

KHAZAR UNIVERSITY

School: Graduate School of Science, Art and Technology

Department: Political Science and Philosophy

Qualification: History and Theory of International Relations

MASTER'S THESIS

Theme: Turkey's Middle East Policy in the Justice and Development Party

Era: Strategic Objectives and Resources

Student: Chichak Nasirli Mehman

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Vasila Hajiyeva Cumshud

Baku – 2024

XƏZƏR UNIVERSİTETİ

Fakültə: Təbiət elmləri, Sənət və Texnologiya Yüksək Təhsil

Departament: Siyasi elmlər və fəlsəfə

İxtisas: Beynəlxalq münasibətlər tarixi və nəzəriyyəsi

MAGİSTR TEZİSİ

Mövzu: Ədalət və İnkişaf Partiyası Dövründə Türkiyənin Orta Şərqi Siyasətində
Strateji Hədəflər və Resurslar

Magistrant: Çiçək Mehman qızı Nəsirli

Elmi rəhbər: s.e.ü.e.d, professor Vəsilə Cümşüd qızı Hacıyeva

Bakı - 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
I CHAPTER. LITERATURE REVIEW	7
1.1 Hypothesis based on literature review.	9
1.2 Theoretical Framework.....	9
II CHAPTER. METHODOLOGY.....	12
2.1 Unit of analysis	13
III CHAPTER. THE PARADIGMS AND RESOURCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY	15
3.1. Peace at home, peace in the world, and a Westernized Turkey.....	15
3.2 The rise of political Islam to power and the AKP's foreign policy course with the legacy of the Caliphate	22
3.3. Resources and opportunities underlying the AKP's Middle East strategy.....	30
IV CHAPTER. TURNING POINTS IN THE AKP'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY.....	36
4.1. The era before the Arab Spring (2002-2010).....	36
4.2. The period until the July 15 coup attempt (2010-2016)	43
4.3. The recent period	47
V CHAPTER. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE AKP'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY	54
5.1. The consequences of the AKP's Middle East policy on Turkey's foreign policy	54
5.2. The refugee issue in Turkey and its effects	59
CONCLUSION	65
REFERENCES.....	68

INTRODUCTION

Turkey has historically held a crucial position in the Middle East due to its geographical location and geopolitical importance. However, Turkey's Middle East policy has undergone significant changes under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) leadership. During this period, Turkey has established fresh strategic goals to expand its regional influence, protect its national interests, and promote stability in the area.

The ascent of Political Islam and the AKP's foreign policy direction, coupled with the legacy of the Caliphate, have played a pivotal role in bolstering Turkey's regional sway. The resources and opportunities underpinning Turkey's Middle East policy have been notable throughout this process. Nonetheless, the shifts and transformations within this policy framework have also presented Turkey with challenges in regional diplomacy.

Turkey's strategic aspirations in the Middle East transcend mere concerns of regional stability and security, encompassing its economic interests and political clout.

Relevance of Research

The study of Turkey's evolving role and policies in the Middle East holds significant importance for several reasons.

Understanding Turkey's changing dynamics in the Middle East is crucial for comprehending the broader shifts in regional geopolitics. As a key regional player with historical ties and strategic interests in the Middle East, Turkey's foreign policy decisions have implications for regional shifts, and challenges in the region, this study offers valuable insights into the evolving power dynamics and alliances in the Middle East.

The study contributes to scholarly debates on the nexus between religion, politics, and international relations. By examining the influence of Political Islam and the AKP's foreign policy trajectory, the study provides nuanced perspectives on how ideological factors shape state behavior and foreign policy outcomes. This analysis is particularly relevant in understanding the complexities of governance and diplomacy in regions where religion plays a significant role in shaping political discourse.

This study meticulously delves into the impacts of Turkey's Middle East policy on its foreign affairs. By focusing on the outcomes of Turkey's policies in the Middle East, the study thoroughly evaluates Turkey's international position and influence. In this context, it sheds light not only on the effects of Turkey's Middle East policies on its foreign policy but also on the broader dynamics of international relations and Turkey's claim to regional leadership. Furthermore, this study is an important step in comprehending the extensive implications of Turkey's

Middle East policies on the country's internal politics, economy, and societal structure. Turkey's Middle East policies can lead to some debates and polarization in domestic politics. Especially, the reactions to crises or conflicts in the region can give rise to different opinions among political parties and segments of society.

This study bridges a gap in the literature by offering a detailed and nuanced analysis of Turkey's Middle East policy, providing valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners.

Goals of Research

1. Detailed examination of the strategic objectives set by Turkey's AK Party government during its tenure regarding the Middle East policy and the resources utilized to achieve these objectives
2. Analysis of the transformation in Turkey's role and policy priorities in the Middle East following the AK Party's rise to power
3. Exploration of the consequences of the AK Party's Middle East policy on various aspects, particularly focusing on Turkey's foreign policy and the refugee issue within Turkey.

Research question and proposition

"What factors have been decisive in determining Turkey's strategic objectives in the Middle East during the AKP era, and how have resources been effectively utilized to achieve these objectives?" is going to be the central question of my research.

The strategic objectives identified in Turkey's Middle East policy encompass various aims, including strengthening its interests in the region, promoting stability, combating terrorism, and enhancing its regional leadership role. This thesis aims to analyze the nature of these strategic objectives and examine the effective utilization of resources, including diplomatic, economic, and military means, in their realization. Additionally, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of Turkey's role in the Middle East by exploring its policy instruments and interactions within the framework of international relations theories.

Independent and dependent variables

The independent variables in this research encompass “aspiration to become a regional power,” and “Turkey’s political interests”. Dependent variables are “policy priorities” “achievement of regional stability,” “success in combating terrorism,” and “security strategies”.

I CHAPTER. LITERATURE REVIEW

Turkey's Middle East policy during the AKP era has garnered significant scholarly attention, reflecting its evolving role and impact on regional dynamics. This literature review aims to synthesize existing research on Turkey's strategic objectives and resources in the Middle East, focusing on the period since the AKP came to power in 2002. The AKP era has witnessed Turkey's emergence as a key player in Middle Eastern affairs, driven by historical legacies, geopolitical imperatives, and ideological orientations. Understanding the context within which Turkey operates in the region is essential for analyzing its strategic objectives and resource allocation.

Atatürk's principle of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" constituted the foundation of Turkey's foreign policy. During Atatürk's era, Turkey's Middle East policy mostly encompassed neutrality and a peaceful approach to international relations (Aras,2010). In AKP's Middle East policy, strategic depth and neo-Ottomanism have been influential. This policy aimed to revitalize historical and cultural ties, as well as the Ottoman Empire's legacy, to generate effective solutions to regional issues. The concept emphasized Turkey's strong references from the past and its historical ties to the region while shaping its regional relationships, supporting Turkey's more effective role in the Middle East (Davutoğlu,2001). Soft power elements play a crucial role in AKP's Middle East policy. These elements include cultural diplomacy, humanitarian aid and development projects, and media activities (Can,2011).

Turkey's policy before the Arab Spring aimed to minimize instability in the region and support regional peace. In this context, Turkey engaged in mediation efforts for the resolution of regional conflicts and supported peaceful solutions. Turkey focused on establishing close relations with the Arab world, emphasizing cooperation in both commercial and political domains (Kutlay&Diğer,2012). Between 2002 and 2008, Turkish foreign policy was primarily focused on economic growth and pursuing EU membership, resulting in a diminished influence of national identity on its formulation (Kiper,2013). Turkey's Middle East policy underwent a significant transformation during the Arab Spring, particularly with the onset of the Syrian civil war (Acar,2018). The Arab Spring presented a significant challenge to Turkish foreign policy, prompting the AK Party to explore new approaches to address this crisis (Özdemir,2019). As the Syrian conflicts evolved, Turkey was compelled to accommodate millions of Syrian refugees, significantly impacting its internal politics and economic environment (Altund- eğer&Yılmaz,2016).

After 2016, a significant shift in Turkey's Middle East policy occurred, characterized by a tougher stance against Kurdish groups like the PYD/YPG. Concurrently, Turkey's inclination

towards cooperation with Russia and Iran in Syria increased, leading to shifts in relations with regional rivals, notably, the support extended to Qatar emerged as a pivotal factor (Altunşik&Martin,2023).

The refugee issue in Turkey, particularly exacerbated by the onset of the Syrian civil war, has grown to significant proportions. This has adversely affected Turkey's economy and public services, increasing competition in the labor market and leading to social tensions (Kutlay,2016). The topic of migration played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of the 2023 elections in Turkey. Except for the HDP, which consistently upheld a pro-immigrant stance, all major parties underwent notable shifts towards more anti-immigrant positions to differing extents during this period (Balta et al.,2023).

After conducting a thorough review of the existing literature, several key findings and gaps have emerged regarding AKP`s Middle East policy.

- While external factors often dominate discussions on Turkey's Middle East policy, there might be a gap in understanding the role of domestic politics, public opinion, and bureaucratic dynamics in shaping policy decisions. Exploring how domestic factors influence Turkey's regional strategy could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

- Research may primarily focus on Turkey's hard power capabilities and military interventions in the region, overlooking the significance of soft power tools such as cultural diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and economic cooperation. Analyzing the effectiveness of Turkey's soft power initiatives could fill this gap.

- Existing literature may focus predominantly on specific events within the AKP era, such as the Arab Spring or the Syrian civil war, without providing a comprehensive longitudinal analysis. A gap might exist in studies that systematically examine the evolution of Turkey's Middle East policy over time, considering shifts, continuities, and the impact of changing regional dynamics.

- While many studies analyze Turkey's official policy objectives and actions, fewer explore how Turkey is perceived by actors in the Middle East and how these perceptions shape regional dynamics. Investigating regional perceptions of Turkey and analyzing competing narratives could offer valuable insights into the country's soft power, image projection, and diplomatic challenges.

By bridging these gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Turkey's Middle East policy during the AKP era.

1.1 Hypothesis based on literature review

By analyzing this data with the given methodology this research hypothesizes that during the AK Party era, the most decisive factors in determining Turkey's strategic objectives in the Middle East have been the reaffirmation of historical and cultural connections, the aspiration to become a regional power, the maintenance of political stability in the region, and material factors. These material factors include economic interests, energy security, control of trade routes, and strengthening the defense industry. To achieve these objectives, Turkey has effectively utilized a broad range of resources, from diplomatic initiatives to military interventions, and from economic cooperation to humanitarian aid.

This research comprises several sections, including an introduction, an analysis with separate chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The introduction section provides a general overview, research questions, variables, and hypothesis. The following chapters examine the AKP's policy framework in the Middle East region, exploring its formulation, implementation, and subsequent ramifications. The paper concludes by presenting the final findings, answering the research question, and evaluating whether the hypothesis was supported.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The realist perspective, grounded in the principles of structural realism, offers valuable insights into the formulation and execution of Turkey's Middle East policy during the AKP era. Realism argues that states play a central role in international relations and are primarily motivated by their interests, especially in safeguarding their survival and security within a world lacking a central authority. Turkey's involvement in conflicts such as the Syrian civil war and its interventions in Iraq and Libya can be understood as efforts to secure its borders and prevent the emergence of threats to its security.

Buzan and Waever's (1998) concept of security provides a lens through which to examine Turkey's regional policy. Buzan and Waever's notion of security sectors can help identify the multifaceted nature of Turkey's interests and objectives in the Middle East. For example, Turkey's policy may aim to enhance its economic security through trade partnerships, its political security through diplomatic alliances, and its societal security through managing migration flows and addressing refugee crises.

During the AKP era, Turkey's Middle East policy can be viewed through a constructivist lens, focusing on identity, norms, and social interactions. Under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the AKP government aimed to redefine Turkey's regional role by emphasizing its Islamic heritage, historical ties, and cultural connections. This involved presenting Turkey as a

model Muslim democracy and mediator in regional conflicts while highlighting its historical links to the Middle East.

Larrabee's research (2008) offers an in-depth insight into the elements that have facilitated the rise of political Islam in Turkey and the wider consequences for the nation's future.

Wendt (1999) emphasizes the role of identity in shaping state behavior. Turkey's historical, cultural, and religious identity as a bridge between East and West, with a significant Islamic heritage, influences its approach to the Middle East. Turkey may construct its identity in the region as a mediator, facilitator of dialogue, and promoter of Islamic solidarity, influencing its policy choices.

Moreover, Turkey's actions in the Middle East during this period were influenced by the norms and values promoted by the AKP, such as democracy, justice, and solidarity with oppressed Muslim communities. The government portrayed its involvement in conflicts like the Syrian civil war as part of a broader commitment to humanitarianism and Islamic unity.

Additionally, social interactions played a significant role in shaping Turkey's Middle East strategy during the AKP era. The government actively engaged with various non-state actors, including civil society organizations, religious groups, and diaspora communities, to advance its vision of Turkey as a regional leader. This grassroots diplomacy aimed to garner support for Turkey's initiatives in the region and strengthen ties with Middle Eastern societies.

Overall, from a constructivist perspective, Turkey's Middle East policy during the AKP era reflected the government's efforts to construct a new identity for Turkey rooted in Islamic values, historical narratives, and social interactions within the region. This approach influenced Turkey's strategic objectives and resource allocation, positioning it as a key player in Middle Eastern affairs.

From a neorealist perspective, Turkey's Middle East policy during the AKP era can be analyzed primarily in terms of power politics, security considerations, and the pursuit of national interests in an anarchic international system (Waltz, 1979).

Turkey's interventions in conflicts like the Syrian civil war and its efforts to manage regional instability may be seen as driven by neorealist concerns for national security and stability. Similarly, Turkey's engagement with regional actors and its pursuit of strategic partnerships, such as with the United States and Russia, could be analyzed through the lens of balancing power and securing its interests in a volatile environment (Walt, 1987).

Liberalism emphasizes the importance of democracy and human rights in international relations. From a liberal perspective, Turkey's strategic objectives in the Middle East may include promoting democratic governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. Liberals

prioritize diplomatic engagement, negotiation, and conflict resolution in international relations (Fukuyama,1992). Turkey's strategic objectives in the Middle East may include promoting regional stability, reducing tensions, and facilitating peaceful resolutions to conflicts.

II CHAPTER. METHODOLOGY

In studying Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East, both philosophies-positivism and interpretivism can be used. Positivism could be employed to analyze quantitative data such as military expenditures, and public opinion polls. For example, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that Turkey's military spending increased by 37% in 2023 compared to 2022 (Middle East Monitor,2024).

Interpretivist approaches are valuable for exploring the beliefs, values, and perceptions that shape Turkish policymakers' decisions and interactions with regional actors. Interpretivist methodologies may involve qualitative methods such as interviews, content analysis of speeches and official documents, and ethnographic research to uncover the underlying narratives, discourses, and ideational factors influencing Turkey's foreign policy conduct.

By delving into the subjective interpretations and contextual nuances of Turkey's engagements in the Middle East, interpretivist research provides deeper insights into the cultural, historical, and ideological dimensions of Turkey's foreign policy behavior.

Efforts have been made to utilize both primary and secondary research sources in order to define and analyze fundamental concepts and methodologies. Nevertheless, a higher priority has been given to secondary sources, such as literature reviews, review articles, and books.

Qualitative data analysis is more suitable for studying complex phenomena such as Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East. By examining the rich details and narratives embedded in qualitative data sources such as interviews, speeches, and official documents, we can gain a nuanced understanding of the cultural, historical, and geopolitical factors shaping Turkey's interactions with Middle East countries. This topic can be influenced by subjective factors such as political ideologies, cultural norms, and individual perceptions. Qualitative analysis allows to capture of these subjective perspectives through methods such as interviews and content analysis of speeches and statements by key policymakers, diplomats, and experts. Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East involves a wide range of diplomatic, military, economic, and cultural activities that may not be easily quantifiable or measurable. Qualitative data analysis offers a means to explore the depth and complexity of Turkey's engagements in the region, providing insights into the motivations, strategies, and outcomes of its foreign policy actions.

Content Analysis: Analyzing speeches, official documents, policy statements, media coverage, and academic literature related to Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East can

reveal key themes, discourses, and policy priorities. Content analysis allows us to systematically examine the language, rhetoric, and framing used by Turkish officials and other actors to communicate their positions and intentions in the region.

Discourse analysis was employed to analyze the language and rhetoric used by state leaders and policymakers. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's "one minute" outburst at Davos can serve as an example for discourse analysis related to Turkey's Middle East policy.

Limitations

Access to Data: Accessing reliable and comprehensive data on Turkey's foreign policy activities in the Middle East can be challenging due to issues such as restricted access to diplomatic archives, and limited availability of primary sources.

Bias and Subjectivity: Research on Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East may be subject to bias and subjectivity, both in the collection and analysis of data. Researchers' own perspectives, backgrounds, and affiliations may influence their interpretation of empirical evidence and their selection of case studies or sources.

Complexity of the Topic: Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East is a complex and multifaceted topic involving numerous actors, interests, and dynamics. Attempting to capture this complexity within a single research study may be challenging.

Despite these methodological limitations, it is possible to mitigate potential challenges by adopting rigorous research practices, triangulating data from multiple sources, acknowledging biases and limitations, and maintaining transparency in their methods and interpretations. By carefully considering and addressing methodological limitations, we enhance the credibility and validity of the research on Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East.

2.1 Unit of analysis

The primary unit of analysis in this research focuses on Turkey's strategic objectives, the resources mobilized to support these objectives, and the effectiveness of its policies in the Middle East during the era of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). This era, spanning from the early 2000s, marks a significant period in Turkish politics and foreign policy, characterized by a proactive and ambitious approach in the region.

Firstly, the formulation of Turkey's strategic objectives under the AKP government will be examined. This includes understanding the ideological, political, and economic motivations behind Turkey's foreign policy decisions. The research will delve into the AKP's vision for Turkey's role in the Middle East, exploring how historical ties, cultural affinities, and geopolitical considerations have shaped these objectives.

Secondly, the research will analyze the resources mobilized by Turkey to support its strategic objectives. This encompasses a wide array of resources, including diplomatic efforts, economic investments, military capabilities, and soft power initiatives such as cultural diplomacy and humanitarian aid.

Thirdly, the effectiveness of Turkey's policies in the Middle East will be critically assessed. This involves evaluating the outcomes of Turkey's engagements in various Middle Eastern countries, such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and the Gulf States. The research will consider both the successes and challenges faced by Turkey in achieving its strategic objectives.

III CHAPTER. THE PARADIGMS AND RESOURCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY

3.1. Peace at home, peace in the world, and a Westernized Turkey

"Peace at Home, Peace in the World" is an aphorism, a slogan, a political doctrine expressed by Atatürk, a great humanist. It has become a superior legal principle by being included in the 1961 and 1982 Turkish Constitutions. "The principle of 'Peace at Home, Peace in the World' aims to ensure domestic tranquility and security within the country and international peace and security among nations. This principle serves as the fundamental basis for both domestic and foreign policies"(Eroğlu,1985).

Professor Dr. Mehmet Gönlübol (1981) rightly evaluates the principle of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" by associating it with Atatürk, considering it as the cornerstone of Atatürk's political doctrine. "Atatürk delineated both the domestic and foreign dimensions of this principle through his thoughts and practices. Atatürk served 'Peace at Home' through his domestic success and 'Peace in the World' through his international success. His success in one realm reinforced the other."

"The principle of 'Peace at Home, Peace in the World' was first articulated by Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) as the leader of the CHP (Republican People's Party) in his declaration to the nation on April 20, 1931, on the occasion of the elections" (Gönlübol,1981).

It has been a matter of debate how nationalism aligns with the principle of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World."

Firstly, it should be clearly stated that Turkish nationalism, Kemalist nationalism, is not an aggressive form of nationalism. It is a nationalism that is respectful of other nations, progressive, peaceful, and values human rights. Kemalist nationalism opposes imperialism and colonialism. It advocates for the independence struggles of nations (Sinagra,2003).

During the Atatürk era, Turkey's foreign policy is generally seen as having two distinct phases: before and after 1932. Similarly, its approach to the Middle East can be divided into two periods: 1923-1932 and 1932-1938.

Before 1932, Turkey's Middle East strategy was largely influenced by the obligations set out in the Treaty of Lausanne, with border issues being a major concern. However, from 1932 onwards, Turkey adopted a proactive foreign policy guided by the principle of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World." This led Turkey to seek security through regional alliances and pursue a peaceful approach beyond its borders.

Turkey's active engagement in the pact's formation underscores its ambition to assume a leadership role in the region, highlighting its aspirations for regional prominence during the Atatürk period. After 1923, Turkey sought to emphasize its commitment to peace by avoiding involvement in limiting international alliances. Turkey chose a foreign policy that prioritized friendly relations with its neighbors while aligning with national interests. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk shaped Turkey's foreign policy, with Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras playing a pivotal role in its implementation.

The guiding principle of Turkey's foreign policy during the Atatürk era, "Peace at Home, Peace in the World," was explained by Tevfik Rüştü Aras as endorsing a collective defense of global peace. Essentially, this principle aimed to address threats to peace through collective efforts (Aras,2010).

Following the National Struggle, the Treaty of Lausanne was concluded with the Allied Powers, leading to the formation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. This treaty underscored Turkey's strategic significance, with the country bordered by major European nations. After the treaty's border settlements, Turkey found itself neighboring the Soviet Union to the east, Iraq under British mandate, Cyprus under British control, Syria under French mandate, and Italy through the Dodecanese Islands. This geopolitical context prompted Turkey to adopt a pragmatic approach and refrain from expansionist agendas.

During the Ottoman Empire's waning years, imperial powers like Britain, seeking dominance in the Middle East, fostered anti-Turkish sentiment among local communities. After the Republic's establishment, Ankara publicly declared its lack of interest in seeking dominance in the Middle East and distanced itself from expansionist aspirations. The lingering effects of Arab revolts against the Ottoman Empire during World War I and Turkey's Westernization efforts led Ankara to maintain limited relations with Middle Eastern nations.

In Nihat Dinç's "Gönüllü Diplomat", he points out Atatürk's directives for foreign policy: "Atatürk advised the Foreign Ministry's chief technical officer as follows: 'Steer clear of involvement in the Arab world, refrain from siding with imperialist or colonial powers, and avoid antagonizing the Russians.'" Atatürk emphasized Turkey's autonomy in foreign relations and stressed the need for non-intervention, particularly in Arab matters (Dinç,1998).

Turkey's decision to abolish the caliphate on March 3, 1924, caused some reactions among Muslim communities in Asia and the Middle East. However, these initial concerns towards Turkey didn't persist, and its relations with Muslim nations remained stable (Edip,2018).

In Turkey's dealings with Iran, changes in government and border disputes played significant roles. Rıza Khan, serving as Defense Minister in 1921, was influenced by Turkey's shift

to a republic and sought to bring similar governance to Iran. He found support from Turkey, and some Iranian intellectuals began advocating for this change. However, Turkey's decision to abolish the caliphate on March 3, 1924, was met with unease in Iran. Iranian religious leaders saw this move as an inevitable consequence of forming a republic, leading Rıza Khan to publicly oppose the idea.

At the same time, border infractions by tribes residing along the Turkish-Iranian border caused tensions. To address these issues, Turkey and Iran signed a "Security and Friendship Treaty" in Tehran on April 22, 1926. Despite this agreement, border violations continued, prompting both nations to sign an additional protocol on June 15, 1928. Yet, border disagreements persisted until 1932 when a definitive treaty was signed, resolving the border dispute between the two countries.

Between 1923 and 1932, Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern nations didn't reach their potential due to concerns over Turkey's secular reforms. Despite this, Turkey maintained a certain level of engagement with regional countries through friendship treaties and addressed border disputes. During this time, Turkey prioritized its internal reforms over extensive foreign policy engagements.

Hitler's ascension in Germany and Italy's growing threat in the Balkans spurred Turkey into action. Turkey's closer ties with Western nations holding colonies in the Middle East and Mussolini's expansion policies in Asia and Africa prompted Turkey to foster better relationships with Eastern countries post-1930s. The treaties with Iran in 1932 and the subsequent enhancement of relations led to the resolution of border disputes, benefiting Turkey's foreign policy and setting the stage for the Sadabad Pact. Indeed, Turkey, along with Iran and Afghanistan—members of the Sadabad Pact—met in Tehran in June 1928 to add new protocols to their existing bilateral agreements. These discussions marked a significant move towards regional cooperation, but true collaboration came only after resolving the border issues.

The border dispute between Turkey and Iran was settled with a treaty in January 1932, strengthening their ties. The relationship was further deepened when Iranian Shah Reza Pahlavi visited Turkey in June 1934. These positive developments also influenced the League of Nations Council elections. In 1934, Iran withdrew its candidacy for the League of Nations Council to support Turkey, reflecting its goodwill as Turkey was also a candidate.

One of the issues left unresolved at the Lausanne Conference was Turkey's border dispute with Iraq, which was under British mandate. After unsuccessful discussions with Britain post-conference, the matter was taken to the League of Nations, which ruled that Mosul would stay within Iraq's borders. The Ankara Agreement of 1926 had initially decided to hand over

Mosul to Iraq, with Turkey receiving 10% of the oil revenue from Mosul for 25 years. However, Turkey gave up this right in exchange for 500,000 British pounds (Uyar,2007).

During this period, Turkey also built strong ties with Yemen's Imam Yahya and King Ibn Saud of Nejd-Hijaz. Following discussions with Ibn Saud's representatives during his Ankara visit in February 1929, Turkey and Saudi Arabia signed a friendship treaty and opened a Saudi representation in Turkey (Bilgin,2016).

The friendship between Turkey and Afghanistan, which began during World War I with Cemal Pasha training the Afghan army, evolved into a partnership. This bond continued during Atatürk's leadership. Following this growing rapport, a friendship treaty was inked with Afghanistan in Moscow on March 1, 1921, making Afghanistan the first Muslim country to recognize Turkey's Grand National Assembly (TBMM) government.

During King Amanullah's visit to Ankara in May 1928, the Turkish-Afghan Friendship and Cooperation Treaty was signed on May 25, essentially renewing the 1921 agreement with similar terms. Relations with Afghanistan saw further development during this period. The trust between Turkey and Afghanistan also positively influenced Afghanistan-Iran ties. Iran and Afghanistan, facing a border dispute since 1903, proposed Turkey as a mediator. Turkey formed an arbitration team headed by Fahrettin Paşa (Türkkan), successfully resolving the Iran-Afghanistan border issue in 1934.

Through its peaceful and cooperative approach, Turkey not only addressed its neighborly issues but also showcased its leadership and reliability in the region by mediating conflicts between other nations.

The Balkans and the Middle East were governed by Turks for centuries, creating both bitter and sweet shared memories. These memories are unforgettable and timeless. Atatürk was a realist; he made great efforts to convey the truths to his neighbors with complete transparency. However, Arab countries often viewed and interpreted everything through a religious lens, misunderstanding Turkey's decision to abolish the caliphate and establish a secular Republic. Turkey signed the Balkan Pact with its western neighboring countries in 1934 to protect its western borders. Later, in 1937, Turkey aimed to safeguard its eastern borders by signing the Saadabad Pact.

During the lead-up to the Saadabad Pact, Turkey not only settled its border disputes with Iran but also acted as a mediator to resolve conflicts among the Pact's member states. Turkey had previously formed friendship agreements with Iran in 1926 and Afghanistan in 1928. Despite all efforts, only one pact could be established in this region: the Saadabad Pact among Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq. This pact didn't have military intentions; it was a

friendship alliance. The countries agreed not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, to respect mutual borders, and not to launch attacks against each other (Tünay,1986). Atatürk's initiatives to safeguard Turkey's borders led to the signing of the Sadabad Pact on July 8, 1937, in Tehran, involving Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. This pact aimed to foster friendly relations among the signatories for five years. By signing, they pledged to uphold the principles of the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928.

Despite these efforts, they couldn't fully address the world's geopolitical situation or the strategic positions of the countries involved. However, Atatürk's realistic endeavors demonstrated that the Republic of Turkey was not pursuing the dream of the old Ottoman Empire.

In a parliamentary speech in November 1937, Atatürk highlighted the Sadabad Pact as a significant milestone for peace. He drew parallels with the Balkan Pact, noting its positive impact on peace, and emphasized the Sadabad Pact's role in promoting peace in the East. Atatürk underscored Turkey's commitment to a peace-focused policy through the Sadabad Pact and expressed their continued dedication to pursuing peace. He also mentioned that Turkey carefully considers every peace proposal presented to them (Grand National Assembly of Turkey Proceedings).

The Republic of Turkey's peaceful and solution-focused approaches in the region led to the establishment of the Sadabad Pact. While the pact mainly focuses on mutual non-aggression and collaboration in shared areas, it underscores Turkey's engagement with the Middle East. This pact, the first of its kind in the region, created a zone of peace and friendship stretching from the Aegean to the Persian Gulf and the Himalayas, enhancing relations with the Islamic world. However, a more robust policy towards the Middle East wasn't feasible at that time due to regional countries' lack of full independence and their colonial status. Moreover, the removal of the caliphate institution resulted in negative sentiments towards Turkey in Arab nations, which persisted until the end of World War II (Duran&Karaca,2011).

After 1932, Turkey's approach to the Middle East culminated in the Sadabad Pact, establishing Turkey as a key player in the region. Turkey's cohesive policies during the Sadabad Pact negotiations boosted its global standing and empowered it to have a greater say in regional strategies. The pact illustrated that regional nations could chart their course independently from the mandates of colonial powers. It became a pivotal moment in the Middle East's fight against the mandate system, uniting nations previously seen as powerless to set their agendas. Despite the influence of mandate powers, the Middle East's intellectuals and media hailed the Sadabad Pact as a significant triumph and publicized it accordingly. Turkey, guided by Atatürk's "Peace

at Home, Peace in the World" principle, aimed to safeguard its borders through regional security agreements, achieving this through the Sadabad Pact along its eastern frontiers.

After the founding of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk drove Westernization reforms with unwavering resolve. He was dedicated to modernizing Turkish society and aspired to position Turkey as a member of the Western world, aligning with the community of civilized nations.

Atatürk's efforts to modernize Turkey were not about blindly copying the West or trying to imitate Europe. His answer to a foreign journalist asking, "What parts of Western civilization do you want your nation to adopt?", illustrates this well: "We don't adopt Western ways just for the sake of imitation. Instead, we choose what we consider beneficial and fitting for our society, integrating it into global standards of civilization." (İnan,1984)

When it comes to Westernization efforts during Atatürk's leadership, they were primarily focused on four key areas. Republicanism paved the way for secularism in the socio-political arena, while statism and populism were emphasized in the socio-economic sector. Additionally, cultural reforms served as tools for Westernization.

Following the success of the National Struggle and the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey embarked on reforms aimed at modernization. Westernization became a dynamic aspiration to elevate the country to a higher level of civilization. To instill the Republic's modern values, outdated institutions were dismantled, and Western achievements from the 17th and 18th centuries were quickly integrated into action in the fledgling Turkish Republic.

The state aimed to foster a conducive cultural atmosphere and cultivate a skilled workforce. This led to reforms across political, economic, and legal domains, including the adoption of the Turkish Civil Code. Educational advancements, changes in dress code, closure of certain religious institutions, legal reforms, adoption of the new Turkish alphabet, moving the weekly holiday to Sunday, introduction of the Surname Law, acceptance of new Penal and Commercial Codes, women's rights, transition to the international calendar, and language developments—all reflected Western-inspired revolutionary changes (Erşan,2006).

Westernization involves adopting European ideas and behaviors rather than sticking to traditional local customs and behaviors. According to Mardin this process began during the Ottoman Empire and expanded with new facets during the Republic of Turkey. It represents a tendency to use Western models as a guide under all circumstances. While Western influences in the Ottoman Empire can be traced back to the 15th century, they became more prominent during the Tulip Era (1718-1730) under Ahmet III's rule. Later rulers like Selim III, Mahmud

II, Abdülmecit, and Abdulhamit II furthered Westernization across various areas including education, social life, customs, music, arts, and architecture. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire's experience with Westernization offers a diverse perspective on its development over time (Mardin,1983). Turkish society's shift from an Eastern to a Western identity is a key aspect of this era. According to foreign writers, Turks during this time had to adapt to a flexible and pragmatic approach, leading to a state where they were neither entirely Eastern nor Western.

In the waning years of the Empire, the Young Turks began convening in Europe starting in 1865. Ahmet Rıza advocates for centralization and strong authority, while Prince Sabahattin champions liberalism. Both were influenced by French ideologies. A key observation is that the French Revolution showcased the equality of lower and upper classes, which is not mirrored in Turkish society. In Turkey, elites attempt reforms to bridge the gap between the lower and upper classes. However, these reforms neither succeed nor do they help the lower classes rise to the level of the upper class. This attempt to blend Western and Ottoman institutions has perpetuated a tug-of-war between modernization and tradition, trapping reforms in a cycle.

The Tanzimat period, starting with the Gülhane Decree in 1839 represents the swiftest phase of Western integration. This decree emphasized that the decline of the Ottoman Empire was the responsibility of all its societal classes, from the rulers to the general populace. This document marked the beginning of reform movements aimed at aligning with Western practices. The Tanzimat Period (1839-1876) marks a significant shift towards Western-inspired administrative reforms in the Ottoman Empire. Introduced to restructure the Ottoman State, the Tanzimat reforms, often termed liberal reforms, involved adopting numerous administrative laws translated from French. İnalcik notes that the Tanzimat edict shares key features with the French constitution. Consequently, this era witnessed socio-cultural transformations affecting Ottoman intellectuals, women, and family structures (İnalçık,2008).

Two primary factors and shifts in mindset during the Tanzimat period from 1839 to 1876 played a crucial role in promoting Westernization. The establishment of the first private newspaper in 1861 was perceived as a groundbreaking event in Turkish intellectual circles, leading to the emergence of a public opinion receptive to Western ideas. Additionally, the introduction of new schools across the state facilitated the adoption of French intellectual life. Consequently, the ideology of the French Revolution permeated among intellectuals in various aspects before the advent of the Constitutional Monarchy (Akbaş et al.,2020).

The efforts of Westernization emerged as a comprehensive restructuring primarily during the decline of the Ottoman Empire, often shaped by external pressures. These initiatives

aimed at modernizing the state structure through the organization and standardization of military and civilian sectors. As a reflection of this goal, various military and civilian institutions were established within the state administration. During this period, not only were the Ottoman military and administrative systems modernized, but the local governance structure was also reorganized, and the spatial planning of cities was reassessed in line with evolving lifestyles (Yerasimos,1992).

In contrast, the concept of Westernization during the Republican era focused on restructuring rather than mere reorganization. Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Westernization was reevaluated in a new context.

Consequently, while a particular segment of society endorsed Westernization efforts during the empire's decline, another significant portion struggled to fully accept it. David Hotham captured this complexity by noting that the Turks seemed to be the sole nation attempting to shift from one civilization to another (Hotham,2000).

This interpretation underscores Turkey's intricate relationship with Westernization, indicating that while some segments embraced it, others grappled with reconciling it with their Islamic heritage.

During the Republican era, the groundwork for Westernization was laid in the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) period. While the CUP pondered Mustafa Kemal's reforms, it was Kemalist revolutionaries who put them into action. Mustafa Kemal didn't dismiss the capitalist system; he viewed Western integration as a pathway to advancement. The Kemalist revolution removed conflicting institutions and introduced secularism to pave the way for new ones. In this vein, Tim Buton points out that secularism played a pivotal role in aligning Turkey with Western civilization (Buton,2007).

The Republic of Turkey, in contrast to the Ottoman Empire, anchored its legal and educational frameworks in a secularism reminiscent of the French *laïcité*. Westernization became foundational for Turkey. Reforms in education and law, modeled after the West, sustained Turkey's Westernization trajectory. The young Republic sought public involvement in reforms, emphasizing economic issues. Past errors from Ottoman reforms were carefully considered to prevent recurrence during the Republican era.

3.2 The rise of political Islam to power and the AKP's foreign policy course with the legacy of the Caliphate

While Islam originated in the Arabian Peninsula, it has expanded to become a global religion, reaching from the Far East to Western Europe, and from Africa to North America.

Though the use of Islam in ideological contexts is not new, there has been a noticeable increase in discussions and research about Islam, both in Turkey and around the world, especially in recent times. After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, Islam has been perceived not just as a religious belief but also as a significant political ideology, gaining prominence on the global stage. A commonly held view is that Islam's growing political impact and the rise of fundamentalism can be seen as reactions to globalization (Guibernau,2010).

Islam stands apart from religions where its influence is limited to specific domains like politics, culture, or economy. Instead of being confined to certain areas, Islam is characterized by a holistic approach that extends to all facets of life (Lewis,1997). In this comprehensive view, the separation of religion and state isn't seen as a natural concept. Thus, there's a prevailing notion within Islam that it should encompass governance, and any separation of religion from the state is seen as inconsistent with Islamic teachings. The idea of an integrated relationship between religion and state, rooted in Islam's early days, is also championed by modern political Islamic movements, which stress the importance of unity among religion, state, and society (Zubaida,1993).

Turkey stands out compared to other nations with predominantly Muslim populations. It identifies itself as a secular state, not recognizing Islam as the official religion (Serter,1997). This unique characteristic leads to frequent discussions about secularism in Turkey. Yet, constitutional secularism doesn't necessarily eliminate religion's role in political affairs.

Beginning in the 1920s, reforms were initiated to reduce religion's impact on politics, promote Westernization, and free social, cultural, and political spheres from religious influence (Yavuz,1997). Under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's leadership, policies were crafted to build a secular nation-state, prioritizing national identity over religious factors.

During the early years of the Republic, many felt that Islam was threatened within the new political system. This perception has been a major factor underlying the rise of political Islam movements in Turkey over time. Top-down policies aimed at diminishing religious influence led to a sense of estrangement between society and the state, ironically strengthening people's commitment to Islam (Karasipahi,2009).One of the main reasons for the current rise of political Islam stems from the strict Westernization and secularization policies of the 1920s and 1930s, which created a feeling among a large part of society that their religious beliefs were endangered. Starting from the 1950s, political parties have increasingly adopted Islamic rhetoric.

The rise of political Islam in Turkey can also be attributed to the inability of current political leaders to enhance the welfare of the people and meet societal demands. Confronted

with significant challenges like high inflation, increasing unemployment, and corruption, the public has sought alternatives by supporting political parties highlighting Islamic values.

After the single-party period ended and the Democratic Party (DP) took power, there were notable shifts in the realm of political Islam. The stringent secular policies towards Islam from Atatürk's time gave way to more lenient approaches. Under the DP's leadership, the call to prayer, which had been recited in Turkish during Atatürk's era, was switched back to Arabic. Moreover, the radio began airing verses from the Quran regularly.

The transition to multi-party politics brought about key changes in the education sector, which have been crucial for the future of political Islam. To satisfy the traditional and conservative populace, the CHP implemented adjustments in the late 1940s, introducing elective religious classes in elementary schools and setting up imam hatip schools.

The rise of political Islam in Turkey can also be linked to the 1980 coup (Duman,2014). While the September 12 regime closed down all political parties, measures taken to stabilize the country primarily targeted leftist groups, sparing religious organizations. The military regime embraced an ideology known as the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, with its key principles influenced by the Aydınlar Ocağı. They were open to integrating religious elements into the state structure. Additionally, this Turkish-Islamic ideology was viewed as a tool to counter the perceived threats from leftist and communist movements. Under Kenan Evren's leadership, the military regime considered religion a means to achieve national unity. In his speeches to the public, Evren often cited verses from the Quran, displaying an attitude that contradicted the army's known stance on secularism (Serter).

With Turgut Özal leading the Anavatan Partisi (ANAP) into power, the liberal reforms enacted went beyond just the economy. They also entailed easing the state's Kemalist and secular positions, recognizing Islam as an essential component of Turkish identity.

After the 1980 coup led to party closures and bans on leaders, Necmettin Erbakan rose to lead the Refah Partisi (RP) in 1987 once these bans were lifted. He became a key figure in Turkish politics again. With his Islamic-focused messaging and ability to engage the public, the RP secured 19.7% of the votes in the 1994 local elections and performed strongly in the 1995 general elections. In the 1990s, members of the Islamist Refayol Party (RP) perceived Turkey as facing a 'systemic crisis' due to the Kemalist state's imposition of a secular Turkish identity, which they believed clashed with Islamic values. They advocated for reintroducing an Islamic and Ottoman influence into Turkish politics as a solution. They also pointed to the Ottoman millet system as a successful model for integrating diverse communities, suggesting it could help resolve the Kurdish issue. Following the RP's disbandment, the Fazilet Partisi (FP) and

later the Saadet Partisi (SP) were formed. However, Islamic voter support eventually shifted to the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), founded in 2001 under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership.

Before delving into the influence of identity on Turkish foreign policy, it's essential to grasp the AKP's 'neo-Ottoman' and Islamist perspectives. Both Erdogan and Abdullah Gül, key founders of the AKP, have expressed reservations about the reforms initiated by Kemal Ataturk and his successors. These reforms emphasized secularism and distanced the country from its Ottoman heritage (Mufti,2014).

Neo-Ottomanism is a trend rooted in history, gaining attention with Turgut Özal's involvement in politics and becoming prominent with the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), which has since shaped Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP). This political stance aims for Turkey to reclaim influence in areas formerly under Ottoman control by leveraging soft power in today's world. Built upon ideas such as "coming to terms with history" and "strategic, cultural, and historical depth," this ideology influences groups with a longing for the past. It has implications for both domestic and foreign policies.

Neo-Ottomanism is a political narrative asserting that the Republic of Turkey holds influence over territories once governed by the Ottoman Empire but has since faded from historical prominence. Highlighting the role of soft power, this idea gained traction during Turgut Özal's prime ministership and reached its zenith under the AK Party's leadership. This sentiment, described as Turkey's "reconciliation with its past," impacts both its domestic and foreign policies. Also known as "Neo-Ottomanism," the concept has diverse interpretations. It embodies an ideology that, while drawing from the Ottoman era's tolerance, moves away from the aggressive aspects of imperialist ideologies and emphasizes cultural and political inclusivity. It reflects Turkey's ambition to regain influence in its former Ottoman territories (Balkans, Caucasus, and the Middle East) through non-military initiatives.

The concept of Neo-Ottomanism primarily outlines a foreign policy framework. Yet, the growing use of Ottoman references in the AK Party's national vision and the inherent link between domestic and foreign policies, highlighted by Wolfram Hanrieder's principle of dependency, (Hanrieder,1971) blur the distinction between these two dimensions of Neo-Ottomanism.

The AKP secured a strong win in the 2002 parliamentary elections following the 2001 financial crisis, marked by rising unemployment and an IMF rescue package (Yeldan,2002). Under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkey has been reconnect-

ing with its Ottoman heritage. The AKP's adoption of the Neo-Ottoman ideology has emphasized and amplified the influence of Ottoman culture on domestic social policies. This has put it in conflict with the foundational principles of modern Turkey, namely secularism and republicanism. Consequently, the AKP's main goal was economic revitalization, which they successfully achieved. Implementing economic and social reforms, Turkey saw an average growth rate of 6.8% annually from 2002 to 2007, with Foreign Direct Investment reaching a record \$22 billion in 2007 (Çağaptay,2017). Between 2002 and 2008, national identity had a limited role in shaping Turkish foreign policy due to the country's emphasis on boosting its economy and negotiating EU membership (Kiper,2013).

From 2009 to the summer of 2013, national identity strongly influenced Turkish foreign policy due to the AKP administration's increasing flexibility in foreign policy decisions. The Arab Spring movements, resulting in a friendly government in Egypt, and the revived Kurdish peace talks, coupled with Erdogan's close ties with the leader of the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), bolstered confidence in the AKP's "neo-Ottoman" ambitions. Yet, setbacks in Turkey's regional policies in Egypt and Syria diminished Turkey's regional goals, prompting a shift towards a more pragmatic and situational foreign policy approach, with the influence of identity waning. Following the forceful suppression of the Gezi Park protests in 2013, Turkey veered towards authoritarianism. Prime Minister Davutoğlu's resignation in April 2016, the subsequent coup attempt, and Erdogan's win in the April 2017 constitutional referendum indicate a transition in foreign policy focus from national security to regime security while sidelining identity concerns (Katerina,2017).

Erdogan viewed democracy as a way to reflect public sentiment and potentially reshape Turkish politics, aligning with his vision. However, he didn't see democracy as an end goal but rather as a tool to achieve the desired governance.

In terms of foreign policy, there was criticism of Turkey's Western-focused approach. The belief was that Turkey should broaden its horizons beyond the West and take a more active role in the Muslim world. This perspective was best articulated by former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu through his 'strategic depth' doctrine.

According to Davutoğlu's doctrine, Turkey's global stance is marked by its strategic depth, rooted in both its historical and geographical dimensions. Davutoğlu defines Turkey's historical depth as being a "modern nation-state that emerged as the successor to the Ottoman Empire". This historical tie to the Ottoman Empire gives Turkey its significant geographical reach. Davutoğlu describes Turkey as uniquely positioned in Afro-Eurasia, being simultane-

ously European, Mediterranean, Balkan, Caucasian, and Middle Eastern (Davutoğlu,2010) criticizes the Western-focused foreign policies of Turkish governments, which were largely influenced by the Kemalist military establishment from 1923 until the end of the Cold War (Cook,2007). He argues that this pro-Western approach has led Turkey to become "alienated" from its neighboring regions, including the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus. During this era, stable factors were treated as dynamic ones, pushing Turkey towards the West and distancing it from its Ottoman heritage and Islamic roots. Therefore, Turkish foreign policy needs to pivot by reconnecting with its former Ottoman territories and aiming to play a prominent and independent role in this expansive region, aligning with its 'zero problems with neighbors' policy. Davutoğlu suggests that, as the heir to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has the potential to not only be a regional power but also a global force capable of uniting and leading the Muslim world (Walker,2011).

Despite its Islamist and neo-Ottoman rhetoric, the AKP maintained Turkey's strong Western alignment in foreign policy. Under Erdoğan's leadership, the focus was on EU accession talks, endorsing the Annan Plan for Cyprus, and not opposing the US invasion of Iraq, essentially adopting a liberal foreign policy approach (Robins,2007). The only instance where identity briefly surfaced in the AKP's foreign policy was in relations with Israel. Erdoğan criticized Israel's actions as 'state terrorism' but later sought to mend ties through a state visit.

The AKP prioritized Turkey's economic improvement through domestic reforms and increased economic ties with the West via Foreign Direct Investment and enhanced trade relations.

Under the AK Party's rule, Neo-Ottomanism transformed into a more encompassing term, mainly associated with the foreign policy strategies led by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who served as the Foreign Minister starting in 2009 with his "Strategic Depth" approach. To sidestep any negative associations, Davutoğlu didn't directly use the Neo-Ottomanism term, opting instead for terms like "strategic depth" and "historical depth" (Akdeniz,2014). During the AK Party's rule, the Neo-Ottomanist ideology became intertwined with the policies of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. The post-Cold War era is a period of transition filled with unknowns. Nations that can maintain both strategic consistency and adaptability stand to gain in this evolving global landscape. Davutoğlu believed that Turkey could confidently engage with the world, turning potential crises into strengths. Turkey's historical legacy sets it apart from the standard nation-states that emerged in the 20th century. With its unique geography, Turkey finds isolation nearly impossible. Considering fixed factors like history, geography, population, and cul-

ture, Turkey also has a solid foundation to translate its overall potential into actual power. Consequently, Turkey is tasked with harmonizing its rich history with its strategic depth and implementing this synergy within its geographic context. Achieving these goals would elevate Turkey to a pivotal role, achieving full integration on geopolitical, geocultural, and geoeconomic fronts (Davutoğlu,2004).

Under Ahmet Davutoğlu's leadership as the Foreign Minister of the AK Party, Neo-Ottomanism diverged from Özal's perspective of "Turkey as a bridge" and Erbakan's idea of "Turkey at the heart of the Islamic Union." Davutoğlu aimed for Turkey to be a central and influential country in its region, with ambitions to establish Turkey as a key player in global politics by 2023, under the slogan "Great Turkey." (Akdeniz,2014)

The "New Ottomanism" strategy was presented by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu during the AK Party's Kızılcahamam Camp in 2009. Davutoğlu described this approach as:

"We have a legacy from the Ottoman era. It's termed 'New Ottomanism.' Indeed, we embrace this New Ottoman identity. We need to engage with our neighboring countries. We're also expanding our reach to North Africa... France is particularly curious about our North African initiatives. I've personally given directions on this. Wherever Sarkozy travels in Africa, he'll see the Turkish embassy and flag prominently displayed. I've instructed to secure prime locations for our buildings." (Sol-Haber merkezi,2009)

The AK Party has highlighted its foreign policy approach, known as "New Ottomanism," by drawing on Turkey's historical and cultural ties to the Ottoman era. This view suggests that Turkey has both "duties" and interests in areas once part of the Ottoman Empire. This sense of duty has made it easier to justify the AK Party's foreign policy initiatives. Moreover, embracing the New Ottomanism trend has allowed Turkey to further establish itself as a regional power. In essence, New Ottomanism reflects the foreign policy philosophy of both the AK Party and Davutoğlu (Cavlan,2010)

Certain groups have viewed the Neo-Ottomanism ideology in a negative light. Critics argue that Turkey's policies are "expansionist" and "imperialistic." While this perspective began with Turgut Özal's opening-up policy, it has evolved into a derogatory term for the AK Party following its rise to power.

The report by George Friedman, the president of Stratfor, an organization associated with the CIA, published in March 2009, claims that "Turkey will abandon its goal of joining the European Union, will strengthen in every aspect by 2012, will be the sole power in the region by 2023, will have a say in the former Ottoman territories by 2040, will appoint governors to these areas, and will eventually bring up the caliphate issue to become the leader of the

entire Islamic world." Additionally, according to some, the understanding of Neo-Ottomanism places Turkey in a position of being an "agent." According to this view, "Turkey is playing the role of a pawn and collaborator in the U.S.'s Greater Middle East Project. The U.S. aims to manage the Middle East with Turkey, as a regional power, being the ideal actor for this. Another criticism is that Turkey is pursuing a "submissive" foreign policy. Some argue that "the U.S. and EU are using Turkey in the Balkans and the Middle East, and Turkey fulfills the tasks assigned to it." (Yenigün,2010)

The concept of "The Ottoman mission" is also discussed in global media. In a thorough analysis by Delphine Strauss in the Financial Times, this new approach is seen as Turkey's return to areas once under Ottoman rule after years of focusing on the West. With Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu at the helm, Turkish foreign policy seeks to play a leading role in the Muslim world. Nonetheless, the analysis warns that this aspiration could strain Turkey's capabilities and lead it to overextend (BBC News Turkish,2009). Additionally, although not directly linked to Neo-Ottomanism, there have been arguments against the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. Another critique suggests that culture evolves, whereas religious doctrines remain static. In science, there's an emphasis on free inquiry and critical thinking, while religion is based on faith and divine commandments that are not open to questioning (Gülbay,2023).

Turkey perceives the Middle East, along with the Balkans and the Caucasus, as significant areas for cultural, economic, and political engagement due to its geographical and historical ties. As a result, any developments in these regions are seen as bound to impact Turkey, whether directly or indirectly. Thus, Turkish leaders, convinced that Turkey can't remain disengaged from this region, aim to take on a more proactive role, seeking to "reshape" the area. When discussing the desired transformation, Turkish authorities consistently highlight two main objectives. The first is to establish peace and stability, while the second focuses on fostering economic growth and prosperity in the region. These objectives effectively encapsulate Turkey's current approach to the Middle East. Additionally, the phrase "zero problems with neighbors, unlimited trade," frequently used by Turkish officials to characterize their foreign policy, offers insight into Turkey's regional strategy.

The interplay between political Islam, neo-Ottomanism, and Turkey's Middle East policy reveals a complex and evolving landscape. The rise of political Islam, rooted in a critique of Kemalist secularism and a call for an Islamic identity, has influenced Turkey's domestic and foreign policies, leading to a more assertive and ideologically driven approach in the region.

The AKP's 'neo-Ottoman' ambitions, aimed at restoring Turkey's regional influence and emphasizing its Ottoman heritage, have shaped its foreign policy objectives, though faced with both successes and setbacks.

While initially aligning with the vision of a democratic Turkey that reflects public sentiment, Erdoğan's leadership has seen a shift towards a more authoritarian stance, prioritizing regime security over broader democratic values. This transition has had implications for Turkey's foreign policy focus, with a move towards a pragmatic and situational approach, often at the expense of its once-prominent identity-driven policies.

Turkey's Middle East policy, influenced by these ideological shifts and regional developments, has experienced fluctuations, oscillating between a proactive and ambitious stance and a more cautious and pragmatic approach. As Turkey navigates its role in the Middle East, balancing its neo-Ottoman aspirations with the complexities of regional politics and identity dynamics remains a challenging endeavor.

Overall, the interplay of political Islam, neo-Ottomanism, and identity in Turkey's foreign policy underscores the multifaceted nature of Turkey's engagement with the Middle East. As Turkey continues to grapple with internal and external challenges, its approach to the region will likely continue to evolve, reflecting the ongoing tension between its ideological ambitions and pragmatic considerations.

3.3. Resources and opportunities underlying the AKP's Middle East strategy

To gain a deeper understanding of the Middle East's geopolitical importance in international relations, it's essential to recognize the region's scope and historical significance (Davutoğlu). The Middle East has consistently been a pivotal player in shaping humanity's progress across political, strategic, cultural, economic, and broader perspectives, spanning from ancient times to the present day.

Ever since the advent of writing, considered the dawn of recorded history, the Middle East has stood as a foundational hub for the birth and growth of various civilizations. It has functioned as a vital nexus, facilitating the exchange and dissemination of cultures, beliefs, and ideas between the East and the West. More than just a trade route, it has been a melting pot where diverse cultures and civilizations intersect and influence one another.

Arguably, the Middle East holds a premier position among the world's most significant and influential regions both geographically and culturally. While the Industrial Revolution might have shifted global influence towards the Western world, before that era and notably after

the 19th-century oil discoveries, the Middle East's importance has undeniably grown. Historically, nations aspiring for global supremacy have prioritized gaining control or influence in this region. It's evident that throughout various epochs, major powers have engaged with the Middle East, aiming to bolster their power and shape the region's trajectory.

From ancient empires like the Umayyads, Abbasids, Seljuks, and Ottomans to more contemporary players such as Britain and France leading up to World War II, and subsequently, the United States and the Soviet Union, all have endeavored to wield significant influence in the Middle East and extend their areas of dominance. In the Middle East, which was once under Ottoman rule, people still hold a favorable view of the Ottoman era. The Turkish governance that lasted for centuries, including the Seljuk, Ottoman, and Mamluk periods, has been seen more as direct rule akin to their own governments rather than that of colonial power, as Bernard Lewis pointed out (Lewis,1998). While Turkey's Republic has had times of inward focus and Western-aligned policies, somewhat diminishing this sentiment, its independent global initiatives in the new millennium have rekindled the admiration and nostalgia that the region's people feel for their past leaders. For over a thousand years, Turks have inhabited this region, establishing deep religious, cultural, and historical connections with its people (Jung,2005). With borders adjacent to three Middle Eastern nations, stability in the region holds significant importance for Turkey, both from a security and economic perspective.

The Middle East has seen its share of invasions and occupations throughout history. Despite even the most brutal invaders adapting to the region after brief periods of conflict, they ensured that the commercial benefits from regional unity continued. However, none of these invasions have inflicted as enduring damage as the French and British occupations in the early 20th century. Today, the effects of this intervention can be traced beneath every current issue in the Middle East.

The world's most ancient regional and global civilizations have their roots in this region. The three primary universal religions—Islam, Christianity, and Judaism—emerged here. Egypt, Palestine, and the Hejaz have been revered as sacred lands where these religions originated, evolved, and spread, continually drawing global attention. The Middle East remains home to Islam's most important sites, and it holds a special place in the hearts of believers worldwide (Serjeant,2001).

Until the 19th century, external powers had limited influence on the Middle East while the Ottoman Empire was strong. However, as Ottoman power waned, global powers began to shape the region's strategic and political landscape. The discovery of oil in the 19th century

increased the stakes due to its strategic value for industrial nations, heightening geopolitical competition over the Middle East.

The colonial rivalries among Western powers and the East-West struggle led to significant changes in the Middle East's political map after World War I. The Ottoman Empire's decline resulted in a Turkey confined to Anatolia, while the Arabian Peninsula was carved up into British and French spheres of influence and mandates.

During the Cold War, the Middle East's geopolitical and geoeconomic importance influenced international competition and conflict. After the Cold War, control over international energy resources and transit routes once again brought the Middle East's geopolitical significance to the forefront.

The oil and petrochemical industry stands out as the leading sector in the economies of the region's countries. British Petroleum (BP) reported in 2008 that around 60% of the world's confirmed oil reserves are in the Middle East. These countries contribute about 30% to global oil production. These statistics suggest that the Middle East's oil reserves are under less pressure compared to other global regions. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) controls about three-quarters of global oil reserves and accounts for roughly 45% of global production (BP Statistical Review of World Energy,2009).

A key aspect of the oil industry is that discoveries made around 50 years ago are the foundation of today's oil production. Although new oil reserves are still being discovered, projections up to 2030 indicate that these new findings will contribute minimally to the expected production during that period. Even with advancements in exploration and extraction technologies, the declining rate and volume of discoveries suggest that most of the world's oil reserves have already been identified.

Another primary energy source gaining importance is natural gas. While the Middle East possesses 41% of the world's natural gas reserves, it currently contributes only 12.4% to global natural gas production. This indicates that the Middle East's role in natural gas production is set to grow in the future (Öztürkler,2009).

The concept of "soft power," introduced by Joseph Nye in the 1980s, suggests that international relations encompass more than just economic, and military might; alternative power dynamics also play a role. Nye outlines three main strategies to achieve objectives: coercion through threats and potential warfare, economic incentives or "buying out" the other party, and influencing or persuading others using "soft power." Soft power, as defined by Nye, is the appeal of a country's culture, political values, and policies. The legitimacy and acceptance of a country's policies by others also contribute to its soft power capacity (Nye,2004).

Soft power is influenced by a range of factors including culture, education, arts, media (both print and visual), film, literature, architecture, higher education institutions (such as universities and research centers), non-governmental organizations, science and technology, innovation capabilities, tourism, and platforms for economic and diplomatic cooperation. These elements collectively contribute to a country's cultural diversity and social capital, shaping its soft power.

Turkey's soft power stands distinctively apart from that of other nations in its form and substance. Stemming from its cultural and historical heritage, Turkey's soft power potential spans from the Balkans and the Middle East to the heartland of Central Asia. The values Turkey embodies, along with its rich history and cultural depth, activate regional dynamics and pave the way for establishing new spheres of influence.

Public diplomacy involves the initiatives taken by states to influence public opinion in other countries, based on evaluations of interests, opportunities, threats, and potential threats. Unlike conventional diplomacy, it focuses on engaging non-governmental entities and public opinion rather than the governments of other nations (Doğan,2012). Hans Tuch defines public diplomacy as the communication effort by a government to convey its nation's beliefs, values, institutions, culture, and current policies to foreign audiences (Tuch,1990).

According to İbrahim Kalın, public diplomacy, which governments use to penetrate public opinion through soft power, can be grouped into two main categories: "State-to-People" and "People-to-People" communication. In the State-to-People framework, the state conveys its policies, activities, and initiatives to the public using official methods and channels. Meanwhile, the People-to-People approach focuses on direct communication through non-state civil entities like NGOs, research institutions, media outlets, public opinion research companies, opinion leaders, universities, exchange programs, associations, and foundations (Kalın 2010).

Gifford Malone states regarding public diplomacy: "To effectively communicate our society and policies, we first need to understand the culture, history, psychology, and particularly the language of the audience we aim to reach." (Malone,1988)

Public diplomacy has a long history in Turkey. The shaping of the country's image saw a significant advancement with Atatürk's initiatives in 1923. The AK Party's ability to form a government on its own led to shifts in both domestic and international policies. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey's geopolitical position presents vast opportunities that require an active foreign policy approach to seize. Recent studies indicate that soft power has been a prominent tool in Turkish foreign policy. Public diplomacy plays roles like safeguarding national interests,

legitimizing countries, and shaping public perceptions. As Turkey aims to be a "central country," it's one of the crucial methods to influence and steer the global community (Öztürk,2015).

Turkey's mediation efforts in the Middle East, TİKA's projects, diverse foreign aid initiatives, and specific foreign policy actions are examined in the context of soft power. (Altunışık,2008, pp.41-50). Turkey's rise as a center of soft power has also enhanced the effective utilization of public diplomacy.

Countries recognizing the significance of influencing public opinion globally have turned to international broadcasting. TRT is prominently among the entities broadcasting internationally. TRT considers Arab nations and their populations as part of its target audience, striving to build mutual understanding and awareness between Turkey and the Arab countries.

TRT El Arabiya was founded in 2010. Turkey made a notable stride in establishing direct communication with the region through this initiative.

Cultural diplomacy focuses on boosting a country's soft power capabilities. Typically, it's carried out primarily by cultural institutions, including the Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs of nations. The Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centers abroad focus on engaging local communities and carry out cultural and artistic events while considering local sensitivities. For example, they held a Nowruz Concert in Tehran in 2015.

Under the AK Party's overarching foreign policy perspective, TİKA has evolved and broadened its geographic reach. The Middle East has notably seen an uptick in TİKA's activities.

Movies and television series are not independent instruments of foreign policy, but particularly popular culture products can significantly influence a country's international positioning. Turkish cinema and TV dramas, although civilian in nature, receive state support, making them integral to Turkey's cultural diplomacy strategy. The viewership of Turkish TV dramas abroad has a ripple effect, notably impacting tourism, the nation's image, and perceptions of Turkish goods. This influence is particularly strong in Middle Eastern nations. The admiration for Turkey's cultural exports, such as TV shows, music videos, and movies like "Kurtlar Vadisi Irak" and "Kurtlar Vadisi Filistin," has boosted not just the fame of Turkish artists but also promoted Istanbul in Arab media (Can,2011). An element beneficial to one country may be seen negatively by another. Evaluating soft power elements in this context is crucial. For example, "Kurtlar Vadisi-Gazze" resonated with the Arab population in the Middle East but caused diplomatic tensions between Turkey and Israel (Sevim,2012). TV series and films, which can be seen as part of soft power, also significantly contribute to tourism. Due to the influence of these series and films, tens of thousands of Arab tourists visit Turkey every year.

IV CHAPTER. TURNING POINTS IN THE AKP'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY

4.1. The era before the Arab Spring (2002-2010)

The Middle East's geographical position, its historical significance as a birthplace of civilizations, its diverse climate, flora, and water sources, along with its intersection of trade routes, have elevated this region to a pivotal status.

In Ahmet Davutoğlu's "Strategic Depth," a text considered pivotal to the AK Party's foreign policy philosophy, there's a widely accepted idea of constructing an identity and civilization to reinforce Turkey's global position, rather than rejecting its historical and cultural legacy. Within this context, the AK Party's foreign policy has been anchored in Davutoğlu's "zero problems with neighbors" rhetoric. The foundational rhetoric of Davutoğlu's reimagined foreign policy, shaped by the principle of minimizing issues while maximizing benefits, reflects an approach that favors soft power elements and aims to establish economic interdependence to turn challenges into opportunities. A significant shift in the AK Party's foreign policy approach has been limiting the military's role in shaping it.

While Davutoğlu identifies the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus as primary spheres of influence in his book, it's clear that he gives special importance to the Middle East. The "axis shift" debates that arose when he came to power were primarily due to his policies regarding the Middle East, not the Balkans or the Caucasus. Moreover, his discourse on Neo-Ottomanism and Neo-Islamism is more aligned with his perspective on the Middle East. In his book "Strategic Depth," the Middle East stands out as the region he delves into most deeply among these three areas (Davutoğlu,2011).

Davutoğlu's concept involves a harmonious interaction between Islamic and Western civilizations. He argues that Turkey, as the Ottoman Empire's successor and a representation of Islamic heritage, should foster a peaceful relationship with the Middle East. Describing Turkey as a key player implies it should have connections with both the East and West. He uses a bow and arrow metaphor to explain that as Turkey leans towards the East, it gains potential reach towards the West (Özpek et al.,2023).

Davutoğlu's Middle East concept relies on two key features: the region's Islamic identity and its Ottoman legacy. Taking a closer look, it's evident that the geo-cultural cohesion fostered by Islam wasn't a product solely of the colonial era. Sources also indicate a population in the region that is multilingual and comprises diverse ethnicities and faiths (Hourani,2014). Furthermore, there isn't just one interpretation of Islam; different understandings of Islam have evolved (Cohen,2000).

In the post-Cold War period, Turkey's focus on its Middle East policy, much like its Balkan strategy, underscores the region's historical, religious, geopolitical, and cultural context. This emphasis stems from the Ottoman Empire's lasting influence over the area. With the Republic of Turkey emerging as a nation-state after the Empire's dissolution, leveraging the historical and cultural assets from its Ottoman legacy offers Turkey significant advantages. Activating these elements aligns with Turkey's Middle East strategy based on economic and security interests.

Davutoğlu contends that the Middle East isn't solely an oil-centric region. He highlights its significance throughout history as an agricultural center and a trade conduit. Additionally, he underscores that nearly all transportation and trade routes across the Afro-Eurasian landmass are connected to this region (Davutoğlu,2016).

The term "Inevitable Hinterland" used for the Middle East is quite striking. This term was often employed by the Nazis in their expansionist agendas. While the book doesn't directly label the Middle East as anyone's hinterland, it suggests through the information provided that the region has historically acted as a hinterland and will likely continue to do so. The issue isn't whether the region serves as a hinterland but rather who has influence over it:

"In the coming years, the role of the Middle East in civilization is poised to become even more crucial, particularly in cultural aspects, which will undoubtedly reshape the region's entire geo-cultural landscape.

Turkey, with its extensive historical background on this topic, faces the challenge of navigating this issue without internal strife and ushering in a new era of civilization. This is crucial not just for Turkey's unity but also for the region's future. The debates in our country in recent years seem to echo this deeply rooted geo-cultural issue" (Davutoğlu,2014).

In formulating Turkey's Middle East policy, Davutoğlu seeks to optimize the country's interests. His strategies for achieving regional and global influence are supported by data rooted in power focused assumptions. Moreover, his advocacy for Turkey's engagement with a range of regional actors underscores the unique capabilities of each regional state and highlights the competition among major global powers, regional entities, and local players. This aligns with the neorealist perspective on international relations.

One factor that contributed to the Middle East gaining a prominent role in Turkish foreign policy after 2002 was the "Greater Middle East Project" launched by the U.S. in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks. There was a complementary alignment between the core objectives and principles of this initiative and the AK Party government's perspective on the Middle East (Bağcı, H., & Sinkaya, B,2006).

The September 11 terrorist attacks led to a notable change in the U.S.'s outlook and strategies towards the Middle East. While the U.S. has historically been interested in the region due to its unique democratic values and the need for cheap energy, (U.S. Department of State,2015) the events of 9/11 prompted a new direction. In 2002, the U.S. introduced the "U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative" to promote democracy, strengthen marginalized groups like women and youth, enhance civil society, and broaden economic opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa. This was later supplemented by the "Greater Middle East Project" announced in late 2003, aiming to bring transformation to the region. The Greater Middle East Project (GMEP) sought to eliminate sources of instability like radicalism, terrorism, and international crime from the region. Its goals included fostering political, economic, and social progress, establishing peace, and enhancing prosperity and stability in the area (Erhan,2005).

Two key factors made Turkey an appealing and suitable partner for the U.S. in the context of the Greater Middle East Project (GMEP). Firstly, Turkey's longstanding democratic traditions set it apart from other regional countries. Since the early 20th century, Turkey has prioritized forming alliances with the West and the U.S., embracing Western values despite its mainly Muslim population, and maintaining a secular, Western-style regime. Its significant geopolitical position also enhances its importance to the U.S.

Secondly, a pivotal change was the AK Party taking power in Turkey in 2002. The AK Party's policy, which emphasized Turkey's historical and cultural connections with the region more than ever before and focused on regional integration, positioned Turkey as a transformative actor in the region from the U.S. perspective (Bağcı&Sinkaya).

Another contributing factor to Turkey's rise as a significant player in the region has been the internal challenges faced by countries that once aimed to lead the Middle East, including Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. After Bashar Assad came to power in 2000 following his father Hafez Assad's death, he first focused on strengthening his control and later had to confront the civil war sparked by the Arab Spring. Iraq has been dealing with instability and challenges to its national unity since the 2003 invasion, exacerbated by ethnic and sectarian divides. In Egypt, political shifts saw Mubarak ousted by a civilian uprising during the Arab Spring, followed by a military coup that brought Sisi to power. Saudi Arabia, a country where radical terrorist groups have found support, has felt threatened by Iran due to its Shia population and nuclear ambitions. These circumstances made the Middle East a region where Turkey saw the potential to adopt a more proactive policy.

Thanks to the political stability brought about by the AK Party's sole governance, Turkey has sought to enhance its economic and trade ties, particularly with Middle Eastern nations, in its foreign policy since 2002. To benefit both its citizens and the country, Turkey has opted to promote mutual economic dependence as a strategy to integrate with the region and neighboring countries. In pursuit of more cooperative relationships, Turkey has put into practice the "Zero Problems with Neighbors" doctrine. Moreover, initiatives have been undertaken to transition into a "Trading Nation" by boosting the trade ratio within its economic partnerships. From 2002 to 2010, Turkey saw its exports to the Middle East grow significantly, jumping from \$2.2 billion to \$18 billion. This led to the Middle East's portion of Turkey's overall exports increasing from 6% to 16%. Furthermore, the total trade volume with the Middle East surged from \$3.87 billion to \$23.6 billion (Kutlay&Dinçer,2012,p.78). In 2012, Turkey's main export partners in the Middle East were Iraq, Iran, and the UAE, while its primary import sources from the region were Iran, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia (Akbay,2013)

Between 2000 and 2003, Turkey worked to strengthen its economic ties with Iraq despite challenges like the UN embargo, which caused trade to drop from \$5.5 billion to around \$1 billion, (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,2015) even with the "Oil-for-Food Program" initiated in late 1996. Concurrently, Turkey prioritized efforts to prevent potential U.S. intervention in Iraq, fearing it could lead to an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq and harm trade relations.

Furthermore, after the AK Party, which aimed to reshape Turkey's Middle East policy, took office in November 2002, the 2003 invasion of Iraq by U.S. and UK-led Coalition Forces brought about significant changes in Iraq's political landscape. This had notable implications for Turkey's relationship with Iraq from 2003 to 2013.

The shift in Turkey's domestic leadership led to a reorientation towards its Middle Eastern neighbors, alongside maintaining ties with the West, as a means of exerting influence and fostering trade, which its Western allies haven't always welcomed. For instance, Turkey played a role in helping Syria break free from isolation imposed by France and the US, who were pressuring Syria to withdraw troops from Lebanon following the death of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. Additionally, Turkey established a trilateral relationship with Syria and Iran out of concern for Iraq's future post-US invasion. This departure from aligning its foreign policy in the MENA region solely with that of the US and the EU began in the late 2000s, as the AKP government expanded its engagement in the region while asserting greater autonomy. These shifts in Turkey's MENA policies and its broader foreign policy approach were influenced by former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's soft power theories, such as his

concept of "rhythmic diplomacy,"(Davutoğlu,2008,p.82) as outlined in his book "Strategic Depth."

During and after the invasion of Iraq, Turkey took the lead in raising Iraq's situation with all relevant countries and international organizations, especially those in the Middle East. The objective was to foster cooperation and coordination for Iraq's stability. Turkey organized a series of meetings under the title "Neighboring Countries Process for Iraq," with the last one held in 2008 (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,2015).In these meetings, consensus was achieved on several important issues:

- Upholding Iraq's territorial integrity
- Ensuring equitable access to Iraq's natural resources for its people
- Advocating for the prompt withdrawal of occupying forces from Iraq and a more active

UN role

- Eliminating terrorist groups threatening neighboring countries from Iraq
- Bolstering Iraq's central governance
- Supporting Iraq's political and economic reconstruction (Yeşilyurt, pp.405-406).

Between 2003 and 2005, Turkey largely observed Iraq's political and social restructuring from a distance, with only a few exceptions related to Kirkuk and the Turkmen community. Several reasons contributed to Turkey's limited involvement:

1. Strained relations with the U.S. after the rejection of the March 1st Motion in 2003.
2. The U.S. not granting Turkey a role in Iraq's reconstruction.
3. Kurdish groups, backed by the U.S. during the Iraq invasion, were hesitant to involve Turkey in Iraq's developments.
4. The U.S.'s tendency to exclude Sunni groups in Iraq's reshaping.

These factors collectively reduced Turkey's active participation in Iraq's restructuring during that time (Yeşilyurt,p.409).

After the 2003 Iraq invasion, economic and trade ties between Turkey and Iraq have fared better Under the AKP, Turkey's foreign policy underwent a significant shift concerning its relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) from 2008 onwards. The conclusion of the Cold War facilitated the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, presenting several challenges for Turkey. These challenges included the potential loss of Baghdad's control over Kurdish-populated areas and the emergence of de facto Kurdish governance, which Ankara perceived as a threat to its security due to the presence of PKK militants. Following the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime, the Kurds played a significant role in shaping Iraq's new political landscape, raising concerns among some about the possibility of an independent Kurdish state.

Facing an increase in PKK attacks and limited success in persuading the US to address PKK activities in Northern Iraq, the Erdogan government pursued direct engagement with the KRG to mitigate cross-border attacks. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's official visit to the KRG in October 2009 marked a shift in policy and paved the way for the opening of Turkey's consulate in Erbil in 2010. This move was a pivotal step in addressing what was commonly referred to as "The Kurdish problem." Prime Minister Erdogan's public use of this phrase when addressing the Kurds in 2005 represented a departure from the traditional rhetoric of Turkish leadership. than their political relations.

Turkey has placed importance on Iraq's territorial integrity, security and stability, internal peace, consistent economic growth, and its role as a source of security and prosperity in the region, given their shared historical ties. Turkey also sees the need for collaboration in counterterrorism and the energy sector. In its dealings with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, Turkey aims to foster relations that respect Iraq's territorial and political sovereignty. Moreover, Turkey has underscored the need to address the concerns of the Turkmen community, a foundational group in Iraq, and to enhance their representation in the country's governance.

Towards the end of this period, particularly after 2007 when the AKP entered its second term, there was a noticeable divergence in AKP foreign policy from Turkey's previous approach. The AKP shifted its focus towards the MENA region and moved away from attempting to synchronize its regional activities with its relations with the West. In the MENA region, two significant changes occurred. Firstly, there was a general reorientation towards the region, and secondly, there was a shift in Turkey's stance towards the newly established Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). This shift was exemplified by the AKP's adoption of a "new" policy dubbed "zero problems with neighbors." In line with this policy, the AKP made considerable efforts to transform Turkey's relations with Syria from hostility, primarily stemming from water disputes, territorial disagreements, and harboring the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), into a relationship marked by increased trade, visa-free travel, military cooperation, and friendship. Consequently, Turkey's relations with Syria progressed beyond normalization to a level of "strategic partnership" (UPI,2009). This was highlighted by Bashar al-Assad's first visit to Turkey in January 2004, which led to the establishment of a "High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council." (Arslu,2009). By 2009, meetings between their respective key cabinet ministers were underway. Turkish-Syrian trade also saw significant growth, increasing from \$1 billion in 2007 to over \$4 billion in 2009 (Worth,2009). Syria also cooperated in repatriating PKK terrorists to Turkey, and notably, the two leaders and their wives vacationed

together. Assad referred to Turkey as Syria's closest ally, while Recep Tayyip Erdoğan referred to Syrians as his brothers (Phillips,2009).

The AKP's new policies in the MENA region showed significant changes, exemplified by Saudi King Abdullah's historic visit to Turkey after 40 years, signaling a pivotal moment in Turkish-Saudi relations (Qusti&Khan,2006). Following this, Turkey's role as the first strategic partner of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) outside the Gulf, along with its mediation efforts in conflicts involving Syria, Israel,(Assad,2010) Hamas, and Fatah,(Jerusalem Post,2009) and Iran, highlighted its increased diplomatic involvement in the Middle East(Bonab,2009). Moreover, the establishment of the Quadripartite High-Level Cooperation Council with Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon aimed to deepen cooperation and establish enduring strategic partnerships. Although attempts to expand free trade agreements with Lebanon and Egypt faced obstacles, such as the failure to finalize an agreement with Lebanon, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, alongside his Egyptian counterpart, pledged to establish a high-level strategic council to enhance political and trade cooperation, showcasing Turkey's proactive stance in the region.

Between 2007 and 2011, the AKP sought to address the Kurdish issue in Turkey by enhancing its ties with the Iraqi Kurds (Altunşik&Martin). This strategy aimed to de-securitize Turkey's MENA policy, particularly its approach to the KRG, which was essential for the AKP to achieve its domestic goals. De-securitizing Turkey's MENA policy, including its stance towards the KRG, not only helped weaken opposition from civil and military bureaucracies but also bolstered the AKP's domestic and international coalitions. Moreover, it presented economic opportunities for the AKP, which prioritized economic prosperity as a key element of its power. The shift towards the MENA region created favorable conditions for Anatolian businesses to thrive, becoming a cornerstone of the AKP government. Strengthening relations with the KRG served this purpose and offered the potential for Turkey to access much-needed energy resources as its economy expanded (Tol,2014). In essence, the AKP leveraged its foreign policy to shape its domestic agenda, ensuring its political survival and electoral victories.

After Israel's establishment as a state, Turkey established cordial relations with it, becoming the first Muslim nation to officially recognize Israel's sovereignty. However, the post-Cold War era brought significant regional shifts that deeply impacted the dynamics between Turkey and Israel. By the 2000s, concerns arose about the trajectory of their relationship with the rise of the AK Party to power in 2002. Israel anticipated that the AK Party government would adopt a foreign policy more aligned with the Islamic and Arab world. This

perception was further solidified after the AK Party assumed leadership. Turkey's stance on the Palestine-Israel conflict diverged from the traditional approach, posing a considerable challenge for Israel. While the Palestinian issue had always been a significant aspect of Turkish foreign policy, it gained even more prominence during the AK Party's tenure. Consequently, Israel grew increasingly apprehensive, especially in light of Erdogan's accusations of Israeli state terrorism, leading to heightened tensions and confrontational rhetoric in their relations. The commencement of the military operation known as "Operation Cast Lead" in Gaza by Israel in December 2008 heralded a new phase in the relationship between Turkey and Israel. Turkey stood out as one of the nations providing the strongest opposition to this operation. The Davos Crisis and other diplomatic tensions in 2009 had a profound impact on the relationship between the two nations. Despite the political and diplomatic challenges, economic and trade connections persisted. In fact, economic and trade ties between Turkey and Israel seemed to strengthen further after 2009. Hence, it can be said that during the AK Party era, the economic relations between Turkey and Israel remained resilient despite political and diplomatic crises.

Besides the significant influence of domestic factors, the AKP also found opportunities to enact changes in its foreign policy through international and regional dynamics. Globally, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, the West saw Turkey as a potential exemplar of democracy within Muslim-majority nations. Regionally, the shifts in the Middle East following 2003 provided Turkey with openings. With the Shia influence growing in Baghdad and Iran's ascension in regional politics, countries like Saudi Arabia and its allies sought to involve Turkey as a counterbalance to Iran. Furthermore, the initiation of Turkey's accession process with the EU encouraged regional countries to foster ties with Turkey as a conduit to the West. Concurrently, Ankara aimed to align its foreign policy with that of the EU, leading to a focus on soft power tools, economic collaboration, and conflict resolution in the MENA region (Altunışık&Martin,2023).

4.2. The period until the July 15 coup attempt (2010-2016)

The second phase of Turkey's Foreign Policy towards the Middle East region emerged during the 2010s. Turkey started to increase its involvement in the region while showing less concern about demonstrating its importance to its Western allies, as exemplified by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's characterization of Turkey as a central state. This transformation was also evident in discussions in the literature regarding the extent to which Turkey's foreign policy was transitioning from a focus on Europeanization to "soft Euro-Asianism."

During this period, Turkey's stance towards Israel underwent a significant change. Tensions heightened in 2010 when Turkey backed a flotilla organized by the Humanitarian Aid Organization (İHH) aimed at providing aid to Palestinians in Gaza, who were under Israeli blockade. Despite warnings, the AKP government allowed the flotilla to proceed. When Israel intercepted the lead ship, the Mavi Marmara, clashes ensued, resulting in the deaths of nine activists onboard. In response, Ankara escalated its anti-Israel rhetoric and withdrew its ambassador from Israel. This incident underscored the divergence in perspectives on Hamas: while Israel, the US, and the EU designate it as a terrorist group, Turkey views it as an Islamist organization linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is perceived favorably by Erdogan's AKP (Tavernise,2010).

"The phrase "Arab Spring" is used to describe the uprising of the people across North Africa and the Middle East, where long-standing authoritarian regimes, which had been in power for nearly two generations and could have lasted even longer, were brought down through brief yet violent struggles that lasted only a few months. The catalyst for what would later be termed the Arab Spring in the region occurred in December 2010 when a mobile vendor in Tunisia, citing economic difficulties, set himself on fire. This incident triggered a chain reaction that rapidly spread throughout the area, destabilizing authoritarian regimes across the Arab world. Tunisia was the initial site of regime change, followed by Libya. The wave of the Arab Spring then extended to Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, and Oman, disrupting the established order in the region.

Turkey chose to observe the situation for a period rather than immediately respond when the events began in Tunisia, the country where the process first unfolded. A similar stance was taken in Libya, with Turkey initially expressing opposition to external intervention. Some argue that this approach, contrary to the prevalent discourse of "activist foreign policy" at the time, was more in line with a traditional diplomatic approach aimed at gauging the reactions of stakeholders before taking action (Çiçekçi,2012).

One viewpoint suggests that Turkey's initial "hesitant" approach to the beginning of the Arab Spring stemmed from a reflexive fear of damaging its well-established economic and political ties with the countries in the region by endorsing the popular uprisings. However, as events progressed and regime changes unfolded in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, Turkey opted for a more proactive stance, concerned that continued silence or hesitation would erode its credibility among the populations in the region (Öniş,2014).

Being a major power in the Middle East, Turkey naturally couldn't remain unaffected by the unfolding events in its vicinity. Consequently, the Arab Spring presented a significant

challenge for Turkey, especially within the realm of foreign policy. It was inevitable that Turkish foreign policy would undergo substantial changes, both in theory and in practice, as a result of the developments during this period. Faced with the wave of popular protests sweeping across the Middle East, Turkey found itself in a dilemma. On one hand, it could adopt a pro-democracy stance and support the protests, risking damage to its established economic and political ties with regional countries. On the other hand, it could align itself with regional regimes and turn a blind eye to the protests, thereby jeopardizing Turkey's aspiration for a leadership role in the region. However, Turkey understood that maintaining silence amidst social upheaval would undermine its credibility among the peoples of the region.

Turkey's response to the regional developments can be divided into two distinct phases. Up until September 2011, Turkey adhered to a stance opposing military intervention by both regional and non-regional actors, opting instead for peaceful approaches to resolving conflicts, as exemplified by its approach in Libya. Initially, Turkey remained silent regarding the uprising in Tunisia and attempted mediation between the Gaddafi regime and the opposition in Libya, refraining from immediate support for the opposition and strongly opposing NATO-led military interventions. However, Turkey's position shifted after the evacuation of thousands of Turkish citizens from Libya, leading to humanitarian aid for Libyan opposition forces and limited participation in NATO's military operations. In Syria, Turkey initially assumed a mediation role between the Assad regime and the opposition, engaging in extensive diplomatic efforts and advocating for political and economic reforms. However, Turkey's approach changed significantly after September 2011 due to the Assad regime's refusal to heed Turkey's calls for reform and its violent suppression of protests. In contrast to its stance in Tunisia and Libya, Turkey was among the first countries to support the protests in Egypt and call for the prompt removal of the Mubarak regime. Turkey openly backed the demonstrators and forged close ties with the Mohammed Morsi administration following subsequent elections. Turkey strongly opposed the military coup in Egypt, accusing General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of overthrowing a legitimate government, while also criticizing Western countries for their initial silence on, and later support of, the military coup. This policy contributed to the tangible deterioration of Turkey's relations not only with Western countries but also with Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with whom Turkey had previously maintained close cooperation (Acar,2018).

Relations with the Iraqi government started souring as Turkey faced accusations of providing support to Iraqi Sunni factions. The Shiite-dominated administration led by Nuri al-Maliki blamed Turkey for meddling in Iraq's domestic affairs and adopting a sectarian-oriented

foreign policy, criticisms echoed by Western nations, notably the United States (Özpek&Demirağ,2014).

Disagreements between Turkey and the US became apparent during the later stages of the Syrian civil war. Initially, both countries advocated for the Assad regime to implement reforms to peacefully transition the country. However, following the breakdown in relations with the Syrian regime, Turkey diverged from the US by supporting almost all Syrian opposition groups except for the PYD, while consistently calling for a Syria without Assad. Turkey's Foreign Policy Conduct (FPC) was even more noticeable in Syria. Erdoğan and Davutoğlu had aimed to establish a strong rapport with the Assad administration. However, when Assad declined to modify his response to the Syrian uprising in line with Ankara's suggestions, Turkey not only severed ties with the Syrian regime but also adopted a resolute regime change stance and permitted the armed opposition to find refuge along the Turkey-Syria border (Tür,2019). Additionally, Ankara permitted foreign fighters wishing to join the Syrian opposition forces to cross the border and provided support to certain opposition factions (Itani&Stein,2016). Erdoğan likely anticipated Assad's downfall, akin to Mubarak's, which he believed would create opportunities for increased Turkish influence in Syria. Ankara's support for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, as part of the Syrian opposition, exemplified this stance (Balci,2012). As noted by Mehmet Ali Birand in a 2011 article, Syrian state television accused Turkey of arming the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, highlighting the regime's perception of the Brotherhood as a significant threat, akin to Turkey's view of the PKK (Birand,2011).

In contrast, the US began to selectively support opposition groups as radical factions gained influence, moving away from Turkey's proposals for a no-fly zone and international military operations. In fact, on October 3, 2014, then-US Vice President Joe Biden accused Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE of being overly committed to ousting Assad and stoking Sunni-Shiite conflict in the region (Ifantis&Galariotis).

The clashes in Syria raised significant worries regarding Turkey's border security. In particular, there was a rise in infiltration attempts and terrorist assaults by groups like the PKK along the borders. The conflict atmosphere in Syria gave rise to terrorist entities such as ISIS, posing a threat to Turkey's safety. Turkey had to confront the presence of ISIS along its border regions. As the conflicts unfolded in Syria, Turkey found itself obliged to accommodate millions of Syrian refugees, a situation that profoundly influenced Turkey's internal politics and economic landscape (Altundeğer&Yılmaz,2016).

After the Arab Spring, Turkey's relationship with Iran started to worsen due to Turkey's stance against Syria (Balci,2014). Turkey's approach in the Middle East following the Arab

Spring, with neighboring countries looking up to Turkey rather than Iran, was not what Iran anticipated (Güner,2015). While Turkey pursued a policy of opposing Assad in the Syrian matter, Iran took a pro-Assad stance and backed the Syrian regime. Moreover, Turkey's authorization of missile defense systems on its soil adversely affected Turkey-Iran relations.

The Arab Spring had several adverse effects on Turkey, including a reduction in trade volume, strained political relations, a downturn in tourism, and an influx of Syrian refugees. Furthermore, the crisis in countries affected by the Arab Spring created opportunities for terrorist organizations to flourish with backing from Western nations, posing direct security threats to Turkey. The absence of central authority in regions like Syria and Iraq has led to attempts by various factions, including terrorist groups, to exploit the power vacuum. This situation has directly endangered Turkey due to its extensive border with these countries. Terrorist organizations such as the PKK/PYD/YPG and ISIS, benefitting from the lack of central control, have carried out attacks on Turkish soil using various means. Before 2016, over 500 fatalities and numerous injuries resulted from these attacks originating from Syria. The emergence of a new order in Syria now represents a significant threat to Turkey's security and existence. Hence, maintaining the status quo and central administrations in neighboring countries aligns more with Turkey's interests (Saylık,2022).

4.3. The recent period

In alignment with developments and challenges in the region, Turkey's approach to Syria's affairs has seen shifts since 2016, notably through military actions in 2016 and 2018. Especially after the critical July 15 coup attempt, both internal and external threats posed significant risks to Turkey's sovereignty and unity, prompting changes in foreign policy priorities and methods. Consequently, Turkey has adopted a holistic understanding of its security challenges.

Following July 15, Turkey initiated comprehensive counterterrorism efforts against organizations like FETÖ, PKK, PYD, and ISIS, both domestically and internationally. Moreover, during this period, Turkey has recalibrated its relations with regional and global actors, emphasizing national interests and security considerations. As a result, the perceptions of threats, a pragmatic approach to regional power dynamics, and diplomatic relations, notably led by President Erdoğan, are seen as the new framework of Turkey's Middle East policy post-2016.

Before the transformation, Turkey's stance on Syria primarily revolved around seeking humanitarian resolutions to the crisis. This encompassed safeguarding refugees fleeing the civil war, averting a fresh influx of migrants, safeguarding the nation's regional integrity, and ensur-

ing internal tranquility to pave the way for Syria's restoration as a secure zone. Despite diplomatic endeavors aimed at persuading the Assad regime, Turkey found itself isolated following a shift in U.S. policy, which left it alone in advocating for Assad's removal from power. Furthermore, Turkey encountered the Syrian branch of the PKK, the PYD/YPG, as the U.S. began constructing military bases in northern Syria, and the PYD/YPG initiated the establishment of cantons in the region in late 2013. Consequently, the U.S. opted for the PYD/YPG as an ally over Turkey, considering them a local force (Ekşi,2018).

Confronted by Russia's direct military involvement in Syria during the summer of 2015 and unable to convince Washington to withdraw its support for the PYD/YPG, the AKP government increasingly collaborated with the Russian camp in Syria. Ankara's warming relations with Moscow enabled it to initiate a second military campaign against the PYD/YPG in northern Syria in 2018 and a third military operation in 2019 with the approval of Washington. Likewise, Turkey and Russia reached an agreement to establish a de-escalation zone in Idlib, comprising 12 observer points overseen by Turkey. Additionally, Turkey joined forces with Russia and Iran in establishing the Astana process, which served as a counter to the Western-led Geneva process aimed at resolving the Syrian civil war. Through the Astana process, Ankara aimed to manage its relations with Syria and seek a political resolution to the conflict, which appeared to strengthen Turkey's role as a major player in the Syrian conflict.

The pivotal shift, exemplified by tangible actions such as the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations, transitioned from a liberal foreign policy approach towards Syria to a realist viewpoint, aimed at tactically addressing encountered challenges. This transition didn't completely alter the policymaking process and objectives but rather repositioned the prioritization of goals within the regional framework (Ataman&Özdemir).

The developments that set the stage for the mentioned shift were the escalating activities of two influential actors in the Syrian civil war during that time: the Syrian offshoot of the PKK, known as the PYD/YPG, and the extremist Islamist militant group ISIS. Despite conflicting reports in the media regarding ISIS during this period, both organizations, operating along the Turkish border and asserting exclusive sovereignty claims, were designated as terrorist groups by Turkey. A decision by the Cabinet on September 30, 2013, formally recognizing ISIS as a terrorist organization was published in the Official Gazette on October 10, 2013. Additionally, the unilateral assertions of sovereignty under the banners of "canton" and "Islamic State," coupled with the escalating terrorist activities targeting Turkey, prompted Turkey to reevaluate the Syrian issue from a broader perspective and take corresponding measures. This shift moved

Turkey away from solely perceiving the Assad regime as a threat and towards a more comprehensive assessment of the Syrian situation (Orhan,2016).

The ongoing battle against the PKK, which has consistently held a paramount position in Turkish foreign policy and security doctrine, has gained urgency due to the escalation of activities aimed at bolstering the influence of the PYD/YPG in the Syrian context. Turkey's foremost concern in this regard is thwarting the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish corridor in northern Syria, particularly as Ankara's apprehensions have heightened following the deployment of PYD/YPG forces to Manbij with backing from the United States (Erşen,2016).

The escalation of threats from the PKK, targeting both Turkey's internal and external dynamics, has heightened existing concerns and emphasized the necessity for taking urgent preventive measures. In this regard, the PKK has primarily attempted to exert security pressure on Turkey by relocating conflicts to urban areas and has aimed to strengthen its military and political influence in Syria, aspiring to become a functional and valuable "actor" in the regional political landscape. Additionally, the PKK's objective includes opening a new front in the ongoing Syrian conflict, aiming to shift the focus of Turkey's regional security policy. By initiating a phase of "attrition warfare" against Turkey, the PKK has started expanding its sphere of influence in the region (Yeşiltaş et al.,2017). From 2013 to 2017, ISIS claimed responsibility for numerous attacks in Turkey, resulting in a significant loss of lives. Turkey announced the initiation of Operation Euphrates Shield on August 24, 2016, citing its legitimate right to self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations (UN) Charter. In a statement issued on November 30, 2016, the UN Security Council outlined that the operation aimed to ensure border security and combat terrorism as per the UN Charter, specifically emphasizing the prevention of the PKK terrorist organization and its extensions, PYD/YPG, from establishing a terrorist corridor along Turkey's border. The primary objective, both geographically and strategically, is to prevent the PYD terrorist organization from advancing west of the Euphrates, particularly focusing on the Jarabulus-Azaz line to obstruct the PYD's connection with Azaz. Within this framework, Operation Euphrates Shield marked one of Turkey's most extensive military operations, starting from Jarabulus and achieving significant objectives in its initial phases. Within the first 50 days of the operation, an area of 1100 square kilometers was cleared. The necessity for Operation Euphrates Shield arose from a geopolitical imperative rooted in Turkey's need to overcome security challenges along its border with Syria and establish a cross-border operational depth until a political resolution to the internal conflict could be achieved. Within this context, the operation is built upon a tangible political and military framework (Kasapoğlu&Ülgen,2016).

Broadly speaking, Turkey has transitioned its foreign policy approach towards Syria from one based on soft power to one emphasizing hard power. In 2016, it took its first direct military intervention, marking a shift towards a strategy of military engagement. This involved the implementation of a strategy involving direct military intervention and deployment in Syria (Ekşi).

On March 30, 2017, the operational phase of the operation concluded after 216 days, conducted in coordination with the Turkish Armed Forces and the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which comprises regime opponents. By the end of the operation, 67 Turkish soldiers had lost their lives, while over 3,000 terrorists had been rendered ineffective. On March 31, 2017, the Turkish Armed Forces announced the completion of the operation with the following statement:

"Following legitimate defense rights under Article 51 of the UN Charter and aiming to neutralize the existing terrorists in the region, particularly members of the ISIS terrorist organization posing threats to our country and people, the Euphrates Shield Operation initiated on August 24, 2016, in coordination with Coalition Forces, has been successfully concluded.

In adherence to planned measures to safeguard our national security, our efforts persist to hinder any undesirable formations, facilitate the repatriation of displaced Syrian brethren, and uphold security and stability in the region." (Sabah,2017)

The second significant military operation representing Turkey's shift towards employing hard power in its Syrian foreign policy was the Olive Branch Operation. This operation aimed to disrupt the influence of PKK affiliates in Syria and prevent their efforts toward "state-building". The objective of the Olive Branch Operation was defined as thwarting the United States strategy of establishing a PKK/PYD terrorist corridor along Turkey's southern border and fostering the militarization of the terrorist organization. Ankara perceived the US announcement of their intention to form a 30,000-strong military force in Syria, in collaboration with the PYD, as a threat to Turkey's national security. This declaration prompted Turkey to launch the Olive Branch Operation against Afrin with the Free Syrian Army (Ekşi). Following the Olive Branch Operation, the potential for the PYD to expand from Afrin to the Mediterranean was nullified, and the area was cleansed of terrorist elements.

Following the conclusion of the Peace Spring Operation, a ceasefire decision was reached after the elimination of terrorist elements within a 120-kilometer area between Ras al-Ayn and Tel Abyad. According to the agreement made with the United States, the PKK/YPG terrorist organization was obliged to withdraw from the Safe Zone within 5 days, collect heavy weapons, and dismantle fortifications.

Besides intervening in Syria, this period of Turkey's foreign policy also saw increased involvement in the broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Ankara adopted a more confrontational stance towards Egypt and Israel. Moreover, Turkey became more engaged in the Persian Gulf and pursued a more assertive foreign policy in Libya. In the Gulf, Ankara supported Doha by expanding its military presence in Qatar and assisting in resisting the blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Additionally, the AKP government started to play a diplomatic and military role in Libya following Khalifa Haftar's assault on the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli in 2019. With the support of the UAE, Haftar's forces came close to capturing Tripoli, but Ankara intervened militarily, deploying Turkish-paid mercenaries from Syria and Turkish troops to prevent this (Debre,2020). As a result of Turkey's intervention, the GNA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Turkey for an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extending into the Mediterranean, granting access to oil and gas resources under the continental shelf. After Haftar's forces were ousted from Tripoli and faced setbacks in the conflict, Turkey extended its military presence into 2020, stating that it aimed to protect not only Turkey's security but also that of the entire region from Libyan rebels. This justification explicitly highlighted Turkey's interests in the Mediterranean basin and North Africa.

Turkey's engagement in the Mediterranean, particularly its recent offshore exploration and drilling activities, has sparked controversy, notably drawing ire from Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GKRY), as well as Western nations. The European Union and the United States have attempted to impose stringent maritime jurisdiction limits on Turkey in the region, prompting Turkey to devise the Blue Homeland Doctrine in response to what it perceives as unjust and unlawful measures. As part of this doctrine, Turkey inked an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) pact with Libya in 2019, officially registering it with the United Nations to establish the legal foundation for its maritime jurisdiction borders and assert its determination to uphold its rights in the area.

The Eastern Mediterranean, a key aspect of Turkey's foreign policy strategy aimed at safeguarding its water security and continental shelf, has emerged as a pivotal component of Turkish diplomacy. The contest over maritime jurisdiction zones in this region has been chiefly fueled by efforts from Greece and the GKRY to stake claims that exclude Turkey, contravening international law (Yaycı,2020). Turkey's conclusion of the EEZ agreement with Libya represents a significant milestone. Through this agreement, Turkey has forged an EEZ delineation pact with a neighboring coastal state for the first time, securing a legal and legitimate basis for its claims in the area. The demarcation of the western boundary of maritime jurisdiction areas

has been conducted by international legal principles, signaling Turkey's commitment to employing legal and diplomatic channels. This move has disrupted political maneuvers aimed at confining Turkey to a restricted sea area of 41,000 square kilometers, as advocated by the GKRY and Greece, and supported by the EU, reflecting historical diplomatic dynamics akin to the Treaty of Sèvres.

Starting in 2021, there was a notable shift in Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East region. This period was characterized by Ankara's efforts to mend relations with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel, following strained ties with these countries in the preceding years. Initially, Turkey aimed to normalize its relations with the UAE, which had been accused by the AKP government and President Erdoğan of backing the failed coup attempt. This process commenced with a visit to Turkey by Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed in November 2021, during which the UAE announced a \$10 billion investment fund for Turkey (Coşkun,2021). Subsequently, during President Erdoğan's return visit in February 2022, the two nations signed an additional thirteen agreements covering defense, trade, and technology (Hamad,2022).

Normalization between Israel and Turkey began in 2022 with a visit from Israeli President Herzog to Turkey, followed by the mutual appointment of ambassadors after a four-year break. One key incentive behind Ankara's decision to normalize relations with Israel appears to have been its desire to gain support from the pro-Israel lobby in the United States. During a trip to New York for the annual UN General Assembly meeting in September 2022, President Erdoğan met with the President of the World Jewish Congress and representatives from various Jewish organizations, reportedly expressing intentions to visit Israel (Daily Sabah,2022). This normalization also offered domestic advantages for the AKP, including enhanced economic relations, tourism, and the potential for transporting Israeli natural gas through Turkey.

The most striking among all the normalization endeavors was the AKP's declaration of its intent to enhance relations with Assad's government, leading to intelligence-level discussions with Syria. In December 2022, the defense ministers of both nations convened in Moscow, marking the first ministerial meeting in 11 years (The Guardian,2022)

Turkey's Middle East policy saw several shifts and outcomes from 2016 to 2024. During this period, Turkey intervened in the Syrian crisis, conducted military operations against the PKK/YPG, and underwent changes in its relations with other regional actors. There was a discernible inclination towards strengthening ties with countries like Russia, Iran, and Qatar. Moreover, Turkey actively engaged in regional issues, including bolstering its military presence in Libya and asserting claims to energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless,

Turkey's military and political interventions sparked debates domestically and internationally, ultimately shaping its influence in the region.

V CHAPTER. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE AKP'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY

5.1. The consequences of the AKP's Middle East policy on Turkey's foreign policy

In the post-millennium period, Turkish foreign policy has undergone significant events, primarily influenced by the West, leading to substantial changes to adapt to the new circumstances. In this context, the key determinants of the crisis in Turkish foreign policy are the Iraq intervention, the Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI), Neo-Ottomanism, and the Arab Spring.

The US intervention in Iraq, which significantly influenced Turkey's foreign policy, stemmed from the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks, leading to a shift in US foreign policy towards a more assertive stance in the East (Güdek,2017). The US aimed to transform the Middle East into a secure region for the West by removing "undemocratic regimes that fuel religious-based terrorism." After the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq was invaded in 2003, and the Greater Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA) was launched in June 2004 (Yeşilyurt&Akdevelioğlu,2013, p.389). In response, Turkey felt compelled to reassess its stance. Before these events, Turkey had maintained a cautious distance from Middle Eastern nations to protect its "Western, modern identity and Republican principles," as noted by Çiftçi and Ertugay (Çiftçi&Ertugay,2011). However, the events during the AK Party era prompted a "shift in perspective" towards the Middle East, resulting in "progress in relations" with countries in the region. As a result, Turkey's foreign policy shifted towards a more pragmatic approach aimed at maintaining stability and securing its borders. Thus, while maintaining its Western image, the AK Party administration strengthened political and economic ties with Muslim nations (Kardaş,2010).

In this period, the AK Party faced a tough test when the United States invaded Iraq and sought Turkey's assistance. The party was put to the test with the possibility of Turkey being marginalized in the Middle East and confronting economic repercussions if it didn't endorse the US intervention (Yeşilyurt&Akdevelioğlu,2013). In these conditions, the AK Party initially started expressing pragmatically that "it is imperative to stand by the US." Erdoğan, in his speech regarding the 1 March Resolution, unequivocally highlighted this by stating, "Use your wits, don't be fooled by the games of the CHP. Look at Iran, Libya, and Sudan. They have oil, they defied the US, what happened? Some countries and circles talk about Turkey as the leader of the Islamic world. Let's not delude ourselves." (Kardaş,2010)

The AK Party faced a significant dilemma due to the 1st of March Motion. Despite diplomatic endeavors to prevent warfare, the AK Party failed to secure adequate support in

Parliament, mainly because of the Turkish public's strong "No to War" stance, even though it leaned towards endorsing the passage of US and coalition forces through Turkey for an Iraq invasion. Criticism from the US administration targeted Erdoğan and Gül for their perceived failure to exhibit the anticipated leadership (Çaralan,2022). In response, the AK Party initiated a limited motion on 19th March to break free from the impasse. This motion, which proposed the deployment of Turkish Armed Forces to Northern Iraq and the opening of Turkish airspace to foreign air forces instead of allowing the deployment and passage of foreign troops through Turkey, was passed on 19th March 2003 with 332 votes in favor and 202 votes against. The US did not gain significant benefits from the delayed motion. As a repercussion of Turkey not complying with its demands, the US detained Turkish Armed Forces troops patrolling in Northern Iraq (Süleymaniye) and covered their heads with sacks. Although CHP Chairman Baykal suggested issuing a note to the US after this incident, Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement highlighted the current dilemma:

"Will you issue a note? What kind of note would that be? I've already explained... Is it a musical note? You need to analyze the situation thoroughly before deciding what action to take. Disagreements between two parties should be resolved through dialogue. A disagreement doesn't necessarily rupture the partnership just because it was 'handled incorrectly.'" (Su,2022)

The March 1 Resolution clashed with Turkey's conventional foreign policy mantra of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World." (Çaralan,2022) This was because the AK Party openly leaned towards supporting the U.S., which was imposing regimes on neighboring nations and turning the region into a battleground. The consequences faced by Turkey for its defiance of the U.S. were not limited to the hood incident alone. Apart from the strained relations between the two countries, Turkey's position within the Western alliance was called into question. Additionally, Turkey found itself excluded from shaping the political landscape of Iraq and its surroundings, anticipating significant challenges in the years ahead (Kardaş,2010). As the Kurds began reaping the benefits of their support for the U.S. in Iraq, especially with the bolstering of structures in Northern Iraq, it became a substantial threat to Turkey. Given Turkey's exclusion by the U.S., it also suffered losses on the international stage. Consequently, the AK Party had to engage in the region's redesign by aligning itself with the U.S.'s global project, the Greater Middle East Initiative, to offset these losses.

Turkey's participation in the BOP has been highly significant for rectifying the soured relations due to the failure of the March 1, 2003, motion. Furthermore, the AK Party's ideological goal of harmonizing "modernism, liberal democracy, and tradition (Islam)" has also played a role in shaping the decisions taken during this period (Bağcı&Sinkaya,2006)

The emergence of a power vacuum in the Middle East following the intervention in Iraq has presented a significant series of challenges for the AK Party. The efforts of both regional countries and global powers to exploit this vacuum for their interests have posed various risks for Turkey. In such a context, Turkish foreign policy has had to undergo a shift. Thus, the formerly "passive" foreign policy approach of the early 2000s transitioned to become "active" post-2003, and then "proactive" from 2006 onwards, aiming to pursue economic and political interests in the Middle East. Consequently, Turkey began to witness a diverse evolution in its foreign policy, offering an alternative to the West. In this regard, economic and political initiatives were accelerated in regions such as the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia (Çiftçi&Ertugay,2011). The AK Party's embrace of a "conservative democracy" ideology, which lacked rigid constraints on the party's actions, facilitated its engagement in both the implementation of the BOP with the U.S. and the pursuit of Neo-Ottomanism during this period (Yeşiltaş,2022).

AK Party has desired Turkey to play an active role in the region, assume leadership, (Duran &Özdemir,2014), and shape regional events, (Güder&Mercan,2012) leveraging Turkey's status as a "central country with diverse regional identities." Notably, there has been an emergence of rhetoric emphasizing the aspiration to become a regional powerhouse and a global player. To achieve this, it was deemed necessary to activate "public diplomacy and institutions that generate soft power" capable of revitalizing historical and cultural ties (Ekşi,2018). Consequently, Turkey aimed to engage in proactive diplomacy and employ soft power measures in its surrounding regions to foster a positive perception and enhance its regional, political, and social legitimacy. AK Party believed that historical experiences would bring about geographical and regional strength, emphasizing the significance of utilizing the depth created by the Ottoman Empire in foreign policy. In this context, harnessing the economic opportunities afforded by the geography (former Ottoman territories and Eurasia) became the fundamental pillar of Turkey's foreign policy (Tüysüzoğlu, 2013). Neo-Ottomanism viewed Turkey as a pivotal geopolitical hub and aimed to foster political, economic, and social cooperation between the Western Civilization and the Eastern (Eurasian) Civilization. Consequently, it was anticipated that Turkey would emerge as an influential actor shaping regional dynamics within the global system.

Turkey has made significant strides in its policies towards Islamic countries since 2009, positioning itself favorably compared to the past. During this time, regardless of whether the countries were Islamic or not, Turkey has taken proactive steps to resolve issues in the Middle

East and other regions (Türk,2014). This has involved increased mediation efforts in neighboring countries, enhancing Turkey's reputation. Relations with Arab countries have been strengthened, focusing on historical, cultural, social, and religious ties, leading to improvements in trade and visa liberalization. Additionally, Turkey has expanded its relations not only with neighboring countries but also with Gulf and North African nations. Davutoğlu has emphasized Turkey's influence in the region, stating that "Without Turkey, no game can be played in the Middle East." (Güder&Mercan,2012). During the period from 2007 to 2011, the AK Party reshaped Turkish foreign policy at both regional and international levels, positioning Turkey as an "autonomous" power once again (Yeşiltaş,2022).

Turkey has transitioned from its role as the "policeman of the West" to becoming a proactive force and provider of security in the region. It has gained observer status in both the Arab League and the African Union, and there's now a possibility of a Turk assuming the position of Secretary-General in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. These diplomatic efforts have enabled Turkey to secure a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council with the backing of Middle Eastern and African nations, allowing Turkey to recognize its potential (Şahin,2010).

While Turkey may feel compelled at times to participate in strategies under the Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI), such as those involving the partitioning of the Middle East, as seen in the case of Iraq, it has also taken various measures, such as mediation and investment, to promote stability in the region. Interestingly, Turkey has used the framework established for fragmentation to instead consolidate, aligning with the foreign policy principles of Neo-Ottomanism.

The Arab Spring has become a trial for Turkish foreign policy, compelling the AK Party to seek fresh solutions to navigate through this crisis (Özdemir,2019). It's not just about toppling existing regimes but also about reshaping the entire region (Güder& Mercan,2012).

What was once described as a region of peace and prosperity suddenly turned into a battleground. Another significant factor pulling the AK Party into foreign policy complexities, besides the Arab Spring, is the US shifting away from its democracy promotion agenda, as outlined in the "Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative" (BMENA). The changes observed in countries experiencing the Arab Spring also altered the US approach to democracy, leaning towards supporting authoritarian regimes. This stance isolated Turkey, forcing it to maintain its influence in the region through new strategies, further ensnaring it in a web of challenges (Efegil,2016).

Under such circumstances, it became incredibly challenging for the AK Party to adopt a consistent policy, occasionally leading the country into uncertain and conflicting actions (Güder&Merican, 2012). The core vision and drive of Turkish foreign policy underwent fundamental changes between 2011 and 2016. While initially aiming to spearhead regional transformation, the AK Party later grappled with foreign policy hurdles due to resource constraints and the internal dynamics of regional politics. Despite aspirations to play a leading role in managing the Arab region's transformation, deepening crises in Egypt and Syria thwarted these efforts. Specifically, the internal strife in Syria has had adverse effects on "Turkey's security, regional commitments, and relations with the US." (Yeşiltaş,2022)

The ups and downs in Turkey's relationships with the "Middle East, Russia, the US, and the EU" after the FETÖ coup attempt in 2016 suggest a lack of consistent direction in foreign policy (Kösebalaban,2020). Turkey, in this phase, moved away from its ties with the US, opting instead for more autonomous policy decisions. While contending with these challenges, Turkey also began to see the benefits of its foreign policy shift, reminiscent of a neo-Ottoman approach.

Ataman suggests that Turkey's presence is felt across various sectors globally, establishing it as a significant player in international affairs (Ataman,2020). This presence is evident in key international forums like the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Group of Twenty (G20), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Moreover, Turkey demonstrates its soft power through widespread humanitarian and developmental aid, while bolstering its hard power through advancements in defense industry production. Additionally, Turkey's economic and technological successes indicate a pragmatic approach. Thus, these circumstances indicate that the AK Party is striving to navigate this challenge using diverse strategies.

From 2016 to 2022, the AK Party underwent significant turmoil, leading to a profound shift in its foreign policy approach. During this period, Turkey organized military operations along the Syrian border to counter security threats posed by groups like ISIS and the PKK/YPG. Additionally, Turkey intervened to thwart a coup attempt in Qatar and provided military assistance to Libya's legitimate government. Faced with challenges from the US, Turkey swiftly improved relations with Russia, resulting in various economic and energy benefits, including acquiring the S-400 missile defense system. However, tensions with the US and its perceived support for terrorism in the region pushed security to the forefront for the AK Party. Consequently, while pre-2016 saw Turkey striving to align itself with the West as a liberal and democratic actor, post-2016 witnessed a shift toward criticism of the West. This transformation reflected a perception that the West, particularly in light of issues like FETÖ, the PKK, and the

Syrian crisis, posed a threat to Turkey's survival. As a result, a more realist foreign policy discourse emerged, characterized by a focus on struggle, with "security" remains a central theme for the party in 2021 and 2022.

5.2. The refugee issue in Turkey and its effects

Looking back at the history of humanity, migration has evolved alongside historical events, arising from the challenges posed by nature and interpersonal conflicts. Humans have relocated from diverse regions to both familiar and unfamiliar territories for reasons such as escaping adverse environmental conditions, fostering closer social bonds, seeking safer living environments, establishing communal settings, and improving material conditions for a more organized and sustainable life. The pursuit of a better existence has consistently underscored the significance of migration throughout human history.

Migration isn't confined to individual actions alone; historical records showcase numerous instances of collective movements. Despite differing reasons, mass migrations continue to hold significance. Consequently, the term "migration" encompasses a spectrum of individuals and groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, irregular migrants, and various displaced populations.

Turkey, due to its geographical location, has a rich tradition of migration, welcoming migrants, offering protection to those in need, and earning respect from the international community.

Jacobsen draws parallels between the reasons prompting refugees to leave their home countries, which influence the reception by the host society, and the concept of "needy poor" that bolsters welfare policies in developed nations (Jacobsen,1996). When the host community perceives refugees as not being "needy," implying that they did not flee their homes due to life-threatening circumstances but rather for economic reasons, the likelihood of sympathizing with and showing tolerance towards these individuals diminishes. It is more probable for "needy refugees," those perceived to be genuinely in danger in their own countries, to receive hospitality, support, and aid from the host community. For example, Iraqi Turkmen, escaping from war-torn conditions, receive "compassion" and "hospitality" from the local populace, with the belief that there is no objection to their staying in Turkey "until the end of the war in their country." However, as their stay prolongs, some segments of the local community begin to view the refugees' situation not as "escaping from war conditions" but as "avoiding fighting for their nations."

When faced with multiple refugee groups, the local community may adopt varying attitudes towards each group. Despite arriving concurrently, Iraqi Turkmens might be embraced due to "ethnic solidarity," whereas Syrians could face exclusion despite their "religious affinity." Iraqi Turkmens are often portrayed as "industrious" and "hardworking individuals striving for livelihood," while Syrians are depicted as "idle," "averse to labor," and "accustomed to begging," consistent with this perception. Moreover, the substantial presence of Syrian refugees in Turkey, coupled with the absence of an expectation for their return post-war, has diminished the prominence of Iraqi Turkmens, akin to other refugee groups excluding Syrians. Iraqi Turkmens, categorized as "ethnic kin," have encountered reduced acceptance due to arriving concurrently with Syrians, unlike previous instances of ethnic kin migrations. This scenario evokes Daniş's notion of "futile ethnic kinship", highlighting the challenges faced by Iraqi Turks arriving in Turkey during the 2000s, including difficulties in obtaining residency permits, let alone citizenship, unlike those who arrived before 1989/1991 (Daniş&Parla,2009).

The worry over refugees accessing the nation's resources is a key factor influencing how the local community views them. Some argue that citizens should be given priority in resource allocation, with refugees considered later. The utilization of resources like employment, education, healthcare, or social assistance by refugees is occasionally met with resistance from the local populace. Residents' expressions such as "we're tired of constant Arabic" create a division based on language, setting up an "us versus them" scenario. Here, "them" refers to those "who don't speak our language." (Duszak,2002). Within the shared ethnic identity of Iraqi Turkmens and neighborhood dwellers, there emerges a process of separation and marginalization initiated by the locals and centered on language. The ethnic assumption that Turkmens should speak Turkish can foster division in their communal experiences when this expectation isn't met. The disappointment arising from Iraqi Turkmens speaking Arabic can fuel negative sentiments among locals, potentially leading to exclusionary attitudes and behaviors toward refugees. Additionally, the language barrier results in misunderstandings or misinterpretations during everyday interactions between the two groups.

The unfolding humanitarian crisis in Syria saw the beginning of a mass movement of approximately 300-400 Syrian citizens towards the Cilvegözü border gate in the Yayladağı district of Hatay province on April 29, 2011, signaling the start of a significant population flow from Syria to Turkey. Turkey, under its "Open Door Policy," has not repatriated any Syrians and has granted them "Temporary Protection Status." Turkey has gained recognition as a leading and exemplary nation in the international arena, particularly by the United Nations, for

its high standards of support provided to Syrian refugees. Consequently, Syrians have been compelled to flee their homeland in pursuit of better conditions elsewhere.

Upon the crossing of the initial convoy in 2011, a period of uncertainty commenced, marked by an indeterminate duration. As a result, an era unfolded characterized by unpredictable social and societal outcomes, demanding substantial responsibility and imposing a considerable financial burden.

The challenge of Syrian refugees in Turkey should be primarily perceived as a matter of social cohesion. According to ORSAM's findings, significant issues arise between refugees and the local community, particularly concerning cultural disparities (especially in cities beyond border regions), language, and lifestyle differences (ORSAM,2015).Cultural disparities, language obstacles, and varied lifestyles often provoke adverse responses from the indigenous population and impede social assimilation. Refugees are frequently censured by locals owing to disparities in their way of life. The local inhabitants, predominantly following traditional family frameworks and favoring nuclear family setups, frequently find discomfort in refugees living in extended family arrangements.

The demographic shifts occurring in certain southern border provinces of Turkey can stir unrest and amplify other issues. Kilis serves as a notable example in this context. With its populace primarily consisting of Turkmen, residents of this city feel a sense of minority status within their community. Given that most Syrians are Arab and Sunni, the Arab Alevi population in Hatay perceives themselves as being relegated to a secondary status (Erdoğan,2017). This dynamic fosters feelings of insecurity among the Alevi community in Hatay. Additionally, the diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs among Syrians can occasionally lead to tensions and disputes with the local populace in their residing cities.

As Syrians arrived, the previously uniform and predominantly "indigenous" urban culture evolved into a blend over time. This resultant hybridity revives fears among the local community of their culture's potential disappearance and reinforces inclinations to view the "foreigner" as an intruder. Consequently, the belief that public spaces are being taken over by "foreigners" enables them to be perceived as the potential source of any wrongdoing or crime (Ekinci,2015).

The Syrian crisis, which commenced in April 2011 and has persisted to the present day, stands out as one of the most extensive crises Turkey has faced in recent memory. Inevitably, Turkey's policies have come under scrutiny and sparked debates due to the magnitude of the crisis and the significant influx of people. This is because the crisis and the influx of people are too substantial to be overlooked. The issue transcends mere humanitarian concerns; it also holds

political significance and carries serious implications for Turkey's security infrastructure, alongside the management of the process. Even in an environment where European countries reject groups of 10-15 thousand people due to the challenges posed by societal reactions and process management, Turkey's accommodation of millions of individuals necessitates security-related endeavors (Ilhan,1971).

When viewed as international actors, refugees have three ways of impacting international security, as outlined by Lohrmann: - Host countries perceive migration movements, particularly mass movements of people, as a threat to their economic prosperity, social cohesion, cultural and religious values, and political stability. - Tensions in bilateral relations across borders are heightened, affecting the balance of regional relations. - Irregular human movements and population displacement significantly affect the personal security of refugees, rendering them uncertain actors in international relations (Lohrmann,2000).

Because of factors such as the challenging living conditions they face, the lower income and welfare levels compared to Syria, and their need for assistance, the overall satisfaction levels of displaced individuals are generally low in Turkey. Consequently, they are in a position where they could become involved in terrorism, illegal activities, and public disturbances (Korkmaz,2016). Syria, considered a failed state due to its failure to find lasting solutions to its issues, continues to grapple with escalating security threats both domestically and in the region. The expanding governance vacuum within the country has inadvertently or intentionally facilitated the rise of various militant groups such as the Democratic Union Party (PYD), People's Protection Units (YPG), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Hezbollah, and others on its soil (Özalp,2014).

Turkey effectively protects its borders, comprising 2875 kilometers of land boundaries and 8333 kilometers of coastal and maritime borders, with the coordination of the Land, Air, and Naval Forces Commands, the Coast Guard Command, and the Gendarmerie General Command. Among all borders, the most critical for Turkey is the 1242-kilometer Syria-Iraq border (Deniz,2009). Preserving territorial security and integrity ranks among Turkey's foremost concerns. Border security has gained heightened significance due to the challenges in Iraq and Syria. The unregulated situation on both sides of the border facilitates the logistical reinforcement of terrorist organizations. Ensuring maritime border security is equally vital.

Bernard notes that the host community, which fears refugees' participation in employment, housing, and resources, never genuinely welcomes them. In Turkey, refugees are often perceived as cheap labor by employers, leading to criticism and accusations from the local population for depressing wages as they accept low-paying jobs. The existing unemployment

problem in Turkey is often blamed on refugees by locals, who see them taking up undesirable jobs and consequently being pushed into the lower socioeconomic class. Small business owners, especially in major cities like Ankara, tend to favor hiring illegal workers (Orhan&Gündoğar,2015).This results in refugees being compelled to work in physically demanding jobs for low pay, without any social security benefits. Exploiting their vulnerable situation, employers use refugees as inexpensive labor, leading to a decrease in overall wages in the job market. When refugees do manage to find employment, they are seen as competitors by the local population and as a cheap labor force by employers. Conversely, if they are unable to secure jobs, they are often labeled as "lazy" and "entitled individuals.

Another economic consequence of the refugee population at the neighborhood level is the escalation in rental fees. While this surge benefits landlords as an advantage, it poses an economic burden for refugees and low-income local inhabitants. Property owners lean towards renting their premises to refugees due to their willingness to pay higher rents and their reliability in payments, leading to challenges for impoverished residents in securing housing (Orhan, Gündoğar,2015,p.16).

The issue of migration played a significant role in shaping the political landscape of the 2023 elections in Turkey. Throughout the campaign, President Erdoğan's government underscored the notion of solidarity between refugees and the Turkish populace. Additionally, the AKP, under Erdoğan's leadership, vaguely outlined a voluntary return option for refugees in its election manifesto. Specifically, the manifesto committed to supporting stability in post-conflict areas of Syria and included measures to prevent new migration flows while facilitating the return of refugees under temporary protection in Turkey.

Furthermore, in a televised address before the second round of the 2023 elections, President Erdoğan expressed compassion for Syrian refugees. He acknowledged the hardships they faced due to terrorist threats, challenging living conditions, and ongoing conflicts in their homeland. President Erdoğan firmly rejected the idea of forcibly repatriating Syrians, emphasizing the humanitarian aspect and its alignment with Islamic principles. While acknowledging the challenges, he also stressed that individuals engaging in misconduct would face accountability from law enforcement (TV100, 2023).

Opposition parties such as CHP and İYİ Party criticized the government, alleging that it had transformed Turkey into a facility for storing refugees. The opposition's attention to this matter reflected an increasing public sensitivity towards the prevailing situation, accompanied by a growing anti-migrant sentiment among Turkish voters. There has been a noticeable shift towards stricter migration policies between 2018 and 2023. Similarly, İYİ Party underwent a

substantial change during this period. In 2018, İYİ Party emphasized international cooperation, facilitating the return of Syrian guests, and establishing safe zones in their countries of origin. However, by 2023, the party adopted the slogan "Border is sacred!", endorsing rigorous border security measures and implementing a policy of "pushback" for identified migration movements. Apart from HDP, which consistently maintained a pro-immigrant stance, all major parties experienced a significant transformation towards more anti-immigrant positions to varying degrees during this period.

Amidst a surge in anti-immigrant rhetoric during the elections, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who championed a more favorable stance towards migrants, emerged victorious. This outcome can be understood from three angles:

Firstly, while migration was a significant theme in the discourse of the 2023 elections, it might not have been the primary concern influencing voting behavior. Turkey is grappling with issues such as high inflation, rising unemployment rates, a depreciating currency, increasing state debt, and widening trade deficits.

Secondly, Erdoğan, having been in power for the past two decades, might be seen as more trustworthy in restoring order compared to other candidates, possibly due to his lengthy tenure.

Thirdly, the economic contributions of migrants, particularly as a source of low-wage informal labor, continue to be implicitly recognized. Many small and medium-sized enterprises rely on this workforce for their survival(Balta et al.,2023).

CONCLUSION

Throughout the AKP era, Turkey's engagement with the Middle East has been characterized by a complex interplay of strategic objectives, available resources, and ideological underpinnings, including the influence of political Islam, the legacy of the caliphate heritage, and the strategic utilization of soft power. By emphasizing principles of Islamic solidarity, justice, and unity, Turkey has sought to appeal to Muslim-majority countries in the region and position itself as a champion of Islamic values and aspirations.

One of the central strategic objectives of Turkey's Middle East policy has been to assert itself as a regional power while promoting stability, security, and economic prosperity in the region. The AKP government under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has sought to position Turkey as a key player in regional affairs, leveraging its historical ties, cultural affinities, and economic potential to expand its influence.

The primary objective of my research was to elucidate Turkey's strategic objectives in the Middle East, alongside an analysis of the instrumental resources deployed for their realization. To accomplish this, I employed the theoretical frameworks of realism and constructivism, particularly focusing on their respective perspectives.

Turkey's engagement with the Middle East has been influenced by two key doctrines: the "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" doctrine and the "Strategic Depth" doctrine. The former, advocated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, emphasizes the importance of internal stability as a prerequisite for projecting power and influence on the global stage. In contrast, the "Strategic Depth" doctrine, championed by Ahmet Davutoğlu, emphasizes Turkey's historical, cultural, and geopolitical connections with the wider Muslim world, particularly the Middle East.

The consequences of Turkey's Middle East policy extend beyond the region, impacting its broader foreign policy objectives and international relations. By adopting an assertive and proactive approach to regional affairs, Turkey has sought to elevate its status on the global stage and assert its influence in key geopolitical arenas. Turkey's Middle East policy has had implications for its relations with major powers, including the United States, Russia, and European Union. As Turkey seeks to balance its alliances and pursue its own national interests in the region, it has faced challenges and tensions in its relations with traditional allies and partners.

The refugee crisis resulting from conflicts in the Middle East, particularly the Syrian civil war, has had profound implications for Turkey's economy, security, and social cohesion. As one of the largest hosts of refugees in the world, Turkey has faced immense humanitarian

and logistical challenges in providing for the needs of millions of displaced people, including housing, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. The influx of refugees has strained Turkey's resources and infrastructure, placing a significant burden on its economy and public services. Despite receiving international assistance, the long-term impact of the refugee crisis on Turkey's economy remains a concern, particularly in terms of unemployment, inflation, and social tensions.

One of the key insights gained from this research is the close alignment observed between Turkey's identified strategic objectives in the Middle East and the priorities and narratives espoused by the political leadership, reflecting broader ideological and geopolitical considerations. The findings of this study strongly support the hypothesis that during the AK Party era, the most decisive factors in determining Turkey's strategic objectives in the Middle East have been the reaffirmation of historical and cultural connections, the aspiration to become a regional power, the maintenance of political stability, and material factors such as economic interests, energy security, control of trade routes, and the strengthening of the defense industry.

Through an in-depth analysis of Turkey's Middle East policy during the AKP era, it has been elucidated that these identified strategic objectives closely align with the priorities and narratives of the political leadership. The AKP's leadership has consistently emphasized historical and cultural ties, reflecting in their diplomatic and cultural initiatives in the region. Their aspiration to become a regional power is evident in their active participation in regional politics and military interventions. The promotion of political stability has been a recurring theme in their policies, with efforts to mediate conflicts and support stable governments.

Furthermore, the material factors such as economic interests and energy security have been pivotal. Turkey's economic engagements in the region, including trade agreements and investments, underline the importance of economic interests. The focus on energy security is highlighted by Turkey's strategic moves to secure energy supplies and routes, while control over trade routes is evidenced by their geopolitical maneuvers. The strengthening of the defense industry is apparent through increased military spending and indigenous defense projects, showcasing their commitment to bolstering their defense capabilities.

The examination of resource utilization encompassing diplomatic, economic, and military means underscores the effectiveness of the AKP-led government in implementing its strategic vision in the Middle East. The diplomatic initiatives, ranging from high-level visits to active participation in international forums, demonstrate Turkey's diplomatic engagement. Economic cooperation, through trade and investment, highlights their economic strategy, while

military interventions and defense collaborations reflect their security and defense objectives. Humanitarian aid also plays a significant role, showcasing their soft power strategy.

Thus, the convergence between our research question and the findings of this study reaffirms the hypothesis, providing compelling evidence of the significant influence wielded by the political leadership in determining Turkey's strategic objectives and resource allocation in the Middle East during the AK Party era. The strategic objectives and the multifaceted approach in resource utilization highlight the comprehensive and integrated nature of Turkey's Middle East policy under the AKP leadership.

REFERENCES

1. "Assad: Turkey is Needed for Peace in the Region". (2010, October 8). *Dünya*. Retrieved from <https://www.dunya.com/gundem/assadquotturkey-is-needed-for-peace-in-the-regionquot-haberi-127782>.
2. "Turkish Parliament extends troop deployment to Libya." (2020, December 23). *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved from <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/12/turkey-troops-libya-deployment-extend-gna-lna-truce-erdogan.html>.
3. BBC News Turkish (2009, November 24). *New Ottomanism*, Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2009/11/091124_ft_turkey.
4. Bhutto, T. (2007). *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West*.
5. Bonab, R. G. (2009). Turkey's emerging role as a mediator on Iran's nuclear activities. *Insight Turkey*, 11(3), 169-171. <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/turkeys-emerging-role-as-a-mediator-on-irans-nuclear-activities>
6. BP. (June 2009). *Statistical Review of World Energy*. <http://www.bp.com/statisticalreview>
7. Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. https://books.google.az/books/about/Security.html?id=j4BGrElsP8C&redir_esc=y
8. Cohen, C. (2000). Islam: Book 1. *From Its Emergence to the Foundation of the Ottoman Empire*. (Trans E. N. Erendor). İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi
9. Cook, S. (2007). *Ruling, but not Governing*. (1st ed.). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
10. Dalacoura, K. (2017). A new phase in Turkish foreign policy: expediency and AKP survival. *Future Notes*, 4. Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/new-phase-turkish-foreign-policy-expediency-and-akp-survival>
11. Debre, I. (2020, August 17). Pentagon report: Turkey sent up to 3,800 fighters to Libya. *Associated Press*. <https://apnews.com/article/c339f71bf029f36b1091ee31c9f0171a>
12. Duszak, A. (2002). *Us and Others: Social Identities Across Languages, Discourses and Cultures*. John Benjamins Publishing Co. <https://benjamins.com/catalog/pbns.98>
13. Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. https://old.tsu.ge/data/file_db/anthim/011.pdf

14. Guibernau, M. (2010). Globalization, Modernity, and National Identity. In I. Gündüz (Ed.), *National Identity and Ethnicity. Sarmal Yayınları*, 71-77.
15. Hamad, A. (2022, February 14). UAE, Turkey sign 13 agreements during Erdogan's meeting with Mohammed bin Zayed. *AlArabiya News*. Retrieved from <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/gulf/2022/02/14/UAE-Turkey-sign-13-agreements-during-Erdogan-s-meeting-with-Mohammed-bin-Zayed>.
16. Hanrieder, W. F. (1971). "Compatibility and Consensus: A Proposal for the Conceptual Linkage of External and Internal Dimensions of Foreign Policy." In W. Hanrieder (Ed.), *Comparative Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays* (242-264).
17. Hotham, D. (2000). *Turks I. Cumhuriyet Yayınları*.
18. Hourani, A. (2014). *History of the Arab Peoples* (Y. Alogan, Trans.). İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
19. Ifantis, K., & Galariotis, I. (October). The US and Turkey in search of regional strategy: Towards asymptotic trajectories. *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, 36, 18-19. Retrieved from <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/media/www/pag-72480/UNIS-CIDP36-1IFANTIS-GALARIOTIS.pdf>
20. Itani, F., & Stein, A. (2016, May). Turkey's Syria predicament. *Atlantic Council*. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03457#metadata_info_tab_contents.
21. Jacobsen, K. (1996). Factors Influencing the Policy Responses of Host Governments to Mass Refugee Influxes. *International Migration Review*, 30(3), 670. Retrieved from http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS_Migration/Reading_List/Module_A/75.pdf.
22. Jerusalem Post. (2009, January 19). *Turkey says it would mediate between Hamas and Fatah*. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/turkey-says-it-would-mediate-between-hamas-and-fatah>
23. Jung, D. (2005). Turkey and Arab World: Historical Narratives and New Political Realities. *Mediterranean Politics*, 10(1), 1-17.
24. Kiper, C. (2013). Sultan Erdogan: Turkey's Rebranding Into the New, Old Ottoman Empire. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/sultan-erdogan-turkeys-rebranding-into-the-new-old-ottoman-empire/274724/>.
25. Larrabee, F. S. (2008). *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg726osd>.

26. Lewis, B. (1998). The Multiple Identities of the Middle East. *Sabah Kitaplari*.
27. Lohrmann, L. (2000). Migrant, Refugees and Insecurity, Current Threats to Peace. *International Migration*, 38(4), 4-5. Retrieved from <https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/8629557.pdf>.
28. Malone, G. (1988). *Political Advocacy and Cultural Communications: Organising the Nation's Public Diplomacy*. Lanham: University of America.
29. Middle East Monitor. (2024, April 24). *Turkey military spending rebounds to grow 37% in 2023 - SIPRI*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240424-turkiye-military-spending-rebounds-to-grow-37-in-2023-sipri/>.
30. Mufti, M. (2014). The AK Party's Islamic Realist Political Vision: Theory and Practice. *Politics and Governance*, 2(2), 28-42. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273513768_The_AK_Party's_Islamic_Realist_Political_Vision_Theory_and_Practice.
31. Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Succeed in World Politics*. Public Affairs: New York.
32. Phillips, C. (2009, October 1). *Turkey, Syria's New Best Friend*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/oct/01/turkey-syria-friendship>
33. Qusti, R., & Khan, M. G. A. (2006, August 6). King Abdullah To Make Historic Visit to Turkey. Arab News. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/282954>
34. Robins, P. (2007). Turkish foreign policy since 2002: between a 'post-Islamist' government and a Kemalist state. *International Affairs*, 83(2), 289-304. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4541699>.
35. Serjeant, R. B. (2001). *The religions of the Middle East and North Africa/Islam. The Middle East and North Africa 2002* (48th ed.,16) Europa Publications.
36. Tavernise, S. (2010, May 31). Raid jeopardizes Turkey relations. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/world/middleeast/01turkey.html>.
37. The Guardian. (2022, December 29). Turkish and Syrian security and defense officials meet for the first time in a decade. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/29/turkish-and-syrian-defence-and-security-officials-meet-for-first-time-in-decade>.

38. Tol, G. (2014, March). Untangling the Turkey-KRG Energy Partnership: Looking beyond economic drivers. *Global Turkey in Europe, Stiftung Mercator, IAI, Istanbul Policy Center*, 2. Retrieved from <https://www.iai.it/en/publicazioni/untangling-turkey-krge-energy-partnership>.
39. Tuch, H. N. (1990). *Communicating With the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
40. UPI. (2009). Turkey, Syria sign strategic partnership. <https://www.upi.com/Turkey-Syria-sign-strategic-partnership/19631255549037>
41. Walker, J. W. (2011). Turkey's global strategy: introduction: the sources of Turkish grand strategy— 'strategic depth' and 'zero-problems' in context. In Kitchen (Ed.), IDEAS reports— special reports, SR007. *LSE IDEAS*, London School of Economics and Political Science.
42. Walt, S. M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances*. JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt32b5f>
43. Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. Addison-Wesley series in political science. https://dl1.cuni.cz/pluginfile.php/486328/mod_resource/content/0/Kenneth%20N.%20Waltz%20Theory%20of%20International%20Politics%20Addison-Wesley%20series%20in%20political%20science%20%20%20%201979.pdf
44. Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. University of Chicago Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/social-theory-of-international-politics/0346E6FDC74FECEF6D2CDD7EFB003CF2>
45. Worth, R. (2009, December 15). Relations With Turkey Kindle Hopes in Syria. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/15/world/middleeast/15syria.html>
46. Yeldan, E. (2002). "BEHIND THE 2000/2001 TURKISH CRISIS: Stability, Credibility, and Governance, for Whom?" http://yeldane.bilkent.edu.tr/Chennai_Yeldan2002.pdf
47. Zubaida, S. (1993). *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris.16-32.
48. Acar, N. (2018). Arap Baharı Sürecinde Güvenlik ve Dış Politika: Suudi Arabistan Örneği. *Birey ve Toplum*, 8(16), 155. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/birtop/issue/41900/477316>.

49. Akbaş, G. (2020). "Westernization in Ottoman Culture and Built Environment." *International Journal of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences*, 6(3).
50. Akbay. (2013). Turkey's Economic Relations with the Middle East. *Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 1(1), 94.
51. Altundeğer, N., & Yılmaz, M. E. (2016). İç savaştan bölgesel istikrarsızlığa: Suriye krizinin Turkey'ye faturası. Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, *İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 21(1), 289-301. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/sduiibfd/issue/20859/223811>
52. Altunışık, M. B. (2008). The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East. *Insight Turkey*, 10(2), 41-50.
53. Altunışık, M. B., & Martin, L. G. (2023). Turkey and the Middle East and North Africa under the AKP: A three-level analysis of foreign policy change. *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, 1-18. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/uidergisi/issue/76840/1285200>.
54. Altunışık, M., & Martin, P. (2011). Making sense of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East under AKP. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239791071_Making_Sense_of_Turkish_Foreign_Policy_in_the_Middle_East_under_AKP.
55. Aras, T. R. (2010). Atatürk'ün Dış Politikası. *Kaynak Yayınları*, 7-8.
56. Arslu S. (2009). Turkey and Syria Signal Improved Relations. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/14/world/europe/14turkey.html>.
57. Ataman, M., & Özdemir, Ç. (2018). Turkey's Syria Policy: Constant Objectives Shifting Priorities. *Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/tocd/issue/40232/466046>.
58. Bağcı, H., & Sinkaya, B. (2006). Büyük Ortadoğu projesi ve Turkey: AK Parti'nin perspektifi. *Akademik Ortadoğu*, 1(1), 26. https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=tr&user=82-hCGEAAAJ&citation_for_view=82-hCGEAAAJ:g5m5HwL7SMYC
59. Balci, B. (2012, April 13). Turkey's relations with the Syrian opposition. *Carnegie Endowment*. Retrieved from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/04/13/turkey-s-relations-with-syrian-opposition-pub-47841>.

60. Balci, B. (2014). Suriye krizi: Turkey'nin Ortadoğu rüyasının sonu mu? Retrieved from <https://tr.boell.org/tr/2014/06/16/suriye-krizi-tuerkiyenin-ortadogu-rueyasinin-sonu-mu-yayinlar>.
61. Beken, M., Kurt, N., & Eyecioglu, O. (2022). Estimating the Effect of Renewable Energy Policies on the Republic of Turkey's Gross National Product by using Artificial Intelligence. In 2022 11th International Conference on Renewable Energy Research and Application (ICRERA) (Publisher: IEEE).
62. Bilgin, M. S. (2016). İki Savaş Arası Dönemde Turkey'nin Ortadoğu Politikası. *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, 39. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/gav/issue/27857/320641>.
63. Birand, M. A. (2011, June 15). Turkey plans buffer zone on Syrian land. *Hürriyet Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-plans-buffer-zone-on-syrian-soil-2011-06-15>
64. Çağaptay, S. (2017). *The New Sultan*. (1st ed.). London: I.B. Tauris.
65. Çaralan, İ. (2022, September 1). Cumhuriyetin dış politikası, Yeni-Osmanlılık, AKP'nin 'U dönüşü' ve sonrası... *Evrensel.net*. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/469243/cumhuriyetin-dis-politikasi-yeni-osmanlicilik-akpnin-u-donusu-ve-sonrasi>
66. Çelik, M. E. (2018). Turkey'nin Sadabad Pakti Ekseninde Şekillenen Ortadoğu Politikası. *History Studies*, 10(8). https://www.historystudies.net/turkiyenin-sadabad-pakti-ekseninde-sekillenen-ortadogu-politikasi_1244
67. Çevik, B. S. (2015). Non-State Actors in Cultural Diplomacy: Turkish Cinema and TV Series. In M. Şahin & B. S. Çevik (Eds.), *Turkish Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy*. Ankara: Nobel Academic Publishing. 396
68. Çiftçi, S., & Ertugay, F. (2011). Turkey'nin dış politikası bağlamında Ortadoğu'ya yönelik tutumlar: Üniversite öğrencilerinin algıları hakkında bir alan tartışması. *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, 7(28), 1-26. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285680135_Turkiye'nin_Dis_Politikasi_Baglaminda_Ortadogu'ya_Yonelik_Tutumlar_Universite_Ogrencilerinin_Algilar
69. Coşkun, O. (2021, November 24). Turkey, UAE sign investment accords worth billions of dollars. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-hopes-uae-investment-deals-during-ankara-talks-2021-11-24>

70. Daily Sabah. (2022, September 20). Erdoğan tells Jewish leaders he plans to visit Israel. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/erdogan-tells-jewish-leaders-he-plans-to-visit-israel>
71. Danış, D., & Parla, A. (2009). Nafile Soydaşlık: Göçmen, Dernek ve Devlet Örneğinde Irak ve Bulgaristan Türkleri. *Toplum ve Bilim*, 114, 142. <https://research.sabanciuniv.edu/id/eprint/26757/1/NafileSoydaslik.pdf>
72. Davutoğlu, A. (2004). Strategic Depth. *Küre Publications*.
73. Davutoğlu, A. (2010). Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy. Foreign Policy. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/20/turkeys-zero-problems-foreign-policy/>
74. Deniz, O. (2009). *Uluslararası Göçler ve Turkey'ye Yansıması (Sığınmacılar, Mülteciler ve Yasadışı Göçmenler)*. Çantay Kitabevi. <https://www.nadirkitap.com/uluslararasi-gocler-ve-turkiye-ye-yansimasi-siginmacilar-multeciler-ve-yasadisi-gocmenler-orhan-deniz-kitap6482524.htm>
75. Dinç, N. (1998). Gönüllü Diplomat: 'bir diplomatın meslek yaşamından notlar'. *İthaki Yayınları*.
76. Doğan, E. (2012). Kamu Diplomasisinin sunduğu fırsatlar ve kısıtlar üzerine. In A. Özkan & T. E. Öztürk (Eds.), Kamu Diplomasisi. *Tasam Yayınları*.
77. Duman, L. (2014-2015). 1983 Seçimlerine Katılan Siyasal Partilerin Milliyetçilik Anlayışları: Türk-İslam Sentezinin Zaferi mi? *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 31-66. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324476421_1983_SECIMLERINE_KATILAN_SIYASAL_PARTILERIN_MILLIYETCILIK_ANLAYISLARI_TURK-ISLAM_SENTEZININ_ZAFERI_MI_THE_POLITICAL_PARTIES_IN_THE_1983_ELECTIONS_AND_THEIR_UNDERSTANDING_OF_NATIONALISM_A_VICTORY_OF_TH
78. Duran, Y., & Karaca, A. (2011). Tek parti dönemi türk-arap ilişkileri. Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi *İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 16(3), 203-216. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/sduibfd/issue/20823/222912>
79. Duzgun, B., Bayindir, R., & Bulbul, H. İ. (2021). Policy Instruments to Promote the Use of Renewable Energy for Residential Heating and Cooling: A Case of Turkey. In 2021 10th *International Conference on Renewable Energy Research and Application (ICRERA)* (Publisher: IEEE).
80. Efeğil, E. (2016). AK Parti hükümetinin Orta Doğu politikası ve ABD yönetimi ile batılı uzmanların eleştirileri. *Akademik Bakış*, 9(18), 52-55. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/gav/issue/27857/320656>

81. Ekinci, Y. (2015). Misafir Dediğin Üç Günlük Olur: Suriyeli Sığınmacılar ve Sosyal Dışlanma. *Birikim*, 6. https://www.academia.edu/18531984/_Misafirlik_Dedi%C4%9Fin_%C3%9C%C3%A7_G%C3%BCn_Olur_Suriyeli_S%C4%B1%C4%9F%C4%B1nmac%C4%B1lar_ve_Sosyal_D%C4%B1%C5%9Flanma
82. Ekşi, M. (2018). Türk Dış Politikasının Ultimo Ratiosu: Yumuşak Güçten Sert Güce Turkey'nin Suriye Politikası. *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, 15(60). <https://dergipark.org.tr/pub/karadearas/issue/68515/1072377>
83. Erdoğan, R. Tayyip (2011), "The Robust Man of Europe," *Newsweek*. https://www.ab.gov.tr/45536_en.html
84. Erhan, Ç. (2005). Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative and Beyond. *Perceptions*, (Autumn). <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/perception/issue/49003/625155>
85. Eroğlu, H. (1985). Yurtta sulh, cihanda sulh. *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 435-450. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1148278>.
86. Erşan, M. (2006). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün Batılılaşma Hakkındaki Düşünceleri. 8(3), 40-50. <https://kutuphane.dogus.edu.tr/mvt/pdf.php?pdf=0008533&lng=0>
87. Erşen, E. (2016). Türk-Rus İlişkilerinde Normalleşme ve Fırat Kalkanı. *Ortadoğu Analiz*, 8(77), 24. <https://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/turk-rus-iliskilerinde-normallesme-ve-firat-kalkani/>
88. Gönlübol, M. "Yurtta Barış, Cihanda Barış". *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 11. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/aamd/issue/55295/758385>
89. Gönlübol, M. (1981). Atatürk'ün Dış Politikası; Amaçlar ve İlkeler. *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 269. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/aamd/issue/55295/758385>
90. Güdek, Ş. (2017). ABD'nin zora dayalı dış politikasında söylemsel bir değişim: 11 Eylül terörü. Ömer Halisdemir Üniversitesi *İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10(4), 143-158. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/ohuiibf/issue/31295/332795>
91. Güder, S., & Mercan, M. H. (2012). 2000 Sonrası Türk dış politikasının temel parametreleri ve Orta Doğu politikası. *İnsan ve Toplum*, 2(3), 75-78. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/insanvetoplum/issue/69972/1119974>.

92. Gülbay, A. (2023). İç ve dış politika boyutları ile Yeni Osmanlıcılık. *Uluslararası Toplumsal Bilimler Dergisi*, 7(4), 259-284. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/toplumsalbilimler/issue/81606/1388613>.
93. Güner, G. S. (2015). Turkey-İran ilişkileri: 13 yılın en kötü dönemi. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/aljazeera-ozel/turkiye-iran-iliskileri-13-yilin-en-kotu-donemi>.
94. İlhan, S. (1971). *Jeopolitikten Taktiğe*. Harp Akademileri Press.
95. İnalçık, H. (2008). "Doğu-Batı Makaleler".
96. İnan, A. (1984). Afet İnan Atatürk Hakkında Hatıralar ve Belgeler. Retrieved from https://www.ademia.edu/50995768/Afet_%C4%B0nan_Atat%C3%BCrk_Hakk%C4%B1nda_Hat%C4%B1ralar_ve_Belgeler.
97. Karasipahi, S. (2009). Comparing Islamic Resurgence Movements in Turkey and Iran. *Middle East Journal*, 63(1), 26. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25482605>.
98. Kardaş, Ş. (2010). Turkey ve Irak krizi: Kimlikle çıkar arasında AKP, 2002-2004. In H. Yavuz (Ed.), *AK Parti, toplumsal değişimin yeni aktörleri* (pp. 359-389). İstanbul: *Kitap Yayınevi*.
99. Kasapoğlu, C., & Ülgen, S. (2016). Operation Euphrates Shield and the al Bab Campaign: A Strategic Assessment. *EDAM*, 13.
100. Kılıç, E. A. (2015). TRT as a Public Diplomacy Tool. In M. Şahin & B. S. Çevik (Eds.), *Turkish Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy* (p. 379). Ankara: *Nobel Academic Publishing*.
101. Korkmaz, A. (2016). Suriyeli Sığınmacılardan Kaynaklanan Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri. *Akademik Hassasiyetleri*, 109. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/270524>.
102. Kösebalaban, H. (2020). 2021'e Girerken Türk Dış Politikasının Dönüşümü. *Perspektif*. Retrieved from <https://www.perspektif.online/2021e-girerken-turk-dis-politikasinin-donusumu-2/>.
103. Kutlay, M., & Dinçer, O. (2012). Turkey'nin Ortadoğu'daki Güç Kapasitesine İlişkin Ampirik Bir İnceleme (An Empirical Analysis on Turkey's Regional Power Capacity in the Middle East). *Akademik Ortadoğu*, 6(2), 61-97. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2348127.

104. Öniş, Z. (2014). Turkey and the Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence in a Turbulent Middle East. *Mediterranean Politics*, 19(2), 208. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263703954_Turkey_and_the_Arab_Revolutions_Boundaries_of_Regional_Power_Influence_in_a_Turbulent_Middle_East.
105. Orhan, O. (2016). Fırat Kalkanı: Hedefler, Fırsatlar ve Riskler. *Ortadoğu Analiz*, 8(77), 12. Retrieved from <https://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/firat-kalkani-hedefler-firsatlar-ve-riskler/>.
106. Orhan, O., & Senyucel Gündoğar. (2015). Effects of The Syrian Refugees On Turkey. *ORSAM Report No: 195*, 7. Retrieved from <https://orsam.org.tr/en/effects-of-the-syrian-refugees-on-turkey/>.
107. Özalp, O. (2014). Uluslararası İlişkilerde Başarısız Devletler Sorunsalı ve Bu Sorunsalın Uluslararası Hukuka Etkileri. *İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 72(1), 349. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/97879>.
108. Özdemir, Ç. (2019). AK Parti dönemi *Turkey'nin Ortadoğu politikası: İnşacılıktan realizme dönüşüm*. İstanbul: Kadim Yayınları. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369039805_AK_PARTI_DONEMI_TURKIYE_NIN_ORTADOGU_POLITIKASI_INSACILIKTAN_REALIZME_DONUSUM.
109. Özpek, B. B., & Demirağ, Y. (2012). 'The Davutoğlu Effect in Turkish Foreign Policy: What If the Bowstring is Broken?'. *Iran and the Caucasus*, 16, 118-119. Retrieved from https://brill.com/view/journals/ic/16/1/article-p117_7.xml.
110. Özpek, B. B., & Demirağ, Y. (2014). Turkish Foreign Policy After the 'Arab Spring': From Agenda-setter State to Agenda-entrepreneur State. *Israel Affairs Journal*, 20, 328-346. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264562608_Turkish_foreign_policy_after_the_'Arab_Spring'_From_agenda-setter_state_to_agenda-entrepreneur_state
111. Öztürkler, H. (2009). Ortadoğu ülkelerinin enerji kaynaklarının öneminin ekonomi-politik bir değerlendirmesi. Retrieved from https://www.orsam.org.tr/d_hbanaliz/7harun-7-8.pdf.
112. Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2015). Turkey-Iraq Political Relations. Retrieved from <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-irak-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa>.

113. Sabah. (2017, March 31). TSK: Fırat Kalkanı Başarıyla Tamamlandı. Retrieved from <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2017/03/31/tsk-firat-kalkani-basariyla-tamamlandi>.
114. Şahin, M. (2010). Turkey'nin Orta Doğu politikası: Süreklilik ve değişim. *Akademik Orta Doğu*, 4(2), 17-18. Retrieved from http://www.akademikortadogu.com/belge/ortadogu8%20makale/mehmet_sahin.pdf.
115. Sarigol, I., Bayraktar, E., & Ozkan, C. (2024). Product Assortment With Sustainable Product Attributes: The Case of a Tire Producer. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 71(Publisher: IEEE).
116. Saylık, M. İ. (2022). Arap Baharı Sonrası Turkey'nin Ortadoğu Politikası. *Kadim Akademi SBD*, 6(2), 80-104. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/kadimsbd/issue/74497/1117294>.
117. Serter, N. (1997). Dinde Siyasi İslam Tekeli. *Sarmal Yayınları*. 24. Retrieved from https://www.ademia.edu/37346617/D%C3%9CNYADA_VE_T%C3%9CRK%C4%B0YEDE_S%C4%B0YASAL_%C4%B0SLAM_POLITICAL_ISLAM_IN_THE_WORLD_AND_IN_TURKEY_
118. Sevim, N. (2012, June 29). Turkish TV: A device for social change in the Arab world. Retrieved from <http://www.euronews.com/2012/06/29/turkish-tv-a-device-for-social-change-in-the-arab-world/>.
119. Sinagra, A. (2004). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün Uluslararası Hukuk Düzeni Görüşü ve Devlet Anlayışı. 339. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1148278>
120. Sol-Haber Merkezi. (2009). Yeni Osmanlıyız İşte! Retrieved from <https://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/yeni-osmanliyiz-iste-haberi-20780>.
121. Su, T. (2022, July 4). Çuval Olayı'nın 19. yılı ve topuktan Türk usulü müdahale. *Sözcü*. Retrieved from <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2022/gundem/cuval-olayinin-19-yili-ve-topuktan-turk-usulu-mudahale-7229529>.
122. Tünay, B. (1986). Jeopolitik Tehditler Karşısında: "Yurtta Sulh, Cihanda Sulh". *Dergipark*. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/aamd/issue/55030/755348>
123. Tür, Ö. (2019). Turkey's Role in the Middle East and Gulf Security. *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 13(4), 592-603. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337055666_Turkey's_Role_in_Middle_East_and_Gulf_Security

124. Türk, Y. (2014). Küresel ve bölgesel yeniden yapılanma sürecinde güçlü dış politika. Müstakil, *MÜSİAD Araştırma Raporları*: 88. İstanbul: Mavi Ofset Basım Yayıncılık. https://www.musiad.org.tr/uploads/yayinlar/arastirma-raporlari/pdf/dis_politika_raporu_2013.pdf
125. Tüysüzoğlu, G. (2013). Milenyum sonrası Türk dış politikası: Yeni Osmanlılık ve Türk Avrasyacılığı ekseninde inşa edilen bir pragmatizm. *Alternatif Politika*, 5(3), 308. <https://alternatifpolitika.com/eng/site/dosyalar/arsiv/15-Aralik-2013/4gokturktuysuzoglu.pdf>
126. Uyar, E. (2007). Türk-İngiliz siyasi ilişkileri (1929-1936). *Yeniden Anadolu Ve Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Yayınları*, 49-50.
127. Yavuz, M. H. (1997). Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey. *Comparative Politics*, 30(1), 64.
128. Yayıcı, C. (2020, January). Turkey-Libya Arasında İmzalanan Münhasır Ekonomik Bölge Anlaşmasının Sonuç ve Etkileri. *Kriter Dergi*, 4(2). <https://kriterdergi.com/dosya/turkiye-ve-libya-arasindaki-anlasmanin-sonuc-ve-etkileri>
129. Yenigün. (2010). Yeni Osmanlılık dış politikada kime yarar? 60, 26-30. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279189248_Dis_Politika'da_Yeni_Osmanlicilik_Kime_Yarar_Who_Benefits_from_New_Ottomanism_in_Foreign_Policy.
130. Yeşiltaş, M., Seren, M., & Özçelik, N. (2017). Operation Euphrates Shield: Implementation and Lessons Learned. İstanbul: SETA. https://setav.org/en/assets/uploads/2017/11/R97_Euphrates.pdf
131. Yeşilyurt, N., & Akdevelioğlu, A. (2013). AKP döneminde Turkey'nin Ortadoğu politikası. In İ. Uzel & B. Duru (Eds.), (2002-2009) AKP kitabı - Bir dönüşümün bilançosu içinde (pp. 381-409). Ankara: Phoenix Yayınları. <https://avesis.ankara.edu.tr/yayin/290382c8-25cd-467b-bacd-75f45f203c60/akp-doneminde-turkiyenin-ortadogu-politikasi>