

Turning Their Backs on the West – A Comparison of Populist Regimes' Foreign Policies: The Cases of Hungary and Turkey

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Abstract

Populist leaders tend to apply sharp shifts in their foreign policies, and they often have ambitious foreign policy concepts. Under the rule of Erdogan and Orban, Turkey and Hungary are widely described as the mavericks of Europe, and in addition to their populist attitudes and authoritarian turns, they are sharp critics of the Western civilization and Western institutions. These concepts appear in their foreign policy directives as the two leaders intend to lower the dependency of their country to the West while pursue to close ties with alternative power blocks by increasing economic cooperation. In this research my aim is to conduct a comparative analysis of the sharp shifts in the foreign policies of Hungary and Turkey under their populist leaders. It will be argued that opportunism is a significant driving force in shaping foreign policy by populist movements; however, the overestimation of the potential of their country, unreal visions, and unpreparedness for external effects can cause hardly manageable difficulties for populist leaders.

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Introduction

It was a normal weekday in April and I was sitting in the office of a high-ranking diplomat of the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara in order to conduct an interview for my current research about the foreign policies of Hungary and Turkey. Our one-hour conversation was interrupted at least six times due to important phone calls to my interviewee who wished to remain anonymous due to his politically sensitive position. “Do you see they are calling me frequently? It was not like this before. But there has been tons of work to do since the breakthrough in February of 2013,” explained the official apologetically, but proudly, at the end of the interview.¹ He was referring to then Turkish PM Erdogan’s visit to Hungary, which was followed by Hungarian PM Orban’s trip to Turkey at the end of the year which changed ‘the lukewarm friendship to a strategic partnership’.²

The meetings resulted in positive outcomes: Hungary and Turkey established a high-level strategic council to promote permanent relations; the two countries decided to double bilateral trade to reach five billion dollars within two years; and they agreed on annual meetings at the highest levels.³ In addition to the various agreements, it was even more impressive how Erdogan and Orban praised each other with unusually kind words in the joint press conference after their meeting. While Erdogan referred to Orban as a ‘close friend’ and a ‘dear colleague’, Orban called

¹ A high-ranking diplomat of the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara, interview by author, Ankara, April 16, 2015. Translated by author.

² A former high-ranking diplomat who worked at the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara, interview by author, Budapest, April 25, 2005. Translated by author.

³ „Turkey's success is an encouragement to Hungary,” *Website of the Hungarian Government*, last modified February 5, 2013, <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/news/turkey-s-success-is-an-encouragement-to-hungary>.

Erdogan one of the greatest global political leaders of the decade whose country has reached an unprecedented economic success in the last ten years.⁴⁵

How did the leaders of two countries with so many differences – including size, economy, international environment and geopolitical location – find such a common voice? Is it just a coincidence that they aim to strengthen their relationship with such determination? According to another former high ranking diplomat who worked at the Hungarian Embassy in Turkey and wished to remain anonymous, the answer to the latter question is ‘definitely not’. My interviewee participated in the preparation of Erdogan’s and Orban’s first summit in Budapest which he described as follows:

We at the Embassy and some other senior diplomats – including then Minister of Foreign Affairs Janos Martonyi – had urged the organization of a meeting between the two since we were aware of how many issues bound them together. They have similar social backgrounds, they rule a conservative party, both of them are even certified football players. They have similar views on religion, national traditions, and foreign policies. Specifically, both of them aim to break down the limits of their power and governance in order to convert the complete socio-economic system of their countries. They have visions and they want to build a more independent state, their attitude is very similar. Such level of similarity is rare in international politics, thus we were sure that they will get along well with each other. After their negotiation I saw them together: it was clear how much they like each other. There is chemistry between them.⁶

The diplomat only subtly hinted at the authoritarian turn of Erdogan and Orban, but Western political leaders⁷ and the majority of Western media⁸, by contrast, have criticized more harshly the two leaders due to their anti-democratic measures.⁹

⁴ „Erdogan-Orban Joint Press Conference,” *Youtube*, published February 5, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dhtn16ENwVQ>.

⁵ “Viktor Orban’s speech on the Hungarian-Turkish Economic Forum,” *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified February 6, 2013, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/orban_viktor_a_magyar-torok_uzleti_forumon.

⁶ A former high-ranking diplomat who worked at the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara, interview by author, Budapest, April 25, 2005. Translated by author.

⁷ Among others German Chancellor Angela Merkel and President of European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker

⁸ There were numerous critical articles for example in *Economist*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*

Since his landslide victory in 2010 Orban has been viewed as the daredevil¹⁰ and the black sheep¹¹ among the leaders of EU countries by many. He has been accused of dismantling checks and the balances; centralizing his rule; repressing the freedom of the media and civil organizations; appointing his loyal allies to all important positions; violating the rule of law; thus in general, turning his country into an authoritarian system.¹² Erdogan's judgment by Western leaders has changed even more sharply since his inauguration in 2003. While during the first years of his rule, he was widely praised as initiating liberal economic and social security reforms, expanding religious freedoms and minority rights, and curbing the power of the military, recently he has been under fire due to the significant deterioration in indicators such as freedom of speech, rule of law, judicial independence and the dismantling of checks and balances.¹³

In addition to the above-mentioned similarities, apparently there are two further common features: both of them are regularly labeled as populists and they have been accused of turning their backs on Western countries. The aim of this thesis is to reflect and research this phenomenon; how come populist leaders are able to initiate such sharp shift in the foreign policy of their countries? My research attempts to respond to this question through investigating the cases of Hungary and Turkey under the rule of Orban and Erdogan. In order to reach my goal,

⁹ Fareed Zakaria, "The rise of Putinism," *The Washington Post*, last modified July 31, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fareed-zakaria-the-rise-of-putinism/2014/07/31/2c9711d6-18e7-11e4-9e3b-7f2f110c6265_story.html.

¹⁰ Tibor Fischer, "Viktor Orban, Hungary's political daredevil, will be judged by results," *The Telegraph*, last modified January 5, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/hungary/8995365/Viktor-Orban-Hungarys-political-daredevil-will-be-judged-by-results.html>.

¹¹ "Black sheep in the crimson dome," *The Economist*, last modified June 8, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21579052-viktor-orban-once-again-accused-dismantling-rule-law-hungary-black-sheep>.

¹² Kim Lane Scheppele, "Hungary and the End of Politics," *The Nation*, last modified May 6, 2014, http://www.thenation.com/article/179710/hungary-and-end-politics?page=0,6&utm_source=mandiner&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=mandiner_hungarianglobe_201505

¹³ Cenk Sidar, and Emre Tuncalp, "Who's going to save Turkey's economy?," *Foreign Policy*, last modified April 3, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/03/whos-going-to-save-turkeys-economy-erdogan-akp/>.

first populism must be defined and underpin briefly why this term could be used for the two leaders. Populism is perhaps one of the most contested and most ambiguous terms in political science. Any kind of recent research which is related to populism could not be complete if it did not explain various approaches to populism; typically, it is rare to read any research on populism which does not specify how ambiguous the term populism is.

While literature on populism is arguably rich on specifying its core elements, hardly any consideration has been given to foreign policy preferences of populist regimes. By researching the potential literature I have concluded that there are no prominent studies which explicitly research how a populist leader affects foreign policy in general. However, there are a small number of articles which implicitly – through the cases of certain populist leaders such as Hugo Chavez and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad¹⁴, or populist parties such as Italian Northern League¹⁵ – investigate the issue. As Stephen C. Ropp – who researches populism – argued, the existing literature on the impact of populist leaders/parties on foreign policy of European countries is almost exclusively out-of-date because it tends to focus exclusively on right-wing populists.¹⁶ He mentions one exception to this rule, namely a recent work by Chrysogelos, *Old Ghosts in New Sheets: European Populist Parties*¹⁷; however, in addition to right-wing parties, it focuses on left-wing parties and none of these seems to be valid for AKP and Fidesz. Chrysogelos also

¹⁴ Michael Dodson, and Manochehr Dorraj, "Populism and foreign policy in Venezuela and Iran," *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy, and International Relations*, no. 9 (2008): 71.

¹⁵ Bertjan Verbeek, and Andrej Zaslove, "The impact of populist radical right parties on foreign policy: the Northern League as a junior coalition partner in the Berlusconi Governments," *European Political Science Review* 7, no. 2 (2015): 1.

¹⁶ Michael C. Ropp, e-mail to author, May 1, 2015.

¹⁷ Angelos-Stylianios Chrysogelos, *Old ghosts in new sheets: European populist parties and foreign policy* (Centre for European Studies, 2011), <http://martenscentre.eu/publications/old-ghosts-new-sheets-european-populist-parties-and-foreign-policy>.

confirmed that there has been little work on populists and their impact on foreign policy.¹⁸ All in all, apparently a significant gap seems to exist which might be worth the effort to fill.

Nevertheless, Erdogan's and Orban's authoritarian turn and defection from the West raises questions whether they are exceptional cases; and the research on their impact on foreign policy could serve as an instructive case. Leaning towards authoritarianism is not an isolated phenomenon in the post-Cold War world. As Mair argues, in theory the collapse of the Soviet Union was the brightest moment for liberal democracy which was followed by the political elite turning Western democracies into "a protected sphere, safe from the demands of voters and their representatives".¹⁹ Levitsky and Way observed the proliferation of hybrid political regimes after the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁰ In parallel, as Aytac and Önis argue, populism has been also emerging: the financial difficulties experienced in the global south and the mounting inequalities due to the neoliberal reforms resulted in widespread public discontent against the Washington Consensus which has generated diverse populist responses.²¹ In the words of Ropp, paradoxically the rise of the liberal democracy and the market economy at the end of Cold War created the preconditions of a potential populist outburst in those regions – Europe and South America – which meant a vital security risk for the United States.²² According to him, democracies in the 'New Europe' have been exposed to populism due to their new institutions and the hardships of the economic transition; democracies in the 'Old Europe' are under stress by globalization; while South American countries are under pressure from the anxieties of public sphere. This also means

¹⁸ Angelos-Stylianios Chrysosgelos, e-mail to author, May 2, 2015.

¹⁹ Peter Mair, *Ruling the void: The hollowing of Western democracy*, London, New York: Verso Books, 2013.

²⁰ Steven Levitsky, and Lucan Way, "The rise of competitive authoritarianism," *Journal of democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002), 51.

²¹ S. Erdem Aytac, and Ziya Önis, "Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo," *Comparative Politics* 47, no. 1 (2014), 42.

²² Steve C. Ropp, *The strategic implications of the rise of populism in Europe and South America* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 4.

that the current cases of Hungary and Turkey are apparently not unique, but I found them worth researching due to their unique role among European countries.

Turkey is clearly a country with strategic importance, lying in an incomparably unstable region. Turkey has a strategic layout in the Eastern Mediterranean and has control over the entrance to the Black Sea: it is located between Europe, Russia and the Middle East, surrounded by EU-members, war-torn countries such as Syria and Iraq, and an additional regional power, Iran. Turkey has the second largest army in NATO and it is a candidate country for EU-membership. Since the election of Erdogan in 2003 Turkey's GDP has grown from 303 billion USD to 822 billion USD²³, becoming the 18th largest economy on earth.²⁴

Even though Hungary is a tiny country, hardly significant in major economic and geopolitical matters – although its strategic importance to the Ukrainian crisis has increased –, hardly any leader in the EU since Jörg Haider has been criticized more heavily than Orban by the EU institutions, other member states and the Western media due to its democracy concept and government measures. The Hungarian PM himself likes to express his maverick attitude to the West and liberal democracies. He repeatedly orates on the decline of Western civilization and the crises of Western style capitalism, and in his infamous speech in 2014 he stated that he is constructing an illiberal state and mentioned Singapore, China, India, Russia and Turkey as examples to follow.²⁵

²³ Data of World Bank, accessed May 5, 2015,
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries/TR?display=default>.

²⁴ Data of World Bank, accessed May 5, 2015,
http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2013+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=desc.

²⁵ “Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s Speech at the 25th Balvanyos Summer Free University and Student Camp,”
Website of the Hungarian Government, last modified July 30, 2014,
<http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp>

In parallel to heavily criticized governmental measures, Orban announced his new foreign policy directive, ‘Eastern opening’. This novel concept is based on the idea that the focus of foreign policy has shifted towards economic cooperation. Thus the priority aim of Hungarian foreign policy is to subordinate it exclusively to the nation’s economic interests instead of value based foreign policy based on commitment to the West.²⁶ According to Orban, a ‘new global market’ has been emerging, and new actors will appear in order to compete for it. In his vision, the global realignment will bring the rise of Central Europe. He argued that in the future, instead of Western Europe, Central Europe will be the economic hub of Europe; he also believes that Central Europe will be a pioneer, a determinative pole in the multipolar world which he imagined.²⁷ Thus, the ‘Eastern opening’ was based on four pillars: seeking strategic relationships with Russia and East Asian countries; boosting ties with countries in the Caucasus Region; deepening relationships with Arabic countries; and initiating an economic expansion in the Western Balkans.²⁸ All in all, Hungary under Orban – who is also often compared to Erdogan and Putin²⁹ – became an outlier among EU-members; therefore it would be worth investigating why its leader harshly criticizes the West, and how he attempts to reposition Hungary in the world.

As the Hungarian foreign policy has changed under Fidesz, so has Turkish foreign policy under the rule of AKP. The secular Turkish state’s foreign policy had been determined by its commitment to Western orientation for a long time. However, under the first AKP government, the relationship with the EU started to cool, and the Iraq war also had a negative impact on US-

²⁶ “Speech of Peter Szijjarto, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations of the Prime Minister's Office,” *Website of the Government*, last modified September 16, 2013, http://konzulizsolgalat.kormany.hu/download/0/ad/80000/Szijjartobeszed_tbkonzkonf.pdf.

²⁷ “New direction Hungary! New direction Hungarians! - Viktor Orban’s State of the Nation Address” *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified March 6, 2009, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/uj_irany_magyarorszag_uj_irany_magyarok.

²⁸ “Speech of Peter Szijjarto, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations of the Prime Minister's Office.”

²⁹ Zakaria, “The rise of Putinism.”

Turkish relations. Nevertheless, the re-election of the AKP in 2007 and specifically, Ahmet Davutoglu's appointment as foreign minister, indicated a sharp shift in Turkish foreign policy. Davutoglu has aimed to implement his concept 'Strategic depth' and to reposition Turkey in the international environment which implied the following goals: mitigating its dependence and exclusive focus on the West; trying to be a more active actor in the region and becoming a regional power; instead of the West, focusing more on neighboring countries in the auspices of 'zero problems' with them; challenging the global distribution of power.³⁰ Even though the implementation of the new directive met various hardships – which will be elaborated on later –, the relationships with the US and the European Union have significantly deteriorated.

In order to answer the research question I will investigate the term populism, and the literature on how populist leaders initiate sharp shifts in the foreign policies of their countries. My aim is to apply these concepts to the comparative analysis of the foreign policy directives of Hungary and Turkey under the reign of Orban and Erdogan. For the analysis I aim to use primary and secondary sources such as empirical data from organization's reports, public speeches of relevant political leaders, official documents press reports. I also conducted interviews in the two countries with Hungarian and Turkish politicians, diplomats and scholars.

The first chapter of my thesis introduces the term populism briefly, presenting its main characteristics according to the most prominent scholars who have researched it. Then I will introduce a small numbers of publications which researched the relationship between foreign policy and populism and summarize their main findings. At the end of the chapter I will introduce the methodology I apply in more detail. The second chapter is the empirical part; I will examine

³⁰ Ilter Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," in *The Eastern Mediterranean in Transition: Multipolarity, Politics and Power*, edited by Aristotle Tziampiris and Spyridon N. Litsas (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015): 140.

the independent variables regarding the two case studies, Hungary and Turkey. In the third chapter I will analyze my findings; and the link between my findings and the statements of the literature on the relationship between foreign policy and populism I presented in the first chapter.

Chapter 1: Conceptualizing the relationship between populism and foreign policy: the role of populist leaders in shaping foreign policy

The aim of this chapter is to interpret the concepts on how populist leaders shape and initiate sharp shifts in the foreign policies of their country. In order to investigate the relationship between populism and foreign policy, first it is necessary to introduce briefly the approaches to such a notoriously ambivalent term as populism. I will review only the most prominent researches on populism as the primary focus of this thesis is on the link between populism and foreign policy, even though the literature on populism is reasonably extensive. In contrast, populist leaders' effect on foreign policy has received very little attention among scholars. In the field of IR, scholars have mostly ignored the role of populist movements as IR basically focuses on states, and it pays little attention to the influence of domestic actors on foreign policy.³¹ Despite its neglect in general, a limited number of studies examined the relationship between populism and foreign policy mostly through case studies which will be reviewed in the second part of this chapter.

1.1 *Conceptualizing populism*

Populism is a peculiarly confusing concept: scholars dispute not only over its particular characteristics, but also over its elemental domain.³² Because of this conceptual dissonance, a variety of governments, leaders, movements and policies have been described as populist, and it also widely varies how scholars apply the term populism.³³ Nevertheless, scholars argue less over the proliferation of populism which became a fashionable concept in several countries in Latin

³¹ Verbeek, and Zaslove, "The impact of populist radical right parties on foreign policy: the Northern League as a junior coalition partner in the Berlusconi Governments," 2.

³² Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics," *Comparative politics* 34, no. 1 (2001): 1.

³³ Ibid.

America in the second part of the 20th century. However, populism seems to be on the rise again after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but not only in South America: both Europe and Latin American have experienced an emergence of populist actors and regimes since the 1990s.³⁴

This also suggests that the more actors are labeled as populist, the more diverse these different actors are: despite certain common characteristics, there have been a wide variety of movements which can be labeled populists. As Taggart – who is one of the most prominent researchers on populism – argues, even though none of these are ‘exclusively populist’ but movements lead by a strong leader and with different forms of mobilization.³⁵ Indeed, populism is a highly debated discourse among scholars, diverse approaches exist towards its definition, and there have been continuous attempts on defining regimes such as Orban’s or Erdogan’s by alternative approaches – for example by illiberal democracy³⁶ and new authoritarianism³⁷ –, but populism seems to be the most widely researched phenomenon with various notable researches.

In addition to Ionescu and Gellner – who did not define populism explicitly³⁸ – Canovan was among the first scholars who wrote a prominent study on populism. Canovan argues that defining populism by a general theory is problematic due to the various types of populism which she differentiated³⁹; however, a clarification can be achieved if we focus on structural considerations instead of concentrating on the ideology and policy approach of populist

³⁴ Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "The ambivalence of populism: threat and corrective for democracy," *Democratization* 19, no. 2 (2012): 184.

³⁵ Paul Taggart, "Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 3 (2004), 270.

³⁶ Fareed Zakaria, "The rise of illiberal democracy," *Foreign affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 22-43.

³⁷ Sergei Guriev, and Daniel Treisman, "How Modern Dictators Survive: An Informational Theory of the New Authoritarianism," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, No. w21136., 2015.

³⁸ Ghita Ionescu, and Ernest Gellner, *Populism: Its meanings and national characteristics*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson), 1970.

³⁹ Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 9.

movements.⁴⁰ In this sense, populism implies a demand to ‘the people’ against the whole existing power structure and the prevailing ideas and values of the society; in other words it challenges the whole elite not only power-holders.⁴¹ Even though her differentiation seems to be out-dated, her theory on the relationship between the elite and ‘the people’ within the populist frame is accurate.

Conversely to Canovan, in his influential book⁴² Taggart argues that a universally applicable approach exists to define populism which he explained by five characteristic features: populism is hostile to representative politics; populists construct an ideal world, a ‘heartland’ which is an idealized conception of their territory; populism lacks core values which makes it highly ‘chameleon-like’; it emerges in times of extreme crisis; due to the previous point, populism is self-limiting: it appears and grows quickly, but it can mobilize only during a crisis.⁴³ Even though Taggart lacks highlighting the leadership role in populism which seems to be a significant feature in order to understand the nature of Erdogan’s and Orban’s system, but other than that, Taggart’s definition consists of accurate observations which precisely describe populism in my view.

While Taggart defines populism through diverse characteristics, Mudde provides a more straightforward definition to populism which – according to him – separates society into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and “politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people”.⁴⁴ Mudde and Kaltwasser argue that this definition implies that it is essentially a form of moral politics which

⁴⁰ Margaret Canovan, "Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy," *Political studies* 47, no. 1 (1999), 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴² Paul Taggart, *Populism*, Vol. 3. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000).

⁴³ Taggart, "Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe," 273.

⁴⁴ Cas Mudde, "The populist zeitgeist," *Government and opposition* 39, no. 4 (2004), 549.

has three core concepts: the people, the elite and the general will; and two direct opposites: elitism and pluralism.⁴⁵ The hostile relationship between ‘the people’ and the elite seems to be prevailing in the definitions by prominent scholars: for example Laclau also emphasized the antagonistic relationship between ‘the people’ and the elite as a main feature of populism.⁴⁶ In my view these, are fairly simplified explanations of populism and they fail to explain the reasons behind the appearance of populism. I suppose that anti-elitism is a necessary but not sufficient feature of populism. In a slightly different manner, Acemoglu, Egorov and Sonin intended to research why politicians adopt populism and why they receive widespread support from voters.⁴⁷ They researched populism from an economic point-of-view which suggests populism emerges when the levels of inequality are high, political institutions are weak and political corruption is widespread.⁴⁸ Their findings are helpful in order to explain the emergence of populism in contemporary Hungary and Turkey, even though this will be researched in this theses in a very limited way.

Although most scholars view populism which has pejorative connotations, some recent works tend to explain it by using a more neutral manner: Schmitter compared the ‘virtues’ and the ‘vices’ of populism staying away from judging it. According to Schmitter, politicians and political scientists tend to use populism for movements they would not like to see in power.⁴⁹

Schmitter defined populism as follows:

⁴⁵ Cas Mudde, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, eds. *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or corrective for democracy?*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 8.

⁴⁶ Matthijs Rooduijn, Sarah L. de Lange, and Wouter van der Brug, "A populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic contagion by populist parties in Western Europe," *Party Politics* 20, no. 4 (2014), 564.

⁴⁷ Daron Acemoglu, Georgy Egorov, and Konstantin Sonin, *A political theory of populism*. (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011), 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Philippe C. Schmitter, "A balance sheet of the vices and virtues of ‘populisms’," *Romanian Journal of Political Sciences* 7, no. 2 (2007), 7.

Populism is a political movement that draws its support across or with disregard for the lines of cleavage that are embodied in existing political formations and does so by focusing on the person of its leader who claim to be able to resolve a package of issue previously believed to be unattainable, incompatible or excluded.⁵⁰

In contrast to Taggart and Mudde, Schmitter focuses more on the role of a leader and mitigates the role of the elite.

There are two comparative studies which are relevant to my research as they are about Hungary or Turkey, even though they do not investigate the foreign policy aspect, but only compare populist regimes in general. First, Aytac and Önis drew a parallel between Argentina under Kirchner and Turkey under Erdogan while arguing that in the post-Cold War era economic crisis linked to the neoliberal policies of the Washington Consensus which increased inequality coupled with high public discontent has created the emergence of populism in the global south.⁵¹ The attitude towards the hegemony of the US genuinely appears to be a crucial aspect in order to examine the rise of populism in Hungary and Turkey as both of them started to have various disputes with the US. Moreover, inequality has been growing in the two countries which apparently underpin the argument of Aytac and Önis. Therefore their study contains valuable insights regarding my thesis, even though it fails to investigate the other aspects of foreign policy.

Second, Pappas compared post-authoritarian Greece and post-communist Hungary labeling them as populist democracies. Pappas argues that after the regime change in Hungary in 1990, the adopted liberal democracy was soon transformed by populism which was rooted once again - as Taggart would explain also - in the poor economic state of the country.⁵² According to Pappas, a typical two-party system and a highly polarized society was a common feature in both

⁵⁰ Schmitter, "A balance sheet of the vices and virtues of 'populisms'," 7.

⁵¹ Aytac, and Önis, "Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo," 42.

⁵² Takis S. Pappas, "Populist democracies: Post-authoritarian Greece and post-communist Hungary," *Government and Opposition* 49, no. 1 (2014), 17.

countries, and he also argued that populist democracies are unstable and will not live long due to the polarized political life.⁵³ Due to the negligible number of researches on populism of Orban, Pappas' work is a useful overview, despite the fact that it entirely lacks researching the foreign policy aspect.

After reviewing some prominent approach towards populism, it is clear that populism is a very vague and ambiguous term. Among the presented options, I will apply Taggart's definition in order to examine if Erdogan and Orban are populists. In my view, Taggart's definition is the most concrete and most extensive among the other approaches, despite the fact that it fails to emphasize the importance of leadership which seems to be important in understanding the case of Hungary and Turkey.

1.2 *Theoretical explanation of the role of populism on shifts in foreign policy*

This part will introduce the theories and literature on sharp shifts on foreign policy of populist movements which is the primary aim of this thesis is to introduce. As I previously mentioned, this is a rarely researched area: among the previously mentioned scholars, Schmitter was the only one who focused on the foreign aspects of populist movements. Schmitter typifies briefly two main foreign policy-related characteristics of a typical populist movement: they "challenge accepted external constraints and call into questions existing and often exploitive dependencies upon foreign powers" and "use foreigners and foreign powers as scapegoats for their own failings and weaken external linkages necessary for national welfare and security".⁵⁴ Judging from populist leaders such as Hugo Chavez, Mahmoud Ahamdinejad and Evo Morales, challenging the world order is definitely part of their rhetoric, similarly to their sharp criticism

⁵³ Pappas, "Populist democracies: Post-authoritarian Greece and post-communist Hungary," 18.

⁵⁴ Schmitter, "A balance sheet of the vices and virtues of 'populisms'.", 3-4.

towards foreign powers accusing them of repression and exploitation. According to Schmitter, populists tend to focus on external enemy rather than internal in order to unite supporters; to terminate previous lines of cleavages; and to accuse domestic opponents of lacking patriotism.⁵⁵ However, this concept can be doubtful, as immigrants and minorities such as Roma are targeted by populist parties such as Dutch Party for Freedom and Hungarian Jobbik.⁵⁶

In addition to the main research question, it also has to be analyzed how populism is defined by those authors who investigated the relationship between populism and foreign policy despite the fact that they are not as widely known as those who were presented previously. Focusing on more empirical data, Ropp researched what strategic consequences would be caused by a potential future burst of populist regimes in Europe and South America. Ropp characterizes populism as an ideology which emerges in societies which are subjected to stressful forces and whose citizens lose faith in power-holders and democratic institutions.⁵⁷ Although Ropp's main focus is out of the scope of my research as he deliberately examines populist regimes from the strategic perspective of the US, he briefly argues that once acquiring power, populist leaders might reorient the foreign policies of their country in order to subordinate to the perceived economic interest of their country. This perception are apparently valid in the case of Hungary and Turkey, but the limit of Ropp's explanation is that he clearly explains this phenomenon from a one-sided approach as he exclusively represents the strategic interests of the United States.

In contrast, the essay of Chryssogelos published in 2011 explicitly focused on the impact of populism on foreign policy through five populist movements even though his research was limited to Western European far right and far left populist parties. Chryssogelos described

⁵⁵ Schmitter, "A balance sheet of the vices and virtues of 'populisms'." 6.

⁵⁶ Richard Wolin, "Ghosts of a tortured past: Europe's right turn," *Dissent* 58, no. 1 (2011), 58-59.

⁵⁷ Ropp, *The strategic implications of the rise of populism in Europe and South America*, 57.

populism as a thin-centered ideology which is more than a political style but less than a complex system of thought.⁵⁸ Similarly to Taggart's concept, its main characteristics involve a 'Manichaean struggle between the elite and the people'; an appeal to the heartland; offering easy solutions to complex problems; and political entrepreneurship which implies that his approach is rather value based.⁵⁹

Chrysogelos defines further attributions which affect foreign policy: populist movements aim for those voters who fear globalization, immigration, liberal economy policies and deregulation. He argues that the values of populism are attached to the notions of nation state, sovereignty, and criticism towards modernization. Although European populists represent 'old and apparently failed ideological traditions', they are active on international issues such as European security and international trade. Based on the author's empirical observation, radical populist parties are pro-Europe and favor a political and independent Europe even though they overlook the institutions of the EU.⁶⁰ However, his work lacks what is the role of a populist leader in shaping foreign policy, and due to his critical attitude to populism it fails to recognize the positive aspects of populist foreign policy. Moreover, he fails to explain why he focused exclusively on radical populist parties which are clearly less influential as 'not radical' populist movements on power.

Verbeek and Zaslove – who used Mudde's definition of populism in their research – investigated the impact of populist right parties on foreign policy through the case of Northern League as a supporter of Berlusconi governments. They argue that the lack of researching populism's effect on foreign policy is unfortunate due to globalization which makes foreign

⁵⁸ Chrysogelos, *Old ghosts in new sheets: European populist parties and foreign policy*, 4.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 32.

policy increasingly a domestic issue, and political parties deserve more attention in clarifying foreign policy as they become more salient actors in shaping foreign policy.⁶¹ The findings of Verbeek and Zaslove are partly irrelevant regarding my thesis as they focused largely on the junior coalition partner feature of the Northern League, and they do not investigate the foreign policy making decisions of a populist government. However, they also had some valuable findings in the terms of my thesis. First, despite its rhetoric, a populist right party is not steadily anti-EU and anti-internationalist; its position depends more on whether a certain international policy helps or obstructs the promotion of ‘the people’.⁶² Second, the case of the Northern League suggests that the foreign policy of a populist right party can be pragmatic as foreign policy decision making is not a product of domestic political factors exclusively, but is limited by international constraints which can modify the fundamental approach of a populist party.⁶³

Instead of parties, Tudoroiu examined the common features of populist leaders in four non-great power post-communist states in the Black Sea region. Based on his findings, Tudoroiu introduced the notion ‘new populist’ which characterizes a charismatic leader who intends to monopolize leadership and to fulfill his political aims not necessarily with democratic practices.⁶⁴ According to him, the latter is due to foreign policy-making being less restricted by parliamentary control, therefore it could easily be a tool for a populist leader to increase prestige. Tudoroiu determines various characteristics of populist’s foreign policy which are absolutely relevant to my research. In the eyes of Tudoroiu, foreign policy supposes to gain prominence in populist regimes: populist leaders tend to use foreign policy for the sake of gaining popularity among their

⁶¹ Verbeek, and Zaslove. "The impact of populist radical right parties on foreign policy: the Northern League as a junior coalition partner in the Berlusconi Governments," 4.

⁶² Ibid., 16.

⁶³ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁴ Theodor Tudoroiu, "The Regional Foreign Policies of Black Sea “New Populist” Leaders," *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 22, no. 2 (2014), 164.

countrymen; they also tend to present themselves as ambitious and visionary: conducting ‘activist’ foreign policy, initiating ambitious international projects and undertaking actions beyond their countries’ genuine potential are a common feature.⁶⁵ In accordance with Schitter and Verbeek and Zaslove, Tudoroiu argues that populist leaders intend to stimulate nationalism in order to mobilize masses and consolidate their power, but instead of ethnic minorities they target great powers which are labeled as external oppressors.⁶⁶ As Verbeek and Zaslove, he also highlights the opportunist nature of populist foreign policy.

Similarly to Tudoroiu, Dodson and Dorraj investigated populism through a comparative study, but their work proves to be extremely helpful in the matter of my research as they explicitly focus on the relationship between populism and foreign policy through the example of Iran and Venezuela. Their research intended to identify common characteristics of the foreign policy strategies of the two countries. Dodson and Dorraj argue that the populist rhetoric and ideas of Chavez and Ahmadinejad are largely shaped by the international context of the globalization as both leaders and the mass public fear being exploited economically by foreign powers.⁶⁷ In general, Dodson and Dorraj found similar features to Tudoroiu’s findings: populist leaders do not only mobilize masses against the elite, but by “pursuing an aggressive foreign policy which seeks to diminish the hegemonic power historically exerted over their economies and polities by the United States”.⁶⁸ In addition to this, populist leaders express their ambitions to become regionally more influential. In order to fulfill these ambitions, they typically apply soft balancing measures which seem to be a key component in the foreign policies of populist

⁶⁵ Tudoroiu, "The Regional Foreign Policies of Black Sea “New Populist” Leaders," 164.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 165.

⁶⁷ Dodson, and Dorraj, "Populism and foreign policy in Venezuela and Iran," 71.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 72.

regimes.⁶⁹ In order to counterbalance the hegemony of the US and increase their security, Iran and Venezuela turned their attention towards regional cooperation.⁷⁰

All in all, the relationship between foreign policy and populism is a hardly researched topic, there are just a limited number of researches which analyze this phenomenon at least partly. The review of the relevant literature found that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar world has catalyzed the emergence of populist actors and regimes worldwide which have numerous common features in terms of foreign policy:

- Populist movements are critical of the globalization, market economy, the United States and EU institutions on a rhetorical level, and they eager to blame neoliberal policies for generating economic crises, increasing inequality, and exploitative dependencies, but their genuine stance is less antagonistic. They can be pragmatic, even opportunistic as foreign policy decision-making does not build entirely on domestic factors, but international constrains.
- Populist movements consider sovereignty and nation state as a key notion which became a key element in their foreign-policy decision-making.
- Populist regimes tend to challenge the status quo and external constraints, and influence of a super power party by using soft balancing. In order to counterbalance the hegemonic role of the US, they aim to develop regional cooperation.

⁶⁹ Soft balancing is a balance of power theory implying that a weaker power does not directly challenge the hegemony of a superpower, but uses non-military tools to undermine the superpower's unilateral policies.

⁷⁰ Dodson, and Dorraj, "Populism and foreign policy in Venezuela and Iran," 84.

- Populist regimes galvanize nationalism in order to unite their citizens, but instead on ethnic minorities they tend to focus on external enemies, while also attacking domestic rivals who lacking patriotism.
- Foreign policy can be a tool for a populist leader to increase prestige who intend to subordinate foreign policy in order to gain domestic support
- Populist leaders are often ambitious and visionary regarding foreign policy: they prefer being active rather than passive, initiating ambitious international and regional projects at times beyond their countries' genuine potential.
- Populist movements tend to aim for voters who fear globalization, immigration and liberal economic policies; they emphasize their disapproval towards modernity.

Judging from these conclusions, the role of domestic political factors indeed seem to be influential in shaping the foreign policy of populist regimes which underpins the relevance of the aims of this thesis. Starting from the presented theoretical part, the next part will introduce what the methodological way to research my case studies will be, namely Hungary under Orban and Turkey under Erdogan regarding their shifts in foreign policy.

1.3 ***Methodology***

The thesis focuses on two countries, Hungary and Turkey, examining the shifts in their foreign policies under the rule of their current leader. Therefore I investigate Hungarian foreign policy from 2010 when Fidesz and Orbán gained power by a landslide victory, and I investigate the Turkish counterpart from 2003 when Erdogan was elected to PM. The main approach of this thesis will be a comparative method in order to test theories and then to conclude with a general

explanation which will help in understanding the nature of populist regimes in terms of foreign policy.

Those scholars who have investigated the relationship between populism and foreign policy applied various independent variables depending on their exact aim. By examining five parties Chrysogelos tested four issue clusters: transatlantic relations, attitudes towards European security and NATO; EU-Russia relations; attitudes towards Middle East; and rhetoric about the global economic and financial system.⁷¹ Verbeek and Zaslove examined the Northern League's impact on foreign policy by testing its attitude towards the followings: globalization (mostly in relation to immigration and market economy); European integration; and military interventions.

Based on these independent variables and on those conclusions I summarized from the literature, European populist movements' stance towards the United States and the European Union seems to be crucial to examine. In addition to this, the way how populist leaders – and especially Erdogan and Orban – see world order and globalization is also a crucial point in understanding their views and policies. According to their new foreign policy directives, both Hungary and Turkey initiated a sharp change which was presented in the introduction. Accordingly, they turned their attention to regions which had been neglected for a long time, and it would be worth researching what genuinely happened beyond the level of rhetoric. Therefore my dependent variable will be populist regimes' sharp shift on foreign policy, and my three independent variables will be the following:

1. Attitudes towards the West: relationship with the US and the EU
2. Views on globalization, and ambitions in foreign policy

⁷¹ Chrysogelos, *Old ghosts in new sheets: European populist parties and foreign policy*, 11.

3. Efforts for seeking alternatives to Western-orientation

In order to conduct my comparative research, I will apply the method of process tracing which is “the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms”.⁷² In order to test my cases, I will apply both primary and secondary sources. One part of the project contains library-based research: primary sources such as official data on the countries; public speeches of relevant actors; official documents; and secondary sources such as publications, news articles regarding my topic. What complicate my research is that the infamous book of current Turkish PM Ahmet Davutoglu, *Strategic Depth*⁷³ – which has a key role in understanding current Turkish foreign policy – has not been translated to English, and that the Hungarian policy directive ‘Eastern Opening’ has not been detailed in a government program. However, there are various researches and public statements which help to reconstruct the main conception of these issues. In the case of Hungarian foreign policy, I could largely base my research on the speeches of Orban which are well documented on his website, but I had to seek alternatives – such as field work, secondary sources – in the case of Erdogan as the transcript of his speeches are hardly available in English.

The other part of my research consists of field-work in order to conduct interviews with Turkish and Hungarian diplomats, politicians and scholars. For this aim I traveled to Ankara and Istanbul in April, and I also conducted interviews in Budapest. Among my interviewees were Gün Kut, associate professor of Bogazici University, Istanbul; professor Ilter Turan from Bilgi University, Istanbul; Zoltán Fehér, former Deputy Ambassador at the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara and current Deputy Head of Department of the EU Legal Department at the Prime

⁷² Andrew Bennett, and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds. *Process tracing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 12.

⁷³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, [Strategic Depth] (Istanbul: Küre Yayinlari), 2011.

Minister's Office; a high-ranking official from the Ministry for EU Affairs of Turkey who wished to remain anonymous; a high-ranking official from the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara who wished to remain anonymous; a high-ranking official from the Prime Minister's office who wished to remain anonymous; and two former high-ranking diplomats of the Hungarian Embassy in Turkey who wished to remain anonymous.

Chapter 2: Sharp shifts in the foreign policies of populist regimes: the cases of Hungary and Turkey

In this chapter my aim is to empirically analyze the foreign policies of Hungary and Turkey under the rule of Orban and Erdogan in terms of my independent variables. I will briefly describe the main concepts behind their foreign policy directives, then I will briefly underpin why Orban and Erdogan can be labeled as populists according to the definition of Taggart. Then I will examine the foreign policies of the two countries in terms of my variables: their relation to the West; their concept on globalism and their foreign policy ambitions; and how they pursue the search for alternatives to their Western-orientation.

2.1 *The case of Turkey*

The foreign policy of Turkey changed sharply during the rule of AKP. In addition to Erdogan, current Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has played the major role in this enormous change. Davutoglu published his book *Strategic Depth* in 2001 which became a very influential concept in Turkish foreign policy, especially after 2009 when Davutoglu was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. Davutoglu's main argument is that Turkey's location, history and cultural heritage enables it to adopt a more pro-active global and regional strategic role by focusing on its own region instead of its previous Western-orientation, and pursuing peaceful relationships with its neighbors based on economic cooperation. Accordingly, Turan differentiated three stages of the foreign policy under AKP: a pro-Western stance until 2007; followed by a role of regional leader with global aspirations; finally becoming the 'lonely hero' as a result of the failure of the regional 'zero problem' policy and alienating itself from the West.⁷⁴ In order to analyze the three

⁷⁴ Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 137.

independent variables of this thesis, first I will very briefly introduce why Erdogan and its movement can be labeled as populist according to Taggart's definition.

2.1.1 Erogan's populism

Coming from a poor and anti-establishment family, and being imprisoned for four months for reciting a militant Islamic poem, Erdogan successfully and credibly claims that he is an outsider to the political elite, and a maverick within his political movement.⁷⁵ He expresses his hostility to representative politics by characterizing Turkish politics as a struggle between 'the elite' and 'the people' while referring to himself as a 'man of the people'.⁷⁶ The role of the Anatolian heartland and the territory of the Ottoman Empire play a crucial role in the AKP's foreign policy view: under the rule of Erdogan, Turkey aims to return to its Ottoman roots and strengthen itself by focusing on its own region.

Erdogan's 'chameleon-like' attitude can be easily observed: he constantly attacks the EU while he is also committed to Turkey's accession – which will be elaborated later –; he aimed to represent average Turks, to be the 'citizen Osman' who was struggling with the globalized, modern world, while at the same time being committed to apply a market economy strategy in order to reach his foreign policy goals; AKP's aim was to overcome corruption and injustice rhetorically, but he and his son have benefited from corruption according to tape recordings.⁷⁷ The fourth characteristic, emerging in times of crisis, is particularly valid for Erdogan as prior to AKP rule, Turkey suffered from both a political and an economic crisis. Ineffective, unstable, short-lived governments were rotated in frequently while Turkey entered a deep economic crisis

⁷⁵ Aytaç, and Önis, "Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo," 44.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁷ R. Quinn Meacham, "From the ashes of virtue, a promise of light: the transformation of political Islam in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2004): 351.

in 1999 which brought recession and lasted for years.⁷⁸ Even though we can not measure the fifth characteristic at this time, namely the self-limitation of populism, but Erdogan's popularity is fading: ahead of the parliamentary election in the 7th of June, AKP's support has been decreased significantly and it may lose the election.⁷⁹

2.1.2 Turkey and the West: an ending friendship

There have hardly been any governments which have questioned the primacy of Western orientation throughout the history of secular Turkey until very recently, this despite the fact that the EU and Turkey have a complicated relationship which has lasted since 1963 when Turkey became an associate member of the EEC, the predecessor of EU.⁸⁰ During the Cold War Turkey had strategic importance for the United States and its allies; therefore, it became an important member of NATO as early as 1952: in exchange for accepting American strategic leadership and providing its territory for NATO, Turkey was supported with military and economic assistance which was crucial for the country.⁸¹ Even though Turkey's relationship with the EU and the United States has not been nurtured since the end of the Cold War – mostly due to the increasing antagonism between the West and the Muslim world, and security ceased to be the major concern of the US –,⁸² the AKP, when it came into power in 2003, stuck to its pro-Western foreign policy; however, as it later became clear, this was due to clearly opportunistic considerations.

⁷⁸ Ilter Turan, "The Rise and Fall of Turkey's Middle East Policy," *The German Marshall Fund on the United States*, last modified October 9, 2012,

<http://www.gmfus.org/publications/rise-and-fall-turkey%E2%80%99s-middle-east-policy>.

⁷⁹ Ercan Gurses, "Second poll shows Turkish ruling party may lose elections," *Reuters*, last modified May 25, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/25/us-turkey-election-poll-idUSKBN0OA00920150525>.

⁸⁰ Svante Cornell, Gerald Knaus, and Manfred Scheich, *Dealing with a rising power: Turkey's transformation and its implications for the EU*, (Centre for European Studies, 2012), 5.

<http://martenscentre.eu/publications/dealing-rising-power-turkeys-transformation-and-its-implications-eu>

⁸¹ Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 134.

⁸² Cornell, Knaus, and Scheich, "Dealing with a rising power: Turkey's transformation and its implications for the EU," 13.

During the first term of the AKP, Turkey continued to show a deep commitment to economic reforms and to the democratization process, and the party also seemed to be committed to achieving EU-membership.⁸³ However, accession to the EU seems to be a never-ending story: as Kut highlighted, Turkey applied for associate membership in 1959 when EU had six members, but it is still not a member despite the fact that the EU now has 28 members.⁸⁴ Even though Turkey came closest to accession in 2004, it proved to be a turning point as numerous obstacles started to appear which hindered Turkey's accession: anti-Turkey voices became loud among EU-members⁸⁵; critical members lost interest in Turkish membership⁸⁶: French President Sarkozy blocked a key part of Turkey's EU entry negotiations⁸⁷; Turkey also lost interest and turned its attention towards regional questions.⁸⁸ As Turan argues, both the AKP's commitment to the EU in the early years and the alienation later on served the interests of the AKP.⁸⁹ On one hand, the AKP took advantage of accomplishing the requirements of the EU by consolidating the civilian control over the armed forces which effectively ended the possibility of a military coup.⁹⁰ On the other hand, after consolidating its power domestically, AKP could start to apply a more independent foreign policy in parallel with the rise of Davutoglu during the second term of AKP between 2007 and 2011.

Similar to the ties between the EU and Turkey, the relationship between the US and Turkey has been deteriorating. Even though there was a tension between the two countries as

⁸³ Ziya Öniş, "The triumph of conservative globalism: The political economy of the AKP era." *Turkish Studies* 13, no. 2 (2012): 139.

⁸⁴ Gün Kut, interview by author, Istanbul, April 13, 2015.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ İter Turan. Interview by author. Istanbul, April 13, 2015.

⁸⁷ Dan Bilefsky, "Sarkozy blocks key part of EU entry talks on Turkey," *New York Times*, last modified June 25, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/25/world/europe/25iht-union.5.6325879.html?_r=0.

⁸⁸ Turan, interview by author.

⁸⁹ Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 138.

⁹⁰ A high-ranking diplomat of the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara. Interview by author. Ankara, April 16, 2015. Translated by author.

early as 2003 over Turkey's refusal to provide permission to the US to use its territory in the Iraq war, the relations remained to be stable for years.⁹¹ However, since the second term of AKP, Turkey has started to be hostile towards the US and has challenged their global leadership. The cooling relations with the West have been reflected in Turkish exports: according to the new Turkish foreign policy direction and in parallel with global economic power shifts, the proportion of Turkey's total exports to Asian countries grew from 15% in 2002 to 35% in 2012, while the share of exports to the EU decreased from 56% in 2002 to an unprecedentedly low level of 38% in 2012.⁹² In addition to the relatively shrinking economic cooperation, the gap between the EU and Turkey has widened on the political level too: particularly since the Gezi Park protests in June 2013, Erdogan's anti-West rhetoric has been on the rise.⁹³ Erdogan has blamed the European Union and in general, the West for islamophobia, hypocrisy over the Paris attack on Charlie Hebdo and ignorance over the Syrian war.⁹⁴

Despite these spectacular outbursts and the anti-West rhetoric, most of my interviewees stated that these aggressive remarks are not aimed at international policy-makers, but at domestic political actors in order to gain popularity by attacking and accusing foreign powers. According to Kut, there is a gap between rhetoric and real intentions due to AKP's pragmatic consideration as in reality the AKP is doing whatever is necessary to reach the accession.⁹⁵ Kut depicted the controversial relationship in the following way:

⁹¹ Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 137.

⁹² Ziya Öniş, and Mustafa Kutlay, "Rising Powers in a Changing Global Order: the political economy of Turkey in the age of BRICS," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 8 (2013): 1414.

⁹³ Mustafa Akyol, "What turned Erdogan against the West?," *Al-Monitor*, last modified February 2, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/turkey-erdogan-anti-west.html#>.

⁹⁴ Ayla Jean Yackley, "Turkey's Erdogan accuses West of hypocrisy over Paris attacks," *Reuters*, last modified January 12, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/12/us-france-shooting-erdogan-idUSKBN0KL23M20150112>.

⁹⁵ Kut, Interview by author.

This is like a national football match: if they do not want us, we will not want them.⁹⁶

Similarly, a Hungarian diplomat who worked in Ankara stated that Erdogan plays a double game: he expects domestic political stability in exchange for verbally attacking the West.⁹⁷ According to the diplomat, the US and the EU tolerated this phenomenon for a while as their global strategic interest overrode the effect of the accusations, but Erdogan has gone too far which has alienated its former allies.⁹⁸

2.1.3 Turkey and the globalization: a global power wannabe

The previous sub-chapter touched on the fact that the aim of AKP's new, pro-active foreign policy directive is to promote Turkey's position in the global world order. In his book *Strategic Depth*, Davutoglu stated that given Turkey's geopolitical location, it would be worth having a more pro-active role in global affairs.⁹⁹ Davutoglu views the emergence of the Islamic state as a reaction to the Western-led global order, and according to him, globalization is a challenge to nation states and Western civilization has been declining.¹⁰⁰ The diversification of Turkey's foreign policy focus is an answer to these challenges: on one hand, Turkey aims to enhance economic independence while on the other hand Turkey aims to challenge the global distribution of power and the global system of governance.¹⁰¹ Therefore, AKP's ultimate aim was to position Turkey as a soft-power driven, 'benign' regional player which fosters democratization

⁹⁶ Kut, Interview by author.

⁹⁷ A former high-ranking diplomat who worked at the Hungarian Embassy in Ankara. Interview by author. Budapest, April 25, 2005. Translated by author.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 140.

¹⁰⁰ Cornell, Knaus, and Scheich, "Dealing with a rising power: Turkey's transformation and its implications for the EU," 47.

¹⁰¹ Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 141.

and economic independence in the region.¹⁰² However, Önis argues that AKP' foreign policy was not based on democracy promotion, but on the Westphalian logic of relying on nation states and not interfering in the domestic affairs of other states.¹⁰³

In another paper, Önis argues that the meaning of globalism in the eyes of AKP has changed as has its foreign policy during its rule.¹⁰⁴ While initially AKP's brand of 'globalism' was attached to the notions of democratization and reform, with the fading influence of the EU's soft power on Turkey and the decline of its military power, 'globalism' became rather an Asian style globalism where "economic success through global integration and diversification of markets" are combined with negligence of democratic institutions which is a significant paradigm shift from the reformist approach.¹⁰⁵ However, the anti-West discourse did not combine with anti-capitalist rhetoric. Even though the AKP describes the West as a civilization in cultural crisis, this does not apply to Western capitalism and neo-liberalism. AKP bases its policy on nationalism, Islamic values and the Ottoman heritage, but this does not mean rejecting and challenging Western capitalism: in contrast, AKP aims to apply neoliberal economic methods in order to strengthen its international position.¹⁰⁶ Önis described Erdogan's system as social neo-liberalism which recognized the shortcomings of Western-style free-market liberalism: the regulatory and social failures.¹⁰⁷ According to Önis, this approach is a third way answer to the neo-liberal

¹⁰² Öniş, and Kutlay, "Rising Powers in a Changing Global Order: the political economy of Turkey in the age of BRICS," 1412.

¹⁰³ Ziya Önis, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: between ethics and self-interest," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 3 (2012), 47.

¹⁰⁴ Ziya Önis, "Sharing Power: Turkey's Democratization Challenge in the Age of the AKP Hegemony," *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 2 (2013): 113.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Cenk Saracoglu, and Özhan Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey Under the AKP Rule: Geography, History and National Identity," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2015), 306.

¹⁰⁷ Önis, "The triumph of conservative globalism: The political economy of the AKP era," 141.

globalization.¹⁰⁸ Therefore the AKP government aims to enhance redistribution in order to stabilize its electoral support.

According to Saracoglu, the primary aim of current Turkish foreign policy is not to establish an integrated Islamic world without official borders, but to enhance the influence of Turkey in the region by making borders meaningless.¹⁰⁹ However, this does not imply that ‘nation state’ and ‘homeland’ would not be essential for AKP, but it intends to differentiate itself from the Islamist idea of unifying the entire Sunni Muslim World.¹¹⁰ The concept of making borders meaningless in the region is depicted by Davutoglu as follows:

For a Western or other diplomat from another part of the world, a Bosnian issue is a technical issue to deal with, like a technical process. For us, it is a life and death story... Like in the 16th century, when the rise of the Ottoman Balkans became the center of world politics, we will make the Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East together with Turkey the center of world politics in the future. This is the objective of Turkish foreign policy and we will achieve it.¹¹¹

Strengthening its influence in the region serves the broader goal of Davutoglu’s concept: achieving regional leadership which will help balance the domination of the West.¹¹² Moreover, Turkish leaders started to speak about Turkey not as a regional, but as a global power; Davutoglu explicitly stated that he expects Turkey to be among the top 10 powers in the world by 2023.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Önis, "The triumph of conservative globalism: The political economy of the AKP era," 142.

¹⁰⁹ Saracoglu, and Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey Under the AKP Rule: Geography, History and National Identity," 310.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹¹² Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 143.

¹¹³ Cornell, Knaus, and Scheich. "Dealing with a rising power: Turkey’s transformation and its implications for the EU," 43.

2.2.3 Turkey and its neighborhood: becoming the ‘lonely hero’

As was elaborated earlier, the focus of the AKP government during its second term has shifted towards its own region and the Middle East. The rediscovery of the Middle East in Turkish foreign policy lays on the concept of a “broader multi-lateral strategy to diversify its economic, political, and diplomatic relations [which has] constituted the positive side of the AKP’s increasingly pro-active foreign policy in recent years”.¹¹⁴ Within the framework of the new foreign policy, Turkey intended to make some reconciliation with those neighbors with whom it has traditionally had problematic or ambivalent relations such as Bulgaria, Greece, Armenia, Russia and Syria; Turkey also aimed to be pro-active as a mediator. Under the auspices of the new foreign policy directive, the most prominent effort was that of initiating relations with Armenia in 2009 by signing an accord after long negotiations.¹¹⁵

In addition, Turkey managed to conduct successful mediations between Bosnia and Serbia, Saudi Arabia and Syria, and near successful mediation attempts over the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria.¹¹⁶ However, after a while, Turkey abandoned its neutral approach as a mediator and started to take sides. After the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla crisis in 2010, the previously blossoming cooperation reached a historic low between Turkey and Israel, and caused a sharp shift in the Turkish-Israeli relations and in Erdogan’s rhetoric on Israel.¹¹⁷ This shift and Erdogan’s harsh statements of Israel brought widespread support and popularity for Erdogan among Arab states.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Önis, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: between ethics and self-interest," 13.

¹¹⁵ Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 138.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Can Kasapoğlu, "The Turkish-Israeli Relations under the Davutoğlu Doctrine in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Ege Strategic Research Journal* 3, no. 12 (2012), 20.

¹¹⁸ Matthew S. Cohen, and Charles D. Freilich, "Breakdown and Possible Restart: Turkish–Israeli Relations under the AKP," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2014), 44.

According to a high-ranking official working at the Ministry for EU Affairs, prior to the Arab Spring Turkey had gained a lot thanks to this pro-active stance: Erdogan became well known and has gained ‘quite an image’ in the Middle East due to his anti-Israel and anti-West rhetoric; Turkey became the biggest financial donor in the region; Turkey became the most generous country in the region as it hosted two million refugees mostly from Syria¹¹⁹; and Turkish soap operas became extremely popular in Arab states which also enhanced its soft power.¹²⁰ However, as the official highlighted, such an active foreign policy brings its risks:

If a problem pops up, you have to inevitably react, like in the case of Israel. If there is a problem, you will find yourself in the middle of the problem. We can see the shortcomings of such active policy in the case of the Arab Spring. Nobody would have predicted it, nor the crisis in Ukraine. But I would also doubt that any other policy would have been successful.

In addition to the official, scholars such as Kut and Turan came to a similar conclusion regarding the success of the policy of ‘zero problems’. According to Kut, this policy could have been successful, but it was not due to explicitly external factors, most notably the Arab Spring.¹²¹ After the Arab Spring, Turan labeled Turkey as a lonely hero of the region as it failed to promote democracy despite its intervention during the revolution, and as Turkey itself has been becoming authoritarian which has caused a growing isolation in the Middle East.¹²²

¹¹⁹ “2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Turkey”, *UNHCR*, accessed May 15, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e0fa7f.html>

¹²⁰ A high-ranking official of the Ministry for EU Affairs in Turkey. Interview by author. Ankara, April 16, 2015. Translated by author.

¹²¹ Kut, interview by author.

¹²² Turan, "Reorienting Turkish Foreign Policy: Successes, Failures, Limitations," 143.

Investigating Turkey's relations in the region, their statements seem to be valid. In addition to the US and the EU, the first victim of the new Turkish foreign policy directive was Israel as it was introduced. Even though relations with Armenia have improved, their 2009 accord still has not been ratified, - the process of reconciliation seems to be stuck; moreover, the re-establishing ties with Armenia alienated Turkey from one of its closest allies, Azerbaijan. When the Arab Spring erupted, Turkey intended to apply a pro-change approach by supporting Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood – the failure of the Brotherhood meant a fiasco for Turkey as well.¹²³ The relations between Egypt and Turkey soon reached their lowest point: in November 2013, Egypt expelled the Turkish ambassador, while Erdogan called President al-Sisi a 'tyrant'.¹²⁴ Syria was an additional blow for Turkey: while after a long time of antagonism, Turkey and Syria developed a strategic partnership prior to the Arab Spring, the AKP government openly supported the anti-Assad Free Syrian Army which failed to overthrow the regime of Assad.¹²⁵ Even though Turkey has accepted the Annan Plan in Cyprus, its relations have not developed significantly with Greece according to Kut and Turan.¹²⁶ Despite the fact that Turkey invested a lot of effort in gaining influence in the region, it has failed because – as Cornell concluded – the 'AKP government has grossly overestimated its influence in the Middle East'.¹²⁷

¹²³ Saracoglu, and Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey Under the AKP Rule: Geography, History and National Identity," 316.

¹²⁴ "Erdogan slams Sisi as 'tyrant' over Cairo policy," *Al-Arabiya*, last modified July 19, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/19/Turkey-PM-slams-Egypt-s-illegitimate-tyrant-Sisi-.html>.

¹²⁵ Saraçoğlu, and Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey Under the AKP Rule: Geography, History and National Identity," 317.

¹²⁶ Kut and Turan, interview by author.

¹²⁷ Cornell, Knaus, and Scheich, "Dealing with a rising power: Turkey's transformation and its implications for the EU," 51.

2.2 The case of Hungary

Viktor Orban has not been a fan of Western values for a long time. Even before the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008, Orban blamed Western-type capitalism for not creating freedom but only a weak state, and he claimed that we should not believe in such a system.¹²⁸ In another speech, he said that the future of Europe¹²⁹ should be anchored on a different foundation: the age of neo-liberalism is over, and so are the ages of political correctness and social market economies.¹³⁰ Orban also declared that capitalism's main failure was lacking morality, so only the state could protect its citizens, and instead of moral relativism, citizens need stronger leaders and stronger unity.¹³¹ After the outbreak of the crisis, Orban's critique of capitalism and the European Union became more frequent and sharper:

Maybe we do not understand yet whether we have arrived at the end of the civilization of the modern West, but we see the rise of alternative 'cultural experiments' and civilizations which could take humanity to a new dimension.¹³²

After his inauguration, Orban not only started speaking about the decline of the West, but he started to reshape Hungary's economy, public sector and foreign policy according to his views. Orban started to speak regularly about Russia, China, India and Turkey as examples to follow, and he reshaped the foreign policy of Hungary in order to subordinate these goals under the

¹²⁸ "Liars should pay! - Viktor Orban's State of the Nation Address," *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified February 16, 2007,

http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/fizessenek_a_hazugok.

¹²⁹ Orban repeatedly refers European Union as Europe

¹³⁰ "Viktor Orban's speech at the Bálványos Summer Free University," *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified, July 21, 2007,

http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/orban_viktor_tusnadjard_337_i_beszede

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "Social balance must be restored - Viktor Orban's speech at the Bálványos Summer Free University," *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified July 20, 2008,

http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/helyre_kell_allitani_a_szocialis_egyensulyt.

directive of ‘Eastern opening’.¹³³ Before I start to scrutinize this new direction, I briefly analyze why Orban can be labeled a populist according to Taggart.

2.2.1 Orban’s populism

One of the most prominent scholars on populism, Pappas, labeled Orban as a typical populist leader.¹³⁴ Indeed, Orban has claimed his outsider role since his first appearance in political life back in 1989 when he played a significant role in the regime change as leader of his anti-communist movement. During his first term – between 1998 and 2002 – ‘family’ became the buzzword of his party which was later completed by ‘polgár’ (meaning ‘civic’) which were opposed constantly to the old post-communist elite.¹³⁵ Orban is clearly hostile to representative politics: his party is extremely centralized; only loyal leaders have been appointed to the top of all major state institutions; Fidesz members are also extremely loyal to him as hardly any representatives has openly questioned the will of Orban.¹³⁶ Orban has stated numerous times that he hasn't just become disappointed in the Western type capitalism, but also in Western institutions.¹³⁷ Another repeating sentiment in Orban’s speeches is the phrase ‘We Hungarians’ which implies the importance of the nation in Orban’s view. Orban regularly reiterates that he

¹³³ Marek Naczyk, "Budapest in Warsaw: Central European Business Elites and the Rise of Economic Patriotism Since the Crisis," *Available at SSRN 2550496*, 2014, 2.

¹³⁴ Pappas, "Populist democracies: Post-authoritarian Greece and post-communist Hungary," 11.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ John O’Sullivan, "Orbán’s Hungary: Image and Reality–Whose Democracy? Which Liberalism?," *Hungarian Review* 05 (2014): 17.

¹³⁷ "The government is engaged in national economic policy - Viktor Orban’s speech at the Bálványos Summer Free University," *Website of the Government*, last modified July 19, 2013, <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/a-kormany-nemzeti-gazdasagpolitikat-folytat>.

views Hungarians as a special nation: Hungarians are the most difficult to be governed; Hungarians have a specific mind-set; they are the most individualistic nation in Europe.¹³⁸

Although Orban often highlights certain values which are specific to them such as civic values, one of his chief advisors, Gabor G Fodor, admitted in a interview that these were only ‘political products’.¹³⁹ Orban’s political flip-flops are even more remarkable. Initially, his party was formed as a youth party in order to fight against communism and promote liberalism, but its liberal character changed in the mid 1990s to the right.¹⁴⁰ By that time, Fidesz had become a ‘nemzeti’ (national) party, a party of the centre and recently, the party of the working class. The global financial crisis played its part in Orban’s landslide victory in 2010. Due to irresponsible political elite, Hungary was among the biggest losers of the crisis in Europe: it lost its leading role in the region and its export-oriented sectors were damaged.¹⁴¹ The economic crisis was accompanied by a political one: after the 2006 parliamentary election, the ‘lies’ speech of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany leaked out and generated widespread protest.¹⁴² The crisis not only strengthened Fidesz, but another, more radical populist party, Jobbik as well. Although Fidesz was elected for the second consecutive time in 2014, its popularity has decreased by more than 30 percent in the last year which foreshadows the fragility of its power.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Zsuzsanna Wirth, „Honnan bújtak elő Orbán kekec, nyomulós magyarjai?,” *Origo*, last modified October 9, 2012, <http://www.origo.hu/archivum/20121008-igy-gondolkozik-orban-viktor-a-magyarokrol-tizmillio-szabadsagharcos.html>.

¹³⁹ „G. Fodor Gábor atombombája, a Fidesz őszödi beszéde – Vad visszhangok jobbról az interjünkra,” *Magyar Narancs*, last modified February 21, 2015, <http://magyarnarancs.hu/villamnarancs/g-fodor-gabor-atombombaja-a-fidesz-oszodi-beszede-vad-visszhangok-jobbrol-az-interjunkra-93859>.

¹⁴⁰ Pappas, "Populist democracies: Post-authoritarian Greece and post-communist Hungary," 11.

¹⁴¹ Tamas Egedy, "The effects of global economic crisis in Hungary," *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 61, no. 2 (2012), 165.

¹⁴² "Excerpts: Hungarian 'lies' speech," *BBC*, last modified September 19, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5359546.stm>

¹⁴³ „Popularity of Fidesz has been falling” *Világgazdaság*, last modified April 8, 2015, <http://www.vg.hu/kozelet/politika/tovabb-esett-a-fidesz-nepszerusege-447749>

2.2.2 Hungary and the West: an EU-member with anti-West sentiments

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Hungary had been committed to its Euro-Atlantic orientation. Hungary became a member of NATO in 1997, then it joined the EU in 2004; the primacy of the Western orientation of Hungary's foreign policy had not been questioned by any governing party until 2010. However, Orban continued his anti-West rhetoric when his party gained power in 2010 which was a sharp shift in the foreign policy of post-communist Hungary. According to Orban, due to the decline of Western civilization, a 'new global market' has been emerging and new actors such as China, India, Russia and Southeast Asian countries will appear which will counterbalance the current primacy of the Western states.¹⁴⁴ In Orban's view, the global realignment will also bring the rise of Hungary as a part of Central Europe. This concept was the basis for his newly introduced foreign policy directive 'Eastern opening':

Those who were stranded and not competitive within the framework of old rules and conditions, will have better chances in a new, different kind of competition. This gives us hope.¹⁴⁵

In Orban's view, Central Europe was a buffer zone various times in the past, and the rise of China and Russia could lead to a similar scenario once again. In order to avoid being a buffer zone, Europe has to develop a new way of cooperation with these emerging powers; however, Orban argues that European countries should not merge as we are living in the renaissance of nation states.¹⁴⁶

During his rule, Orban openly criticized the European Union various times. In a 2011 speech, he drew parallel between the repressive communist system and the European Union:

¹⁴⁴ "Social balance must be restored - Viktor Orban's speech at the Bálványos Summer Free University."

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ "The Western-style capitalism is in crisis - Viktor Orban's speech at the Bálványos Summer Free University," *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified July 24, 2010, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/a_nyugati_tipusu_kapitalizmus_kerult_valsagba.

We did not let Moscow dictate to us in 1956 nor in 1990. We do not let Brussels or anyone else dictate to us now.¹⁴⁷

While Orban constantly blames the EU for interfering in domestic affairs and restricting the Hungarian government from taking certain decisions such as the building of the Russian-backed South Stream gas pipeline¹⁴⁸, Orban fails to communicate how much economic support Hungary has received from Brussels, and how much EU-money has been taken by businessmen close to him. According to former President of the EC Barroso, Hungary is one of the biggest beneficiaries of EU funds as it has received 25.9 billion Euros between 2007 and 2014¹⁴⁹; moreover, while Hungary contributed 900 million Euros to the EU budget in 2014, it received 5.9 billion Euros that same year.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, some businessmen loyal to Orban have benefited extremely from Hungary's membership in the EU. Since Fidesz returned to power in 2010, companies linked to Lajos Simicska – Orban's closest ally until their quarrel in 2015 – won state contracts worth billions of Euros of which 88 percent was funded by the EU.¹⁵¹ The husband of Orban's daughter, Istvan Tiborcz and Orban's childhood friend, Lorinc Meszaros also won state contracts totaling hundreds of thousands of Euros of which more than 90 percent was EU-funded projects.

¹⁴⁷ "1848 and 2010 also brought a renewal – Viktor Orban's speech," Website of the Prime Minister, last modified March 15, 2011,

http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/1848_es_2010_is_megujulast_hozott.

¹⁴⁸ Gergely Szakacs, „Hungary PM, reeling from pipeline set-back, blames Brussels,” *Reuters*, last modified December 5, 2014,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/05/hungary-orban-southstream-idUSL6N0TP0WG20141205>.

¹⁴⁹ Hungarian Press Agency, “Hungary is one of the biggest beneficiaries of European solidarity, Barroso says in Budapest,” *Free Hungary*, last modified September 11, 2014,

<http://www.freehungary.hu/index.php/56-hirek/3212-hungary-is-one-of-the-biggest-beneficiaries-of-european-solidarity-barroso-says-in-budapest>.

¹⁵⁰ Data of the EU, *Europa.eu*, last accessed 21 May, 2015,

http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/hungary/index_en.htm.

¹⁵¹ Andras, Petho Andras, and Anita Vorak, "How Western Taxpayers Help Boost the Businesses of Hungary PM's Inner Circle," *Direkt36*, last modified February 26, 2015,

<http://www.direkt36.hu/en/2015/02/26/orban-ot-eve-harcol-az-eu-val-legszukebb-kore-addig-gazdagodott-belole/>

Even though there were endless conflicts between the EU and Hungary about the new Hungarian constitution, the media law, the judiciary reform and the treatment of civil organizations, Hungary's relationship with the United States went even worse. Similarly, the US criticized the authoritarian measures of the Hungarian government during the second term of Orban between 2010 and 2014. The ambivalent relationship reached a historical low after 1990, when the US banned several Hungarian citizens from entry into the US, including high-level public servants, accusing them of benefiting from corruption.¹⁵² In response, Orban accused the US charges of being chaotic, referring to their previous warning as a 'scrap of paper' without any official signatures.¹⁵³ Orban viewed the ban as a politically motivated act:

[The document appears] as if somebody wanted to drag us back into the political situation before the elections. (...) One takes criticism from friends seriously... but now it is becoming more and more difficult.

All in all, Orban systematically used double speech regarding the European Union, while Hungary's relationship with the US has reached an unprecedentedly low level, but his stance can be summarized by this quote by Orban:

The truth is that we are fed up with the kind of politics that exclusively focuses on how we can appropriate the bankers, the capitalists and the foreign press for the West.¹⁵⁴

2.2.3 The redeemer of Central Europe

As was elaborated before, Orban has been a sharp critic of neo-liberal market economy and liberalism, but according to his speeches, Orban views globalism as a given; therefore the

¹⁵² Gergely Szakacs, „U.S. bans Hungarians from entry over corruption charges,” *Reuters*, last modified October 18, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/18/us-hungary-usa-corruption-idUSKCN0I70KL20141018>.

¹⁵³ Hungarian Press Agency, „US entry ban 'chaotic', says PM,” *Politics.hu*, last modified November 14, 2014, <http://www.politics.hu/20141114/us-entry-ban-chaotic-says-pm/>.

¹⁵⁴ “We are facing an upward era – Viktor Orban's State of Nation Address,” *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified February 16, 2014, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/felivelo_korszak_kuszoben_allunk.

main challenge for him is how to reorganize a state in order to remain competitive.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, despite its anti-neo-liberal rhetoric, Orban views globalization as a tool for increasing the role of Hungary. According to him, Hungary – and the EU – should establish free trade agreements with as many Asian countries as possible in order to increase trade and investments mutually.¹⁵⁶ Although in a different context, he also highlighted his pragmatic stance on globalism when he stated that it is not worth fighting against globalization because despite its disadvantages globalization carries several opportunities – for example, in more easily unifying the nation.¹⁵⁷

Concerning Hungary's ambitions, Orban regularly identifies Hungary as a determinant Central European state which went from being an also-ran to a front-runner and which could be a role model for the declining West.¹⁵⁸ The Central European region itself seems to have an important role in Orban's foreign policy vision. As was elaborated before, Orban views Central Europe as an economic hub which overtakes Western Europe; he also argued that Hungary aims to be the financial hub of the region and urged deeper cooperation among the Central European states in order to lower their dependence on the West and Russia, and counterbalance their power.¹⁵⁹ According to Orban, the core interest of the Central European states is to resist the ambitions of the great powers:

¹⁵⁵ "Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp."

¹⁵⁶ „A globalizáció pártján áll Orbán Viktor,” *Mandiner*, last modified October 18, 2014, http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20141018_a_globalizacio_partjan_all_orban_viktor.

¹⁵⁷ Hungarian Press Agency, „Orbán: A globalizáció segít egyesíteni a nemzetet,” *Origo*, last modified November 17, 2015, <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20111117-csutortokon-megalakult-a-magyar-diaszpora-tanacs.html>.

¹⁵⁸ „Hungary became the first from being the last – The Speech of Viktor Orban,” *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified May 21, 2014, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/magyarorszag_regionalis_sereghajtabol_a_regio_ellovasava_valt.

¹⁵⁹ „The Western-style capitalism is in crisis - Viktor Orban's speech at the Bálványos Summer Free University."

The main question is how can we establish a policy where our nation is able to prevent the exploitation of our national resources in the reshaping system of world order. (...) In other words, how can we prevent the loss of our political and economic sovereignty.¹⁶⁰

As we can see from this quote, despite the fact that Orban is rather pro-globalization, he believes more in nation states where economic sectors with strategic importance – such as the banking system – should be majority-owned by Hungarians.¹⁶¹

2.2.4 The re-positioning of Hungary: focusing on ‘Eastern winds’

The growing importance of Central Europe itself suggested a shift in Hungarian foreign policy as the wider Eastern European region played a limited role before Orban returned to power in 2010.¹⁶² But Orban went even further as, after his return, he has stated various times that ‘Eastern winds are blowing in the world economy’. He announced the new directive of ‘Eastern opening’ in 2011 implying that he was looking to initiate closer ties with Eastern countries such as Russia, China, Japan, Turkey, South Korea, Southeast Asian countries, Arab countries and Central Asia in order to reposition Hungary by diversifying its foreign trade and investments, therefore mitigating its dependence on Western countries.¹⁶³ According to the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency, the main aim of the ‘Eastern opening’ is to promote the expansion of Hungarian companies in Eastern countries.¹⁶⁴ This new direction is admittedly a pragmatic approach: as Orban declared, the ideologically driven foreign policy leadership style is used

¹⁶⁰ “The government is engaged in national economic policy - Viktor Orban’s speech at the Bálványos Summer Free University.”

¹⁶¹ „The government builds a new economic model – the speech of Viktor Orban,” *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified July 17, 2012, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/uj_gazdasagi_modellt_epit_a_kormany.

¹⁶² Andras Racz, "A Limited Priority: Hungary and the Eastern Neighborhood," *Perspectives: Review of International Affairs* 19, no. 2 (2011), 158.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁶⁴ Website of the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency, accessed May 23, 2015, <http://hipa.hu/hu/keletinyitas>.

solely by ‘idiot countries’, but Hungary approaches foreign policy aspects clearly on the basis of its economic interests.¹⁶⁵

In order to enhance economic cooperation with Eastern countries, the Hungarian government decided to open ‘national trade houses’ which support Hungarian companies to promote their products in foreign markets and to assess market needs.¹⁶⁶ Hungary has opened 28 trade houses so far across the globe including China, Turkey, India, Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This economic division was supported on the political level as well: Orbán and Hungarian ministers regularly visited these countries with large business delegations. Between 2010 and 2014 Orbán visited Russia three times, China, Azerbaijan and Lebanon twice each and he also went to Kazakhstan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, India, Japan and South Korea -- he has not been to the US however.¹⁶⁷ Although most of Orbán’s desired partners are accused of having poor records on protecting human rights and freedom of expression such as Azerbaijan, Orbán sticks with his pragmatic approach and apparently seeks cordial relations:

Despite the differences between Azerbaijan and Hungary we share much in common as both countries are guided along clear strategies, and have found the right direction.¹⁶⁸

Despite the activism of Hungarian foreign policy, five years after the initiation of the Eastern opening, the government can hardly present any positive outcomes. Although the goal was diversification and to increase trade with Asian countries, according to the Central Statistical

¹⁶⁵ „Hungary must be represented by common sense and courage – The Speech of Viktor Orbán,” *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified August 25, 2014, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/jozan_esszel_es_batorsaggal_kell_kepviselni_az_oroszagot.

¹⁶⁶ Website of the Hungarian National Trade House, last accessed May 23, 2015, <http://www.tradehouse.hu/hu/magunkrol>

¹⁶⁷ Zoltan Haszan, „Merre visznek Orbán útjai?,” *444*, last modified January 23, 2015, <http://444.hu/2015/01/23/merre-visznek-orban-utjai/>.

¹⁶⁸ „Viktor Orbán’s speech on the Hungarian-Azeri Business Forum,” *Website of the Prime Minister*, last modified November 11, 2014, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/orban_viktor_felszolalasa_az_azeri-magyar-uzleti_forumon.

Office, Hungarian export to Asian countries in 2014 was as low as in 2008 by 5.3% share of total export.¹⁶⁹ According to Eurostat, 75% of Hungarian goods continue to be sold in the EU.¹⁷⁰ While there were some Asian countries where Hungarian exports doubled during the period such as Kuwait, Bangladesh, Mongolia and Lebanon, Hungarian export has decreased for example to Russia, India, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia.¹⁷¹ There are only two major counter-examples to this negative trend: China and Turkey. These are the two countries which Hungarian goods were exported to in significantly higher quantities, more than 500 million dollars each, which made Turkey become the fifth most important trading partner for Hungary.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Istvan Madar, „Ezért lett bukás a keleti nyitás,” *Portfolio*, last modified March 23, 2015, http://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/ezert_lett_bukas_a_keleti_nyitas.211635.html.

¹⁷⁰ Zalan Zubor, „Nem sikerült a keleti nyitás a külgazdasági adatok szerint,” *Origo*, last modified March 31, 2015, <http://www.origo.hu/gazdasag/20150331-nem-sikerult-a-keleti-nyitas-a-kulgazdasagi-adatok-szerint.html>.

¹⁷¹ Madar, „Ezért lett bukás a keleti nyitás.”

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: Comparing the foreign policies of Hungary and Turkey

The aim of this chapter is to provide a comparative analysis on the foreign policies of the populist regimes of Hungary and Turkey. I will introduce what the link is between the case studies and how these findings fit into the literature which was introduced previously. In the first sub-chapter I will examine what drives populist leaders in the making of foreign policies, and how they see global order in general. In the second part I interpret the shortcomings of such a policy and I intend to provide an explanation for why sharp shifts are characteristic of their foreign policies.

3.1 The role of the US and the global order in making foreign policy

Both Erdogan and Orban came into power in the time of prolonged crisis in their country, but this was not the sole common point regarding the conditions of their election. Both of them came into power when the US was paying less attention to their countries compared to previous periods – and compared to the present. During the Cold War security was the primary standpoint of the US, but after the collapse of Soviet Union, prosperity became prevalent and that lowered the strategic importance of Turkey in the eyes of the US. Meanwhile, Hungary – and the entire Eastern European region – lost US interest in the last decade as well due to the US' novel focus on the war on terror and the rise of Asia. This implies that Erdogan and Orban not only came into power in times of crisis, but also in times when the United States paid significantly less attention to their countries. In other words, a power vacuum had been created for both Erdogan and Orban in terms of foreign policy and they viewed this as an opportunity worth seizing rather than regretting the lack of more attention from the US. As I presented in the previous chapter, Erdogan and Orban are leaders with visions, and they were able to take advantage of the neglect of the US

when they decided to pursue a diversification from their originally Western-oriented foreign relations.

However, there are more complex reasons behind the novel foreign policy directives of Hungary and Turkey, most importantly the above mentioned visions of their two leaders. Regarding Hungary, Orban became skeptical about European integration and the helpless EU institutions, and he became disappointed in Western-style capitalism due to the global financial crisis. Orban perceived the decline of Western civilization and envisioned a multi-polar world order due to the rise of centralized, strong, not necessarily liberal democratic states mostly in the East which will overtake the power of the United States and other Western countries. Simplistically, Orban's will is to convert Hungary to a more competitive country in terms of emerging countries in the East, where foreign policy would be subjected to this conversion and re-positioning Hungary in the envisioned multi-polar world.

Regarding Turkey, Erdogan envisioned a very similar global power shift to Orban, where Turkey could play a leading role and be a regional power. According to my interviewees, Erdogan was driven by the idea of a more ambitious, more independent and more influential Turkey even when he apparently continued the traditional pro-Western foreign policy approach during his first term.¹⁷³ After Erdogan consolidated his power – partly due to reforms required by the EU – and after the halt of the accession process to the EU, Erdogan openly turned his back on the EU and traditional Turkish foreign policy discourse. Instead of its Western-orientation and dependency on the West, Turkey became more interested in becoming a regional power in a multi-polar world order where it can be more active and it can focus more on regional and global issues.

¹⁷³ Interviews with Kut, Turan, and an anonymous senior official from the Hungarian Embassy in Turkey.

In addition to the use of the negligence of the US and the rise of alternative power centers, both Erdogan and Orban actually took advantage of the support of the EU in order to diversify their foreign relations, and more importantly, stabilize their power. Despite their harsh anti-EU rhetoric, both leaders benefited much from the EU as was elaborated in the second chapter. Hungary is among the most benefited EU-members, and EU contributions largely enrich the close allies of Orban, but Erdogan should be even more grateful to the EU as he was able to stabilize his power by cutting the power of the military in accordance with the expectations of the EU. Moreover, Erdogan instituted several painful reforms which he blamed Brussels for forcing him to do. However, their genuine stance towards the EU still remains ambiguous which will be elaborated on later.

It would be hard to decide which came first for Erdogan and Orban: the recognition of a need for a more centralized state applying Asian-style capitalism, or seeking closer ties with emerging countries due to the appearance of a multi-polar world, but there are definitely some correlations between them. Namely, facing alternative power centers regarding foreign policy is not necessarily only an alternative foreign policy directive, but also a consequence of the policy making of Erdogan and Orban. Based on their rhetoric even before their election and the way they have been governing, it seems to be clear that their main aim was, in the long-term, to break down the limits of their power and governance in order to transform their country in accordance with their vision of the global world order. Therefore, they had to be prepared that their pursuit of centralization and their authoritarian-leaning politics would be harshly criticized by their traditional foreign allies in the West. This implied that they had to seek alternatives regarding their foreign relations: states which are less sensitive to the lack of genuine checks and balances

and proper democratic institutions, or which are not interested in domestic issues at all. That is the reason why I argued that the diversification of the foreign ties of Hungary and Turkey seems to be a consequence of their authoritarian bent.

As the senior official at the Ministry for EU Affairs in Ankara said to me, both Erdogan and Orban – and he added Putin too – are popular at home, less popular in the Western media, and from a political point of view, they are doing the right thing as their populist discourse works well.¹⁷⁴ As the literature on the populist leaders suggest, Erdogan and Orban genuinely use foreign policy and anti-West rhetoric as tools to increase their prestige among their voters. They sharply criticize the West in front of their domestic audience, but they also willingly apply the advantages of the EU such as its financial support or institutional reform expectations. A striking example of their pragmatic stance on the Western institutions is the IMF. Both countries were in need of the help of the IMF, but after requesting its aid – which itself reassured their creditors – they sustained the negotiations as long as they could in order to survive the critical period financially without signing an agreement with the rhetorically ‘despised’ institution.¹⁷⁵ Finally, after months of negotiation neither of them signed an agreement with the IMF.

Moreover, the relationship of Erdogan and Orban towards globalization and market economy is ambiguous as well. As was elaborated in the first chapter, Aytac and Önis argue that populist leaders are eager to blame neo-liberal policies for economic problems and exploitation, while populist movements aim at those voters who fear globalization and liberal economy policies as Chrysogelos argue. However, based on my research, Erdogan’s and Orban’s stance on globalization is more related to their ‘chameleon-like’ and opportunist attitude: even though both of them view Western civilization in crisis and they aim at voters who fear globalization,

¹⁷⁴ A high-ranking official of the Ministry for EU Affairs in Turkey. Interview by author.

¹⁷⁵ Öniş, "The triumph of conservative globalism: The political economy of the AKP era," 143.

they take advantage of the benefits of the market economy which is one of the most significant features of Western civilization. While both leaders believe in a less dependent, sovereign nation state, they view globalization more as an opportunity which can strengthen their international position by diversifying their foreign relations and enhancing their foreign trade.

All in all, I argue that Erdogan and Orban have both recognized that a shift exists regarding the global world order, and they took advantage of this shift due to the fading attention given to them by the United States. They also took advantage of the EU's permissive approach towards them, and they used this opportunity to stabilize their domestic power. Orban and Erdogan have created more space for themselves domestically, and they intended to stabilize their positions internationally by seeking alternative allies which may also substitute for the investment and financial support of the West due to their recent economic growth. Their stance on globalization is similar to their views on the EU: they utilize its advantages but are willing to attack it in order to gain political benefits.

3.2 The shortcomings of populist foreign policy

Nevertheless, both Erdogan and Orban had to face the shortcomings of their foreign policy shift. However, the reasons behind these shortcomings are partly unrelated to the policies of the two leaders. No one could predict the Arab Spring and the Ukrainian crisis which have their part in the failure of the foreign policies of Erdogan and Orban. After the occupation of the Crimea, the West treated Orban more strictly due to his close relations with Putin, while Turkey has isolated itself within its region as first it confronted Israel and lost its role as a neutral mediator, and then it also lost Arabic allies such as Egypt and Syria due to the Arab Spring. Turkey's open aspirations to being a regional leader also meant a challenge for the most

influential countries in the Middle East, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The regions of Hungary and Turkey once again recently became a priority of the United States due to Russian aggression and the Ukrainian conflict, and due to the Arab Spring, the Syrian war, and the emergence of ISIS. Since the US has been paying more attention once again, the isolation of Hungary and Turkey has been growing. This can clearly be seen from the corruption ban in Hungary.

As Tudoriou argues, populist leaders are often ambitious and visionary in their foreign policies, but they tend to overestimate the genuine potential of their countries. In the researched cases, it seems to be valid as both countries became isolated, and now they seem to be trying to re-position their foreign policies. For example, in his latest speech, Orban applied a considerably softer tone when he spoke about the EU:

I am ready to criticize the EU, I am ready to argue with bureaucrats from Brussels, but I firmly oppose anyone who urges our secession from the EU and NATO.¹⁷⁶

In my understanding, this is a clear sign of mitigating his previous sharp statements, and in my understanding, there are various reasons behind these recent shifts and up and downs regarding the foreign policies of the two countries. First, Hungary and Turkey used to be and they still are dependent on West: without the enormous financial and political support of the West, neither of the countries would have reached their current levels of development. Knowing this, neither Hungary nor Turkey would genuinely turn their back on the West for a number of reasons as long as they can't find any alternatives. Second, even though they have tried to apply an alternative foreign policy directive which would diversify their foreign relations, in addition to a limited number of successful cases, these intentions have failed so far; therefore they had to modify their

¹⁷⁶ „The key of the governance will be the attention – The speech of Viktor Orban,” *Website of the Prime Minister*, May 29, 2015, http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/a_kormanyzas_kulcsa_mostantol_a_figyelem.

initial concept. Third, similar to other populists, Erdogan and Orban partly base their domestic support on blaming external actors in order to divert attention from their failures.

Ergo Erdogan and Orban intend to chase goals which are not entirely complementary: they want to benefit from the benefits of the West, but they want to lower their dependency on the West; they seek to intensify economic ties with emerging countries, but they are hardly successful; they expect domestic support from applying anti-West rhetoric, but this can generate protests and sharp criticism in the West. In other words, while they take advantage of the liberal institutions of the West – as was previously presented – they also pursue mutually exclusive foreign policy goals due to an overestimation of the genuine potential of their countries. In my understanding, their foreign policy goals can not be totally accomplished, and without modifying these ambitions, they have no other option than to make some sort of balancing act between power blocks.

As we see from the previous paragraphs, there are various reasons behind the sharp shifts in the foreign policies of Hungary and Turkey. First, they intended to choose an alternative approach in their foreign policy, but this kind of uniqueness also meant that they were more sensitive to external factors such as the Ukrainian revolution and the Arab Spring. Second, due to their ambitious foreign policy goals, it is probable that they can not achieve all of them which force them to reshape their aims constantly. Third, the more Erdogan and Orban were critical with the West, the more firm the response of the West was to these verbal attacks. On one hand, this implies that high linkage to the West – as Levitsky and Way argue – supposes “governments’ vulnerability to external democratizing pressure”, on the other hand it also implies that both

populist countries had to re-balance themselves if they went too far, as we saw in the case of the corruption ban scandal in Hungary.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Steven Levitsky, and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the cold war*, New York: Cambridge University Press (2010), 40.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper is to investigate the sharp shifts in the foreign policies of populist leaders, a topic which scholars have barely researched. Hungary and Turkey proved to be relevant cases as, in addition to the evident differences such as their size, economy and geopolitical location, there are various similarities between the two countries, particularly between the foreign policies under their current regimes. Under the rule of Erdogan and Orban both countries pursue anti-West rhetoric; want to evolve a strong, centralized country less dependent on the West; chase huge foreign policy ambitions; attach great importance to regional cooperation; and intend to enhance economic cooperation with emerging countries.

Even though the two countries are trying to lower their connections to the West, and they took advantage of the United States paying less attention to them as well as the helpless attitude of the European Union, their new foreign policy directives have brought only limited success. Other reasons for this limited success are external obstacles such as the Ukrainian crisis and the Arab Spring due to their high linkage to the West; the inability to find an alternative power block to the West which can fulfill their needs for financial support; overestimation of their potential and irrelevant foreign policy ambitions; and their contradictory foreign policy goals. However, without changing their foreign policy goals, due to these shortcomings, Hungary and Turkey are doomed to constantly perform a balancing act between the West and other power blocks which they wish to enhance their relations with such as Russia, China and the Middle East. In other words, they were unsuccessful in implementing their new foreign policy strategies as their linkage to the West is too high, while their linkages to alternative power centers are not strong enough yet.

Through the cases of Hungary and Turkey I argue that populist leaders not only try to strengthen their regional presence and to conduct an active foreign policy *per se*, but they to intend to take advantage of a power vacuum which happened with Hungary and Turkey due to a foreign policy shift in the US. Another finding of this paper is that populist leaders view globalization as ambiguously as their attitude towards the West. While rhetorically they are willing to blame the West for their economic hardships, and they often emphasize their views on the declining Western civilization, in reality they are eager to take advantage of the benefits of Western-style capitalism such as free trade. Based on my cases, populist leaders view globalism more as an opportunity, and their ‘chameleon like’ attitude is more prevalent in this case than on policy-making based on values.

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