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**Foreign Policy Perspective and its reflection on a city: the case of Antakya**

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**Dış Politika Yaklaşımı ve bir şehre yansımaları: Hatay Örneği**

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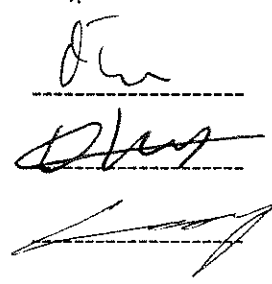
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## **Abstract**

This thesis is based on an ethnographic analysis of the influence of the Syrian policy of the Turkish government and the resulting impact Syrians have had on Hatay following the turmoil in Syria and their subsequent arrival in Turkey. The research question I try to answer is: How has the daily life of Hatay residents been affected by the JDP government's Syrian policy and the influx of Syrian guests into the region after the eruption of the conflict in Syria? Taking into consideration the multicultural characteristics of the Hatay population and the non-racist inclination in the region, I try to understand three important issues: How the locals of Hatay perceive and approach Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria; the nature and outcome of Turkey's policy towards Syria; how Syrians influence the daily life of Hatay; and whether the foreign and domestic policies of Turkey differ when the approaches of JDP to these policies are considered. Foreign policy is shaped at the national level but its reflection at the local level varies. In the Hatay case, due to the fact that Hatay is a multicultural region, it is more receptive to provocations than other, neighboring cities. Based on the fear felt in the region, the Syrians have been perceived as a threat to the peace in the region. Throughout the thesis the attempt is made to demonstrate the attitude taken by Hatay residents toward Syrians, and their fear of Syrian threat to their peaceful balance - leading them not to embrace Syrians but rather to keep a suspicious distance with them.

## Özet

Bu tez Türkiye'nin Suriye politikasının ve buna istinaden Suriye'deki iç karışıklık neticesinde Hatay bölgesine yerleşmiş Suriyeli sığınmacıların Hatay üzerindeki etkisini inceleyen etnoğrafik bir çalışmadır. Tezi oluşturan araştırma sorusu: Ak Parti hükümeti'nin Suriye politikası ve Suriye'deki iç karışıklık neticesinde Hatay bölgesinde yaşamaya başlayan Suriyeli misafirler Hatay halkının günlük hayatını hangi açılardan ve nasıl etkilemiştir? Özellikle Hatay'ın çok kültürlü bölge karakteristiğine ve bölgenin ırkçılık yaklaşımına olan mesafeli yaklaşımına değinerek tezde üç soruya odaklanılıyor: Hatay halkı Türkiye'nin Suriye'ye karşı olan dış politikasını nasıl algulamakta ve konuya nasıl yaklaşmaktadır? Türkiye'nin Suriye politikası ve bunun neticesinde bölgede yerleşmiş olan Suriyelilerin Hatay'ın günlük yaşamına etkisi nedir? Akparti hükümetinin politik yaklaşımları gözönüne alındığında Türkiye'nin iç ve dış politikasının farklı olduğunu söyleyebilir miyiz? Dış politika ulusal düzlemde oluşturulur fakat yerelde politikanın yansımaları farklılık gösterebilir. Hatay örneği de çok kültürlü olması sebebiyle bölgedeki diğer şehirlere oranla provokasyona daha açık bir yerleşim yeridir. Bu sebeple halk arasında sürekli artan olası kargaşa korkusu Suriyelileri de bölge barışına bir tehdit olarak algılamaya itti. Tez boyunca Hatay halkının Suriyelilere olan yaklaşımı ve barışı kaybetme korkusu yansıtılmaya çalışılmış ve bu duruşun halkı Suriyelilerle aralarına mesafe koymaya ittiğine değinilmiştir.

## **Abbreviations**

EU- European Union

FSA- Free Syrian Army

JDP- Justice and Development Party

NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCSROF- National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

RPP- Republican People's Party

SNC- Syrian National Council

TFP- Turkish Foreign Policy

TÜSİAD- Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association

IHH- The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief

UK- United Kingdom

UN- United Nations

US- United States of America

USSR- The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the distinctions between foreign and domestic policies have been undergoing scrutiny. The decision-making strategies states use when engaging in international politics and the central-role of the state in decision-making have also been of central importance. As state have begun to be less immune to criticism with regard to the decisions they make, the focus of criticism has shifted to the decision-making process itself. Unlike the traditional approach, newly appearing analyses have started to target the decision-maker, the dynamics of the environment and rationality behind the decision (Smith 1986). Also contrary to the traditional understanding of foreign policy is the notion that foreign policy may not be autonomous from the domestic policies of a state. Moreover, it has also been suggested that the decision-making process and the decision-making actors might be subjective, varying according to the conditions and dynamics of state politics and to the character and even to the threat perception of the actors (Lobell 2009, pp. 55-57).

Turkish foreign policy over the last decade has undergone a significant transformation. Turkey was founded by the military elites of the Ottoman Empire in accordance with the European nation-state model. Therefore, since the establishment of the state, Westernization has always been the aim of the modern state. Thus, in accordance with the path of the state, Turkish foreign policy has also been based on a Westernization principle. The other main principle of Turkey when shaping the foreign policy has been to be the supporter of the 'status quo,' the sole claim of which is that

Turkey desires peace (Cleveland 2008, pp. 184-5). The change in the Turkish foreign policy began during the Turgut Özal period and has continued with a pro-active policy with the neighboring states, especially under İsmail Cem as foreign minister (Oran 2013, p. 140). However, during the JDP period, the government has adopted a pro-active and multi-dimensional foreign policy that not only targets the Western and ally states but also, especially, the states that exist on former Ottoman territory, referring to geo-cultural and geo-structural unity (Davutoğlu 2012, pp. 551-563). The revision made to Turkish foreign policy is based on a new identity, whereby the Turkish state is seen as belonging to the West and to Islamic civilization. By this way, it is aimed to regenerate the passivized relations with the Islamic states (Adak& Turan, 2014, p. 38).

The foreign policy structure shaped by Davutoğlu emphasized the use of strategic risks, approaching them as opportunities. Through a proactive and multi-dimensional foreign policy Davutoğlu aims to make Turkey a central state in the region, which will enable Turkey to become a significant global political player with important roles in international organizations and influence in global political issues (Davutoğlu 2012, pp. 551-563). The JDP has forged an identity for itself in Turkish society as a conservative democratic institution, and has accordingly adopted a series of reforms within the EU accession process. In the second political period, the aim of the JDP has been to make Turkey a central player in the region. Turkey's humanitarian soft power involvement and mediator role attempts have shaped the foreign policy framework of the JDP in this period. Following the spread of the Arab Spring into Syria, a new security concept has appeared for Turkey: Syrian conflict. Thus, Syria became a domestic concern for Turkey in March 2011 (Öktem, Kadioğlu 2012).

Turkey and Syria have had less-than-positive relations since the formation of the two states because of the Sanjak issue (Hatay was called the Sanjak of Alexandretta until was included within Turkish borders) (Oran 2013, p. 157). However, the rapprochement during the JDP period had brought Turkey and Syria so close that the two countries began engaging in cultural and economic cooperation and even lifted the visa requirement between two states (Abou-El-Fadl 2012). Relations between the two states soured in March 2011 when the Arab Spring spread to Syria. With the risk-opportunity approach of Davutoğlu, Turkey has perceived Syrian conflict as a opportunity to gain a Central State role in the region. Turkey once again adopted the mediator role and subsequently met several times with the regime. Turkey then started to take part in international formations to support the Syrian society against the Baas rule. At the same time, Turkey began welcoming Syrian citizens to Turkey through its 'open-door policy,' which has created tension in Turkish society (Çelikkol 2015). The tension within the Turkish society is the result of a number of issues. The significance of the target region of my thesis-Hatay is based on its multi-ethnic identity and its close distance to Syria in addition to the language benefit for Syrians where Arabic is quite a wide-spread used language (Erdoğan 2015)

In this thesis, it will be analyzed if the domestic and foreign policies of Turkey independent from each other with regard to the behavior of the Turkish state in domestic and international arenas. Moreover, focusing on this political behavior, the foreign policy of JDP and the influence of Syriance over Hatay society will be analyzed.

## **1.1 An Ethnographical Approach to Antakya**

In Hatay, I studied the influence of the Turkey's Syrian policy and its result - the impact on the city life of Hatay of Syrians that have migrated there – by analyzing the social behavior of the Hatay locals. Since the 2011 election, the JDP has forged a foreign policy that is increasingly Sunni-Muslim oriented. I tried to analyze the relationship between the foreign and domestic policies by examining the political behavior of the JDP. The key question I have tried to answer is whether the JDP's foreign policy was created to strengthen its domestic political stance. Thus, through the interviews I conducted in Hatay, I attempted to obtain an overall picture of how each component of JDP policies has led to exaggerated perceptions there of the policies.

Hatay, which is located in the south of Turkey, has the greatest number of border gates with Syria in Turkey - Reyhanlı, Yayladağ and Altınözü (which is not active now). Hatay is a multicultural and multi-ethnic city. As a result of its historical background and its position on the border, the residents of Hatay have dual identities, which include Sunni and Alawi Muslim Turks, Sunni and Alawi Arabs, Christian Arabs, Armenians, Jews, and Sunni and Alawi Kurds. In addition to its geopolitical position and multi-religious and multi-ethnic diversity, Hatay has tight familial relations with Syria. Therefore, in light of Turkey's Syrian policy, it can be argued that Hatay is genuinely one of the most critical cities, being exposed as it is to religious and ethnic turmoil from the other side of the border.

I have chosen the Syrian policy and its influence on Hatay because of personal interest. My hometown is close to Hatay, so I had the opportunity to become familiar with Hatay every summer since childhood. However, I was there only temporarily, and

resided mostly with non-locals. So I really could not get a handle on its culture and I was left unfamiliar and curious about it. I was outsider, not being able to speak Arabic, which is used in daily life. Moreover, as part of my job with the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, I had the opportunity to visit Syria many times, which made me even more interested in the subject. Therefore, my distant familiarity, as both an insider and outsider, has allowed me to see the potential richness of the data available there, which led me to choose to focus on this issue.

My primary purpose in this field research was to obtain a snapshot of the emotions and reactions of Hatay society towards the present demographical change in the city. In order to take that snapshot, I conducted personal interviews and scanned the archives of various local newspapers. I attempted to collect sound evidence from the social life of Hatay in order to assess the local citizens' perception of threat perception and attitude towards Turkey's Syrian policy and the Syrians in the city. The questions I tried to answer in the research are as follows:

- How do the locals of Hatay perceive and approach Turkey's foreign policy?
- How does Turkey's Syrian policy and its outcome, as well as the Syrians themselves, affect the daily life of Hatay?

My initial step was to start living in Arsuz-Hatay among my target group to be able to understand the emotions they experience and the reactions they have to the Syrian population that has migrated to the city. I spent my time in Antakya, İskenderun and Arsuz, not concealing my identity, from July till October 2014. Throughout the research,

I stressed that I was an MA student in International Relations working on my thesis. Moreover, I emphasized that I also was from the region-from Gaziantep, which made it easier to gain the trust of the interviewees.

My next step was to find a 'Key Informant' who would provide me access to the locals of Hatay. The editor of a local newspaper in Antakya helped me a great deal to reach the locals. Moreover, his local reputation and his existence in almost half of the interviews made the conversations less stressful, eliminating the fear of 'freedom of speech' that most of the residents have. In the interviews, he introduced me as a trustworthy person - 'a girl from our region,' thus building a reliable relation. Presenting my identity helped substantially in strengthening my 'Participant Observer' position when accessing the interviewees, most of whom are quite afraid of expressing their thoughts. The fear was basically because of being 'the other.' What I observed in Hatay regarding this significant fear was that interviewees, either being Christian or Alawi, or even being Sunni but against the leading party, were afraid to be heard talking behind the policy of the leading party. They were willing to talk, they had many things to say but until an absolute trust has been built, they preferred not to talk. For example, the residents of an Alawi village refused to talk to me about the Syrians and the Syrian policy of the government even though I approached them with a 'Key Informant'- a resident from that village. Due to the widespread suspicion within the society, the interviews were done after close contact was created with the interviewees. In order to have a different perspective, additional interviews were done in Gaziantep, Nizip and Kilis.

In Hatay, I conducted 17 field interviews in the form of an in-depth interview. My target group covered a diverse mix of people from different ethno-religious and

educational backgrounds. Therefore, throughout the interviews, I directed semi-structured open-ended questions to be able to access their inner feelings about the subject. I paid special attention to create a chat environment with the interviewees to let them relax and express their personal thoughts. (Neuman 2003,p. 391). The only pre-determined structure in the interviews was the inclusion of the three-type field interview questions, which were; descriptive, structural and contrast questions. However, answers to the questions asked were not always obtained. Some of the questions had to be repeated in order to get the interviewee's specific opinion on that issue. With 'Descriptive Questions,' I aimed to get an idea about how the locals thought, which helped me formulate my questions, shaping them on the basis of that person's inclination. This included, for example, avoiding to talk about his/her identity, asking the questions within a different framework, or if the interviewee avoids criticizing policy, just trying to see how he or she feels about the current influence Syrians are having. That is why after several interviews, I came up with the realization that the only way I could reach the genuine ideas of the interviewees was opening the dialogue with the question, 'how will the Syrians be able to adapt to the city?' This was a common topic that every single local was willing to talk about. What I wanted to get through 'Structural Questions' was responses to specific events such as 'the explosion in Reyhanlı,'<sup>1</sup>'the Antakya protests against the war,' and 'the Syrian trying to kill the engineer Mahmut Akçil'<sup>2</sup> (Antakya Gazetesi, 5 May 2014) in order to get at their pure emotions and reactions. In addition, with 'contrast questions,' I tried to assess the answers of the interviewees analyzing the

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<sup>1</sup> **Reyhanlı bombings** is the incident involving the bombing of two cars that happened on May 11th 2013, which resulted in nearly 50 fatalities and over 130 injuries. Reyhanlı is located on the Syrian border of Hatay

<sup>2</sup> **Mahmut Akçil** is an engineer living in Antakya. He was attacked with the intent to kill by his Syrian employee and suffered serious injuries to his neck.

similarities and differences between their reactions, trying to understand, for instance, if their reaction was the same to both a Sunni Syrian and an Alawi Syrian, or how they approach the Afghans in Ovakent.<sup>3</sup>

I did not use a survey with my target group to analyze my subject because I realized that without personal interaction based on trust, it would be impossible to obtain the real thoughts of my interviewees. Personal experience has shown me how reactive they have been to both refugees and foreigners (the same applies to intelligence services or NGOs) in the city. Moreover, I also know that they avoid expressing their ideas initially. Therefore, in order to get the most subjective emotions and reactions, I preferred to conduct in-depth interviews instead of a survey.

In order to assess the reliability of the oral data, I used 'contrast questions' and tried to evaluate the reactions of the persons to my 'structural questions.' Moreover, I assessed the occupational and societal position in a specific community. In two instances I encountered intentionally misleading answers, both given to avoid revealing personal opinions. What was common about these two persons was that both had official positions, which led them to be neutral. However, in the proceeding dialogue, after I turned off the recording machine, both shared their inner feelings about the issues, understanding they would not be used in my thesis. Therefore, knowing that the dialogue is based on the subjective perspective of that person based on personal experiences of fear or anxiety, I assessed the reliability of the answer. What I could do at a minimum to attain as objective a picture of Hatay as possible was to choose my target interviewee group so that it would include different segments of the society with respect to their

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<sup>3</sup> **Ovakent** is an Afghan district in Hatay that was established in 1982 for the immigrants escaping from the war between Afghanistan and Soviet Union.

education, ethno-religious backgrounds and political inclinations.

In order to prevent ‘ethical dilemmas,’ I made an extra effort to be as open as possible to the interviewees about my identity and assured them that the shared information would be used only if I had their permission. Therefore, with the persons with whom I did several interviews and conversations, I used only data to which consent was given. Moreover, I paid special attention to using the recording only if they agreed. I assured them that the names of the interviewees would be changed in my thesis and anonymous ones would be used instead. To be able to be unbiased, I tried to reach people from different segments of the Hatay society, such as people having different identities - Sunni, Alawi, young, middle age, old, women, men, low income, middle income, from the private and public sectors and several different ethnic identities. This maximized the validity of my study.

This research attempted to determine the cultural, economic and psychological impact of Turkey’s Syrian policy – and the accommodation of Syrians in Turkey, one of its outcomes, on Hatay.

## **1.2 Content of the Chapters**

The thesis contains four chapters. The first chapter consists of an overview of the significance of the Syrian turmoil from the Turkish perspective, emphasizing the impact of Turkish foreign policy and the ethnographic diversity of Antakya. Also addressed is the foreign and domestic policies of the JDP. The second chapter explains Turkey’s foreign policy before and since the JDP. It follows with a discussion of the facts and the historical background of Hatay during the period included. The third chapter analyzes the

conducted interviews with reference to the personal stories of the real people. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the research analysis trying to assess the influence of 'the foreign policy of Turkey towards Syria- and its outcome Syrians' on Antakya. Moreover, it examines if there is distinction between the foreign and domestic policies of Turkey and if it is valid to say that the JDP government has a Turkish foreign policy that is independent from its domestic politics.

## CHAPTER II

### TRANSFORMATION OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

#### **2.1 Foreign Policy and Domestic Policy Distinction Revisited**

International relations theories have always included foreign policy analyses. However, their approaches assumed the state to be the 'central actor.' The focus of foreign policy critiques in international relations theories was not processes or other probable actors, but results. Thus, theories tried to improve results, but excluded solutions in light of the decision-making process or the foreign policy behavior of states. Over the past few decades, the state-centered approach of international relations theory began to be criticized, as the new actors were added to analyses (Smith 1986).

Traditionally, the state was seen as the main actor in the international system, which existed in an anarchic environment. States were sovereign and had the right to control over their territory and the people living within its boundaries. Anarchy was the absence of an international body to regulate international activities. Thus, under this condition, according to traditional international system, states were the actors that would provide security for the territory and the people living on it in order to be able to maintain the interests and the independence of the state. Accordingly, the traditional approach to the international system used the concept of power politics. It was the tool used to pursue 'foreign policy objectives' and 'self-preservation' (Rothgeb 1995, p. 35).

Thus, international system and foreign policy studies have naturally focused on a comparative analysis of the military capabilities of states. They saw military capability as the ultimate strength and its use as a way of acquiring bargaining power. States are

characterized as weak or strong by virtue of the hard power they have. Military power used to be considered superior to any other power because the priority for states was their sovereignty and possession of bargaining power to exercise when faced with risks appearing in the anarchic environment. Moreover, in addition to being superior, some scholars believed that other characteristics of states such as population, geographical position, natural resources, and economic capability were there to contribute to military power (Rothgeb 1995 p. 35). Therefore, even the attempts of states in the post- World War II era to setup cooperation among states were based on their military concerns with regard to “military security” and “strategic balances” of the states (Neack& Hey 1995, p. 5).

The study of foreign policy has undergone changes that parallel the political and social transformations in countries during all eras of world politics. Military power has been very important throughout history. The destructiveness of World War II led the states to be more inclined to see military as the most crucial power leading to peace (Neack& Hey 1995, p.5). For human beings, survival is the basis of all struggles. Thus, following the war, the priority of states was military security. This was followed by the wellbeing of the economy and the population, both of which contribute to the continuance of the ultimate security- military power.

In the post-World War II era, the world has witnessed the rise of two non-military states: Japan and Germany. Moreover, the Soviet Union has collapsed, Eastern Europe has been liberalized, European Community unification has been achieved, and newly developing industrial states in the Pacific have found a place in the international system (Rothgeb 1995, p. 35). These political changes all have influenced the minds of the

societies and the study of global politics. As international politics and foreign policy studies are shaped by global political changes, the post-war period led to the rise of the idea that wars are dysfunctional and military strength is no longer applicable in international system. On the other hand, realists maintained that the structure of international politics was still anarchical. Therefore, they continued to take the position that military power is crucial for states to strengthen their commercial power. Moreover, the influence of the theorists arguing that military power provides security guaranteeing the existence of the state and the flow of trade between states has remained strong (Rothgeb 1995, pp. 35-6).

Thus, the traditional approach's narrow focus on the nation-state has expanded from an emphasis on military hard power issues to a concern with more general security issues. Unlike the case in traditional international relations theories, non-military issues such as drug trafficking or health issues involving states are now being considered as political issues. The most important of these concerns for the new approach is economics (Rothgeb 1995, pp. 35-6).

Prior to World War II, conflicts between states mostly arose over the protection of territory or the control of natural resources (Jervis 1968, p. 168). These conflicts would lead to war when diplomacy failed. In the post-World War II era, domestic and international economics required international cooperation in the aftermath of the devastation and the political instability brought about by the war. The new role of states was to provide welfare for their societies. Improving economic capacity has become a priority for the improvement of the welfare of citizens. The economic interdependence within states has created interstate dependency. The latter conflicts have not disappeared

but military threats have been transformed into economic threats between states. This interdependence has created an equilibrium through which the states threaten each other, not militarily, but through economic instruments, in order to directly influence the economic power of the other state (Rothgeb 1995, pp. 37-8).

However, even if the role of the wars and military power of states have gradually become less a priority, war and military actions have not completely disappeared in the new international order. As power-seeking and resource-controlling concerns have continued to be priorities of the national interests of states, developed Western states still use the threat of the use of military power when economic threats do not work. The US intervention in Iraq to provide regional stability in Middle East and the US intervention in Afghanistan to fight against terrorism and the first Gulf War are all the instances where the national interests of the US required the initiation of wars (Halperin & Clapp 2006, p. 12).

When providing access to the international political system and having successful coalitions, the influential factors include also the domestic structure of the states: the “nature of the political institutions, state-society relations and the values and norms embedded in its political culture” (Kappen 1994, p. 187). Thus, the factors influencing the foreign policy of a state cannot be analyzed without looking at disregarding the domestic dynamics of the state.

The assessment of opportunities and threats shapes the foreign policies of states. The decision-makers and the political elites of states make this assessment. According to neoclassical realism, the analysis of these opportunities and threats is not very objective, but rather, is influenced by the domestic factors of states. Neoclassical realism does not

disregard the political struggle among states with regard to the scarce resources and anarchy based on the lack of an international sovereign government. Moreover, the relative material power distributions between states and the domestic parameters and the perception of decision-makers determine the international behavior of states (Taliaferro et al. 2009, pp. 1-5).

States are at the junction between domestic and international politics. The focus of decision-makers and political elites is mainly the balance of power in the international and domestic order. In general, powerful states are threatened by shifts in power within the international or domestic order, while regionally powerful states are vulnerable to changes in regional order. International and regional shifts are based on a change in the balance of power among states. However, intra-state shifts in power can emerge when there is domestic competition for the position of head of state. In states with subnational groups or identities, the representative societal groups or leaders place greater priority on domestic threats than on international ones since their main aim is survival. Thus, in such states, the leading societal group lobbies the government in order to strengthen its position at the expense of the interests of the opposing groups or the nation (Lobell 2009, pp. 42-51). Therefore, threat perception for these states with different sub-identities varies from more homogeneous nation-states for each of these have different priorities regarding threat perceptions.

States might form differing foreign policy behaviors based on different threat perceptions. Foreign policy actors (the head politician or the leading party) can structure a hardline foreign policy on the basis of an inter-state conflict in order to manipulate the domestic audience. By building solidarity around flag politics, a state-over-society

dynamic might be created, thereby strengthening the position of the government. Another means through which foreign policy actors strengthen their political position is to manipulate the domestic actors in another state. The long-term advantage of this approach is to enable the manipulating state to acquire close contact with the political and economic organizations of the state being manipulated. Finally, foreign policy actor might act globally to gain the support of super powers that will then provide support against the regional competitors in return (Lobell 2009, pp. 51-53). Thus, foreign policy actors might direct the threat onto another target, pursuing a non-perceived threat for their political maintenance.

Because foreign policy actors are located at the nexus between foreign and domestic political systems, they can use international causes for domestic causes and vice versa. Foreign policy actors make foreign policy decisions to benefit the nation and the state. However, political and societal compromise, societal support of the leading decision-makers, strength of the managerial position and political capability of the political party are all factors influencing the actors' perception of security issues. Their assessment and perceptions shape the threat framework of states. State leaders - foreign policy actors - are the "sole authoritative foreign policymaker" being able to reach all the data for this assessment. Thus, they have monopoly over the assessment of threats toward states (Lobell 2009, pp. 55-57).

Hermann classifies the ultimate decision units as: Predominant Leader, Single Group and Multiple Autonomous Actors. The Predominant Leader has the ultimate decision-making power. The Single Group is the decision-making team having the ultimate power and decision-making power to create compliance within the group.

Multiple Autonomous Actors are the people having no lone ability to decide but who are the parts of collective decision parties. In order to analyze the foreign policy decision-making process of a state, the focus has to be on the decision unit. The characteristic of the decision unit reveals the objectivity, decision patterns and the dynamics of the deciding environment of the foreign policy process (Hermann & Hermann 1989, pp. 363-4).

In addition to these, poststructuralist theory has questioned the so-called distinction between foreign and domestic policies, arguing that the foreign policy of a state is very much attached to its internal politics. Poststructuralist theory stresses that the concept of 'foreign policy' provides the main basis for the discrepancy. Therefore, it can be claimed that this distinction between foreign and domestic Policies is based on the presupposition of the existence of a concept called Foreign Policy. The existential acceptance of foreign policy legitimizes the segregation giving state the opportunity to control policies (Balçı 2011, p. 29).

Illustrating the poststructuralist view, Ali Balçı aims to 'deconstruct' the distinction between foreign and domestic policies. When doing so, he refers to the myth of sovereignty, which has been taken as the basis for the distinction between Foreign and Domestic Policies. Ali Balçı argues that sovereignty is a tool that is used by states as a source of authority. Therefore, sovereignty is an absolute that states must protect without question. He maintains that sovereignty is a myth that is created by the discourses of leaders and developed by media and has been used by statesmen in order to control the absolute authority of the states. Sovereignty is the golden value, which needs to be protected by protective policies. Statesmen of nation states use the ultimate power of

'sovereignty discourse' on foreign policy issues in order to exert it essentially on their own society. Therefore, Ali Balcı proposes the concept of 'policy' instead of the so-called created 'foreign policy' and states that policy keeps 'power relations' in check. With this argument, it is claimed that 'foreign policy is the result of sovereignty.' In relation to that, foreign policy is the tool used by states in order to control the domestic 'power relations' in sovereign nation states (Balcı 2011, p. 29).

Referring to the current government and the current political picture, the correlation between Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria and the JDP's domestic policy is also an instance of this argument. When the JDP government determined the 'central state' role in the Middle East, by nature, unlike with previous policies, Turkey adopted a pro-active approach. This has required the state to embrace the roles of 'mediator' and 'democracy promoter' simultaneously. Turkey's role as democracy promoter, especially in supporting the opposition in Syria, has resulted in a loss of its reputation, both domestically and internationally. In turn, the JDP government, primarily to revise its power domestically, decided to consolidate its conservative base. To achieve that, the JDP began referring to its essential Sunni identity, which had not been emphasized before due to the liberal secular image of the party. In relation to the Sunni-oriented domestic approach, the JDP government embraced the Sunni discourse in international policy likewise in order to intensify its Islamist Sunni-oriented policy. Therefore, today in Turkey, International Relations and Domestic Politics work as a complementary couple, both of which support each other.

## **2.2 Turkish Foreign Policy until the JDP Era**

The national gains of the Turkish independence war - sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity- had been concretized with the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. However, the newly founded state was fragile against threats. Based on the experience coming from the Ottoman period that being a non-Western has had negative consequences (military security), Turkey has adopted a Western oriented foreign policy (Bilgin 2009, pp. 113-4). For that reason, it had been frequently emphasized by Atatürk that the independence movement was not against the Western ideals but against the Western imperialism. Since the initial step of the independence movement, Westernization has always been chosen as the path for the aimed modern state. Thus, in accordance with the path of the state, Turkish foreign policy has also been based on a Westernization principle. According to Westernization understanding of newly founded Turkey, the way to be a sovereign state not being under the control of imperialist states was to be a state among Western states having Western type of governance and Western life prototypes (Sander 2006, pp. 74-9).

In the post-Cold War era, this Western oriented approach has transformed into a need based on security concerns taking part in the collective security organization- NATO. With the 1980 military coup, the Western institutions have distanced themselves from Turkey. In this period, being distanced from Europe, Turkey has improved relations with the East. Following the coup, Turkey for the first time has been represented in the Organization of the Islamic Conference at the presidential level by Kenan Evren. The latter leader- Turgut Özal has made an attempt to improve the relations with the West by the involvement of Turkey in the 1990-1991 Gulf War (Yanık 2011).

In addition to Western oriented approach, the other main principle of Turkey when shaping the foreign policy has been to be the supporter of the 'status quo,' the sole claim of which is that Turkey desires peace (Cleveland 2008, pp. 184-5). The change in the Turkish foreign policy began during the Turgut Özal period as mentioned before and has continued with a pro-active policy with the neighboring states, especially under İsmail Cem as foreign minister (Oran 2013, p. 140). This pro-active and multi-dimensional foreign policy approach has been continued and developed by JDP starting from the year 2002.

### **2.3 Islamist Ideology in Turkey**

When the Turkish republic was founded, Islam was included as a part of Turkish identity in the newly instituted state. The control and monitoring of Islam was placed under the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which has restricted religious functions and disconnected the Islamic community of Turkey from the rest of the Islamic states. This enabled the state to prevent the rise of a political Islam, which was perceived as a threat to the secular republic. Thus, the Turkish republic has kept Islam, especially sharia law, out of the social, economic, political and legal order, particularly state institutions. Under conditions where the role of Islam has been restricted, Turkish Islamists have expressed their political demands under the cloak of nationalist ideology (Çınar & Duran, pp. 17-26).

Secularism in Turkey not only "disestablished Islam," but also created a legitimate Islam in accordance with state values, thereby distancing it from the political order. Because Turkish Islam has never been able to find expression in sharia, it has been

forced to be articulated through nationalist ideology, which has prevented the establishment of a bond between Turkish Islam and the rest of the Muslim world. This inclination is also rooted in the claim of Arab betrayal during the First World War<sup>4</sup> (Çınar & Duran, pp. 21-23).

The Islamist movement in Turkey is quite diverse and fragmented. Thus, it has never had a unified structure or common ideology. The sole common aim of all of the Islamist groups is the “reappraisal of Islam” (Gole 2006, p. 6). Politically, Islamic ideology in Turkey has varied in the way it has been expressed while working towards the common aim. The priorities of the Islamist parties have varied with the ideological perspective of their leaders and the changing social developments in Turkey. The first of the National Outlook parties, the National Order Party, prioritized order, while the National Salvation Party focused on spiritual life and the Welfare Party stressed economic development as party priorities. Political Islamist parties can be classified into two periods: the classical national outlook and the revisionist periods. Parties during the classical period focused on an ideal spiritual civilizational development opposing the West and cared about preserving national characteristics and tradition. In contrast, parties during the revisionist period made integration into the global capitalism their priority and were intent on carrying out a similar National Outlook discourse (Yıldız, pp. 41-50).

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<sup>4</sup> Arab betrayal -The Arab Revolt began on June 10, 1916, when Sharif Husayn’s tribal forces attacked the Ottoman garrison at Mecca. The Arab Revolt did not constitute a popular uprising among the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire. However, Turkish society believed that Arabs betrayed them by the Arab Revolt (Cleveland 2009, p. 157).

## 2.4 The Economic Picture of Turkey in the 2000s

Turkey welcomed the 2000s with an ongoing economic crisis. The continuing economic and political crises of the 1990s reached their climax in February 2001, when a conflict erupted between President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit at a National Security Council (MGK) meeting, where Ecevit threw a booklet containing the constitution booklet at Sezer (*Hürriyet*, 2001).<sup>5</sup> The governments from the unstable 1990s till the JDP era were coalition governments that implemented loose monetary and fiscal policies as part of their economic programs, all of which did nothing but worsen the economic chaos in Turkey. In 2000, an agreement was signed with the IMF to carry out economic program for the Turkish economy. This program was an economic stability program based on currency pegs and required the implementation of determined structural reforms in the economic system of Turkey (Oran 2013, p. 52). In period following the conflict between Sezer and Ecevit, it became obvious that the program would work because of the lack of stability at the political level, which led to a serious collapse of the Turkish economy beginning February 21<sup>st</sup> 2001 (Alper & Öniş, pp.5-26).

The collapse of the economy led to a devaluation in the Turkish Lira, which fueled the already high inflation rate. As a result of the high inflation, the markets became locked into crisis, with per night interests reaching extremely high levels. Moreover, numerous banks became bankrupted because of the deceleration of the value of their stocks and shares. The sudden quake in foreign currency, money and financial markets had a negative impact on investors. In addition, the economy seriously

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<sup>5</sup> For more information: 'Crisis suffers complications, surgery necessary', *Hürriyet Daily News* 21 February, Available from: <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com>>. [21 February 2001].

contracted, experiencing a 4.7% drop in GDP. As a solution for the sudden collapse in the economy, the coalition government adopted structural reforms under the leadership of Kemal Derviş as Minister of Finance, who had previously been deputy president of the World Bank. With these reforms and the stability program, the Turkish economy got on more stable footing economically in the 2000s, which has made it easier economically for the JDP government (Oran 2013, pp. 53-5).

## **2.5 The Factors Leading Turkey to Embrace the JDP**

Throughout its political history, there have been several cases in Turkey of Islamist parties being closed, due to the perceived threat of their Islamist identities. The last instance of this came with the 28<sup>th</sup> February<sup>6</sup> process and the failure of the Welfare Party. The newly established JDP has since changed the traditional strategies, visions and discourses of National Outlook ideology. The JDP initiated an approach through which they have embraced democracy and freedom while inculcating Islamist values in society. Although most of the members of the party included people with ex-Islamist backgrounds, they emphasized that they rejected the label of 'Islamist' when defining the party (Çınar & Duran, pp. 30-1).

The electoral victory of the JDP cannot be explained solely by the need of the society for a new party. The JDP's success has been based on its extensive penetration in the society, from the 'urban poor' to the 'Anatolian tigers, entrepreneurs from Anatolia, because of the ability of its discourse to touch different segments of the society. The common denominator has been the 'conservative democracy' approach of the party.

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<sup>6</sup> 28 February- Post-modern coup ending up with the resignation of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and his coalition government.

Unlike the previous Islamist parties, the JDP has distanced itself from the Islamist label, embracing instead the conservative label and positioning itself in the center-right of Turkish politics. In this way, the JDP has differentiated itself from the National Outlook ideology in order to enlarge the party base. Moreover, the use of the term ‘conservative’ has served to keep a significant part of the Islamist base of National Outlook as well. The second crucial shift of the JDP has been its adoption of liberal economic policies, which is a crucial departure from National Outlook ideology. The JDP is politically and economically liberal and socially and culturally conservative. Both of these stances are in accordance with Western, especially US, political values and approaches (Yıldız, pp. 41-3).

## **2.6 Turkish Foreign Policy in the JDP Period**

Turkish foreign policy has changed during the JDP era. The structural transformation initiated in the Özal period continued, characterized by a comparatively more active policy vis-à-vis neighboring states, especially during the ministry of İsmail Cem. However, despite the minor reconsiderations of the longstanding Turkish foreign policy orientation, no government has dared to ignore its pillars, for example, the status quo and Westernism. The revision of Turkish foreign policy is based on the establishment of a new identity that is firmly planted in both the West and Islamic civilization. Moreover, in the case of the latter, the passivized relations with the Islamic states by the founders of the Turkish state would be reactivated (Adak & Turan, 2014, p. 38).

Two main characters have shaped foreign policy during the JDP period: Ahmet Davutoğlu and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The structure of Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP)

has been based on the structure that Davutoğlu outlined in his book *Strategic Depth*.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, based on Davutoğlu's principle of strategic instant decision-making, main foreign policy decisions have been made by Erdoğan. On the other hand, because the newly structured TFP of the JDP is a rather a new approach for the Turkish state, instant decisions within active policy cover, Turkey has sometimes been faced with deadlocks.

According to Davutoğlu, Turkey has a deep capacity based on its history, geography, population and culture, which could be turned into real power. This potential power, however, has advantages and risks at the same time. Turkey has to use these advantages while considering the possible risks. The international relations cases within which Turkey exists do not have unidimensional explanations. That is why Turkey has to develop multi-dimensional strategies in order being able to control the risks and the advantages of its natural potential. Frailties of states are at the same time their potential doors opening to power. The states that cannot use these elements maintain their diplomacy with serious fragilities whereas the ones being able to transform these into power sources (Davutoğlu 2012, pp. 551-563).

Davutoğlu argues that Turkey needs to develop a new mindset in international relations, one not based on differentiation but rather on unification. Turkey has to embrace geocultural and geostructural unifications instead of focusing on differences rooted in Asian-European or eastern-western categories. From an economic-political perspective, Turkey is located between North and South, while geo-culturally, it straddles the line where cultural, geographical and political differentiation is occurring. What Davutoğlu claims is that Turkey has to adopt a new strategy to transform the role of Turkey into a unifying state as a tool providing geo-political, geo-economic and geo-

cultural unification in the region. If it does this, Turkey will succeed in becoming a central state having the role of unifier in the region (Davutoğlu 2012, pp. 551-563).

Thus, the foreign policy culture shaped by Davutoğlu focuses on the use of strategic risks, approaching them as opportunities. With a proactive and multi-dimensional foreign policy, Davutoğlu aims to make Turkey a central state in the region, taking a part in global political arena by having important roles in international organizations and political issues, as well as achieving economic success in the global economy (Davutoğlu 2012, pp. 551-563).

Multi-dimensional foreign policy, however, was not introduced into Turkish politics by the JDP. Moreover, playing with balanced policies has always been crucial for Turkey since the formation of the state in the 1920s and 1930s. Turkey has maintained balanced relations with the eastern states of Afghanistan and Iran, on the one hand, and with Great Britain and USSR, on the other hand, not confronting major risk. Moreover, at the end of the 1970s, while Gündüz Ökçün was minister of foreign affairs under the Ecevit government, Turkey has opened embassies in Third World countries and launched foreign aid programs. İsmail Cem, too, worked seriously on pro-active and multi-dimensional foreign policy while he was foreign minister, especially with Greece, which had solid positive results that produced cordial relations between two states (Oran 2013, p. 140).

Three conditions required for a successful policy were absent during İsmail Cem's term in office: a suitable international environment, national opportunities and a feasible strategic path. In the 2000s, the international environment was conducive to Turkey having a pro-active policy and a stable domestic economy. Therefore, this was

not the first time that the JDP had used this approach; it was able to use the suitable conditions available. What was unique about the foreign policy of JDP was the use of soft power. Even though the JDP was the first to use soft power, it was able to exercise it with the help of the contemporary economic and technological opportunities. Popular culture and national and international social media have been used by the party in a very effective and influential way in order to strengthen the marketing of the government in domestic and international arena for the aim of creating a central power (Oran 2013, p. 140).

As previously mentioned, the JDP introduced itself in the political arena by focusing on conservative democracy and liberal economic policies. In order to achieve a democratic improvement, starting from 2002, the JDP adopted a series of reforms within the EU accession process. Therefore, if the political life of the JDP is divided into four periods.

The first period is characterized by a pro-democratic and pro-reformist emphasis by the party. Internationally, the European Union was the most important element for the JDP government. Domestically, the EU element created the environment for the party to make reforms in line with the requirements of EU membership. Therefore, the JDP government's policies in the first phase were shaped by the EU accession process and democratizing reforms (Kadioğlu, pp. 54-5).

In the second period, the JDP was less reformist than it was in the first period. Having acquired the majority of votes in the election, the party has changed the strategy it used to present itself to the public. They had already gained the trust of the majority, which supported the party. Thus, the goal of the party following the 2005 election was to

fortify its political position against potential threats (Kadioğlu, p. 55). For that aim, the government tried to decrease the roles of the army in the political arena. Referring to the restriction of the power of the generals, Hilmi Özkök mentioned that the power of the army had been restricted within the framework of counterterrorism (Ahmad 2014, pp. 199-201).

The second period allowed Turkey to play a key central state role in global political issues. Turkey's humanitarian soft power involvement shaped the foreign policy frame of the JDP during this period. The civil humanitarian aid to Gaza, and humanitarian involvement in Afghanistan and Africa are instances of the exercise of soft power by Turkey (Keyman, p. 27). Likewise, Turkey's consecutive visits to Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia to stop the attack of Israel on Gaza and Erdoğan's sudden criticism of Israeli president Shimon Peres concerning these attacks at the Davos Economic Forum are the examples of Turkey's attempts to take part in global humanitarian issues as a significant player (Ahmad 2014, p. 207).

Following the 2011 elections, the JDP government maintained the reform process, focusing on developing an influential role in regional politics (Kadioğlu, p. 55). As the uprisings and political revolutions spread in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria, Turkey changed its political strategy and went from being a mediator for peace to a significant player. The active international relations approach of the state in the region became an issue of domestic politics for Turkey. With the demilitarization of the state, the perception of Islam and the Kurdish issue, which had been viewed as threats, began to be changed and de-securitized. However, when the Arab Spring appeared, there arose new issues for Turkey to securitize. In particular, Syria became a domestic concern for

Turkey starting in March 2011. Hence, the majoritarian, peaceful discourse of the JDP was transformed in the domestic and international order into one that pursued distinctions between Muslim- non-Muslim and Sunni Muslim- non-Sunni Muslim domains.

What can be understood from the foreign policy stance adopted by the JDP during these three periods is that initially, JDP embraced a conservative democratic orientation, which has been welcomed by the EU. This made the EU the pivotal model for Turkey in the conservative democratic era for domestic and international politics. In the following period, Turkey aimed to be a significant actor by taking a mediator role in several issues in which Turkey has improved its relations in the Middle East, the Balkans, Africa and the Caucasus. While forming these ties, Turkey maintained a relative distance from the West- especially from the EU - and focused on its central political position in its periphery, especially in the Middle East. In the next period, this attention toward the periphery became focused on Muslim states (Erdoğan's personal friendship with the Hamas leader, having warm relations with the Iranian president Ahmedinejad and Erdoğan's defending Omar al Bashir, and the existence of negative Turkish-Israeli relations and distant relations with the EU) (Öktem, Kadioğlu 2012, pp. 4-5).

However, toward the end of the third period and afterwards, the political view of the JDP government took on another frame of reference, emphasizing the distinction between Sunni and non-Sunni Muslim in the creation of political relations. The political behavior of Turkey in the post-Arab Spring period has been based on the natural result of this 'we' and 'other' approach of the government. Likewise, this 'we' and 'other' approach has been felt in domestic politics. Especially since the Gezi Park protests, when

making speeches, the government has begun categorizing society into supporters of the government and those who don't support the government.

## **2.7 The revisionist JDP politics in the domestic and international environment**

The JDP declared its desire to reform the institutional framework to guarantee “human rights, secured rule of law, participatory democracy, secularism and freedom of faith and conscience at international standards” in the 2003 National Program prepared for Turkey’s EU accession (Coşar & Özdemir 2012, p. 163). To democratize the legal citizenship structure of identities in Turkey, they JDP has revised the citizenship law and taken several initiatives. Having the image of a majoritarian party, the JDP has been seen as the path for change and transformation based on its discourses embracing not just the Islamist segment but also the whole of society. Moreover, the JDP seems dedicated in its discourses to create the impression in society that it is the party that will transform Turkey from a monoist to majoritarian (Coşar & Özdemir 2012, pp. 160-1).

The status of National Security Council was transformed into an advisory body having a civilian secretary general. The military was removed from Board of Higher Education. The president’s powers were limited and the State Security Courts were closed and replaced by Regional Serious Felony Courts. Moreover, in the Supreme Military Council, the long-time seating order was changed to reflect ranks and not have the prime minister and the chief of the general staff sitting beside one another (Karaaslan 2011).

In terms of minority rights, JDP has not fulfilled the demands of minorities with respect to identity claims. The reform of the 2000s was based on “respect for and

protection of minorities.” However, other than Jews, Orthodox Greeks and Armenians, and other non-Muslims such as Assyrians, or ethnic minorities having Muslim affiliations, are referred to as minorities. Still unresolved is the demand of Alawis to have their place of worship – Cemevis - recognized as such (Erdoğan and the Turkish state recognize Cemevis as a place where cultural activities are held<sup>7</sup>) and be financially supported by the Diyanet<sup>8</sup> (Yeğenoğlu & Coşar 2012, p. 170-1). According to Açikel and Ateş, while the government has made some efforts under the auspices of a so-called ‘Alawi Opening,’ the JDP has not hesitated to play the anti-Alawi card in order to regain the support of the conservative and nationalist segments (Açikel & Ateş 2011, p. 728).

Increased human rights awareness and identity claims in the domestic and international order have led the JDP to take a number of steps to redefine its democratic and revisionist roles. However, in terms of practice, there has been no obvious change in the democratic rights of the society and its minorities. The JDP’s timid approach towards democratic practice, resulting in limited change, is basically based on the prioritization of Turkish-Sunni Muslim identity in the society (Yeğenoğlu & Coşar 2012, p. 171).

## **2.8 Turkey’s Foreign Policy with respect to Syria**

At the beginning of the 2000s, politics in the Middle East attracted global attention. Issues such as the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada in September 2000 in Palestine and the increasing US pressure on the states of Iraq and Syria resulted in Turkey developing a more regionally active policy. The ‘region-based foreign policy’ strategy of the coalition government already had the aim of improving the relations with the region while not

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<sup>7</sup> For more information: ‘Erdoğan’dan Cemevi Yanıtı’, Milliyet 21 February. Available from: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr>. [21 February 2013].

<sup>8</sup> Diyanet is the governmental institution having responsibility over religious activities in Turkey.

disturbing the ongoing relations with the West. In addition to this, the February 2001 crisis led Turkey to improve trade relations with the aim of opening into new Middle Eastern markets (Oran 2013, p. 401).

Turkey and Syria have had unfavorable relations since formation of the two states. The Sanjak issue (Hatay was called the Sanjak of Alexandretta until was included within the borders of Turkey) was the root of the animosity of Syria towards Turkey. Moreover, Turkey's control over the flow of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers has also been a protracted problem for the two states. In 1998, as the Kurdish state was being founded in Northern Iraq, Turkey began to have concerns about the path of the PKK terror in Turkey and demanded that Syria deport Abdullah Öcalan- the leader of the terrorist group - and threatened Syria (Oran 2013, p. 157). Subsequently, Öcalan left Syria and Syria recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization, which was the first step towards the normalization between two states (Abou-El-Fadl 2012, p. 240).

Starting in 2005, Turkey attempted to be the mediator between Syria and Israel in order provide peace between the two states and succeeded in initiating the reciprocal meetings held in 2008. However, the military operation of Israel toward Gaza in December 2008 was a turning point for the mediator role of Turkey between Israel and Syria (Çelikkol 2015, p. 135). On the other hand, the normalization in Syrian-Turkish relations continued. In 2007, with regard to a secret agreement signed between Lebanon and Cyprus on oil and natural gas, Syria supported Turkey and most probably had a role because the issue has not been accepted in the parliament of Lebanon. (Oran 2013, p. 157). Syrian-Turkish relations have continued through the Turkish policy of cultural and economic cooperation. Following the free trade agreement between two states, visa

requirement were lifted and over fifty bilateral agreements were signed. While not binding itself through an agreement, Turkey agreed to new quotas for river waters flowing to Syria in order to relieve the water conflict. After the Davos Economic Forum, where Erdoğan blamed Israel for the death of Palestinians, Turkey and Syria became so close that the two states made joint war plans in April 2009. There have also been common cabinet meetings to discuss the “strategic partnership” between the two states (Abou-El-Fadl 2012, pp. 240-3).

March 2011 was the turning point for the overwhelmingly positive relations of the two states when the Arab Spring spread to Syria. Social protests demanding a majoritarian and democratic rule were answered with a violent attack from the Baas regime, which led to civil war in Syrian cities. The excessively violent stance of the Syrian regime put Turkey in a difficult situation with respect to choosing sides (Çelikkol 2015, p. 137). Once again, Turkey adopted the role of mediator role by meetings several times with the regime and imposing sanctions on Syria. This was the first step taken by Turkey to becoming the key player in the Syrian conflict (Abou-El-Fadl 2012, pp. 243).

Following unfruitful visits to Syria, Turkey started to take part in international formations to support Syrian society against Baas rule. ‘The Group of Friends of Syrian People’ meeting is one of these formations with which Turkey has had close contact. Moreover, the second meeting of the group was held in Turkey in order to address humanitarian solutions for Syria. Turkey has made a stand as friend of the Syrian people and enemy of Syrian rule (Erdoğan 2015, pp. 71-2). The political wing of the Syrian opposition began to organize in Turkey, which was followed by the formation of the Syrian National Council in Istanbul (Çelikkol 2015, p.138).

As Syrian civilians began seeking asylum in Turkey, Turkey's stance towards the issue became harsher (Oran 2013, p. 158). Turkey has let Syrian opposition groups use the state for accommodation, organizing conferences and structuring their oppositional system. The structuring of the Muslim Brotherhood was done via domestic non-governmental organizations in Turkey. Even if the Turkish Foreign Relations Ministry has kept a distance from these structuring activities, their tolerance toward the organization of these meetings in Turkey is a clear reflection of the political stance of the state (Oran 2013, p. 158).

The JDP's Syrian strategy component of Turkish politics was based on the expectation that the Assad rule would collapse in less than a year, similar to what happened to the other states experiencing the Arab Spring. Thus, Turkey openly declared, through the discourses of Prime Minister Erdoğan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu, the will of the state to be a change in Syrian rule. Because China and Russia have explicitly rejected intervention in Syria, Western states have hesitated to help the diverse Syrian opposition groups. Turkey has shown an exceptional stance by continuing to resist the maintenance of Assad's rule in Syria. In response to Turkey's stance, Al Assad has asserted that Turkey has spearheaded the organization and armed support of the opposition groups (Erdoğan 2015, pp. 72-4).

Erdoğan's discourse, "Syria is my domestic issue!," delivers several messages to the audience (akparti.org.tr, 06 August 2011<sup>9</sup>). First of all, the Syrian conflict has turned into a personal problem between Al Assad and Erdoğan. Secondly, the reason why Erdoğan considers the issue a domestic case is the potential for the conflict growing into

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<sup>9</sup> For more information: 'Suriye meselesi bizim iç meselemizdir', JDP Official Site 6 August. Available from: <<https://www.akparti.org.tr>> [6 August 2011].

a Kurdish one, which would be problematic territorially for Turkey. Therefore, Turkey desires to be a part of the solution. Moreover, since the beginning of JDP governance, Erdoğan has tried to embrace the vulnerable segments of the society using vulnerability discourse. Erdoğan's image of key player in the Middle East not only targets the region but also the domestic voters of the party. And finally, Erdoğan's "Syria is my domestic issue" resembles the discourse of Atatürk "Hatay is my personal issue" in the way that both of whom has perceived these two issues as a matter of honor for their political career. Therefore, this sentence is not only a political message referring to the Kurdish issue; it is also a reference to the fact that Erdoğan perceives the Syrian issue as a critical matter of honor.

The Turkish government's opposition to Al Assad has not just manifested itself in discourses but through support of the opposition forces, just as Assad has stated. The Syrian opposition has explicitly stated that the Turkish government has provided it with weapons (*Radikal*, 24 May 2012). Providing weapons has been an ongoing sensational issue for the Turkish government in the domestic and international media. *Times* magazine (Times 14.September 2012) reported the delivery of a considerably cache of weapons from Libya to Iskenderun Harbor, which was received by The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) - a Turkish NGO. Moreover, it has also been claimed that the Muslim Brotherhood has received deliveries of weapons destined for the Free Syrian Army (Oran 2013, p. 159). In addition to the *Times*, Turkish national newspaper *Cumhuriyet* has also published reports of weapons being carried to Syria. The trucks full of weapons, which were purportedly to be carrying humanitarian goods for delivery to the Turcomans living in Syria, were stopped by the

gendarmerie to check their contents. The investigation found that the trucks were full of heavy weaponry. Subsequently, President Erdoğan threatened to have the journalist Can Dündar punished (*Cumhuriyet* 2 June 2015). In response to the threat of the president, Can Dündar has directed twenty questions to Erdoğan to be answered with regard to Turkey's role on the Syrian conflict. On 12 May, the President Erdoğan when coming from Germany visit on the plane talked to the press as:

“Nobody can claim that the Turkish intelligence organization has sent weapons to Al Qaida.”

On 18<sup>th</sup> of May, Siirt Deputy of JDP has underlined that the aids were going to Free Syrian Army in a speech in Siirt. When the press has made news about the weapons with pictures, Davutoğlu on 29<sup>th</sup> of May talked to French to press as:

“The aids were for the Syrian society and for Free Syrian Army.”

Then next day, Davutoğlu told to press that the aid were transported to Turcomans. Can Dündar directed several more questions to the president about if the aids were going to Turkomans, why did the trucks used Reyhanlı border which is under the control of Al Nusra. Moreover, he asked if it is a crime to lie to the society, to the parliament, to the world and to target the reporter who revealed this lie (*Cumhuriyet*, 2 June 2015)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For more information: Dündar, C 2015, ‘Tehdidi bırak, bu 20 soruya yanıt ver!’, *Cumhuriyet* 2015. Available from: <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/> [2 June 2015].

Another claim has appeared on the issue of military training of the Syrian opponents in Turkey. Many news agencies, including Reuters, have reported the claim that, in an area around Adana, there is a Free Syrian Army (FSA) base under the control of Turkish officers, where Saudi Arabian and Qatari military officers train the Syrian opposition. Several newspapers have also reported, on the basis of interviews conducted with members of the FSA staying at camps located near the border, that FSA fighters were fighting in Syria during the day and coming back at night to stay at the camps. While denied by the government, the official website of the FSA had named Hatay as its main base, and later changed it to Damascus, Syria after the issue came up in the Turkish media (Reuters 27 July 2012)<sup>11</sup>.

It is claimed that Turkey has tolerated and even purchased IS-smuggled oil worth millions of dollars. Mehmet Ali Ediboğlu, Hatay deputy of the opposition party- RPP has further asserted that the oil is being transferred via pipes laid from the border villages and sold in Turkey. The oil is taken from the refineries in Syria at no cost and sold in Turkey (*Al Monitor*, 13 June 2014).<sup>12</sup> The JDP government of the Turkish state, in response to pressure from international media over the issue of IS smuggling, has increased control over the border region in order to prevent oil smuggling conducted by the IS (*Al Arabiya*, 6 October 2014).<sup>13</sup>

Still another claim involves the hospitality of JDP government has shown towards IS members. *Taraf*, a Turkish newspaper, has reported that the claim that IS members are

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<sup>11</sup> For more information: Doherty, R & Bakr, A 2012, 'Exclusive: Secret Turkish nerve center leads aid to Syria rebels', Reuters 2012. Available from: <http://www.reuters.com> [27 July 2012].

<sup>12</sup> For more information: Yılmaz, G 2014, 'Opposition MP says ISIS is selling oil in Turkey', *Al Monitor* 13 June. Available from: <http://www.al-monitor.com> [13 June 2014].

<sup>13</sup> For more information: 'Turkey cracks down on oil smuggling linked to ISIS', *English Al Arabiya* Available from: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en>. [6 October 2014].

being treated at private hospitals with the knowledge and financial support of the Turkish government. Eight IS militants who were wounded during the American bombing in August 2014 were transferred to the city of Urfa in southern Turkey and treated at several hospitals. The Turkish government has secured the transfer and paid the costs of their treatment fully. When the treatment of the militants continued, Bađdadi's (the leader of IS) right hand in the organization Ahmet El H. was brought to řanlıurfa to be treated after having lost his left foot (*Taraf* 11 September 2014).<sup>14</sup>

## **2.9 Does the Foreign Policy Serve Its Domestic Policy for JDP?**

The JDP government did not pay excessive importance to power politics. Instead, soft power has been more important from their perspective. The ruling party has paid special emphasis on the relations of Turkey with neighboring states. In order to have a successful global policy, a state ought to have stable relations with the states within the entourage. Therefore, improvement in regional politics is the first step for having a successful global politics. According to Davutođlu, there are two policies to be done for the improvement of relations with the neighbor states. The first policy requires the pioneering of Turkey in order to provide security and cooperation in the region, as the second policy requires Turkey to initiate economic and cultural dialogues for the formation of reciprocal dependency between two sides. These dialogues would ease transportation paths, increase border trade and cultural exchange between states. By this way, Turkey might be a central state for economic transitions in the region, which in

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<sup>14</sup> For more information: 'İřid militanları devlet kesesinden tedavi oldu', *Taraf* 11 Eylül. Available from: <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/>. [11 September 2014].

return would serve the aim to be an important player in global order (Davutoğlu 2012, pp. 143-7).

When seeking cultural and economic cooperation with neighboring states, in domestic order these dialogues have been presented to business and cultural segments to activate reciprocal activities. With the liberal economic policies, the government had revealed their concern with regard to the improvement of economics. Improvement of economics was crucial for JDP because economics has consolidated the support for the party in Turkey. Businessmen, industrialists and TÜSİAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) appreciated the liberal economic policies and the stability brought by JDP. JDP has also had a significant role on the improvement of Islamic businesses and the Anatolian capital by the commercial opportunities initiated by the liberal policies and the reciprocal cooperation with neighbor states (Coşar& Özdemir 2012). Thus, 'the Zero Problem with Neighbors' policy and the attempts of JDP in order to provide cultural and economic cooperation have been based on the concern on domestic economics, which in return has provided continuance in support.

For JDP, beside economics, European Union oriented foreign policy with reform and democracy concerns has been another priority in the early phases of the party. Series of packages with regard to legal reforms have passed by JDP. With this stance, JDP has been perceived as the 'democratization political force' in domestic and international arena. However, other than the reform packages JDP has not taken further solid steps for the democratization process. Thus, the attempts of the government with regard to democratic improvement have been perceived as the struggle to be 'centered on strengthening the elected' political class. EU oriented foreign policy has served the

reform packages in domestic order to pass strengthening the political power of the elected ruling party (Çınar, p.39)

Another issue for which Turkish domestic and foreign policies are connected is Syrian conflict. When Syrian conflict appeared, the economic growth of Turkey had slowed down. The Prime Minister Erdoğan foreseeing the future instability in domestic politics based on economy (Hürriyet, 3 May 2012)<sup>15</sup>, aimed to catch a significant role in the solution of the Syrian crisis. With this attempt, he aimed to use foreign policy card in domestic order. For that aim Erdoğan presented Syrian issue as his domestic issue. With this act, the decision-making actor Erdoğan has securitized Syrian conflict. Security issues are always prior for states. By securitizing the conflict, Turkey would be a Central State taking part in global solutions whereas postponing the emergence of instability in domestic order. However, this crisis has not reached an end with a solid solution as planned but has created a deadlock and loss of reputation for JDP government in domestic and international politics (Al Monitor, 22 April 2015)<sup>16</sup>.

As domestic instability has increased (based on financial cost of camps, Syrians in cities, loss of reputation, conflict with Gülen Community), Erdoğan has embraced an authoritarian discourse toward the society. Having an anti-Assad stance has shaped the discourses of Turkey around Sunni identity with anti-Shiite/ anti-Alawi connotation. Thus, having this position in international order, the president has sometimes been inattentive toward non-Sunni citizens of Turkish society. Several times referring Alawi belief as not a sect but a culture or emphasizing the Alawi identity of RPP leader

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<sup>15</sup> For more information: 'Turkey angry at S&P for downgrading ratings', Hürriyet Daily News 3 May, Available from: <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com>>. [3 May 2012].

<sup>16</sup> For more information: 'Turkey's foreign policy blunders hit home', Al Monitor 22 April, Available from: <<http://www.al-monitor.com/>>. [22 April 2015].

Kılıçdaroğlu are both such instances with which domestic conservative votes have been targeted (Radikal, 21 July 2013). In Hatay it was claimed that the reason behind the merge of several different Alawi municipalities under newly created Defne municipality was to consolidate the Sunni votes in Hatay<sup>17</sup>. (Konuralp 2012).

As the support rate diminished, the majoritarian, democratic conservative JDP became discriminative and authoritarian toward anti-JDP elements or even toward neutral citizens. Especially after Gezi Park protests, Erdoğan has started to use a discriminative and pejorative tone. Erdoğan has described Gezi Park protesters as ‘looter’ and has defended the violence used by the police against the protesters (Radikal, 9 June 2013). Gezi Park protest is significant for Hatay because Ahmet Atakan, Abdullah Cömert and Ali İsmail Korkmaz were from Hatay (CNN Türk, 10 September 2013)<sup>18</sup>. In Hatay the protests lasted longer than Istanbul where Gezi Park protests initiated. The reason behind the excessive reaction of Hatay is because Hatay has felt discrimination more than the other cities. The anti-Alawi discourse threatening Assad was perceived as a threat in domestic order as well. The reaction and the fear of Hatay, similar to Gezi Park protests, has been excessive and exaggerated based on the insecurity that Hatay residents feel. In addition to that, the ambiguous refugee status of the Syrians and the unknown duration of their stay have created tension in the city as an extension of their fear<sup>19</sup>. They perceived

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<sup>17</sup> For more information: Konuralp, O 2012, ‘Bölücülük Yapma’, Hürriyet 12 October. Available from: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr> [12 October 2012].

<sup>18</sup> For more information: ‘Ahmet Atakan Hatay’da protestoda hayatını kaybetti’, CNN Türk 10 September. Available from: <http://www.cnnturk.com/> [10 September 2013].

<sup>19</sup> The Syrians in Turkey accommodating in camps and cities are not legally accepted as ‘refugees’. Legally, the Syrians are ‘under protection’ for an undefined period under the protection of Turkish state. For that reason, Turkish state named Syrians as guests when they have first entered the Turkish territory (Erdoğan 2015).

Syrians as a threat for their survival. The anti-Shiite/ anti-Alawi foreign policy towards Syria has been perceived as a threat toward the Alawi elements of Turkey's own society.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CLASHES BETWEEN THE SYRIAN IMMIGRANTS IN HATAY AND THE HATAY RESIDENTS

#### 3.1 Geographical and Historical Facts about Hatay

In Hatay, most of the residents have double identities when their ethnic or religious background is considered. Under a strong influence of Arab culture, the variety of the sub-identities of Hatay residents can be listed as: Christian, Sunni, Alawi, Rum Orthodox, Armenian, Jewish, Arab, Kurdish and Turkish.

Hatay has been surrounded by Mediterranean in the west, Nur/Amanos Mountains in the north, Orontes River and Aleppo in the east and Akko Mountain and Lazkiye in the south. The two settlements of Hatay are Antakya (Antioch/Antiokheia) and İskenderun (Alexandretta). İskenderun is a significant location in Mediterranean having one of the most important natural harbours in eastern Mediterranean. İskenderun Gulf is a critical point for the trade of the region. On the other hand, Antakya is likewise an important settlement due to its historical significance in Roman Empire and Christianity. It is located in the coast of the Orontes River. The most important trading good of Hatay region is agricultural products, which is raised in the Amik Valley located around Amik Lake. (Ada 2005, pp6-7)

The historical leaders have given the names to these two settlements. İskenderun has gained its name İskenderun from Great Alexander in B.C. 333 after the Issus victory. On the other hand, Antakya has gained its name Antioch from heir of the eastern part of the Alexander's state; I. Selevkos Nikator in B.C. 313. It is known that Hatay has a

historical background up to Middle Paleolithic period hosting several civilizations. However, it is a well known fact that after the appearance of “The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta”, the two sides have created their own narratives approving each side’s own claims. Turkish side emphasized the Hittitian past of the region whereas the French side highlighted the crusaders who had conquered the territory in 1099 and founded the Antioch Principality. The statements referring to different nations being the first residents of the region are not more than just claims due to the fact that these claims had been created for certain follow-ups in order to support other claims. There had been numerous civilizations one after the other in the same region. Therefore, such claims cannot be taken as more than just a propaganda tool of that exact timing. (Ada 2005, pp7-8)

The civilizations being settled in the region can be listed as: Akkadian Empire, Phoenicians, Hittites, Egyptians, Hurri-Mittanis, Ashurite Kingdom, Persians and Roman Empire respectively in chronological order. Right after Jesus, with the efforts of St.Peter, St. Peter Church- one of the first churches in history had been built in Antakya. Following the construction of this church Antakya has been one of the Christianity centers of the world. Afterwards, the Byzantine Empire, Abbasids and Fatimid Empire had controlled the region. In the following period, Seljukians, Crusaders and then Mamelukes had gained the control at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In 15<sup>th</sup> century, the region has faced with the Mongolian attacks. The Ottoman control over the region has started after the victory of Ottomans in Battle of Marj Dabiq in 1516 as Selim I annexed the territory. Under Ottoman rule, Antakya and İskenderun were taken as sub towns of Aleppo city. (Ada 2005, pp7-9)

### **3.2 The Inclusion Process of Hatay The approach of the Western States towards the Sanjak Issue**

Narratives always have significant turning points at different phases of the stories. After the First World War, the world politics likewise has faced with a climax. The two leading empires- Austro-Hungary Empire and the Ottoman Empire were then a part of the history. There were various popular concepts such as: 'nationality', 'liberation', 'self determination' etc. Moreover, these 'ideal world, ideal society' concepts had spread to the world political arena from the former colonial European states. On the other hand, the long lasting lone ruling of Europe had shaken with the sudden appearance of several non-European powers in addition to the serious loss of European powers on financial terms during the First World War. The main concerns of the leading powers were rebalancing the power relations between states and in addition to provide political balances, looking behind, to find explanations for the reasons led them to war. The rebalancing of political power relations would be applied via usage of the 'nationality', 'liberation' and 'self determination' concepts. The European states- in need to keep their power area and the new-coming power United States of America- in search of new opportunities struggled to play a significant role in the peace process focusing on the 'unjust atmosphere' in the region.

In a speech made in the US Congress, the US President Woodrow Wilson emphasized the need for people's liberation underlining the reason leading to injustices was the 'absence of democratic rule'. Wilson insisted that the postwar resettlements would lead to the sweep of the injustices, which were present then in the society structures of Asia and Europe. Thus, according to the US president, in order to end the

injustices in Middle East, the postwar settlements would have to be based on 'self-determination of peoples' in order to achieve a democratic rule in the region. Thus, the expectation of the US was the appearance of new opportunities in Middle East region would open doors to US to be an additional player in the 'new world order'. League of Nations on the other hand was established by Western states as an insurance to the new political order in the region. With the existence of League of Nations, the disagreements would be solved with the language of diplomacy instead of letting a conflict lead into a war. Based on the correctness of the assumptions: 'nationalism' and 'self-determination', League of Nations aimed to create a West European type of civilization. (Shields 2011, p.5)

However, the reasoning tool of "self-determination of peoples" could have finalized their colonial existence in the region. Therefore, Western "civilized" members of the League of Nations fragmented the region into various states. (Shields 2011, p.5) Moreover, if necessary, within a state they also applied fragmenting the society into pieces based on the religious or ethnical identities of the society. For instance, Arab Alawis were quite effective in the resistance against the colonial French forces. Thus, French colonials chose to keep Alawis away from the rest of the society to keep stability. However, this act of keeping Alawis away from the rest of the Arab society had eased the Turkish side to claim that Alawis were not Arab so that needed protection by the Turkish state.

“Alawis had played a an important role in the resistance to the French occupation of Syria after World War I as allies of other anticolonial forces. Recognizing the dangers that could ensure if Syria’s Alawis continued to coordinate their anti-French struggles with their neighbors, French colonial authorities created separate states for the “compact minorities” working to keep Alawis from working together with the rest of Syria’s people.” (Shields 2011, p.89)

On the other hand, in addition to fragmenting the society into pieces, in order not to lose the control over the territory, League of Nations member states embraced the idea that the civilized colonizer states would hold the partitioned territory until the societies reach the civilization level until whom to be able to lead themselves. The reasoning behind the mandate system was claimed to help the territory get civilized enough to gain their independence. However, even in that so-called civilizational process- getting education, discrimination was felt within the society. According to Al-Arsuzi who later has been one of the most important Arab nationalists, these discrimination-based approaches have shaped his political aims based on the Arab unification idea. Al-Arsuzi refers to a bitter memory from his childhood:

“When the school principal was called away during a French exam in 1930, Alawi students came thronging to take their exam as I was ignorant of the identity of the students, just as I was ignorant that there was an established policy concerning the various sects...

Another Frenchman, one of the prep-school language teachers, entered the room where I was conducting the exam. He glanced at the list of grades then bellowed in amazement:

“How did you give such grades? Are you not aware that these students are Alawis?” ” (Shields 2011, p.90)

Another instance from Zeki Al-Arsuzi's memories reveals another humiliating approach of a French teacher.

“When Christian students made mistakes, the French teacher demanded, “Are you an Alawi?... Are you a dumb beast?” and wrote on the board “Alawis are on the same level as dumb beasts.” (Shields 2011, p.90)

The discrimination was especially done toward the Alawi citizens. When looked closer, it is understood that the French mandate significantly aimed to keep the Alawis uneducated. In addition, it seems that there is an effort to create a negative perception against the Alawis not to let them reach the so-called ‘civilization level’ and spread Arab nationalism ideas to the other Arabs in the society, which would harm the stability and the control of French over the region. Why Alawis? Not especially because they are Alawis but due to the fact that they are the ethno-religious group in the Sanjak who have shown the most significant resistance against the colonizing powers. They do not have high education in general. Moreover, according to Al-Arsuzi, Alawis were assigned in the army under the French in large numbers. In case they were educated, Al-Arsuzi claims that they would struggle for a unity with the rest of the Arabs, which would result with a “nightmare” for the French. (Shields 2011, p.90)

Fragmenting, in other words, ‘divide and control’ was the solution of the colonizer states to keep their influential area in the region. Therefore, fragmenting the Arab territory as states and fragmenting the society of the Sanjak of Alexandretta as the communities, the French aimed to keep the necessary peace and stability. As mentioned before, the Alawi community had been separated from the rest of the society based on a

reasoning claiming for stability in the region. Following the end of the World War I, the peace agreement was signed and the new settlement in Middle East had initiated. (Cleveland& Bunton 2008, p.171)

Thus, fragmenting the society into segments was the solution for the colonizer states but the thing they could not guess was that this approach of them would ease the inclusion of Hatay in the close future into Turkish state with the help of the excluded Alawi community.

The Sancak Constitution required a two-step election in order to determine the parliament with forty members who would serve the Sanjak for four years. In the two-step election, the Sanjak residents would first register themselves into the log as one of the following communities; Turkish Community, Alawi Community, Arab Community, Armenian Community, Rum Orthodox Community, Kurdish Community and other communities. The number of the communities would determine the deputies representing each community. In the second phase, the registered voters would determine the deputies whom would constitute the parliament. (Oran 2012, p. 286) Therefore, the critical process was the first step of the election- determination of the community of the residents. According to the statistical estimates of French High Commission, the population distribution was as: 39%Turks, 28% Alawites, 11% Armenians, 10% Sunni Arabs, 8% other Christians (mostly Greek Orthodox) and 4% Jews, Circassians and Kurds. (Khoury 1989, p. 495) Moreover, the population was consisting of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious identity making the first societal classification step of the election harder. For instance, even though the Turks were claimed to be the majority of the population considering single ethnic identity, when the Arabic speaking communities taken together, they were

consisting of a larger population (Sunni Arabs, Alawis and non-Armenian Christians). (Khoury 1989, p. 495) On the other hand, Alawis were divided in the registration process either be registered as Turkish or Alawi. Alawis were the most critical element to determine the result of the elections. (Oran 2012, p.287)

Turkey had concerns about the structure of the election. The Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras has emphasized the point of view of Turkey as; “religious or linguistic affiliation might not determine political will”.(Shields 2011, p.159.) In 15 April 1938, in order to organize and monitor, a committee had been nominated by League of Nations and sent to the Sanjak and started the process. However, when registering the residents, the approach of the committee focusing on the ‘ethnic and religious affiliation’ of the person has created conflict at the Turkish side. Moreover, when the committee not informing Turkey, has prepared an ‘Election Regulations’ and sent it to League of Nations, Turkey abolished the 1930 dated Turkish-French Friendship Agreement in December 29<sup>th</sup> of 1937. Besides, in 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1938, Atatürk naming the trip as an Army Monitoring Visit has visited Mersin and Adana allocating a military force with 30,000 people in the southern border of Turkey. The determined stance of Turkey in addition to the tense political balances in Europe has led Britain to warn France to step back. Revision has been done on the election regulations with regard to the demands of Turkey. Moreover, the Election Committee has left Sanjak. After the normalization of Turkish-French relations, election has started in 22<sup>nd</sup> of July.

The result of the election was as follows;

- “Turkish-35,847
- Alawi-11,319
- Armenian-5,504
- Arab-1,845
- Rum-Orthodox - 2,098” (Oran 2012, p.289)

The second election has resulted with a parliament consisting of 22 Turkish, 9 Alawi, 5 Armenian, 2 Arab and 2 Rum-Orthodox members. The oath-taking ceremony has been done in Turkish. The name of the Sanjak has been changed into Hatay. The head of the parliament, president and prime minister has been Abdülgani Türkmen, Tayfur Sökmen and Abdurrahman Melek respectively who were the eminent personalities of Turkish Kemalist movement in Sanjak. (Oran 2012, p.289) Meanwhile, Europe was on the margin of a world war in 1939. When Britain was in search of an ally in Mediterranean, Turkey has responded this demand and an Anglo- Turkish Agreement have been signed on May 12nd 1939. Turkey has proposed Hatay as a prior condition for a similar agreement with France. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1939 French-Turkish Agreement has been signed having an article revealing official inclusion of Hatay into Turkey. (Oran 2012, p.290) What can be inferred from the inclusion of Hatay is that two factors helped Turkey to achieve its aim. The Entente powers concluded that Hatay poor on oil unlike Mosul. In addition, neither Turkey nor the political balances in Europe were the same in 1930s when compared to 1920s. On the edge of a war, Turkey was a necessary ally for France and Britain which made Hatay condition a less prior issue when gaining an ally on the

Mediterranean is considered. Therefore, Hatay is the final achievement of the Turkish Independence Movement, which has been gained via a diplomatic way. (Oran 2012, pp.290-292)

Hatay has never been a monoethnic society. Throughout history, the region has been home to various ethno-religious groups, both before and after the rise of many different states and countries. This coexistence and unity, marked by harmony among several communities, has continued throughout the republican era in Turkey. Ethno-religiously, Arab influence in the daily life of Hatay is significant. This influence is felt in various ways, ranging from the languages spoken to the regional foods eaten. Ancient Arab culture is strong even in the daily lives of people who do not have ethnic Arab backgrounds.

Because of the place of Arab culture in Hatay society, the region has always had close contacts with Arab countries, particularly Syria. The residents of Hatay have maintained significant business and familial relations with Syria; this was the case especially during the JDP era and continued right up till the eruption of turmoil there. There were daily visits between the countries that did not require visas for single-day visits. Such practices improved not only the cultural relations between two states but also developed a mutual understanding between two close cultures.

In the period following the turmoil in Syria, a significant number of Syrians have entered Turkey in an effort to escape the catastrophic results of the war there. Likewise, Hatay has been one of the most popular cities for Syrians seeking shelter. Nevertheless, in spite of the similarities between Syrian and Hatay cultures and the improvements achieved in the last decade, there have been serious psychological clashes between the

Syrian citizens and Hatay residents. My aim in this chapter is to draw attention to the fears and worries of both the Hatay residents and the residents of neighboring cities. This makes it possible to see the dramatic changes occurring in their cities from their own points of view.

### **3.3 The Tolerance Level of the Hatay Region from their own Perspective**

From their own multicultural perception, Hatay residents have always been alert to provocations. This vigilance is not new. Some residents argue that this approach was also beneficial for Hatay society when Sunni-Alawi conflicts led to armed conflict in late 1970s in several cities of Turkey such as Kahramanmaraş and Sivas. This shows that Hatay residents with non-Sunni or non-Turkish identities have not always felt completely secure. For them, the balance between the communities having different identities in the region has always been fragile. Thus, people in Hatay are continuously worried about their security.

Mr. Z (in his 60s), an Alawi resident who has a Sunni wife, talks about the continuing segregation into Sunni and Alawi districts. Mr. Z states that an Alawi generally does not live in a Sunni district. Likewise, a Sunni does not prefer to live in an Alawi district, even if there is no specific discrimination between these communities. Mr. Z refers to the late-1970s period:

“This is the border. Now I am in the Sunni part. Starting from there (points to the street), Sunnis were not allowed to enter. Likewise, Alawis were not allowed to enter their part, either. For a period of time, there have been serious conflicts here. Armed conflicts. Very serious. Before 1980, around 1979. With the unrelenting stance of a lieutenant, the conflicts escalated. Armed forces have been deployed to create a buffer zone between the districts. Fortunately, they did that. Otherwise, there would be a

blood bath here. Heavy weapons have been brought from Syria, from everywhere, being provided by smugglers. True, these are the things that happened, but who initiated the provocations. Some formations within the state have done these. I do not blame the state, but these formations are being structured inside the state. And these dirty formations still exist within the state” (Mr. Z 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, September).

Mr. Z refers to the continuous vigilance of the Alawi citizens in Hatay, which in turn makes them quite receptive to provocations. Thus, it is not surprising to see Syrians as an existential threat for their position in Hatay. They feel excluded by the politics of their own state with the discourses against Assad. Even if the discourses of the president do not target them as the excluded Alawis, they, having the same religious and cultural identity as Assad, feel insecure and vulnerable. Mr. Z has close relations with the JDP, but does not reveal his political inclinations.

Another Sunni resident, Mr. A (in his 60s), who is actually from Gaziantep, a neighboring city, but has lived in Hatay since his youth, refers to the tolerance in Hatay society. Even though he was a member of a right-wing nationalist party, he has never been a supporter of violence. He explains that they moved to Hatay when he was a teenager because of the tolerant nature of the city. He still loves the city in which he was born but prefers to spend the rest of his life in Hatay. When I asked him about the difference between Hatay and Gaziantep, he explains:

“If a stranger shoulders a resident in Gaziantep, a huge fight starts immediately. However, if the same stranger shoulders a resident in Hatay, the Hatay resident looks at him and keeps going, just silently saying ‘illiterate man’” (Mr. A, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, September).

Mr. A is a Sunni Turkish citizen. Therefore, for him, Hatay is secure and tolerant. However, due to the fact that he does not belong to a minority community, he cannot express the fear felt by the other citizens who have minority identities. Mr. A believes that there is real brotherly tolerance in Hatay among the different communities. It is not possible for him to face conflict among sects there because the residents protect each other and do not let such incidents occur. Mr. A does not reveal his political inclination but emphasizes that he comes from the right-wing political tradition.

Mr. K (in his 80s), a former legislator with Sunni identity, also believes that there is harmony and tolerance in the city. He openly supports the RPP and he is staunchly opposed to the JDP. Criticizing the local and central politicians for continuously announcing ‘the unity and brotherhood in Hatay,’ he says,

“Actually, we do not need such a saying. There is no Alawi-Sunni conflict here. There have been no instances of people attacking one another because we have been living all together for years. My milk sibling is Jewish. We have taken girls from Alawis, we have given girls to Alawis. There are grandchildren and so on. We do not have such issues. However, every mayor, every minister assigned to Hatay proclaims ‘brotherhood messages.’ They don’t do anything else. They just babble. Hatay people have been living with their fears. (He mentions Syrians) Their messages should be more realistic because what they say does not correspond to what is being lived” (Mr. K, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, July).

Mr. J (in his 40s), of mixed identity - the son of a Christian Orthodox mother and a Sunni Muslim Turkish father, has his reservations about the harmony that is purported to exist among the communities in Hatay and believes that it is exaggerated. Mr. J is quite critical of the claim that there is tolerance in the region. Mr. J openly supports the RPP

and is against the JDP.

“Hatay has a texture. The communities are nested but apart. Alawis, Christians, Sunnis all have different sectors, none of them getting into the sector of the other. However, when one sees the heterodox attitude of someone, he says ‘He is like *gavur!*’<sup>20</sup> If you eat salad with pomegranate syrup or if you eat too much garlic, they say jokingly ‘did you become a fellah?’ You insult someone else with the words you use to scorn another community. Where is peace within societies? There is none. But, we are together. We have common living spaces. Everybody knows their limits and lives inside the framework of respect. Still no one can get married to a girl from any community. I am comfortable. I am freer to move around. Society does not criticize me. My mom is Christian. My dad is Sunni. I can get married to an Alawi. When a Christian sees me, he embraces me because I am Christian. When a Sunni sees me, embraces me because I am Sunni. But they do not criticize because I was born as a duality. They see themselves as pure and try not to become spoiled. If I get married to an Alawi woman, my close friends respect me. When a member of their family gets married to an Alawi woman, they never accept” (Mr. J, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni&Christian, September).

Mr. M (in his 50s), a Sunni resident with Turkish ethnic background, approaches the sectarian approach with semi-approval, referring to some of the feelings he has towards Alawis:

“The present government is involved in sectarianism in the region. Even if they do not call it sectarianism, it is. However, I slightly agree with them. My first cousin is married to an Alawi. However, the textures do not match. They love each other. They have two children. But, when they come here, even if I am a democratic man, I personally cannot feel as sympathetic as I do toward a Sunni. There are past experiences, being told by our elders or being lived by us. We have to see something. I live with them. 80% of my friends are

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<sup>20</sup> An insulting word which is used for referring to a person as a non-believer.

Alawis, but when I am about to make a decision, I do not make that decision with an Alawi. I eat, drink, and socialize with them. I go to their weddings, funerals. They are my friends. However, if an Alawi demands to get married with my daughter, I do not permit. I do not make some decisions with them because of past experiences” (Mr. M, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, September).

Mr. M is a typical case of the quasi-sincerity expressed by communities towards other communities, which sustains the balance in the city. He treats other communities nicely, with a smiling face, but he openly says that in spite of his close relations, especially with Alawis, in essence he does not trust them and does not feel comfortable with them, either. Even if he does not reveal his political inclination, from his interview, he is most probably a supporter of the JDP.

Thus, based on the attitudes of the interviewees, while there are many factors that create differences in the perception of tolerance, the common ground for Hatay residence is paying respect to the pre-defined structure of living spaces, which includes living habits, business sectors or regions.

The conclusion we can reach from these interviews is that the harmonious relations between the communities is not because of their intimacy with one another, but rather because of their long-lasting relations that have continued for decades. They certainly have a certain amount of respect and tolerance toward each other. However, limits start where their fears coming from the past discourses start. Thus, they can get along well but when it comes to trust, the communities are not homogeneous.

### **3.4 Overview: Encountering Syrians in Hatay**

Hatay is culturally, economically and psychologically interconnected with Syria. Therefore, Hatay has been influenced by the turmoil in Syria much more than other cities in Turkey. A major part of the city has economic and family ties with Syria. This direct influence has resulted in great fear not only that the denominational conflict there will spread to Hatay but that the city will suffer serious economic loss. Therefore, for Hatay residents, the Syrians entering their region has not been perceived as just refugees looking for shelter but as the extension of the conflict.

### **3.5 The Chronology of the Syrian Turmoil**

Following the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, on February 5<sup>th</sup> 2011, small-scale anti-government events took place in Damascus. Concurrently, in a small city, Daraa, a group of high school students wrote anti-Assad messages on street walls and were later arrested and brutally beaten. This specific event drew a passionate response from their families and the Syrian opposition. The citizens making up the opposition organized a rally on the 15<sup>th</sup> in Daraa and the 18<sup>th</sup> in several other places, which resulted in widespread protest marches numbering hundreds of people in Daraa, Damascus, Hums and Hama. In Daraa, four people died in these protests. In response, the protesters made another call for protest demonstrations on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Serious armed conflicts then broke out between the protesters and government forces, which led to the deaths of around 100 people and the wounding of hundreds more, including protesters and government forces (Mahalli 2014, p. 160).

On March 31<sup>st</sup>, President Assad called for an emergency session of the Syrian Parliament. It was announced that a new government would be formed and major reforms decisions made. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the long-lasting (for 38 years) 'State of Emergency Law' and the 'National Security Court' were abolished (Mahalli 2014, p. 160). However, Syrians in the opposition were already organized to fight against Assad rule in different parts of Syria.

### **3.6 How the Syrian Turmoil was perceived in Turkey**

The first group of Syrian refugees entered Turkish territory in April 2011. Turkey has adopted 'Open border policy' towards Syrian citizens (Bodur 2014, p. 15). It has since established many camps in different cities very close to its border with Syria. Syrians entering the territory do not only live in refugee camps; some have chosen to live in different parts of Turkey. The residents of the cities bordering Syria, especially Hatay, were worried about the entrance of the Syrians because of rumors regarding the nature of the people arriving. Rumors spread among Turkish citizens that the Syrians coming to Turkey not only included the refugees escaping war, but also armed opposition fighters, and that both groups were residing in the camps and cities. Syrian fighters were said to be using Turkish territory as a base. Aleppo legislator Mahli claimed that the Syrians making statements to the Turkish and international press had been involved in events leading to murders. According to Mahli, the identities used in the declarations are not actually theirs but belong to the people being killed by them (Bodur 2014, p. 18).

According to Turkish Parliament Deputy Mehmet Ali Ediboğlu, the first Syrians

applying for asylum were the Turkmen<sup>21</sup> from the Bayırbucak region. However, despite plans for their accommodation, the Syrians living in the camps in the first phase of the arrival did not include any of these Bayırbucak residents, but rather the families and relatives of the opposition forces. They were bringing their families to keep them safe and then returning to fight against the Syrian government (Bodur 2014, p. 22).

There were rumors that the Syrians being accommodated in Turkey consisted mostly of the Syrian opposition. Thus, it was asserted that the refugee camps and the regions where the Syrians were living had begun to be used as military quarters. There were gas explosions (from liquefied petroleum gas for kitchen use) in the camps and in rented houses. While not officially acknowledged, it was stated that some of the explosions were the result of bomb-making. As Hatay deputy of the opposition party (RPP)- Refik Eryılmaz said in June 2013, some of the refugees living in Yayladağ camp, leave the camp every day around 2 or 3 p.m. in armed groups of 30-40 people carrying backpacks, and go by minibus to 'Aşağı Pulluyazı Village.' According to Eryılmaz, these refugees were guests in the morning, warriors in the evening (Bodur 2014, p. 69).

Riyad Asaad, a colonel in the Syrian Army, escaped from Syria and then joined the Free Syrian Army. Riyad Asaad stayed at Apaydın Camp, which was said to be military quarters for high-ranking Syrian soldiers, policeman and government officials that were part of the opposition groups fighting against the Syrian government (Bodur 2014, pp. 102-3). Apaydın Camp has been a significant source of concern for Hatay residents. It is located inside Turkish territory but is used as a base against Syria. It is said that fighters are making military plans there to fight Syrian forces. Opposition party Turkish Parliament deputies have demanded that they be allowed to enter Apaydın Camp

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<sup>21</sup> Turkmen- Turkomans having Turkish identity.

but they have been refused access. However, according to Akin Bodur<sup>22</sup>, who went to the camp, people who were said to be prohibited from visiting the camp were seen entering it. When Bodur was waiting outside the camp, he saw several people enter. One of these people was someone from Qatar who had come to see Colonel Riyad Asaad and was allowed to enter without being searched (Bodur 2014, p. 231). What frightens Hatay residents the most about the camps is not the arrival or the existence of Syrians in their country, but the potential danger they bring to the region. Apaydın Camp, and the rumors surrounding it, are a major source of fear for the locals.

The Syrian opposition is not a homogenous group; it is split into several factions that are often at odds with one another. The conflicts that arise, however, have sometimes been discussed in dangerous ways. For instance, in Antakya, a Syrian lawyer, Musa Erman, was kidnapped by other Syrians when he was at home in January 2013 (Bodur 2014, pp. 220-21). When officials carried out their investigation, they found a Russian-made bomb, a 9 mm gun, a gun clip and 6 full rockets on the scene. There was a similar incident in Reyhanlı in October 2012. A local man from Reyhanlı met two wounded Syrians soldiers who had lost their way. He took them home to give them food and to take care of them. The local man's neighbor was a member of one of the opposition groups called the jihadists. The jihadists raided the flat of the local man and kidnapped the soldiers. The man called the police giving the license plate of the jihadists' car. The soldiers were found and given handed over to the Turkish police but the jihadists were released. These two specific cases reveal several realities: a Syrian refugee living in the city might carry weapons and, regardless of his crime, including kidnapping, Turkish

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<sup>22</sup>Akin Bodur is a local journalist in Hatay who works for Ses Newspaper in Iskenderun. He is also the Hatay representative of a national newspaper Cumhuriyet.

police might release him. In contrast, a Turkish citizen may be in danger in his own country in case he helps a Syrian (Bodur 2014, pp. 155-56).

In February 2013, there was an explosion on the Cilvegözü border resulting in 14 fatalities and 26 wounded, according to the official records. Four days before the explosion, the police found 400 kilos of TNT in a flat rented by Syrians. A week after the explosion in Cilvegözü, the police found 27 kilos of hand-made bombs ready to be carried to Syria, in another flat, this time in Belen. In these two Turkish flats being rented by opposing Syrians, the police discovered explosive materials, which is something quite worrisome for the residents of these flats, for Belen and for Hatay (Bodur 2014, pp. 323-24).

The next explosion occurred in Reyhanlı in May 2013 leaving 53 dead and 221 wounded. The two consecutive explosions resulted in the damage of 452 businesses, 293 residential estates, 62 cars and 11 public buildings. In response, at 19:25, a third explosion took place in front of an apartment where Syrians were living as an answer. This involved the blowing up of an oil tank, immediately after which the police put out the fire.

Even if Hatay is culturally, economically and psychologically interconnected with Syria and Arab culture, many factors have made Hatay locals perceive Syrian refugees as a threat to peace in Hatay. Based on the pervasive fear in every community, the society has been inclined to consider the worst case about the existence of the Syrians. Fear makes it difficult for Hatay locals to approach Syrians in a positive way.

For instance, there is a widespread concern that explosives might be found in apartments rented by Syrians. Sometimes, explosions have occurred during the

production of these explosive materials. Nevertheless, specific instances have been generalized and exaggerated within the community. In the minds of Hatay residents, the Syrians are guests in the morning and warriors in the evening. Having warriors as neighbors and knowing that they may be carrying weapons while walking on the street is quite frightening for the residents of peaceful Hatay. Thus, the direct influence has been tremendous, instilling deep fear in Hatay that denominational conflict will spread to their city. Therefore, Hatay residents not only perceive the Syrians entering their region as refugees looking for shelter but also as an extension of the conflict.

### **3.7 The Influence of Syrians Felt in the Daily Life of Hatay**

#### **3.7.1 The Economic Cost of the Syrian Turmoil in Hatay**

The crisis in Syria has had a significant impact on the Hatay economy, which has taken two forms. First, the breakdown in relations due to the crisis has led to the collapse of trade with and via Syria. This, in turn, has been a major blow to Hatay. On the other hand, from the perspective of businessmen, the arrival of the Syrian refugees has lowered production costs, which has been welcomed by business owners and has had a positive influence on the economy of the region. However, as the Syrian refugees demand comparatively less wages, local workers claim that they are either losing their jobs or being forced by the system to adapt to the new wages for unregistered unskilled jobs (Orsam& Tesev, 2015).

The main areas of business in Hatay are the production and transportation of fresh fruit and vegetables and the manufacturing of iron and steel. Businesses have been hit hard by the turmoil due to Hatay's position as a bridge. The economic interactions

between Syria and Turkey can be categorized as follows:

- The exports to international markets by Hatay-based companies via Syria
- Black market border trade
- Tourism
- Health tourism
- The reciprocal visits of the two societies, leaving cash on both sides (Dasifed, 2012)

The changes in the export rates from Hatay to Syria are as follows:

- 2010 July – 12,485,507 TL
- 2011 July – 13,628,098 TL
- 2012 July – 3,333,272 TL (Dasifed, 2014)

Moreover, in terms of transport capacity, for example, the change in volume at the Cilvegözü border gate may shed light on the degree to which the turmoil has affected Hatay's trade. The annual number of vehicles leaving the Cilvegözü border gate for trade transport is as follows:

August 2012 – 30 vehicles  
July 2012 – 3,023 vehicles  
December 2011 – 7,980 vehicles  
July 2011 – 15,000 vehicles  
July 2010 – 15,000 vehicles (Dasifed, 2014)

An Alawi local journalist, Mr. K (in his 60s), referring to the economic loss of Hatay based on the turmoil, states: “The economic loss of Hatay is tremendous. In the worst case, 500 semis used to leave the Cilvegözü border with a full truck. Now, as the gate is closed, these are unused. Mr. K is an RPP supporter, just like most of the other Alawis in Hatay.

“In the past, they used ‘Ro-Ro transportation’<sup>23</sup> through

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<sup>23</sup> RoRo is the short usage of “roll on, roll off.” It is the transportation done via ocean shipping for overseas transportation.

Mersin. That did not work either. The exporters, their semis, and producers suffer in Hatay. There used to be a suitcase trade in the region bringing around 300 million dollars per month. These traders would come with their cars loaded with some goods and, likewise, in return, would take other goods back. Every year during *bayrams* (religious holiday), 30-35,000 Syrians used to come. Why did they come? They came to spend money. Similarly, at another *bayram*, 30,000-35,000 Turks would go there. They all travelled using just their IDs. Visiting relatives was their excuse but their actual reason was trade. In just these three days, artisans and shopkeepers used to make so much money that they could close the deficit of the previous 3-4 months” (Mr. K., 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

Mr. K says that border trade has discontinued because of the high prices caused by scarcity in Syria. According to Mr. K, in the past, people would carry goods from Hatay, sell them in Syria, and fill the tank of the car and buy other goods in Syria with comparatively cheaper price to sell in Turkey. Now, the goods are quite scarce, the prices are high so it is worthless for Hatay residents to conduct border trade.

“The purchasing power of the people is not like it was in the past. One-kilo bread was 15 liras in Syria. Every day, trucks full of bread were entering Hatay to be sold. Now, one kilo of bread is 300-400 liras. One liter of liquefied petroleum gas was 5-6 liras. Now, it is 200-300 liras. They are not found. There is scarcity. When gasoline was 4 liras in Turkey, it was officially 1 lira in Syria. Now, gasoline is carried via illegal ways” (Mr. K, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

When asked why Ro-Ro transportation did not work as an alternative for exported goods, Mr. K answers:

“It did not work. Why? Normally, a semi loads the goods in Hatay and transports the exported goods in 7 days. A semi costs 1,500 dollars. However, Ro-Ro transportation from Mersin takes not 7 but 30 days. This brings the risk of deficiency in goods. Moreover, it costs 7,500 dollars. Even if it did work, it was not sound. It was expensive and risky” (Mr. K, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

According to Mr. Z, a local businessman, the economy has suffered in Hatay since the onset of the turmoil. However, it simultaneously created profitmaking areas for some circles. Mr. Z has this to say about the economic chaos in Hatay:

“There have been significant economic losses. For instance, the daily export returns used to be 500,000 dollars, which have now approached zero. On the other hand, this crisis has made some persons richer. Every crisis has a negative impact on society even as it benefits specific circles. It is claimed that the gasoline and other smuggling activities in Hacıpaşa Reyhanlı has reached several billion dollars. This is happening in quite a small town. Hatay used to be known for its three T’s: Agriculture (*Tarım*), Trade (*Ticaret*) and Transportation (*Taşımacılık*). Turkey’s second biggest transportation fleet is in Hatay. What has happened? In the name of aid, convoys and numerous semis worked but no one, including myself, knew what they were carrying. On the other hand, we know that this has influenced illicit border trade and investments. Businesses there have had to shut down. Here, common investments with Syria have gone bankrupt. Economically, some have experienced serious hardship while others have profited. Now, check the export rates of Hatay. Interesting. Let’s say the exports were 1,300,000,000 dollars in the past, now it is 1,100,000,000 dollars. How has this happened? Here is the other face of the dirty war” (Mr. Z, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, September).

Ms. M. (in her 30s), a health professional, talks about the negative influence of the cheap Syrian labor force on local workers and talks about the unfair competition caused by Syrian businesses:

“Our Turkish citizens cannot find jobs because they want a wage that is commensurate with their service. However, I know Syrians find jobs for much lower wages. Service is bought cheaply. This, of course, harms the sector, the economy. My domestic worker - the cleaning lady - told me that she has been threatened by another place she works for. They threatened her,

saying, ‘if you say I am tired or I am pregnant, there are a lot of people instead of you. You get paid 60 liras, Syrians get paid 20 liras-two people to clean whole house.’ It has to be prevented. Otherwise, Turkish citizens will have to comply and work for less money. How sad it is. Moreover, we frequently hear that they seriously harm local shop-owners. Syrian citizens open up businesses and we are not even sure whether they have paid their taxes. They sell *döner* (sliced meat) for instance. If the average price is 8 liras, they sell it for, let’s say, 2.5-3 liras. But, of course, what is this *döner* made up of; these are the things that affect the health of society. Decaying of all kinds starts” (Ms. M., 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

Ms. M’s attitude reflects what the majority of the region thinks. Unemployment has become a serious issue because of the crisis. On the other hand, Syrians accept quite low wages in order to obtain food to live. On the other hand, employers naturally prefer to pay lower wages with no tax, which leads to lowering wages throughout the community, another factor fueling anger toward Syrians. However, due to the situation, the ones to be blamed are not the Syrians, but rather the government and the employers. Ms. M. supports the RPP and she believes that the JDP discriminates against the Alawis.

Another local, Ms. J. (in her 30s, a lawyer) from Gaziantep, disagrees with the general negative attitude society has towards the Syrians on such issues as cheap labor and increasing rent prices. She believes that these are not the fault of the Syrians but rather the government, which is to blame for structuring the system. Ms. M does not reveal her political inclinations.

“We Turks have benefited from their needy situation. When they run out of money and are unable to pay their rents, we started to say ‘look what Syrians did to me.’ Look, they gave you 500 liras for months, for places that are actually worth 100 liras. You waited until their money dried up. Now, you try to throw them out. Let’s try to blame ourselves a little bit. Because of them, the average prices have risen. How will they survive? They will either open up a business or will work at a business. You limited their right to work. Then what happens?

Business owners hire them without insurance - off the record. The man, in need of money, accepts the amount offered. The cost of a worker with insurance is 1,700 liras. If you find a worker who costs you 900 liras, you choose him. Then the Turkish workers are left out in the cold" (Mr. J, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, October).

To sum up, the crisis in Syria has had significant impacts on the economy of Hatay. The export rates have diminished. So has tourism, border trade and money-making reciprocal visits between the two countries. Moreover, in addition to the weakened income sources of Hatay, with the arrival of Syrians, demands for basic needs have risen. Therefore, prices have gone up in the region, thus leading to higher costs of living compared to previous years. Therefore, Syrians in need of money started to search for ways to earn money. Some business owners in the region preferred Syrians as cheap unskilled laborers that agree to work unregistered and uninsured. However, the two issues have led to a social problem: the higher cost of living and unemployment resulting from Syrians taking lower wages. Therefore, because of the changes in the economy, the local workers have not embraced Syrians, but rather have blamed them for taking their jobs.

### **3.7.2 The Sudden Impact of the Syrian Refugees on Daily Life in Hatay**

Syria and Hatay share a common history and are culturally similar. However, in spite of the existing similarities, there are also many different characteristics and habits of these two cultures causing conflict among Turks and Syrians.

Hatay, especially İskenderun and Antakya, are known to be a cities where people – both men and women - do not hesitate to go out late at night. It is not a problem for women to be alone outside because according to what the interviewees say, until the

arrival of the Syrians, they did not have a gender-based security problem.

A hairdresser, Ms. K. (in her 20s), lives in an Alawi village in Arsuz. In the summer, temperature get quite high in Arsuz, so the locals having houses with terraces prefer to sleep either on the terrace or on the roof. According to Ms. K., because of the high temperatures and the secureness of the village, until recently, it was common for them to sleep outside on summer nights.

“Personally, since the Syrians came to our village to live, I cannot sleep outside anymore” (Ms. K., 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, October).

During this conversation, another local, Mr. L adds his opinions to what Ms. K had to say:

“Because of the fear that they might be from Isis or Al Qaida. Moreover, they cover their daughters, they do not even let them out; but when they see a woman, they stare at her as if they will eat her. Before you came, I was warning the guard to take them out. There were a lot of them and they were disturbing everybody” (Mr. L, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, October).

(The village is near private summerhouses, and the beach, which is normally closed to public, is used by both the villagers and the villa owners. According to Mr. K (in his 30s) the Syrians come to the beach to watch women swimming or sunbathing)

Mr. L and Ms. K. are concerned that their ordinary lives might be harmed by the arrival of the Syrians. Their examples given about Syrians are not unique. The cases they

describe could apply to Turks, too, but their discrimination leads them to perceive Syrians as a threat to their survival. Mr. L and Ms. K. both support the RPP and they believe that the JDP discriminates against the Alawis in foreign and domestic policies.

The woman health professional, Ms. M., talks about the immediate impact of the Syrians on the city:

“Because of the district we live in, we haven’t experienced any violence caused by Syrians (She lives in an Alawi district). But haven’t we heard? We have. Aren’t we scared? We are. At the center of the city, there is the Great Park of Antakya. We used to take a walk there in the mornings. We used to take our children there in the afternoon to play in the park. However, after the arrival of the Syrians, we could no longer go to the park for a walk or to take our children to play. Why? Because, the park is full of unemployed Syrians just hanging around. They leave us no space. We, the natives of the city started to be annoyed by this situation. It is a beautiful park with beautiful trees, which was constructed during the French administration. However, now it is used by them in a very dirty way, in a way we are not familiar with” (Ms. M., 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

Her explanation highlights the changes occurring in their daily lives following the arrival of the Syrians. She also refers to a common societal problem that has recently arisen in the region – the taking of Syrian women as second wives by Turkish men. It is said that this have become a widespread phenomenon, which is making the women in the region fearful and apprehensive.

“I heard about an event, told by my husband. A lady knocks the door of a family. The man of the house does not let her in but his wife feels pity. She asks her husband to accept the Syrian lady into the home just for that night to give her food and place to sleep. She enters. And the next day, the husband informs his wife that the Syrian lady will continue living with them. There are lots of such stories, which are experienced a

lot. The problem is the demand of the men of the region for Syrian women, which ends up with these kinds of stories, and even with prostitution” (Ms. M., 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July)

An artisan, Mr. Ş. (in his 40s), complains about the Syrians hanging around in the park next to his office. Mr. Ş is Alawi and supports RPP. He refers to the complaint letter that was prepared by all the shop owners in the district to ask the officials to prohibit the use of the park by the Syrians. The Syrians living in the region also have security concerns, which lead them to carry knives or to damage vehicles. It is widely reported, because of their problematic life, Syrians frequently have serious fights, which sometimes harm people around them or their belongings. The police need to keep the places they live under control to prevent any harm to either Syrians or Turkish citizens. However, it is claimed that the police do not intervene in Syrian conflicts because of an order issued by the government, which in turn, results in growing apprehension in society. Whether or not this is true, the government is the institution that is responsible for organizing the security of the region.

“We as the artisans around ‘Antakya Yüzüncü Yıl Parkı’ have complaints about the Syrians who harass girls, women, our families, who beg, who continuously fight within groups with knives and harm our offices during these fights. These complaints are not personal but reflects the view of all the artisans in the district” (Mr. Ş, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

Another local, Ms. T. (in her 40s) complains about the restriction that they have begun to face in their daily life after Syrians became part of their city life. Mr. T has Sunni Turkish identity and supports the RPP.

“Even the side streets are full of Syrians. You cannot trust. Because you cannot trust, you do not walk on the streets. We are not secure anymore. For instance, my daughter is a university student in another city. When she came to visit us this year, she did not go out after one occasion. She wanted to go out with her friends, she did. When she came back, she did not want to go again. Why? How has it become no longer peaceful? She said ‘Mom, Antakya became another Antakya. How do they stare? It’s as if Antakya is another Antakya with these people’” (Ms. T., 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, July).

The same woman, Ms. T., also refers to another recent concern of Antakya people  
- the issue of health.

“I have a two-year old baby. I took her to doctor because of the redness on her eyes. You know what the doctor told me? He told me not to take the baby to the park. And he told me that if I take her to park, I am supposed to disinfect her. The Syrian go everywhere we do not go so they carry every kind of microbe. Before everything, come our health and safety. Now, we have neither in Antakya” (Ms.T, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, July).

Ms. T. also speaks of the vaccinations being performed in the region after the arrival of the Syrian population:

“Children were being given the polio vaccination when they were born and not repeated afterwards. This year they gave it to the children again. They have also given the smallpox vaccine because there was an outbreak of smallpox in the region. Recently, when my neighbor took her child to doctor, there was a Syrian family there. She knows Arabic so she understands what they said. The doctor told them that he couldn’t give the vaccine to child without his vaccination report. Then the doctor did not vaccinate the child. The child is not vaccinated now. Can you believe it? It is not safe in Antakya at all” (Ms. T, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, July).

A local Alawi doctor Mr. L, (in his 40s), who works in the emergency room a

hospital was asked if there had been any changes in the widespread illnesses after the arrival of the Syrians. Contrary to what the public thinks, he said:

“There is no such a thing. The polio is a special situation. In Syria, because of the chaotic environment, vaccination is a problem. The World Health Organization initiated a campaign because of this chaotic environment leading the states around Syria to perform polio vaccinations, especially in border cities. There have been no cases of polio from Syria. No polio cases have been identified in Turkey, either. These are called mop-up vaccinations and are done as a precaution. And I have not heard of the outbreak of smallpox at all” (Mr. L, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

According to Mr. L, the health rumors in the community are exaggerations caused by fear. He mentions the precautionary measures being taken by the government in order to prevent an unwanted health issues. Mr. L supports the RPP and he is active in local politics as a member of the RPP city delegation.

A health professional from Kilis, Mr. T (in his 60s), likewise does not agree with the outbreak of new illnesses in the region but states that there has been an significant increase in illnesses because of the poor hygienic conditions the Syrians have been living under. Mr. T has Sunni identity. He prefers not to reveal his political inclination.

“The old illnesses have increased, for instance, typhoid fever. The Syrians live under hard conditions. Hygiene is lacking. The temperature is high. Infections grow. We discharge the patients to prevent infections” (Mr. T, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, September).

Another serious concern of Hatay residents is the prior position of Syrians in the hospitals. By Hatay locals it is claimed that when a Turkish and a Syrian come simultaneously, the Syrian is given priority in getting health service, in accordance with

the orders of high-ranking officials. However, some argue that priority is based on the emergency nature of the cases.

A local of Antakya with Arab ethnic background, Mr. M (in his 50s & a supporter of the RPP), says:

“All the hospitals are under the command of Syrians. You as a woman, I hope you do not ever find yourself as injured in a public hospital. Syrians are a priority there. They are the priority of the Prime Minister Erdoğan. Not the Turkish citizens” (Ms. M, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, June).

However, the health professional from Kilis, Mr. T, explains why the Syrians are perceived as having priority in public hospitals:

“It happens in such a way that the translator gets the transfers of Syrian patients from camp. For instance, 5 patients are taken to the pediatric department; the doctor inspects them consecutively. Then the translator takes another group to the next department, let’s say, general surgery. All are inspected consecutively again and taken back to the camp” (Mr. T, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, September).

According to Mr. T, priority appears to be based on the necessity of having a translator in hospitals. When there is a translator, they want to take in the Syrians, making the Turks wait just for practical reasons. However, of course when the issue is health, sometimes this practical solution leads to vulnerabilities in the region based on the restricted conditions the hospitals work under.

### 3.7.3 The Security Concerns of Hatay following the Syrian Turmoil

“A friend from Reyhanlı gave this account. Following the Reyhanlı bombings, a guy around 17-18 years old finds a Kalashnikov and hand grenades, and puts them in the car. His father realizes this, asks him where he was heading. He answers: ‘to Samandağ, to take revenge for Reyhanlı.’ The father cannot stop him so as he leaves, he calls the police and the gendarmerie to catch his son. The government used every possibility to make Reyhanlı locals believe that Alawis were responsible for the event” (Mr. B, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, June).

This is an incident that a local Alawi, Mr. B (in his 40s & a supporter of the RPP), recounted to show how the society is tense and insecure. The Sunni-oriented Syrian policy of Turkey and the Sunni and Islamist and anti-Alawi inclination of the perceived majority of the Syrians living in Hatay frighten the Arab Alawis-Nusayris there relatively more than it does other locals. Their fear is based on, first, the history of massacres they have experienced, and, second, the idea that these Syrians will be a part of a new massacre. Another local, Mr. P (in his 50s and a supporter of the RPP), highlights their feelings about how worried they are about living together with hostile Syrian refugees.

“At the beginning, the Alawis were threatened a lot. I know that the residents of Samandağ were armed. Then in dolmuşes (minibuses), on buses, and in restaurants, they wouldn’t pay, saying, ‘we do not pay, ask the prime minister to pay for us.’ People in Samandağ beat some of them up. Then they started to pay. Last week, for instance, there is a construction opposite the new museum, Syrians came, saying ‘Go ahead and continue to build, but this is not yours but ours. Sooner or later you will leave. Tomorrow Tayyip Erdoğan will come and fire all the Alawis from here” (Mr. P, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi,

July).

It is certain that the arrival of Syrians has created certain changes in their lives as well. Moreover, they have been bothered and threatened by some Sunni Syrians because their religious sect is associated with Bassar al Assad. However, there is another reality, and that is that they are inclined to be psychologically affected by the fear attached to how Syrians are perceived. An Alawi doctor, Mr. L, attributes this immediate fear and negative attitude of Alawis towards Syrians to their fear. He claims that if they did not have to worry about their security, the so-called Syrian issues would not be taken so serious.

“Go back in history. Yavuz<sup>24</sup> came and massacred. Others came and have beaten us. A non-stop assimilating authority. You continuously feel like a foreigner, as you do not feel like you belong. Then, one day in the neighboring country you considered as insurance for yourself, saying ‘if anything happens to me I’ll go there; there they will protect me,’ war breaks out. Your brothers, relatives are being shot and killed there. The ones killing your brothers come to your region, Antakya, and ask for asylum. Moreover, they fight there and come back. The Turkish republic supports them. Then, the head of the hospital calls ordering their examination. They are treated as if they were more Turkish and more of a citizen than you are. By who? By the authorities. You have been working in this country paying your taxes, doing your national service in the army, accepting to be assimilated. Even if I am Arab, I personally cannot speak Arabic well. We acquiesced. Fine. We accepted Atatürk as the greatest Turk and the entire community embraced him. Our community is extremely nationalist. They hang Atatürk pictures all over. However, when it comes to being a candidate for an administrative position, cannot become a manager or anything like it. In a hospital line, a Syrian is superior to you. You see it that way. Then, of course people worry about their future if one day they threaten my life. That is why they say ‘polio, smallpox appeared, man did not pay in bus or in a restaurant saying go

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<sup>24</sup> During Yavuz Sultan Selim period, a significant number of Alawis in Anatolia have been killed in order to suppress their revolt.

get it from Erdoğan. That is why the whole community talks so much about these things. These are ordinary things actually which might be experienced by everybody. Under normal conditions, it would not be a big deal for someone not to pay. However, the reason why these are talked today is because of the high level of worry in the community” (Mr. L, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

The same doctor, Mr. L, refers to a widespread belief among the Alawis that with the coalition of the Syrians and the government, Alawis would be massacred.

“There has been a rumor. The rumor is that the mayor has ordered that guns be collected. Do you know how Alawis talked about this rumor? ‘They take our guns from us. Then the opposition groups and the Free Syrian Army members will come and kill us. And the government works with them to be able to have them kill us.’ Of course, there is phone traffic. The mayor is called and it was concluded that no such a thing is happening. This is because of worrying. Normally, if you are not stressed out by fear, you might say that it is not logical. However, if you consider that ‘this government has always repressed me, did not share rule, massacred me, Yavuz came and then the Çorum, Sivas, and Maraş massacres,’ then you believe. For instance, it is claimed that during the Maraş massacre, a massacre in Antakya was prevented with the support of Assad’s father - Hafez Assad” (Mr. L, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

Actually, there are several reasons for the existential fear of Alawis. However, the underlying ones are their feelings of insecurity and vulnerability, and not being protected by their own state because of their religious identity. Thus, they feel threatened by the exclusionary discourse used by the president of Turkey against Assad, who has the same ethnic and religious identity as them.

On the other hand, Alawis are not the only people in Hatay region who worry about their security. As mentioned before, when the borders were open, some Syrians

would fight in Syria and come back to Hatay to take a rest. This pattern frightened people, who worried about the kinds of people they could face at any moment in the street. Moreover, they were scared of the tension that was being spread to their region by these fighters. In order to prevent conflicts in Hatay, several non-governmental organizations have been established. One of these NGOs is the *Sivil İnsiyatif Derneği*, which actively monitors daily life in Hatay. In case of a conflict such as the mentioned above by Alawi doctor Mr. L, who stated that Alawis were worried that their guns would be taken away from them, in cooperation with the mayor and public officials *Sivil İnsiyatif Derneği* immediately gathers and looks for solutions. The spokesman of this NGO and a businessman, Mr. Z, characterizes the security weakness in the region by saying:

“Every part of the 900-km Syrian-Turkish border was in flames. And these flames started to spread towards us. There were armed groups and convoys supposedly providing aid. There were also international jihadists intent on supporting this war.

These people numbered not simply 500 or 1000. I’m talking about thousands. We talked about these. There were people sleeping in the morning, fighting at night. We asked them (the officials) to prevent this. There are still unknown people with beards, with strange attitudes and clothing in the region. It is dangerous. They could create conflict. People are afraid of them. People react to them and then conflicts arise and the city breaks out into flames” (Mr. Z, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, September).

Another issue upsetting the people in Hatay is the failure of Syrians to behave according to the rules of civilized city life. People complain that Syrians do not obey traffic lights when driving or crossing the street. Moreover, it was mentioned in Kilis that Syrians have easy access to drugs. Not only do they use drugs, they have

contributed to the spread the drug use in the region. These are two ways in which Syrians are seen as sabotaging the security of Hatay. Actually, Turks are also a source of insecurity, as it the case with other issues. However, people are more troubled by specific instances. Apart from the danger posed by drugs is the vulnerability doctors have when treating Syrians. A case in point is Mr. Y (in his 30s and a supporter of the RPP), who works in a private hospital:

“I am Alawi and I was afraid that if I took a critical case and he/she were to die, they would blame, and even threaten, me, because of my identity. For that reason, whenever a critical case came, I found a reason to reject it. I also warned my colleague who is very young and newly starting her career not to take the risk. She did not listen to me. One day, one of her patients died. Even though she is Sunni, the Syrian relatives of the patient attacked her. We tried to protect her against them. We managed to save her. However, for weeks, she came to the hospital with a police escort because the Syrians continued to frequently visit the hospital and threaten her” (Mr. Y, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, June).

Doctors face the same threat with Turkish citizens as well. However, the tense solidarity Syrians feel psychologically from having escaped from war probably makes them sensitive to the health of their relatives. It should be emphasized that the state needs to provide security in hospitals in order to relieve the fear of the doctors.

### **3.8 The Approach of Hatay Residents towards the JDP and its sectarian Syrian Policy**

When asked about Turkey’s Syrian policy, regardless of ethnic background, people are nearly unanimous in their responses. They say that while the JDP’s aim was initially to be a hegemon power in Middle East, it failed, and as a result, Syrians are now

on Turkish territory. They are worried also about a denominational conflict in the region. For Alawi citizens, this concern includes an existential fear based on their sect. Moreover, not all but most of the locals believe that the JDP has used an anti-Alawi discourse in order to consolidate its power.

A socialist local, Mr. H., (in his 30s) talks about the JDP's Syrian policy:

“Turkey had an Ottoman vision that claimed a right to the Middle East. However, Turkey plan was derailed in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. If Egypt and Libya failed, why not Syria - This is what encouraged Erdoğan. He would take the initiative. His goal was for Turkey to be a sub-imperialist state. To achieve this goal, he tried to take position as the main actor in Syria, but he has been unsuccessful” (Mr. H, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, August).

The Alawi doctor Mr. L emphasizes that the main aim of the government is to act against the Shiites. However, he argues that this has only hurt the people of these countries. Based on his interview, it may be concluded that the complementary foreign and domestic policies of the government hurt the people of the states while failing to bring any good to the states.

“There are no countries but a region – the Middle East. Can you show me a natural border in Urfa, in Samandağ, between Keseb and Yayladağ? There is none. Therefore, I would like Turkey not to have a foreign policy. Is there a policy between Hatay and Adana? Isn't that more natural? We should have emphasized the meaninglessness of borders as Turkey. We should have positioned ourselves there. Unfortunately, a foreign policy that aims at splitting the Shiite crescent in the Middle East has been formed in this country, which has a government made up of determined defenders of Sunni Islam. This is called an active policy. Supposedly, they position themselves in international politics. For what? Inflicting pain

on societies” (Mr. L, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, July).

According to a local journalist with Sunni background, Mr. O (in his 30s and does not reveal his political inclination), the Arab Spring was the turning point in the Islamization process. Radical Islam has come to dominate the Middle East.

“Although it may have seemed like a dictatorship, there was a system that contributed to liberal and democratic perspectives in people’s lives. The whole world has stood by while this is being overthrown by repressive Islam. In the case of Syria, the perception of Syria has changed as radical Islam and Sunni identity have risen. Erdoğan has never denied his Sunni-based axis, which has not been able to keep him out of such a Sunni alliance. If you are going to redraw this geography, then you have to add this to your slogans. Turkey has done that by playing the given role very well. However, Erdoğan exaggerated the role and started to shape Turkey as well. Its societal, secular, democratic structures started to crack. Denominational conflicts are occurring in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Libya. Everybody is afraid that it will also happen in Turkey. However, Erdoğan probably does not have such a fear, so in speeches, he explicitly has shown the courage to say ‘I am Sunni and you are Alawi.’ This is scary” (Mr. O, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, August).

The JDP government has always operated on a Sunni axis. However, at the beginning of their rule, to strengthen their political position, they based their policies on a majoritarian approach and the concepts of human rights and democracy. On the other hand, especially since the outbreak of the Syrian turmoil, this position it has become more obvious, which is a source of concern for non-Sunni citizens. Moreover, the JDP chose to use this Sunni-Alawi fragmentation as a tool in order to consolidate its political base. Sadullah Ergin, the former Minister of Justice in the JDP government, was a candidate in local mayoral elections in Antakya. Before the elections, the voting regions

were reshaped according to sectarian majorities and a new region called Defne was created. Through this, it was claimed; the JDP government split the Alawi votes from Antakya city center (Arab Alawis are known to vote for the RPP almost without exception).

Mr. O, the local journalist, refers to the sectarian positioning of JDP, saying:

“When we look at the Antakya and Defne issue, we are always on a Sunni-Alawi axis. This division in Antakya is the reflection of the sectarian stance of the government. So are the messages given by the JDP in election visits to the community. For instance, they say things like: ‘Every vote given to the RPP is sent to Syria’ or ‘If you vote for the RPP, they hang an Assad flag in the middle of Antakya.’ Somehow, by frightening. The situation is over domestic and foreign policy. The situation is more about what kind of a life the people of the Turkish Republic demand. Now, Ankara is an Ankara that is very disconnected from Anatolia and Turkey” (Mr. O, 2014, pers.comm., Sunni, August).

Mr. H emphasized that the Alawi-Sunni conflict that has been triggered is a tool JDP government is using to strengthen their ruling position.

“Turkey tried to become the spokesman of the entire Islamic Community in the world. That is why they began holding Islam Conferences more frequently. Moreover, when emphasizing Ottomanism, they applied neo-liberal policies. In order to prevent opposition against these policies, they needed an ideological tool. Sectarianism, not faith, is the answer to ‘how can I protect my ruling position.’ Erdoğan needs this tool to control. This is a serious threat to non-Sunnis. In a speech before the presidential elections, he mentioned that he was Sunni and Kılıçdaroğlu was Alawi. By doing this, he directly put these concepts as oppositions. This has resulted in the Alawis in Anatolia experiencing discrimination in the areas of health and education. However, what is life like here? We live in fear for our lives because the sectarian policy made Antakya

the backyard of the Syrian war. He provided accommodation to the jihadists whose motivation is killing Alawis; he made them the priority” (Mr. H, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, August).

However, Mr. Z, who mostly acts as a mediator between the local officials and the Alawi community, does not agree that the government has used a sectarian policy on purpose. Moreover, he believes that the mayor has worked hard to prevent possible conflicts in the Hatay region.

“Look, there is has been war for three years around us. If the government was willing or let it happen, there would be blood here. They did not want this. They have certainly prevented it. At this point, the mayor and the armed police forces made a serious effort to avoid this. I know it because I have experienced it” (Mr. Z, 2014, pers.comm., Alawi, August).

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Does Turkey have a foreign policy in the JDP era that is autonomous from its domestic policy? Does this foreign policy, and the decision-making process and actors that comprise it, operate independently, free from the dynamics of domestic Turkish politics? How do the locals of Hatay perceive and approach Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria? How does this policy affect them? What is its impact on them? How do the Syrians influence the daily life of Hatay? Why do Hatay residents fear Syrians and see them as a potential threat to their peaceful balance - leading them not to embrace Syrians but to maintain a distance from them out of mistrust?

The Turkish republic was established by the military elites of the Ottoman Empire as a secular nation state. Turkey's main foreign policy principles were political Westernization and keeping the status quo in order to preserve peace (Cleveland 2008, pp. 184-5). During Turgut Özal's political period, Turkish foreign policy underwent transformation and became pro-active. This policy was continued with neighboring territory under İsmail Cem's term as foreign minister (Oran 2013, p. 140). Since the beginning of the JDP period in 2002, there has been a fundamental change in the foreign policy of Turkey. The new government has maintained the pro-active and multi-dimensional principals of Turkish foreign policy. However, the JDP has paid special attention to the old Ottoman territory, especially to the Middle East. Emphasizing the Ottoman past, the JDP has tried to establish Turkey's identity not solely as being Western oriented and secular but also as having ties to Islamist territory. Thus, it is aimed to

regenerate the previously passivized relations with the Islamic states (Adak& Turan, 2014, p. 38).

According to Davutoğlu's concept of Strategic Depth, during the JDP period, Turkey aimed to transform geostrategic risks into opportunities by taking a proactive and multi-dimensional foreign policy approach. The JDP's goal is to make Turkey a central state in the region that is able to transform Turkey into a significant global political player that has important roles in international organizations and global political issues (Davutoğlu 2012, pp. 551-563). The JDP introduced itself to Turkish society as a conservative democratic party. Accordingly, the JDP government adopted a series of reforms as part of the EU accession process. The first period involved efforts of the party to get acceptance from Turkish society. Subsequently, the second period has been shaped by the struggle of the government to become a central player in the region, through humanitarian soft power involvement and mediator role attempts in international politics. In these two phases, Turkey underwent demilitarization and became a peace seeker in the region. However, the emergence of the Arab Spring and the spread of the protests in Syria changed the direction of the pre-determined foreign policy of the JDP. From then on, the Syrian issue became securitized and openly accepted as a domestic issue of Turkey (Öktem, Kadioğlu 2012).

Who have been the foreign policy decision-making actors of Turkey during the JDP era? Recep Tayyip Erdoğan - the Prime Minister and now the President of Turkey and Ahmet Davutoğlu - Minister of Foreign Affairs and then Prime Minister, who wrote the book *Strategic Depth*. The foreign policy of Turkey has never been independent of the domestic concerns of the party. First, based on the domestic reforms, Turkey has had

close relations with the EU. Afterwards, in order to develop the problem-solving character of the region, Turkey developed relations with neighboring states having conflict with other states. In this way, the strong peaceful international role of Turkey would help maintain democratic initiatives in the domestic order. In the final stage, Turkey has improved the relations with Saudi Arabia and Qatar as Sunni allies having an anti-Assad stance against the Shiite Syrian rule. The political strength of the party has declined, which has created tension in the party. With the new securitized Syrian issue, the party aims to consolidate trust in the domestic arena. Thus, it cannot be claimed that foreign policy is shaped based on totally independent dynamics arising from domestic policies (Öktem, Kadioğlu 2012).

Because the leaders of the JDP had Sunni identities with Islamist party backgrounds and based on the anti-Assad stance of Turkey referring to the Shiite/Alawi minority rule of Syria there were ramifications these connotations in domestic politics. Erdoğan has made speeches in which he has stressed that the government does not approve the Alawi demand that Cemevis be recognized as places of worship. Moreover, the government refuses to acknowledge Alawism as another sector, but rather insists that it is a cultural formation (Coşar& Özdemir 2012, p. 170-1). The Sunni connotations in domestic and foreign policies have created fragility in the security perception of the non-Sunni – especially Alawi divisions of the society.

Hatay is a multi-cultural region having a social equilibrium that has been shaped for hundreds of years. The peace there is based on the balance between communities. However, while the city is frequently referred to as tolerant, it is actually a balanced city. All aspects of living in every community - Sunni, Alawi, Jewish, and Christian – is

structured – from domicile to business districts. Although it cannot be said that there is no racism or discrimination, each community has its own expectations of other communities. They all have fears and concerns that stem from the past, which makes them guarded but respectful. Especially given the suffering Alawis have been exposed to in the past, such as in Maraş<sup>25</sup> and Madımak<sup>26</sup>, the apprehension in the city has grown. Thus, Hatay residents have viewed Syria with suspicion and not with objectiveness. Moreover, Hatay residents with non-Sunni identities perceive themselves as falling into the category of the enemy as far as the state is concerned.

Having positioned itself as against the Assad rule, Turkey has supported several anti-government groups in Syria. Turkey has also adopted open-door policy vis-à-vis vulnerable Syrian citizens. It has been claimed that some of the Syrians in Turkey are fighters in Syria and live as refugees in Turkey. Due to its multi-ethnic identity, Hatay has felt the tension comparatively more than other cities in Turkey. The claim that opposition Syrian fighters are living in Hatay has resulted in great consternation among the locals. Thus, Syrians have begun to represent conflict and threat for Hatay residents. In addition, Syrian presence in the region has deepened the passive tension in society. Even though it has been more than three years since the eruption of turmoil in Syria, relations between Syrians and the Hatay community have not softened but rather have become even more aggressive. Contrary to many recent claims, this is not the result of discriminatory or racial attitudes of Hatay residents. Indeed, it is the result of many

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<sup>25</sup> For more information: Taştekin, F 2014, 'The massacre Turkey hopes Alevis will forget', *Al Monitor* 25 May. Available from: < <http://www.al-monitor.com> >. [25 May 2014].

<sup>26</sup> On July 2, 1993, a group of Islamic fundamentalists surrounded the Madımak Hotel in which many intellectuals were staying for the Pir Sultan Abdal Festival in Sivas to protest Aziz Nesin for translating Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and who criticized Islam. Then the crowd set fire to the Madımak Hotel which ended up with the death of 37 people.

factors. First, as previously stated, there is no deep tolerance in Hatay towards ‘the other;’ instead, there are balances and expectations that the pre-structured balances be respected. Therefore, Syrians were expected to be more passive, and not become part of city life, and to stay to themselves until it was time to leave. However, the time has not come. Moreover, Syrians are not a passive, obedient community; they prefer to continue the life they used to have in Hatay. Thus, both sides have been frustrated in the end. In addition, the ambivalent official status of the Syrians has made a significant contribution to the negative attitude of citizens. Syrians were initially announced as guests when they came to Turkey, but expectation was based on the misled projection of the government. This ‘guest’ connotation has created an expectation in the minds of natives that it was a temporary situation. However, as the duration of their stay has lengthened, tension within the region has grown significantly.

Based on the interviews conducted in different parts of Hatay: in Antakya, Iskenderun and Arsuz, the conclusion has been reached that people’s perception of Syrians differs, depending on the community of which the interviewee is a member. In general, the fact that thousands of Syrians live in their city disturbs most of the Hatay residents. The level of disturbance varies with their perception. For the Sunni residents, Syrians make their daily city lives uneasy in practical means such as meeting them on the streets or in hospitals. The interviewees from Kilis and Gaziantep likewise refer to the burden that the Syrians have brought to city life. On the other hand, from a non-Sunni perspective, Syrians are perceived as a significant threat. Quite exaggerated stories are told especially within the Alawi community. The support of the government toward the Syrians is perceived as anti-Shiite cooperation, which could threaten the survival of

Alawis in the region, based on historical experience.

This thesis concludes that the anti-Assad political stance of the JDP and its Sunni-based anti-Alawi discourses during the post-Arab spring period have created a feeling of vulnerability within non-Sunni communities. They have the sense that they have not been protected as much as the Syrians have by their own state. Moreover, because they feel as if they are in a precarious position and the Syrians have been welcomed so overwhelmingly, they have the perception that the government sees the Syrians as being superior to them even in their own homeland. Moreover, because of what has happened in history, they tend to exaggerate particular instances. The apprehension in the region has led to Syrians being perceived as a threat to the peace in there. The thesis attempted to demonstrate the attitude of the Hatay residents towards the Syrians. Their fear that Syrian are a threat to their peaceful balance has led them to distance themselves and not embrace them.

Thus, what is making Hatay locals negative and unwelcoming of Syrians is not any inherent discrimination but primarily their desire for security. Because Syrians are perceived as nothing more than an extension of the denominational conflict in Syria, nobody in Hatay wants to include them in their daily life. Moreover, as they have lived with a certain balance among communities, the people of Hatay expect Syrians to obey these predetermined balances, which is quite hard for Syrians. The societal balance of the Hatay region remained pretty stable until the Turkish government began embracing Sunni Islamist and anti-Alawism as part of its foreign policy. The deterioration of the sound foreign and domestic secular policies has destabilized the balance in Hatay, resulting in growing consternation in society there.

Consequently, the denominational political inclination of the JDP in domestic and international areas demonstrates the idea of Ali Balcı that international policy is nothing more than a reflection of the domestic political elements of the government. Moreover, the stance taken by the JDP while consolidating its base and strengthening its political power, simultaneously seriously weakened the societal stability and security in Turkey's domestic order, especially in Hatay. Thus, when consolidating its political power, the JDP excluded segments of Turkish society that did not share similar values and beliefs. This has led those segments to become psychologically vulnerable vis-à-vis the threats that have appeared as a consequence of the complementary foreign and domestic policies of the JDP.

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