Global Public Goods, Religion and Turkey

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Last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed the return of religion to the mainstream of political life in an array of settings around the world. Last decade have been a period that religion got brought into international relations. Publication of several books on the topic within this period\(^1\) signifies the phenomenon. Almost in all of the related publications, it is mentioned that there exists a global resurgence/return of religion (Banchoff 2008: 9-13; Falk 2001: 2; Fox and Sandler 2004: 12-14; Haynes 2007: 19; Johnston 2003: 3; Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003: 1; Shani, 2009: 311; Thomas 2005: 26-42)\(^2\). Upon discussions on Westphalian legacy (Banchoff 2008: 52-54; Carlson and Owens: 2003, 1-37; Falk 2001: 6-8; Fox and Sandler 2004: 22, 54; Hanson 2006: 17; Haynes 2007: 31-34; Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003: 2; Shani, 2009: 308-309; Thomas 2005: 25-26; Wessels 2009: 324, 328), changing paradigms of international relations and the rise of faith-based diplomacy more or less get to be the common denominator of all mentioned material (Banchoff 2008; Falk 2001; Fox and Sandler 2004; Fox 2009; Hanson 2006; Haynes 2007; Haynes 2009; Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003; Shani, 2009; Thomas 2005; Wessels 2009). Religion is understood in this context, “as encompassing both the teachings and beliefs of organized religion and all spiritual outlooks that interpret the meaning of life by reference to faith in and commitment to that which cannot be explained by empirical science or sensory observation and is usually associated with an acceptance of the reality of the divine, the sacred, the transcendent, the mysterious, the ultimate” (Falk 2001: 30). Furthermore the concept of religion is used, “in the course of constructing a global civil society and recasting the meaning of citizenship and democratic practice” (Falk 2003: 193).

Soft power is yet another concept used in regards to the role of religion in international relations; referring to “the capability of an entity, usually but not necessarily a state, to influence what others do through attraction and persuasion” (Haynes 2009: 296). It is quite recent that religious soft power gets considered in regards to foreign policy\(^3\) (Haynes 2007: 44-55; Haynes 2009: 296-304; Thomas 2005: 12, 69, 109-110, 214-216) Joseph Nye, who coined the term two decades ago (Nye 1990), perceives religion in international relations as a

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\(^2\) Thomas defines the global resurgence of religion, as the concept is used in this context, as follows: “the global resurgence of religion is the growing saliency and persuasiveness of religion, i.e. the increasing importance of religious beliefs, practices, and discourses in personal and public life, and the growing role of religious or religiously-related individuals, non-state groups, political parties, and communities, and organizations in domestic politics, and this is occurring in ways that have significant implications for international politics.” (Thomas 2005: 26)

\(^3\) John O. Voll uses the term in a “negative” context reminding the readers, a religious impetus in U.S foreign policy that was reinforced by Bush administration had resulted in an increase in the soft power of Osama Bin Laden and other radicals. (Voll 2008: 262-268)
persuasive power reserved for same-faith parties mentioning that “religion is a double-edged sword as an American soft-power resource, and how it cuts depends on who is wielding it” (Nye 2004: 59); and focusing on Wahhabism, which he calls a “sorcerer’s apprentice that has come back to bedevil its original creator”, the Saudi Government (Nye 2004: 96). The concept of soft power is similar in substance but not identical to a combination of the second dimension (agenda setting) and the third dimensions (or the radical dimension) of power as expounded by Steven Lukes in *Power: a Radical View* (Lukes 2005: 20-29).

In this paper I will briefly try to take a picture of Turkey’s current policies in international relations, and conclude by raising some questions about religion in international relations.

Turkey is not at all an exception to the above-mentioned developments in the international relations. Changes in Turkish foreign policies that have already started in 1990s, but intensified by the ruling AKP government appear to be a substantial drive for Turkey’s relatively new claim for a more prominent role in world affairs.

Turkey appear to use religious soft power in foreign affairs not only by state agencies including Presidency of Religious Affairs (hereinafter *Diyanet*) 6, but also by some NGO’s and faith-based organizations affiliated to this country. In terms of corresponding parties, regions like Europe, Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, and Middle East seem to be more intensified. Turkey’s diplomatic affairs reveal overwhelmingly that same-faith relations somewhat prevail; however as Scott Thomas argues (Thomas 2003) MacIntyrean virtue-ethics appear to help different communities and states in international society to develop a deeper pluralism among themselves as well. Contemporary religious thought provides new ways of thinking about the socio-political implications of the multiple systems of belief present in the world. (Lynch 2003). Actually activities of Turkey-based NGO’s like The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) 7, and Gülen movement that also work in places like South America, Africa and Southern Asia where Muslims are relatively scarce indicate that religion as soft power gets used by some faith-based transnational actors affiliated with Turkey.

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4 For critical views on the concept of soft power see articles of Steven Lukes’ and Janice Bially Mattern’s in Berenskoetter and Williams.

5 The new foreign policy bore the imprint of Ahmet Davutoğlu, a professor of international relations and the chief foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan until he himself became the Foreign Minister in May 2009. Davutoğlu had early outlined his vision for Turkey’s strategic mission and foreign policy in his book “Strategic Depth” (Stratejik Derinlik). For evaluation of this doctrine *See* Ionnis N. Grigoriadis, “Religion as a Determinant of Foreign Policy in Secularist States: The Cases of Turkey and Syria”, and Alexander Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy”.

6 *Diyanet* is a secular administrative unit in the Republic of Turkey established in 1924 to execute services regarding Islamic faith and practices. It was designed to enlighten society on the topic of religion as well as to carry out the management of places of prayer. For further information see Gözaydın 2008a; Gözaydın 2008b; Gözaydın 2009a.

7 See figure 1 for venues where IHH work.
An aspect of Turkish foreign affairs in Europe is obviously the country’s relationship in regards to European Union (EU) membership. Differences of religion and culture between Europe and Turkey appear to be main obstacles for some opponents of a full accession for Turkey to the EU. However there also exist others to debate several views to reveal an enriching outcome (Jung and Raudvere 2008). Besides policies carried by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diyanet, several lobbying groups work in Europe on behalf of Turkey to use religion not as a dividing but as a persuasive power. Especially

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8 For a brief evaluation of these views, see Haynes 2007: 286-293.
9 According to Abdullah Gül, Turkey’s Foreign Minister at the time and the President now, Turkey’s Muslim identity would neither be a handicap nor ‘political time bomb’. Instead, “positive EU-Turkey relations will show that shared democratic values and political unity prevail, sending the message that a ‘culture of reconciliation’ within Europe is at hand” (Gul 2004).
10 On English version of Diyanet website under the heading of “preceding” in regards to international relations it is stated that, “The presidency also has been running various projects to help establish a firm and lasting peace between muslims and other religious groups, based on common values and principles. So the presidency cherishes a firm belief in the natural prospect of the alliance of civilizations and human beings on the grounds of those common values and ideals. Being aware of the cultural and historical differences, it also sees the continuing process of turkey’s entry into eu as a tremendous opportunity for a mutual learning and understanding, which should be considered as a win/win process for both parties.”
http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/english/default.asp In this context, among many others, on 5-7 September 2004 Prof. Ali Bardakoğlu, the President of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, alongwith a committee joined a meeting titled “Freedom of Religion in Christianity and Islam” organized by Catholic Academy Berlin and Protestant Academy Berlin in Berlin, presenting a paper titled “Achieving Freedom through Religion: Turkish Experience”.
Fethullah Gülen, the spiritual leader of a large community of religious activists, is a prominent religious figure who advocates Turkey’s accession to EU. One of the activities of his movement known as the Gülen movement is to advance transnational interfaith. In Gülen’s opinion, interfaith dialogues have five main reasons: saving modern humans from materialism; all religions have the same sources and natures; the Koran’s call to interfaith dialogue; religious tolerance as a purpose of human life; and love as the essence of being requests tolerance. He repeatedly rejects fundamentalist, violent, and exclusivist interpretations of religion. Instead, Gülen emphasizes the importance of pragmatist reasoning to serve what he sees as the common goal of all religions: to fight materialism and to revive the existence of God in people’s lives. In other words, he appears to be seriously concerned not only with religion per se, but also with the question of how to improve the religious life of contemporary humans so as to increase both tolerance and interfaith dialogues. He prefers as a method of dialogue to forget the divisive arguments of the past and to concentrate on common points that religions share (Gözaydın 2009b: 1225). In the context of the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, Gülen has held talks with many religious leaders and institutions, such as Pope John Paul II (1998), Greek Eucumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos (1996), Sepharadic Chief Rabbi of Israel Eliyahu Bakshi Doron (1999).

Diyanet has also made ‘dialogue’ a part of its agenda from 1998. However recently it has become a concept that has been expressed more and more by the authorities: “I believe that one of the most effective steps to solve such problems is to establish ways for strong dialogue among religions as well as cultures. Such a dialogue will not only help to wipe out the prejudices of the followers of different faiths, but also contribute to solve the above-mentioned problems. I believe that lack of sincere dialogue causes the discourse of the clash of civilizations to gain ground.”

Turkish economic activity in the Caucasus and wider region exists on two levels: state agencies, especially TİKA (the Turkish Co-operation and Development Agency), provide technical and financial assistance, and Turkish businessmen invest. By the end of the 1990s, 2,500 Turkish companies were operating in numerous projects in the Central Asian and Caucasian republics, their investments amounting to $8.4 billion and involving $4 billion in construction services. Trade volume climbed from a meagre $145 million in 1992 to over $5.6 billion in 1999. Following the demise of the Soviet Union, local and external powers sometimes competed for influence in the South Caucasus, and since then three South Caucasus republics—Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan—gained their independence. TİKA, established in 1992, appears to be the most important body in Turkey that furthers economic relations with the newly independent states of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Some of TİKA’s ongoing programmes include educational scholarships and student exchanges in cooperation with the Turkish ministry of education. Currently, about ten thousand students from the Caucasus and Central Asia attend various Turkish educational institutions, at the Turkish

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13 For ‘Repercussions from Gülen–Bartholomeos Meeting’ see, http://en.fgulen.com/content/category/148/252/11/

14 “Peace and Tolerance”, a speech made by Ali Bardakoğlu, the President of Religious Affairs in the Conference on Peace and Tolerance II, co-sponsored by Appeal of Conscience Foundation and Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, November 7–9, 2005).

15 For history, roles and responsibilities of TİKA, see http://www.tika.gov.tr/EN/Icerik.ASP?ID=345
government’s expense. TİKA has arranged for the exchange of specialists in various fields, and teachers of all levels are being trained in Turkey. Turkey has opened eighteen high schools and two universities in the Caucasus under the direct control of its education ministry. Ankara has also promoted the use of the Turkish language in Azerbaijan and has beamed Turkish-language radio and television programmes via satellite to the region through its Avrasya (Eurasia) channel since April 1992.

Dİyanet, and its Foundation of Religious Affairs (TDV), “aim not only to promote Turkey’s position in the new republics but also to prevent the penetration and dissemination of Iranian and Wahhabi types of Islamic understanding.” (Aras 2005) Dİyanet supports the education of Islamic preachers, and increase aid for Muslim–Turkic peoples to restore and build mosques. TDV has opened three religious high schools and five divinity faculties in various countries of the region. Dİyanet also has a counsellor of religious services in Azerbaijan, and an attachéship in Nahjevan. There also exists a temporary official of religion in Georgia where there are no consulships and attaché units.

Until the early 1990s, Turkey’s historical, ethnic, cultural and linguistic similarities with these states did not imply anything for Turkish policy-makers. Central Asia began to play a central role in the making of Turkish foreign policy when the Turkish population claimed a kinship with Central Asian communities. In order to read Turkey’s focus in Central Asia, it is interesting to look where Dİyanet has been organized in the region. There exist counsellors of religious services in Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Since the beginning of the 1990s Central Asia has been the area where Gülen movement has mainly been focusing its strategy of development as a transnational network.16 Because of its strong presence in Central Asia, Gülen’s movement is an element in the development of Ankara’s policies in the Turkic republics there. Their presence in Central Asia is everywhere: in economic life, in the media and in the educational network. In just two years, 1991–93, hundreds of companies and dozens of schools were opened in Central Asia, as well as the cemaat newspaper Zaman, which was published in the capital of each republic. Most of the companies in Central Asia other than a few exceptions are small sized companies involved with a range of activities like baking, running restaurants, construction industry and textile manufacture.

Concluding Remarks and Further Questions

In regards to the role of religion in international relations Richard Falk adopts an approach that seeks to turn the energies of the religious resurgence in the direction what he has been calling humane global governance (Falk 2003: 208); while Scott M. Thomas proposes a parallel approach under the rubric of “virtue-ethics” (Thomas 2003: 45), and Fred Dallmayr depicts the ways in which religion in practice can shape behaviour and outlook in humanly positive directions (Dallmayr 2003: 215-231). As “remedies” for the destructive effects of economic globalization religion seems to be a means of appreciation of suffering, and construction of an ethos of solidarity; however it should also be noted that placing religion into international affairs is yet a shift of paradigm. Focusing for example on Turkey’s new perspectives on foreign policy, developing relations with countries like the United Arab Emirates, Syria, Malaysia, or Sudan reveal not simply a use of religion as soft power, but rather unexploited strategic and economic potentials. Instances like these and others as China in Africa appears to be yet other means of power construction in newly formed alliances. Global public goods like environment, health, stability have been issues of controverses in the international world. We should take into consideration that he most notable non-party to the Kyoto Protocol is the United States, which is a party to UNFCCC (United Nations

16 For a study based on field research on Gülen movement carried out between November 1996 and May 2002 in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan see Balci 2003.
Framework Convention on Climate Change) and was responsible for 36.1% of the 1990 emission levels of Annex I countries. The other Annex I non-KP Party is Turkey. Yes, religion has taken the place of ideologies; however before religion started to get important in international relations again, humanitarian sensitivities were there. Moreover necessary institutions and sanctions should be provided in order to achieve targeted means. Nevertheless, as long as “people are people” I am pessimistic that the world will be a place that sufferings, unequalities, and injustices happen to be over, I personally wish that constructivist school succeeds to create a new system.

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nization of religious officials and services and the maintenance of public stability and strength in the field of religion. Therefore, the absence of clergy in Islamic theology does not mean that religious services were delivered in a haphazard fashion or that they were not subject to any controls or organization in the historical experience of Muslim societies. Indeed, no matter how different things may appear, I can safely say that during my term of office and in my area of activity, the Presidency of Religious Affairs has acted totally on its own initiative, its own scholarly competence and accumulation of knowledge and with Turkey’s scholarly capacity while providing religious services, responding to religious questions that come from the citizens. While Sunni Islam is the overwhelming majority religion in Turkey, there are other religions practiced in the country such as Christianity and Sunni Islam. A portion of the population is irreligious. Sehzade Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey. Turkey is a country covering parts of both Europe and Asia, with 97% of the country in Asia and the remaining 3% situated in Europe. The Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits and the Sea of Marmara separate these two parts of Turkey. The country is a unitary state. It is the only Muslim country without the state religion. The other religions in the country are Christianity, Judaism, and Ashkenazi. The Islam religion can be divided into Sunni Islam, Alevi Shia Islam, Ja’fari Shia Islam and Alawi Shia Islam. Sunni Islam - 65%. Such public goods are also described as 'non-rival' because, unlike privately owned goods, their use by one consumer does not prevent another consumer from accessing them. Take clean air again, or benefiting from the fact that a particular disease has been eradicated with these, the advantage to one person does not hinder the advantage to another, whereas, if one person buys a car, another person is effectively deprived of it. And the goods are global because they range beyond national borders. In reality not all GPGs are truly global in their reach but they are, at least, regional. Everyday, the importance of global public goods (GPGs) is increasing in the globalization process. For instance, peace in Cyprus enhances peace in Turkey, Greece and the Mediterranean, and it helps peace in the world and the overall peace process. While the private profits are the strongest, a regional peace thus has positive externalities that give it public goods properties (Mendez, 1995). Galtung (1975) distinguishes between positive and negative peace. Global public goods (GPGs) are currently the subject of most active research, because the globalization of markets and the emergence of global questions have given new meaning to the concept. The first general work on the subject, published by UNDP in 1999 under the title Global public works, has become a general reference. This means that the impact or damage involved depends on a stock of capital, knowledge or pollution accumulating over a long period. In the Kaul, Inge; Grunberg, Isabelle), and Stern, Marc A.. Global Public Goods: International Cooperation in the 21st Century- New York, Oxford University Press for UNDP, 1999.