

Turkey's 'geopolitics dogma'

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A first look at Turkey's case reveals it to be an 'ideal' one, which affirms the hypothesis 'tested' in this volume: that a 'revival' of geopolitical thought occurs in those settings where a crisis of foreign policy identity coincides with a pre-existing disposition to materialist foreign policy thinking, active involvement of key actors fluent in geopolitics-speak and their employment of this discourse in pursuing a conservative agenda. A second look, however, calls for qualifying this hypothesis in that geopolitical discourse has been employed in Turkey by a variety of actors in pursuit of political agendas that are conservative/radical in different ways – so much so that the same set of notions and images driven from classical geopolitical thought have been invoked in justifying policy agendas diametrically opposed to each other. For example, in the post-Cold War era, whereas a coalition of 'Euro sceptic' actors have tapped geopolitics to make a case for Turkey remaining outside European integration, those wishing to make a case for Turkey joining European accession have employed the same discourse. This, I offer, could be understood as a function of the historical centrality of geopolitical assumptions and language to Turkey's security imaginary – heretofore referred to as the 'geopolitics dogma'.

The chapter begins by laying out the main features of Turkey's 'geopolitics dogma' in an attempt to highlight the mutually constitutive relationship between security imaginary, (foreign policy) identity and (re)production of geopolitical thought. While it may seem counterintuitive to begin with 'the geopolitics dogma', I have chosen to do so to underscore my finding that the post-1989 'revival' of geopolitical thought in Turkey is more one of quantity and less of quality. That is to say, references to geopolitical assumptions and language have never been far from central to Turkey's security imaginary. The end of the Cold War has only reinforced an already existing propensity to invoke geopolitics in support of policy choices of various kinds – conservative and radical.

Put differently, the chapter begins with 'the geopolitics dogma' not because this is how I began my research, but because this is where the process of tracing the changes in the practical, formal and popular discourses of myriad actors in

Turkey has led me – i.e. historical ubiquity of geopolitical assumptions and language to Turkey's foreign policy discourse. In what follows, I outline the main features of the dogma and highlight its historical centrality to Turkey's security imaginary. Next, the chapter shows that the post-1989 period in Turkey witnessed a proliferation of publications and think-tanks seeking to provide a 'geopolitical perspective'. While there was not much that was new in terms of ideas (after all General Suat İlhan, Turkey's foremost geopolitician since the 1960s and Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu, current Minister of Foreign Affairs and author of the best-seller *Geopolitical Sensitivity*, while coming from different professional and ideological backgrounds, tap into the same set of ideas), what was new was the widespread dissemination of these ideas. In the third part of the chapter, I locate this quantitative revival in Turkey's geopolitical thought in international politics – namely, the post-1989 crisis in Turkey's already fragile 'Western' identity.¹ The argument comes full circle in the fourth section where I highlight the domestic politics dimension as bringing about the centrality and persistence of geopolitical assumptions and language to Turkey's foreign policy discourse – namely the role of the military, the state of International Relations as an academic field, and the project of locating Turkey in the 'West'. The fifth and final section further illustrates this inter- and intra-national complex with reference to post-1989 debates on Turkey's accession to European integration, where the versatile yet ultimately indeterminate nature of geopolitics as discourse is highlighted with reference to myriad actors' resort to geopolitics in the struggle over locating Turkey in the 'West' (read: EU) or elsewhere, with radically different implications for the country's domestic politics. As such, the chapter has implications beyond Turkey's case in that, while underscoring the versatility of geopolitics as discourse in fixing (foreign policy) identity it also highlights the fragility of such a 'fix' – contrary to assumptions of determinacy flaunted by geopoliticians.

Turkey's 'geopolitics dogma' (identifying a 'pre-existing materialist disposition in foreign policy thinking')

In accounting for Turkey's actors' (pre-)disposition towards geopolitics, I offer the concept of 'geopolitics dogma', defined as a structure of well-established assumptions as to what geography tells one to do and why this makes sense. Different from any geopolitical truth-claim that is likely to enjoy some authority warranted by the ostensibly 'scientific' and/or 'god-given'/'natural' quality of geopolitics (as in Classical Geopolitics), the 'geopolitics dogma' is a structure of geopolitical truth-claims, the constituent parts of which support one another

¹ This is not to suggest that foreign policy identity is not precarious elsewhere.

in a tautological fashion thereby rendering it impossible to verify the truth/falsity of statements emerging out of this structure.²

In identifying the main features of Turkey's geopolitics dogma, I draw from formal geopolitics as shaped by Turkey's two foremost geopoliticians, namely, General (Ret.) Suat İlhan and Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu while pointing to inter-textuality between formal, practical and popular forms of discourse.

General İlhan is a well-known public commentator and prolific author who has published some twenty-one books³ including several studies on various aspects of Turkey's geopolitics.⁴ Professor Davutoğlu is the author of the 2001 non-fiction best-seller, *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth).⁵ Professor Davutoğlu's ideas deserve particular treatment not only because of their apparent popularity, but also because he has had access to the 'Prince's ear' during the AKP's (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party) term in office (since November 2002). Davutoğlu was appointed as Ambassador-without-portfolio by the AKP government and served as advisor to both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs 2002 through 2009. In 2009, he was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The first feature of Turkey's geopolitics dogma is the understanding drawn from Classical Geopolitics that geographical elements are 'natural' and 'constant' 'facts' that are 'out there' waiting to be 'discovered' by the geopolitician and that politics driven by the 'facts' of geography is a foil to idealism, ideology and human will. Adopting such an unreflexive approach to geography helps to establish geopolitics as the 'view from nowhere' that offers a 'scientific' and 'objective' outlook on world affairs. Once geopolitics is established as a 'privileged perspective', alternative views are marginalised by default, as they come to be considered 'unscientific', 'idealistic', 'political' or outright 'ideological'. Indeed, General İlhan considers geography to be the only 'constant' component of geopolitics (other components being the human and temporal dimensions).⁶

² Given Turkey's current divide between the so-called 'secularists' and 'Islamists', it is difficult to underplay the dogma's appeal to and authority over both those favouring 'scientific' and/or 'divine' justification for their truth-claims.

³ See İlhan, 1971, 1989, 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2004.

⁴ There is also a distinct Ottoman/Turkish tradition. For instance, the chronicles of the seventeenth-century Ottoman historian Naima are replete with the metaphor of 'state as an organism'. See Thomas and Itzkowitz, 1972.

⁵ Davutoğlu's book went through several printings in a manner unusual for a book of academic nature and was lauded by the Turkish media (see, for example, Akyol, 2003; Kömürcü, 2003 and Yılmaz, 2001). As of this writing, the book was in its twenty-ninth printing. Most of those who purchase the book are likely to be university students who are assigned the book on Turkish Foreign Policy courses – which also begs explanation. That a book of such polemical nature is assigned to university students as required reading in courses on Turkey's Foreign Policy says less about the reception of the book than the state of International Relations (IR) in Turkey (see below).

⁶ İlhan, 1989.

Geopolitical analysis is a 'search for truth', he writes; it is a way of looking at the world that is untainted by personal or political ambitions or cultural proclivities.⁷ Accordingly, İlhan portrays geopolitics as 'the only branch of knowledge that could uncover and help to establish' such 'realities', which he views as 'the means and ends of threats to security'.⁸

The second feature of Turkey's geopolitics dogma is the axiomatic nature of widely held views about the primacy of geography as a factor shaping world politics. Since geographical knowledge is portrayed as the 'view from nowhere', policy recommendations that are justified with reference to geopolitics are portrayed as '*fait accompli* of geography'.⁹ 'Geopolitics is politics shaped by geography', writes General İlhan, 'sensitivities of countries are determined by geographical factors'.¹⁰ Professor Davutoğlu concurs: strategies should be rooted in 'geopolitical, geocultural and geoeconomic realities'.¹¹ As such, the essentially political character of policy making is denied; geopolitical truth-claims are offered in place of political outcomes – geopolitically correct policies, as it were.

The third feature of the geopolitics dogma is the assumption that Turkey's geographical location is somehow more unique than others and that it somehow has more deterministic power over Turkey's policies than other countries. The extra-determinism of Turkey's geography is considered to stem from its 'uniqueness'. For, it is a 'central' state that 'constitutes the hinge of the world island that is made up of three continents. It is both the lock and the key to this hinge. It connects the Mediterranean and the Black Sea ... It brings together and keeps apart the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East'.¹²

İlhan assumes Turkey's geography to hold extra-determinism over its foreign as well as domestic policies when he maintains that only 'strong unitary nation states' can survive in Turkey's geographical location.¹³ Needless to say, İlhan understands state strength in solely military terms, and not in terms of the strengthening of democratic norms and practices and state–society relations in addition to the military. The argument that Turkey should become a 'strong state' rests upon a transformed version of the 'state as an organism' metaphor drawn from Classical Geopolitics.¹⁴ Whereas Classical geopoliticians underscored geography's determinism over a country's 'needs' and 'interests' in the inter-national arena (as with *Lebensraum*), the transformed version as found in İlhan's work stresses the determinacy of geography over state structure and domestic policy making (i.e. intra-national relations).¹⁵

⁷ See also Davutoğlu, 2001; Olcaytu, 1996 and Sezgin and Yılmaz, 1965.

⁸ İlhan, 1989, 5 and 30. ⁹ İlhan, 1989, 55.

¹⁰ İlhan, 1989, 3 and x. ¹¹ Davutoğlu, 2001, 58.

¹² İlhan, 2000, 34. ¹³ İlhan, 2000, 36. See also Işık, 1987.

¹⁴ See Bilgin, 2007.

¹⁵ For a discussion on the South American context, see Hepple, 1992.

The transformed version of the 'states as an organism' metaphor is invoked in both the high school 'National Security' textbook (see below) and the 2005 fiction best-seller *Metal Fırtına* (Metal Storm).¹⁶ The novel tells the story of an imaginary US invasion of Turkey in the year 2007. The plot begins with the collapse of Turkey's defences against the invading US forces. The military failure is represented as a consequence of a political failure; the latter is seen as having been caused by politicians who have overlooked the exigencies of Turkey's geography that 'demand' a 'strong state' understood in the above-mentioned narrow terms.¹⁷

The fourth feature of the geopolitics dogma is the prevalence of representations of Turkey as surrounded by 'enemies' and occupying a geographical location that is the 'envy' of friend and foe alike. İlhan writes:

Turkey occupies a very significant position according to both the heartland theory [of Mackinder] and the rimland theory [of Spykman] ... No matter which theory you adopt in your analysis Turkey is one of those countries that demand priority at both the regional and global levels.¹⁸

In a similar fashion, at the end of *Metal Fırtına*, the great powers' decision to put together a coalition led by Russia and to press on the already embattled United States to withdraw from Turkey is explained again through appealing to geopolitical truth-claims: 'These lands have a strategic significance,' Turkey's fictional prime minister wryly notes: '[n]o powerful country would want another to get hold of these territories all by itself'.¹⁹ As such, other states are portrayed (in Turkey's formal and popular geopolitical discourse alike) as having malicious 'goals' and 'intentions' whereas Turkey innocuously responds to their actions.²⁰

Having identified the main features of Turkey's 'geopolitics dogma', the remainder of this section highlights its centrality to Turkey's security imagination.²¹ One way of doing this is to look at the classics of Turkey's foreign policy,

¹⁶ The novel's title, 'Metal Storm', invokes a parallel with 'Desert Storm', the US-led coalition war against Iraq (1991). *Metal Fırtına* took Turkey's close observers by surprise not only because of the outrageousness of its plot but also due to its record sales. At the time of this writing, the *Metal Fırtına* was in its sixth printing with 50,000 copies published each time. Although this figure may not seem so high for a population of over seventy million, given Turkey's not-so-strong readership, the significance of this sales record by two (until then) virtually unknown authors cannot be underestimated.

¹⁷ For analyses of popular geopolitics in Turkey, see Yanık, 2008 and 2009.

¹⁸ İlhan, 1989, 61. See also Doğanay, 1989; Gürkan, 1987a, 1987b; Harp Akademileri Komutanlığı, 1963; Işık, 1987, and Ü. Özdağ, 2003.

¹⁹ Uçar and Turna, 2005, 160.

²⁰ Such a portrayal of Turkey's international relations does not only render invisible the agency of Turkey's policy-makers, but also that of their global counterparts. After all, if Turkey is a 'central' state, then others' policies too should be considered as exigencies of politics as determined by geography.

²¹ See also Bilgin, 2003b.



Man: 'Germany has harsh winters. They have to plan ahead. This has resulted in German advance in development and planning'; 'The English have a small country, they have travelled to other lands. As a result, they have advanced in seafaring and science'; 'In Israel water and land are scarce; they have developed new irrigation techniques'; 'the United States is far from Europe. To be able to monitor from far, they have advanced in information technology.'

Boy: 'But then what did we develop?'

Man: 'Nothing. For we are a country of immense geopolitical significance.'

Figure 7.1. Political cartoon by Behiç Ak demonstrating 'geopolitics as common sense' in Turkey. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist

which invariably begin with discussions on the primacy (if not determinacy) of geography.²² A more recent and widely used textbook on Turkey's foreign policy is by Baskın Oran (2005). The two-volume textbook's singular moment of reflection on the primacy of geopolitical truth-claims in Turkey's foreign policy discourse is a political cartoon (reproduced in Figure 7.1).

Another way of highlighting the centrality of geopolitics dogma to Turkey's security imaginary is to point to those instances when geopolitical truth-claims are marshalled to respond to the challenges directed against various arguments emerging out of the imaginary. In what follows, I will resort to the latter course and focus on post-Cold War foreign policy debates.

A significant component of Turkey's security imaginary has been the Republican leaders' answer to the identity question: 'Who are we?'²³ 'Western' was the answer the founders of the Republic offered.²⁴ During the inter-war period, they sought to write Turkey's 'Westernness' into 'race' and

²² See Gönübol *et al.*, 1989 [1967] and Sander, 1982.

²³ Weldes, 1999a. ²⁴ Bilgin, 2009.

'language' – tapping then prevalent theories of identity.²⁵ Later, during the Cold War, the ideological stance of anti-communism and NATO membership served as the marker of Turkey's 'Western' identity.²⁶ Turkey's geographical location meant its ideological stance mattered even more. For years, Turkey assumed a key role in the choreography of NATO defence against Soviet expansionism. In the post-Cold War period, challenges to Turkey's 'Westernness' have increasingly been met by writing it into 'space'. For instance, in response to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing who declared that 'Turkey's capital [is] not in Europe, 95 % of its population [lives] outside Europe, and it [is] not a European country',²⁷ various actors have pointed to Turkey's Cold War contributions to security in Europe and what it has to offer towards advancing European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Needless to say, both qualities are considered to be a function of Turkey's geographical location and its implications for politics.²⁸ The assumption being that, if not culture, religion, ideology or civilisation, geopolitics secures for Turkey a place in the 'West' and/or 'Europe'.²⁹

What renders geopolitics discourse particularly powerful in Turkey has also to do with its 'Westernness'. Turkey's geopoliticians treat as a 'timeless truth' the prominence British geopolitician Halford Mackinder ascribes to Turkey's geography. Although Turkey is not located in the 'heartland' as plotted by Mackinder, it somehow emerges, in the writings of Turkey's geopoliticians, as a 'central state'.³⁰ Turkey is a 'central state', various authors assure their readers, not because we, as Turks, would like to think so, but because world-renowned Western geopoliticians, such as Mackinder, say so. While Turkey's geopoliticians begin their studies with an overview of the ideas and ideals of 'Western' geopoliticians, the substance of what the canons of classical geopolitics say is somehow considered less important when compared to what cursory references to them allow Turkey's authors to 'say'.

The relationship between the geopolitics dogma and the Sèvres metaphor, another component of Turkey's security imaginary, further illustrates its centrality.³¹ The Sèvres Treaty³² marked an attempt by the Allies to divide up the

²⁵ See Aytürk, 2004 and Göksu-Özdoğan, 2001.

²⁶ Yılmaz and Bilgin, 2005.

²⁷ "Turkey Entry "Would Destroy EU"", 2002.

²⁸ See, for example, Bir, 1998 and Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Turkey, 2000.

²⁹ Bilgin, 2004.

³⁰ See, for example, Doğanay, 1989; Hacısalıhoğlu, 2003; Harp Akademileri Komutanlığı, 1963; Ü. Özdağ, 2003; Türsan, 1971b and Uzun, 1981.

³¹ The Sèvres metaphor has a rather paradoxical relationship with Turkey's actors' claim to a Western identity. Whereas being 'Western' requires identification with other Western actors, the effect the Sèvres metaphor seems to have on the psyche of many is symptomatic of a failure to trust those very same actors. Yet, this paradox is explained away through resort to geopolitics: since it is geography that drives world politics, neither Turkey nor other state actors can resist *faits accomplis* of geography. Past 'Western' advances on Turkey are therefore understood as exigencies of politics determined by geography.

³² The Sèvres Treaty, 1920.

Ottoman Empire following World War I. The Treaty comprised clauses that allowed for the division of most of the Empire's territories between Britain, France, Italy and Greece. It also recognised the right of self-determination for the Armenian and Kurdish populations thus rendering the Empire a shadow of its former self. In present-day Turkey, the Sèvres metaphor is frequently invoked to remind the audiences of the destructive effects of the Treaty, thereby reinforcing the trauma. In the novel *Metal Fırtına*, for instance, one phase of the US military operation (whereby Turkey's territories are carved up between a US mining corporation, the Greek Orthodox Church and Armenia) is dubbed 'Operation Sèvres', in an all-too-obvious reference to the Treaty.

Lest the continuing relevance of the Sèvres metaphor as a guide to Turkey's foreign policy are questioned, the timelessness of 'Western conspiracies' as such is written into space. Consider the textbook of the high school course, 'National Security' (Milli Güvenlik Bilgisi). This course, which is compulsory for all high school students, has been a part of the curriculum since 1926. Previously it was called 'Military Service', reflecting its post-Independence War purpose of generating awareness of the 'virtues of military service'. In time, the title as well as the content of the course has changed. The most recent version³³ devotes a significant number of pages to Turkey's international relations.³⁴ What is interesting for the purposes of this chapter is that Turkey's international relations are represented as a function of its geography. The first few sentences of the textbook read as follows: 'The Turkish Republic, because of its geopolitical position, has experienced [political] ploys by external powers. The Turkish youth need to be prepared to confront such ploys.'³⁵

In the rest of the book, the schemes laid out by 'external powers' are discussed in detail with recourse to geopolitical truth-claims while Turkey's foreign policies are represented as mere responses to the aggressive behaviour of others; thus erasing the agency of Turkey's policy makers and representing them as mere slaves to the exigencies of geography.

The significance of the 'National Security' textbook cannot be underestimated not only because it is required reading for all high school students, but also because, as Ayşe Gül Altınay³⁶ has highlighted, it is the only course in the high school curriculum that takes up current affairs issues. It is not only substance but also style that the 'National Security' textbook disseminates. For, the only language high school students learn to use when making sense of international relations is that of geopolitics as taught by military officers following a textbook written by the military. Young men who do not have access to high school are exposed to this language during compulsory military service, as a part of which they attend seminars on Turkey's international relations couched

³³ Lise Milli Güvenlik Bilgisi, 2004 [1998].

³⁴ Altınay, 2005. ³⁵ Lise Milli Güvenlik Bilgisi, 2004, 7.

³⁶ Altınay, 2003.

in geopolitical terms. Although it is difficult to know the extent to which course material is carried over to their life after school and/or military service, it could be surmised that the course's bearing for current affairs issues makes it somewhat more interesting to students/conscripts compared to other course material that has less palpable relevance to the 'reality' 'out there'.

The chapter so far has identified the main features of Turkey's geopolitics dogma and highlighted its centrality to Turkey's security imaginary. The next section is designed as an exposé of the ubiquity of appeals to geopolitical truth-claims in post-Cold War Turkey through which the dogma and the security imaginary of which it is a central part has been re-produced.

Post-Cold War ubiquity of geopolitical truth-claims (a 'revival or not?')

In recent years, close observers of Turkey have witnessed a proliferation of publications, publishing outlets and think-tanks that claim to provide a 'privileged' perspective on world politics by virtue of their 'geopolitical outlook'. There is, for instance, the journal *Jeopolitik* (Geopolitics, 2003ff.) and the two in-house journals of ASAM, *Avrasya Dosyası* (The Eurasian Dossier, 1994–) and *Stratejik Analiz* (Strategic Analysis, 2000ff.). All three are policy journals that publish articles on world politics in general and Turkey's international relations in particular. They come out regularly and are distributed widely to bookshops and newsagents around the country. There is also *Strateji* (Strategy, 2004ff.), the weekly supplement of the centre-left daily, *Cumhuriyet*, published in cooperation with a privately funded think-tank, TUSAM (Center for the Study of National Security Strategies, established in 2004) that specialises in research into 'national security strategies'.³⁷ Although it is difficult to know what kind of readership these new publications have, the very fact that they have been coming out with minimum interruption may be considered indicative of interest in the kind of 'geopolitical outlook' they purport to provide.³⁸

³⁷ *Cumhuriyet's* readership is not strong but loyal; for years, it has been the newspaper of Turkey's state elite and other bearers of a statist conception of politics. For TUSAM, see www.tusam.net.

³⁸ Past examples tended to be short-lived. The only exceptions are those published by publicly funded universities (such as the more academically-oriented *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, published since 1960 by Ankara University's Faculty of Political Science) and publicly funded think-tanks (as with the policy-oriented quarterly journal *Foreign Policy*, published since 1974 by the Ankara-based Foreign Policy Institute). Both are specialised journals unlikely to be (physically and/or intellectually) accessible to those who are outside the field. There is also the new privately funded academic journal *Uluslararası İlişkiler* (International Relations). The latter's success warns against reading too much into the longevity of geopolitics journals and magazines.

Among Turkey's new think-tanks, the now defunct ASAM is the one that first comes to mind – not always for the right reasons: the bold manner in which ASAM pushed for a military-focused foreign policy led some to quip that 'the centre has a lot of tanks and not-so-considerable novel thinking'. ASAM stands for 'Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi' (Eurasian Centre for Strategic Studies). It was set up in 1999 as Turkey's first privately funded think-tank specialising in strategy and security issues. During the decade it was functional, ASAM did not merely claim to provide a privileged 'geopolitical perspective' on and insight into international relations, but also actively sought to carve out an intellectual space wherein citizens' 'geopolitical consciousness' would flourish – to quote the centre's website.³⁹

Over the years, ASAM published several monographs and edited volumes on 'geopolitics', including the Turkish translation of an edited volume by Colin Gray,⁴⁰ perhaps the most prominent contemporary representative of the Classical Geopolitics tradition, and the collected works of Colonel Muzaffer Özdağ.⁴¹ Late Colonel Özdağ, besides being the father of ASAM president, Professor Ümit Özdağ, is better known as a prolific author and a prominent figure in Turkey's ultra-nationalist right.⁴² When Colonel Özdağ initially began to air his views on Turkish nationalism and the need to reach out to Turkey's Central Asian brethren, it was still during the Cold War and flaunting such ideas was not without its dangers; those who dared risked being branded as a threat to national security.⁴³ Geopolitics proved a safe outlet for Colonel Özdağ's ideas; after all, it was not he, but the 'science' of geopolitics that made these recommendations. Arguably, it was in and through geopolitics that Özdağ found a broader audience for his otherwise potentially destabilising views and reach beyond his traditional (ultra-nationalist) constituency. His ideas were aired once again in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union when ASAM reprinted his collected works.

Another prominent geopolitician whose works have reached broader audiences in recent years is General (Ret.) Suat İlhan, who, as noted above, is no ordinary retired general; he is also a prolific author and a public commentator. During 1967–1969, he set up and taught the first geopolitics course at

³⁹ See ASAM's mission statement at www.avsam.org.tr/misyon.asp (accessed 26 May 2006).

⁴⁰ Gray, 2003.

⁴¹ Following Özdağ's death in 2002, ASAM published his collected works in four volumes. See M. Özdağ, 2003. See also Özdağ, 2000 and 2001.

⁴² Colonel Özdağ first came to prominence as a low-ranking military officer partaking in the 1960 military coup. When dissent surfaced among the coup-makers, he was one of the first to be forced to early retirement. Özdağ became a central figure in Turkish nationalist right until he retired from active politics in 1971.

⁴³ The nature of the threat was understood as ethnic irredentism at home and Soviet wrath in response to perceived expansionism on the part of Turkey. These threat perceptions, in turn, are rooted in the trauma of World War I whereby 'pan-Turkist' adventurism on the part of some Ottoman statesmen led to disastrous losses on the Russian front.

the Military Academy. His lecture notes were later published in book form⁴⁴ and have, since then, been used as teaching material at the Military Academy and the National Security Academy.⁴⁵ His classical work, *Jeopolitik Duyarlılık* (Geopolitical Sensitivity) was published in 1989 by the state-funded Turkish Historical Society but soon after sank into oblivion save the aforementioned institutions. It was as part of post-Cold War debates on Turkey's accession to European integration that İlhan and his 'geopolitical outlook' gained a new lease of life. His 2000 book, *Why 'No' to the European Union: The Geopolitical Perspective* was widely distributed and read. Volume II of the same book followed in 2002. In 2003, *Geopolitical Sensitivity* was reprinted; this time by a commercial publishing house.⁴⁶

In his early works, which are replete with approving references to Classical Geopolitics, General İlhan had called for adopting geopolitics as the guide for shaping Turkey's domestic and foreign policies. To emphasise how 'accurately' geopolitics describes the world, İlhan referred to the case of Germany and its search for colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet in a typically unreflexive fashion, he failed to note that if geopolitics is able to describe 'accurately' such developments, this is because geopolitics – like realism during the Cold War – 'has helped to *construct* some of that reality'.⁴⁷ In his later publications, İlhan focused more on specific foreign policy issues, as with the prospect of Turkey's EU membership, which he is staunchly against. Notwithstanding his conviction that the 'EU won't let Turkey in' ('because of its Muslim identity', İlhan's point of convergence with Samuel P. Huntington), İlhan nevertheless leaves open the possibility that Turkey may become a full member, but only as part of a 'Western conspiracy' designed to carve out some of its territories and/or render it defenceless.⁴⁸ In this scenario, EU conditionality is portrayed as part of a conspiracy designed to weaken Turkey's military and therefore render defenceless the secular unitary make-up of the Republic – yet another instance of Turkey's geopoliticians invoking the Sèvres metaphor to justify their scepticism toward Turkey's accession to European integration.⁴⁹

Another geopolitician who has called for modifying Turkey's almost exclusively Western orientation is Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu, currently Minister of Foreign Affairs. In his 2001 best-seller, *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth) Davutoğlu maintained that Turkey's Cold War foreign policies 'denied' the country its 'natural sphere of influence' and its 'strategic depth'. This is because, he argues, the aforementioned policies were designed to make the most of

⁴⁴ İlhan, 1971 and 1989.

⁴⁵ The National Security Academy was set up in the aftermath of the 1960 military coup to provide in-service training to high-level civil servants and media representatives.

⁴⁶ Ötügen, which is well known for its ultra-nationalist leanings, reprinted İlhan's other early works as well.

⁴⁷ Booth, 2005, 5 (original emphasis).

⁴⁸ See İlhan, 2000, 40–42. ⁴⁹ See Bilgin, 2005.

Turkey's geographical location for the purposes aiding Euro-Atlantic policy making – that is, deterring 'Soviet expansionism' – whereas Turkey's own interests demand tapping into its 'strategic depth' – that is, opening up to former Ottoman lands as well as other areas where Muslim and Turkic peoples live. The solution to Turkey's foreign policy problems, according to Davutoğlu, is to be found in a 'new strategic theory' that would help Turkey's policy makers make use of the opportunities provided by the post-Cold War 'geopolitical and geoeconomic vacuum' in Turkey's zone of 'strategic depth'.⁵⁰

To recapitulate, although there has been, in the post-Cold War era, a proliferation in publications and publishing outlets that provide a professedly geopolitical perspective, there is very little new thinking that warrants calling it a revival of geopolitical thought. Of the some 101 international relations books (in Turkish) during 1989–2005, thirty-four of them have 'geopolitics' either in the title or among their keywords.⁵¹ Just under 34 per cent is not an insignificant figure. Yet, going beyond the title and the keywords of these books reveals that the discourse of geopolitics is used to regurgitate ideas and formulae developed in earlier periods. What is new, then, is the ubiquity of geopolitical thought thanks to the widespread availability of writings on foreign policy thinking already embedded in a materialist tradition.

What is also new in the post-Cold War era is myriad actors' recourse to geopolitical truth-claims in support of a Eurosceptic agenda, better known as 'Eurasianism'. In Turkey's context, 'Eurasianism' serves as an umbrella term whose very ambiguity seems to have allowed for coalitions to be formed among otherwise unlikely fellows (see below). General İlhan, Colonel Özdağ and Professor Davutoğlu, despite differences in emphasis (İlhan and Özdağ on geography and national identity, and Davutoğlu on Muslim identity and geography) share the conviction that Turkey should relocate 'eastwards' if it is to fulfil its 'destiny' of becoming a great power. What has allowed such coalitions to be formed and justified, in turn, is Turkey's geopolitics dogma and the security imaginary of which it is a part; both of which have been re-produced in and through Turkey's post-Cold War 'ontological insecurity'. This is what the chapter turns to next.

Turkey's post-Cold War crisis in foreign policy identity

Until 1989, the prevalence of 'ideological geopolitics'⁵² as the 'organizing script and defining drama' of world politics⁵³ had meant that by virtue of the anti-communist posture it adopted, Turkey was ascribed the role of a 'Western'

⁵⁰ Davutoğlu, 2001, 71 and 115.

⁵¹ This number is derived from database research at the National Library in Ankara, which is a deposit library.

⁵² Agnew, 1998. ⁵³ Ó Tuathail, 1996, 225.

state. Whereas the United States, in the absence of the Soviet 'enemy', experienced a 'widespread sense of uncertainty about how to organise world politics',⁵⁴ for Turkey the crisis was one of a shadow being cast upon its highly-prized 'Western' identity. Many in Turkey had, until then, thought that their country had succeeded in locating itself firmly in the 'West' by virtue of the role it assumed within Western institutions in general and NATO in particular. Indeed, NATO membership was viewed by many in Turkey as not only ending the anxieties caused by post-war Soviet demands⁵⁵ but also bringing Turkey into the Western security system as a fully recognised 'Western' state.⁵⁶ In time, acceding to European integration came to be seen as the next logical step on the Westernisation path – pretty much like joining 'economic NATO', as one external observer wryly noted.

Earlier signs of the fragility of Turkey's 'Western' identity had been witnessed during the 1980s when Turkey–EC relations took a downward turn following the 1980 coup d'état and the promulgation of the 1982 constitution, which the EC had found wanting in terms of political rights and freedoms. The EC's 1989 'no' to Turkey's application for full membership, and the calls for a 'special arrangement' (i.e. less than full membership) had already signalled the widening gap between Turkey's preferred location (in the 'West'/'Europe') and the location it was being assigned by others (in the 'Middle East' or the 'Mediterranean'). The decision to welcome some former 'Eastern' bloc countries into the EU while 'Western' Turkey was waiting at the doorstep, when coupled with EU actors' mid-1990s approach to Turkey within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership framework, was particularly worrying for some; it was invariably viewed as signalling that Turkey was being located in the 'non-West' and/or 'non-Europe'.⁵⁷ The website of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs put into words this post-1989 feeling of rejection and betrayal: 'Having played an active role in the demise of the Soviet bloc, it was only natural for Turkey to aspire for inclusion in the new European architecture which it helped to build' (Relations between Turkey and the European Union n.d.).

In all their haste, many in Turkey failed to reflect upon their own shortcomings (as with Turkey's domestic problems being exported to 'Europe' thereby further troubling the already troubled relationship) or to appreciate the transformation the EU had begun to go through since 1989.⁵⁸

During this period, Turkey experienced troubles in its relationship with the United States as well. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, successive US administrations had become less accepting of the limits of Turkey's

⁵⁴ Agnew, 1998, 119.

⁵⁵ In the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union made demands on Turkey's Eastern provinces and joint control of the strategic waterways of the Straits.

⁵⁶ Yılmaz and Bilgin, 2005.

⁵⁷ Bilgin, 2004. ⁵⁸ For a discussion see Bilgin, 2001.

democratisation efforts and the not-so-bright human rights record. Coupled with the end of US grants after 1993 and the decline in US economic aid after 1994 (which increasingly began to come with strings attached), little room for manoeuvre was left for Turkey's policy makers who were desperately in search for a 'Western' ally that would reaffirm Turkey's 'Westernness' without any reservations.⁵⁹

It was within such a climate that there emerged heated debates in Turkey on the country's identity and role in post-1989 world politics. What is significant for the purposes of this chapter is that the participants to these debates articulated their views through tapping geopolitics. During the 1990s, it was invariably argued that Turkey had made great contributions to securing Europe throughout the Cold War and was likely to contribute further in the post-Cold War era by virtue of its 'significant' geographical location. Consider the words of Hikmet Sami Türk (then Turkey's defence minister) who maintained that:

Geographic destiny placed Turkey in the virtual epicentre of a 'Bermuda Triangle' of post-Cold War volatility and uncertainty, with the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East encircling us. Rather than isolating ourselves from the pressing conflicts at our doorstep, Turkey decided to assume a pivotal role in promoting regional peace, stability and cooperation in contributing to vital efforts to end human suffering and conflict.⁶⁰

The point being that in recent years various actors have invoked geopolitical truth-claims within a context characterised by the EU's ambivalence towards Turkey's membership and less-accommodating policies by the United States, which rallied myriad actors to the cause of reminding the 'Western' allies of Turkey's 'geopolitical significance' lest they had forgotten in their post-Cold War euphoria.

There is one caveat: perhaps one should not make too much of such emphasis being put by Turkey's actors on their country's geography. The widely shared assumption in Turkey is that throughout the Cold War, it was Turkey's contribution to security in Europe (which is understood to be a function of its geography and military prowess) that helped to locate the country in the 'West'. Is it not only 'natural' for Turkey's actors to emphasise what they consider to be their greatest source of strength? After all, EU actors make similar points through deploying analogous notions in the attempt to convince the sceptics within the EU of the virtues of Turkey's membership.⁶¹ That is to say, there may

⁵⁹ These dynamics in Turkey-US relations have changed since the 2001 economic crisis in Turkey and the 9/11 attacks.

⁶⁰ Türk, 1999.

⁶¹ See, for example, 'The Impact Assessment Report of October 2004' and 'Recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's Progress towards Accession'. Available at www.europa.eu.int.

be little that begs an explanation here: if you have a significant geographical location (Mackinder says so, it must be true!) you try to make the best of it.

One problem with this line of reasoning is that it explains away the contradictions (geography as Turkey's greatest source of strength and weakness; geopolitics as pushing towards and pulling away from Europe/Eurasia) in Turkey's geopolitical discourse.⁶² Whereas analyses sensitive to political agency and socio-economic context would expose such contradictions as (unintended) consequences of ('nested'⁶³) games being played by multiple actors in the international and the intra-national realm.⁶⁴ Another problem, more significant for the purposes of this chapter, is that such reasoning leaves unanswered the question: 'Why geopolitics but not another set of notions and theories as to how the world works?' In the following section, the chapter maintains that if geopolitics has come to occupy a central place in Turkey's security imaginary, this should be considered as an unintended outcome of two main factors: namely, the military's entrenchment of its own central role in Turkey's politics, and the way in which the field of International Relations has evolved in Turkey.

Why geopolitics (but not another materialist explanation as to how the world works)?

Geopolitics as a field of study and discourse was introduced to Turkey for the first time during World War II in a series of articles published in mainstream newspapers that called for developing its study in Turkey.⁶⁵ By the time World War II came to an end, the study and discourse of geopolitics had become stigmatised in the 'West' because of its links with Nazi expansionism. However, in Turkey, there was little if any sign of such stigma being attached to geopolitics. Far from it, Turkey's aspiring geopoliticians presented geopolitics as a 'science' that was studied at 'Western' institutions of higher education and used for shaping post-war policies in the West and elsewhere.⁶⁶ The implication of these writings being that both Turkey's 'Western' orientation and its foreign policy interests required achieving mastery over this new 'science'.⁶⁷

⁶² Such contradictions are not unique to Turkey. See Ö Tuathail, 2002.

⁶³ Putnam, 1988. ⁶⁴ Bilgin, 2007.

⁶⁵ Eren, 1964; Sezgin and Yılmaz, 1965; see also Fahri [Findıkoğlu], 1946. It is likely that officers of the Ottoman Army were exposed to classical geopolitical thought during their training. Many of Turkey's founding leaders had served in the Ottoman Army had military background. Yet their public discourse did not invoke classical geopolitics when justifying foreign (or domestic) policy. See Bilgin, 2007.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Eren, 1964; İlhan, 1986; Öngör, 1963; Osmanağaoğlu, 1968; Sezgin and Yılmaz, 1965 and Turfan, 1962.

⁶⁷ Western authors' reservations regarding the 'contamination' caused by the close links between Classical Geopolitics and Nazi expansionism were not totally lost on Turkey's geopoliticians. Yet, this did not prevent them from making explicit and approving references

Although geopolitics was not shunned in Turkey as in the West, interest in geopolitical notions and theories nevertheless remained confined to the military well until the late 1960s. Following World War II, the Military Academy (and the National Security Academy after 1960) introduced a series of lectures on geopolitics to the curriculum.⁶⁸ The majority of the texts that were published during this period are written up versions of the lectures delivered at these two military institutions by professors from leading universities in Turkey.⁶⁹

The military's attraction to geopolitics is not 'unique' to Turkey. In other parts of the world such as South America where militaries have a track record of intervention in politics, geopolitics has emerged as the preserve of military actors and provided 'a more conceptual and comprehensive foundation for an ambitious political-military vision and theory of the state.'⁷⁰ Had the aforementioned texts remained confined to military institutions and outlets, the military's interest in geopolitics could perhaps be likened to a typical military bureaucracy that seeks to enhance its understanding of and control over space to fulfil its duty of defending the state. However, the military in Turkey has not stopped there but played an active role in introducing geopolitics to civilian audiences, disseminating the idea of geopolitics as a 'privileged perspective' and representing itself as enjoying unrivalled command over this perspective. Indeed, in formal writings by military officers that came out in the aftermath of the 1960 (the first) coup d'état, geopolitics is presented as a 'view from nowhere' that 'shows the way' when civilians fail because of their 'ideals and ideologies.'⁷¹ Instrumental in the popularisation of these ideas and assumptions has been the aforementioned high school course on 'National Security', which is designed and taught by military officers, compulsory military service for the male population over eighteen years of age, and the National Security Academy.

This is not to suggest that the military is solely responsible for the emergence of the geopolitics dogma or its centrality to Turkey's security imaginary. Geopolitics has its own attractions; the field of International Relations in Turkey has its own weaknesses (see below). Rather, the point is that the military's role in this process cannot be denied. For, in the post-World War II era, the military tapped geopolitical discourse to justify its interventions (1960, 1971, 1980, 1997) and its forays into the political sphere during times of 'civilian rule.'⁷² Yet, pointing to the agency of the military goes only so far in responding to the question 'why geopolitics but not any other alternative?'

to the ideas of German geopoliticians such as Haushofer and Ratzel. See, for example, Eren, 1964; İlhan, 1989; Öngör, 1963; Sezgin and Yılmaz, 1965 and Turfan, 1962.

⁶⁸ İlhan, 1989, 12.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Bilge, 1959; Eren, 1964 and Turfan, 1962.

⁷⁰ Hepple, 1992, 139. See also Dodds, 2000.

⁷¹ See Harp Akademileri Komutanlığı, 1963. İlhan, 1971, iii–iv, makes a similar point in the immediate aftermath of yet another military intervention in 1971.

⁷² Bilgin, 2007.

There may be a very straightforward explanation for this. The appeal of geopolitics may be the appeal of geopolitics. Classical Geopolitics offers a neat and seemingly parsimonious explanation of world politics ostensibly devoid of 'politics'. It is an account of the world as driven by geography, which, in turn, is taken as 'god-given'/'natural' and therefore 'untainted' by ideals and ideologies. How can one not be attracted to that? Especially if alternative explanations as to how the world works (i.e. International Relations theory) are found too complicated, lacking or even irrelevant.

This brings me to the second explanation for the weakness of alternative accounts of world politics, which has to do with the way in which the field of International Relations has developed in Turkey. For years International Relations was considered in Turkey as a vocational programme for training high-level bureaucrats for the state. As the entrance examination of government institutions (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular) have emphasised knowledge of law and history, the curriculum of International Relations departments were structured around these subjects.⁷³ Consequently, conceptual training and reflection has never been on equal footing with law and history in the study of International Relations in Turkey.⁷⁴

The third and related explanation has to do with the 'standard' textbooks (and the concepts and theories introduced by those books) used for teaching International Relations at universities. As with other non-Western contexts, the instructive value of such textbooks remains rather limited for Turkey's context. Turkey, after all, is a part of the developing world about which 'standard' theories of International Relations have very little to say.⁷⁵ When they read the canons of the discipline, students often do not recognise their own world. Yet, in the absence of reflection on the suitability of these imported textbooks, concepts and theories for Turkey's context, International Relations/Theory has remained a course that has to be studied but not necessarily internalised. In the absence of suitable conceptual tools to make sense of the vast realm of world politics, the appeal of geographically determinist accounts on world politics for minds trained in history should not be underestimated. Indeed, practical, popular and formal discourses of various actors suggest that there currently exists very little space outside geopolitics in Turkey's foreign policy discourse.⁷⁶ As such, the chapter proposes a qualifier to the hypothesis of this volume regarding the use of geopolitical discourse by conservative actors. For, in Turkey it was not merely in support of a 'conservative' agenda that geopolitical discourse has been utilised. Rather, actors with myriad political agendas have tapped geopolitics in making their case.

⁷³ Ataöv, 1961; Eralp, 1996, 8–9.

⁷⁴ See Bilgin, 2008b and Bilgin and Tanrısever, 2009.

⁷⁵ See Bilgin, 2008a; Holsti, 1992 and Tickner, 2003.

⁷⁶ For an analysis popular discourse, see Yanık, 2008 and 2009.

The point here is not the same as that of Sidaway *et al.*,⁷⁷ who has highlighted that conservative actors' agendas often call for radical changes in foreign or domestic policies of their governments in the attempt to 'preserve' certain things. Rather the point here is that in Turkey's case actors who seek to pre-serve/change different aspects of Turkey's foreign and domestic policy have tapped the same discourse. In other words, in Turkey it is not the case that conservative actors alone have tapped geopolitical discourse; all actors did. While this has to do with the pre-existence of 'the geopolitics dogma', the reason why it became a 'dogma' to begin with begs for an explanation. The reason, I have argued elsewhere, has to do with the fragility of Turkey's Western 'identity' and geopolitics having allowed for locating Turkey firmly in the 'West'. While the fixing of Turkey's 'Westernness' has been a cornerstone of Turkey's security in both the international and domestic arenas⁷⁸ throughout the Republican era (since 1923), it was during the Cold War that Turkey was able to firmly locate itself in the 'West': by virtue of standing against the Soviet bloc (the 'East') together with the United States. The end of the Cold War proved the fragility of Turkey's 'Western' identity and geopolitical discourse as a fix. For, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union (i.e. the 'East' against which Turkey had located itself in the 'West') Turkey's claim to 'Western' identity received a decisive blow. Also significant in bringing about this crisis was the transformation of European Community into the European Union and redefinition of European identity in increasingly normative terms. During the 1990s, as EU actors challenged Turkey's 'Western' identity due to its failing democratic and human rights record, and successive US administrations proved unwilling to offer backing on purely geopolitical grounds, Turkey's 'ontological insecurity' reached a high point.⁷⁹ During this period, actors for and against remaining with the EU option have invoked geopolitical notions in making their arguments – hence the quantitative revival. The reason why the revival was not also qualitative is to do with the pre-existence of 'the geopolitics dogma' and its centrality to the security imaginary. Such centrality was reproduced in response to the post-Cold War crisis in Turkey's (foreign policy) identity. The following section will seek to illustrate this point with reference to debates on Turkey's accession to European integration.

Multiple actors, different agendas, tapping geopolitics

Increasingly since the 1999 decision of the EU to recognise its candidacy, Turkey has been making headway towards meeting EU conditionality. Around the same time Turkey's Eurosceptics began to increasingly invoke geopolitics

⁷⁷ Sidaway *et al.*, 2004.

⁷⁸ Bilgin, 2009.

⁷⁹ Bilgin, 2004.

in articulating their concerns regarding the potential implications of EU conditionality.⁸⁰ However, given Turkey's Republican founders' commitment to a westward orientation, making a case for Turkey turning away from the West/Europe is not a politically correct argument to make. That said Turkey's Eurosceptics seems to have found a creative solution in propounding the so-called 'Eurasian option' (see below). Their very use of the term 'Eurasia' does half of the job. The word 'Eurasia' gives the impression of retaining the Republic's 'European' orientation and embracing the 'Asian' dimension while doing away with EU conditionality. The centrality of EU conditionality to the notion of 'Europeanness' seems to escape the proponents of Eurasianism. What has allowed Turkey's Eurosceptics to revive Eurasianism, which would have been considered unthinkable during the Cold War for fear of pan-Turkism at home and abroad, is post-Cold War re-inscription of Turkey's security imaginary with the geopolitics dogma enjoying central place. As will be shown below, increasingly since 1999, Turkey's Eurosceptics have tapped geopolitics to de-legitimise Turkey's accession to European integration while presenting 'Eurasia' as the geopolitically correct alternative.⁸¹ That said Eurasianism's pre-existence as a resource in the security imaginary has its roots in pan-Turkist thought which suffered a devastating blow in World War I and was marginalised in Republican Turkey save the ultra-nationalist elements in the society (see the above discussion on Colonel Özdağ).

As early as 1989, General İlhan had begun calling for reviving the Eurasian dimension of Turkey's foreign policy.⁸² The eastward dimension, which General İlhan called a 'mission', comprised leading the 'dispossessed nations of the East'. Although İlhan did not consider the context to be opportune at the time for Turkey fulfilling its 'mission', he was nevertheless convinced that Turks would one day 'find the strength that is needed to fulfil this mission bestowed upon them by geography and culture'.⁸³ More recently, General İlhan tapped geopolitics to de-legitimise the EU option while justifying the appropriateness of his preferred alternative. Consider the following quote where General İlhan lays out the EU's 'geopolitical gains' from Turkey's membership:

it enhances its horizons and sphere of influence to include the Caucasus, Middle East, Central Asia; attains the opportunity to enhance and reinforce the advantages created by the Customs Union treaty ... prepares the ground for the resolution of the Turco-Greek dispute in favour of Greece ... paves

⁸⁰ See Bilgin, 2005.

⁸¹ It is a telling example that the lead article of the EU-Turkey relations special issue of *Avrasya Dosyası* (Eurasian Dossier) is an article entitled 'Türkiye'nin AB Sürecinde Avrasya Politikası: Niçin ve Nasıl Bir İşbirliği?' (Turkey's Eurasian Policy in the Process of the EU: Why and What Kind of a Cooperation?) (Erol, 2004).

⁸² Also see İlhan, 1997 and 2005.

⁸³ İlhan, 1989, xii and 58.

the way for carving out Turkish territories via endeavours in 'minority rights'; and generates hope for the resolution of the 'Eastern Question' by way of side-tracking Turkey.⁸⁴

The implication of all this for Turkey, according to İlhan, is that what the EU gains Turkey loses. Since the stakes are so high, maintains İlhan, the decision cannot be left for the politicians alone to make. This is not merely a political choice, he writes, for it is geopolitics that 'decides' what Turkey should do: remain outside the EU. Neither of the two are mere political choices, according to İlhan, but *faits accomplis* of Turkey's geographical position.⁸⁵ Professor Ümit Özdağ concurs: 'Neither returning to Asian geopolitics nor joining Europe could be the Turks' aim ... What could and should happen is following a strategy of consolidation in Eurasia. Turkey ... should take up the struggle to resuscitate the Eurasian civilisation.'⁸⁶

This, according to Özdağ, is what geopolitics tells Turkey to do. Geopolitics also tells Turkey how to do it: by forming a coalition with Russia (and perhaps Iran). As articulated by then General Secretary of the National Security Council, General Tuncer Kılınç, the Eurasian option calls for Turkey to cease its efforts to accede to European integration and turn towards Iran and Russia in its search for new allies.⁸⁷

Following General Kılınç's intervention into the debates on Turkey-EU relations, Turkey's Eurosceptics became even more vocal in propounding Eurasianism as the option more in tune with Turkey's 'geopolitical realities'. There is very little agreement as to where 'Eurasia' is, let alone a coherent political project. What seems to allow Turkey's Eurasianists to act in concert is their scepticism towards Turkey's accession to European integration.⁸⁸ Accordingly, the proliferation in publishing outlets and think-tanks that specialise on geopolitics should be understood not merely as a condition that has allowed increasing appeals to geopolitics in Turkey but also as a consequence of Turkey's Eurosceptics seeking to make use of the epistemological certainty offered by geopolitics dogma at a time of 'ontological insecurity'. It is through resort to arguments warranted by the geopolitics dogma that the politics of

⁸⁴ İlhan, 2000, 22.

⁸⁵ İlhan, 2000, 40–42. ⁸⁶ U. Özdağ, 2003, 8. ⁸⁷ See Torbakov, 2005.

⁸⁸ In the past decade, coalitions have been formed between various actors in pursuit of the Eurasian agenda. For example, Küre publishing house that translated the Russian Eurasianist Alexander Dugin (2003) into Turkish has also published Davutoğlu's book. Ötüken publishing, which reprinted İlhan's books, is well-known for its ultra-nationalist leanings. Avrasya TV's (Eurasian TV) owner has been sponsoring the centre-left daily *Cumhuriyet*'s supplement, *Strateji*. Lastly, many of the publications identified carry articles that are heavily critical of Turkey's accession to European integration and favourable towards 'Eurasianism' which is presented as an alternative project more in tune with Turkey's geopolitics (Davutoğlu, 2001) if not 'necessitated' by it (see, for example: İlhan, 2000 and 2002; U. Özdağ, 2003).

foreign and security policy making gets suppressed and policy practices are portrayed as mere responses to geopolitics of Turkey. The point being, post-Cold War pervasiveness of geopolitical discourse in Turkey is not merely a product of the structure of cultural resources that is the geopolitics dogma but has also helped to re-produce the dogma and entrenched its centrality to Turkey's security imaginary.

Conclusion

The pervasiveness of geopolitical images and notions in the practical, formal and popular discourses of myriad actors in present-day Turkey (as encapsulated in the cartoon in [Figure 7.1](#)) cannot be overemphasised. With the dissolution of the Eastern bloc, in defence against which Turkey had reaffirmed its 'Westernness', a significant marker of Turkey's 'Western' identity had also disappeared. Coupled with the ups and downs of Turkey-EU relations, the post-1989 period was characterised by a feeling of 'ontological insecurity' and seemingly incessant conversations on Turkey's identity, location, role and policies. Participants to these conversations have invariably made their case through deploying geopolitical images and notions. Indeed, given Turkey's current divide between the so-called 'secularists' and 'Islamists', it is difficult to overlook the dogma's appeal to and authority over those favouring ostensibly 'scientific' and/or 'god-given'/'natural' quality of Classical Geopolitics.

Pointing to the impact of 'external' dynamics as such should not be taken as establishing straightforward cause and effect relationships between the aforementioned developments and various actors' recourse to geopolitics. Not least because such an explanation would leave unanswered the question: 'Why geopolitics but not another set of notions and theories as to how the world works?' This, the chapter submitted, was because geopolitics was ready and available as a resource in Turkey's 'security imaginary'. In Turkey as in some other contexts considered in this volume, geopolitical thought seems to have offered myriad actors a degree of 'epistemological certainty' in their post-Cold War predicament of 'ontological anxiety'. Yet, Turkey's case shows that the very presence of a materialist tradition in foreign policy thinking, actors fluent in geopolitics-speak and their vigour in shaping policy debates can be taken as *both* a starting point for analysing the (re-)production of geopolitical thought *and* its consequence. For it is through the (re-)production of geopolitical thought that actors fluent in geopolitics have been socialised into using geopolitics-speak in justifying their (at times conflicting) positions in foreign policy debates.

As such, the chapter proposed a qualifier to the hypothesis of this volume regarding the use of geopolitical discourse mostly by conservative actors. In Turkey, the uses of geopolitics defy simply being classified as conservative vs.

radical, or pro- vs. anti-status quo. For myriad political actors, appeals to the 'facts' of geopolitics have helped in the struggle for political power and legitimacy needed to shape political processes at home and abroad. For example, in 2001, then Prime Minister and head of the DSP (Demokratik Sol Parti – Democratic Left Party) Bülent Ecevit appealed to geopolitics when seeking to justify Turkey's limited compliance with the EU accession criteria in the 'National Programme' (which was prepared to lay out the reformist steps the coalition government headed by Ecevit was going to take). What the 'National Programme' promised was already far too 'bold' for a country occupying Turkey's geographical location, argued Ecevit; given its geopolitical 'sensitivity', Turkey could only so much comply with EU calls for further democratisation and the reinstitution of civilian authority over military.⁸⁹ For policy practitioners and the bureaucracy, geopolitics helps to de-politicise what are essentially political processes. Through invoking assumptions about 'what geography tells Turkey to do', it becomes possible to remove issues from the realm of political debate and present existing policies as *faits accomplis* of geography – as with the criminalisation of both conscientious objection and citizens' objection to such criminalisation.⁹⁰ For the military in Turkey, geopolitics helps to portray as 'normal' the centrality of the role it plays in shaping political processes thereby (re-)producing a culture of militarism. Indeed, it is partly its self-proclaimed command over geopolitics that allows the military to enjoy a 'privileged perspective' on statecraft. When military actors intervene in current debates, they frequently tap geopolitics as a 'view from nowhere' that 'shows the way'. The connotation being: civilians 'fail' because of their 'ideals and ideologies' whereas the military is guided by the precepts of the 'science of geopolitics'. For 'journalists keen to be read as serious and worldly'⁹¹ and 'intellectuals of statecraft' who present ostensibly scientific accounts of Turkey's international relations, references to geopolitical images and notions are helpful in enhancing the authority of what they 'say'. The point being, Turkey's case bears out how the implications of the uses of geopolitics defy neat categorisation.

In response to the question, 'Why geopolitics?' then, the chapter offered an answer in accord with Turkey's international relations (understood as a search for affirming its 'Westernness'), intra-national relations (i.e. domestic power struggles) and International Relations (the academic field). In supporting this conclusion, the chapter highlighted how practical, popular and

⁸⁹ Ecevit, 2001.

⁹⁰ In 2005–2006 a famous Turkish novelist was tried for criticising the criminalisation of conscientious objection in her weekly magazine article. The novelist, Perihan Mağden, was found 'not guilty'. But the laws that allow for individuals to be taken to court for committing such 'crimes' remain.

⁹¹ Ó Tuathail, 1996, 260.

formal geopolitics makes use of the legitimacy driven from the 'Westernness' of Classical Geopolitics in justifying arguments regarding suspected 'Western' plots against Turkey – arguments that often contradict the very essence of the works cited by the author/speaker. The irony in Turkey's actors' reliance on warrant by 'Western' authors in establishing the timelessness of 'Western' conspiracies against Turkey and the impossibility of trusting the latter's intentions (as with the Sèvres metaphor) seems to escape many.