

Research article

<https://doi.org/10.37493/2307-910X.2025.1.15>



Ahmet Davutoglu's foreign policy concept of "Strategic Depth" and the Kurdish issue

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the content and basic principles of the foreign policy concept set out in the book "Strategic Depth" by former Turkish Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. The article examines the historical prerequisites for the formation of a new foreign policy concept of Turkey in the 21st century, the main ideas and principles formulated by A. Davutoglu in his work. It is pointed out how the political reality of recent decades has seriously adjusted many provisions of the doctrine of "strategic depth", but despite this, its basic principles and approach are still relevant for Turkish diplomacy. The correlation between the provisions of the "Davutoglu doctrine" and the Kurdish problem in Turkey, which has both domestic and foreign policy significance for this country, is analyzed. Davutoglu's view that a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish issue was urgent for Turkey's strategic interests was innovative and politically far-sighted. The result of the implementation of this doctrine was that in the first decade of the 21st century, not only relations with Kurdish leaders changed positively, but also relations with neighboring countries, which were largely determined by the "Kurdish issue".

Keywords: Turkey, Ahmet Davutoglu, the Kurdish question, "strategic depth", political elite, intelligence and power

For citation: Mehmet EID, Magomedov AK. Ahmet Davutoglu's foreign policy concept of "strategic depth" and the Kurdish issue. Modern Science and Innovations. 2025;(1):169-180. <https://doi.org/10.37493/2307-910X.2025.1.15>

Научная статья
УДК 327

Внешнеполитическая концепция Ахмета Давутоглу «стратегическая глубина» и курдский вопрос

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена содержанию и основным принципам внешнеполитической концепции, изложенной в книге «Стратегическая глубина» бывшего главы МИД и премьер-министра Турции Ахмета Давутоглу. Работа рассматривает исторические предпосылки формирования новой внешнеполитической концепции Турции в 21 веке, а также основные идеи и принципы, сформулированные Давутоглу в своем труде. Несмотря на то, что политическая реальность последних десятилетий серьезно скорректировала многие положения доктрины «стратегической глубины», ее базовые принципы и подходы по-прежнему актуальны для турецкой дипломатии. Анализируется корреляция между положениями «доктрины Давутоглу» и курдской проблемой в Турции, имеющей для этой страны исключительное значение. Мнение Давутоглу о том, что мирное урегулирование курдского вопроса является неотложным для стратегических интересов Турции было новаторским и политически дальновидным. Результатом реализации данной доктрины стало то, что в первое десятилетие 21 века позитивно изменились не только отношения с курдскими лидерами, но и отношения с соседними странами, которые в значительной мере были детерминированы «курдским вопросом».

Ключевые слова: Турция, Ахмет Давутоглу, курдский вопрос, «стратегическая глубина», политическая элита, интеллект и власть

Для цитирования: Мехмет Э. И. Д., Магомедов А. К. Внешнеполитическая концепция Ахмета Давутоглу «стратегическая глубина» и курдский вопрос // Современная наука и инновации. 2025. № 1. С. 169-180. <https://doi.org/10.37493/2307-910X.2025.1.15>

"Critics have said many times that I am too fascinated by power. This is not true. What I am really fascinated by is the intellect, and power is inherently linked to it."

Charles Wright Mills [1].

Introduction. The epigraph quote by the iconic American elitologist Charles Wright Mills defines with the utmost precision the true mission of the ruling class as people who perform the role of producers and distributors of ideology. Nothing testifies to this as clearly as the scientific work and political achievements of the Turkish intellectual Ahmet Davutoglu. Ahmet Davutoglu, who served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (2009-2014), Prime Minister and simultaneously the leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party, can be called a truly iconic figure in the modern history of Turkey. The political biography of this man, like nothing else, shows that members of political elites are the most active individuals capable of generalizations, expressing their interests and will in the language of ideology. An analysis of his political biography and analytical works can give a lot for an objective vision of modern problems of geopolitics and international relations.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the "new" foreign policy doctrine of Turkey, developed by Professor Ahmet Davutoglu and known as the concept of "strategic depth". The focus is on the place and role of the Kurdish problem in the foreign policy doctrine of Turkey in the 21st century. The choice of the Kurdish problem is due to the fact that this topic has been and remains one of the key problems for Turkey's domestic and foreign policy.

Materials and research methods. Towards a conceptual clarification of the role of political elites in transitional societies. An explanatory model that can help us better understand Ahmet Davutoğlu's political role is the elitist paradigm. However, here we need a theoretical clarification of the concept of "elite" to more accurately select the research angle. The path to a methodological clarification of the leadership functions of the political elite lies through a theoretical discussion between supporters of various elitist approaches. To begin with, it should be noted that elitist concepts are divided depending on what characteristics allow a certain ruling group to secure the status of an elite. Some scholars define the elite as people who are maximally involved in politics in any society, while striving to control key positions of power [2]. Others evaluate the concept of elite as a general term for people with a high position, qualifications, wealth, and the ability to

coerce [3]. Still others classify members of political elites as those who receive the overwhelming majority of material values in society [4]. Finally, another category of researchers associates elites with the role of possessing informational and command functions, insisting that the political elite must be strictly associated with people who are much more involved in political thought, discussions and actions than the rest of the population" [5].

The essence of the approach to studying elites that we propose is a meaningful examination of ruling groups through the prism of their genetic mission—leadership. In this context, the problem of the elite's political consciousness becomes especially relevant. Using the political biography of Ahmet Davutoglu as an example, we insist that the most subtle feature of the elite and, at the same time, the pinnacle and embodiment of all its psychological forces is its worldview.

Research results and their discussion. Ahmet Davutoglu: Brief Political Biography. Ahmet Davutoğlu was born in 1959. He graduated from the Faculty of Economics and Management at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul in 1983 with a degree in political science and economics. He later completed his postgraduate studies at the same university and received a PhD in international relations.

Until the beginning of the 21st century, Davutoğlu was exclusively engaged in scientific and teaching activities. From 1995 to 2004, he was a professor at Beykent University in Istanbul, where he headed the Department of International Relations. At the same time, the future head of Turkish diplomacy wrote columns for the *Yeni Şafak* newspaper and lectured at the Military Academy. It was during this period that most of his books and articles on fundamental issues of international relations were written, including his main work, *Strategic Depth* (2000). This work became a real event in Turkish political science and brought Davutoğlu closer to the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which was rapidly gaining strength and influence. After the party came to power in 2002, he became the chief adviser on foreign policy to Prime Ministers Abdullah Gül (2002-2003) and Recep Erdoğan (2003-2014). Not a single significant foreign policy decision was made without taking into account Davutoglu's opinion, and behind the scenes he began to be called the "shadow head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." On May 1, 2009, Ahmet Davutoglu was officially appointed head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey [6].

At the same time, Davutoğlu's importance within the AKP party ranks is growing. From a pure theoretician and ideologist, he is increasingly becoming a public and practical politician. In June 2011, Davutoğlu was elected to the Turkish parliament for the first time, heading the AKP list from his home province of Konya. On August 27, 2014, he was approved as the party's chairman at the AKP congress, and two days later, as the new party leader, he was approved for the post of prime minister of the country. On September 12, 2015, Davutoğlu was re-elected as the AKP chairman, and following the early elections on November 1, 2015, the AKP regained its constitutional majority. 30 On November 2015, Davutoglu's one-party government received a vote of confidence from parliament.

The following year, 2016, turned out to be a turning point both in the political history of Turkey and in the career of Ahmet Davutoğlu. On May 5, he announced that he would not put forward his candidacy for the post of AKP chairman at the next party congress, and on May 22, he officially resigned from the post of prime minister. Among the main reasons for Davutoğlu's departure from the political forefront of Turkey are the emerging trends of pressure on civil liberties and media activities, as well as the resumption of hostilities against the structures of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), with which the truce was broken back in July 2015. Of significance was also the tendency to strengthen the personal power of Recep Erdoğan, which became decisive in the political life of Turkey after the failed military coup of July 15-16, 2016 [7].

In September 2019, Ahmet Davutoğlu, along with several other politicians, announced their withdrawal from the AKP, and three months later announced the creation of a new political

structure – the “Future Party”. Currently, the former head of Turkish diplomacy is in “soft opposition” to the country’s President Recep Erdoğan.

Ahmet Davutoglu and the Formation of Turkey's Foreign Policy Doctrine: The Concept of "Strategic Depth". Until the early 1990s, Turkey did not have its own foreign policy concept. This is explained by the fact that its place in international relations was strictly determined by its membership in NATO and the fact that it was the only country in this military-political bloc that bordered directly on the USSR. That is, Turkey was a kind of NATO outpost in the Black Sea region, being a part and instrument of foreign policy strategies.

The collapse of the USSR in 1991-1992 and the cardinal geopolitical changes in the world urgently required the formation of a new Turkish foreign policy. Already in the early 1990s, two of its main vectors were defined, which underlie Ankara's modern foreign policy. The first is the assertive penetration of Turkish influence into regions that were historically part of the Ottoman Empire. We are talking about the states of the Middle East, North Africa and the Balkans. The second is an active foreign policy projection onto regions connected with Turkey by an ethnic Turkic and Muslim religious community. These are the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and, to some extent, such subjects of the Russian Federation as Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. As R.S. Terekhov notes, "the already noted change in Turkey's status forced other countries to take into account, and even adjust their position on regional problems in accordance with Ankara's aspirations." At the beginning of 1992, when the collapse of the Soviet Union became a fait accompli, one of the main tactical tasks in Turkey’s foreign policy became convincing the West, especially the United States, of the advantages of using it in contacts with the new Central Asian states, and the latter that it could be a defender of their interests in the West [8].

The new foreign policy is associated with the name of the then President of the Turkish Republic Turgut Özal and was defined as “neo-Ottomanism” (this term is still used to describe Turkey’s foreign policy, although Turkish diplomacy itself does not use it). However, if we talk about the 1990s, the foreign policy of that time placed the main emphasis on elements of pan-Turkism. Thus, at the beginning of 1992, President T. Özal stated that “the independent republics of Central Asia have no problem choosing a development model, since they have already made it in favor of the Turkish model of authoritarian nationalist modernization introduced by Atatürk.” [9]. Turkey’s ethnocultural community with the countries and peoples of Eurasia was recorded in the geostrategic concept of the country’s development until 2023, formulated in the late 1990s. Within the framework of this concept, Turkey’s foreign policy was defined, which is based on pan-Turkism” [10].

Only at the beginning of the 21st century did the preconditions for the development and formulation of Turkey's foreign policy doctrine emerge, taking into account the diversity of its historical prerequisites and potential areas of implementation. It was at this moment, in 2001, that the book by Ahmet Davutoglu, a professor at Istanbul's Beykent University, "Strategic Depth. Turkey's International Position" was published [11, 12]. It is generally accepted that the monograph "Strategic Depth" was initially conceived as an extensive "service instruction" for the Turkish Foreign Ministry and other structures related to international relations. Such a straightforward purpose of a scientific work is somewhat questionable. It seems that with his work Davutoglu sought to convey a new vision of Turkey's international position to the general public and the state bureaucracy.

In the most general sense, the views and approach of Ahmet Davutoğlu, set out in the above-mentioned book, fit well into the framework of the so-called "critical geopolitics". The latter refers to a separate direction in political-geographical and international studies that emerged in the West in the 1980s. If we speak in the most general terms, then, unlike "classical geopolitics", which considers international problems as a set of purely geographical factors (the confrontation between "land and sea", "continental center and periphery", "North and South", etc.), "critical geopolitics" sees the world somewhat differently. In particular, it departs from strict geographical determinism and considers geopolitical situations in the context of the cultural, national, historical specifics of countries and communities that are actors in specific international political situations. Davutoglu's

work fits into the framework of the critical-geopolitical approach primarily because its starting point is to consider Turkey's entire experience in the international sphere in the context of historical-cultural continuity.

One of the distinctive features of the concept of “strategic depth” (as the ideas formulated by Davutoglu are called in scientific parlance, based on the title of the monograph) was the sharp criticism it contained of the one-dimensionality of Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War, which we have already mentioned. During that period, the country obediently played the role of NATO’s eastern outpost and made unsuccessful attempts to integrate into the EU. As S. S. Tretyak notes, “He [Davutoglu] calls the blind adherence to the path of European integration throughout the 20th century not so much a mistake as... not corresponding to the spirit of the beginning of the new century. He... emphasizes that, by completely linking itself to the Western world with its values and orders, Turkey has distanced itself from the world of the Near and Middle East, with which it had long-standing historical and cultural ties” [13].

In short and inevitably schematic terms, the concept of “strategic depth” consists of the “principles” outlined by the author, three of which are “methodological” and five “operational” [14]. Let us consider the structure of these principles in more detail. The first methodological principle involves abandoning the one-dimensional vision of international relations characteristic of the West during the Cold War and forming an independent foreign policy for Turkey, especially with regard to the Middle East and the Muslim world. The second principle includes “substantive and systematic” foreign policy activity throughout the world. It is emphasized that the content and direction of foreign policy in different regions should not contradict each other. The third methodological principle places a fundamental emphasis in foreign policy on “soft power” (resolving political problems peacefully, activating economic and cultural diplomacy). According to Davutoglu, Turkey, having one of the most modern armies in the Middle East, must constantly demonstrate to the world that it does not pose a threat to anyone.

As for the five “operational” principles of Davutoglu’s concept, they are formulated as follows. The first of them assumes harmonization between the principle of respect for the rights and freedoms of citizens and the principle of national security. The second principle, which has become the most famous in the world, is the slogan of achieving “zero problems with neighbors.” Moreover, Davutoglu saw its implementation in the transfer of the experience of developing Turkish democracy, which is associated primarily with the period that began with the AKP party coming to power in 2002, to the level of foreign policy relations. The third principle is the primacy of “preemptive diplomacy,” which is capable of preventing conflicts or preventing them from escalating into an acute, antagonistic form. The fourth principle assumes a multi-vector foreign policy of Turkey. Within the framework of this norm, interaction with the United States and NATO should not interfere with relations with Russia, and the path to closer integration with the EU should not complicate the development of relations with the countries of Eurasia. The main principles of relations are peaceful, conflict-free coexistence and mutually beneficial ties in the sphere of economy and trade. The fifth principle is “rhythmic” (i.e. consistently active) diplomacy, which means increased integration of Turkey into international political, economic and cultural-humanitarian projects as a significant subject of the entire system of international relations. “In the book by A. Davutoglu “Strategic Depth” (2001), a successful balance was found between the Eurasianism traditional for Turkey, suppressed imperial complexes (“neo-Ottomanism”), and approaches adapted to regional realities, characteristic of Western political science. The set of these ideas, in essence, is the calling card of the phenomenon known as the Turkish model...” [15].

Many assessments of the “Davutoglu doctrine”, especially those in the media and coming from certain political circles in different countries, see in it not only a “set of ideas”, but also a specific aspiration of modern Turkey for hegemony in the Middle East region and an informal “neo-imperial” status. In our opinion, we should talk about Turkey's aspiration for greater significance in international relations, including at the regional level, primarily in the economic

sphere and as a link in political and cultural terms between the "West" and the Muslim "East", which is by no means equivalent to hegemonic aspirations and "neo-imperial ambitions".

Turkish researcher Bulent Araş notes that "...Davutoğlu gained fame and went down in history as the intellectual architect of Turkish foreign policy during the AKP years. He led the party's foreign policy and influenced a number of important foreign policy events. It is believed that it was Davutoğlu who significantly changed the rhetoric and practice of Turkish foreign policy, giving it a dynamic and multifaceted focus. He defined the vision and style of the new foreign policy line and laid the foundation for its implementation. At first, Davutoğlu's new vision and style were the subject of much discussion and criticism; many wondered whether they were suitable for Turkey's foreign policy?" [16]. The general conclusion was that Davutoğlu now had the best opportunity to test his theoretical developments in practice.

Today, two decades after the emergence of the "strategic depth" doctrine, researchers have the opportunity to verify its applicability to Turkey's specific foreign policy practices based on specific facts from recent history.

It can be said that such significant components of the Davutoglu doctrine as independence and multi-vector foreign policy of Turkey have been implemented. Also, the thesis formulated by this scholar on the relationship between domestic and foreign policy has very clearly manifested itself in Turkish politics, and that Turkish foreign policy is undergoing changes in accordance with the evolution of the internal situation of Turkish society. However, the thesis on achieving "zero problems" with neighbors has not stood the test of time. It was seriously adjusted by such events as the "Arab Spring" that began in 2011, as well as social changes in countries with which Turkey has very active relations. We are talking about such states as Syria, Iraq, Libya - Arab-Muslim countries where Ankara maintains a military presence. It was not possible to implement the Davutoglu doctrine not only in relation to Syria, Iraq and Libya, but also in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. However, this should not be seen as a total failure of this concept. Ahmet Davutoglu is in many ways an outsider, a pure theorist, in relation to the Arab world, the South Caucasus and the Central Asian republics. For many decades, the ruling regimes in these countries have been irreplaceable, and Davutoglu, as an expert in the field of foreign policy theory, might not have taken into account the full depth of the internal social problems that have accumulated in the countries of the region. In its practical foreign policy, Ankara could not help but react or remain strictly neutral in relation to the "Arab Spring". The only weapon in its foreign policy arsenal in this situation was to adopt the position of one of the parties in the intra-Arab conflicts. Such a state of affairs can in no way ensure a "zero level" of problems in international relations. In particular, Turkey took a position of armed support for the opposition in Syria in this situation, became one of the conflicting parties in the Libyan civil war after 2011 and politically supported the position of the Iraqi authorities in relation to the problem of Kurdish self-determination.

Below we will examine the applicability of the "strategic depth doctrine" to the Kurdish issue in Turkey and the Middle East region.

The "Doctrine of Strategic Depth" and the Kurdish Question: Theory and Practice. The Kurds are the most numerous ethnic group in the world that does not have its own state. Belonging to the Iranian ethnocultural group, the Kurds and their historical territories are today divided between Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. Today, Turkey is home to the largest number of representatives of this people, over 20 million people, which is almost a quarter of the country's population. Historically, the Kurds of this country were subjected to the strongest ethnocultural oppression, especially during the early Turkish Republic of Kemal Ataturk's era. The Kemalist Republicans who ruled the country effectively denied the Kurds their independent national identity, even referring to them as "mountain Turks". From the second half of the 1920s, a course was taken towards the total "Turkification" of ethnic minorities living in Turkey, to which the Kurds responded with large-scale armed uprisings that were brutally suppressed by the authorities. Since 1985, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, a political organization of Turkish-Kurdish nationalists with developed armed structures, has been at the center of an armed confrontation with the Turkish government [17]

However, despite the fact that the socio-economic status of the Kurds during these periods was quite marginal, the situation has changed in recent years. Among the Kurds, the average level of education is higher than that of the Turkic-Turkish population, and during the years of the AKP rule, the situation with the economic and infrastructural development of the Kurdish regions has improved. Nevertheless, the Kurdish problem remains one of the key issues in both the domestic and foreign policy of the country.

It is clear that Ahmet Davutoglu could not help but touch upon the “Kurdish issue” in his fundamental work, where he devotes an entire section to it, entitled “The Kurdish Problem. Northern Iraq and Turkey from the Point of View of Global and Regional Balance.” Let’s start with the fact that Davutoglu believes that the “Kurdish issue” is at the center of global and regional balance and affects Turkey in matters of foreign policy, regional strategic planning and internal socio-cultural integration. He claims that Kurdish terrorist activities in Turkey have been in the center of international attention, intensified during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, as well as the Gulf War in the early 1990s. In his opinion, it is difficult to ensure internal peace in Turkey without achieving regional peace in the Middle East. In order to achieve this goal, as he writes in his work, “Turkey should be expected to pursue a cold-blooded and comprehensive policy based on the strength of its common historical experience”.

Davutoğlu sees the solution to the “Kurdish question” within the concept of “sense of belonging.” He argues that if a political system fails to provide a sense of belonging that encompasses all layers of society, it is not surprising that internal tensions fueled by clashes of external interests periodically appear on the agenda. The idea of “sense of belonging” is also used in some of his public speeches. For example, in 2014, he used the term when greeting Masoud Barzani, the leader of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. He stated verbatim that “sense of belonging is the biggest challenge for the region in the future, because the sense of citizenship goes hand in hand with the sense of belonging” [18].

But the question arises, what is meant by a “sense of belonging”? Equally important is the question of how this sense can be created. In his book, Davutoglu argues that Turkey needs a process of internal reconstruction that can lead to a sense of belonging among all its citizens. The “Kurdish debate” can be seen as an important component of a long-term strategy to transform Turkey into a regional power.

Thus, the Kurds, as part of a shared Middle Eastern history, must feel a sense of belonging to Turkey, as Turkey seeks to become a regional power in areas where the Ottoman Empire ruled for centuries. Another integral part of Davutoğlu’s approach to the ‘Kurdish question’ is Islam. Davutoğlu refers to the Ottoman era, when Ottoman subjects were bound to the empire by religious ties. According to renowned Turkey scholar Aaron Stein, Davutoğlu believed that the Ottoman Empire was politically powerful because of its commitment to Tawhid (the principle of monotheism fundamental to the religion of Islam). As Stein explains, “if this vision were realized, Middle Eastern governments would be politically and culturally bound to Turkey, thereby reducing the significance of national borders. A commitment to Tawhid by Middle Eastern governments would also resolve many of the region’s problems, including ethnic nationalism and sectarianism” [19]. Like Davutoglu, Erdogan also uses Islam to formulate ideas related to the “Kurdish question.” In a 2011 speech in the city of Diyarbakir (the historical center of Turkey’s Kurds), he emphasized the connection between religious values and ethno-nationalist concepts. [20].

In our opinion, such a vision of the solution to the "Kurdish problem" - through the prism of the unity of the Kurdish and other peoples of the Middle East on the basis of Islamic unity - is too idealistic. It does not reflect the complex realities of the political and religious situation in the region. The fact is that each country has its own local religious tradition, conditioned by the peculiarities of the historical development of a particular country. In addition to this, for the mass consciousness of the majority of modern Kurdish society, the ethnic component clearly prevails

over the religious one. In addition, the level of religiosity of the Kurds today, especially among the young and middle generations, is quite low.

Nevertheless, we cannot fail to note the positive developments that took place in the Kurdish issue during the rise to power and subsequent rule of the AKP. This party itself won the elections in 2002 largely thanks to the conservative-religious voters of the rural areas of southeastern Turkey, a significant part of whom are ethnic Kurds.

As for Turkey's concrete steps towards the Kurdish issue, the AKP government launched a number of initiatives in this direction in 2009. After the launch of the Kurdish-language state television channel (TRT Şeş), Erdoğan announced that his government would take a number of measures to ensure equal rights for Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin. The most impressive moment of the AKP's "Kurdish opening" (Kürt açılım), later called the "democratic opening" (demokratik açılım), was the return of a group of 34 PKK fighters from northern Iraq to Turkey on 19 October 2009. Although this was greeted with jubilation by the Kurdish population of Turkey, the nationalist backlash from Turkish public opinion forced the AKP government to suspend the initiative. However, the said "discovery" was consistent with Davutoğlu's view that a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish issue was urgent for Turkey's strategic interests.

It should be noted that the first decade of the 21st century also saw positive changes in relations with neighboring countries, which were largely determined by the "Kurdish issue." The most striking changes occurred in Turkey's relations with Syria. While the two countries were on the brink of war at the end of 1998 over Syria's support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), relations reached a high point in 2005. Political and economic cooperation between the two countries grew ever closer. The decision to mutually abolish visa requirements for tourists in September 2009 was a rare step in the region that had a very positive impact on public opinion in both countries. Turkey has repeatedly tried to mediate between Syria and Israel in order to reach a peace agreement and return the Golan Heights to Syria. Of course, we are not talking about the subsequent events associated with the aggravation of relations between the two countries after the "Arab Spring," which ended with Turkey's intervention in the Syrian civil war on the side of the anti-government forces.

Turkey's relations with Iraq have also improved significantly. While Ankara's policy toward Baghdad since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 had focused on preventing the emergence of an independent Kurdish political entity and eliminating the presence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq, its policy, under the influence of the "Davutoğlu Doctrine," shifted from containment to engagement. Turkey recognized the legitimacy of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as a federal entity within Iraq and deepened economic and political cooperation with the federal government in Baghdad. Davutoğlu became the first senior Turkish official to visit northern (Kurdish) Iraq in October 2009. He met with Iraqi Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani (a former archenemy of Turkey) and Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani. The meeting was timed to coincide with the opening of the Turkish consulate in the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, Erbil. In his statements, Davutoğlu claimed that such a visit was long overdue. Noting that he found Erbil to be a very developed city, Davutoğlu added that "we will all contribute to the further development of Erbil, which will become a bridge between Ankara and Baghdad. Turkey is Iraq's gateway to the European Union, and Erbil is our gateway to Basra." [21].

Although the rapprochement described remained fragile due to ongoing subversive operations by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and counter-attacks by the Turkish army in northern Iraq, it was a radical departure from the previous hostility and mistrust between Turkey and the Kurds. This turnaround confirmed Davutoğlu's view that good relations with the Iraqi Kurds and Iraq were crucial to Turkey's access to the Persian Gulf.[22]

Conclusion. An analysis of Ahmet Davutoğlu's political biography and the doctrinal foundations of his new foreign policy vision for Turkey in the 21st century poses for researchers not only a problem related to the role of personality and the leadership factor in political processes. The study leads us to broad generalizations that the thoughts of the ruling classes are dominant in

any era, and the paths of societies are just as naturally determined by the myths and doctrines of the ruling elites. Along with the function of exercising power, the development of ideologies is an area of political vocation for elites. This is especially important in times of crisis, when a particular society finds itself in a transitional state. Due to these circumstances, the political consciousness and political ideology of the ruling minorities play a key role in the fate of certain communities.

It is fair to say that Ahmet Davutoglu's "strategic depth" doctrine has become a landmark phenomenon in both Turkish politics (primarily foreign) and global geopolitical science. Its basic principles include: the formation of a foreign policy strategy based on the country's entire historical experience, independence and multi-vector foreign policy, and a clear priority of "soft power" in international relations. The events of the 2010s and 2020s in the Middle East and Europe, as well as internal changes in Turkey's politics and economy, have already "corrected" and may still correct many provisions of the "Davutoglu doctrine". More specifically, the Davutoglu doctrine has failed in relation to Syria, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. It is also impossible not to notice that in recent years the Islamic factor in the world has been steadily degrading. This allows us to say that Muslim identity cannot have a unifying and consolidating potential in the Middle East under Turkish leadership. However, whatever new foreign policy concept is implemented in the future, it will be based to one degree or another on the fundamental principles of Ahmet Davutoglu's "strategic depth" doctrine, primarily the methodological ones. Since this doctrine became the first full-fledged and multifaceted foreign policy concept in the history of Turkey.

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Contribution of the authors: the authors contributed equally to this article.

Conflict of interest: the authors declare no conflicts of interests.

The article was submitted: 21.01.2025;

approved after reviewing: 14.04.2025;

accepted for publication: 20.04.2025.

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Вклад авторов: все авторы внесли равный вклад в подготовку публикации.

Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Статья поступила в редакцию 21.01.2025;

одобрена после рецензирования 14.04.2025;

принята к публикации 20.04.2025.