechanisms of exclusion” are the main issues at this point, because is the absolute limit of Western hegemonic thought is driven out.⁶⁹ To put it differently, the silence of non-Western thought takes part in the formation of Western thought by being “an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies...an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate” the Western thought.⁷⁰

To clarify the role of silence in the construction of specific thought, *Ibn al-‘Arabi’s* idea on the function of the *alif* - the first letter of the Arabic alphabet - in language is useful. When he attempts to explain the importance of the *alif* for the other letters, he points out the absence/silence of the *alif*, which is utterly immanent in other letters. For him, the *alif* is silent when other letters speak. The *alif* is implicitly present in every letter because “the letters are regulated by the *alif* and the *alif* always accompanies them”.⁷¹ Because the *alif* is the foundation of all the letters, it makes the totality of the letters possible. Moreover, the “*alif* is not from letters” and “does not break down into them” while “all letters may be broken down into and built up from it”.⁷² Although the *alif* is absent within other letters, it is the foundation of their existence.⁷³ Like the *alif*, the very possibility of Western thought is the silent existence of non-Western within the Western. Therefore, my conviction is not a futile attempt; recalling silenced non-Western texts is the only way to challenge the dominance of Western thought. Otherwise, what remains at hand is to live in a *colonial* mode of thought.

Unfortunately, most existing IR studies in Turkey, including mine, are reduced to “a reservoir of data production to illuminate the validity of Western thought”.⁷⁴ The transition, at least “from imitation to hybridity”,⁷⁵ for Turkish IR (or social science) is possible only when Turkish scholars are able to read current hegemonic IR theories together with non-Western texts. For example, reading Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, or other poststructuralist names with *Ibn al-‘Arabi* is very productive in creating a “new” hybrid (or alternative) theory. For the case of IR, reading existing theories together with non-Western texts will save IR from Western hegemonic thought and make it *international*.⁷⁶ Since forgetting what we learn from the Western intellectual tradition is impossible,⁷⁷ the only viable alternative is remembering the non-Western mode of thought simultaneously. However, “reading together with” is not an easy task.

⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Translate: Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 27.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries*, trans. Cecilia Twinch and Pablo Beneito (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2008), 55.

⁷² Quoted by Mohamed Haj Yousef, *Ibn ‘Arabi’: Time and Cosmology* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 181.

⁷³ This idea is echoed in Rabbi Mendel’s (d. 1814) comments on the *Aleph*, the first letter of Hebrew alphabet. For him, while the *Aleph* is “the spiritual root of all other letters”, it is silent in everything. It is so, because the *Aleph* is “the preparation for all audible language, but in itself contains no determinate, specific meaning”. See, Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (The United States of America: Schocken Books, Scholem, 1996), 30.

⁷⁴ Pasha, “Untimely Reflections,” 218.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Arlene B. Tickner and David L. Blaney, *Claiming the International: Worlding Beyond the West* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁷⁷ According to a famous story, the method used by master Iranian poets in teaching their pupils had three phases: First, memorize all the poems of a famous poet, which is not such a hard task. Second, forget all the poems you memorized, which is the real challenge. Third, if you are able to pass this phase, start writing your own poems.

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Transatlantic Security, Defence and Strategy: Badly Needed Reforms*

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This year we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the downfall of communism in Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Students who started their post-secondary education this year were born about seven years after this anniversary, in 1996. And the freshmen of 1990 are now in their early forties. In Europe, the latter generation is about to take on political leadership and may still be aware of the ‘Idea of Europe’ as advocated by one of the fathers of the European Union, Jean Monnet: “No more war on this continent; we will build institutions and peace instead.” Today’s enrolling students probably do not remember this forceful idea; nor do they realise the significance of this inspiring idea in overcoming great difficulties to achieve a peaceful, democratic and prosperous EU. The freshmen of today may take this for granted while being rather more disturbed by the confusing world of globalisation, populist slogans such as ‘The War on Terror’, multilevel governance and a rippled sense of direction and political effectiveness in the EU or, for that matter, NATO; in other words, throughout the transatlantic world.

For my generation, security, defence and strategy were relatively easy to understand. Realism and Cold War logic prevailed *vis-à-vis* a pacifist and rather weak opposition. But then all of a sudden we had to adapt ourselves to post-Cold War circumstances. We tried, but with mixed results. What about our experiences in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, not to mention Iraq or today, Ukraine? However, the next generation at the political helm will face an even more demanding job because of the sheer *complexity* of security and strategy and because of the need for some radical changes in our approaches to both of these concepts.

Today, I deal with this complexity throughout my presentation, while addressing two questions in particular: “What has been done in the face of the new challenges?” and “What is still being neglected?” In trying to understand some of the reasons for and causes of the mixed results – some might say failures – I attempt to explain why things happened as they did. Furthermore, I try to answer some questions raised by the analysis and make some suggestions about what could or should have been done to remedy the failures and improve the outcomes. In the end, we may offer suggestions on what the next generation of political and security leaders in the West should try to do.

I am not here to criticise past decisions. Security policy is difficult to begin with, and developing a sound strategy towards it is very difficult. Strategy presents guidance to achieve certain objectives. It represents the realm between the political and military dimensions of

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security. By definition, strategy entails conflict; political and military considerations are of a different order and cannot always be reconciled. Moreover, political-strategic and military-strategic considerations do not always remain in the distinct spheres of political leadership on the one hand or military leadership on the other. History shows countless examples where political leaders have been inclined to follow a military-strategic approach, relying on military force for problem solving. For example, Saddam Hussein was a problem for most neo-cons in the US and was simply defeated by the vastly superior US armed forces. But US political objectives in Iraq have always been troublesome, if not absent. Therefore, a political defeat of the US in that case was practically unavoidable. In fact, the political complexities of Iraq ruled out the popular, albeit short-sighted, military problem-solving approach in favour of tempting but ineffective quick fixes by military means.

Military-strategic thinking is of course a European legacy. While Western Europe was trying to make the principally *political* Idea of Europe work, relations with Eastern Europe were rigorously dominated by military-strategic concerns. Actually, there hardly were *relations* in, for example, the economic field; there was military confrontation between East and West. Security and defence were practically synonyms, something that was never the case conceptually. Everybody spoke about defence policy. NATO itself was a defence organisation wary of security politics. Arms control was about all we did in our diplomatic efforts. Negotiations were suspiciously monitored by the military, such as at Checkpoint Charlie on the West German side of the border.

It does not come as a surprise then that a defence organisation with a prevailing military-strategic culture is not well-prepared for taking up new missions such as those in the former Yugoslavia. Those missions, soon called “peace-keeping missions”, were useful for legitimising sizable armed forces and the ongoing existence of the Alliance. “Out of area or out of business” was how NATO’s Secretary-General Manfred Wörner aptly formulated the danger of doing nothing. Indeed, troops for peace-keeping were sent to Bosnia with 100 per cent backing by, for example, the Dutch Parliament and the Dutch Army, who, in turn, were eager to show their indispensable contribution to restoring stability in that troubled European backyard. Some countries were somewhat more reluctant, but with the support of the UN Security Council, peace-keeping was legitimate and seen as the right thing to do. The intentions were good. The cause for human rights and humanitarian assistance was a moral and rightful duty, as it was widely perceived in the West.

Yet preparations for the mission were poor. Commanders, both in country capitals and in the field, had limited knowledge about the region and the nature of the raging conflict. The role of diplomat-soldier was unknown and unforeseen, as was the fact that peace-keeping runs the risk of mission-creep; the mission can turn into dangerous peace-enforcing. Indeed, mistakes did take place. The drama of Srebrenica in 1995 was not the fault of any person or institution in particular. Nonetheless, Milosovic and other bad guys were seen as a problem that could be handled by traditional military forces. A military fix of an essentially political problem. One should add, though, that the Western powers were pretty much divided on what to do, and that, for example, the EU Commissioner for External Affairs, Hans van den Broek, was negotiating with his hands bound behind his back. Four years after Srebrenica, NATO was still not willing to deploy forces on the ground and bombed Serbia out of business after more than 70 days of an intense air campaign. “Winning ugly”, as the scholar-strategist Ivo Daalder (who later became the US Ambassador to NATO) described the campaign. Bombing

as a tactic of attrition is not exactly a strategy deserving that qualification. The use of military force, however powerful it may be, cannot be the exclusive answer in a post-Westphalian, post-Cold War world order. A Cold War defence policy no longer equals a security policy. Defence forces deployed in traditional formations with an array of conventional weaponry such as tanks, artillery and APCs, are much less relevant than in the past. In the broader understanding of security, they have in a number of cases become irrelevant altogether.

Colonial wars in Africa and Asia are a case in point, as is the war in Vietnam. The superior armed forces of the colonial power did not bring victory. Among the factors working against the traditional type of warfare, we should list the greater determination of indigenous forces and their hit-and-run tactics (which prevent them from becoming vulnerable targets for massive firepower) and, perhaps above all, the support of the people, the nationalists or freedom fighters. You cannot get at the enemy and you cannot get him down. Fighting terrorists is even more difficult, since they are not territory-bound. Moreover, they do not seek a victory on the ground as the anti-colonial freedom fighters did. Conventional battle groups are not the right answer against the actions of insurgent fighters, globally dispersed. They may be necessary, but they are never sufficient for a successful campaign. The centre of gravity that must be attacked for a decisive victory against guerrilla fighters and insurgents is not defined by a concentration of military power, as in classical warfare.

Maoist guerrilla warfare and today's insurgent and global terrorist actions are first and foremost *political*. Guerrillas and insurgents seek to undermine their enemy in the long run, in particular by creating popular support for their case. The shocking effects of the so-called propaganda of the deed – *action directe* – is meant to mobilise more people who are willing to sacrifice their lives and to communicate the impact of the violence to a wider audience sensitive to the cause of insurgents. The use of media is thereby an essential tool. Besides the use of modern means of communication, purposeful violence is meant to create a genuine security problem. The political issue at stake must be securitised for the target audience. At the same time, terrorist violence seeks counter-action by the attacked, if possible, a violent overreaction. The war against Iraq was such a military-operational overreaction, which unintentionally, albeit effectively, played into the hands of political Islam and its crusaders. Violent counter-insurgency furthers the case of the insurgents. In Iraq itself, the tragic number of deaths and wounded among the population and the impossibility for the Americans to ally themselves with one or the other representative of the Islamist belief, were bound to undermine the position of the US regionally and globally. Retreat was sooner or later inevitable.

Obviously, a security problem that is essentially political must be addressed as such in the first place. This is not to say that the utility of military force has completely vanished. Of course not. But the military-strategic view should not be the primary or sole response, but one embedded in the political context. The fact is that no military action should be undertaken without political and/or military support on the ground. Even with such support, the decision remains difficult and the outcome always uncertain, as we have seen in the case of Western support for the Libyan rebels against Gaddafi. Moreover, the battle cannot be left to foreign troops. Sooner or later, they are likely to be seen as occupiers.

Respect some golden rules. One, if you cannot do it, don't start military assistance and do have at least a good exit strategy. Two, if you do not have clear political objectives, don't even think about it, as Clausewitz taught us. The greatest philosopher of war would never

have agreed with the war in Iraq; nor would he have been a likely supporter of the war in Afghanistan. A real strategist would have listened to Clausewitz and should have said “No,” as, indeed, some states did in the case of Iraq. No matter how strong we appear in military terms (at least in our own eyes), political-strategic considerations should prevail. These considerations should include a thorough knowledge and solid analysis of the forces one is going to engage. Make sure that you have a good understanding of their culture and their political motives as well as a clear view on the warring parties. All these elements were insufficiently known in Bosnia, totally lacking in Iraq, and painfully forgotten in Afghanistan, with ominous neglect of the colonial as well as the Soviet-era history of that country.

Let me be fair and say that in hindsight it is easier to come to these conclusions than it was at the time of action. Sometimes you have to do something. Bosnia is an example of the need to do *something*, which was generally felt by the so-called international community. And in the end, a reasonable stability has been established in the region with the prospect of Western assistance and EU integration. And look at Mali today. The French government decided in January 2013 that the advance of Muslim groups and Jihad terror had to be stopped. Also, the danger of a terrorist base from which European countries could be or would be attacked was seen as a valid reason to do something. The French moved swiftly and took advantage of military-strategic surprise. They had forces in the region and combat capabilities ready for deployment in Mali. From the very beginning they enlisted the Malian army. No matter its deplorable state, it meant indigenous support. In addition, the armed forces from neighbouring countries in the African Union were asked to assist, as was the UN, by contributing a military unit. Eventually, the EU was engaged in training the security forces of Mali. Some individual countries, such as the Netherlands, are supporting the French combat units in ways such as gathering intelligence and delivering transport – of course under the flag of the United Nations. In other words, the mission was welcomed on the ground and supported by regional forces and international organisations. Of course, it remains to be seen how successful Mali’s defence organisation will be and when external powers will be able to leave security policy to the proper national authorities.

So, the utility of military force cannot be disregarded that easily. But the use of the armed forces alone cannot bring a decisive victory, as happened in some historic battles as an essential means for the goals of *warfare*. Today, military force is much more explicit in shaping the right conditions for *politics*’ objectives. You cannot eliminate the Jihadists, but you can complicate their mission with the help of force.

There is a caveat to this post-modernist logic of strategy, though. What about the fact that Jihadists, active in Western Europe, are often not recruited in Mali or Afghanistan, but at home? They are often well-educated citizens in the West. Clearly, the utility of military force is seriously in doubt in this case. Here, we need intelligence services and police and law enforcement authorities, not the armed forces and their battle groups. By and large, counter-insurgency is not terribly well served by regular armed forces. Intelligence services are the logical choice to go after an invisible or hiding threat. Indeed, the utility of military force has dwindled in both international security policy and safety at home. The security problems have changed and the security institutions should follow this reality.

To change institutions and the way of thinking proves to be a daunting task. If one looks at the changes since the end of the Cold War as regards force structures in NATO, for example, one is struck by the slow pace of genuine reform. Please take note: reform is not the same

as downsizing. Reform needs a concept; downsizing is merely a struggle between vested interests. Looking at military inventories or forces, it seems that the state of the national economy and the temper or personality of a finance minister are more important than anything in the realm of strategy. The peace dividend was quickly cashed and today, a balanced budget is overruling the sparse protest of a weakened security community, not to mention the apathy of the public at large. That is what we saw in Eastern and Central Europe in a dramatic way after 1989, and since 2008 in Western and Southern Europe as well. Just a few examples: Czechoslovakia had no fewer than 4000 main battle tanks in 1989 (the Netherlands 900). Twenty years later the Czech Republic and Slovakia had 245 and 180 tanks, respectively. Still a lot. (The Netherlands had 60 by then.) In 2013 these numbers were cut back to 30 tanks in each country, thanks to the economic crisis, we must assume. (Today the Netherlands has zero tanks because of the conviction that we cannot do anything useful with them.) In France and Germany we counted 1340 and 5000 main battle tanks in 1989. Twenty years later there are still 640 tanks in France and no fewer than 2000 in Germany. Today, after the six years of financial and economic troubles, these numbers are down to 250 in France and 322 tanks in Germany.

The situation as regards combat aircraft – a very expensive weapons system – is also radical. The numbers have been by and large cut in half in Western Europe, but in the Eastern part of Europe been reduced to 20 to 25 per cent of the inventory of 1989. Defence-spending levels also decreased significantly over the first 20 years since 1989, but drastically over the past three years. Overall spending in Europe decreased by 7.4 per cent, but varied significantly among the individual member states of NATO. Of course, the absolute levels are very different. France and the UK are big spenders, relatively speaking, with some \$52 billion and \$57 billion in 2013. Romania spends barely \$2.5 billion; Poland some \$9 billion.

But what kind of combat power do the countries get for their defence money? They spent between at least 50 and 60 per cent on personnel; in Romania even up to 80 per cent. Acquisition is troublesome and modernisation is very expensive, for everybody. The rich Netherlands will spend almost a full year's defence budget for less than half the originally planned Joint Strike Fighters – 39 instead of 80, which it could no longer afford. Others are struggling with their budgets even more and thus get stuck with old equipment. In Romania there is still an impressive number of main battle tanks (437). Yet, 250 of them are T-55s, a model produced in the 1960s and 1970s, and some 130 are TR-580s and TR-85s, models from the 1980s and 1990s. There were a meagre 54 TR M1 tanks produced in this century. I am not going to bother you with fighter aircraft in Europe. This is simply an example among many others and true for many member states.

This is not to say that the West does not spend enough money on defence. The US spends around \$700 billion and deploys over 8000 tanks, 25,000 armoured vehicles and over 13,000 aircraft. The EU spends almost \$200 billion and fields 6500 main battle tanks, 46,000 armoured vehicles and some 2000 combat aircraft. One must ask: What are armed forces for? There is no question that the West as a whole does spend enough, say *vis-à-vis* the Russian Federation, with her modest \$70 billion defence spending. We drastically outspend Russia, while there is no doubt about her dated inventory. Moreover, this dubious inventory is significantly outnumbered by NATO's. Therefore, the Pavlov reaction of NATO officials and member states to increase national defence efforts in response to the Russian annexation of Crimea and aggression towards Ukraine is not really justified. The point is that we do

not spend our money “wisely”, as Lord Robertson put it when he was Secretary-General of NATO. The real problem is that Western defence organisations and member-states pay too much for a number of disputed capabilities of *defence* and too little for some other and less-disputed issues of *security*. Let me dwell a little on both views.

First, we do not get much value for defence money after years of unguided, haphazard downsizing across the board. The bedrock success of NATO, namely integrated planning, has been disregarded, if not given up. Instead we are witnessing uncoordinated, national decisions – not even strict planning – and this has led to fragmentation of the common output. Individual capabilities have become very costly in maintenance and overhead and too small for robust and sustainable combat power. With the exceptions of France and the UK, no European ally can field an independent, sizable battle group for a long period of time. It should be noted that France and the UK also need support from the US as to capacities such as intelligence, target acquisition, airlift and in-flight refuelling. Individual, national capabilities impede the deployment of coherent and balanced international forces. The EU was not capable of putting together the Rapid Reaction Force of 60,000 men as envisaged years ago, in spite of the fact the member states have more than a million men altogether. By the same token, the EU has never offered one of its Battle Groups of 2500 men to any mission, Mali included, where the much-acclaimed units would have been more than welcome.

Communiqués of both NATO and EU meetings call time and again for more cooperation and smart planning, but to no avail. Ministers return home and are more inclined to comply with domestic politics. Even the EU summit in December 2013 ridiculed the much-heralded agenda on defence by addressing the issue for less than an hour, notwithstanding the fact that was the first discussion on the subject in five years. The communiqué is dull reading; many old wishes, good intentions, but no commitments to genuine action and reform. Back home, very few people asked for an explanation. In general, defence issues are already years down the list of priorities, both for parliamentarians and the public at large. The Ukraine crisis is unlikely to be a real wake-up call for the same reason.

As regards issues that are not so important in a strictly military sense and yet are put on the agenda of defence issues, particularly in NATO, cyber security stands out as an example. Recently, the Alliance even applied Article 5 to the case of a cyber attack – as if an attack would stand on its own and nothing else would happen in a political-strategic sense. Moreover, there is no compelling reason why NATO as a defence organisation should take on such tasks.

This is not to say that the subject is not important. Far from it. But it makes much more sense to have a civilian body, as the EU does, to oversee a given problem and only then to address the specific military aspects of cyber warfare. But NATO has not evolved as a more political organisation – on purpose for some allies – and a civilian and comprehensive approach to security is underdeveloped. Therefore, NATO has made itself much less relevant in the post-Cold War environment than it should be, as, for example, her very modest role during the Maidan crisis has shown. Bringing up issues such as a cyber attack is not going to give the Alliance more relevance; rather, it makes NATO look silly.

When we turn to some issues that are not disputed but insufficiently discussed, we should first mention the priority of the political-strategic approach. Again, NATO as an outspoken defence organisation puts too many restraints on herself. Interdependence has grown immensely – financially, economically – but also in terms of employment and education,

migration and humanitarian concerns and the like. The military-strategic approach is certainly not absent and should not be ignored. As said before, the European countries should do more as regards the combat power of their armed forces. They must strengthen the output of defence expenditures for expeditionary missions and redress the by-now-serious neglect of a common European defence force. The two go hand in hand; without robust defence forces, expeditionary missions are wishful thinking.

All the same, even the nineteenth-century behaviour of Putin in his campaign to grab land in Crimea was not primarily a military-strategic threat. With tens of thousands Russian soldiers on the ground and huge indigenous support, Putin posed everybody for a political *fait accompli*. He did not need to send regular combat units and infiltrated the peninsula with so-called self-defence forces without Russian insignia. In the Eastern part of Ukraine, fear of Russian domination was not created by the threat of a military invasion, but by pro-Russian demonstrators and self-proclaimed regional and local administrators and, indeed, sneaky Special Forces. Military exercises near the border increased pressure on Ukraine leadership to eventually consider more regional autonomy or federalisation. Putin's objectives were political-strategic. His calculations of costs and benefits were part of an interdependent world and, rightly or wrongly, he seemed to accept the likely setbacks in his international position, perhaps putting his bet on the temporary nature of Western sanctions and feeble Western cohesion. For Putin, the stakes are high as regards the loss of the Soviet empire. Indeed, the significance of Ukraine's choice as to its place in Europe is incomparably higher for Putin than for the West. Interdependence of interests does not mean symmetry of interests, however. Ukraine as part of Russia's sphere of influence is an essential political-strategic goal for Putin. The military capabilities of the West are unlikely to bring this asymmetry of interest back into balance. However, the Western preponderance of military power showed the usefulness of defence against conventional aggression. Ultimately, deterring a large-scale conventional incursion in Ukraine worked, in this case by the possibility of air superiority and denying entry of Russian fighter aircraft into Ukrainian airspace.

All the same, most security concerns depend on things other than defence forces, including in the transatlantic world. Security involves disputed political, economic, social and other issues that can lead to violent behaviour and the threat of using violence. That is how the former Yugoslavia exploded. The differences between regions, ethnic groups and economic circumstances had grown too big. The outcry "Enough is enough!" was the popular response to the problems in Ukraine. Anti-democratic measures, concessions favouring Russia and the decision against EU association, all imposed by Yanoukovich, were too much for the people. All together, the autocratic and corrupt regime brought insecurity for large parts of the population, particularly for that essential part of a vibrant state, the civil society. Rampant corruption, despicable inequalities, poverty, powerlessness, betrayal, etc. justified Maidan and the demise of the president, if necessary with violent resistance against the interior forces of public order. Ukraine does not stand alone in this kind of experience of what security is. Indeed, future security issues are likely to mirror such concerns, and we may add some others, such as water shortage, environmental threats, climate change, land degradation and unrelenting suppression and violence by domestic rulers.

Security is not a matter of 'normal' political conflict, but of conflict that runs out of arguments and eventually out of control. You no longer want to argue since there is no reasonable response and, therefore, the threat of using violent means and violence itself

are legitimised, at least in the eyes of the desperate actors in conflict. These matters have little to do with military-strategic considerations. Unstable and failed states are looking for a political-strategic approach, for economic or social security as a precondition for individual and national development. Of course, police and armed forces are effective means against political insurgents, as we have seen after the so-called Arab Springs. But such intra-national ‘solutions’ based on domestic politics are not suitable for international military interventions *vide* Syria, the Central African Republic, Sudan and many other horrible examples. By and large, countries that have seen political and economic development have first of all succeeded in achieving security at home themselves. Brazil, Argentina, China or India come to mind.

External military force may contribute to establishing or restoring domestic security, but only if the external player is really knowledgeable about the political situation and the cultural-societal motives and reasons for insurgency. These motives and reasons never have an ephemeral nature and cannot be fixed by short, quick action. A political-strategic approach requires deep understanding, patience and long-term vision. The future of Georgia, Moldavia or Ukraine depends not so much on the military strengths of the EU, but on diplomatic perseverance and loyalty to the advocated moral values of the Union, in particular the soft power of democracy and the rule of law, the original Idea of Europe. Self-confidence should then be backed up by military-strategic strength – in that order, which should also be understood in NATO. *Sans stratégie, pas de régie.*

Hopefully, the present generation of students that will make up the political leadership in Europe in some 20 years will be aware of this vision, and I am happy and honoured today to be their teacher.

International Relations Theories and Turkish International Relations: Observations Based on a Book

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Review article of:

Ramazan Gözen, ed., *Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorileri* [International Relations Theories] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014, 648 pp., 37 TRY, paperback)

1. Introduction

International Relations (IR) theory is a fundamental course both at undergraduate and graduate levels of study in Political Science and/or International Relations departments in North America and Britain. One might even argue that in the hierarchy of IR scholarship, authors of IR theory rank high, if not always first, among their colleagues and that theorizing is a tough but charismatic business. *International Relations Theories*, released by a prestigious Turkish publishing house, is a clear indication that IR theory is now well-established within the Turkish IR community. The book's publication can also be interpreted as a sign that the discipline in Turkey is moving from the dominance of the *Mülkiye* (School of Government) or diplomatic history schools towards embracing grand theoretical debates in the wider field of IR. *International Relations Theories* is edited by Ramazan Gözen, a well-known IR professor currently teaching at Marmara University, and the author of various books and articles on globalization, security studies, and Turkish foreign policy. The book compiles writing by distinguished professors and graduate students from around Turkey.

This review essay has two components. I will first present a brief outline of the book. Second, I will discuss the place of IR theory within the Turkish IR community by investigating the sources of the lack of theorizing up to now in Turkish IR and offering solutions to overcome this problem. I will argue that, in this investigation, the search for moving beyond grand theoretical debates in favor of puzzle-driven research can be useful. Working with specific concepts and themes, I also argue, will enhance Turkey's contribution to IR theory. In addition, I call for diversifying the curriculum in IR departments, in which teaching theories, rather than theorizing, has become the disciplinary norm.

2. Overview of the Book

One remarkable aspect of the book is its comprehensiveness. In addition to discussing established and internalized IR theories such as Realism, Idealism, Liberalism, the English School, Constructivism, and Critical Theory, the book has chapters on International Political

Theory, Marxism, Post-structuralism, Post-colonial theory, Feminist IR, and Green Theory. In that sense, the edited volume very well displays what leading scholars of IR theory have recently dubbed “theoretical proliferation.”¹ It also incorporates a sophisticated chapter (Chapter 1) on the philosophy of science, written by Faruk Yalvaç, which elaborates on the founding blocks of theorizing in social sciences and IR. Gonca Biltekin’s Chapter 14, on homegrown theorizing and non-Western approaches to IR, is rich in terms of the literature it covers and opens the floor for discussion on what should be done to improve local theory development – a topic I will return to later in this review.

Each chapter discusses the application/implications of the theories for Turkey’s international relations, which makes the book very important, especially for undergraduate and graduate students. Turkey’s relations with the EU and NATO, and the “new” activism in Turkish foreign policy, are issue areas that many of the chapters address. For example, Gözen, in Chapter 2, shows through Turkey’s Republican history that its foreign policy has been driven by Idealist principles and policies, such as Atatürk’s “Peace at home, peace in the world,” Turkey’s bid for integration with the EU, and Özal’s “peace pipelines” project. Similarly, in Chapter 3, Burak Bilgehan Özpek argues that the evolution of Turkey’s relations with the EU confirms the Liberal theory’s hypothesis that domestic political structures and interest groups influence foreign policy. In Chapter 7, Hakan Övünç Ongur and Başak Yavçan, on the other hand, interpret Turkey’s relations with the EU from a Marxist perspective, and argue that the web of economic relations between the former and the latter resembles one between a peripheral country and the core, in which the former is economically dependent on the latter. Yet for Constructivists, Mustafa Küçük demonstrates in Chapter 9 that Turkey’s relations with the EU can only make sense if one takes into account how Turkey’s “Western” identity and national interests and the EU’s interpretation of Turkey’s identity have interacted and mutually constituted each other. From this point of view, Turkey became a member of NATO and has sought EU membership due mainly to its self-conception as a Western state. Similarly for Constructivists, the end of the Cold War revealed Turkey’s multiple identities, which eventually paved the way for redefining its national interests. The re-formation of Turkey’s foreign policy goals and interests under Justice and Development Party (JDP) governments can only be understood in this light. Conversely, in Chapter 4 Eyüp Ersoy shows that for a Realist, Turkey’s “new” foreign policy makes perfect sense as it tries to adjust to an anarchic region rife with conflict and fierce rivalry. From this point of view, regardless of the JDP’s ideological roots or the academic and intellectual background of Prime Minister Davutoğlu, the latter is a statesman who has been acting according to the principles of survival and self-help with a goal of maximizing Turkey’s national interest. However, according to Tarık Oğuzlu (Chapter 5), from an International Political Theory perspective, Turkish foreign policy has become “value-oriented,” with normative principles such as justice, human rights, and humanitarian intervention gaining primary status in the definition of Turkey’s national interests.

Reading Turkey’s relations with the US and NATO through Gramscian lenses, Mehmet Akif Okur and Hakan Övünç Ongur argue in Chapter 8 that Turkey’s troubled relationship with American hegemony has been established through the interaction of ideas, material opportunities, and institutions. Drawing attention to the discursive construction of Turkey’s

¹ Tim Dunne, Lene Hansen, and Colin Wight, “The End of International Relations Theory?,” *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (September 2013): 412.

new foreign policy in line with Post-structuralist theory, Tuncay Kardaş and Ramazan Erdağ argue in Chapter 10 that Davutoğlu's civilizational discourse can be interpreted as a response to Turkey's traditional status-quo-oriented and Westernist foreign policy. Similarly, recent debates on Turkey's 'axis shift' are, according to Kardaş and Erdağ, efforts to re-interpret Davutoğlu's discourse. Assessing Turkey's recent opening up to Africa through Post-colonial theory, Volkan İpek and Çağlar Oyman observe in Chapter 11 that Turkish foreign policy towards that continent differs depending on whether the region in question is North Africa or Sub-Saharan Africa. The Turkish interpretation of the former has been shaped by their common Ottoman past, as Turkey was the former imperial center. Conversely, Turkish decision-makers interpret Sub-Saharan Africa as a region in need of foreign aid, education, and economic development.

According to Mehmet Evren Eken's Feminist analysis (Chapter 12), Turkish foreign policy has traditionally been under the influence of a domestic masculine-militarist culture. In this light, depending on one's theoretical position, Turkey's involvement in the Syrian civil war can be interpreted as a continuation of masculine-militarist Realpolitik principles with a justificatory liberal discourse, or as human-centered foreign policy activism that prioritizes Syrian refugees and groups with different/oppressed identities. Yelda Erçandırlı, on the other hand, shows that Turkey's foreign policy goals have never been driven by 'Green politics'; in contrast, Turkey's policies vis-à-vis global climate change and sustainable development have only been tools to help Turkey acquire prestige in international organizations – such as gaining a temporary seat on the UN Security Council.

One major omission in Gözen's book is the lack of discussion on what kind of concrete thematic issues (or real-world problems) authors with different IR-theoretical backgrounds have written about. For example, Realists have focused on themes such as nuclear proliferation, the origins of war, and grand strategy, whereas Liberals from various strands have written on the institutional design of international organizations, the influence of sectoral interests on the formation of foreign economic policy, and incentives for economic cooperation. *International Relations Theories* would definitely be stronger had each chapter included a section on each theory's range of empirical contributions to the broader IR discipline. Considering the goal of the volume to become a textbook for undergraduate and graduate students, it would be helpful for such readers to be able to grasp the empirical and thematic issues that Realists, Liberals, Constructivists, and Critical theorists, for example, have debated, rather than just absorbing a summary of the grand theoretical questions. Such an inclusion would also show the reader that the same set of research questions and themes have been explained/studied differently by different theories.

This edited volume should open the door to similar books being published in Turkey that fall within the academic territory of IR, such as Foreign Policy Analysis, International Security, and International Political Economy. I believe theoretical discussions around a core theme such as regional integration, civil war, or climate change would also be very beneficial for such literatures in the Turkish language. An imminent example is Turkey's relations with the EU, which most authors of this edited volume have used to test/apply the theories they write about. A book on Turkey-EU relations with Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, Marxist, and other theoretical insights would help sharpen our minds and inform policy. Similarly, a book that brings together scholars with different theoretical insights on the JDP's foreign policy would also be very useful.

3. The State of Theory in Turkish IR: Problems and Prospects

Turkish IR has obviously matured in the past few decades, and this change is not limited to the now-richness of literature on Turkish foreign policy. Scholars such as Rumelili² and Zarakol³ have published leading pieces on self–other dynamics and stigmatization in international politics, respectively, which have contributed to the broader IR discipline through insights from Turkey. Similarly, I note Kayaoğlu’s outstanding critique of “Westphalian Eurocentrism” in IR Theory⁴ as well as his book on extraterritoriality, which is based on British legal imperialism in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China.⁵

Yet these studies constitute a tiny minority in Turkish IR, which is still mostly focused on various regional and thematic aspects of Turkey’s foreign relations, with little original theoretical insights. In 2008, Aydinli and Matthews asked the question, “Why is there still an underachievement of homegrown theorizing” in Turkey?⁶ The question still begs an answer. To be clearer, why – despite Turkey’s position in a dynamic part of the world – do we still lack theoretical approaches based on the Turkish experience? I do not want to repeat what has already been said about this question; instead, let me state what I think is another major factor and problem that makes the above-cited question an enduring one. I argue that IR theorizing in Turkey by Turkish scholars is rare because now, in the post-*Mülkiye* era, our minds are occupied only with grand theories and meta-theoretical debates. We tend to think that theorizing means developing a theory as big and influential as that of Kenneth Waltz’s Structural/Neo-Realism or Alexander Wendt’s social theory of International Relations/Constructivism. The side effects of importing theories from the Western core are twofold: we tend to either get lost in big theoretical questions as a result of the futile effort to explain all political phenomena with a single grand theory, or simply apply grand theories to issues of Turkey’s international relations.

Unlike Comparative Politics, which emerged and has evolved mainly around methodological differences (quantitative vs. qualitative, large-N vs. case studies), IR has “largely been understood through the prism of the ‘great debates,’”⁷ and incorporated serious ontological and meta-theoretical dividing lines. Contrary to the prevalence of diplomatic history and international law in the *Mülkiye* tradition, IR departments whose curricula are influenced by North American or British systems tend to prioritize teaching theory without empirics. Thus, an undergraduate IR student who undergoes such training, for example, would have to learn what Realism is before understanding the complexities of nuclear strategies, terrorist and anti-terrorist tactics, the function of the WTO or the history of Turkish-Russian relations. This method of teaching IR theories in Turkey results in graduate students and junior academics interpreting all research questions, puzzles, and thematic issues of real-world international and global politics within dogmatic grand-theoretical lenses. As a former

² Bahar Rumelili, “Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU’s Mode of Differentiation,” *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (January 2004): 27-47.

³ Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Ayşe Zarakol, “What Made the Modern World Hang Together: Socialisation or Stigmatisation?,” *International Theory* 6, no. 2 (July 2014): 311-32.

⁴ Turan Kayaoğlu, “Westphalian Eurocentrism in International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Review* 10 (2010): 193-217.

⁵ Turan Kayaoğlu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, Ottoman Empire and China* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶ Ersel Aydinli and Julie Matthews, “Periphery Theorising for a Truly Internationalised Discipline: Spinning IR Theory of Anatolia,” *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 4 (October 2008): 693-712.

⁷ Dunne, Hansen, and Wight, “The End of International Relations Theory?,” 405-25.

graduate student in Turkey, I remember having conversations with my colleagues about which professor belonged to which theoretical school. We determined the affiliations of a few instructors, whose leanings were obvious, but continued our efforts to uncover the remaining theoretical secrets throughout graduate school.

While one Turkish student trained within the so-called *Mülkiye* tradition (if that even exists anymore) would know all the details of the 1974 Cyprus intervention, another Turkish student trained in the alternative method would interpret the Cyprus intervention from a theoretical perspective, with little knowledge of the facts. We need neither a student who gets lost in tiny historical details (which does little to understand/explain its origins and consequences), nor a student who knows nothing about the context in which the Cyprus intervention took place (but keeps ‘theorizing’ about why it occurred in a bipolar structure). What we need is a student who knows the relevant facts *and* who can develop theoretical arguments based on those facts.

As a Ph.D. student in Canada, I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet prestigious IR scholars from varied theoretical backgrounds (Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, Critical, and English School) and listen to their presentations and lectures – arguments I read in textbooks when I was studying in Turkey. I was particularly surprised that representatives of the Realist school would have friendly conversations with representatives of the Constructivist school, and moreover, challenge each other’s research with mind-opening questions and constructive feedback. Because of the different approach to education in Turkey, this, I imagine, would have been impossible for me to grasp as a master’s student there: a Realist and a Constructivist exchanging views in a friendly and productive manner!

One solution that Western (primarily North American) scholars have offered for the problem of prevalent paradigmatic or meta-theoretical wars in the discipline is theoretical pluralism, or bridge building.⁸ In simplest terms, theoretical pluralism involves bringing together insights from different theories to explain political complexities. According to Katzenstein and Sil – two champions of eclectic research in IR – “theoretical monism” had real-world costs because it undermined the scholarly effort to better explain international politics.⁹ According to Checkel, eclectic/pluralist studies have significantly contributed to our understanding of international institutions, normative theory, and civil wars.¹⁰ It is unfortunate that these debates did not make it into Gözen’s book – though it is understandable given the problem in Turkish IR that I touched upon above. On the other hand, I am aware of the single unanswerable question in eclectic theorizing – how do ideational and material variables interact? Which comes prior? Yet this line of thought can still offer a new venue for Turkish IR scholars to develop stronger arguments in fields such as Turkish foreign policy, in which it is impossible to argue that only ideational or material factors are predominant.

4. Some Ideas for Enhancing Original Contribution to IR Theory in Turkey

What, then, are the prospects for original contribution to IR theory in Turkey? More importantly, what should be done to encourage homegrown IR theories? In Chapter 14, Biltekin offers

⁸ In the past decade, much has been written with a pluralistic approach. For an overview of that literature, see Jeffrey Checkel, “Theoretical Pluralism in IR: Possibilities and Limits,” in *Handbook of International Relations*, 2nd Edition, ed. Beth A. Simmons, Thomas Risse, and Walter Carlsnaes (London: Sage Publications, 2013), 220-41.

⁹ Peter Katzenstein and Rudra Sil, *Beyond Paradigms: Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹⁰ Checkel, “Theoretical Pluralism in IR,” 220-41.

several suggestions: First, IR scholars should build data – qualitative or quantitative – and present them to the broader Turkish IR community. Building data will help come up with original concepts. Second, the means through which concepts and data are shared with the broader community should be enhanced. Such methods include not only academic journals, but also workshops/conferences that will bring together scholars who focus on the same set of questions to form a research program over time. Finally, Turkish students and scholars should be familiar not only with Western political theory but also with non-Western/Turkish political theory and the history of thought. It is no secret that the major IR theories the book deals with all have ideational roots in Western philosophy, and all chapters touch upon this fact. In summary, for Biltekin, scholars with solid philosophical knowledge (including political philosophy and the philosophy of science) and are advanced in various data gathering and analysis techniques are necessary for the emergence of homegrown theories in Turkey.

While Biltekin investigates the prospects for homegrown theorizing, I am curious about how Turkish IR scholars' contributions to IR theory could be enhanced. I call for a puzzle- or problem-driven approach, which prioritizes concept building based on local experience and sophistication based on methodology. Puzzle-driven research refers to starting scientific inquiry by focusing on real-world problems that cannot be explained/understood with existing theories. Turkey's engagement with the Western international system and the country's multi-regional character would enable finding many empirical puzzles and related research questions. In that light, Turkish IR scholars – especially young academics – should stop starting their research with grand-theoretical boundaries. While we should pursue “theory-led and theory-concerned”¹¹ research, we should not let grand theoretical debates block our vision. As Rumelili's¹² survey of the East's agency in IR clearly demonstrates, Turkish scholars (as well as scholars from other non-core countries) will be able to challenge existing theories by developing new concepts based not only on the Turkish (other country's) experience, but also by taking Turkey as an agent in Turkish-Western relations. This is one of the reasons why, for me, Turkish scholars are doing much better in Comparative Politics (a sub-field of political science that is unfortunately little known, studied, or taught in Turkish IR departments because IR is thought to be separate from all other social sciences) than Turkish IR scholars. A recent example is Aktürk's comparative study on the characteristics of different “regimes of ethnicity” and determinants of the change/transformation in these regimes.¹³ Another recent example is Aytaç and Öniş's article on the divergent strands of populism in Argentina (left of center) and Turkey (right of center).¹⁴ Puzzle- or problem-driven research necessitates moving beyond theoretical and methodological pre-commitments and embracing a pragmatic research approach; different research questions demand different methodologies and a single grand theory may not always be helpful in explaining complex social phenomena.

At the end of the day, International Relations is a branch of social sciences, and IR theories ‘import’ many insights from other fields.¹⁵ Two major examples include Waltz's

¹¹ Dunne, Hansen, and Wight, “The End of International Relations Theory?,” 420.

¹² Bahar Rumelili, “Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorisinde Yerel-Görürlülük ve Doğu'nun Özneselliği,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 45-71.

¹³ Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ S. Erdem Aytaç and Ziya Öniş, “Varieties of Populism in A Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo,” *Comparative Politics* 47, no. 1 (October 2014): 41-59.

¹⁵ Dunne, Hansen, and Wight, “The End of International Relations Theory?,” 413.

micro-economic approach and Wendt's sociological approach. Therefore, IR curricula should include detailed courses on history, comparative politics, political economy, and sociology. More importantly, these courses should either be taught prior to (preferably) or at least simultaneously with courses on IR theory. At the same time, IR students should learn what scientific inquiry means and how it differs from journalism or think-tank (policy) analysis. According to Rumelili, conceptual innovation was the sole reason why Amitav Acharya's piece on the localization of international norms in Southeast Asia was the only article that appeared in *International Organization* – the discipline's leading journal – that was built ontologically on Eastern agency. This fact shows that we need IR scholars who are capable of theorizing – or at least developing – arguments with a conceptual basis. And that is impossible to do without knowing facts/empirics. I cannot imagine Ted Hopf writing his incredibly rich book on the social construction of foreign policy without a thorough knowledge of Russian language and history, as well as methodological sophistication.¹⁶ Similarly, without detailed empirical knowledge on Germany, France, and Britain, as well as on the international agreements that created the European Community, Andrew Moravcsik's Liberal account of European integration would offer little theoretical insight. As a starting point, I believe that Turkey's history holds numerous ideas on conceptual strength and contributions to IR theory.¹⁷ For example, how did the Ottomans interpret territoriality and sovereignty, and how do those concepts differ from the so-called Westphalian order? Similarly, does the non-existence of armed conflict between the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and the Safavid Empire (Iran) since 1639 tell us anything from an IR theory perspective? These are just two immediate questions that I can think of.

Notwithstanding my above arguments, I am also aware that for the majority of undergraduate IR students, getting a secure job in the private sector or the Turkish bureaucracy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, etc.) is much more important than learning IR theories. It is exactly for this reason that detailed reading and writing on grand theoretical discussions should be left to graduate studies. To conclude, while theorizing is good, theorizing for the sake of theorizing is a big danger, and is against the very nature of scientific inquiry. It is time to connect our theoretical maturity with empirical knowledge.

¹⁶ Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policy, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

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Abstracts in Turkish

Uluslararası İlişkilerde Alt Sistemler Arası Bir Yaklaşım

Haluk Özdemir

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Bu çalışmanın ana çıkış noktası, güncel uluslararası ilişkiler teori inşalarının, analiz düzeyleri arasında yer değiştirmeden, değişim ve sürekliliği açıklamakta yetersiz kaldığıdır. Sistem çalışmaları üzerine daha önce yapılan araştırmalara potansiyelleri gerçekleştirilemeden bırakılmıştır. Oysa, alt sistem kavramı bu zorluğu çözmek için büyük bir potansiyele sahiptir. Bu makale, anarşi de dahil olmak üzere, uluslararası sistemin öğelerinin sabit olmadığını ve değişiklik gösterdiğini savunmaktadır. Bunun için, ilk olarak, sorun alanları ve işlevleri farklı alt sistemleri (örneğin coğrafi veya fonksiyonel alt sistemler) tespit etmek gerekmektedir. Sonrasında, literatürde ihmal edilen bir konu olan alt sistemler arasındaki etkileşimler incelenmektedir. Böylece makale, alt sistemler ve bu sistemlerin, istikrarlı ya da değişken, genel sisteme olan etkilerini incelemek üzere yeni bir araştırma gündemi yaratarak tartışmaya katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu sebeple özellikle farklı alt sistemlerin kesiştiği noktalarda yatan tutarsızlıklar, çelişkiler ve sorunlara odaklanılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sistem, stratejik kültür, alt sistem, kriz, değişim

Türkiye'nin Son On Yıldaki Orta Doğu Politikasını Yorumlamak

Nilüfer Karacasulu

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi

Orta Doğu'da farklı güçler alternatif bir düzen empoze etmeye çalışmaktadır. Bu bölgedeki sayılı kilit oyuncudan bir tanesi de Türkiye'dir. 2002 yılından bu yana, Türkiye iktidarındaki Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin Orta Doğu'ya ilgisi giderek artmaktadır. Bu makale, 2002 yılından bu yana Türk dış politikasında bir değişiklik olduğunu ileri sürerek, konuda daha önce yapılmış çalışmalara katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Makalede, Türkiye'nin değerlere dayalı ve ilkeli bir yaklaşımla şekillendirdiği yeni bir vizyon ile Orta Doğu'da bölgesel bir güç olmayı hedeflediği iddia edilmektedir. Bu vizyonu açıklamak için, son on yılda Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'daki uluslararası kimliğini de oluşturan, Türk dış politikasını tanımlayan temel değer ve ilkeler analiz edilmektedir. Makalede, genel olarak Türk dış politikasında, özellikle de Orta Doğu'ya yönelik taktiksel değişiklikler yapıldığı sonucuna varılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, dış politika, Orta Doğu, AKP, bölgesel düzen

İbn Arabi Düşüncesinde Bilgi, Tekerrür ve Güç: Metodoloji Hakkında Bazı Yorumlar

Ali Balcı
Sakarya Üniversitesi

Bu çalışmanın ana gerekçesi, uluslararası ilişkiler akademisyenlerinin güç çalışmaları üzerine nasıl alternatif bir yöntem geliştirebileceklerine ilişkin tartışmaya katkıda bulunmaktır. Batılı olmayan bağlamda yapılan erken güç ilişkileri kavramsallaştırılmalarına bir örnek olarak İslam mutasavvıfı İbn Arabi önerilmektedir. İbn Arabi'ye göre tekrar edilemezliğin kural olduğu bir dünyada, bir şeyi tefsir yoluyla tekrarlanabilir ve sabit kılmak dünyevi amaçlar için yapılmaktadır. Arabi'nin eseri, "evren"i anlamak için yapılan girişimlerin keyfi birer müdahale olduğunu ve bu müdahalelerin aktörler arasındaki güç ilişkilerini tam anlamıyla yansıttığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu nedenle, İbn Arabi'nin çalışması Batı-dışı bağlamda bir uluslararası ilişkiler ve dış politika disiplini için sosyolojik ve metodolojik bilimsel sorulara zemin hazırlamaktadır. Argümanları, uluslararası ilişkilerde eleştirel ve postyapısalcı güç kavramlarıyla değerlendirilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İbn Arabi, evren, bilgi, tekrarlama, tefsir, sınırlama, güç

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