

## *Interview*

# ***DIPLOMACY: THE ACADEMIC SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER ELLIPSES, CHOICE and PERSONAL FREEDOMS***

**Prof. Dr. Esra Hatipoğlu**  
Member of Board, Chair of Advisory Board,  
Center for Diplomatic Affairs and Political Studies  
[esra.hatipoglu@dipam.org](mailto:esra.hatipoglu@dipam.org) +902163103040

**Prof. Dr. Paul Ade Silva**  
Nişantaşı University Faculty of Economics, Administrative  
and Social Sciences, English New Media Department  
[paul.silva@nisantasi.edu.tr](mailto:paul.silva@nisantasi.edu.tr) +905378766595

**PAS:** Why diplomacy and international relations?

**EH:** In fact, when I sat the University Entrance Exam, international relations as a field was my first and only choice. I was so determined to study in that department...From the very beginning I knew that I was interested more in social sciences although many around me were thinking that I may be also very successful studying pure science...I insisted on social sciences... Why I chose international relations is because at that time I was also thinking to become a diplomat. In fact, it was my first motivation to choose international relations as a subject field. But after starting University, in my second year, I changed my mind and decided to be an academic. I enjoy working as an academic in international relations and diplomacy...It is so inter-disciplinary even trans-disciplinary. As a field, it has contributed a lot to my career. I don't regret, not even once that this is the area, I chose to work in...

**PAS:** Talking about Diplomacy with a capital “D”, it has often been said in the media that international organizations such as the United Nations have been a great success in spite of the complexities of the nature of diplomacy and international relations that they manage because there has not been another world war, in devastation and reach like the first and second world wars. What are the truths, half-truths and fallacies inherent in this given media mantra, in view of what’s happened, and is happening to Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Libya and South East Asia; not to mention the current scope for global instability in the relationships between the US, Russia, China and Turkey?

**EH:** The transformation of global politics and the questioning of the real roles and the effects of the existing international organizations are the main topics that are discussed nowadays.

The liberal system (order) is questioned; the collective security and the sharing of benefits are constantly becoming a remote possibility; the global values are being eroded (loss of confidence in global norms); inferences as to the dominion of a digital world require the current state of the global politics to be defined over four concepts: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA World).

The followings are inevitable to occur: the authorization of competition in a global dimension; multilateralism being substituted by multi-conceptualism; that the culture of living together is eroded; the emergence of policies that progress on the basis of leaders, wherein the performance of leaders becomes significant; that the equation of security-economy-democracy is reconsidered and assessed; that the domestic values get more and more valuable; that rather than long-term alliances, narrower-scoped, short-term, temporary ones become common; that misunderstandings and miscalculations are frequently observed amongst the actors due to the experienced uncertainty and that nationalism (including economic nationalism) is on the increase.

The corona virus also complicates the situation even more. We have already seen many critics of the existing organizations like WHO, UN, NATO, EU... We will see how they will get out from this difficult situation. It will be a litmus test for all in a way...

**PAS:** By “they”, do you mean the international organizations or the critics, or both?

**EH:** Here I mean IOs. But in general, we can also use it for all the actors in international politics...

As I mentioned before bilateral cooperation or relations among smaller groups of states seems to serve better in today’s world...Ad hoc, timesaving etc. The more so that

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nowadays it is also very difficult to follow the changing alliances.... We are in the time of flexible alliances. According to the changing situations actors are shifting from one another very easily, very quickly. The more so that nowadays we are not only talking about nation states as actors in international relations, but individuals and I think our readers can think about some real-life examples... Not difficult to find....

**PAS:** At any rate, is it your considered view then that there won't be a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic knowing as we do that there has been an increase in the number of contractions and deaths in the US and China's experiencing a resurgent, if we were to believe the current media coverage? Even, the rate of contracting the pandemic in Turkey is said to be increasing daily as the numbers of recoveries are subsiding.

**EH:** I am not an expert on medical issues. That's why I can't say anything about the possibility of a second wave. But my general expectation is that the things that we are discussing now as part of a post-corona world, we have already started to discuss even before Covid-19 pandemic. Covid 19 came as another wakeup call but it can't be regarded as the main turning point. It will accelerate the changes, but we don't have enough evidence that it will altogether turn the world upside down.

**PAS:** You're an international relations expert of significant clout, you participate in policy deliberations within international Think Tanks giving voice to the Turkish perspectives, so in all candours what are your estimate for the next four years for the direction or directions of global management? What do we need to embrace and what do we need to avoid as a plague?

**EH:** It is possible to see many researches, reports, articles and books that reflect the current situation and future expectations of the international system. The result that emerges from all these studies and analyses that have been carried out recently is the reality that we face a world wherein the international order that was established after 1945 has now been totally questioned; that the security and benefits are made common among the actors has become harder to accept; the dominant global values have been eroded; the confidence in the global norms is being lost; the effects of Industry 4.0 (artificial intelligence, deep learning, virtual and augmented reality, the Internet of object, etc.) cannot be thoroughly foreseen.

**PAS:** Whilst I agree that the full impact of Industry 4.0 evaluation is still in progress, there are arguments strengthening Industry 4.0 with bringing about unprecedented opportunities for developing nations. That Turkey has risen in economic wealth and power and is now among the leading global powers because of AI, the internet of things etc.

That despite the tensions in global security, the US is drawing down its occupational forces in Afghanistan, Syria and elsewhere. And if you have in mind the unilateral pull-out of the Trump administration from the Iran Nuclear Deal Framework – a deal reached under President Obama, then it can be argued that if anything else, Iran's aggression has been curtailed by the Trump Whitehouse. Do you disagree?

**EH:** It is true that Turkey is doing well in digitalization and is now among the leading global powers. It will be much better in the coming years. Almost all the sectors in Turkey have already started their preparations for dealing with the effects of Industry 4.0 many years ago. Covid 19 pandemic accelerated the transformation to digitalization in many sectors including the education sector ... But again, we must talk about legal issues related to that field and cyber security etc. This is not only for Turkey but for every actor...

As for US, its involvement in Middle East etc. can really be an issue of another interview. What is the importance and significance of Middle East for US? Historical background? US's Middle East policy? The relations between global and regional actors? What kind of drawing down from the region? How many times before did we hear all these? It is too long a story... The same questions can also be asked specifically for Iran as well... And when you ask these questions it is not easy to answer your question with one word "agree", or "disagree" ... The more so as you know it is not easy to agree or disagree with an idea in social sciences without taking into consideration all the determinants which are not easy to specify correctly under certain circumstances...

In a world where the uncertainty makes itself felt so strongly, the global actors are forced to produce and use new policies, new practice methods and new diplomacy devices so that they can improve their capability of adapting to the current situation.

**PAS:** What are some examples of the new practice methods and diplomacy devices that you're referring to?

**EH:** I think for now it is not easy to specify them one by one... They are still loading... Speed is the main denominator for today... Conditions are changing so quickly... The actors also keep changing their tools, policies, devices to be able to adapt to the quickly changing situations... The coming years will show us everything more clearly... Social media for example is one of the new methods that is used by many leaders as tool..

The current situation of the international system and the efforts of the international actors to adapt to this situation leads to a vicious circle, whereby causing the process to appear even further complicated. While the priorities of national interests, within the frame of 'power balancing policies' at/in different levels and forms, are being maintained with no

neglect by any means, the competition and power-struggle among the international actors that do not wish to lose their power are on the increase; the nation-state is being tried to be reinforced; multilateral alliances are becoming questionable; the security-democracy balance is being reshaped on behalf of security; and nationalism - including economic nationalism - and protectionism are becoming the most important policy-determinants.

Currently, actors prefer negotiating problems - rather than with those international organizations whereof they are a part - with actors that are with fewer participants that focus on single or few subjects that are similar to themselves in ad hoc formations (viz. that have the same behaviour patterns).

**PAS:** Do we have any substantial evidence that economic nationalism and protectionism are now the most important policy determinants? Were you to be thinking about the trade tariff wars between the US and China, there's yet to be a domino effect because of these? Besides, the reshaping of alliances that took place during the first and second world wars, some might say that this isn't the global situation right now. Correct me if I'm wrong. Don't you agree that the jury is still out on the aggregate of the potential damage to the world economy based on the tariff wars? And we may never know because the COVID-19 pandemic has run amok with global and national economies.

**EH:** Yes, we can say that economic nationalism and protectionism are now one of the most important policy determinants... Trump's "America First" policy openly includes economic nationalism and protectionism. Brexit can also be analysed from this perspective... We can also talk about the rise of economic nationalism in the EU. We can talk about US-China trade war... The domino effect is also possible. On the other hand, there is also an attempt to protect the existing global rules, globalization, free trade, WTO... We can't be sure about the near and far future effects of Covid-19 pandemic on national and global economies...

State leaders play an important role in forming policies: their discourses and social media uses, the attitudes they exhibit at national and international meetings, their body language, etc. are followed and their performances are measured. As such, there happen to develop misunderstandings, misevaluations and mistaken inferences between states from time to time, wherein the process may add up to such policies as are not effectual enough as a result of miscalculations. The tension in the international system is becoming a new ordinary thing; the reality is evolving in a different manner; and the conflict cycle that is fed by unpredictability and uncertainty leads to the definition of belonging with intra-national values instead of trans-boundary values. After the corona virus we will continue to discuss the same issues in an aggravating way, most probably we will continue to discuss the same things in the short and medium term and plus the unknown real economic, social and political effects of it.

**PAS:** You talk about the significance of leaders' use of the social media and we have, for the first time, if I'm correct a president of the US using tweets to announce policies and decisions of global impact; often in contradiction to stated official government policies. Do you see such as part of the problems you succinctly state as, "misunderstandings, misevaluations and mistaken inferences between states from time to time, wherein the process may add up to such policies as are not effectual enough as result of miscalculations".?

**EH:** Social media includes quick reactions to various national and international issues. Following Trump's tweets for example sometimes really may confuse our minds... He sends many contradictory tweets not only to other institutions in the US but also to himself... Plus they are so short messages... Not easy to be regarded as a base for policy formulation! The more so that since we started to conceptualize the politics from leaders, without knowing what is going on behind the scenes in those countries we formulate our expectations according to the leaders' characters, gestures, speeches and when they aren't realized, we are disappointed. We don't have a continuous data coming from these countries. For example, we try to understand US policies through Trump, Germany's policies through Merkel or Russian policies through Putin...

**PAS:** Quantify for me intra-national values and trans-boundary values, say for instance, in the case of Syrian or Palestinian refugee treatment by Turkey, UK-Europe and the United States of America in terms of size, rights and well-being of the refugees.

**EH:** In terms of refugees I think it is enough to have a quick look at the existing situation both regionally and globally. There are lots of things to be said. It is really a long story... From one side we can talk about international law dealing with refugees. On the other hand, we see the different legal measures, administrative measures and actual treatments by various countries... Humanitarian aspect is the main issue here... Turkey continues to host the largest number of refugees worldwide and Turkey's position vis-à-vis refugees is well known worldwide... For Turkey it is more a moral issue... Unconditional hospitality can be used as a concept... Turkey is source, transit and destination country for migration. The economic and political problems in its neighbouring countries create an important challenge for Turkey. The more so that this is a problem that needs international cooperation, so can't be solved only by the efforts of one country... Respect for human rights is one of the main issues. Then coherent, inclusive and comprehensive policies are needed for both the migrants and asylum-seekers.

We should also mention here the negative discourses against refugees that cause some radical reactions... Here we can also mention the rise of radicalism, racism, xenophobia and identity-based animosities globally that also complicates the situation.



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**PAS:** Let's talk away from taking the current global temperature, let's take a pause and talk about you. Tell us about your childhood.

**EH:** I spent some part of my early childhood with my aunt, Gülseren Gökaşan and my maternal grandmother, Şükriye Görçeğiz due to my father's job. When my father had to serve in the remote area of the country, I spent some years with my aunt and grandmother (although I could see my parents regularly). They were so protective of me and they tried to please me in any way possible by spending so much of their time with me, looking after me. They let me do whatever I wanted I guess that could be one of the reasons why we would have very good memories of one another. I really respect them so much as both had a very strong personality. Thinking about them now, my aunt and grandma, I really learned a lot about life, culture, religion from them. Most importantly I learned to never in my life complain about hard work. They really helped me a lot in building self-esteem and confidence.

Unfortunately, my grandmother passed away, but I still have very good relations with my aunt. I still share many private matters with her. She is like another "mother" to me ... I learned many things from her. I always know that I have her support, no matter what. She has always been so happy, so reliably relatable and full of love for everyone... Under her influence of absolute loyalty and unflinching support, I could really practice unconditional loving; unconditional love of myself has helped me a lot in my life.



Grandma Şükriye Görçeğiz whom Esra lived with in Bursa

**PAS:** How old were you when grandma Şükriye, passed away? How was that for you since she was one of your closest confidants? Talking of unconditional love, how does that look like in practical terms? Give me one or two situations that could help me see what you're saying. Also, does this unconditional love extend to other people - how does it express itself in your relationship with other people and professionally? Are there downsides to loving unconditionally in a materialistic laden world?

**EH:** My granny passed away when I was 23. It was a huge emptiness... It took me sometime to adapt to the world without her... It was so difficult for me to accept the fact that I would not have anyone anymore to call my "maternal grandmother". My mother and my aunt supported me a lot during that period. I also fully shifted my attention to my postgraduate education and my work... Our memories are always with me... By unconditional love, I mean love which is not conditioned upon anything... I know that any love is anyway conditioned in some sense, but for me unconditional here means without paying attention to the expectations so much... Maybe I mean pure love... If I love someone, I always consider the relationship in light of the moment not with future expectations... My love is generally something that is not conditioned on the concerns of other people as well... It is an inner urge... I can love anyone without any reason... I am not calculating anything when love is concerned... I follow my instincts... I care about people both in my personal and professional life... Respect them as they are... I don't pay so much attention to the materialistic aspect of the world... I am aware of it but don't care much... I live in my own way...

**PAS:** You've already spoken about your parents living away from you because of your dad's work when you were a child. Usually, this may mean your father was working in the military. Tell us more about your parents, Niyazi and Nurten Hatipoğlu, and their relationship with you. What's their life like, now?

**EH:** Reuniting with my parents was really a turning point. By the way I also have a brother... Coming together and living in the same house really was a turning point in my life. It wasn't that easy. I really missed my grandmother and aunt so much. I even tried to escape from home to go back to them... It took me some time to adapt myself to the new conditions. But they were so understanding and parentally... After a certain time, everything settled. I was happy and had a very successful school life. My brother was also very successful in many senses. He was born with a gift... great brain power! We were at the same Tuzla İlkokulu, primary and middle school in Istanbul. It was very nice to be together, work together... In fact, we have only 13 months between us. He was younger than me... He has been living in the USA since 1993. Talking about schooling, it played an important role in my life. Starting from my primary school... Especially my primary school teacher, Leyla Aktunç, who inspired me a lot and helped me to achieve my



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potential... She was my role model... She was the first person who really made me to think to be a lecturer... She was so kind, so knowledgeable, so supportive. She was not only a teacher to me but a real-life coach... I learned a lot from her... I still remember most of the things that she told us... All the advice she gave us, her closeness to the students... She gave us a real background to many forms of knowledge that I still remember... I still also remember her style of teaching that really attracted us during that time... I still use some of her tactics in my lessons and lectures.

Again, my high school Kadıköy Anadolu Lisesi was a real turning point in my life. I really had a very powerful education there. I owe a lot to all my teachers... It had high academic standards, high quality staff, nice school campus. The language of instruction was English. We studied all our courses in English. We had international teachers who have worked all around the world. We also had German/French as secondary language. We reached high levels of proficiency in both English and German/French. The friendship there was also special... It was a place where we learned that talent or IQ is very important for success, but drive, motivation and decisiveness are even more important. We trained in that way... We learned also how to adapt ourselves to the changing environment... I think this is the real thing that is still very useful to me...

My university Marmara was another important step for me. I really had a good education. I was at the department of international relations, which I had really wanted. I was a very successful student. I had very good friendships there. Again, the language of instruction was English. I owe lots to all my lecturers there... They really helped me a lot in developing my vision and my future job. I also have many role models from the University as well... While I was in my sophomore year, I was almost sure that I would become an academician... Starting from that period, I really watched my lecturers and tried to assess what kind of lecturer I should be? What should I do, what I shouldn't...?

Also my being in London, London School of Economics and in Florence, European University Institute were also great experiences for me... Being abroad really broaden my vision, enlarged my network, boosted my trust in myself, my knowledge, my role in life, promoted my career success, transformed my sense of self, helped me to discover myself...

I spent almost 26 years working at Marmara University starting from assistantship to professorship. I always remember those days with a big smile on my face... Then being the rector of Nişantaşı University was another real experience both personally and professionally...



**Prof. Dr. Esra Hatipoğlu, Rector Nişantaşı University 2016 - 2019**

Back to my parents, my mother was the real power behind our success in life. She was so helpful, determined. She scarified so much of her life for us and for our successes... She was a very disciplined, very supportive, very positive and pro-active with our lives and what we were doing... She always stood behind us... Although she was ambitious and knew what she wanted she never forced us to do anything that we didn't want... Due to his work, we didn't see much of our father, but we also always knew that whenever we needed him, he was always there for us. We have very flexible, liberal, respectful parents... They always respected our choices.

They tried hard to give us the necessary environment to realize our ambitions whilst giving us a great responsibility, at the same time. Because I came from a middle-class family, I was able to give some lectures while I was a student to make some money for example. It was very helpful... I even started to practice lecturing in those days... They never told us to study, but showed us how to like studying... Our parents never let us just be hardworking students, they helped us enlarge our perspectives and to be good human beings with outstanding IQs and Emotional Quotients (EQs). We were always active... We always did sport, dealt with literature, socialized with our friends, went to movies, read

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as many books as possible on any topics including even the encyclopaedias.

The most important thing was the organization. We really organized our time more precisely. When we studied, we studied without thinking of anything else, when we were out and enjoying what we were doing, we never thought of studying. I still do the same now. I can work 17-18 hours without a break. Starting to do something may be a little bit difficult for me, but I never stop before finishing once I've started. I really owe so much of my perseverance to my parents especially my mother.

My parents' life in retirement is also very nice and they spare most of their time for various social responsibility projects, my father knows German very well, now he starts learning English... He enjoys being busy and with nature... We see each other almost every day... I talk to my mother several times a day over the phone... We are so close now and share almost everything... We enjoy spending time together, discussing international relations, specific issues and some of our other areas of interest...

**PAS:** What's your brother's name and what does he do? Does he have a family of his own and do you see each other regularly... I guess what am asking is how close are you to your brother now?

**EH:** My brother's name is Cem. He is an electrical engineer living and working in the US since the 90s. He has a family and I have two lovely nephews. We see each other regularly... We exchange several visits each year and communicate through the social media, etc. every weekend.

**PAS:** What situations, potency, inspiration or motivation careered you into the academics?

**EH:** Starting from my primary school, I develop a habit of having pleasure from studying, learning and reading. As I explained before that was also true for my brother... After a while studying, learning and reading really became a natural template, part of our life. We enjoyed these activities a lot. During that time, we really thought that everyone was like us... Loving that much of studying, learning and reading... It was the first motivation that careered me into the academics... The second motivation was much more related with being free and independent... I wanted to develop my career in the way I wanted and to openly and freely share my ideas. The other motivation was flexible time schedule... Anyway, as academics, we are all working 24 hours a day... Another motivation was the thought that I could really touch the lives of the students... I really like teaching and have enough patience to do such a respectful job... In fact, I never see it as a job, it became my lifestyle... It is a very honourable job. Each of us has teachers and lecturers in our lives and we are teachers and lecturers to others...

By the way as I mentioned before including my primary teacher, I have so many role models in my life that made me who I am today... In addition, I also got so much support from my family and friends to be an academic.

**PAS:** Returning to our evaluation of global balance of power, is our world gravitating to a unipolar, bi-polar or multilateral power-directions?

**EH:** I think we are in a period where we rethink or redefine most of the main concepts of international relations. That's why it is not easy to conceptualize the future globe... With all the things that are happening over the globe now, including the corona virus and its effects at every stage starting from individuals to states and to the whole world, we can only predict that in the future things may not be that much different from the ones that we have now which is chaotic enough and unpredictable...

**PAS:** Let me ask you this then, will the aggregate of international diplomacy in the next ten years lead to economic stability or will weaker countries plunge into becoming pariah states?

**EH:** It is discussed today that in terms of global governance, it seems that the worsening international relations and the relevant deterioration in the economic and geopolitical conditions are the main issues. The geopolitical tensions among the great global powers are increasing... The international cooperation potential that will ensure to make urgent collective decisions is decreasing...

Such problems as the weakening of multilateralism; the fast easy changing nature of the relations among the leading global powers; the failure to determine the permanent common rules for the solution of those clashes ongoing around the world as well as the other urgent problems (such as climate change and environmental problems, etc.) are still very apparent.

The issues of the mass destruction weapon, the risk of cyber and biological attacks are also very important issues...

We must definitely include now the effects of corona virus into the bigger picture... Now there are basically two ways to discuss the post corona period: we will see either a world where globalization will finish, nation states and nationalization strengthened, less free, less prosperous or where a new type of globalization exists, more internationalized, mutually connected, more cooperative, freer... There are also some researchers who think that these two trends will parallel each other... Nothing is clear yet... We will wait and see... But now we really see the changing nature of power and security... Biological

security, cyber security and food security will be the main topics that we continue to discuss more and more of in the coming days...

**PAS:** All that's left for me is to thank you for doing the interview and for giving our readers issues to examine regarding the bottlenecks of international diplomacy. I must also put on record that I particularly appreciate your generosity discussing your family life and upbringing. I thank you for your candour, it has been a privilege.

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