

Mavi Vatan and Forward Defense

The Sinuous Journey of a Republican and Imperial Hybridization

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The Mavi Vatan (Blue Homeland in English) naval doctrine of Turkey has lately emerged as one of the pillars of the Turkish foreign and security policy, aiming at establishing Turkey as a vast regional naval power in and around the Mediterranean.

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The Mavi Vatan (Blue Homeland in English) naval doctrine of Turkey has lately emerged as one of the pillars of the Turkish foreign and security policy, aiming at establishing Turkey as a vast regional naval power in and around the Mediterranean.

While the Mavi Vatan doctrine has raised the eyebrows in Athens and Nicosia, who as both face it as an extension of what they perceive as to be an assertive expansionist Turkish foreign policy that disrupts Greek and Cypriot sovereignties, *Mavi Vatan* emerges as the product of a thought-provoking political, ideological, but above all circumstantial, hybridization between different undercurrents in contemporary Turkey. Moreover, its ascension as a pillar of Turkey's security policy, after having stayed in the margins for many years after its birth in 2006, is intimately linked to the tenacity of Turkey's deep existential insecurity and to the domestic and seemingly never-ending power recalibrations in Ankara.

This hybridization has fashioned what some scholars, like Tol and Taşpınar², call a "Green-Kemalist alliance between the government and the military", according to which "the military will submit itself to an Islamist government, and in the short run, Erdogan will tolerate the Kemalists gaining strength". Although the term "Green Kemalism" ("Green" as a color standing for Islamism) could be a handy tool employed to reveal the significance and magnitude of this hybridization, it would also be more precise to rather talk of a Green-Kemalist ultranationalist left (*ulusalcı*) synergy on the ground, under a common deep rooted and widespread anxiety for the perseverance of the state (*devletin bekası*). This description seems politically and ideologically more appropriate, as it acknowledges the existence of a more liberal and progressive Kemalist trend

² Tol, Gönül, Taşpınar, Ömer, Foreign Affairs, Erdogan's Turn to the Kemalists, How It Will Shape Turkish Foreign Policy, 27 October 2016; <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2016-10-27/erdogans-turn-kemalists>; Date Accessed: 15 June 2020

which is not associated with such synergy, and of the still surviving, albeit marginalized for now, Kemalist-atlanticist dynamic.

Currently, through a foreign policy scope, this hybridization brings together two conflicting wider paradigms: On the one hand, the more introvert and cautious Kemalist Republican, and on the other hand, the more extravert and daring Islamist/Ottoman Imperial³. Therefore, producing a new paradox in Turkish foreign policy, where Turkey is projecting its power in a much more extravert and irredentist style while gradually, diplomacy and deterrence, which were major components in the Republican paradigm, are retrieving in favor of an expansionist hard power and a military might that drove Turkey into a precarious “precious loneliness”. More specifically, as Uzgel has argued⁴, *Mavi Vatan* is the meeting point of two originally antagonistic ideological frameworks: the Islamist “*strategic depth*” and “*zero problems with the neighbors*”, and an *ulusalci* assertiveness.

However, the constant re-calibrations within the “Green-*ulusalci*” synergy and the growing domestic and foreign policy challenges that it is facing (especially in Libya and Syria), might put in doubt its long-term sustainability and new contextual and political dynamics could change once again Turkey’s characteristics and consequently might lead to a re-framing of the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine, and soften its current assertiveness, without, nonetheless, changing its basic essence.

³ Mufti, Malik, *Daring and caution in Turkish strategic culture: Republic at sea*, Pelgrave Macmillan, London, 2009

⁴ Uzgel, Ilhan, *GazeteDuvar*, “Mavi Vatan ve Türkiye'nin yeni güvenlik doktrini”, 15 June 2020; <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2020/06/15/mavi-vatan-ve-turkiyenin-yeni-guvenlik-doktrini/>; Date Accessed: 15 June 2020

The Mavi Vatan hybrid

As the former Turkish Rear Admiral Cem Gürdeniz, the author of the said doctrine, explained in a recent interview with the Greek daily *To Vima*, “the (*Mavi Vatan*) doctrine has essentially two pillars. The first is intended to indicate Turkish areas of maritime jurisdiction under national sovereignty, such as territorial waters, the continental shelf, the EEZ. The second was intended to create a maritime worldview for Turkey”⁵.

Whereas the “great game” of gas in the Eastern Mediterranean⁶ could eventually be at the heart of the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine, its soul lies, as Admiral Gürdeniz highlighted above, in the new worldview of Turkey, as it has been brewed over the last two decades. This new worldview of Turkey, as distilled today from the “Green-*ulusalci*” synergy, seems to be the result of a conjuncture of two central dynamics, made possible by a political catalyst, namely the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016.

The first dynamic is the doctrinaire and ideological environment created by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and later Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu. Davutoglu was one of the principal ideologues-politicians of the first fifteen years of AKP. According to his *strategic depth* doctrine, Turkey is entitled by its Ottoman past and by its geographical position and culture to lead (and eventually to shape) a new Middle East and the Muslim world. Davutoglu’s *strategic depth* was the matrix of neo-Ottomanism (or Ottoman Islamism

⁵ To Vima, Τζεμ Γκουρντενίζ: «Η Γαλάζια Πατρίδα είναι η θάλασσα κοσμοθεωρία της Τουρκίας» <https://www.tovima.gr/2020/06/09/politics/tzem-gkournteniz-i-galazia-patrida-einai-i-thalassia-kosmotheoria-tis-tourkias/>; published 9 June 2020. Date Accessed: 11 June 2020

⁶ Talbot Valeria, Turkey and the West in the Eastern Mediterranean; German Marshall Fund of the United States, Turkey and the West: Keep the Flame Burning; Policy paper No 6, June 2020; <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Tastan%20et%20al%20-%20Turkey%20and%20the%20West%20-%209%20June.pdf>; Date Accessed: 10 June 2020

according to some scholars⁷), an ideological construction that links the present day Turkey with the Ottoman imperial legacy.

While Davutoglu was dismissed from the Prime Ministry in 2016 and has since founded his own political party, his ideological legacy not only survived him, but has also generated new dynamics of irredentism and revisionism as well as an infatuation with Turkey's global role and power amongst the current Turkish elites and the significant majority of the society.

Nevertheless, the convergence between the neo-Ottoman/Imperial matrix and the Kemalist ultranationalist *Mavi Vatan* was far from obvious at the beginning and it was made possible only through the political and ideological adventures and constant re-calibrations of power in current Turkey. Uzgel highlights that, before these adventures, "zero problems" policy and *Mavi Vatan* were born in the same period but were essentially conflicting⁸. *Mavi Vatan* was coined in 2006. For many years, it remained in the margins of Turkish foreign and security policies.

Therefore, *Mavi Vatan* is not the "child" of neo-Ottomanism, but the rebirth and hybrid transmutation of a Kemalist-*ulusalcı* creed of the 90s within the new intellectual and political environment of neo-Ottomanism and, eventually, the equally hybrid re-appropriation by the current regime. Hence *Mavi Vatan* has wider implications in Libya, Somalia and the Red Sea region and with various Islamist groups in these regions.

Gingeras⁹ argues that the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine simultaneously departs from, and is aligned with, the "traditional" foreign and security policies of Ankara:

⁷ Hintz, Lisel, *Identity Politics Inside Out: National Identity Contestation and Foreign Policy in Turkey*, Oxford University Press, London, 2018

⁸ Uzgel, Ilhan, *idem*

⁹ Gingeras, Ryan, personal interview conducted by the author, 3 June 2020. Ryan Gingeras is a Professor at the Department of National Security Affairs in Naval Postgraduate School, USA

“It is a break in so far as it represents an all-encompassing view of naval strategy aimed at influencing key water ways (particularly the Aegean) and, most importantly, a maximalist interpretation of its EEZ. It is not a break in that Turkey has long been assertive in pursuing its own interpretation of its territorial waters (especially in the Aegean with respect to key islands)”.

Moreover, according to Ulgen¹⁰,

“Turkey had always had, even before AKP, an interpretation of its own rights in the Aegean and the Mediterranean that was at odds with Greece. The position of the Turkish state was that there is a need for a political agreement. The difference is that the *Mavi Vatan* narrative extrapolated an understanding of national sovereignty onto maritime rights. Before, the Turkish position was more conciliatory, but *Mavi Vatan* is a bit more aggressive in the sense that it is more protective of Turkey’s maritime rights in the Mediterranean”.

Uzgel¹¹ argues that *Mavi Vatan* is a policy option adopted by the state, reflecting the traditional Turkish state mindset, according to which Turkey is constantly under threat and this is the departing point of any assertive doctrine. It is an established, state mentality that Turkey is under constant threat, from the Soviets and communism during the Cold War and from the West after the end of it. According to Uzgel, today, there is a consensus in the high echelons of the state that Turkey’s security should be defended from cross border areas and *Mavi Vatan* is the maritime extension of his doctrine.

¹⁰ Ulgen, Sinan, personal interview conducted by the author, 9 June 2020. Sinan Ulgen is the chairman of EDAM, an Istanbul based independent think tank

¹¹ Uzgel, Ilhan, personal interview conducted by the author, 20 June 2020. Ilhan Uzgel is an academic specializing in International Relations

The deeper ground for this hybridization to become possible seems to have been fertile since, as Taspinar has argued in 2008¹², despite the differences between Kemalism and neo-Ottomanism, “both share a strong sense of patriotism and attachment to the Turkish nation-state (...) At the end of the day, both Kemalism and neo-Ottomanism share a state-centric view of the world and Turkish national interests”.

Through this transformation, Erdogan and AKP’s Imperial paradigm overlapped with the traditional Republican paradigm, which, while being notoriously cautious in foreign policy, was always ready to use military might as a means of deterrence and as intimate accessory to diplomacy when the fear that the perseverance of the state (*devletin bekası*) was at stake. This was shown with the threats to invade Syria twice, in 1936-37 and 1998, the multiple cross-border operations in Iraq during the 90s and the invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

Military industry, “forward defense” and international (dis)order

The second dynamic, intimately linked to the first one, is the gradual militarization of the Turkish foreign policy and its shift to the logic of “forward defense”¹³, made possible by “the decades-long developments in the defense industry”¹⁴ that permitted to today’s Turkey to effectively use hard power.

¹² Taspinar, Ömer, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Carnegie Papers, Turkey’s Middle East Policies Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism; 7 October 2008; <https://carnegieendowment.org/2008/10/07/turkey-s-middle-east-policies-between-neo-ottomanism-and-kemalism-pub-22209>; Date Accessed: 10 June 2020

¹³ Uzgel, Ilhan *idem*

¹⁴ Adar, Sinem, The Middle East and North Africa Politics Section of the American Political Science Association (APSA), “Understanding Turkey’s Increasingly Militaristic Foreign Policy”, MENA Politics News letter, Volume 3, Issue 1, Spring 2020; <https://apsamena.org/2020/06/01/mena-politics-newsletter-31-spring-2020/>; Date Accessed: 12 June 2020

Adar¹⁵ explains that, “without the cumulative growth in the defense industry over the last four decades, a pronounced shift to the current hard power approach would not have been possible”. She further argues that “the growth over time of an indigenous defense industry and, equally if not more important, the sense of power that it has reinforced in Ankara generates an aggressive stance and readiness for military action in multiple spheres”.

The effect of the defense industry came to embolden the “forward defense” logic that was made possible within the matrix of neo-Ottomanism and Davutoglu’s *strategic depth*. Despite its original soft power and “zero problems with neighbors” dynamics, neo-Ottomanism had already the seeds of the “forward defense” logic, as Uzgel argues.

Back in the days when Davutoglu was still venerated as a great strategist, he declared that, “the defense of Istanbul starts from Bosnia, the defense of Erzurum plateau starts from Grozny”¹⁶. Almost ten years later, in October 2016, after the failed coup attempt of July 15th, Erdogan stated that, “we have lost many generations in the fight against terrorism and in fratricides. We no longer want to carry the can. From now on, we will not wait until the threats are at our borders. We will no longer wait for the terrorist organizations to attack us; yet we will beat them to death wherever they mobilize”¹⁷.

With Davutoglu and the AKP before 2009, “forward defense” was a strategic theory mainly based on a perception of common culture and on the systematic use of soft power. With Erdogan after July 15th, “forward defense” had definitively become a hard power pillar of Turkish foreign policy.

¹⁵ Adar, Sinem *idem*

¹⁶ Uzgel, Ilhan *idem*

¹⁷ Adar, Sinem, *idem*

Hence, as Kiniklioglu¹⁸ argues, *Mavi Vatan* is a stipulation that Turkey's national interests need to be protected beyond its current borders in a wider context, in which “similar to a number of other countries, Turkey is going through an immensely nationalistic phase”.

On an international level, according to Kiniklioglu, this is by and large a response to the increasing chaos in the international order and the many weaknesses seen in the US and the EU (Brexit, the rise of the extreme right and the erosion of liberal values). Turkey's ruling coalition also harbors nationalist elements that favor such an assertive policy. This assertiveness works well in domestic politics, especially at a time when hard power is back in the game as is seen in eastern Ukraine, Crimea and Syria.

The Sledgehammer and failed coup turning points

The political catalyst that ultimately brought a merging between AKP's Islamists and Kemalist nationalists was the July 15th 2016 failed coup attempt. While the failed coup changed drastically the power balance mechanisms within the state, (mainly but not only because of the void left by the Gulenist widespread network within the state had to be filled in), it was the culminating point of a longer process of political and ideological transformations within the state.

This longer process started back in the first years of AKP's power, when the party's Islamists were preaching a liberal and multicultural expression of Islam and were “as open to the West and Western political influences as they are close to the Muslim legacy”¹⁹. The seeds of lack of trust to the West amongst the Kemalist nationalists were already recorded back in 2008, when Taspinar wrote that, “in fact, the Kemalist establishment is now increasingly suspicious of the EU

¹⁸ Kiniklioglu, Suat, personal interview conducted by the author, 21 June 2020. Suat Kiniklioglu is Senior fellow at the Center for Applied Turkey Studies at SWP

¹⁹ Taspinar, Ömer, *idem*

and the United States, whom they see as naïve toward Islamists and dangerously tolerant of Kurdish nationalism”²⁰.

This seed of mistrust started to “flourish” with the *Ergenekon*²¹ and *Sledgehammer (Balyoz Harekâtı)*²² plots that sent dozens of high-ranking military officers to prison (including Cem Gürdeniz, Cihat Yaycı and the admiral who replaced him, Yankı Bağcıoğlu), with charges of coup plotting. After 2014, after the alliance between AKP and the Gulen network had fallen apart, the accused were released, and the cases were branded as plots organized by the Gulen movement.

Ulgen argues that the top brass of the navy, who were associated with the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine,

“[they] got attacked during the *Sledgehammer* period and what that means is that these officers who could have been more atlanticists turned more nationalists because they viewed *Sledgehammer* and FETO (Gulenist Terror Group) as being under the influence of US services. They believe it was a coup against them orchestrated by the US and as a result of that they have turned much more nationalists and anti-atlanticists”²³.

The second main point of this process were the June 2015 elections when AKP lost for the first time ever its parliamentary majority and at the same time the Kurdish leftist Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) managed to cross the 10% threshold and to enter the Parliament. At that point, Tayyip Erdogan and AKP

²⁰ Taspinar, Ömer, *idem*

²¹ “Ergenekon” was an allegedly “secretive, ultra-secular, ultra-nationalist organization (that) had been carrying out terrorist attacks and manipulating events behind the scenes, all in an alleged plot to throw Turkey into chaos and justify a military coup ousting then-prime minister, and current President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

²² Sledgehammer was an alleged coup plan to topple Erdogan and AKP in 2003. In 2012 300 of the 365 accused were sentenced to prison. In June 2014 all the accused were ordered released from prison and in 2015 they were acquitted after the prosecutor declared that the documents used for their sentence were forged.

²³ Ulgen, Sinan, personal interview conducted by the author, 9 June 2020

decided to enter into a de facto alliance with Devlet Bahçeli's MHP and by doing so, they radically changed their initial trajectory while they created the fertile conditions for a return of state-centrist and hardline nationalist policies and reflexes.

The failed 15th July coup attempt was the fatal catalyst of this peculiar journey. As Adar argues, it accentuated the anxiety of the perseverance of the state, providing the justification for the necessity of using hard power to defuse threats, accentuated the belief of lack of solidarity from the West and particularly the US and re-configured alliances within the state apparatus²⁴.

For *Mavi Vatan* in particular, the regional context was also favorable since the coordination between Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, Israel and Egypt did nothing but exaggerate this anxiety of the perseverance of the state and the wider "status anxiety"²⁵ of Turkey. In addition to that, as Kiniklioglu²⁶ argues, already since 2004, Ankara felt that despite its hard efforts to unite Cyprus around the Annan Plan, Turkey has been mistreated despite pressuring the Turkish Cypriots to vote in favor of the plan and taking considerable domestic political risk at the time.

²⁴ Adar, Sinem, *idem*

²⁵ Dalay, Galip, Turkey and the West Need a New Framework , German Marshall Fund of the United States, Turkey and the West: Keep the Flame Burning; Policy paper No 6, June 2020; <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Tastan%20et%20al%20-%20Turkey%20and%20the%20West%20-%2009%20June.pdf>; Date Accessed: 10 June 2020

²⁶ Kiniklioglu, Suat, *idem*

An intricate anti-atlanticist maze

One of the dimensions of this re-configuration of alliances within the state apparatus were the different nationalist groups that filled in the void left by the Gulen network and cemented the state. The wider nationalist faction was able to make a significant comeback to the state, under the wider umbrella of what many scholars have named as “Eurasianism”²⁷, although it seems more accurate to use the wider term “anti-atlanticist”.

As Gürcan²⁸ suggests, one of Eurasianism’s main components is the fear that political and security integration with the West is dragging Turkey toward a new Treaty of Sevres, a fear that has been repeatedly expressed by the founders of the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine. Another main component is that NATO, the USA and European countries have all come to erode the legitimacy of Turkey’s Syrian and Iraqi borders, withholding support for the country’s fight against terrorism and since they no longer care about Turkey’s security concerns, Ankara needs to draw up its own strategic vision, relying on its own power²⁹.

These visions, within the context and the transmutations that lead to the “Green-ulusalci” synergy as displayed above, opened the door for the staunch ultranationalist leftist Doğu Perinçek (who was also imprisoned in the frame of the *Ergenekon* affair) and his small *Vatan Partisi* (*Patriotic Party* in English). These are the main representatives of “Eurasianism” in Turkey. They were allowed to “gain clout in Turkey’s Islamist government”³⁰ and to become the

²⁷ Gürcan, Metin, Al Monitor, The rise of the Eurasianist vision in Turkey, 17 May 2017; <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/05/turkey-rise-of-euroasianist-vision.html>; Date Accessed: 15 June 2020; Çakır, Ruşen, Taşpınar, Ömer, Kınıklıoğlu, Suat, Medyascope, 29 May 2020; <https://medyascope.tv/2020/05/29/turkiyede-avrasyacilik-rusen-cakir-omer-taspinar-ve-suat-kiniklioglu-tartisiyor/>; Date Accessed: 10 June 2020

²⁸ Gürcan, Metin, *idem*

²⁹ Gürcan, Metin, *idem*

³⁰ Mahmud, Nafees, Al Monitor, How an ultra-secularist gained clout in Turkey’s Islamist government, 30 January 2020; <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/turkey-ultra-secularist-man-said-to-be-behind-erdogan-policy.html>; Date Accessed: 20 June 2020

principal meeting point and melting pot of secularist anti-atlanticist trends in the country and specially in the military.

However, it seems that the Eurasianist/anti-atlanticist front is far from being homogeneous. Gürcan³¹ argues that Eurasianism has four distinct variants; that could suggest different sub-groups: Pro-Russian Eurasianism, pan-Turkic Eurasianism, Islamist Eurasianism and Erdoganist Eurasianism.

Kiniklioglu³² argues that *Mavi Vatan* is driven by a group of nationalist military and political leaders who have been identified as "Eurasianists" which are extremely anti-western and favor Turkey to be aligned with Russia and China.

In this context, it is noteworthy that China's navy has also lately developed its own naval doctrine, with very assertive and expansionist characteristics, named "blue national soil"³³.

However, Ulgen³⁴ suggests that the navy officers behind the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine "are not eurasianists, they are nationalists". He also highlights that *Mavi Vatan's* gaining significance is indicative of the post-coup political alliance where the nationalists are now part of the ruling alliance. And he explains that the main difference between Eurasianists and nationalists is that the former are more pro-Russian whereas the later are not.

³¹ Gürcan, Metin, *idem*

³² Kiniklioglu, Suat, *idem*

³³ Will, George, F, The Washington Post, The 'blue national soil' of China's navy, 18 March 2011; https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-blue-national-soil-of-chinas-navy/2011/03/18/AB5AxAs_story.html; Date Accessed: 17 June 2020

³⁴ Ulgen, Sinan, *idem*

Furthermore, Gingeras³⁵ highlights the “heated politics behind *Mavi Vatan*” within the state and also the bumpy relationship between the officers of the *Mavi Vatan* and Doğu Perinçek’s group.

“Recent events, however, suggest that the ideological influence of Gürdeniz and others associated with the ultranationalist left may possess certain limits. On May 16 of this year, the architect of Turkey’s agreement with Libya, Rear Adm. Cihat Yaycı, was officially demoted in accordance with a presidential decree. Erdoğan’s endorsement of the demotion whipped up a firestorm of speculation across Turkish media. As the navy’s chief of staff, Yaycı was generally seen as an emerging strategic visionary who championed many of the assertive policies proposed by Gürdeniz (...) His decision to resign rather than to accept his demotion has provided fodder to commentators who see this affair as a power struggle within the armed forces as a whole”³⁶.

“In his most recent column, Gürdeniz largely derided Yaycı’s removal as a Gülenist plot backed by Greece and the wider “Atlantic front.” He declared his hope, however, that the state would continue to “make the best use of Admiral Yaycı’s advanced knowledge and experience”. In contrast, Perinçek issued a starkly public rebuke of Yaycı’s refusal to accept his demotion. “In a time when our navy is face to face with threats in the eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus, and the army is at war from within and without, one does not resign”³⁷.

After making these comments, Cem Gürdeniz announced he was parting ways from Perinçek’s newspaper *Aydınlık* and resume publishing with another ardently Kemalist media outlet, *Odatv*³⁸.

³⁵ Gingeras, Ryan, War on the Rocks, Blue Homeland: The heated politics behind Turkey’s new maritime strategy, 2 June 2020; <https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/blue-homeland-the-heated-politics-behind-turkeys-new-maritime-strategy/>; Date Accessed: 10 June 2020

³⁶ Gingeras, Ryan, *idem*

³⁷ Gingeras, Ryan, *idem*

³⁸ Gingeras, Ryan, *idem*

Recently, *Odatv* has been under attack from the Turkish justice and a number of its journalists have been arrested on accusations that they have revealed state secrets³⁹.

Looking forward

These domestic “heated politics” in Ankara as well as future regional and international dynamics, in combination with the financial encounters of Turkey, might become significant challenges for the “Green-*ulusalci*” synergy and put into doubt its long-term sustainability. Consequently, despite the fact that the inherent significance and essence of the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine within the state establishment in Ankara seems to have acquired a permanent character that is likely to prove impermeable to political changes in the future, its leading assertive character could eventually come to be softened and the doctrine might be re-framed in a way to include a more conciliatory tone, in the event of a future re-positioning of Turkey towards the West.

Uzgel⁴⁰ suggests that “there are many potential obstacles in front of the current synergy between secular ultranationalist leftists and Islamists, the major ones being the economy, the declining support to AKP-MHP alliance, the extend of tolerance of the nationalists towards the growing Islamization while its limits will be also tested in Syria and Libya”. Despite all that, Uzgel argues, Greece and Cyprus should learn to live with this doctrine because it has become a state policy and it is a long-term strategy.

³⁹ Ozsoy, Tugce, Bloomberg, Turkey Arrests OdaTV Editor-in-Chief, Bans Website, Report Says, 6 March 2020; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-06/turkey-arrests-odatv-editor-in-chief-bans-website-report-says>; Date Accessed: 17 June 2020; Hurriyet Daily News, Court arrests journalist Müyesser Yıldız, 12 June 2020; <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/court-arrests-journalist-muyesser-yildiz-155599>; Date Accessed: 17 June 2020

⁴⁰ Uzgel, Ilhan, personal interview conducted by the author, 20 June 2020

The limits of the “Green-ulusalci” synergy are indeed tested in Libya, mainly by Ankara’s policy driving Turkey to be a more permanent player in the inner dynamics of the country and to associate with Islamist elements.

As Gingeras⁴¹ argues, “at present, Turkey has face few directly obstacles in asserting itself in the eastern Mediterranean. It is entirely possible that direct costs placed on Ankara (be it sanctions or armed confrontation) changes Turkish behavior”.

And he highlights that, “as for whether Turkey's behavior can be moderated in the long term, one has to consider also that *Mavi Vatan* thinking is also conceived alongside the navy's current recapitalization efforts. In ten years time, the Turkish navy could look very different: bigger and more advanced. While it is difficult to say just how capable that navy will be, Ankara's behavior rests on the confidence that it will become a naval power in the Mediterranean. That factor alone seems to suggest that Turkey may see an advantage in being more aggressive”.

The internal dynamics within the Turkish military seem also to be a factor in the creation and the course of the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine. According to Gingeras⁴², “the navy may have gained greater exposure and significance within the military as a result of Blue Homeland thinking but it is likely it is still seen as a “second-tier” service next to the army and Air Force”.

Kiniklioglu⁴³ suggests that the basic tenets of the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine policy are widely shared among Turkish political elites. This is also due to the rising nationalist sentiment in Turkey especially since 2015. So, many leaders in the opposition favor the basics of the policy that stipulates the protection of Turkey's interests in the Aegean and Mediterranean seas.

⁴¹ Gingeras, Ryan, personal interview conducted by the author, 3 June 2020.

⁴² Gingeras, Ryan, *idem*

⁴³ Kiniklioglu, Suat, *idem*

Ulgen⁴⁴ argues that a “next government will have a different relationship with the West and as part of that it might revise *Mavi Vatan* or not. A new government, if it wants to change relations with the West, might revisit it and frame it in a more conciliatory way”.

Within the Turkish society and in numerous political ‘elements’, there is a significant dynamic of change that might bring new constellations of power in the next period and by doing so, Turkey might indeed come to the point of changing again its relations with the West and therefore its foreign policy’s tone.

⁴⁴ Ulgen, Sinan, *idem*