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The Internal-External Dialectic: The Political and the Economic in the Foreign Policy of Turkey's Refah Party

Akif Avci^{*}

Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to examine the dialectical relationship between internal and external factors which shaped the foreign policy approach of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, the RP) in Turkey in the 1990s. To grasp the class characteristics of the RP, the relationship between the RP and the state within the power bloc, and its relations with global capitalism, this study addresses the connection between neoliberalism and political Islam in Turkey. To achieve this goal, the study focuses on social relations of production, relations at the state level, and international relations which shaped the foreign policy of the RP. Accordingly, it examines the dialectical relationship between *the political* and *the economic* which shaped the material basis of the RP and its foreign policy. The study concludes that the analysis of the RP's foreign policy requires some form of a combination of internal and external factors which form essential extra economic and political conditions for social cohesion. Finally, it demonstrates that there was neither a shift nor a change in Turkish foreign policy under the RP-led coalition government during 1996 and 1997.

Keywords: Turkey; Islamism; Refah Party; Social Relations of Production; State-Capital Relations; Foreign Policy; Neoliberalism.

Introduction

The focus of this study is on the dialectical relationship between internal and external dimensions which constitute the foreign policy approach of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, the RP). Accordingly, this study examines the transformation of Turkish foreign policy (TFP) which began in the era of transition to neoliberalism in the 1980s and subsequently has taken a new form in the process of the internationalization of money-capital in the 1990s. This study argues that the restructuring of the social relations of production and reconstituting the state's financial and regulatory agencies after the transition to neoliberalism have influenced the foreign policy approach of the Turkish state. The process of the internationalisation of money capital in the 1990s, and thus, the interests and operations of transnational capital have also been internalised within the Turkish social formation through the restructuring of the Turkish state after the 1980s. In this process, the second generation (the so-called Islamist bourgeoisie) of Turkish capital has also integrated into social relations of production and foreign policy making in various ways. This study provides a reliable account of how the foreign policy of the RP government relates to the history of Turkish foreign policy and the

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specificity of social relations of production under the umbrella of an imperialist chain which was fundamentally characterised by *uneven and combined development*.

To unpack the relationship between internal and external dynamics which shape the foreign policy approach of the RP, this study constructs a three-levels of analysis based on the social relations of production, relations at the state level and foreign policy. The relationship between these three levels is not unilinear, which means that one level influences the other in different ways (Cox 1987: 396-398). Hence, the structure of the study is based on these three levels. The first section of the article defines the RP from a class perspective. Rather than reducing particular positions of different power groups within the RP to their religious and cultural attitudes, this study examines them through an empirical analysis based on their positions in social relations of production, at the state level and in foreign policy-making. Secondly, this study explores the dialectical relationship between the RP and the state. Following the philosophy of internal relations and the conceptualisations of Nicos Poulantzas, this study examines the role of the RP in the power bloc. Thirdly, this study sketches out the connections between the RP's foreign policy approaches and global capitalism. Furthermore, this study discusses whether there is a shift or incoherency in its policies during its time in power compared to its years in opposition. This means that this study shall assess whether the RP brought a change to traditional Western-centric TFP. Lastly, it concludes with a discussion on the insights offered by this article for the broader scholarly literature.

The Philosophy of Internal Relations and the RP

To elaborate on the theoretical approach of this study, first it is necessary to address the philosophy of internal relations. It is an epistemological and methodological approach which is based on the premise that interactions between relations of production, ideology and power as well as between dominant and dominated classes are all relations which are internal to each other. That is why political parties, states, markets or classes cannot be taken as independent, single units and determinant factors in themselves, but only as part of a relational system. Therefore, the analysis of the RP and its foreign policy cannot be discursively constructed or examined as entities separate from the other parts constituting the social relations of production but should be viewed as internally related. This methodological and epistemological approach is called "the philosophy of internal relations" (Ollman and Badeen 2015: 3; Ollman 2015: 10). In Bertell Ollmann's words, totality "is a logical construct that refers to the way the whole [is made] present through internal relations in each of its parts" (2003: 72).

Accordingly, to move beyond the mainstream analysis of RP's foreign policy approach, this study starts by defining the state. Drawing on the works of Poulantzas, and Antonio Gramsci before him, the state can be seen as a condensation of class relations. This definition does not underestimate the relationship between the state's internal functions and international market conditions and "global capitalist relations of production" (Bieler and Morton 2013: 38). Gramsci argues that the state is present in both civil society and political society, the totality of which is called the integral state (Gramsci 1971: 269). The concept of integral state is useful to understand the complex relations which the RP engages at the state

level. Poulantzas later developed the Gramscian concept of the integral state into an analysis of economic relations (Jessop 2014). It is in this context that the internal relations between the state and capital, the state and market and the political and the economic are taken into account (Bieler and Morton 2013: 38).

To demonstrate the interconnectedness between the RP's policies and global developments, this study sketches out the transformation of the nation-state in the 1980s. States have played primary roles in establishing and reproducing "the social relations and institutions of class, property, currency, contract and markets" as well as mediating the international process of capital accumulation (Panitch and Gindin 2004: 17). Most existing nation-states do not have a high capacity to control the internationalisation of capital accumulation. However, they enjoy their capabilities to influence capital accumulation within national borders (Bryan 2007: 254). The important class relations for the reproduction of this type of production and accumulation are created and secured "within the space of the nation and using the nation-state" (Bryan 2007: 254). This new relationship between capitalism and states is understood as the internationalisation of the state since each national state became responsible for "managing its domestic capitalist order in a way that contributes to managing the international capitalist order" (Poulantzas 1975: 73). This phenomenon refers to the internationalisation of capital which was internalised within each state in different forms at different times (Bieler and Morton 2006: 170).

As the internationalisation of capital not only increases global integration but affects domestic social formations, this has also led to significant changes in domestic class structures in different countries (Kiely 2010: 141). As a result of the deepening of markets and increased competition in the era of neoliberalism, the internal fabric of states and the crucial role that states should perform have been reconstructed and shifted at the expense of the productive forces. This US-led global project of encouraging the free flow of capital across the world demanded the establishment of new formal and informal mechanisms in different forms in different regions and countries (Panitch and Gindin 2004: 22, 2012: 224). The development of such mechanisms within the internal structures of individual nation states is formed by the states themselves. Concomitant international developments also influenced the extent to which Turkey was internationalised, for instance, the demise of the USSR in 1991, the Customs Union agreement signed with the EU in 1996, and the East Asian Crisis that began in 1997.

Social Relations of Production and the RP

Previous works adhering to mainstream approaches such as Bilgin (2008), Yavuz (1997), Öniş (1997), Çakır (1994), and Dinç (2018) have been limited to the cultural, religious and regional dimensions in their examinations of the RP and the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*, MG) Movement. Necmettin Erbakan founded the MG movement in 1969, and this movement led to the establishment of several political parties. The RP was founded by the MG Movement in 1983. Necmettin Erbakan was brought to the leadership of the party in 1987. The MG-led political parties resurfaced five times in history: the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*), the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*), the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*), the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*), and the currently active Felicity Party (*Saadet*

Partisi) (Tuğal 2009: 42). The gap in this literature is the neglect of class dynamics and the lack of the analysis of the social characteristics of the RP. Rather than reducing particular positions of different groups in the RP to their religious and cultural attitudes, this study examines them through an empirical analysis based on their positions in relations of production. This means that the analysis of the RP is not only based on the personal or institutional attachments of businesspeople to the MG Movement but, more precisely, through its relationship with production relations, productive forces and class fractions. Even though many studies focus on the RP from different perspectives, they do not examine how different power and capital groups belonging to this political movement integrate into the production process, and which mechanisms they use in their integration into the relations at the state level and global capitalism. Accordingly, relations of production, class, power and ideology are examined in a dialectical relationship, which constitutes the spheres in which the foreign policy of the RP can be examined.

The RP was not just a political party but also a social movement which had strong roots in the society (Öniş 1997: 743). The RP defined itself as the collective and organic Muslim union regardless of class and ethnic differences in Turkey. The distinctive feature of the RP's party programme was its emphasis on identity and justice (Yavuz 1997: 63-82). The RP's identity-based politics was welcomed by those who felt alienated from the Turkish nation-state and statist politics (Dinç 2018: 260). In this context, Necmettin Erbakan, the founder of the RP, brought a space of opportunity to most of the Muslim community outside the state hegemony. At the same time, the use of Islamic and economic dimensions made it easy to mobilise the society in the hand of the leadership cadre of the RP. Also, the Kurdish question, the country's high unemployment rates and poverty pushed the Turkish society into accepting an Islamist political party (Sayari 1997: 44-55). The RP came to power by obtaining 21.4% of the total vote in the 1995 general election. After several unsuccessful attempts to form a coalition government, the RP formed a coalition with Tansu Çiller's True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, DYP) in 1996. This coalition was unique since the RP was the first political Islamist party that won an election and became the more prominent partner in a coalition government (Sayari 1997: 44-55; Bilgin 2008: 408). However, the RP was closed after the 28 February 1997 "post-modern coup". The National Security Council of Turkey issued an ultimatum to the government on 28 February 1997, which was based on the views of generals regarding the Islamist threat to secularism (Dinç 2018: 268). The then Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, was forced to sign this memorandum, and the coalition government officially ended in June 1997. This military intervention is now referred to as a "postmodern coup" because the constitution was not suspended and the parliament was not dissolved, yet the government was subtly overthrown.

In order to understand the rapid growth of the RP in the 1990s, we need to address the political and economic transformation of Turkey after the 1980 military coup as well as the relationship between neoliberalism and political Islam in the country. In retrospect, from the initial transition to a multi-party democracy in 1946 onwards, Islamists have always had a presence in political life, but their influence on foreign policy was minimal (Mayall 2005: 75). Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the TFP has mostly controlled by Kemalist or centre-right political parties with a few exceptions. The 1980s represent a break in Turkish politics – leading to the rise of capitalists with close ties to Islamic groups in

Turkey (Göksel 2016: 254-255, Göksel 2018: 79). The transition to neoliberalism in Turkey is associated with the export-oriented industrial development policy which created an environment conducive to entering the network of global capital (Uysal 2016: 382). As a result, the small-capital fraction of the bourgeoisie started to operate in sectors which were abandoned or neglected by the big-capital groups represented by the Turkish Industrialists and Business Association (*Türk İş İnsanları ve Sanayicileri Derneği*, TUSIAD¹). Apart from the economic transformation of Turkey in the post-1980s, religion and culture also occupied a vital space for the rise of political Islam. The Islamists established business relations with the help of their religious networks, especially in Konya and Kayseri. New legal regulations also paved the way for operations of *cemaats/tariqats*² which constituted the material base for the capital accumulation of RP-affiliated businesses, such as the member firms of the Independent Association of Industrialists and Businessmen (*Müstakil İşadamları ve Sanayicileri Derneği*, MUSIAD). This business association was established in 1990, and it is mainly composed of SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) which mainly operate in construction, furniture and logistics sectors. It is important to note that the Foundations Law implemented by the government in the 1990s provided legal spaces for MUSIAD to reach a broader audience (Doğan 2006: 53).

It would be prudent to say that the military coup in 1980 was an attempt to put an end to class-based politics (Yalman 2002: 38). It was led by the military junta which united the power groups and defused the crisis of hegemony in the power bloc. The RP-affiliated capital, therefore, views this military coup favourably. The ex-president of MUSIAD, Ömer Cihad Vardan, stated that the 12 September 1980 military coup saved the country from a situation of anarchy which brought the country to the brink of disaster (Vardan 2012: 26). As smaller fractions of capitalists knew that integration into the world economy was vital for their survival, they advocated the neoliberal economic policies of the Turgut Özal governments in the 1980s. Before the 1980s, most small companies only produced for the national market, so they initially represented a nationally oriented capital. Integration into the world economy provided smaller companies with new areas in which to produce, especially through sub-contracting (Ercan 2002). It is this period which accelerated the transformation of some of the nationally oriented fractions within the RP-affiliated capital into larger fractions which invested in foreign countries and engaged in sub-contracting relations, such as *Kombassan*, *Jetpa*, *Yimpaş*, *İttifak*, *Endüstri*, *Çalık*, *Albayrak* and *Boydak* Holdings (Öztürk 2015: 120).

Before Erbakan founded the MSP in the 1960s, his primary purpose was to integrate small Anatolian merchants into the social relations of production within and beyond the country (Avcı 2018: 172). For him, the bourgeoisie benefitted from the advantages of the credits provided by state banks, and thus played a pivotal role in state apparatuses and decision-making processes. For Erbakan, the financial system of Turkey was under the control of prominent business tycoons centred in Istanbul. The purpose of Erbakan, therefore, was to do anything required to change this system and benefit the SMEs affiliated with his Islamist movement (Çalışlar and Çelik 1997: 27). Erbakan was aware that small Anatolian merchants could not benefit from the privileges of the state as opposed to larger capital fractions such as TUSIAD (Çalışlar and Çelik 1997: 84). At the same time, Erbakan won the Union of Chambers and Stock Exchanges (*Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği*, TOBB)

election and became the chairman of the organisation. His election campaign mobilised the SMEs within the chambers – which felt alienated by the chamber’s leadership by larger fractions of capital (Buğra 1998: 525). Most of the members of TOBB were commercial bourgeoisie and, in line with their interests, they encouraged the government to provide more incentives to exporting companies as well as to encourage industrial policies, in contrast to which was demanded by TUSIAD (Akçay 2007: 56). In other words, the fractions within TOBB based on smaller capitalists were in favour of the maintenance of import-substitution industrialisation policies, and protectionism in foreign trade (Alkan 1998).

In the 1980s, the RP-affiliated capital flourished and was strengthened in both public and private spaces. Hence, the policies of this period did not only change the radical vision of political Islamists in Turkey but also transformed how they engage in business activities (Yavuz 2009: 56). This is not only seen in civil society, as mainstream theories contend, because emerging capital fractions also found spaces in political society (Göksel 2016: 254-262). In this period, new financial networks were formed in foreign countries, which played a crucial role in transformations in the manner of accumulation of capital by MUSIAD affiliates. After the victory of the RP in municipal elections in 1994, the relationship between the state apparatuses and the Islamist bourgeoisie also transformed. For instance, the latter benefited from public funds through state contracts and local business networks in big cities in Turkey like Ankara and Istanbul (Yavuz 2009: 59). Moreover, Turkish citizens living in EU countries were integrated into the process of capital accumulation through donations and charity organisations led by Islamist NGOs.

In the 1990s, the discourses of RP-affiliated capital in opposition to the state, the Western institutions, global free trade relations and capitalism became more radical. The goals of RP-affiliated capital were mainly: (i) to make more profit from the privatisation processes as they thought the big bourgeoisie organised under TUSIAD had a domination over state contracts; (ii) to enter into sectors, such as automotive and finance, which were dominated by TUSIAD members; (iii) to follow an alternative model of integration into the world economy based on the idea of an “Islamic Common Market” rather than integration with the EU or the USA; and (iv) to follow a different path of money-capital accumulation and stop the IMF-backed strategy which favours a small number of big capital groups, while dominating small-scale capital groups (Özden and Akça and Bekmen 2017: 191). Despite the radicalism of aspects of the rhetoric of this period, MUSIAD was against neither the idea of internationalisation of capital nor global free trade per se in the 1990s. What they argued against was the expansion of Turkish companies towards the EU. In contrast, they were in favour of investing in the countries in the Middle East (the ME). In short, the primary strategy of MUSIAD was to challenge the hegemonic position of the TUSIAD in all sectors.

The rise of MUSIAD in the late 1990s created contradictions among different capital fractions. The rapid and uncontrolled growth of MUSIAD members could jeopardise TUSIAD’s position as the centre of traditional finance capital. For instance, the firms affiliated with MUSIAD have accumulated almost \$50 billion through the Islamic banking system, which was relatively outside of the legal control of the government (Doğan 2006: 60). Another contradiction emerged between MUSIAD and TUSIAD in the privatisation of the state’s electricity provider (TEDAS) in 1997. To outbid a TUSIAD member firm in the privatisation bid, over 3000 MUSIAD members made financial contributions to launch a new

firm which is called Investment Partnership Inc. (Gürakar 2016: 15). This was a clear example of why TUSIAD attempted to reduce the power of SMEs affiliated with MUSIAD.

Regarding the economic transformation of the country, the state used the Islamisation of society after the 1980 military coup in its struggle against labour movements. This led to the emergence of new spaces for Islamist political movements like the MG (Yavuz 1997: 63-82). The RP has, therefore, emerged as a nationwide political movement thanks to the political atmosphere after the 1980 military coup (Öniş 1997: 743-766). In other words, the RP and previous MG-led political parties were supported by the military regime in the early 1970s and 1980s to create a “moderate Islamist bloc” to fight against the fundamentalist religious groups as well as radical socialist movements (Yalçın 2012: 75).

After the closure of the RP, there appeared two different fractions of a political party in Turkish politics. One was the Felicity Party, which was founded by the traditionalist wing, and the other one was the AKP founded by the reformist wing within the RP. The military intervention in 1997 brought a change in the discourse of MUSIAD representatives (Buğra and Savaşkan 2014: 130). After the collapse of the coalition government, MUSIAD publicly declared that capital had “no colour or religion”. It also became much less vocal in its criticism of the EU and of Turkey’s integration into the global political economy (MUSIAD 1999: 46). This demonstrates that the SMEs which had close ties with the RP government realised that they would not be able to survive in the current circumstances (Akça and Özden 2015), as the RP and MUSIAD were not strong enough to confront the dominant power bloc in the country. The dominant groups in the power bloc were mainly some fractions within the Turkish Army and large capital groups within TUSIAD. The Constitutional Court opened a court case against MUSIAD for its closure just after the 28 February 1997 coup (Yankaya 2012: 2). As a result, the leaders of MUSIAD recommended its members not to use religious references in their commercial and promotional activities. While this was partly a strategic move in response to secularist repression, the fraction of capital within MUSIAD was also unsympathetic to traditional Muslim mentalities towards market principles. For instance, they were in favour of competition in the free market and contended that Islam was compatible with capitalism. Therefore, MUSIAD reorganised its relations with political and civil society after the military intervention on 28 February 1997. In this sense, they supported the establishment of the AKP whose leaders represented the reformist fraction within the RP (Göl 2009: 803).

The Foreign Policy of the RP

In order not to fetishize the impact of globalisation on the Turkish social formation, it can be argued that the analysis of TFP under the RP-led coalition government requires a combination of internal and external factors. After the dissolution of the USSR, Turkey’s geopolitical position in the bipolar world has been replaced with a new role: that of a stable pro-Western country strategically located close to three unstable regions, namely the Caucasus, the ME and the Balkans (Robins 1997: 82-100). As such, Turkey was perceived as a model partner by the USA in confronting and managing the conflicts in these regions. In this period, identity-based politics were in ascendancy in world politics and the RP heavily benefited from this international atmosphere. The coalition between the political Islamist RP

and the DYP in 1996 was a turning point for TFP because the RP was the first political Islamist party which came to power since the establishment of Turkey in 1923 (Öniş 1997: 743).

For Erbakan and the MG Movement, there have been two distinctive civilizations since the first human beings: one is *Batıl* (superstitious), and the other is *Haq* (truth) (Çalışlar and Çelik 2000: 23). For instance, Western countries are always referred to as “infidel” (*kafir*) in most of Erbakan’s speeches. In other words, Erbakan argued that the world was locked in an inevitable war between the Haq and Batıl. In this war between Haq and Batıl, Turkey must protect Muslim countries from the domination of Western countries, and take the leading role of the Muslim world (Çakır 1994: 167). Erbakan posited that the EU is also one of the most influential representatives of the Batıl system. It is a Christian Club which was encouraged to establish by the Pope Pio VII (Refah Partisi 1995 Election Manifesto: 29). Erbakan argued that, by the very nature of the EU, Turkey would never be allowed to join the EU, even if Turkey completes all the tasks and requirements of the EU. In the case of Turkey’s accession, Erbakan had fears about the transfer of sovereignty to the EU in the case of Turkey’s acceptance.

The RP’s anti-Western policy was also linked to its anti-Zionist vision. According to Erbakan (2014: 118), Zionism resembles a crocodile whose bottom jawbone represents the USA; the upper jawbone represents the EU while the brain of the crocodile represents Zionism and/or Israel. The body then consists of compradors. Erbakan argued that Zionists had enough economic and political power to influence developments in many Muslim countries after the demise of the Ottoman Empire (Erbakan 2014: 203). For instance, the alleged abolition of the Islamic caliphate by the Zionists aimed at minimizing Turkey’s influence over Muslim countries. Erbakan strongly claimed that if the caliphate had not been abolished, Turkey would have had a huge impact on Muslim countries today. According to the RP’s ideology, Israel divided its overambitious target into three stages, which are the establishment of a Jewish state; to conquer the promised lands through the occupation of the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Hills, and to ultimately conquer Egypt, the entirety of Palestine and Turkey. This had to be completed to establish the Greater Israel (Erbakan 1991: 200; Günay 2014: 93). In this regard, the RP supported the idea that the USA aims to suppress Iran, Libya and Sudan where Islam was an active force, and at the same time, the USA had the power to influence Muslims in Turkey (Oran 2012: 561). In Jordan and Egypt, the elites in society were compliant with US interests. Accordingly, the US intervened in countries of peripheral capitalism. In such a situation, the RP suggested that Muslims could only achieve greater success by creating an Islamic *ummah* (Bayramoğlu, 2013: 27). In accordance with this purpose, Muslims must establish internationally respected Islamic institutions as large and important as its counterparts in the West (Mayall 2005: 77).

The Basic Pillars of the RP’s Foreign Policy

The most significant principles of RP’s foreign policy were based on five targets. The first one was to establish an “Islamic United Nations” as an alternative to the US-dominated UN system. The RP placed special emphasis on the geostrategic position of Turkey in the world, and therefore Turkey’s aim must be nothing less than to assume the leadership role within the

Muslim world. The RP characterized its position as the protector of Muslims' right around the world – a country that would not allow the USA and the West to exploit the Muslim countries. If an Islamic UN were established, Turkey must have positioned itself as the leading country in this organisation. To achieve this goal, the RP wanted to use cultural norms to achieve its ideological hegemony over Islamic countries and in the ME region. The concern of the RP to achieve its target was a revival of the Ottoman heritage and civilization. Despite the loss of sovereignty of nation-states in the face of globalisation, many states not only dealt with multi-level governance but also generating and managing extraterritorial spaces such as export processing zones, offshore financial centres and tax havens (Jessop 2010: 42). The leader cadre of the RP argued that Islam had the most excellent economic programme to create export processing zones (Yayla 1997: 19-25). In this regard, the second target of the RP's foreign policy was to create an "Islamic Common Market" which aimed at demolishing borders and tariffs between Islamic countries to challenge the hegemony of the Western imperialist capital. Accordingly, the goal of the RP's foreign policy approach was to bring together all the Muslim countries in order to develop their economies under the guidance of Turkey.

Erbakan asserted that there was a tremendous opportunity for economic and political development in Muslim countries if they follow their historical examples. He also attached greater importance to Turkey which was the centre of one of the world's varied civilizations; that of the Ottoman and Seljuk empires (Erbakan 2014: 171). According to the RP's perspective, Turkey has followed an incorrect way of Westernization since the dethronement of the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II in the late 19th century. Turkey had to return to the historical and national values, and abandon the incorrect way of Westernization (Çakır 1994: 167). The RP spokespeople often used historical examples from the Ottoman Empire; that it used to carry the banner of Islam as the leader of the Islamic countries. It is clear that the RP's foreign policy perceived Turkey as the rightful heir and successor of the Ottoman Empire in global politics.

Closely related to the second target, the third one was to use an "Islamic convertible currency" to foster economic cooperation among Islamic countries. This also aimed at improving exchange relations between Islamic countries to establish a safe space for the mobility of commodities among these countries. Erbakan argued that the Westernization of Turkish politics caused the formation of current ideas and methods which were the underpinning impulses of Turkey's under-developed situation (Erbakan 2014: 4). The life of the modern human being was covered by corrupt forms of Western thought and systems. Many ideologues of the RP claimed that Western thought could not apply to the Muslim world because it originated in a world which was in contrast to the Islamic principles. The reason why the RP placed greater emphasis on Islam was that it is the only divine, uncorrupted and universal system, while communism and capitalism are human-made and corrupted. Most of the RP's adherents were influenced by the post-modernist thought which claimed that the Western civilization is in crisis and on the verge of annihilation.

The ideology of the RP envisaged the creation of a new system and a new civilization based on the concept of "just order" (*Adil Düzen*) to resist the Western civilization (Yayla 1997:19-25). It was claimed that the just order system is the best antidote to the existing IMF and the World Bank system (Erbakan 2017: 14-19). This system would be comprised of two

main components: legal pluralism and the Just Economic Order. This was created by Erbakan as an alternative to both communism and capitalism. The Just Economic Order was based on two important principles. Firstly, the state would be responsible for the organisation and the functioning of the economy. Secondly, this system would be expected to rely on complete harmony of economic interests among Muslims (Yayla 1997: 19-25). It is against communism which creates political domination and hegemony over the popular masses. For the RP, the communist system is obsolete, Muslims, therefore, should manage themselves and create a political system based on Islamic principles (Mayall 2005: 77). At the same time, this system is also against capitalism which does exploit the poor via economic and political mechanisms (Erbakan 2014: 219). Erbakan argued that Turkey and Muslim countries do not have a modern industry or modern services which provide social and economic benefits for the Muslim community because of capitalism. For him, capitalism exploits their resources as fully as possible, yet it does not allow the underdeveloped parts of the world to increase their industrial productivity. This is the very nature of capitalism which is a system based on unequal distribution (Erbakan 2014: 214). However, for Erbakan and MG ideologues, the just order system would combine the most favourable aspects of capitalism and communism, and it can be perceived as a bridge between capitalism and communism.

According to the RP, Turkey should lift visa requirements and trade tariffs between Turkey and Muslim countries (Çakır 1994: 167). To obtain this goal, Muslims must create a trade organisation like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to promote the regional industry within Muslim countries instead of encouraging them to join the European Common Market. Erbakan argued that the options for Muslim countries were to become a periphery state, an exploited state in the EU, or to become the leader of the Islamic Union (Erbakan 1991). In accordance with this perspective, Erbakan established the D-8 (Developing-8) organization as an alternative to the G-7 (Kirişçi 2001: 103). The D-8 was officially established on 4 January 1997 in Istanbul (*BBC Türkçe* 2017). Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt and Nigeria were the charter members of the first D-8 which aimed to transform the “international Zionist order” from a cruel system to a just system based on Haq (Birand 2012: 161-163). In addition to this, it was founded to protect all developing countries from the capitalist system and improve the economic decision-making process within these countries. The primary objective of the D-8 was also to facilitate the development process of these Muslim countries and provide harmony among them (Erbakan 2014: 210-12).

According to RP’s foreign policy assumptions, when capital moves freely between Muslim countries, Muslim states would pursue similar strategies to regulate economic activities, thereby internalising the interest of Islamic capital within their structures. In this sense, FDIs (foreign direct investment) by Islamic companies and their operations would be mediated by each nation-state in similar ways since each country has shared values and similar goals. Erbakan also suggested that Turkey should have taken on the leadership role to establish an Islamic Common Market because Turkey was the most developed and industrialized country within the Muslim world (Erbakan 2014: 122).

Erbakan attached priority to the roles of international organizations, such as the IMF, the WB, the UN and the EU, in managing the world system (Erbakan 2014: 89). The RP argued that such international organizations were dominated by the world’s Zionist/Jewish tycoons, and that these organizations helped Zionists to expand their influence towards

different regions (Erbakan 2014: 218). For Erbakan, the IMF and the WB provided financial credits to the developing and under-developed countries during the Cold War era in order to fight against the so-called communism threat. This was nothing more than a step by step imperialist policy of the Zionist bloc (Erbakan 2014: 93). According to Erbakan (2014: 114), the overarching rationale behind the Zionist policy was to weaken the whole Muslim world in order to ensure and consolidate Israeli ascendancy. That was why the Islamic caliphate institution was abolished, and the Muslims were supposedly left leaderless. As a result, it was claimed by the RP that conflicts and wars among Muslims were the very results of Western imperialism (Yayla 1997: 19-25). Accordingly, the RP suggested that a new World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which would work for the benefit of all nations to further their development, must be established according to the principles of the “just order” system. These alternative organizations, the IMF and the WB, would not exploit developing countries and nations as previous ones did. They would work for the benefit of all nations in the world (Erbakan 2014: 218).

The RP was against Turkey’s EU membership process, arguing that the EU enlargement process would not increase the level of economic cooperation and integration between the members. In the case of accession, this would help Zionists to exploit Turkey. Erbakan believed that the overambitious target of the Europeans behind Turkey’s potential accession was nothing more than an effort to achieve their aborted holy war since the Crusader Wars (Erbakan 2014: 118). In one of his speeches during the 1995 parliamentary election campaign, Erbakan asserted that Turkey had historical enemies who were the USA, Greece and Israel. The historical enemies of Turkish people would invade Turkey because they still had the “Crusader mind”. In another speech, he promised his voters to abolish the Customs Union once the RP comes to power (*Milliyet* 1996). In this regard, Erbakan suggested that the greater the extent to which Turkey sticks to the principles of the Just Economic Order, the less likely Turkey would be exploited by the “racist Zionist world powers” (Erbakan 2014: 231). In making this argument, the RP suggested that Turkey would be unchained if it follows the principles of the Just Order. In this case, Muslim countries would not have to borrow with massive interest from the IMF or the WB, and Turkey would grant loans to the Muslim countries instead (Erbakan 2014: 230).

Erbakan argued that some nation-states are not entirely able to coordinate their interests in international/supranational organisations such as the NAFTA, the NATO, the G-8, or the European Union. Having established an economic system that might challenge the US-dominated international economic system, the fourth target of the RP was to establish an “Islamic NATO” in order to provide internal and external security for the Islamic countries. The targets of the RP were not only limited to economic issues and security problems. Anchored within the broader debates within the Ottoman heritage in RP’s discourses, the final target was to establish an “Islamic cultural cooperation council” like the UNICEF (Bilgin 2008: 409). Paradoxically, the RP’s pan-Islamism ideology was based on a rather nationalistic view of Islam (Gerger 2012: 171-238). For the RP, Turkey was the only country which was able to lead the Islamic countries due to its historical heritage (Karabell 1997: 76-90). Therefore, Turkey was the only country which can lead the establishment of a cultural cooperation council. For the RP, Islam was not an antidote for the Western-inspired political

system; but Islam had a set of symbols to interpret the world. For Erbakan, pluralism and diversity were quintessential to bring people together.

The Struggle in the Foreign Policy Field

As mentioned in the previous sections, the analysis of foreign policy cannot be constructed as a separate sphere from the social relations of production and struggle at the state level. The reflection of the class struggle within the power bloc has affected the RP's foreign policy choices, which showed to some extent the structural limitations of the RP's foreign policy. During its one year in power, the RP did not organise any official visits to the Western Countries, while Erbakan made his first official visit to Iran and he signed a natural gas agreement with this country during his visit. Erbakan also proposed that the Arabic language must be compulsory for Turkish diplomats (Oran 2010: 863; Bilgin 2008: 412).

On the other hand, Turkey's foreign economic relations have not witnessed a shift during the RP era in the context of a re-organisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was accompanied by the improvement of bilateral political and economic relations with the Western countries. However, the main aim was to foster a deepening of relations with the countries in the Middle East and Africa. This means the RP's foreign policy showed a reversal and retreat when it was in power between 1996 and 1997 (Bilgin 2008: 410). The past promises of the RP to its voters were to stop political relations with the USA, the EU and Israel in the international arena. For instance, Erbakan publicly declared that he was against the Operation Provide Comfort II (*Çekiç Güç*). This was a military operation initiated by the US forces during the Gulf War between 1991 and 1996. This operation against the Iraqi forces was approved by the UN Security Council Resolution 688 to protect civilians from the war. However, as soon as Erbakan took office as prime minister, the RP followed a pragmatist policy contrary to its Islamist ideological tone during the election campaign and its manifesto. The RP government, therefore, stopped its criticism against this US-led operation. In other words, RP's foreign policy characterized a continuity of the traditional Western-centric Turkish foreign policy rather than a radical change (Robins 2003: 82-100).

The most discussed area of the RP's pragmatism in foreign policy was its relations with Israel. As mentioned in the previous section, Erbakan harshly criticised the former President Turgut Özal since he had established close relations with the foreign minister of Israel in April 1992. Moreover, in 1994, when the RP was in opposition, Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, the leader of the DYP, made an official visit to Israel. Erbakan launched a public campaign against this visit. In addition to this, Erbakan promised that he would revoke the military agreement between the Turkish Army and Israeli armed forces. Contrary to his anti-Israeli discourse when he was in opposition, however, Erbakan approved the military agreement with Israel when he came to power (Robins 2003: 248). The government also approved the free trade agreement with Israel (Altunışık and Tür 2006: 58). By forging this agreement, the RP expected to develop its military facilities and technological level (Sayari 2000: 169-182). This means that, after the RP came to power, despite Erbakan's disapproval and critics against Israel and pro-Zionist countries, he did very little to downgrade the relationship between Turkey and Israel (Robins 1997: 83-84).

Furthermore, when the coalition between Tansu Çiller and Erbakan's RP was formed, it was planned that Israeli naval vessels would visit Turkish ports in July 1996. As Robins (2003: 51) states, Erbakan had never offered a serious challenge to the traditional Western-centric Turkish foreign policy – despite his rhetoric in opposition. The relationship between the RP and the Western powers like the EU and the USA also showed little shifts. Despite Erbakan's harsh criticism against the USA and the EU, he later dropped his opposition to the EU, Israel and the USA (Sayari 1997: 44-55).

Conclusion

This study examined the role of internal and external factors in shaping the foreign policy of the RP as well as puzzling out the dialectical relationship between the political and economic in its foreign policy approach. This study argued that the definition of the RP is not only based on religious, ideological and cultural dynamics. To a considerable extent, this study examined how different groups within the RP engage in the social relations of production, what role they play in the power bloc and their specific forms of integration into the global capitalism. The analysis is based on the philosophy of internal relations which included an examination of social relations of production and shifting patterns of state capital relations. Following the model provided by Gramsci and Poulantzas, this study argued that the state is an arena of political and economic class struggle, and there are different competing groups within the state structure. In this regard, the foreign policy of the RP is explained in close connection with the dialectical relationship between internal and external factors. Contrary to mainstream approaches, this study additionally argued that the interactions between political Islam in Turkey and fractions of capital as reflected within the state apparatuses in the post-transition to neoliberalism era in the 1980s have also influenced the foreign policy approach of the RP.

In line with these structural and constitutional changes, the state's financial and executive institutions have provided an encouraging and promising environment for the capitalist classes in Turkey, in particular for the RP-affiliated fraction of Turkish capital. This study argued that the rise of the MUSIAD and the process of internationalisation of their capital could be analysed in terms of their symbiotic relationship with the RP. This has also demonstrated that the RP government provided financial assistance, namely export credits to the capitalist classes – in particular to the so-called Islamist fraction of Turkish capital – in order to create its hegemony over the society and the economy as a whole. This brings us to the point that the analysis of the RP cannot be separated from class and power relations.

Having presented various theoretical approaches to analyse the foreign policy of the RP, and the role of the state in this period, this study outlined the historical journey of the RP in the Turkish social formation. Despite its short term in office, the RP's foreign policy approach was unique due to its heavy references to the ancient Islamic Civilization and the Ottoman heritage in its discourse when it was in the opposition. There was an initial promise by the RP to improve its relations with the Muslim countries in the ME rather than the historical alliances of the Turkish state (which are the USA and the EU members). In accordance with this policy, the RP proposed to establish alternative institutions to “the western hegemonic institutions”, such as a political organisation like the UN, which would

represents all Muslim countries, an economic organization among Muslim countries like the IMF and the WTO, which would regulate the currencies of the Muslim countries and trade relations among them, a security organisation like the NATO, which would supposedly protect Muslim countries from the “Zionist” Israel and the West, and a cultural organisation like the UNESCO, which would protect Islamic values against the threat of Zionism. The study argued that the RP proposed these principles to achieve its ultimate objective, which was to transform Turkey into the leading country in the ME region and the broader Muslim world.

This study further demonstrated that, despite its anti-imperialist discourse, the RP was not a political party against the imperialist and capitalist world system. This study emphasised that the tone of the RP government changed when it came to power in 1996. For instance, its policies towards the Customs Union with the EU, its relations with Israel, and Operation Provide Comfort II in Northern Iraq are the most criticised areas of the RP’s foreign policy. Accordingly, the study argued that the material basis of the RP’s foreign policy remained within the foreign policy consensus which characterized the Turkish state’s foreign policy before 1996. To conclude, contrary to mainstream approaches, this study examined the RP’s foreign policy approach in accordance with the internal and external factors which shaped the manoeuvres and actions of the RP. It concludes that social relations of production, the relations at the state level, and the foreign policy of the RP are in a dialectical relationship. Drawing extensively on the philosophy of internal relations and relational approach to the state, this study analysed how the RP’s foreign policy and internal class relations within Turkey were intimately connected.

Notes

1. TUSIAD was established on 2 April 1971 through a protocol signed by the largest companies in Turkey, which had plants elsewhere in the international market, and thus represented the transnational fraction of Turkish capital which engaged in trading industrial goods, including companies whose activities in industry ranged from metallurgy to steel. Today, it represents around 4000 business companies which account for approximately 50% of the value added in Turkey; 80% of Turkey’s total foreign trade; more than 50% of the non-agricultural, non-governmental workforce; and 80% of corporate tax revenue (TUSIAD, 2017).
2. *Tariqat/Tariqa/Tariqah* means “cult” in English and refers to a school of thought or religious order directed by a particular leader and/or shaped by a certain Islamic perspective/interpretation.

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