GLOBAL FOREIGN POLICY STUDIES

One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)

Historical and Theoretical Reflections

Edited by
Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner
Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe

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Global Foreign Policy Studies

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Editors

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Global Foreign Policy Studies
ISBN 978-3-031-35858-6 ISBN 978-3-031-35859-3 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3

Cover credit: D. Hurst / Alamy Stock Photo

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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Foreword

The 100th anniversary of the Republic of Turkey provides an exceptional opportunity to analyze the development and trajectory of Turkey's impact on its surrounding regions, the larger international system, its allies, and its challengers. Traumatically born out of a war that left it as a small fraction of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's leaders concentrated on building a strong state and avoided involvement abroad when possible. Today we see a very different Turkey: one that is active abroad, that sees its foreign policy as an integrated part of its domestic policy; one which not only seeks to be a leader in its surrounding regions of the Mediterranean, Middle East, Europe, and the Caucasus, but also extends its influence into Asia, Africa, the Far East, and Latin America.

Notwithstanding its being a firm ally of the West during the Cold War, Turkey today sees itself more as an independent actor who is a NATO member and yet buys a missile defense system from Russia that does not integrate with the NATO system. It is a state that adopted a "zero problems with neighbors policy" but switched to a more muscular military international policy with the beginning of the Arab Uprising. Still, when its economy suffered Turkey again changed its policies and reached out to those states it condemned in order to heal divisions during that muscular moment and gain their trade and financial support.

How does this important state in the world understand its identity, security issues, energy needs, and economic development? How do others in the globe understand how Turkey conducts its international affairs that impact war and peace as we have seen in Bosnia, in Syria, in Iraq, in Libya,

in Ukraine, in Cyprus, and more. From a Turkish government perspective, why doesn't Europe appreciate Turkey's key role in managing the migration challenge? Why is its full membership in the EU stalled? Why doesn't the West recognize Turkey's concerns on how Turkey sees its terrorist challenge from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and PKK allies just as the West does not appreciate Turkey's position in Syria, obstructing the Syrian Defense Forces as it seeks to eliminate Islamic State fighters and guards them in prison?

To analyze these changes in Turkish foreign policy requires rigorous study. That is just what this essential volume provides for us. Each of these analysts are experts in their region and each of the chapters uses strong analytical frameworks that guide us through the complexity of Turkish foreign policy in a changing international landscape. These scholars clarify the interaction between domestic and foreign policy in Ankara's decision making. Uniquely, every chapter in this "must-read" volume is written by key Turkish women academics. In this anniversary year, we can say, this is another great achievement for them, for academia, and for Turkey!

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Preface

Since its establishment in 1923, the Republic of Turkey has gone through several transformations that involve complexities and provoke tense debates both within the country and abroad. Turkey's foreign policy is not immune to these discussions, as there are not any delineated lines between domestic politics and external relations. The changing nature and orientation of Turkey's foreign policy especially over the past two decades due to significant domestic and international changes that led to new role conceptions in regional and global politics also raises questions about the future of Turkey's place within the Western alliance and its potential role in a newly emerging new world order. This volume begins with the basic premise that, as the Republic is about to celebrate its centennial birthday in 2023, a careful analysis based on a historically grounded and theoretically rich examination of the continuities and changes in Turkey's approach to different external actors and regions provides a critical retrospection and a much-needed perspective on Turkey's current and future foreign policy behavior.

This volume aims to answer some overarching questions on Turkish foreign policy with a particular focus on regions or powers. What are the changes and continuities in Turkey's foreign policy in the past 100 years? How do major International Relations (IR) theories help us better understand these changes and continuities? To what extent have Turkey's foreign policy actions at the regional and global levels been affected by power politics, anarchy, international institutions, economic relations and/or ideas, norms, state identities, domestic political influences, and leadership factors?

In writing specific chapters devoted to Turkey's relations with regional and global actors, our authors considered several overarching questions to make the chapters comparable and the overall project more complete, comprehensive, and coherent. These chapter-specific questions include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) What goals does Turkey have in its relations with the particular region or global actor? (2) What factors and major developments have shaped the relationship between Turkey and the particular regional or global actor? (3) What is the current state of affairs between Turkey and the particular region or global actor? (4) What are some of the opportunities and challenges in Turkey's relations with the particular region or global actor? (5) How will this relationship evolve in the future?

The volume begins with an introductory chapter on the historical accounts and theoretical explanations of Turkish foreign policy. Özkeçeci-Taner and Akgül Açıkmeşe provide a review of the domestic, regional, and systemic level determinants that have shaped Turkey's foreign policy behavior during specific periods of 1923–1980, the 1990s, and finally the AKP era since 2022. Then the co-editors discuss the ways in which the major International Relations theories—Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism—explain the changes and continuities in Turkey's foreign policy in the past 100 years of the Republic's history. It is their contention that since Turkey is a *sui generis* country which has not followed a certain predictable trajectory in its 100 years of foreign policy, it is not easy to grasp the fluctuations of Turkish foreign policy from the lenses of one theoretical perspective.

We continue our examination of Turkey's foreign policy around the world by an analysis of Turkey's transatlantic connections with the USA and its NATO membership. In Chap. 2, Evren Çelik-Wiltse assesses Turkey's transatlantic relations from a liberal institutional perspective. She classifies these relations into two main groups: issues of convergence and issues of divergence. More specifically, Çelik-Wiltse examines the institutional and structural conditions that trigger a "go-it-alone" attitude in Turkish foreign policy and analyzes the conditions under which Turkey-US/NATO interests converge or diverge, and why at some instances Turkey act as a member of the rule-bound, norm-adhering member of the transatlantic bloc, whereas in other cases, Turkey's behaviors deviate from constraints of the alliance.

Chapter 3 reviews Turkey's relations with the European Union (EU). Using Liberalism as the main theoretical framework and also focusing on the state-level factors, Meltem Müftüler-Baç argues that the changing role of the EU as a norming anchor has resulted in not only the Union's inability to prevent democratic backsliding in some EU states or states who are in accession negotiations but also the emergence of alternatives to EU accession in the form of differentiated integration that has made full EU membership less attractive to candidate states. She concludes that the combination of these two factors has led to a reformulation of Turkey's foreign policy toward the EU.

Evren Balta and Habibe Özdal examine Turkey-Russia relations in Chap. 4. They argue that the relationship between Russia and Turkey has followed a similar pattern throughout the Republic of Turkey's 100-year history, which has been shaped primarily by two factors: the level of cohesiveness of the Western alliance and anti-Westernism. By focusing on the complex interactions between systemic and domestic factors in different periods in the course of the past 100 years, Balta and Özdal argue that the strategic balancing that defined Turkey-Soviet relations in the early years of the Republic can now be described as flexible alignment due mainly to lower levels of alliance cohesion within NATO and the growing anti-Westernism, especially anti-Americanism, in Turkey.

Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is discussed in Chap. 5. In her chapter, Altunışık focuses on unit-level variables to explain Turkey's MENA policy. In particular, she emphasizes AKP's domestic political considerations and objectives, specifically identifying ideational and ideological variables (e.g., Islamism) and material factors (e.g., staying in power) as the explanatory factors. According to Altunışık, while the ideational and ideological variables explain the general continuity of the high level of involvement in the MENA in the last two decades despite radical shifts in the international system, the material variables help understand the seeming contradiction between ideology and pragmatism in AKP's foreign policy toward the region. Using "procedural pragmatism" as a heuristic tool, Altunışık shows how Turkey under the AKP governments has followed a pragmatic foreign policy by drawing not only on the party's main ideological framework (i.e., claiming that they are solving the problems of the Islamic world) but also on the more recent ideological frame, namely nationalism.

In Chap. 6, Oya Dursun-Özkanca maintains that the hierarchy between the international systemic and regional sub-systemic factors and domestic

economic and political factors has traditionally shaped Turkey's foreign policy toward Western Balkans region. By using the *Framework of Intra-alliance Opposition*, which is based on Neoclassical Realism, Dursun-Özkanca analyzes Turkey-Western Balkans relations and situates Turkey's foreign policy toward the region within the different tools at the disposal of middle powers like Turkey within an alliance system (i.e., NATO). According to her, while several Turkish actions toward the region illustrate boundary testing and boundary challenging, Turkey's general foreign policy toward the region has not *yet* signaled boundary-breaking behavior.

Bezen Balamir Coşkun reviews Turkey's foreign policy toward the Eastern Mediterranean region with a specific emphasis on the Cyprus problem in Chap. 7. She uses Neoclassical Realism as the theoretical model and analyzes Turkey as a middle power, focusing on Turkey's relations with this region in four periods with a special emphasis on the last 30 years of the Republic: foundational years of the Republic of Turkey (1923–1946), multi-party period (1946–1960), military coups (1960–1985), and post-Cold War period (after the 1990s). She concludes her chapter with a discussion on the effect of the wars in Syria and Libya and the ongoing competition for valuable gas reserves in the region.

Using Constructivism, Ayça Ergun provides an analysis of Turkey's foreign policy in the South Caucasus in Chap. 8. She argues that Turkey's foreign policy choices and initiatives, along with their outcomes, have been largely determined within a geopolitical context where history and perceptions matter and identities (e.g., ethnic, religious, and linguistic) shape existing networks of relations. Ergun argues that the region is not a homogenous entity and specifically looks at Turkey's bilateral relations with three regional states: Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. The Karabakh wars and the increasing economic relations in energy and transportation sectors provide opportunities and challenges in Turkey's relations in the region. Ergun concludes with a discussion on three major issues she argues will dominate whether or not Turkey will be able to continue its pro-active role in shaping regional politics and participating in regional cooperation efforts: the peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the evolving process of normalization of bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey, and the tentative cooperation between Russia and Turkey.

Ayça Alemdaroğlu and Sultan Tepe's chapter on Turkey-China relations (Chap. 9) uses critical theory and feminism and analyzes the relationship between the two countries with a concern for the power

hierarchies, domination, and repression. They argue that the ongoing interaction between Turkey and China not only benefits from the current hierarchical conditions at home and at the global level but also facilitates and legitimizes their very existence. It is within this context that the analysis they provide in their chapter goes beyond just a "realist" descriptive account of the economy, energy, and security agreements between the two countries. Alemdaroğlu and Tepe show that despite their different ideologies and state interests in foreign and security policy, women and minority groups are the main casualties in the Sino-Turkish partnership. The authors conclude that the deepening Turkey-China partnership promotes each country's business interests, but it also aids their authoritarian tendencies and anti-democratic practices, including human rights violations.

In Chap. 10, Aslı Ilgıt contributes to the newly burgeoning literature on Turkey-Africa relations by highlighting two interrelated yet understudied aspects of the identity and cultural drivers of foreign policy: ontological security and emotions. After discussing the literature on ontological security, emotions, and foreign policy in IR, Ilgıt presents the elements of Turkish identity and foreign policy discourse since the 1990s and provides an examination of Turkey's humanitarian and African initiatives. The main focus of this chapter is on the affective features of Turkey's new humanitarian foreign policy and African policy within the ontological security framework.

Finally, we conclude our volume with a discussion of the main findings that emerge from a close reading of the volume's empirical chapters and call for *pragmatic adaptation* as Turkey's new grand strategy based on these findings.

Saint Paul, MN, USA — Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner
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Acknowledgments

Our book is a product of a dedicated group of women scholars who enthusiastically responded to our invitation to participate in this project. We knew they were exactly the right people we hoped to work with! Our authors had tight deadlines and the difficult task of theoretically examining and condensing the past 100 years of Turkish foreign policy with a view toward the future into approximately 8000-word long chapters. They not only rose to the occasion by generously sharing their extensive knowledge of Turkish foreign policy in their carefully crafted chapters but also gave us ideas about how we can formulate a new grand strategy for Turkey. We are extremely grateful to each and every one of them. Professor Meltem Müftüler-Baç has our most heartfelt thanks for her generosity and hospitality, as the "Book Workshop" she hosted at Sabancı University in September of 2022 provided the best venue for discussion of specific chapters and exchange of ideas.

The idea for this book originated following our participation in several Turkish Foreign Policy roundtables at International Studies Association (ISA) annual conventions over the past few years. These roundtables, organized by the International Relations Council of Turkey (IRCT-UIK), were where we met for the first time and decided to work together as this volume's co-editors. We are grateful to the IRCT-UIK and the ISA for providing a setting to have a meaningful exchange of ideas. We are also grateful to Professor Mustafa Aydın, President of the IRCT-UIK, for his unwavering commitment to bringing together academics, researchers, and professionals who work in the discipline and for his ongoing guidance and support.

We could not have completed this volume had it not been for the understanding and support of our families. Our spouses, Timuçin Taner and Tolga Açıkmeşe are our biggest advocates, and our children make us continue to work for a better future.

"All my hope is in the youth!" said Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey. Young people are resilient. They are curious, and they deserve the best future possible—a future that brings them unhindered safety and prosperity at home and peace and cooperation in the world.

We dedicate this book to the next generation of Turkey's youth and especially to our children—Biricik and İlkim Taner, and Ateş Açıkmeşe.

Rochester, MN, USA — Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner
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21 April 2023

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Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
CHP	Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
DP	Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti)
EC	European Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MHP	Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
MSP	National Salvation Party (Millî Selâmet Partisi)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan)
PYD	Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat)
TİKA	Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı)
TRNC	Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic
UN	United Nations
YPG	People's Protection Unit (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel)

CHAPTER 1

Historical and Theoretical Aspects of Turkey's Foreign Policy

Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner and Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe

Turkey's strategic location and its ongoing potential to influence socio-political and economic dynamics not only in its neighborhood but also in several regions of the world have been noted by scholars and policymakers alike (e.g., Burns, 2012; Çağaptay, 2014). More specifically, the recent war in Ukraine, the expansion of important security, as well as political and economic alliances, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), the Arab Spring, the ongoing debate about Iranian nuclearization, and other regional and global developments, have all contributed to the country's continued status as an important player in global politics. Despite this recognition, views on what exactly Turkey's foreign policy goals and actions are and should be differ considerably. Will Turkey continue to act as a "pivot" to "bridge" or

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_1

provide a "crossroads" between the West and the Muslim countries, as a "buffer" to prevent the spillover of problems from the surrounding volatile regions to Europe, or as a "barrier" that could challenge the influence of the West on the Middle East, the Caucasus, and even the Balkans? (Lesser, 1992). More recently, additional questions such as "Has Turkey lost its middle power status and its soft power within its region and in global politics?" "Will Turkey remain in NATO?" and "Is Turkey aligning against the West by increasing its connections with Russia and China?" are increasingly being asked.

In this chapter, we explain the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy since the foundation of the Republic in 1923 in an attempt to historically contextualize the individual chapters of the volume, which respectively focus on Turkey's relations with specific global actors and regions of the world. The chapter provides a review of the shifts in Turkey's foreign policy from non-adventurism and non-expansionism from the 1920s to an outwardly Western-oriented and more collective security-oriented foreign policy between the 1950s and 1990s, which is mainly fed by the traditional fears of the loss of territory and abandonment inherited from the late Ottoman era (Karaosmanoğlu, 2000). Turkey then moved to a multidimensional foreign policy positioning and soft-power*ness* instead of a military stance that is usually described as proactive, assertive, and independent, especially since late 1990s but especially since the early 2000s, in an era when Turkey acted as a "trading state," as dubbed by Kirişçi (2009). The chapter also discusses the "strategic depth" doctrine that guided Turkey's foreign policy orientation between 2003 and 2016 and introduces the newly crafted "enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy" that reflects Turkey's official new foreign policy motto. Finally, as a consequence of all these transformations, the ways in which Turkey found itself in the state of "precious loneliness," instead of an active role in regional global power dynamics, will be evaluated. After a review of the domestic, regional, and systemic level determinants that have shaped Turkey's foreign policy behavior during specific periods, the chapter introduces major international relations theories—Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism—and explains how these theoretical perspectives can help understand the above changes and continuities in Turkey's foreign policy in the past 100 years of the Republic's history.

Turkish Foreign Policy Between 1923 and 1980s[1]

Turkey's foreign policy immediately following the Republic's establishment in 1923 was guided by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's dictum: "Peace at Home, Peace in the World." Domestic restructuring and development at home in order to achieve unity in the newly created Republic became the most important focus. Turkey did not get involved in the affairs of the former Ottoman lands controlled by the victorious powers of World War I (WWI). In fact, a complete break with the Ottoman past by distancing Turkey from the Muslim world and choosing to remain completely outside of Middle Eastern affairs was one of the most important hallmarks of the new era for Turkey. Similarly, Turkey had a cautious and reserved approach toward Europe and avoided getting into European affairs as well. A great example of Turkey's cautious European foreign policy was observed when the Turkish Grand National Assembly renounced war as an instrument of national policy, amid the increasing tensions in the continent in the late 1920s (Özkeçeci-Taner, 2013). While the European powers were entering a new decade of aggression, Turkey's leaders focused on signing friendship and neutrality agreements with the Soviets (1925), Italy (1928), and Greece (1930) and became a member of the League of Nations in 1932.

Turkey's caution continued even after Atatürk's death in 1938. Turkey managed to remain neutral during World War II (WWII) and signed a Turkish-French-British alliance agreement in 1939 and a nonaggression pact with Germany in 1941. Turkey's policy of neutrality came to an end only toward the end of the war when Turkey declared war on Germany on February 23, 1945, in order to take part in the post-war discussions.

The bipolar world following WWII created new challenges for Turkey's foreign policymakers. Turkey considered the Soviet Union as the biggest threat to its security and territorial integrity and aligned itself with the West in contrast with the trends of the inter-war era (Soyer, 2001). Turkey became one of the major recipients of US military aid through the Greek-Turkish Aid Act signed by President Harry S. Truman in 1947, joined NATO in 1952, and applied to the European Community (EC) in 1959 for associate membership. Turkey also joined Britain, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan in signing the Baghdad Pact in 1955 with the aim to prevent

[1] This and the following section draw from Özkeçeci-Taner (2017), but add updated information and new citations.

Soviet influence in the region. This was not only a complete reversal of Turkey's earlier non-interventionist Middle East policy but also a clear demonstration of Turkey's new political elites' loyalty to the Western bloc.

During the Cold War, tensions between Turkey and its Western allies emerged mainly over Cyprus in the 1960 and 1970s (Bölükbaşı, 1988). While the developments on the island led to growing tensions between Turkey and the US in particular, the 1974 Turkish military intervention that led to the de facto division of the island between the Greek Cypriots in the South and the Turkish Cypriots in the North became the highest point of these tensions. The US imposed an arms embargo on Turkey, which was lifted three years later. Beginning in the early 1980s, Turkey began to implement economic reforms with the support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to liberalize its economy. As Özcan and Turunç (2011) note, the liberalization process also paved the way to the rise of Muslim associations in the country with the help of money coming from the Gulf countries.

Turkish Foreign Policy in the 1990s

The end of the Cold War led Turkish leaders to rethink Turkey's identity and position in the world and thus, to reevaluate Turkey's role and foreign policy in its surrounding regions, since Turkey feared that it could lose its advantageous geopolitical significance. Starting in the early 1990s under the leadership of Turgut Özal, Turkey began to follow a more multidimensional foreign policy, taking proactive and substantive actions in the Western Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia while trying to maintain good relations with its Western allies. For some (e.g., Constantinides, 1996; Davison, 2003; Taşpınar, 2008; Tunander, 1995), the period between 1991 and 1993 marked the beginning of Turkey's "neo-Ottomanist" foreign policy orientation that became especially pronounced after the *Justice and Development Party* (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) rose to power in 2002. Neo-Ottomanism has most recently been described as "an idealized construction of Ottoman society as a multireligious, multiethnic, and multicultural formation, where different communities lived together in peace and prosperity," and "a normative and political model to address the problems of Kemalist Turkey" (Bargu, 2021, p. 299). In foreign policy, neo-Ottomanism focused on Turkey's cultural and historical affinities with the former Ottoman lands in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, and thus was used to pursue

proactive policies with ambitious objectives in these regions and assume a leadership role (Taşpınar, 2008). However, "Turkey played the traditional pro-Western 'follower' role in its foreign policy in the 1990s" (Aksu-Ereker & Akgül Açıkmeşe, 2021) in order to alleviate its economic shortcomings by becoming dependent on Western allies and not to be isolated and excluded politically.

In such a context, Turkey continued to deepen its relations with the EU in hopes that the country would soon become a full member (Müftüler-Baç, 2016). With the 1/95 decision of the Association Council, Customs Union between Turkey and the EU was launched, with the hope that the relationship would advance further. However, Turkey-EU relations soured after 1996 when the Kardak/Imia islet crisis almost brought Turkey and Greece to the brink of war. Due to the growing influence of the political Islam and Kurdish nationalism, Turkish Military's role in domestic politics was also becoming more dominant around the same time, which was not acceptable to the EU based on the *Copenhagen criteria*, the rules that define whether a country is eligible to join the Union. The Turkish-EU relations became more strained following the declaration of the *Agenda 2000*, the first major document of an overall EU enlargement strategy that was announced in 1997, which was followed by the Union's 1997 Luxembourg Summit decisions. These two documents excluded Turkey from being a candidate. The political stalemate between Turkey and the EU began to soften only when the European Council declared the inclusion of Turkey as a candidate for full membership in its future enlargement process in 1999. Further improvements in relations came following the AKP's rise to power in 2002. The period between 2002 and 2005 was marked by the phrase of "Europeanization" of Turkish foreign policy (Aydın & Açıkmeşe, 2007; Müftüler-Baç & Gürsoy, 2010). Since then, however, EU-Turkey relations have been rocky; Turkey's formal accession negotiations that began in 2005 are stuck at an impasse since the Council of the EU concluded in 2018 that no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing.

Turkish Foreign Policy Under Successive AKP Governments Since 2002

Between 2003 and 2016, the "strategic depth" doctrine, philosophized and promoted by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who served as the 26th Prime Minister of Turkey (2014–2016), Minister of Foreign Affairs (2009–2014), and chief advisor to the then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2003–2009), became the foundation for the unrealistic dream of Turkey's leadership status in its surrounding regions. The "strategic depth" doctrine, heavily based on Neo-Ottomanism, was about repositioning Turkey from the periphery of international relations to the center as an actor sitting at the intersection of multiple regions (Murinson, 2006; Özkeçeci-Taner, 2017). The premise of this doctrine was that Turkey would become a *global player* by focusing on its cultural ties with the former Ottoman territories after creating *regional independence* through leadership in these locations. Five principles formed the foundation of the "strategic depth" doctrine. These were *balance between security and democracy*, *zero problems with neighbors*, *proactive and preemptive peace diplomacy*, *multidimensional foreign policy*, and *rhythmic diplomacy*.

Beginning in 2003, the AKP government reversed Turkey's long-lasting position on Cyprus and endorsed a United Nations (UN) plan to reunify the island, took initiatives to normalize relations with other neighboring countries, including Greece and Armenia, and began to show increasing interest in mediating conflict situations in the Balkans and in the Middle East. Turkey lifted visa requirements for nationals of Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, and Syria, expanded its foreign policy parameters geographically, and embarked on an active campaign targeting specific groups of countries in the General Assembly of the United Nations. This multidimensional and highly proactive foreign policy approach paved the way for Turkey's securing a non-permanent member position at the UN Security Council in 2009 for the next two years.

In addition to reinvigorating historical friendships and taking initiatives to normalize relations with others, Turkey's leaders put some of its old friendly relations at risk. This was especially the case for Turkey-Israel relations. In 2009, the then-Prime Minister Erdoğan left the stage after an angry exchange with Shimon Peres, President of Israel, during a panel discussion on Gaza at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland. The "Davos Outburst," or the "Davos Crisis"—also referred to as "the one-minute event" in Turkish public discourse—became a turning point in

Turkey-Israeli relations. Following Israel's refusal to allow Foreign Minister Davutoğlu to visit the Gaza Strip on an official visit to Israel in September 2009, Turkey canceled the participation of the Israeli Air Force in an October 2009 international air exercise, which Turkey hosts annually with Italy, the United States, and other NATO forces (Tür, 2012). Things became more tense when, in a meeting with the Turkish ambassador to Israel, Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon insulted the ambassador by having him sit on a lower chair, and requesting the media take pictures of them sitting (Arbell, 2014). However, the relations between the two countries reached its lowest level in May of 2010 when Israeli military forces boarded an international flotilla in international waters off the coast of Gaza carrying humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip killing nine civilian passengers and leaving many more wounded. The flotilla was organized by the Foundation for Human Rights, Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief, a Turkish non-governmental organization (Arbell, 2014; Tür, 2012).

In time, Turkey's more assertive and proactive foreign policy became more obvious. Many saw this change as Turkish leaders' attempt to make Turkey more Islamist domestically and less oriented toward the West (e.g., Kaliber & Kaliber, 2019; Kutlay & Öniş, 2021). Others argued that the new policies remained "fundamentally nationalist, Turkey-centric, and commercially opportunistic" (Pope, 2010). Still others made the case that AKP governments were simply pursuing a multidimensional and multiregional foreign policy (e.g., Çakır & Arıkan Akdağ, 2017; Kirişçi, 2009). According to this camp, Turkey was still interested in becoming a full member of the EU even though the EU became less interested day by day, has long-lasting strategic ties with the US, and mostly followed policies that were in line with its Western allies in the Balkans and Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The Arab uprisings provided Turkey with an opportunity to show its democratic credentials and become a role model to the countries in the Middle East. Yet, the choices Turkey's leaders made between 2013 and 2016 underlined a clear incongruity between some of the foundation principles of the "strategic depth" doctrine (e.g., balance between security and democracy) and the AKP government's heavy-handed approach to crush the pro-democracy movements in the country, following the Gezi

Park protests.[2] The Gezi Park protests coincided with the crucial years of the uprisings in the Middle East, eventually playing a significant role in the collapse of the AKP government's foreign policy based on the "strategic depth" doctrine.

In the post-Davutoğlu era and under the presidency of Erdoğan, the rhetoric and practices of the "strategic depth" doctrine disappeared. Since then, no clear foreign policy doctrine or specific set of principles has emerged. There are certain tendencies and patterns that help understand the Turkey's foreign policy since 2016. Turkey's reach in the past decade has extended to North Africa by way of providing military support to Libya and even to the rest of the African continent in the form of humanitarian and financial assistance to countries like Somalia. Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has named this new stance and shift as "humanitarian and entrepreneur foreign policy."

The 2016 failed coup attempt, and the way Turkey's Western allies reacted to the event raised serious questions for the AKP government. The lack of support for the democratically elected AKP government from long-time allies increased the level of distrust Turkey's political elites and public already held about the US, NATO, and EU member states. It is no coincidence that Turkey's relations with Russia improved dramatically after 2016, as Russian President Vladimir Putin was the first foreign leader to call President Erdoğan after the coup attempt and gave his "unconditional support" to the AKP government. Today, there is uncertainty about whether Turkey can still be seen as "the old, predictable, and loyal American ally" with an unquestionable Western foreign policy orientation (Fuller, 2008, p. 178); it is still unclear where Turkey's loyalties lie in its surrounding regions or at the global level.

Most recently, Turkey has played an important mediating role between Ukraine and Russia. The country's stance on the NATO membership of Sweden and Finland raised eyebrows among the members of the alliance. Turkey's threat to veto Sweden's and Finland's NATO membership unless they abandoned their support for Kurdish militants, as well as the President

[2] A sit-in to contest an urban development project at Gezi Park in Taksim Square, Istanbul, was evicted by the police using tear gas and water cannons on May 28, 2013. This event coupled with a couple of months of excessive legislation taken by the AKP government intended to make significant changes in the social lives of Turkish citizens (e.g., a ban on the retail sale of alcohol after 10 p.m.) led to major protests in Turkey. While most of the protestors did not consider themselves to be affiliated with a particular political ideology or political party, the government's response was harsh.

Erdoğan's close relations with both Ukrainian and Russian leaders have proven that Turkey continues to play an important role in regional and global politics.

This short narrative of Turkey's 100 years of foreign policy demonstrates that Turkish foreign policy has been a product of Turkey's various identities and ideologies at different times (i.e., Western, Middle Eastern, Eurasian, Islamist, nationalist, sectarian, and others) (Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Rüma, 2021). Furthermore, Turkey acted as a "bridge" between Eurasia and Europe at times and moved progressively from being a flank country to a regional soft-power having middle power capabilities, then to an emerging power or a constructive mediator, and finally, ended up as a lonely power over time. Thus, Turkey is a *sui generis* country which has not followed a certain predictable trajectory in the past 100 years of foreign policy. Likewise, it is not easy to grasp the fluctuations in Turkish foreign policy from the lenses of one theoretical perspective. Accordingly, there are various theoretical accounts that help understand Turkey's foreign policy toward different external actors in the world.

Understanding Turkish Foreign Policy from Different Theoretical Perspectives

Realism has a long tradition in the study of international relations (IR). Whereas it is impossible to do justice to all the scholars and practitioners, it is still important to distill from the rich literature on Realism several recurrent themes that are relevant to understanding the role of this theoretical framework in foreign policy analysis. Realism explains a state's foreign policy in terms of power politics and is based on the idea that the struggle for power among rival groups is a fundamental and endemic feature of human life (Gilpin, 1996, p. 6, quoted in Wivel). Realists assume that all states, whether democratic or authoritarian, big or small, developed or underdeveloped, pursue national interests in an international environment that represents anarchy (Rose, 1998), where there is no overarching central authority. At the global level, this translates into power politics being fundamentally about a struggle among the nation-states, impacting decisions on war and peace. In other words, state action is determined entirely by power calculations (Grieco, 1990; Mearsheimer, 2014; Waltz, 1979) rather than collective action or ideational factors (i.e., who gets what, when, and how (Lasswell, 1950), also see Kennan, 1994).

The Waltzian structural realist understanding of the international system usually is used to examine state action due to theoretical parsimony, focusing on the choice of particular foreign policies created by anarchy, self-interest, and international constraints. Yet, the defensive variants of Neorealism and Neoclassical Realism view a purely structural view of foreign policy as incomplete. For Neoclassical Realism, systemic factors like anarchy are important but these factors' impact on foreign policy depends on their interaction with domestic-level variables (Ripsman et al., 2016). Moreover, Neoclassical Realism attaches significant importance to power as an instrument for ensuring the states' survival. In other words, while states still behave rationally in an anarchical environment and consider power paramount, they have different ways of processing the available information and usually have a different set of preferences based on their state identity, regime type, and other factors. In this regard, Neoclassical Realism helps scholars to "bring the state back into realist foreign policy analysis" (Lobell et al., 2009). Neoclassical realists pay special attention to the foreign policy choices of "middle powers" in international relations whose characteristics include an interest in multilateral foreign policy that would help them maintain the status quo (Darwich, 2020). In this sense, a middle power may have a limited but still influential role in either the continuation or disintegration of the international system and power arrangements. This variant of realism has been employed to explain the status of Turkey as a middle power or an emerging middle power (Aksu-Ereker & Akgül Açıkmeşe, 2021).

Realism has reemerged as an important theory to explain Turkish foreign policy in recent years, specifically in the aftermath of the Arab revolts in Turkey's neighborhood. The extant literature that focuses on the first sixty years of the Republic almost exclusively examined the structural conditions of the inter-war period and Cold War in their analysis of Turkey's foreign policy. Whereas much of this literature starts with the role *Kemalism* played in the articulation of Turkey's Western-oriented foreign policy during the earlier period of the Republic, structural conditions are considered to be the main factors explaining the continuities and small shifts seen until the early 1980s. Although not naming it as such, scholars regularly used Neoclassical Realism to examine Turkey's foreign policy. According to Mustafa Aydın (2003), for example, until the early 2000s, Turkish foreign policy was traditionally shaped by five factors, including historical experiences, geopolitical and geostrategic location, the demands of systemic factors, several domestic vulnerabilities, and the political

ideology of the governing elite, namely *Kemalism*. Other scholars explained the changes and continuities in Turkish foreign policy by looking at the interplay between global and regional constraints and domestic factors (Kirişçi, 2009; Robins, 2007).

Recent studies use this theoretical framework more explicitly. In his recent research monograph, Eren A. Yılmaz (2021) has argued that Turkey follows a strong neoclassical realist foreign policy approach in its external affairs that is observable, especially in Turkey's bilateral relations with its core allies—the US, Russia, and the EU. Similarly, Tziarras (2022) uses a neoclassical realist theoretical framework and argues that what he calls the "Lausanne Syndrome" in Turkey's strategic thinking under the AKP regime predicts a revisionist type of foreign policy behavior and tests his hypotheses in four case studies: Cyprus, Libya, Syria, and Iraq.

In his book, *A Neoclassical Realist Approach to Turkey under JDP Rule*, Sönmez (2020) uses neoclassical realism and incorporates both international and domestic factors in his analysis of Turkey's foreign policy since 2002. According to him, the fluctuations in Turkey's relative power position in response to the changes at the international level stand out as the most important factor in explaining Turkey's changing foreign policy approach. In other words, it is the interplay between the changes at both international and domestic levels that provide the most comprehensive understanding of why and how Turkey pursued an activist and assertive foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, and "why the country experienced the zenith of this activism abroad under the JDP rule" (Sönmez, 2020, p. 8).

Several scholars who use this approach also emphasize the theory's appeal as they consider whether Turkey has or should have a grand strategy. According to Aktürk (2020), with the partial exception of Iran, none of Turkey's neighbors pose a conventional, existential threat to Turkey's security in terms of their latent or military power. Yet, some of these countries have increasingly strong relations with the world's great powers that have the military or economic capacity to threaten Turkey. From a neoclassical realist perspective, Aktürk argues, the adoption of a "neighborly core doctrine" to keep great powers' military forces out of Turkey's immediate neighborhood would serve Turkey's long-term interests in its surrounding regions. He further argues that it would make sense for Turkey to seek integration with its immediate neighbors through bilateral or multilateral economic, political, and security initiatives. Aktürk concludes that Turkey must carve itself into the position of a "third

power," eliminating the potential for the countries in its neighborhood from destruction in proxy wars.

The outputs in Turkish politics and foreign policy have also been a manifestation of the neoliberal globalization trends since the 1980s and are commonly explained through the impact of economy and trade (Rosecrance, 1986), and with the concepts of Liberalism, including "transnational interactions" and "complex interdependency" (Nye and Keohane, 1972, 1977). According to Keyder (1987), the modern Turkish state has evolved within the framework of global capitalist development and has followed the main trajectories of global capitalism as well as its domestic power struggles and social forces (quoted in Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Rüma, 2021). Thus, Turkey's foreign policy has been impacted by these global capitalist trends, interactions, and interdependencies, especially since the 1980s.

Among the few scholars focusing on the economic drivers of the Republic's foreign policy, Kirişçi (2009) utilizes Rosecrance's "trading state" argument and Putnam's "two-level games" to explain Turkey's foreign policy in the twenty-first century. According to Kirişçi, Turkey has become a trading state in the making since the 1980s and that economic and non-state actors have increased their role in foreign policymaking. In addition, Kutlay (2011) utilizes functionalist and interdependence approaches to analyze Turkish foreign policy and suggests that "bifurcation within the financial capital in Turkey in the post-2001 period and the internationalization of the 'Anatolian tigers' have turned out to be the 'practical hand' of Turkish foreign policy" (Kutlay, 2011, p. 67). Similarly, Altay's "Businessmen as Diplomats" (2011) analyzes the increasing role of the business associations in helping shape Turkey's foreign policy.

The impact of economic trends on Turkey's foreign policy during the AKP era has been an important topic of discussion. Turkey's foreign policy choices reflected the country's economic needs following the 2001 economic crisis, which not only led to significant political changes but also resulted in Turkey's increasing need and dependency on foreign funds mostly from the International Monetary Fund. Aksu-Ereker and Akgül-Açıkmeşe (2021, p. 104) argue that "Turkey's deficits in material capacities as reflected in economic welfare rates have become a dynamic that pushed Turkey to take a more active part in international affairs, as a way of sugar-coating." In this context, consecutive AKP governments "began to follow an active policy at both regional and international levels by presenting Turkey as a role model for the Muslim world with its democratic practices"

at least until the Arab uprisings. Ziya Öniş (2019) similarly explains Turkey's recent foreign policy using developmentalism and state capitalism. Öniş concludes that the "solidification of Turkey's new state-capitalist political-economic trajectory depends on generating funds from non-Western sources such as Russia, China, and Qatar" (quoted in Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Rüma, 2021).

Another variant of Liberalism suggests a relationship between the domestic governance principles of liberal democracies and foreign policy (Russett & O'Neal, 1999, 2001). For instance, Keyman and Gümüşçü (2014) focus on Turkish foreign policy through the themes of "modernization, democratization, globalization and Europeanization" and how they affect Turkish foreign policy. They argue that "the modernization process generated center-periphery cleavages, such as the democratization process generated left-right cleavages, the globalization process generated global-national cleavages, and the Europeanization process generated identity-citizenship cleavages" all of which have their footprints on Turkish foreign policy (quoted in Erdağ, 2020, p. 505). Similarly, Keyman (2010) argues that in addition to geopolitics, "modernity and democracy" were the main pillars of Turkish foreign policy back in the early twenty-first century. Indeed, not only those democratic values shaped Turkish foreign policymaking, but the spread of those values to the Middle East and to its Ottoman legacies became the objective of Turkish foreign policy throughout the Davutoğlu era, which ultimately failed in the second half of the 2010s. Kösebalaban (2011) explains this failure as a result of the embeddedness of "democracy and Islam" in AKP's foreign policy choices.

A final variant of Liberalism that is important for the purposes of this volume is liberal intergovernmentalism or embedded liberalism (Moravscik & Schimmelfennig, 2009), which posits the importance of international institutions and global regimes in state action. Aydın and Akgül-Açıkmeşe (2007) (also see Müftüler-Baç in this volume for a detailed review) examine the impact of the EU and conclude that Turkey's domestic *Europeanization* process and the prospect to become a full member played a crucial role in Turkey's foreign policy. In a similar vein, Tezcür and Grigorescu (2014) suggest that Turkey's behavior in the United Nations determines and reflects its foreign relations (Tezcür & Grigorescu, 2014, p. 273).

While Realism and Liberalism (and their variants) concentrate mainly on material factors, Constructivism focuses on the influence of non-material factors and examines the role norms, ideas, knowledge, and

culture play in international relations. According to Constructivism, identity and interests of states, which are the products of special historical processes, are flexible, and they explain how power dynamics and external constraints are interpreted differently by individual states occupying the same or very similar position at the regional and global levels. States acquire their relatively stable identities and role-specific understandings and expectations about "Self" by taking part in creating collective meanings at the global level. This is to say that the international hierarchy of power does not completely define how states behave, although it affects the way states interpret their social and material worlds.

Constructivism, first adopted by Nicholas Onuf in 1989 and developed later by Alexander Wendt in 1992, starts with the premise that fundamental structures of international politics are social, and these structures shape actors' identities and interests while being shaped by what actors do during the process. In other words, agents (i.e., states) and structures (i.e., polarity) co-constitute each other. According to Constructivism, a pre-defined anarchy or the distribution of power neither automatically constructs an international structure nor creates an inevitably competitive security system. In this sense, Constructivism distinguishes itself from both Realism and Liberalism not only by its emphasis on the social construction of identities and interests but also by its multiple logics of anarchy. As Hurd (2009) notes, in a socially constructed world, certain patterns and cause-and-effect relationships depend on webs of meaning and practices that constitute them (also see Kratochwil, 1989). Whereas these meanings and practices might sometimes be relatively stable, they are never fixed, as ideas and practices vary over time depending on the actions and interactions among states. Moreover, "new foreign policy ideas are shaped by preexisting dominant ideas and their relationship to experienced events" (Legro, 2005, p. 4). Although Constructivism has several variants (e.g., positivist vs. interpretivist vs. postmodern variants, conventional vs. critical constructivism, and thin vs. thick constructivism), most of its theoretical fundamentals remain intact.

Constructivism has become an increasingly important theoretical framework to explain the changes and continuities in Turkish foreign policy since the 1990s. In his *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*, Bozdağlıoğlu (2003) contends that between the establishment of Turkey in 1923 and early 2000s, Turkey's foreign policy was affected by its Western identity created in the years following the War of Independence. Constructivism became an important theory in

analyzing Turkey's foreign policy toward the Bosnian War (Demirtaş-Coşkun, 2011), the United Nations (Ilgıt & Özkeçeci-Taner, 2014), the Arab Spring (Yorulmazlar & Turhan, 2015), and international aid and development (İpek, 2015). Even before the rise of AKP to power in 2002 and the increasing role of "Islamic identity" in Turkey's foreign policy, scholars studied the distinct roles "Turkishness" and "neo-Ottoman identity" played in Turkey's relations with others (e.g., Jung & Piccoli, 2001; Yavuz, 1998).

Umut Uzer's (2021) recent study argues that the shift in Turkey's foreign policy can be explained by using a constructivist approach that focuses on the gradual change in Turkey's identity from a secular Western-oriented identity to that of a religious-based affiliation between 2002 and 2020. According to Uzer, the Islamic and new-Ottoman state identity that has been created under the AKP allows for more unilateralist and activist foreign policy behavior. Similarly, Aydın-Düzgit and Rumelili (2021) suggest that there has been an overwhelming emphasis in constructivist approaches to EU-Turkey relations on the notion of identity. In their examination of the constructivist literature on EU-Turkey relations, Aydın-Düzgit and Rumelili (2021) focus on three periods: 1997–1999, 1999–2010, and post-2010 and find that constructivist approaches have been useful in showing *how* and *when* identity matters in the EU's stance toward Turkish accession and, more recently, how it impacts Turkey's policies toward Europe through shaping the Turkish elite and public conceptions of identity. They also show how Constructivism helps explain Turkey's contestation of the EU's development policy in sub-Saharan Africa and how Turkey has presented itself as a "virtuous actor" in the region as opposed to "neocolonial Europe."

Scholars using different theoretical frameworks increasingly include ideas, state identity, and socialization and learning in their discussion about the future of Turkey's grand strategy. For example, Mustafa Aydın (2020, p. 219) contends that "a broader perspective could provide the outlines of a general framework (i.e. grand strategy as pattern of behavior), conditioned by its geography and history, the *ideational desires* of its ruling elites and the limitations of the international system" [emphasis added]. Aydın suggests that while the question of where Turkey belongs will continue to be debated, "with alternative anchorages on the West, Eurasia and the Middle East," Turkey's grand strategy will likely be based on "country's hard-learned experiences and a tradition that has created a set of relatively inflexible principles" (ibid.).

In addition to the grand theories of IR—Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, and their variants—scholars also use critical approaches and examine the role of domestic political influences on foreign policy by challenging the statist mainstream theories of IR and focusing on individual and societal levels of analysis. For example, Feminist international relations theory, which criticizes gender roles inherent in major IR theories (Sylvester, 2001), analyzes the structural and hierarchical principles that exist within different international political systems, examines patriarchy as a historically ingrained part of state identities and, therefore, foreign policy behavior, and applies a gender perspective to the study of war, peace, security, trade, and foreign policy. Mouffe (2005) argues that despite some progress in pro-gender norms at the global level and in some countries, there is still resistance to the diffusion of these norms and even a "re-masculinization" of foreign policy due to the rise of illiberal democracies and right-wing populism, in which white heterosexual men hold onto their entitlements (Enloe, 2017).

Feminism has been an understudied approach in analyzing Turkey's foreign policy. In those limited works forging a link between feminism and Turkish foreign policy analysis, hegemonic masculinity and personal relations between leaders (e.g., Russian President Putin and Turkish President Erdoğan) have been emphasized as factors affecting Turkey's foreign policy (Akça, 2022). Ali Bilgiç's 2015 and 2016 works are considered the first real attempt to examine Turkish politics through a gendered lens. In his work, Bilgiç argues that Turkey's relations with the West have been framed in terms of meeting the Western "standards," which in the long term have caused Turkey to suffer from "subordinated masculinity" (Bilgiç, 2015, p. 3). Following this argument, Ataç's (2021) research uses the conceptual framework of "hypermasculine hegemonic masculinity" to analyze Turkey's S-400 crisis involving NATO, the US, and Russia. According to her, this case demonstrated that Turkey's search for hegemonic masculinity remains an unattainable claim in its foreign policy, especially in terms of its involvement in Russian weapons. A different line of research connecting feminism and Turkey's foreign policy focuses on an institutional framework for Turkey by outlining the role of women in diplomacy and foreign policy through NATO's "Women, Peace, and Security Agenda" (Alemdar, 2019; Alemdar & Yinanc, 2021). For example, according to Alemdar (2019, p. 56), United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. "Soldiers who have seen wars argue that no one can desire peace more than them. … It is vital for Turkey, who has gone

through many wars, protracted conflicts, and sits within the most conflict-prone region in the world, to have a National Action Plan that empowers women, incorporates women's experiences, and increases women's well-being. … Writing and implementing a NAP would not only benefit women living in Turkey but also increase Turkey's normative power in its region."

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the historical accounts and current trends in Turkey's foreign policy cannot be evaluated with the premises of one theoretical approach. Countries differ in size, socioeconomic development, and political regime (e.g., Doyle, 1997; Rosenau, 1971; Russett, 1993a, 1993b). They also differ in their political institutionalization (e.g., Hagan, 1987, 1993), societal structures, military and economic capabilities (e.g., Brecher, 1972; Dassell, 1998), and strategic cultures (e.g., Kupchan, 1994). In addition, public opinion (e.g., Risse-Kappen, 1991), national role conceptions (e.g., Brummer & Thies, 2015; Cantir & Kaarbo, 2016; Holsti, 1970), decision-making rules (e.g., Hermann, 2001), and belief systems and personality traits of political leaders (e.g., Leites, 1951, George, 1969; Walker et al., 1998; Schafer & Walker, 2006) vary from one state to another. These differences directly affect both foreign policymaking process and foreign policy decisions. Within this context, a focused attention on different influences and historically contextualizing the continuities and changes contribute greatly to the study of Turkey's foreign policy over the past 100 years. Turkey's foreign policy has been shaped by a complex interplay between systemic and domestic factors.

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CHAPTER 2

Turkey's Transatlantic Connections: The United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Evren Çelik-Wiltse

This chapter tackles the foreign policy priorities of Turkey vis-à-vis the Transatlantic Alliance from its formation to the present from a systemic and institutional perspective. It unpacks the complex relations Turkey has with the hegemonic advocate of the transatlantic order, namely the United States of America (the US). Often categorized as a middle or emerging power, Turkey is among the earliest members of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Along with neighboring Greece, Turkey joined the alliance in its first wave of expansion in 1952. Fortifying its intentions to be part of the Western bloc, Turkey also joined the Council of Europe in 1950, became a candidate for membership in the European Union (EU) in 1999, and more recently became a member of G20, hosting the G20 Summit in Antalya in 2015. Despite these long-established

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_2

institutional connections with the Transatlantic liberal international order (Ikenberry, 2018), the trajectory of Turkey's Western orientation has come under scrutiny in recent years.

On the Centennial of the Republic and the seventieth anniversary of the country's NATO membership, Turkey's relations with NATO and the US can be broadly classified into issues of convergence and issues of divergence. Among the key questions this chapter addresses are the following: Under what conditions do Turkish-NATO/US interests converge and Turkish foreign policy makers decide on policies that are in congruence with the "old, established NATO ally" position? What are the domestic and international conditions that encourage Turkey to operate as a member of the rule-bound, norm-adhering member of the Transatlantic bloc? Conversely, what are the conditions that trigger divergence in Turkish-NATO/US interests in foreign policy? Under what conditions does Turkey deviate from constraints of the alliance? What are the institutional and structural conditions that trigger a "go-it-alone" attitude or "lone wolf syndrome" (Güvenç & Özel, 2012, p. 535) in Turkish foreign policy?

Turkey's Transatlantic relations were once considered to have been relatively well-established and strongly institutionalized (Yılmaz, 2012). However, a closer look at the seven-decade long alliance shows numerous diplomatic and political crises (Güvenç & Özel, 2012; Park, 2015; Nordlinger, 2019), starting with the Cyprus crisis in the 1970s after which Turkey faced multiple periods of sanctions imposed by the US (PBS, 2017). At times, Turkey engaged in soft-balancing to "delay, frustrate and undermine" the policy preferences of NATO and the US (Dursun-Özkanca, 2017). *Soft-balancing* can be a particularly helpful concept to analyze recent policy positions of the Turkish administration that test the limits of the alliance. Turkey's resistance to the expansion of NATO includes Sweden and Finland, its rapprochement with Russia, the purchase of the S-400 surface-to-air missile systems, and the military interventions both in Iraq and in Syria despite the US denunciations can all be captured under the concept of soft-balancing.

Looking at Changing US Priorities in Transatlantic Relations Through the Lens of Presidential Doctrines

Foreign policy doctrines of the US presidents not only shed light on the evolution of American grand strategy but also help us trace the theoretical foundation of the Transatlantic relations between Turkey and the US/NATO. These doctrines provide us with theoretically bolstered flexibility that can account for fluctuations over time. "By definition, a diplomatic doctrine is a statement of general principles" (Crabb, 1982, p. 11). These principles are expected to have a certain internal cohesion that demarcates the endorsing actors' worldviews. While some scholars (e.g., Crabb, 1982) criticize most US foreign policy doctrines for being overly vague or ambitious, even they admit that doctrines provide significant insights into each US president's foreign policy goals and priorities.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the US foreign policy doctrine had shifted significantly from the humble, isolationist, and non-interventionist position of the third US president Thomas Jefferson, who spoke of "Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none." Jefferson was referring specifically to the virtues of avoiding "entangling alliances" with Europe. Similarly, the Monroe Doctrine (1823) identified the European powers as the greatest threat to American interests. However, the end of the nineteenth century saw a major change in the global power distribution in favor of the US when Spain and Portugal lost their colonial possessions in Latin America. Other great European powers were having a major competition in colonies, especially in Africa. Empires with diverse ethnicities and religions, such as the Habsburgs, Russians, and Ottomans, were on the verge of collapse. As these powers were exiting the global stage, the US was rising as the new hegemon in world politics (Joffe, 2002).

President Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909), a Republican, was a strong advocate of US expansionism. In his annual address to the Congress in 1904, Roosevelt articulated a globally assertive and interventionist foreign policy and promised that the US military presence would be felt across the world. Commonly referred to as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, his speech made it explicit that the US wanted to serve as an "international police power" (The US Department of State). While Monroe Doctrine had a relatively defensive nature, the Roosevelt Corollary made it more activist "perhaps even imperialistic" (Crabb, 1982, p. 34).

President Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, also envisioned an assertive US and advocated for greater US engagement in the world. However, Wilson's approach to ensuring US's global engagement was different. Wilson provided the lexicon of international relations with numerous famous concepts, including "self-determination," "making the world safe for democracy," and "a just and lasting peace." As an idealist, Wilson's moral values influenced his foreign policy agenda; Wilson valued peace, prosperity, and democracy in the world (O'Toole, 2018), condemned military aggression and colonialism, and called for disarmament of all nations paving the way to a collective security system. Moreover, Wilson promoted international law and multilateral institutions to facilitate these goals. Among his top priorities was establishing a League of Nations, which could then serve as a permanent forum to conduct open diplomacy among all independent nations (O'Toole, 2018; Wilson Center, 2022).

Wilson's diplomatic propositions were rebuffed both at home and abroad. The Europeans disliked the American president coming and dictating the terms of peace in the aftermath of WWI. Among other things, the Twelfth Point of Wilson's Fourteen Points called for restoring the sovereignty of Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire, giving autonomy to other nations living under the Ottomans, and establishing free passage through the Dardanelles Strait. Such degree of anti-colonialism was not yet fashionable in Europe. The Europeans would rather partition the weakened Ottoman Empire and compete with each over territorial expansion. At home, the US Congress and the American public questioned the blatant idealism and Atlanticism of the president. Before Wilson, American presidents did not spend long periods of their time abroad. Public sentiment was still more isolationist and considerably skeptical of the European powers. There was little appetite for the type of liberal interventionist foreign policy that President Wilson favored. Whereas President Wilson believed that his biggest achievement was convincing the world's leaders to create the League of Nations as part of the settlement of WWI, he had a harder time convincing his fellow citizens (Wilson Center, 2022). In a vote of 49–35, the Republican-dominated Senate rejected the US membership to the League of Nations (US Department of State, Office of the Historian).

Wilson was not dissuaded by the power of isolationism at home. He wanted to develop a "viable program for peace in the Middle East," and to achieve this he sent various commissioners to the region in 1919. His Commission on Mandates in Turkey had experts headed by the President

of Oberlin College, Henry C. King, and a Chicago businessman, Charles R. Crane. Among other things, the King-Crane Commission recommended a unified American mandate for the areas that largely corresponded to Anatolia (Asia Minor), suggested an independent Syria that also included Lebanon, warned about substantial resistance to the "extreme Zionist program," and opposed giving any territory to Greeks in Izmir. But the report was suppressed, and an official US mandate was established only for Armenia, which ended shortly after Armenia became a Soviet republic. By 1920, isolationism was steering the US further away from Europe. The US, taking no formal part in the negotiation of the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, attended the Lausanne Conference only as an "observant" and their delegation was "instructed to sign nothing and seal nothing" (Howard, 1976, pp. 299–300). Despite the American attempts to distinguish itself from European colonial interests, and never operationalizing the mandate mechanism in Turkey, just the contemplation of such an option cast a long shadow on US-Turkish relations.

Things changed rapidly following the end of WWII. The Truman Doctrine (1947), which advocated strong engagement with Western Europe against the Soviet threat, helped establish the seventy-five years-old transatlantic relations. Neoliberal institutionalism that guided the American thinking in post-WWII became dependent on multilateral institutions to facilitate global economic collaboration and collective security (Ikenberry, 2002; Ruggie, 1982).

Forging the Transatlantic Alliance and Turkey's Rapprochement with the United States

Reforms of the late Ottoman era and the modernization of early Turkish Republic have long been associated with closer ties with the West (Zürcher, 2004). Despite periods of tension and mistrust, largely due to the Ottoman Empire's history with the European powers and the Treaty of Sèvres, which was premised on the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire among Western powers (Kirişci, 1999), the desire to have a modern republic led the founders and subsequent foreign policy elites of the Republic of Turkey toward establishing closer connections with Western institutional structures (Mango, 2000).

The initial rapprochement between Turkey and the West was stalled for several reasons. First, the Great Depression that led to a global economic

collapse caused most nations to turn inward, hampering the trade in agricultural goods, which were Turkey's only export items at the time. Second, as Balta and Özdal argue in their chapter in this volume, Turkey signed a friendship agreement with the Soviet Union and forged a working relationship without any fear or threat of invasion (Kalaycıoğlu, 2005, p. 68). Third, the cost of extended wars and lack of sufficient capital in private hands compelled Turkey to follow a mercantilist path and state-led development policies during the 1930s (Pamuk, 2010). Statism, or *Etatism*, became the dominant development paradigm in Turkey, which led to the nationalization of utilities and transportation infrastructure, state-owned monopolies in various sectors, and state-led attempts of industrialization (Barlas, 2016).

The rise of a bipolar system after WWII presented important challenges and constraints for the foreign policy makers of the new Republic. Turkey's leaders became increasingly concerned when the Soviet Union showed support for the idea of an independent Kurdish republic in Iran, granted asylum to leaders of Iraqi Kurds, and supported the Syrian Kurds from the immediate aftermath of WWII until the 1970s (Mango, 2000, p. 13). In response to the Soviet Union's expansionist threats, and in line with the Western-oriented Kemalist ideology that dominated the politics of the new Republic, Turkey sought closer ties with the United States and Western Europe. The first formal alliance bond between Turkey and the US was forged when "the US battleship *[USS] Missouri* sailed into Istanbul's harbor in response to Stalin's threats in 1946" (Kirişci, 2000, p. 52). According to Yılmaz (2012, p. 483), the "Turkish reaction to the arrival of *[USS]Missouri* on 5 April 1946 was euphoric," as the battleship was not only repatriating the remains of Münir Ertegün, Turkey's Ambassador to Washington. D.C., but also sending a signal that the US had a "tougher stance towards Soviet expansionism."

Turkey's rapprochement with the West took place simultaneously with the important systemic and structural changes at the global level. Soon after WWII, the heydays of US-Soviet cooperation came to an end. Having defeated the Nazi Germany and fascist political regimes in Europe together, the two superpowers endorsed different economic models and vastly different political and ideological principles. This new bipolar international system would last until 1989. In his "Long Telegram" sent from Moscow to Washington D.C. on February 22, 1946, George Kennan (1946) portrayed a rather harsh view of the Soviet regime. He underlined the "capitalist encirclement" strategy of the Soviets as a direct threat

against the peaceful coexistence of both regimes. While describing the Soviet model as "a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue," he drew attention to "tired and frightened" nations who might be tempted to fall under the Soviet sphere of influence, should the US not engage with them in a "positive and constructive" fashion. Kennan listed a set of policy propositions to contain the Soviet power (Kennan, 1946).

The "Long Telegram" did not fall on deaf ears. Despite a significant budget crunch in 1947, US President Harry S. Truman requested $400 million from the US Congress as assistance to Turkey and Greece. Under the Truman Doctrine, Greece and Turkey were categorized as "free countries" facing Soviet threat, for which the United States was eager to extend a helping hand (Kalaycıoğlu, 2005, p. 68). The following year, Turkey began receiving US aid.

While the international dimension dominated Turkey's NATO membership process, there were also critical domestic dynamics at play in Turkey at the time. First, Turkey was in the process of democratizing its political system, and Turkey's ruling Republican People's Party (CHP), was in the process of shifting the single-party regime to a multi-party system. The CHP government liberalized the political system in the 1940s allowing the formation of opposition parties. The first multi-party elections, which resulted in the victory of the CHP, were held in 1946. However, the rule of "open-voting, secret counting" led to allegations of irregularities and questions about the fairness of the process, leading many to refer to the 1946 election as a "fraudulent election." The Democrat Party (DP), the main opposition party, won the first free and fair elections by a landslide in the general elections held in 1950. In a letter he wrote to his son, Erdal İnönü, who served as deputy Prime Minister in the two coalition governments in the 1990s, President İsmet İnönü stated that the 1950 elections "verifie[d] how serious and sincere [Turkey's ruling political elite] were in [their] enterprise to establish a new lifestyle [read: a democratic system] in this country. It has been an honor for our country and for us all" (excerpted from İsmet İnönü's letter in Dündar, 2011).

The ruling political elites at the time had the view that a peaceful transfer of power was a necessary step in the progression of the modern Republic. There was an aspiration to emulate the open and competitive political regimes of Western Europe rather than continuing with the single-party regime, which became synonymous with the politics of the interwar Europe and Soviet satellite nations. Party manifestos and parliamentary debates of the time also show that in addition to their interest in

consolidating Turkey's Western identity, Turkey's leaders became increasingly intent on establishing a "liminal identity" for the country as a mediator and disseminator of the Western values to the East (Yanık, 2012). The second domestic factor that pushed Turkey to become a staunch Western ally after WWII was strong pro-Americanism of the DP. A businessman and wealthy landowner himself, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes openly voiced his intention of turning Turkey into "little America" by boosting the agricultural sector and "creating a millionaire in each neighborhood" (i.e., *her mahalleye bir milyarder*!). Once in power, Menderes channeled the money Turkey was receiving through the Marshall Plan to the agricultural sector that had loyally supported him in the 1954 and 1957 elections. Tractors, farm equipment, pesticides, and herbicides were imported from the US, and new roads were built in the name of modernizing the Turkish agriculture (Kalaycıoğlu, 2005, pp. 76–81). Eager to consolidate Turkey's ties with the US, the Menderes government formally applied for NATO membership in 1950. Turkey finally joined NATO in 1952, after sending troops abroad for the first time in the history of the Republic to fight in the Korean War. The country's strategic location also became important in the US's containment policy against the Soviet Union (Hale, 2013). Turkey found itself in the frontlines of superpower confrontation, even when it was seemingly away from the hot conflict zones. For example, in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the two superpowers had almost a direct military confrontation over missile deployments in Cuba, the peaceful resolution was possible only after President Kennedy promised to withdraw the Jupiter Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles from Turkey (Criss, 1997).

The end of Cold War did not automatically result in a divergence of interests in Turkey-US relations (Aydın, 2022). During the 1990s, Turkey found greater room to maneuver in the region and this was backed by the Transatlantic alliance, particularly by the US. Turkey became active in the Caucasus, Balkans, and the Middle East, largely because the Soviet sphere of influence had receded, and the EU was not yet as engaged with the Balkans. However, the US foreign policy preferences changed drastically in the post-9/11 era. Since then, US foreign policy makers chose direct engagement in all these regions, bypassing Turkey's intermediary role (Aydın, 2022). For example, when Russia invaded Georgia to carve out small, pro-Russian autonomous regions in 2008, the US pushed for direct naval access to the Black Sea. Turkey could not accept the request as it would violate the terms of the Montreux Convention that excluded vessels

of war belonging to non-Black Sea powers. While the refusal was not welcomed by Washington (Erhan & Sıvış, 2017, p. 103), Turkish policy makers considered it a bona fide implementation of international treaty obligations. NATO membership has been the cornerstone of Turkey's defense and security policy for the past seven decades as Turkey and the US consolidated their formal alliance with many ups and downs along the way. It is within this context that the following sections analyze Turkey-US/NATO relations in two main categories: points of convergence and points of divergence.

Points of Convergence in the Alliance: Turkey's Membership to Join the European Union

While NATO stands as a collective security alliance and the famous Article 5 states that an armed attack against one is an attack against all, the scope of the treaty is more comprehensive in that there are parts of the agreement that focus on the importance of political and economic collaboration within the alliance. More specifically, Article 2 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty notes that NATO allies will "promot[e] conditions of stability and well-being … seek to eliminate conflict in the international economic policies and will *encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them* [emphasis added]" (NATO official website).

Turkey's engagement with the Western alliance is not exclusively motivated by geopolitical and security concerns. Yılmaz (2001) argues that once the geopolitical significance of Turkey was established among the Western decision makers, Turkey's political elites were eager to capitalize on this status. At the same time, the Western bloc, particularly the US considered Turkey as a test case to check the viability of capitalism and democracy (Yılmaz, 2001), showing the convergence of American and Turkish interest in Turkey's European Economic Community (EEC, precursor to the European Community—EC) and the EU membership.

Although the 1947 Marshall Plan provided much-needed funds to Turkey, it was insufficient for sustainable and long-term prosperity. The missing economic link to the Western alliance came when Turkey signed the Association Agreement (commonly known as the Ankara Agreement) with the EEC in 1963. According to Öniş (1995), Turkey's NATO membership, its progressively increasing ties with the US, and membership attempts to the EEC were all complementary developments. The 1963 Ankara Agreement was a "decisive step" for Turkey, as Turkey "gained the

associate-member status" (Öniş, 1995, p. 53). Although the period from the 1960s till the 1990s was marked by volatility in Turkey-EU relations, it still resulted in the singing of a customs union agreement in 1995.

Turkey's overall level of economic development and degree of industrialization were far behind Western Europe. Turkey systematically underperformed in inflation and unemployment, compared even to the least-advanced members of the EU (Öniş, 1995, pp. 53–54). When the EC had its second major wave of expansion by including Greece, Portugal, and Spain in the early 1980s, Turkey still had much lower living standards than those new members. How much economic pressure this large but underperforming new member would pose to the Union's budgetary transfers and labor markets became a serious concern in European decision-making circles. Despite these problems, the US support for Turkey's EC/EU membership remained a constant.[1] During a NATO Summit in Istanbul in 2004, President George W. Bush explicitly stated that "the US supports Turkey's accession to the EU, which is a secular country with a mainly Muslim population. … Including Turkey in the EU would prove that Europe is not the exclusive club of a single religion, and it would expose the 'clash of civilizations' as a passing myth of history" (Erhan & Sıvış, 2017, pp. 101–102). Ironically, such enthusiastic supports might have hampered Turkey's EU prospects. While some EU members suspected Turkey of being a "Trojan horse" member, potentially doing the bidding of the US, others pointed at Turkey's selective use of its veto rights in NATO to pressure the organization from inside as a bellwether of its potentially disruptive behavior within EU (Blockmans, 2010).

Public opinion in Turkey consistently shows at least half of the population still favoring full membership to the EU. A survey conducted by *Global Academy* since 2012 found that approval for the membership hovers around 50% in most years, while the lowest being 45% in 2016 and the highest in 2014, with over 71% approving Turkey's membership to the EU (Aydın et al., 2022, p. 89). In the end, despite significant hostility toward the US in recent public opinion surveys, majority of the Turkish electorate remains pro-Western and pro-NATO. This could be interpreted

[1] In an *Independent Task Force Report* chaired by prominent US officials, including former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, praised the role of the EU as an anchor for Turkey's domestic democratic reforms. Even though they classified Turkey as an unconsolidated democracy as of 2012, they were still hopeful that the EU and the US could jointly serve as viable forces for democratic reform (A New Partnership, 2012, p. 24).

as the longevity of the alliance structure forged under Truman Doctrine and continued for decades thereafter.

Points of Convergence in the Alliance: Economic Relations and Turkey's Transition to a Liberal Economy

Turkey's engagement with the US and later NATO started with a heavy military component, going back to the Land and Lease Agreement during WWI but eventually gained an economic dimension as well. As a member of the Western alliance, Turkey was also part of the Bretton Woods system. While the system encouraged international trade, it still allowed ample "room for national economies to follow their own policies" (Arat & Pamuk, 2019, p. 135). This meant a fair amount of state interventionism in the form of import-substitution-industrialization (ISI) and a generous welfare state combined with strong unions in Turkey. However, the ISI policies faced serious bottlenecks and deficits, especially during the OPEC-induced crisis of the 1970s, which paved the way for the economic neoliberal wave in Turkey that became more pronounced immediately after the 1980 coup.

The economic and political instability in the country, as well as the political liberalization efforts, since the early 1960s came to a temporary halt with the 1980 military coup. Şenses (2003) argues that the pre-1980 turmoil was triggered by balance of payment troubles, which were the result of fluctuations in global commodity prices and the inherent dependence of ISI model to imports of capital and intermediary goods. Turkish economy was dependent on imports, yet it could not generate sufficient hard currency from its limited portfolio of exports. As a result, one of the coup's most visible effects was on the economy. High inflation, large-scale unemployment, and a large foreign trade deficit forced Turkey to seek help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which led to the liberalization process in full force. Turkey initiated a full spectrum of economic reforms. Turgut Özal, who was appointed as state minister and deputy prime minister in charge of economic affairs until July 1982, and who later served as prime minister and president, led the economic liberalization efforts. Both the EU membership process and the IMF became key actors that significantly shaped Turkish economy (Keyman & Öniş, 2007, p. 106). However, despite the drastic expansion of the economy during this period, Turkey's GDP remained well below those of the EU members.

Similar to Menderes, who wanted to create a "mini-America" in Turkey, Özal aspired to replicate the American dream. Having received the blessings of the military-bureaucratic establishment during the 1983 national elections, he led the transition to an open market economy under the auspices of the IMF and the World Bank. The outgoing military regime helped him by banning almost all the established political party leaders. The role of the labor unions was also curbed. Combination of two years of direct military rule, political repression, and a new Constitution that was more restrictive on collective rights than the 1961 Constitution cleared up the political arena for the implementation of neoliberal reforms. During Özal's first term, the labor movement had a drastically different outlook; the number of unions declined from over 700 to less than 100, and unions with nationalist and religious values gained greater prominence (Kuş & Özel, 2010).

The neoliberal transformation came with a massive wave of privatization, which included state-owned monopolies, mines, factories, agricultural processing facilities, ports, utilities, and infrastructure including highways and bridges. Convertibility of Turkish lira, financial deregulation, and lifting of the barriers against capital mobility brought in long sought-after international investment to the country. These pro-liberal market reforms perfectly coincided with Reaganomics in the US. With Prime Minister Özal at the helm (Acar, 2002; Öniş, 2004), Turkish economy went through a major transformation, which continued even as power was passed on to subsequent governments with different ideological colors. In line with the staunch anti-communism of the Reagan doctrine, Turkish economy took a decidedly pro-market stance, reducing the role of the state in economy by leaps and bounds. The crowning achievement of the liberalization process came when Turkey signed a Customs Union Agreement with the EU in 1995. As the import-export statistics illustrate,[2] however, while the EU and the US became important trade partners of Turkey, Turkey did not and still does not count among the top trade partners of the US or the members of the EU.

The US-supported and EU-aided economic liberalization did not prevent additional economic crises in Turkey. Deregulation of the capital markets made Turkey prone to short-term capital flights, which haunted almost all emerging economies soon after they opened their economies to

[2] For detailed statistics, see: *Atlas of Economic Complexity, the Growth Lab of Harvard University* at https://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/.

global capital. In addition, the regional instability that emerged after the Gulf War in 1990–1991 and Turkey's heavy military spending in the 1990s worsened the budget. Finally, the earthquake on August 17, 1999, that hit the most industrialized and economically advanced parts of the nation crippled the economy and triggered a major crisis in February 2001 that even the 1999 IMF stabilization program could not prevent (Şenses, 2003, p. 92).

Similar to the role it played in earlier periods, the US once again emerged as the "savior" of Turkey's economy following the 2001 crisis. Kemal Derviş, an economist at the World Bank for more than two decades, was transplanted to the coalition government as Minister of State for Economic Affairs in March 2001. *The Economist* (2001, 2002) gave him ringing endorsements with articles titled: "New man, new hope?," "A man for all Turks," and "The Man Turks trust: Kemal Derviş." Even though political aspirations of Derviş did not last long, the economic restructuring package he designed and implemented pushed the country out of the slump. Most importantly, Derviş helped secure $16 billion in IMF economic recovery funds, which stabilized Turkish lira, brought the inflation down to single digits, and generated relatively steady economic growth. His structural reforms aimed to isolate economic bureaucracy from partisan meddling.

In sum, the US provided support to Turkey during the neoliberalization process that steered the country toward the global markets. From Ronald Reagan to Bill Clinton to George W. Bush, Turkish decision makers found strong support in Washington as long as they followed the prescriptions of Reaganomics and the IMF. A 2012 *Independent Task Force Report* praised the "New Turkey" for the great economic progress it achieved. Experts penning the report argued that "Turkey is more democratic, prosperous, and politically influential than it was fifteen, ten, or even five years ago" (Albright & Hadley, 2012, p. 3).[3]

[3] A more critical analysis of economic rapprochement between Turkey, the EU, and the US might give more mixed results. Scholars criticize the earliest US aid to Turkey under Marshall Plan for hampering Turkey's development prospects. Mehmet Ali Aybar and other left-leaning intellectuals argue that prioritizing agriculture at the expense of industry undermined the developmentalist aspirations of the republic (Yılmaz, 2012, p. 488). On more recent reforms, the balance sheet is also mixed. In his comparison of the neoliberal era with the ISI period, Şenses (2015) illustrates that the neoliberal era could not surpass the state-led era in terms of GDP growth and if anything, it worsened the savings, unemployment, and income distribution. While Turkey became a steadfast disciple of the neoliberal economic doctrine championed by President Ronald Reagan, the jury is still out on how much these policies served the nation.

Points of Convergence in the Alliance: Turkey's Commitment to Multilateral NATO Operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans

The end of the Cold War created a sense of obsolescence and expectations of relative decline of the North Atlantic Alliance, particularly among the realist scholars (Layne, 1993; Waltz, 1993). From the Turkish foreign policy makers' perspective, the end of US-Soviet confrontation rapidly depreciated "the country's real estate value as a western outpost" (Güvenç & Özel, 2012, p. 536). These seismic tremors at the international system level coincided with the EU's rejection of Turkey's membership bid. Combined, these developments fueled a sense of isolation and abandonment in Turkey by both pillars of the North Atlantic Alliance. However, subsequent developments validated Turkey's geopolitical significance within NATO.

Eisenhower Doctrine had initiated the expansion of US foreign policy into the Middle East. It not only provided military aid to the Middle Eastern countries, but also authorized the deployment of US military in the region (Crabb, 1982, pp. 153–154). Turkey straddled between the West and the Middle East, while maintaining a privileged status as a member of NATO. The first incident that tested the strength of the post-Cold War Alliance came when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. Iraq's blatant violation of sovereignty of a smaller nation received almost immediate response from the international community. Multiple United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions condemned the invasion and imposed sanctions upon Iraq as the aggressor. Within NATO, the opinions were split. While leaders like Britain's Margaret Thatcher and Turkey's Turgut Özal were enthusiastic supporters of a US-led military intervention, others were less eager to use military power in the absence of a direct threat against a NATO member. At the time, Turgut Özal could not convince the Turkish parliament to commit troops to Iraq; however, Turkey still supported the mission. The oil pipeline from Kirkuk to Ceyhan was shut down right after the UN imposed sanctions on Iraq, and NATO bases in Turkey, particularly İncirlik, proved to be invaluable throughout the war. The result of Turkey's active pro-US policy in the war reinforced its geopolitical significance, which helped tighten up its strategic partnership with the US. On the flip side, Turkey's European allies began to see Turkey's proximity to the Middle East more as a liability than as an asset (Güvenç & Özel, 2012, p. 538).

Turkey's contributions to NATO operations continued throughout the 1990s. Turkish troops participated in NATO-led campaigns to stop the bloodshed in the Balkans. After the terrorist attacks on US soil on September 11, 2001, Turkey supported the US-led military operations in Afghanistan. Multiple UN Security Council resolutions provided international legitimacy to the boots on the ground in both missions (Davutoğlu, 2012, p. 16). In the case of Afghanistan, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty was used and compelled all member states to action. The military interventions in the Balkans and Afghanistan (and most recently in Libya) satisfied the criteria outlined in the Treaty. Consequently, in all three cases Turkey actively supported the US and the North Atlantic alliance and opened its bases and committed troops.

An important factor that explains Turkey's collaboration in all three cases was the institutionalized NATO alliance and role the UN played in sanctioning the NATO-led actions in the Middle East. In 1991 and 2001, institutional mechanisms such as the UN Security Council and NATO rules were fully utilized, and decisions were made within a collective security framework.

Points of Divergence in the Alliance: The Opium Controversy

Probably the earliest discord between Turkey and the US emerged over the cultivation of opium in Turkey. At the turn of the twentieth century, the US was leading the efforts to build an international regime to curb the production and distribution of opium and other controlled substances. However, the Ottoman Empire and several producer nations such as Bolivia, Peru, and Serbia refused to partake in the International Opium Convention of 1912. As more Western powers joined the Convention, the young Republic of Turkey felt pressure to comply. However, by the time it became a part of the international treaty regime, modern Turkey had transformed itself into a legitimate producer of raw opium for Western pharmaceutical companies (Robins, 2016, pp. 8–11).

The issue flared up again with the end of the Vietnam War and the rise of counter-culture that increased Western demand for drugs. Turkish opium had a reputation for its high quality, and it was easily deviated to the illicit US markets via France. According to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, Turkey "was at the heart of a tangled web of smuggling routes emanating across the Mediterranean and North Atlantic" (Gingeras, 2017, p. 83). The notorious "French connection" referred to the labs in

Marseilles that processed Turkish opium and shipped it across the Atlantic. When President Nixon launched his "war on drugs" initiative, Turkey, along with Mexico, was among the directly targeted nations. The "tough on drugs" political rhetoric at home translated into heavy-handed US foreign policy abroad. Turkish sources also draw attention to the increasing role of ethnic lobbies, particularly Greek and Armenian organizations, active in the US that "unfairly highlighted Turkish opium as a threat" for the US (Erhan & Sıvış, 2017, p. 95).

For years, American authorities pressured Turkey for a complete ban on opium production. However, Turkish prime ministers, foreign ministers, and diplomatic corps were reluctant to impose such a ban, especially without due compensation to the farmers. Moreover, prohibition of opium cultivation was construed as infringement of national sovereignty. When President Nixon elevated the drug use as a "national security issue" and created an Ad Hoc Cabinet Committee on Narcotics under the chairmanship of his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, complete ban on cultivation came back on the US agenda. Kissinger thought Washington had greater leverage over Turkey, as Turkey was both a NATO member and highly dependent on US aid and financial incentives. The attempts to persuade Turkish governments on prohibition proved futile until the Nixon administration seized the opportunity following the 1971 military memorandum and secured a complete opium ban from the interim Prime Minister Nihat Erim. That year, the US and Turkey signed an agreement for full eradication effective in 1972 in exchange for approximately $35 million US aid for the Turkish opium farmers (Gingeras, 2017). However, the ban did not last long, because when power switched back to the civilian rule, Prime Minister Ecevit argued that "no self-respecting government would ever make such an agreement" (Gingeras, 2017, p. 201) and the ban was abrogated to prevent hardship on the farmers and help with a severe shortage of medical-grade morphine. Washington also softened its stance after observing the backlash against its hardliner position. Finally, Turkey resumed cultivation, albeit in limited number of provinces and with government licensing and oversight (Gingeras, 2017, pp. 187–202).

President Nixon's heavy-handed approach to Turkey about the opium issue can be traced back to what Cecil Crabb (1982) calls the "elusive" Nixon Doctrine. Although the US initiated its withdrawal from Southeast Asia after the sobering lessons of the Vietnam War, the Nixon administration continued to expect to easily pressure a NATO ally to complete

prohibition (Crabb, 1982, pp. 279–284). However, the pressure backfired as Turkish governments interpreted the ban as infringement of Turkey's sovereignty.

Points of Divergence in the Alliance: *Cyprus*

Cyprus constitutes another topic of significant discord between Turkey and its Transatlantic partners. Much ink has been spilled over this issue (Aydın & Ifantis, 2004; Harris, 2004; Erhan, 2010, and Balamir-Coşkun in this volume). The first controversy flared up when the Greek Cypriots attempted to declare independence while infringing on the rights of the Turkish Cypriots, and Turkey wanted to exercise its power as a guarantor state. American President Lyndon B. Johnson wrote to Greek Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou to express an even-handed stance by stating that the US "has no position on terms of any final settlement" and highlight the "common need for Greece, Turkey, the US and the UK to stick together." The tone of his letter to Prime Minister İnönü, which included threats of sanctions, soured Turkey-US relations and the Turkish public opinion vis-à-vis the US (Bölükbaşı, 1993). Johnson's letter even alienated the most enthusiastic advocate of Turkey-US/NATO alliance, namely the Turkish military (Harris, 2004, p. 71).

Tensions over Cyprus worsened soon after a military coup took place in Cyprus in 1974, which coincided with the growing influence of the Greek lobby in US Congress. Despite the arms embargo threats from the US, Turkish military under Prime Minister Ecevit's watch initiated a military intervention on the island to protect Turkish Cypriots, marking the permanent division of the island between Turkish and Greek parts. This episode was significant, as it illustrated different institutional components of foreign policy decision-making in the US. Whereas President Ford, the State Department, and Pentagon were against sanctioning Turkey, US Congress was fully on board to impose an arms embargo. The US embargo imposed on Turkey following Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus was lifted by 1978, but it still had adverse consequences. The embargo prevented the modernization and upkeep of the Turkish military and weakened NATO's southern flank for a little over three years (Erhan, 2010). More importantly, it soured the public opinion toward the US and NATO and generated a sense of betrayal. Güvenç and Özel (2012, p. 545) also mention sentiments of deep mistrust in the published memoirs of Turkish soldiers due to the US embargo. They highlight Turkish-Greek

dispute as one of the most important issues testing the robustness of the transatlantic alliance. Problems over Cyprus also marked the beginning of a trend in the US where we observe greater divisions within and among the branches of the US government that are actively involved in Turkey-US relations, including Congress. Cyprus controversy marked the period wherein Congress began weighing in to impose sanctions on Turkey, or voting on resolutions that strained bilateral relations, including the recognition of the Armenian claims of genocide.

Points of Divergence in the Alliance: Turkey's Relations with Its Minorities

Military and security issues dominated the NATO agenda since its inception. Contrary to the EU's Copenhagen Criteria that define whether a country is eligible for full membership based on its level of democratic governance and respect for human rights among other qualifications, NATO did not have an overtly democratizing mission. As such, the Alliance continued relatively unscratched even when Turkey was experiencing serious democratic shocks. However, after the third military intervention in politics in the country in 1980, Turkey was included in the periodic *Country Human Rights Reports* prepared by the US State Department. The 1980s and particularly the 1990s were also marred with violent military response to terror attacks by Kurdish separatists. The post-coup restrictions on basic democratic rights and liberties continued unabated until the late 1990s. Turkish authorities categorically rejected the Kurdish population's being referred to as a "minority" in US State Department's human rights reports (Uzgel, 2010, pp. 557–558). The scars of international meddling during WWI and the US efforts to put pressure on Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s remained raw among the Turkish diplomatic corps (Kirişçi, 1999). The Kurdish issue became even more important for Turkey-US relations in the 1990s. The Gulf War and US military engagement in Iraq caused an exodus of Kurds from Iraq to Turkey. Even Turgut Özal, Turkey's pro-American prime minister at the time could not secure the military's support for the deployment of troops during the Gulf War. Subsequently, the US imposed a no-fly zone over Northern Iraq, which the Turkish authorities considered tantamount to a de facto Kurdish state at its southern border.

While the US considers the Kurds as a minority suffering under the thumb of authoritarian regimes in Iraq and Syria, Turkish policy makers

consider the Kurdish-populated areas in these two countries as hotbeds of terrorist activity against Turkey's security and territorial integrity. Since the start of the civil war in Syria, Turkey initiated frequent cross-border attacks in Syria, while the US kept providing military and financial support to Kurdish groups in the region. The Syrian conflict spilled over to the US soil, when in 2017, President Erdoğan's security details battered nearly a dozen pro-Kurdish protestors in front of the Turkish Embassy in Washington D.C. (Fandos & Mele/The New York Times, 2017). After the US-led coalition formally began providing aid to thousands of militia forces in border areas of Syria that are under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), tensions escalated further. As NATO allies, Turkey and the US are supporting different factions in the Syrian civil war (Perry & Coskun/Reuters, 2018). Given the increasing role the nationalist groups are playing in the government and the growing emphasis on democratic values by US President Biden (2020) since he came to power in 2021, it is difficult to see Turkey and the US reconciling their differences on Turkey's minorities or the FETO any time soon. If anything, these two countries have drifted further apart on human rights and minority issues ever since the US Congress and Presidency officially recognized the atrocities against the Armenians during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire as genocide in 2019.

US criticism of human rights violations in Turkey was not confined to Kurds. US Department of State country reports listed Christian minorities, such as Greeks and Armenians, as well as heterodox Muslim groups, such as Alevis among the discriminated. After the 2016 attempted coup, the followers of the cleric Fethullah Gülen, who has been in the US for decades in a self-imposed exile, were also included in the US human rights reports. The Turkish government, on the other hand, accused the US of harboring Fethullah Gülen, who, according to the government officials, was the mastermind of the attempted coup, and requested immediate extradition of him and his top followers. The US found the evidence presented for extradition unsatisfactory and accused Turkish authorities of arbitrary arrest of US Embassy staff, including the long-time embassy liaison with the Turkish law enforcement (PBS, 2017). While the Turkish government labeled Fethullah Gülen as the Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization (FET*Ö*), this organization is not a designated terrorist organization in the United States. Accusations of human rights violations against religious and ethnic minorities continue to create tension in bilateral relations. The 2016 arrest and 2018 conviction of Pastor Andrew

Brunson, a US citizen who lived in Turkey for decades, for alleged ties to the FET*Ö*, and aiding terrorism triggered a significant devaluation of Turkish Lira and showed a rare but intense rift between the US and Turkish presidents.[4] Pastor Brunson was released after intense negotiations between Turkey and the Trump administration.

Points of Divergence in the Alliance: Policy Differences over the Middle East

Increasing US engagement in the Middle East as part of the Johnson and Carter doctrines (Crabb, 1982) did not generate significant pushback within the Turkish foreign policy establishment at the time. However, both domestic and international dynamics have changed significantly in the past two decades. By the time the Bush Doctrine had emerged, there was mounting evidence of a unipolar system at the international level, which enticed the US to act unilaterally (Ikenberry et al., 2009). The lack of a viable external threat, combined with having a disproportionate share of global power and resources, allowed the US to feel less bound by the bipolar era alliance structures. The ability to "deploy substantial amounts of military power virtually anywhere—even in the face of armed opposition—and keep it there for an indefinite period" (Walt, 2009, p. 93) resulted in greater military presence across the Middle East and decades-long US occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Divergence of interests among the allies over the Middle East was not unexpected due to significant political changes on both sides. Philip Robins (2013) uses the concept of "double gravity" to explain the increasing gravitational power of both the Middle East after AKP came to power and the existing long-term alliance commitments for Turkey. He argues that the new ruling party positioned itself against the *Kemalist* establishment, enjoyed significant electoral support at home (Çarkoğlu, 2011; Altunışık in this volume) and began charting a different course on foreign policy toward the Middle East. Concepts and principles developed by then Foreign Minister Davutoğlu such as "zero problems with neighbors" and

[4] The letter from President Trump to President Erdoğan read: "Let's work out a good deal! You don't want to be responsible for slaughtering thousands of people, and I don't want to be responsible for destroying the Turkish economy—and I will. I've already given you a little sample with respect to Pastor Brunson. … I have worked hard to solve some of your problems. Don't let the world down. … Don't be a tough guy. Don't be a fool!"

Turkey being a "center country" reflected the strategic aspirations of the ruling party. Initially, Turkey's attempts to have greater engagement in the Middle East received a warm welcome among US foreign policy-making circles. Contrary to the more skeptical European powers, the US was quick to view Turkey's potential "as a model of governance for the wider Muslim world" (Robins, 2013, p. 383).

Having secured an international legitimacy as the model of governance for majority Muslim nations (Çarkoğlu, 2011), Turkey embarked on a more activist foreign policy role. Initially, this activism was in tandem with other emerging powers with similar aspirations. For example, in 2010, the then-Prime Minister Erdoğan and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva helped negotiate a major nuclear swap deal with Iran. To avoid sanctions, Iran agreed to hand over its low enriched uranium to Russia and France, to receive enriched uranium for its nuclear power plants in return (Hafezi/Reuters, 2010). Alas, the Obama administration summarily rejected the swap deal, and pushed for a UN resolution for further sanctions on Iran. At the time, both Turkey and Brazil were serving as the rotating members of the UN Security Council, and both rejected the sanctions. The resolution passed with 12 "yes" votes, including all permanent members, two "no" votes from Turkey and Brazil, and a single abstention from Lebanon (Charbonneau/Reuters, 2010).

"Turkey as a model" approach began wearing out as the country took a more authoritarian turn at home after the Gezi protests in 2013 (Tuğal, 2016), and inserted itself deeper into the Middle East in the post-Arab Spring era. Series of diplomatic crises began to dismantle even Turkey's relatively stable alliances in the region, including then-Prime Minister Erdoğan's "One Minute" moment at Davos in 2009, the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident, and the staunch support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after the toppling of Mursi government. The relations came to a historic low, however, with the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Turkey sided with groups that were completely at odds with the US. The US immediately designated the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Jabhat al Nusra as terrorist organizations, but Turkey was very slow in its condemnation of ISIS and worked closely with a Nusra, with Davutoğlu initially referring to ISIS members as "angry young man" instead of terrorists. Turkish leadership eventually changed its attitude, especially after ISIS took the staff and families of Turkish consulate in Mosul hostage and claimed responsibility of multiple suicide bombings across Turkey (Oktay, 2016). Turkey-US disagreements became more pronounced when the US

State Department identified the People's Protection Unit (YPG) as a "Kurdish-dominated militia" (US State Department, 2016). The YPG issue remains as a thorn in bilateral relations since the Obama administration without any quick resolutions in sight.

As Altunışık describes in this volume, this divergence of interests between the US and Turkey over the Middle East has marked a new era in Turkey, wherein the ruling AKP began to shape Turkey's foreign policy according to its own identity and increasingly challenged US military engagement in a region (Erdoğan, 2019) where the AKP foreign policy elites also had great "neo-Ottomanist" aspirations. Whereas both Obama and Trump doctrines advocated a decisively "hands off" approach to the Middle East (Goldberg, 2016), there is still considerable US involvement in the region. The existence of controversial legal cases at the US courts involving charges of circumventing Iranian sanctions and money laundering further complicate the issues (Pamuk & Psaledakis/Reuters, 2022) and the continued extradition demands from Turkey challenge the institutional repertoire that influences bilateral relations.

Recent Challenges and Conclusion

Whether there is a hegemon, two superpowers, or multiple great powers, tension in bilateral relations is not uncommon within alliances. However, in the case of Turkey and the US, there has been a progressively worsening trend in diplomatic and strategic engagements. This chapter tried to systematically analyze when the bilateral interests and relations converged, and when they were more likely to diverge from each other. The chapter made the case that bilateral relations could enjoy greater harmony when institutional mechanisms functioned in congruity and international law and treaty obligations were respected by both sides. On both sides, when foreign policy teams actively incorporated the diplomatic corps, military-security apparatus, as well as the mechanisms of representative democracy into the decision-making processes, the policy outcomes were considered more acceptable to the parties involved. Secondly, foreign policy decisions carried greater legitimacy and led to a convergence of interests among the allies if they were blessed by the UN Security Council resolutions. Legitimacy emanating from international law and conventions helped the parties handle the foreign policy challenges in less conflictual, more congruent ways. Turkey's successful participation in the UN-sanctioned NATO operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Libya testify to this

harmony. Conversely, when important institutional structures were sidestepped, or international law was ignored, bilateral relations suffered. Nixon administration's pressures for prohibitionist policies in Turkey, Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 all can be examples of discord among allies.

It is not coincidental that recent deterioration of Turkey's ties with the Transatlantic alliance goes hand-in-hand with the drastic domestic and international transformations happening and when the rising "backlash" against the establishment is becoming more observable (Adler-Nissen & Zarakol, 2021; Lake et al., 2021; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). While some continue to have faith in the longevity of the Liberal International Order (LIO) with the embeddedness of free trade, capital mobility, growth of democracy, human rights, and international law (Lake et al., 2021), others warn that the rise of anti-systemic forces is not mere displays of economic discontent. Serious cultural backlash against the LIO comes even from countries that David Lake et al. (2021) refer to as the "core" nations of system, including the US and the UK. Different generational cohorts endorse different values (Norris & Inglehart, 2019), and they are pitted against each other at every election, thanks to the populist, authoritarian-leaning leaders such as Nigel Farage or Donald Trump that take advantage of this widening cleavage in the West.

In addition, there is growing discontent against the LIO from the semi-periphery as they wage *recognition struggles*, initiated by the leaders of right-wing, nationalist, populist, and competitive authoritarian regimes (Adler-Nissen & Zarakol, 2021). Turkey's open discontent with the US/NATO, purchasing of S-400 missile systems from Russia, attempts to serve as a mediator in Russia-Ukraine war, refusal to impose sanctions on Russia, and attempts to slow down Sweden and Finland's memberships to NATO all demonstrate that Turkey fits squarely in this category of states. For some, Turkey's discontent has reached such a point that, along with Hungary and Poland, the political leadership now tries to "foment disunity" within the Western bloc, openly "flaunt the rules" and meddle in the politics of core liberal countries in ways that are disruptive (Adler-Nissen & Zarakol, 2021). For others, Turkey's commitment to NATO remains strong, but Turkey's leaders are pursuing a "soft-balancing" approach (see Dursun-Özkanca among others in this volume). Soft-balancing is used among allies rather than adversaries, especially since other tactics may backfire. Pape (2005, p. 36) lists "entangling diplomacy," gaining economic power in a way to counter-balance the economic

hegemony of the dominant actors and "participation in a balancing coalition" among mechanisms of soft-balancing. Turkey's position during the AKP rule has been systematically identified as soft-balancing vis-à-vis the EU (Dursun-Özkanca, 2017) and the US. Starting with its collaboration with Brazil during President Lula da Silva on the Iranian nuclear swap deal, to most recent activism on Ukraine serving as a mediator alongside the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (Tanis/NPR, 2022). Turkey's soft-balancing under Erdoğan's watch involved entangling diplomacy and signaling of intentions to participate in a balancing coalition.

However, it is unclear how long Turkey could afford soft-balancing, without suffering serious consequences. Among the recent casualties is being excluded from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Program that Turkey had been a member since 1999. For decades, Turkey tried to become a part of this international consortium to upgrade its aging fleet, to transfer defense know-how, and to eventually develop an indigenous fighter aircraft. After intense negotiations, Turkey was able to secure not only purchasing privileges but also significant local work-share contracts to become one of the five "full-fledged and equal" partners to build the center fuselage of F-35 (Güvenç & Yanık, 2013, pp. 121–124). Yet, this hard-won partnership was revoked in 2019, after Turkish government's purchase of Russian S-400 air defense missile systems. As of April 2023, the Erdoğan government's best hope remains to be to repair kits for the existing F-16s and a few newer F-16s, while Greece and Israel were both granted access to fifth-generation F-35s, giving them technological edge in the region (Iddon/Forbes, 2023).

While Turkey has not severed the formal ties with NATO, it is becoming increasingly harder for Turkey to be seen as a reliable partner. In March 2023, Turkey reluctantly approved Finland's accession to NATO, while continuing to hold Sweden's membership as a bargaining chip in F-35 negotiations (Iddon/Forbes, 2023). Turkey's democratic backsliding at home and soft-balancing moves abroad led the Biden administration to exclude Turkey from the democracy summits in 2021 and 2023 (Pamuk & Lewis/Reuters, 2021). The US, under the Biden administration, is signaling a less interventionist and an increasingly voluntary partnership among democracies that share a common understanding of "rule-based international order" and respect for human rights (Biden, 2020). This shift in US foreign policy comes at a time when the AKP leadership is equating its own survival with the survival of the Republic, placing greater emphasis on geopolitical status and military-security issues (Erhan & Sıvış,

2017; Oğuzlu, 2012) while disregarding the role of shared values. Pulling back from the İstanbul Convention in 2021, refusing to implement European Court of Human Rights decisions, treatment of millions of Middle Eastern refugees as bargaining chips vis-à-vis the West (Haferlach & Kurban, 2017), and waving a veto card for each new NATO member are seen as Turkey's changing priorities and further distancing from the ILO values. As the world remains an uncertain place with significant changes happening at national, regional, and global levels, the last act of Turkey-US/NATO partnership has yet to be written.

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CHAPTER 3

An Impasse in Turkey's Relations with the European Union: The Interplay of Democratic Lapse and External Differentiated Integration

Meltem Müftüler-Baç

Turkey has one of the longest associations with the European Union (EU), dating back to 1963. Turkey also has the longest-standing application for full membership for which the negotiations for Turkey's accession commenced in 2005. Yet, despite its association with the EU, its candidacy, and a high degree of functional integration to the EU policies, Turkey's accession as a full member seems still far off. This is a puzzle.

This chapter assesses the role of systemic transformation due to a set of new global political dynamics, on the one hand, and changes in the European integration process, on the other, on Turkey-EU relations. More specifically, the chapter focuses on the emerging political dynamics

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_3

with an emphasis on the process of democratic breakdown, democratic decline, and the differentiated integration processes of different regional countries engaged in with the EU. The EU's unexpected impact on democratic breakdown in Turkey and the role that the developments in Turkey's democratization process has on determining its relations with the EU demonstrate the linkages between domestic politics and foreign policy, although the main premise of the chapter is that a systemic perspective has more explanatory power in analyzing the evolution of the Turkey-EU relations.

Despite the multiple positive developments in Turkey's long association with the EU, including the signing of a Customs Union agreement in 1995 and candidacy in 1999, Turkey's full accession prospects are further away today than they were originally set in 1963. The deterioration in Turkey's relations with the EU in recent years cannot be explained solely by looking at Turkey-specific factors. Therefore, this chapter proposes a novel framework of analysis based on Liberalism that examines the interplay of dynamics of democratic decline at the global level, together with the dynamics of differentiated integration at the European level. A pressing question at the global level is related to the EU's ability to bring about political changes in a rapidly transforming global environment in which the aspirations for the establishment and maintenance of liberal democratic systems have not been met with empirical reality. This is the main framework within which Turkey's relations with the EU need to be assessed. Accordingly, this chapter proposes that the questions about Turkey's accession to the EU go beyond the Turkish harmonization with the EU rules and its adoption of the EU's *acquis communautaire* (Müftüler-Baç, 2016a), but rests on Turkey's relative position in the newly emerging European and global order where democracies unravel, and systemic uncertainty has become the name of the game.

The extant literature on Turkey and the EU focuses more on the Turkish side of the equation emphasizing the Turkish goalpost of EU accession. Turkey, since its Association Agreement with the then European Economic Community (EEC) signed in 1963, has aimed for full membership in the Union. The perceived material benefits of EU accession, market access, increased access to European funds, enhanced security benefits of being part of a larger European club together with the recognition of Turkey's European status outweigh possible material costs of accession. From a rationalist logic, EU membership was the optimum choice for a country such as Turkey located on the fringes of Europe.

While the Turkish concerns over membership rested on the material benefits, the expected recognition of Turkey's *Europeanness* was both a material benefit and a culturally driven motivation. Turkey has long aimed at its recognition as a European state and formulated its foreign policy choices in that regard (Aydın-Düzgit, 2018). Turkey's membership in the European organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1948, Council of Europe in 1949, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 were the steps taken in that direction to cement Turkey's integration into the European order. Turkey's relations with the EEC in the aftermath of the 1957 Rome Treaty were shaped by the Turkish foreign policy goal of recognition as a European state. Turkish foreign policy objective of acceding to the EU as a full member has never wavered, despite the many fluctuations in this critical relationship.

In the following sections, we present a brief introduction of Turkey's association with the EU from a historical background, provide a theoretical model for democratic decline, and analyze the Turkish experience in the EU's external differentiation. The chapter demonstrates how an external differentiated integration with a functional, transactional mode could not be contemplated without a political component. A broader framework that is based on Liberalism is used to place Turkey's relations with the EU within the center of the global dynamics, although Turkey-specific factors are also included in the discussion.

Turkey and the EU: A Brief Background

Turkey has aimed at recognition as a European state since its inception in 1923 (Müftüler-Baç, 2016a). Its foreign policy objectives were formulated accordingly, and in the Cold War years of 1945–1989, Turkey's integration into the then-EEC was a matter of time and level of preparedness (Karakaş, 2013). In the post-Cold War period, Turkey found itself sidelined with the Central and Eastern European countries marching toward the EU, and when the EU adopted its most encompassing enlargement policy in 1997, it markedly left Turkey out. Even though the European Commission underlined Turkey's eligibility for full EU membership and a Custom Union for industrial products was already realized in 1995, Turkey no longer was viewed as one of the front-runners of the accession process. The European Commission's progress reports on Turkey repeatedly underlined the need for multiple reforms for Turkey's compliance with

EU's political and economic criteria, as well as *acquis communautaire*-based EU rules. Consequently, Turkey engaged in an extensive reform process with an extensive array of political reforms taking place between 1998 and 2005 (Müftüler-Baç, 2005). The European Commission noted Turkey's progress with its recommendation for the start of accession negotiations in 2004. When Turkey's accession negotiations were formally launched in 2005, marking the last stage of its association with the EU, the expectation was that Turkey would be able to complete its adoption of the EU rules and accede to the EU as a full member in a matter of decades. Almost 20 years later, Turkey's accession negotiations are stalled, with multiple vetoes from EU members such as France and Cyprus blocking the opening of critical chapters and a slowing down of the Turkish reforms (Müftüler-Baç, 2016b, 2019a). This was an unfortunate turn of events with a deterioration of Turkey's relations with the EU after 2008. With the attempted coup in 2016, Turkey's relations with the EU came to a standstill, despite a high degree of economic and functional integration (Müftüler-Baç, 2017; Saatçıoğlu, 2020). The domestic developments in Turkey, combined with systemic and regional changes in Europe, culminated in this standstill for Turkey's accession process, while Turkey's functional cooperation persisted within the framework of its candidacy and association.

The current impasse in Turkey-EU relations is critical. EU-Turkish relations, which were structured for an eventual accession, rested on the EU's ability to engender political change, a move toward democracy and respect for rule of law. Given the pause in the accession process and the ongoing rise of democratic backsliding (Müftüler-Baç, 2019a), the future of Turkey's place in the European order has increasingly become elusive. The extant literature provides multiple insights into the crisis of democracy with ideology-based, economics-driven, external crisis-determined causes of democratic regression (see Diamond, 2021 for a literature review). However, the lack of scholarly consensus on how to conceptualize and measure democracy has affected how to understand democratic decline. A major shortcoming in the current state of the art is the absence of an overarching model of democratic breakdown and a lack of a comparative perspective for the European periphery. This is partly related to the lack of awareness about country-specific factors in the European periphery—including historical legacies, the inability to capture linguistic, and cultural variations—data-driven constraints and partly to the application of Eurocentric frameworks to explain the political matters in these countries.

Given the current state of affairs between Turkey and the EU where no new chapters opened for accession since 2013, and when Turkey is deemed to have moved significantly away from the goal of accession due to systemic and domestic political developments, it remains to be seen as to what kind of institutional arrangements are likely to keep Turkey anchored to the EU. We argue that examining Turkey's relations with the Union from a liberal, institutionalist perspective and uncovering the main linkage between democratic decline in the European periphery and the emergence of differentiated integration as an instrument to replace accession in the face of democratic decline provides a relevant explanation of not only the current stalemate but also what might happen in the future. The following section introduces the theoretical framework, highlighting the interconnectedness between democratic decline in the European periphery and the emergence of alternative modes of integration in general and the external differentiated integration in particular. This interconnectedness is critical to understand the future of Turkey's relations with the EU in which the EU's political leverage is no longer promising and the material benefits of EU accession have lost credibility.

Democratic Decline and Its Impact on European Union's Anchor Role

Geopolitical shifts underway since 2008 have caused significant strain on the liberal international order (V-Dem, 2020). Drastic changes in the international liberal order (Burnell & Schlumberger, 2010), a vacuum created by the demise of the democratic West, internal dynamics at home that resulted in erosion of checks and balances (Diamond et al., 1988), and the allure of strongmen (Diamond, 2008) seem to seal the fate of democracy in most of the world, especially in the European periphery. The EU, one of the most important actors that acted as a catalyst for democratic transformation in the European periphery, no longer plays the critical role of bringing democracy to formerly authoritarian states. Increasingly in the past decade, multiple countries in the EU's periphery such as Turkey (Müftüler-Baç, 2019a), the Western Balkans (Richter & Wunsch, 2019), and surprisingly new member states such as Hungary and Poland (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018) have experienced democratic breakdown. Since 2008, the world has rapidly changed with liberal democratic premises undergoing profound turmoil (Coppedge et al., 2019). Poland, Hungary

(Cianetti et al., 2018), Turkey (Müftüler-Baç, 2016a), the Western Balkans (Bieber, 2018), and even the United States (US) have experienced a shift toward authoritarianism, coupled with a subsequent deterioration of individual rights and liberties. Democratic decline has become a global threat. Explaining the conditions under which such decline occurs is crucial for the formulation of safeguards and policy tools to prevent democratic regression. This is precisely where the EU and its main tools of political conditionality come into the picture.

This situation constitutes a puzzle both empirically and theoretically within the European context. What accounts for democratic breakdown in the European periphery? Is it possible to develop a comprehensive and overarching model that explains democratic regression at the global level, instead of an individual, case-by-case approach? What role do external actors such as the EU play in this process of political transformation? The rest of the chapter addresses these questions through an analysis of Turkey's long integration process into the EU and its democratic challenges. The democratic decline at the European level plays an important role in shaping the Union's ability to help generate democratic reforms in the acceding countries. More specifically, democratic decline leads to a loss of the EU's capabilities to act as an anchor for political change (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008).

External differentiated integration has become a pathway for countries such as Turkey who are either unable or unwilling to fulfill the political obligations arising from EU membership, which brings into the picture an alternative formula involving staying within the larger European order without committing to extensive political transformation. However, to conceptualize external differentiated integration without political conditionality or political incentives for regional countries carries its own conceptual flaws (Müftüler-Baç, 2019b). Therefore, it is imperative to assess the EU's possible role in democratic breakdown in regional countries that emphasize transactional and functional cooperation as an alternative to accession, as it is currently unfolding in the Turkish case. Such a scenario is even more pronounced for other countries in the EU's periphery, especially those under the *European Neighborhood Policy* through which the EU works with its Southern and Eastern Neighbors to achieve the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration.

Liberal international order, which traditionally rested on the rise of democracy globally (Diamond, 2002, 2008), open international borders,

and expanding economic interdependence, faces unprecedented threats with backsliding onto authoritarianism (Levitsky & Way, 2010, 2015), and rise of populism in European democracies (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018). Protests all around the world indicate a new turning point has arrived (Levitsky & Way, 2015), which have also been compounded with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020.

Deteriorating governance seems to be common denominator in different conceptualizations of democratic decline. Competitive majoritarianism, electoral hegemony (Müftüler-Baç & Keyman, 2012), "stealing" elections (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012) and concentrating sources of power-media (Noutcheva, 2009), control of the economy, and access to resources are visible manifestations of democratic backsliding (Grimm & Mathis, 2017). The rise of mixed, illiberal, and hybrid regimes where seemingly democratic regimes gravitate toward autocratic rule or use majoritarian tools to consolidate their power has become a common occurrence in democratic breakdown. Illiberal democracies depend on a self-fulfilling prophecy of public discontent to enhance manipulation of the popular sentiment against foreigners, international forces, and external "enemies" to reinforce their hold over the state instruments and their monopolistic hold over state resources (Gerring et al., 2005), media, as well as access to positions of power.

In this process of political change, the role of international organizations, in particular the EU, has been a source of scientific inquiry in terms of their political conditionality (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008). Norm diffusion, the EU's institutional, administrative, financial support (Borzel & Van Hullen, 2014), and the central pull of the liberal democracies (Zielonka & Pravda, 2001) contribute to the promotion of democratic ideals and institutions. However, this theoretical insight has now been partly challenged with democratic regression and decline in some Central and Eastern European countries (Freyburg & Richter, 2010) that have already acceded to the EU, as well as countries in the European periphery that are still in the process of accession (Schimmelfenning and Lavenex 2009; Bermeo, 2016, Gafuri and Müftüler-Baç 2021). The EU played an important role in fostering political change and enabling a move from autocracy toward liberal democracy in countries aspiring for accession. However, its ability to induce such political change has changed drastically in Turkey and the Western Balkans in parallel to a decline in the credibility of the EU accession process (Dawson, 2018; Müftüler-Baç & Gafuri, 2021). As prospects for accession decline, the EU's ability to foster

democracy suffers (Aydın-Düzgit, 2018). This situation brings forth various alternatives to EU accession, in particular the integration of third parties into the EU *acquis*, without political strings attached. The EU loses its ability to foster political change and democratization, but it holds on to the different forms of integration instead. It is precisely within this conceptual framework that external differentiated integration for countries such as Turkey might be contemplated.

External differentiated integration for non-EU members involves temporal alignment with EU policies and territorial inclusions such as security cooperation, participation in the Single Market, free trade agreements, Customs Union, or participation in the Schengen zone for third parties and policy opt-ins such as the adoption of EU regulations in electricity, telecommunications, and education (Eriksen & Fossum, 2015; Karakaş, 2013; Stubb, 1996). The increased tendency among the EU members to choose different areas of integration and the non-EU countries to enhance their relations with the EU in this format alters the course of European integration (Schimmelfennig & Winzen, 2020). Non-EU European countries would adopt the EU norms and rules only when there is a significant financial incentive for them to do so, especially when there is an asymmetry in economic and political power as in the Western Balkans, and the Eastern Partnership countries. In other words, the non-member European countries are tempted to adopt such rules if and when there is financial compensation or expected monetary gains from increased trade, as in the Ukrainian and Moldova cases (Müftüler-Baç, 2019b).

External differentiated integration explains non-EU member states' alignment with the EU rules, law, and institutions in specific policy areas. These arrangements extend the EU rules and policies beyond its borders (Fossum, 2019; Leuffen et al., 2013) while ensuring the creation of a uniform, European landmass. As Eriksen (2018,993) notes, "the EU's internal differentiation is also reflected in its relations with non-members, ranging from the European Neighborhood Policy to Turkey's Customs Union, Switzerland's bilateral approach and the multilateral EEA Agreement for Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein."

External differentiation could be seen in sectoral, territorial, and temporal manners, where functional, spatial, and time-based dimensions emerge as the key factors in determining the degree to which a non-member aligns itself with the EU rules and policies (Eriksen & Fossum, 2015; Lavenex, 2015). Specifically, the temporal alignment with the EU policies for non-members could be a step toward full accession to the EU,

yet it is possible that this alignment could be a permanent state of affairs (Lavenex, 2011). Turkey's arrangements with the EU are seen in this temporal point of view whereas Switzerland has remained decidedly outside of the accession process despite its inclusion into the Schengen zone and other EU-driven arrangements (Lavenex, 2015). This is also how the EU integration influences a territorial space that is much broader than the sheer territory of the EU member states. European foreign policy tools such as enlargement and the ENP enable the extension of this jurisdiction beyond the EU's territorial space (Borzel & Van Hullen, 2014; Leruth et al., 2019).

The British exit, or Brexit, provides an additional impetus to understand the future of European integration from this conceptual framework (Eriksen, 2018; Fossum, 2019). The British decision in June 2016 to withdraw from the EU has been a shock for many, yet the EU had already been going through bouts of change with member states opting out of some EU policies, and non-member states opting in for others for the last 30 years. Whether this differentiation is of a permanent nature or involves member states moving forward in the same direction in integration, albeit with different speeds, remains to be seen. While differentiated integration is essentially used to assess the nature and pace of integration among EU members, it is possible to evaluate the EU's external relations with its neighbors and associated states through a similar lens, most specifically a future consisting of different modalities for non-members (Gstöhl 2015). This brings forth a critical question as to whether differentiated integration remains devoid of political rules and conditions of the EU.

The ongoing backslide into authoritarianism in Turkey and the Western Balkan countries that seek full EU membership seems to be contrary to the democratization literature (Bermeo, 2016; Dawson, 2018; Müftüler-Baç & Gafuri, 2021). Yet, it is comparable to the backsliding in Hungary or Poland (Ciannetti et al. 2018), two countries that are already EU members (Dawson, 2018; Levitsky & Way, 2010). This is an important caveat that needs to be explored for the sake of advancing the literature on democratic decline in general, and to uncover the multiple layers of democratic breakdown in the European periphery. Consequently, the emerging patterns of external differentiated integration where non-members opt into the EU rules without EU accession seem to go together with the democratic challenges some of these European countries such as Turkey are experiencing. The move away from the target of full accession to the EU is mutually driven together with the patterns of external

differentiation and the process of democratic backsliding, as these do not seem to be mutually exclusive processes. The Turkish experience in the EU in recent years seems to provide an empirical verification for the interplay of these two seemingly different, but parallel processes in the European order.

The Future of Turkey's Relations with the EU

While full membership no longer seems like a viable option for Turkey in the future, Turkey's relations with the EU revolve around economic integration, functional cooperation, and convergence of security interests. Turkey represents a clear case of external differentiated integration for the EU (Müftüler-Baç, 2017) that is similar to the experience of the EEA countries such as Norway and Iceland, Switzerland, or the new modus operandi for the United Kingdom (Eriksen, 2018). The technical modalities of this cooperation, however, differ from the EEA (Müftüler-Baç, 2019) and other patterns (Schimmelfennig & Lavenex, 2009). There are different legal tools for different countries' relations with the EU—from the EEA agreement that grants access to the Single Market to the UK's Trade and Political Cooperation Agreement. These multiple modes of integration, both internal and external, allow non-member states to opt into the EU rules (Holzinger & Schimmelfennig, 2012; Holzinger & Tosun, 2019). To discern differentiated integration together with democratic backsliding presents a key to understand the future of Turkey's relations with the EU.

Turkey has been negotiating for EU accession since 2005, and its candidacy status since 1999 has already integrated Turkey into multiple EU policies (Müftüler-Baç, 2016a, 2017). Given the Turkish adoption of EU rules within the Customs Union as well as its alignment to multiple EU legislation ranging from research, education, the environment to energy (Karakaş, 2013), the Turkish affiliation with the EU is extensive (Cihangir-Tetik & Müftüler-Baç, 2018). While some of this alignment to EU *acquis* is driven by its accession process, it also goes beyond accession (Saatçıoğlu, 2020). That is because Turkey developed a formalized and institutionalized relationship with the EU even in the absence of an immediate accession (European Commission, 2017). Turkey's relations with the EU have evolved toward a functional cooperation, attesting to different shades of external differentiation. To understand Turkey's future in the EU, the EU's own instruments for deepening functional cooperation with Turkey

need to be assessed within the framework of external differentiation for Turkey's functional and economic integration with the EU.

While Turkey's accession process is seemingly on hold, there is already a change in the EU's own commitments for further enlargement. For example, in 2018, the European Commission launched a new strategy for "credible enlargement perspective," confirming the European future of South-East Europe as a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong, and united Europe based on common values. Based on the Commission's recommendation in June 2018, the General Affairs Council of the European Union adopted multiple conclusions on the EU's enlargement policy which also included Turkey. However, Turkey's accession process to the EU is on a rocky road since 2016. Turkey's official position is that the country still aims for EU accession; however, none of the expected changes in the Turkish legislation are adopted. The reform process came to a halt in 2013. Similarly, some EU member states, including France and Cyprus, are actively blocking the opening of accession chapters. This is also when the Commission noted how Turkey irrevocably moved away from its goal to become a full member of the Union. Despite the current stoppage in its accession negotiations, Turkey's compliance with the EU *acquis* and its alignment to the EU's regulations and policies could be assessed as external differentiation. Turkey's adoption of EU rules and its integration in multiple technical areas indicate the scope of integration that transcends the EU's own borders.

Turkey's adherence to the EU rules in different policy areas remolds its relations with the EU as functional cooperation. Yet, even functional cooperation is not devoid of politics, and it would be misleading to conceptualize Turkey's involvement in the EU policies without contextualizing its political implications. These political implications are tied partly to the Turkish political processes but also to the positions of EU member states and institutions toward Turkey in general. However, an additional major consideration is the degree to which functional cooperation could flourish in the absence of political engagement (i.e., how can one demonstrate political commitment from both parties?). The political landscape in Turkey drastically changed on July 15, 2016, with the shock of an attempted coup against the ruling party. Ever since that time, there has been a steady decline in Turkey's democratic status with increased authoritarian tendencies becoming deeply rooted and highly visible.

A direct casualty of the 2016 attempted coup was Turkey's relations with the Union. Even though Turkey's relations with the EU suffered from political setbacks in the past, in the post-July 2016 period they have reached a nadir. The European Parliament responded to this new state of political affairs with multiple resolutions on Turkey adopted in November 2016, July 2017, November 2018, and March 2019. The July 2017 resolution commanded "to formally suspend the accession negotiations with Turkey without delay if the constitutional reform package is implemented unchanged" (European Parliament, 2017). On March 13, 2019, the European Parliament explicitly stated that while it "recommends that the Commission and the Council of the European Union, in accordance with the Negotiating Framework, formally suspend the accession negotiations with Turkey; it remains, however, committed to democratic and political dialogue with Turkey." From the Turkish perspective, the EU's inability to understand, and its apparent insensitivity to, Turkish concerns and the threats against a democratically elected government were indicative of the EU's moving away from Turkey.

The former President of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, already summarized the EU's official position toward Turkey in September 2017: "Rule of law, justice, and fundamental values have top priority [in the accession process] and that rules out EU membership for Turkey in the foreseeable future." The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament (2017) also stressed that the update of the Customs Union should also have a precondition on human rights and rule of law. It is not only the EU institutions that have made their reservations clear; among the EU member states, there is a similar level of discontent with the current state of politics in Turkey. The Turkish government is similarly disillusioned. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reflected on the Turkish disillusionment suggesting that Turkey "bent over backward to fulfill requirements on democratic reforms, but had been met with undelivered promises and accusations, this is not an acceptable situation" (Pitel, 2017).

It is evident that in the current political climate, Turkey's relations with the EU remain only functional at the lowest level. Whether this situation of functional cooperation and Turkey's technical alignment with EU rules without political convergence could be seen as external differentiated integration is another matter. The Turkish integration with the EU is most advanced in economic integration, particularly in trade relations, as shaped by the Customs Union Agreement signed in 1995 (Ülgen & Zahariadis,

2004). On the one hand, the Customs Union advanced Turkey's economic ties with the EU; on the other hand, it allowed for the Turkish adherence to the EU rules in trade-related matters (European Commission, 2017). Britain's agreement with the EU following its exit from the EU has a lower degree of economic integration with the EU in comparison to the Association Council Decision to include Turkey in the Customs Union whereas the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova are much more extensive.

Nonetheless, and despite the ongoing political problems, the enhanced level of economic integration between the EU and Turkey and its resulting material benefits have been visible for all the parties involved. With regard to economic integration, the revamping of the 1995 Customs Union sits at the center of the current debates. A 2014 World Bank study evaluated the economic benefits of the Customs Union, and its published report recommended the need for an update as a strong imperative to reap further material gains for both parties. However, the update of the Customs Union as suggested by the European Commission in 2016 is currently on hold due to political concerns and democratic backsliding in Turkey, which provides empirical evidence on how even functional cooperation is subject to the EU's political conditionality.

This is also why, as this chapter has argued, external differentiation and democratic conditionality should be conceptualized together. At the same time, deteriorating governance seems to be the common denominator in all the different conceptualizations of democratic regression or backsliding. Challenges confronting democracies are best understood within a comparative perspective of the conditions under which democratic backsliding occurs, as it suggests a particularly helpful lens through which the most pressing issues regarding what democratic breakdown across different countries entails, how it can be handled, and whether it can be countered in the long term.

An important component of this conceptual linkage for democratic backsliding and differentiated integration rests on a comparative analysis of institutional structures in the European periphery shaping their democratic regression, specifically, judicial constraints on executive power. This is also tied to the EU's emphasis on judicial independence and the primacy of rule of law. Countries aspiring for accession such as Turkey and Western Balkan states need to satisfy this criterion and implement measures that would guarantee judicial independence as the key political principle. For example, the democratic backslide into authoritarianism and systematic

violations of the principle of rule of law in Turkey makes the Turkish case an interesting example illustrating the limits of conditionality, on the one hand, and the difficulties of norm diffusion regarding the rule of law on the other (Müftüler-Baç, 2016b, 2019a). This would also illustrate how the EU as an external actor is limited in its capacity to promote democratization when the political conditions in the target country are not favorable. Turkey's relations with the EU took a more functional turn after 2015 when the EU confronted a major refugee crisis with the influx of refugees from Syria.

The ongoing Syrian refugee problem has created additional problems in the EU's approach to democratization in candidate states and maintenance of democracy on the continent. In October 2015, Turkey and the EU negotiated the first EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan that led to the signing of the EU-Turkey Refugee Statement in March 2016. Accordingly, Turkey would be responsible for controlling the EU's external borders as a gatekeeper. In return, EU member states such as Greece as a frontline state in the Eastern Mediterranean route for illegal migration would return "all new irregular immigrants" to Turkey. In addition, the EU agreed to pay 6 million euros to support Turkey's efforts to host the Syrian refugees. The Refugee Statement also called for the reinvigoration of Turkey's EU accession process and a visa liberalization program for Turkish nationals.

The agreement was not only completely "transactional," but its implementation became frustrating for both sides. Turkey has regularly threatened to "open the borders" to let refugees to reach the European shores and complained about ongoing lack of financial support from the Union. In addition, the EU has so far failed to reengage with Turkey in an effort to accelerate Turkey's accession negotiations. In addition, there is no evidence that the EU member states are in the process of liberalizing visas for Turkish nationals.

In the current state of affairs between Turkey and the EU, there is a de facto suspension of the accession negotiations. While the process remains intact on paper, the prospects of Turkish accession are far off. With the British exit from the EU, Turkey's own objectives toward accession waned. Turkey's integration into the EU remains solid in functional areas such as trade relations, energy cooperation, migration-related issues as well as science, education, and technology-related policies. However, it is less likely to become a member of the EU now more than ever. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the subsequent security crisis

have opened new avenues of cooperation between the EU and Turkey, indicating that despite the deterioration of the Turkish prospects for accession, it still plays a critical role in European stability.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how two seemingly different processes in Europe, namely democratic breakdown and differentiated integration processes, have impacted Turkey's relations with the EU. As Turkey's full accession to the EU moved further away, Turkey's relations with the Union have evolved toward a model of external differentiated integration since 2013, especially when seen from the economic integration perspective. Turkey's inclusion in the EU's Customs Union and the Turkish accession process are the main vehicles for this integration. While Turkey has a high degree of functional, economic integration into the EU, it is misleading to conceptualize this cooperation devoid of politics. Turkey's accession process has frozen due to the political concerns about the Turkish democracy and Turkey's ability to meet the EU's political criteria. These concerns increasingly became dominant in the EU's views on Turkish accession after 2013. The democratic backsliding in Turkey has accelerated since 2013 with political changes toward a presidential system along with a reshuffling of Turkish foreign policy objectives. This democratic decline is noted by the EU with European Parliament's resolutions and the European Commission's reports.

However, the main role that the EU plays in bringing about political transformation rests on its political conditionality and the incentives it provides through the membership prospects. The EU's political conditionality loses credibility when the membership prospects are no longer credible, as is seen in the Turkish case, and to a certain extent in the Western Balkans. The emerging external differentiated integration mechanisms do not have the same political leverage as full membership in the EU. The Turkish case with its functional cooperation with the EU could be utilized to illustrate how democratic decline is possible in a country negotiating for accession or for a third country engaged in external differentiated integration. This begs the question as to whether it would be possible to see further democratic decline in the EU's periphery when tools of integration are not bound with political rules and remain functional in their key premises.

Turkey's own future with the EU as part of the European order is increasingly shaped by the general decline in democratic principles in Europe, the challenges that the international political order faces from such countries as Russia, as well as the EU's inability to formulate coherent, unified responses to the challenges and democratic decline. As the EU is increasingly faced with these questions about its ability to promote democratic change or maintain democracies on the European continent, external differentiation for non-EU third countries, and even leaving the EU altogether as the United Kingdom has done is emerging as a possible dominant pattern. While EU membership is not the only tool to reflect one's belonging in the European order, it still motivates Turkey's foreign policy choices. The interplay of democratic decline in Europe together with the future of European integration as one of differentiation shapes the Turkish engagement with the EU. This is a challenge previously unseen in the Turkish-EU relations.

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CHAPTER 4

One Hundred Years of Turkish-Russian Relations: From Balancing Act to Flexible Alignment

Evren Balta and Habibe Özdal

Relations between Turkey and Russia attract the attention of both policymakers and scholars alike. Having similar leadership styles, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan developed a solid relationship, which Western analysts perceive as signaling Turkey's departure from the traditional alliance system and a shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy. What explains the motivation for and nature of the intense foreign policy coordination between Turkey and Russia in various areas since the early 2000s?

Although this question was raised especially in the last decade, the relationship between Russia and Turkey has followed a similar pattern

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_4

throughout the Republic of Turkey's 100-year history. We argue in this chapter that security cooperation between Turkey and Russia responds to two factors. The first factor is the level of *cohesiveness* of the Western alliance. The literature on alliance cohesiveness notes that when threats perceptions of the alliance member states are strong and they share a homogeneity in understanding collective security and its goals, the alliance cohesiveness is strong (Kupchan, 1988; Weitsman, 2003). Furthermore, coercive potential of the alliance leader to require cooperation from its weaker partners and defense burden sharing are important elements in assessing the strength of alliance cohesiveness. When alliance cohesiveness is strong, individual states have less room to pursue independent foreign policy agendas. Accordingly, we argue that when the Western alliance faced external threats and when the US commitment to collective European security was substantial (e.g., during the Cold War), Turkey's leaders had less room to maneuver in foreign policy. In other words, the first cluster of factors that explains Turkish-Russian cooperation functions more at the systemic level.

The second factor is related to a combination of domestic-level factors, which we argue can be subsumed under one category: *anti-Westernism*. The anti-Westernism of different Turkish governments since the establishment of the Republic has many determinants, including national identity, threat perceptions, governing coalitions, and regime type. Whereas the role each of these factors played has differed over the years, the relationship between Turkey and the West has reinforced intense anxiety among Turkey's governing elites regarding the country's role and place in Western security architecture. In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, the Cyprus crisis created a massive rift between Turkey and the West, strengthening the idea that the alliance not only failed to take Turkey's national interests seriously but also actively undermined them vis-à-vis those of Greece (see Balamir-Coşkun in this volume for details). Turkey's foreign policy elites interpreted the situation as granting Greece "a more favorable status" within the alliance. The perception that the West favors Greece still shapes foreign policy decision-making in Turkey.

In the 1990s, Turkey's anxiety was related more to harsh Western criticism of Turkey's human rights violations during operations against the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Turkish governments of the period considered the West's position as an instrument to weaken Turkey's state capacity by undermining its anti-terror operations. The anxiety of the period helped resurrect deep-rooted fears that Western powers aimed to

dismantle Turkey.[1] The same ontological security concerns reappeared intensely after 2011 with the rise of Kurdish transnationalism. The United States' close cooperation with the Democratic Union Party (PYD) as a leading local ally in the anti-ISIS coalition prompted the return of anti-Western narratives while the renewed anxiety created an environment that ushered in a surprisingly resilient and flexible Russian-Turkish rapprochement (Balta & Özel, 2021).

Finally, the anti-Westernism of Turkey's political elites is related to regime security and survival. More specifically, the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti, DP*) government of the 1950s, which the current Erdoğan government sees as its predecessor regarding its anti-establishment rhetoric and conservative base, was the most pro-American government in the Republic's history. The DP government's decision to participate in the Korean War ended Turkey's policy of non-involvement in international conflicts and resulted in Turkey becoming a NATO member in 1952. Turkey's NATO membership also reshaped the debate over the meaning of Westernization and profoundly altered Turkey's relations with the Soviet Union. The decision to join NATO was partially related to the systemic nature of the Cold War and enabled the DP to receive Western aid and investment, which helped consolidate the party's support base. DP had come to power after Turkey's first multi-party elections, primarily due to its emphasis on the emerging "democratic world order" and increasing US pressure (Altan-Olcay & Balta, 2020). Therefore, the DP saw the US as the external guarantor of its survival in a hostile domestic political environment.

This dynamic can be usefully explained by the concept of omni-balancing, which refers to the primacy of regime security and implies that the ruling elites' interests need not be synonymous with those of the state (Koblentz, 2013, p.507). Leaders are likely to shift to regime security if they experience significant challenges, if the domestic political stakes are very high, if there have been domestic attempts to overthrow the government, and if there is a link between internal and external threats in the form of external support for internal challengers (Schweller, 2006). Paradoxically, the same concerns that led the conservative DP to pursue a Western path in its security orientation have led the *Justice and Development Party*

[1] For many, *the 1918 Treaty of Sèvres symbolizes not only the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the carving up of Turkey by outside forces* but also the continued perception that the West has not stopped its goal to destroy the Turkish state since the establishment of the Republic in 1923. This is dubbed as the Sevres syndrome.

(Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), another conservative-Islamist political party, to use anti-Western rhetoric and pursue anti-Western policies. Accordingly, in direct contrast to the DP, AKP governments increasingly pursued a foreign policy that paved the way for an increased bilateral cooperation between Turkey and Russia while leading to Turkey's progressively more isolation from European politics. The same dynamic went in tandem with growing authoritarianism and personalization of power in both Turkey and Russia. In other words, following newer debates in International Relations literature which concerned the relative importance of domestic versus systemic factors, we emphasize the complex interactions between systemic and domestic factors in analyzing Turkish-Russian relations.

Before discussing how the systemic and domestic factors manifested in Turkish-Russian relations, we should add a caveat. As Seçkin Köstem (2021) argues, the expansion of the security cooperation between Turkey and Russia can best be captured using the concept of *alignment*. In contrast to alliances, alignment is a form of policy coordination which offers greater flexibility to state behavior and does not necessarily involve defense treaties and mutual commitments (Snyder, 2007). Whereas Turkey has been in a formal alliance with NATO, Turkish-Russian cooperation is an informal geopolitical alignment, despite involving intense interaction. Balta and Çelikpala (2020) argue that the Turkish-Russian bilateral relations lack institutionalization despite periods of intense cooperation between the two countries and lack a stable and common perspective on regional and global matters. Consequently, bilateral relations in an alignment depend on short-term definitions of national interest and force the two countries into strategic but fragile cooperation that is vulnerable to sudden domestic and geopolitical shifts. The following sections examine how different systemic and domestic dynamics have shaped Turkish-Russian bilateral relations throughout the previous century.

Turkish Foreign Policy During the Independence Movement and Relations with the Bolshevik Regime

Relations between the Government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, which was the name used until 31 December 1922, originated in Europe's reorganization after World War One (WWI) during the early 1920s, when Moscow became the Ankara government's most important partner (Tellal, 2001a, b). The Turkish government needed this cooperation due to the lack of sufficient military capacity to pursue the independence war against

the West. The military cooperation later expanded to economic and cultural cooperation. According to Hirst (2017), a coherent element in Soviet-Turkish exchanges of the period was opposition to the Western-dictated international order. Yet, the Ankara government was careful to distance itself ideologically from Communism and the nature of the cooperation was summarized with a well-known phrase of the period "Yes to the Soviets, no to communism" (Tellal, 2001a, b).

On 26 April 1920, just three days after the Turkish Grand National Assembly was convened in Ankara, Mustafa Kemal wrote to Lenin about the possibility of forming an alliance against Europe. The Bolsheviks responded with gold and arms that proved crucial in the Turkish War of Independence (Hirst, 2013, p.37). In their search for economic and military support, the Grand National Assembly's first foreign policy decision was to send a delegation to Moscow. Diplomatic relations between the Government of the National Assembly and the Bolshevik regime were established in the early days of the Republic as the Bolsheviks became the first government to recognize the Ankara government led by Mustafa Kemal. They then opened the Soviet Embassy in Ankara. This recognition was crucial in strengthening the government's position both internally against the Ottoman sultan and externally against European states, who were wary of Soviet ambitions to create similar friendly regimes abroad.

The Treaty of Moscow, or the Treaty of Brotherhood, was signed on 16 March 1921, right after the Bolsheviks took control of the Caucasus. Through this treaty, Ankara was able to secure its Eastern Front in order to focus more on the Western Front (Tellal, 2001a, b). Under the Treaty, Russia accepted Turkey's borders as declared in the National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*), which included Kars and Ardahan (Giritli, 1970, p. 3). Russia also gave up its demands on capitulations and agreed to postpone the settlement of the status of the Straits (Tengirşenk, 1981, pp. 215–216). The Treaty was the first agreement signed by the Grand National Assembly with a major power, the first that was not imposed by force in the history of the two countries' bilateral relations. More importantly, it was the first official document before the Lausanne Treaty to declare that the capitulation regime in Turkey was incompatible with national sovereignty (Hale, 2013, pp. 36–37; Yerasimos, 1979, p. 325). The Treaty provided Ankara with not only an important partner but an opportunity to use its alliance with Bolshevik Russia as a bargaining chip against the Allied powers. Indeed, the Soviet Union provided a perfect partner to balance the power of the West.

The Turkish-Soviet cooperation continued during the early years of the Turkish Republic. The Friendship and Neutrality Agreement was signed in

1925, which stated that the parties should not intervene in each other's affairs by force, should not have alliance agreements with third countries detrimental to each other, and should not join third countries' hostile acts against the other (Gönlübol & Sar, 1996, pp. 77–78). This was followed by the Trade Agreement in 1927. Although the newly created Turkish state strengthened its diplomatic and economic cooperation with the Soviets, Turkey's leaders were eager to join the emerging Western international order and demonstrated Turkey's intention to pursue a capitalist economy (Oran, 2001). While the organization of Turkish economy was influenced by Soviet thinking during the early years of the republic and Turkey pursued an import substitution model during the 1930s that was supported by loans from the Soviet Union, Turkey's intention to incrementally move to a capitalist economic system was clearly conveyed to the Allies in the Izmir Economy Congress of 1923.

In short, during the time of Turkey's independence movement and the early years of the Turkish Republic, bilateral relations between Turkey's leaders and the Soviet Union emerged as a pragmatic response to geopolitical necessities before proving mutually beneficial to both governments. As Hirst (2013, pp. 37–38) argues, this was not just a response to a practical necessity; rather, anti-Westernism and Turkish leaders' need to balance the West played a distinct role in establishing these relations. The anti-Western dynamic as a constitutive force of bilateral relations was later transformed when the Western Alliance began to consolidate itself.

War-Making and Alliance Building Before and During World War Two

The later years of the interwar period brought new threats and opportunities for middle powers like Turkey with relative international influence. Turkey's foreign policy strictly focused on staying out of the emerging European conflict and maintaining its hard-won territorial integrity. Yet, Turkey's policymakers also took the opportunities provided by the period's uncertainty to renegotiate what they deemed unfavorable terms forced on Turkey. In particular, the status of the Bosporus and Dardanelles Straits and the fear of Italian aggression prompted Turkey to ask for a revision of the Straits Convention of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. The government first sent a diplomatic note to Great Britain in 1936, arguing that regulations vis-à-vis the status of the Straits set out in the Straits Convention did not restrict the wartime passage of the warships of aggressor states. Turkey's following intense diplomatic efforts led to a conference held in

Montreux, Switzerland. The resulting Montreux Convention of 20 July 1936 restored full Turkish sovereignty over the Straits. Importantly, while the Soviet Union did not ratify the Treaty of Lausanne, it signed and ratified the Convention of Montreux.

Turkish-Soviet relations gradually deteriorated (Gürün, 1991, p. 131) as the Soviets became critical of the reinstitution of Turkish sovereignty over the Straits and cautiously followed Turkey's increasingly close cooperation with the West. Turkey's leaders became suspicious about Soviet expansionism, which was further aggravated by an emerging internal opposition within Turkey seeking closer relations with the Soviets based on ideological adherence. At the same time, the Turkish government had successfully consolidated its position; therefore, Turkey's leaders did not feel the pressure to pursue a strictly balancing approach in foreign policy. Turkey's rapprochement with the Western alliance was also strengthened by Turkey's long-held ambition to become a full-fledged member of the Western bloc. In other words, during the last few years of the interwar period, Moscow and Ankara struggled to maintain their cooperation (İşçi, 2020). Consequently, Turkey's interwar balancing policy was coming to an end (Oran, 2001).

During and after World War Two (WWII), Turkey became more closely aligned with the West, particularly after March 1945, when the Soviets notified Turkey that the 1925 Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship would not be extended (Hasanlı, 2011) and asked for a base in the Straits area and the return of two Turkish provinces, Kars and Ardahan, to the Soviet Union (Bilge, 1997). The mutual mistrust increased further when Soviet Russia demanded revision of the status of the Turkish Straits at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 and the Potsdam Conference in August 1945. In both instances, the Soviet Union argued that the Montreux Convention of 1936 was outdated (Balta & Çelikpala, 2020) and should be revised to allow Russian warships to move freely through the Straits *at all times* (Erkin, 1968, p. 323). In response, Britain declared in 1946 that the 1939 alliance between Turkey and Britain was still in effect; Britain was obliged to help Turkey in case it was attacked by the Soviets.

The Cold War: Turkey's Western Orientation

Behlül Özkan (2017) argues that Soviet Russia's territorial demands became the foundation of Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War and forced Turkey to define the Soviet Union (or the Russians) "once again"

as an ideological threat with destructive aspirations on Turkish territory and sovereignty. The increased threat perception and domestic anti-communism of Turkey's elites eclipsed their longstanding suspicions of the West, which enabled Turkey to rapidly align its foreign policy with the West. In the 1950s, anti-communism shaped the mindset of Turkey's political elites and became the core pillar of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's new foreign policy orientation deeply affected relations with the Soviet Union for the next four decades (Balta & Çelikpala, 2020).

The emerging alliance cohesion within the Western bloc and US leadership and presence in Europe were crucial in Turkey's pro-Western attitude. As discussed in detail by Çelik-Wiltse in this volume, in March 1947, the US initiated a substantial aid package to Turkey and Greece under the Truman Doctrine to assist these countries to resist both direct and indirect Soviet influence. The Truman Doctrine offered unilateral American military support to any free nation threatened by the Soviet Union and promised to strengthen national defense systems. The US Congress appropriated financial aid to support the economies and militaries of Greece and Turkey under the Marshall Plan of 1948. Turkey formally applied for NATO membership in August 1950 and was accepted as a full member in February 1952 after participating in the Korean War. Equally important was American promotion of free elections which ended the single-party regime in Turkey and helped DP secure an electoral victory (Altan-Olcay & Balta, 2020). As the Cold War became institutionalized, the domestic causes of anti-Westernism disappeared while the increasing cohesion and strength of the Western alliance under American leadership became important determinants of Turkey's Cold War foreign policy.

Turkey and the West in Crisis

After Stalin's death, the Soviet government officially withdrew all its demands from Turkey on 30 May 1953. Soon after came offers of Soviet technical and financial aid for industrial development, and the economic relations were re-established after 1953. Starting from 1954, the Soviet Union began to participate in the Izmir Fair while İşbank and Soviet institutions signed technology transfer agreements (Oran, 2001). However, the Turkish-Soviet cooperation was limited to economic relations, as Turkey did not respond to the Soviet's political normalization initiative. On the contrary, the DP government actively took part in the US's containment policy of the Soviet Union.

The limited nature of the Turkish-Soviet relations remained in place even during the Cyprus crisis that prompted a strong anti-Western reaction in Turkey following US President Lyndon Johnson's ultimatum to the Turkish Prime Minister, İsmet İnönü, in which Johnson warned İnönü that NATO would be under no obligation to protect Turkey if a potential military intervention to stop the intercommunal violence in Cyprus resulted in Soviet aggression (Güney, 2004, see Çelik-Wiltse in this volume). The diplomatic crisis over Cyprus deepened further in 1974, when Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit launched a military incursion into Cyprus following the Cypriot coup d'état orchestrated by the Greek military junta. In 1975, the US Congress placed an embargo on transferring military equipment to Turkey while the Turkish government retaliated by suspending all US military base operations on Turkish territory. This embargo was not lifted until 1978, but the crisis and the temporary fall-out between the two governments fed anti-American and anti-Western sentiments even more (Altan-Olcay & Balta, 2020).

Despite several serious political crises between Turkey and the US, Turkey never pivoted toward the Soviet Union nor radically questioned its commitment to the Western alliance. This was due to the bipolar nature of the Cold War, which solidified the alliance's internal cohesion and prevented middle powers from seeking security cooperation with the Soviet Union. In Turkey's case, domestic concerns of the political elites also played an important role. Despite being critical of US attitudes toward Turkey's national autonomy regarding the Cyprus crisis, Turkish leadership was also wary about the growing significance of communist movements in Turkey. Indeed, the Western Alliance provided anti-communist political elites with the tools to repress them. In the 1950s, for example, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the United Kingdom's Secret Intelligence Service established a covert intelligence and armed operations organization called "Operation Gladio" within the NATO framework to counter the "communist threat" in several member states. Turkish Gladio was founded under the codename "Counterguerrilla" after Turkey joined NATO in 1952. It became one of the core elements of the Turkish state, closely cooperating with the West and instrumental in destroying anti-Western political dissidence (Söyler, 2013:316).

While there was no security cooperation between Turkey and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, they continued to develop economic relations in a pattern that closely followed rising levels of anti-Westernism in Turkey. For example, right after the Johnson letter of 1963, Turkey's

Foreign Minister Feridun Cemal Erkin visited Moscow while a trade agreement was concluded in 1964 and supplemented in 1965 and 1967. From 1967 onward, Turkey accepted loans and economic aid from the Soviet Union. In particular, the 1967 agreement provided funds to establish seven facilities, including the Seydişehir Aluminum Factory, Aliağa Petroleum Refinery, and İskenderun Iron-Steel Factory. The Soviet Union once again emerged as an alternative partner when Turkey faced the US embargo due to the Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974. During this period, Turkish leaders frequently emphasized the country's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy, with a specific emphasis on establishing economic independence from the West and strong trade links with the Soviet Union (Çelikpala, 2019).

Turkey's trade relations with the Soviet Union, especially in energy, gained momentum with the liberalization of the Turkish economy in the 1980s. Two important agreements on energy cooperation were signed following a meeting between Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Tikhonov and Prime Minister Turgut Özal in December 1984. After 1984, many Turkish private and public companies established trade relations with the Soviet Union, while the percentage of Turkey's overall trade increased (Karaçay, 2017). The supply of natural gas from the Soviet Union to Turkey in 1987 also played an important role in evolving trade relations (Balta & Çelikpala, 2020, p. 588). In short, due to the Western alliance's cohesion, which did not tolerate security cooperation with the Soviet Union, and domestic anti-communism, Turkey's security alignment with Moscow was minimal during the Cold War. Nevertheless, Turkey's political elites still regularly sent signals warning the West that Turkey could pivot to the Soviet Union, at least economically, to provide a balance of the power of the Western bloc.

The End of the Cold War: A New Role for Turkey at a Time of Great Uncertainty

The end of the Cold War significantly reshaped Turkey's bilateral relations with the Russian Federation, which was recognized as the successor state of the USSR. As Ikenberry notes (2018, p. 18), the end of superpower competition freed the international order "from its Cold War foundations and [it] rapidly became the platform for an expanding global system of liberal democracy, markets and complex interdependence." The Western alliance was in a moment of both triumph and confusion, rebuilding its multilateral ties with the newly emerging democratic states of the

post-socialist bloc while reinforcing cohesion among its allies. NATO was also considering expansion in both its mandate and membership.

The systemic transformation of the international order and the disappearance of superpower competition significantly affected middle powers like Turkey by creating opportunities to expand their role while posing new risks and challenges (Sayarı, 1997). Mufti (1998) argues that Turkey confronted this dangerous new world with "daring and caution" by looking back in time for clues on how best to proceed. In the early 1990s, a segment of Turkey's foreign policy establishment continued to err on the side of caution, based on the lessons learned from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Responding to the period's uncertainty, they warned against an expansionist foreign policy outlook. In contrast, there was growing appeal among newly established political parties, emerging leaders, and public intellectuals for a more "undaunted," or assertive foreign policy outlook, emphasizing new opportunities. Indeed, the 1990s saw not only a host of new issues that come to the fore as part of Turkey's foreign policy but also a rapidly changing domestic context affecting foreign policymaking (Sayarı, 1997).

Prominent among these new opportunities was a renewed commitment to the newly emerging states of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Indeed, the US promoted Turkey as a role model in Central Asia and the Caucasus to counter-balance Russian regional influence. This task and identity were quickly adopted by policymakers in Turkey (Denizhan, 2010) who tried to increase the country's soft power through new institutions like the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), increasing bilateral ties with the new republics, and promoting the new Turkish foreign policy discourse aiming to re-establish the Turkic world from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China (Köstem, 2017). Turkey's new foreign policy approach made the competitive dynamic between Turkey and Russia more apparent and partially blocked any meaningful regional cooperation.

Russia perceived Turkey's regional activism as a direct threat to its security interests since it signified the expansion of both the Turkish and US spheres of influence (Zagorski, 2016). Nevertheless, competition between Russia and Turkey over influence in the post-Soviet sphere never transformed into a full-blown crisis due mainly to the relative weakness of Russia at that time adoption of balanced foreign policies by the newly established former Soviet republics (Balta, 2019). While these countries in the region avoided alienating either Turkey or Russia, Turkey carefully avoided provoking Russia (Balta & Çelikpala, 2020, p. 589). In short, Turkish foreign policy was both daring and cautious.

In the early years of the post-Cold War period, Turkey's expansionist foreign policy outlook did not fully diverge from its Western orientation. Turkey's leaders believed Turkey would stay as a valued ally of the West only by expanding its regional role and influence (Sayarı, 1997). Meanwhile, Turkey was dealing with a series of domestic issues with regional components. The Kurdish issue began to dominate Turkish foreign policy during the 1990s and shaped its outlook for many years to come. The military conflict that began in 1984 when the PKK launched its violent campaign in Kurdish-populated regions of the country, intensified in the 1990s, in parallel with developments in northern Iraq.

The conflict's intensification resurrected the deep-held beliefs of Turkey's political elites (and society) about the reliability of their Western allies and raised substantial doubts about their intentions. Whereas the harsh criticisms for human rights violations and arms embargos against Turkey intensified the ontological security concerns of the Turkish government and political establishment, the crisis of trust between Turkey and the West did not deepen enough to cause Turkey to shift its foreign policy axis. Instead, Turkey retained or even strengthened its Western-oriented outlook while questioning specific policies and raising concerns instead of questioning the foundations of its alliance. With the exception of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP), all political parties had no ideological opposition to Turkey's pro-Western foreign policy and perceived that Turkey's national interests were best served within the Western Alliance (Balta, 2019).

Western criticism of Turkey's Kurdish policy also did not lead to an alignment with Russia because Russia was actively supporting the PKK. In other words, although Turkey's elites were highly critical of the Western approach to the Kurdish problem, they were similarly concerned with Russian policies. Successive Turkish governments accused Russia of supporting the PKK, while Russia accused Turkey of supporting Chechen separatism (Balta & Çelikpala, 2020, p. 590). In 1999, the two countries reached a tacit agreement over the PKK and Chechen separatists by signing a Joint Declaration on Anti-Terrorism.

Collaboration over the PKK/Chechen issue and Turkey's less assertive policy in post-Soviet territories helped both states to reduce their mutual threat perceptions and collaborate on economic and energy-related issues (Yanık, 2007). During the 1990s, Turkey primarily positioned itself against Russia, especially over the development and transportation of the Caspian Basin and Central Asian oil and gas reserves, by taking an active

role in projects aiming to bypass Russian-controlled transportation lines (Çelikpala, 2007). In the 2000s, however, political relations developed more once Turkey's attitude toward transport routes took more account of Russian interests (Kardaş, 2012, p. 93). At the beginning of the 2000s, Turkish officials emphasized their desire to make Turkey a regional energy hub and the relationship with Russia was seen as very important in realizing this ambition. In less than two decades, Turkey not only became overreliant on Russia as its primary energy supplier but also an important hub for Russian natural gas (Erşen & Çelikpala, 2019).

The 2000s: Turkey and Russia as the Emerging Powers of the Region

On 28 June 2000, Russia announced a new Foreign Policy Concept that prioritized the Russian interests in the post-Soviet territories. More specifically, Moscow sought to prevent other regional powers from establishing influence and protect its economic interests and ethnic Russians in these regions. The document specifically mentioned Central Asia as one of Russia's priorities, with radical Islam mentioned for the first time as a significant security priority (Cummings, 2001). In Turkey, Foreign Minister İsmail Cem (1997–2002) favored strengthening Turkey's relations with neighboring states, shifting to a more trade-oriented and less conflictual foreign policy, and transforming Turkey's traditional Western-oriented foreign policy into a more multi-dimensional approach (Tuğtan, 2016). Successive AKP governments continued this emerging multi-dimensional approach in the 2000s, which boosted Turkey's political and military cooperation with Russia (Öniş, 2011). Turkey also pursued a policy of conflict de-escalation with neighboring states while negotiating proactively and looking pragmatically for opportunities to resolve disputes and create cooperation. The policy also infused a dramatic expansion of trade linkages, especially with Russia and Middle Eastern countries, eventually turning Turkey into a trading state (Kirişçi, 2009).

Turkey's relations with the West also improved and reached an unprecedented level during the first decade of the 2000s due to strengthened institutional ties with the European Union (EU) after Turkey was declared as a candidate country in December 1999 (Aydın-Düzgit & Tocci, 2015). Although US-Turkish relations were briefly strained in 2003, when Turkey's parliament rejected a proposal to allow US troops to operate from Turkish bases and ports in the event of war with Iraq, no significant

change was noticed in Turkey's policy toward its Western allies. However, this incident changed Russia's perceptions of Turkey from being a country that cannot act independently from the US to a more independent political player (Baev & Kirişçi, 2017).

Turkey's, as well as Russia's, relations with the West entered a different period after 2008 due mainly to new regional and global economic-political developments. Russia became highly wary of potential NATO and EU expansion into its immediate neighborhood (Gretskiy et al., 2014), while Turkey's full membership to the EU became increasingly elusive. As Turkey's leaders and public became less hopeful about the country's inclusion in the emerging new European security and economic architecture, a new perception, namely *de-Europeanization*, emerged (Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber, 2016). In both countries, the political leadership faced challenges at home that led to increasingly authoritarian tendencies.

As their relations with the West deteriorated, and despite their ongoing geopolitical competition (Markedonov & Ulchenko, 2011), a significant convergence emerged between the foreign policies of Turkey and Russia toward the West. Both countries saw an opportunity to assert power after the 2008 global financial crisis at a time when the US and the European nations were trying to tackle issues at home and thus increasingly became inward-looking. However, the seeming policy convergence was not institutionalized because of conflicting interests and different threat perceptions on both sides. The lack of institutionalization of established relations, the fighter jet crisis in November 2015, and the irreversible and largely irreconcilable policy preferences in Syria led to a suspension in bilateral relations in every area of Turkish-Russian relations for almost eight months. Relations were only renormalized after Turkey accepted Russia's demands for an apology, compensation, and the trial of the people responsible in June 2016 (Özdal, 2020, pp. 103–104).

After Syria: Flexible Alignment in Turkey-Russia Relations

By the year 2009, Turkey's evolving foreign policy outlook under the AKP was showing an increasingly interventionist and assertive foreign policy, seeking to recover Turkey's lost Ottoman past (Özkan, 2014). This policy outlook was partly related to a unique set of ideas advocated by AKP elites, particularly the foreign policy thinking of Ahmet Davutoğlu who served as

Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009–2014, and then as Prime Minister in 2014–2016. Davutoğlu emphasized Turkey's responsibility in the Middle East to restrict Western dominance and promote its unique civilizational rights and duties. In 2013, Russia, too, adopted a new foreign policy concept that emphasized its role as an essential global military and economic pole, a restraining factor in an increasingly chaotic world, and a unique civilization whose values should be transplanted globally through soft power (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia, 2013). Accordingly, Russia's new foreign policy was to become more assertive, as revealed later by Russia's active role in Syria and the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 (Engstrom, 2014).

While the change in the national role conceptions in both Turkey and Russia is important, it is insufficient to consider only agency-level factors to explain their new foreign policy orientations. Around the same time, the Western Alliance was also going through tremendous change. The US as the hegemonic power was, for global and domestic reasons, perceived to be losing its historical role as the custodian of the international order (Balta & Özel, 2021). Meanwhile, the project of European integration was experiencing a profound crisis as EU debates over the Union's role and future, and rising Euroscepticism—even in EU member states—shook the image of the EU as a normative anchor (see Meltem Müftüler-Baç in this volume). These developments gradually loosened the alliance's cohesion, reviving national initiatives and making small and middle powers less concerned about engaging with US power and West-led multilateral institutions (Öniş, 2011). Given the multiple identity crises at national, regional, and global levels, and the Western alliance's lack of ability to promote order in the immediate neighborhoods of Turkey and Russia, provided both Turkey and Russia with an environment in which they came together to seek new opportunities both to counter perceived threats to their security and to establish themselves as regional actors with global ambitions. Turkey called its new policy "flexible alliances," which signaled a significant reduction in Turkey's dependence on the Western alliance "to handle regional security crises by becoming more flexible and transactional in its foreign affairs" (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021, p. 1090).

The systemic and domestic factors shaping the dynamics of Turkish-Russian security cooperation became more accentuated after the beginning of the Syrian civil war. Initially, Turkey and Russia were on opposing sides of the conflict, as Russia supported the Assad regime, and Turkey, in alignment with the Western powers, backed what it labeled the "moderate

Islamist opposition" (Özkan, 2017). In time, however, Turkey's position shifted considerably, as there appeared a significant policy divergence with its Western allies, especially with the US over Kurdish transnationalism and US support for the YPG in Syria. The Turkish government became highly critical of the US-led anti-ISIS coalition and focused on countering the threat of Kurdish insurrection in Syria (Baev & Kirişçi, 2017, p. 6). Since the foundation of the Republic, the Kurdish issue has been one of the key ontological security anxieties of Turkey's political elites (Somer, 2022).

Turkey's estrangement from the West over the Kurdish issue became one of the main drivers of the Astana Talks, which started in 2017 with the participation of Russia, Turkey, and Iran (Trombetta, 2017). Despite significant disagreements about the future of Syria and Assad, possible autonomy for the Kurds, the role of Hezbollah, and the role of the Turkish-backed opposition, Iran, Turkey, and Russia attempted to form of a functioning order in Syria, with minimal presence (or even absence) of the West. This cooperation enabled Turkey to conduct four direct military interventions in Syria in 2016, 2018, 2019, and 2020 to counter Kurdish advances. The operations also resulted in Turkey's active military presence in Syria and the extension of its administrative structures and practices, particularly in education, health, and humanitarian aid. This move also further drifted Turkey and West apart. According to Dalay (2021, p. 12), "Turkish-Russian cooperation in Syria has helped both sides to achieve some of their major goals and aspirations as well as increase their influence and ability——along with that of Iran——in charting the course of the civil war. In return, this has decreased the role and influence of the Western powers in Syria."

Another dynamic that led to Turkey's "flexible alliance" with Russia was the perceived role of the US in the attempted coup in Turkey on 15 July 2016, which raised serious concerns about the AKP regime's security. The Turkish-Russian rapprochement quickly gained momentum after Putin expressed Russia's full support for Erdoğan (Tsvetkova & Kelly, 2015) while Turkey's Western allies responded critically to the AKP government's harsh stance against the perpetrators of the attempted coup and their supporters. The attempted coup and the AKP's response demonstrated that while the interests of the ruling elite need not be synonymous with the interests of the state, political leaders may shift alliances depending on the interests of the ruling elite and use the rhetoric of regime survival to ensure their own security (Koblentz, 2013, p. 507). Given the

context of *autocratization* in Turkey following the 2016 attempted coup and the increased estrangement of the AKP from the West encouraged more cooperation with Russia.

Galip Dalay (2021) argues that in addition to the actor-specific and systemic factors, a personality-centric framework is also crucial in explaining the increasingly closer relations between Turkey and Russia. The leadership style of Putin, the changing decision-making landscape in both countries, and the personal rapport between Erdoğan and Putin have been crucial in keeping these relations on track (Dalay, 2021, p. 6). Indeed, the personalized nature of decision-making, which derived from progressively authoritarian tendencies in both countries, not only reinforced trust between them but also led to a rapid decision-making process that both leaders thought worked efficiently in a chaotic region. Furthermore, both leaders valued "being a man of his word" and highlighted how legislative institutions constrain the necessary decision-making capacities of the leaders. They thought that Western leaders could not reach a policy consensus, and their words may not imply proper actions. A disdain for democratic oversight has also been part of their, what Ekşi and Wood (2019) describe as masculine leadership styles.

One of the most significant consequences of the Turkish-Russian security cooperation was Turkey's decision in 2017 to buy Russia's most advanced S-400 surface-to-air missile-defense system. This move was interpreted as a further sign of Turkey's evolving security rapprochement with Russia, which significantly undermined the Turkish-Western alliance and Turkey's position in NATO (Kasapoğlu, 2017). The purchase created one of the most significant crises between the US and Turkey and between NATO and Turkey.

While significant factors have created a platform for Turkey and Russia to cooperate over the past decade, their similar ambitions and conflicting national interests remain significant. Russia's position on Cyprus, which considers any change in the *status quo* as directly threatening its influence over Nicosia, is antithetical to Turkey. Turkey and Russia have also been at odds in Libya as both countries try to cement their military presence. Finally, the renewed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia has added to the tensions. At the time of this writing, Turkey and Russia were still able to coordinate their policies despite these conflicting interests in their surroundings because their alignment in certain conflict situations (e.g., Syria) has enabled them to weaken the Western alliance (Konarzewska, 2021).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022 created an environment in which Turkey came to the fore as a power broker. Having established good relations with both Russia and Ukraine, Turkey acted as a mediator by hosting direct meetings of Russian and Ukrainian delegations and negotiating the grain deal together with the United Nations (UN). Turkey sold weapons, specifically drones, to Ukraine while maintaining security cooperation with Russia in regions like Syria and Nagorno-Karabagh. Turkey has also implemented Montreux Convention and closed the straits to ships of the warring parties but asked third-party states not to use the Straits. Even though Turkey abstained from voting on Russia's suspension from the Council of Europe, the UN General Assembly resolution condemning Russia was approved. These developments have so far made it possible for Turkey without strongly committing to one side. Turkey's delicate balancing role of being pro-Ukrainian without being openly anti-Russian remains intact. However, Turkey continues to use the fluidity and ambiguity of the current situation and its flexible alliance with Russia to its advantage.

Turkey has not vetoed or blocked any NATO decisions on Ukraine and has involved in the efforts to build up NATO's defenses in South-Eastern Europe. Yet Turkey initially stalled the approval of Sweden and Finland's membership for NATO. As of April 2023, Turkey has not yet approved Sweden's membership, and still expresses concerns mostly related to bilateral issues, yet ratified the Finland's application to join NATO on 30 March 2023. This ratification removed the last obstacle in the way of Nordic country's long-delayed accession into the Western military alliance. Finland's membership represents a major change in Europe's security landscape, considering the country's traditional policy of neutrality after its defeat by the Soviets in WWII. The long-term impact of Turkey's ratification on Turkey-Russia relations is still yet to be seen.

Conclusion: What Comes Next After Ukraine?

As we write this chapter, the situation in Ukraine and the balance of power on the ground remains unclear. How the war is going to unfold is still uncertain, and therefore, it is difficult to predict how the developments during the war will affect Turkish-Russian relations. Historically, as we argued in this chapter, two factors were dominant in shaping Turkey's approach to its relations with Russia: alliance cohesion (i.e., cohesion of the Western alliance) and domestic anti-Westernism. Accordingly, the first

real test of the sustainability of the current Turkish-Russian alignment would be greater alliance cohesion within the Western Alliance.

The EU has abandoned its previous policy, favored by France and Italy, of accommodating Russia, while the US has returned to Europe in full force, and NATO is being revitalized to become the central organization around which the transatlantic or geopolitical West is being reconstituted (Balta & Özel, 2021). The alliance, however, faces a double pressure. On the one hand, its cohesion and future depend on effectively resisting Russian aggression, either through sanctions or through military means. On the other hand, capitalizing on being Europe's main energy supplier, Russia has directly targeted the resilience of Europe's domestic politics, which would have an unprecedented impact on alliance cohesion. Therefore, it is important to monitor emerging patterns of alliance cohesion within the West.

Regarding the second factor shaping Turkey-Russia bilateral relations, Turkish politics has seen widespread anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism in the last decade. Regime security and the Kurdish transnationalism coupled with a populist foreign policy have converted the West into the new "Other" in Turkey's foreign policy outlook. As Turkey is preparing for elections in 2023 during the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the sharp differences between political camps over Turkey's political identity and its democratic path will determine what might come next. The Republic's centenary represents a constitutive moment for Turkey's future.

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CHAPTER 5

Domestic Sources of AKP's Foreign Policy Toward the MENA Region: Ideology and Pragmatism

Meliha Benli Altunışık

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has acquired a prominent place in Turkey's foreign policy since the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) in late 2002. In practice, this meant several things: Turkey's relations with this region not only intensified and broadened but the Turkish state was increasingly identified with MENA. Thus, unlike other governments during the Republican era some of which also aimed to develop relations with this region, the AKP's involvement in the MENA region has been different in terms of its extent and intensity as well as its nature and meaning. Although the AKP's specific policies toward the MENA have shifted during the last two decades that it has been in power, its general view of Turkey's place in this region and the importance it attached to that place have not changed. How can we understand and explain AKP's overall

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_5

MENA foreign policy despite the recent shifts in specific policies? Furthermore, how can we explain the intensity and assertiveness of foreign policy behavior of the AKP toward MENA during its more than two decades in power?

These questions allude to a general continuity in AKP's overall MENA policy regardless of the important shifts in global and regional politics in the two decades of AKP in power. In order to explain that continuity, despite the shifts in specific policies, this chapter focuses on the domestic sources of Turkey's foreign policy toward the MENA under the rule of the AKP. The chapter claims that although international and regional contexts become significant especially in understanding specific policies of the AKP, focusing solely on external strategic constraints and incentives does not explain the general continuity in AKP's approach to the region (i.e., namely how it sees the region and Turkey's place in it). The chapter suggests that unit-level variables are explanatory in terms of overall AKP foreign policy toward the MENA. Thus, instead of focusing on the centrality of the international system and treating unit-level variables as intervening variables as Neo-Classical Realism does (Lobell et al., 2009), the chapter focuses on the unit-level variables as the main factors that explain the prominence of the MENA region in AKP's foreign policy. More specifically, the chapter places special emphasis on ideational and ideological factors (i.e., AKP's worldview) in explaining the continuity in Turkey's foreign policy toward the MENA region in the past two decades.

Yet focusing on AKP's ideology at times creates complexity in explaining AKP's specific foreign policies toward the MENA region, particularly the normalization drive with several key countries with which Turkey had a quite hostile relationship since the Arab Uprisings. This points to an important puzzle that refers to the possibility of co-existence of ideology and pragmatism. On the one hand, the ideas and ideology of the AKP have had a great impact on AKP's foreign policy toward the MENA (Altunışık, 2009; Özkan, 2014; Parlar Dal, 2012). Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP ideology that focuses on Islamic solidarity and the Ottoman past has identified the MENA region as a significant part of its narrative of "new Turkish foreign policy." Yet at the same time, the AKP's general foreign policy and its foreign policy toward the region, in particular, have displayed characteristics of pragmatism focusing on material interests. Although there were previous examples of it, this pragmatism has reached its apex in the last two years. The government began an effort to normalize its relations with several countries, particularly the United

Arab Emirates (UAE), Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, with all of which it had a quite problematic relationship due to their different ideological perspectives as to how should the Middle East be organized after the Arab Uprisings. AKP officials also began to talk about normalizing relations with the Bashar regime in Syria, after presenting themselves as its nemesis since the beginning of the uprisings there. How can we account for this seeming contradiction? In other words, if the ideology and ideas of the AKP explain the continuity in its foreign policy, how can we explain the instances of pragmatism where the AKP seemingly disregards its ideological positions? How come the AKP has been able to harmonize ideological perspectives with pragmatic foreign policy moves?

This chapter argues that AKP's pragmatism is "procedural pragmatism" as opposed to "substantive pragmatism,"[1] which allows for the consideration of different policy alternatives without ultimately changing the overall ideological framework that drives foreign policy. *Procedural pragmatism* is defined as "a process of engaging with all and any ideas that are contextually and politically expedient" and as such it differs from *substantive pragmatism* which refers to a "content-rich blueprint for change-namely, to a foreign policy built on realist assumptions" (Chatterjee et al., 2017, p. 28 and 34). Yet, *procedural pragmatism* also requires the actors to find a balance and to provide a justification within the ideational frames particularly for its constituencies. This chapter shows that the AKP has been trying to do this and justify its pragmatism by drawing not only on their main ideological framework (i.e., claiming that they are solving the problems of the Islamic world) but also on the more recent ideological frame, namely a nationalist one, that the leaders of the AKP have started to use especially since the failed coup attempt in July 2016 (i.e., claiming to help to solve the threat from the Kurdish groups in Syria). In addition, the AKP ultimately argues for the necessity of pragmatism as a way to "save the[ir] authentic rule," while not challenging the party's main ideational frame.

Thus, in understanding the relationship between AKP's ideology and pragmatism in AKP's MENA foreign policy moves, our analysis emphasizes the importance of unit-level variables and focuses on AKP's domestic political considerations and objectives, specifically identifying ideational

[1] I am borrowing the concepts of "procedural pragmatism" and "substantive pragmatism" from Chatterjee et al. (2017). In addition to India under Modi, the issue of understanding pragmatism in ideologically driven governments and regimes has also been discussed in the case of revolutionary Iran for years. For an early example, see Ramazani (2004).

and ideological variables (rebranding Turkey's state identity and ideology) and material variables (achieving the AKP's domestic political objective of staying in power) as the explanatory variables. While the ideational and ideological variables mainly explain the general continuity of the high level of involvement in the MENA in the last two decades despite the shifts in the international system, the material variables help us to understand the seeming contradiction between ideology and pragmatism in AKP's foreign policy toward the region. The AKP, which came to power as a single party soon after its establishment in 2002, and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who dominated the party and established a highly personalized rule that has culminated in the new "Turkish style" presidential system, want to continue to stay in power. The pragmatism in foreign policy emanates from this objective. As a result, the AKP's foreign policy toward the MENA region has been affected by ideologically rebranding Turkey's state identity as well as its domestic political objective of staying in power. Even further, this chapter demonstrates that for a long time AKP's ideology in MENA foreign policy and its domestic political objectives reinforced each other. Its overall foreign policy toward the region that emphasized Islamic solidarity and the Ottoman past and its positions and discourses on the Palestinian issue helped to consolidate its constituency. Its specific policy of engaging the *Kurdistan* Regional Government (KRG) helped the party to consolidate its support in the Kurdish areas. However, since the Arab Uprisings some tensions began to emerge between AKP's foreign policy in the MENA region and domestic politics. Turkey's involvement in Syria and the influx of a large number of refugees into Turkey as well as recent normalizations with the countries AKP was highly critical of seemed to lead to a dissonance between these two spheres.

The Role of Domestic Politics in Explaining Turkey's MENA Policy

The influence of domestic politics on foreign policy has been long modeled by several approaches in International Relations (IR). The so-called domestic turn in IR has influenced all grand theories, including Realism which led to the emergence of Neo-Classical Realism. Similarly, Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) is based on domestic political explanations, specifically focusing on the role of decision-making units to be central in state behavior. Drawing on the theories that focus on domestic sources of

foreign policy, this chapter builds an eclectic model by bringing together material variables and ideational and ideological factors in explaining Turkey's foreign policy toward the MENA region.

The primary assumption we start with is that unit-level variables are more important than international and regional factors in foreign policy-making in personalistic and ideologically oriented polities like Turkey under the AKP. As to the main material variable in the domestic context, the study identifies political survival of the AKP as the main driver in explaining AKP's MENA policy. The quest to remain in power has shaped AKP's domestic alliances and thus its foreign policy engagements. As such it also became an important source of its *procedural pragmatism* in foreign policy. However, the aim of political survival has also been linked to ideational and ideological elements in AKP foreign policy. As to the ideational and ideological variables, Islamism, neo-Ottomanism, Islamic civilization, and solidarity are considered to drive foreign policy toward this region. As such it is argued that this ideological frame not only has shaped conceptions of national identity but also foreign policy by developing ideational frames that legitimize some foreign policy actions while delegitimizing others. Ultimately, however, the AKP and especially its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have been able to locate any foreign policy move that they have engaged in within the general frame of "authentic rulers" of the country and thus continued to successfully explain it to their core constituencies.

Ideational Factors: State Identity and Constructed Narratives in Foreign Policy

Turkey's MENA policy has long been part of domestic political debates and struggles. The political Islamist parties, movements, and ideologues have long framed Turkey's policy toward the region as part of their general criticism of "Kemalist Turkey." According to this narrative, except for brief instances, Turkey had turned its back to the Middle East as part of its "culturalist project of Westernization." Even when there was an opening to the region, this was a continuation of the Western-oriented foreign policy of Republican Turkey rather than a genuine interest based on historical and cultural responsibility. A corollary of this position is the argument that the political Islamist parties are those unique actors with a *vision* and *policy* toward the MENA, as they are the ones that really "understand" this region.

The juxtaposition of Turkey's MENA policy in a binary fashion and its use in domestic political debates reached its zenith with the coming to power of the AKP in late 2002. The AKP came with a claim to change Turkey's foreign policy in the MENA region. Turkey was already actively engaged with this region in the 1990s. The Gulf War of 1990–1991 and the developments in Iraq afterward had increased Turkey's threat perceptions due to the emergence of a de facto Kurdish rule in northern Iraq. The tensions with Syria also almost led to a war due to that country's support of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which had escalated its war against Turkey. Turkey's increasing threat perceptions led to its use of military power as well as to an alignment with Israel. The AKP was critical of such an engagement with the region, which focused on threat perceptions, and promised to improve Turkey's ties with the whole region.

A nucleus cadre that split from Turkey's Islamist movement, the *National Outlook (or National View)*, established the AKP. From the beginning, the party made foreign policy one of the cornerstones of its ideology and practice, and the MENA region has had a special place in the party's quest to redefine and re-constitute Turkey's domestic and international identity. A vision of Turkey's national identity and its historical narrative was explicitly tied to specific foreign policy frames. This new vision of Turkey's foreign policy toward the MENA region started with criticism of traditional policy and its historical narrative. The "old era" republican foreign policy toward the MENA was characterized by Turkey's turning its back on the region, which signaled an ideological choice that favored a rupture with Turkey's past. These arguments appeared extensively in the writings of Ahmet Davutoğlu who became one of the ideologues of the AKP and served in different capacities in AKP governments until 2015. For instance, Davutoğlu argued that Turkey's approach to this region was influenced by "Turkey's alienation and to some extent being torn about the culture of the region and regional balances," as well as "prejudices about the Arab image that was put at the center of foreign policy making" which made it impossible for Turkey to "catch up with the developments in the region" (Davutoğlu, 2001, pp. 59–409). As a result, Turkish Republic turned its back on the MENA region after losing these territories.

Instead, the AKP began developing a new regional vision originating from "historical responsibility and experiences" based on the so-called consistent principles (Party Program, pp. 160–161). From this

perspective, historical and cultural ties with the MENA countries are viewed in positive terms that not only make it easier for Turkey to be involved in the region but also compel Turkey to be part of the MENA. Turkey's historical and cultural identity that has been re-articulated by the AKP leadership has imposed on the country a central role in the region. In the words of Davutoğlu, Turkey had historical, strategic, and geographic *depth* in the Middle East. As such, Turkey not only held a central position but also had it in its best interest to engage in this region. This engagement, however, Davutoğlu added, should be dynamic and proactive as well as Ankara-centered, meaning that it should not only be an extension of Turkey's relations with the West (CNNTurk December 12, 2006). In this context, Davutoğlu was critical of Turkey's role as a "bridge," as such a role embodied passivity and diluted Turkey's central position in the Middle East (Altunışık, 2009, pp. 187–188).

The new foreign policy framework under the AKP rule was based on the importance of Turkey's historical and cultural ties and thus its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. Although the AKP renounced neo-Ottomanism in the new vision, AKP officials continued to make references to the Ottoman past in Turkey's relations with the region. For instance, while referring to conflict over Jerusalem, Davutoğlu claimed that "no political problem can be resolved without utilizing Ottoman archives" (Aras, 2009, p. 131). A related argument was, Turkey is a country that "knows, understands, and analyzes its geography best" because "we have common religious and cultural characteristics with all the countries and peoples of the region" (Erdoğan, September 23, 2014) and the Ottoman past accorded responsibility for Turkey for this region (Anadolu Agency, February 10, 2018). Thus, approaches such as "zero problems with neighbors" and "win-win" in regional relations allowed the AKP to criticize the previous policy and helped frame Turkey as a *constructive* and *responsible* actor (Altunışık, 2014b, p. 129). As Constructivists argue, preferences come from identities (Adler, 2002). The AKP's definition of what Turkey's identity should be led to its extensive engagement with the MENA region. The AKP's view of the centrality of the Ottoman past also paved the way to ideas of leadership in the region (Altunışık, 2014b, pp. 129–130). The focus on political Islam has determined whom the AKP wants to help and whom it chooses to oppose.

Although Davutoğlu became the most well-known representative of this worldview, similar ideas about Turkey's "return" to the MENA region

after a long break during the Republican era and the region's importance in the new vision of Turkey's new foreign policy have been articulated by many AKP officials. The new MENA policy continued to be the basis of criticism of the Republican ideology, which, from the perspective of the AKP, was represented by the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet* Halk Partisi, *CHP*). In 2015, criticizing what he frames as the Republican worldview, the then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said: "[T]he places you call swamp, are historic places that we cannot forget" (*ENSon Haber*, November 26, 2011). In the same speech, Erdoğan said: "Now there is a deepening Syria issue. The Syrian issue is our main issue. We do not look here like other countries. We feel every bomb dropped on Syria in our own hearts" (Ibid.). This reference, which was repeated numerous times in later years, showed the extent to which the MENA region was present in AKP's consciousness. Similarly, in 2018, President Erdoğan criticized the main opposition party CHP for threatening Gulf investors who were buying properties in Turkey and stated: "For [the CHP], Germans, Americans and others aren't foreigners, but Arabs are. They have the inferiority complex to such a degree that they detest everything about our civilisation but they unconditionally admire the West, whose past is full of exploitation and blood." In the same speech, Erdoğan also blamed the CHP for creating an anti-Syrian refugee sentiment in public and said that the AKP will continue to host Syrians (*Middle East Eye*, May 18, 2022). Overall, Turkey's new MENA policy has been utilized as a fertile area where the AKP can construct Turkey's new identity along its ideology and differentiate itself from the previous Kemalist regime. Thus, more than any other aspect of foreign policy Turkey's MENA policy became an arena for the contestation of domestic political struggles and identity debates.

The ideational and ideological elements in AKP's foreign policy toward the MENA have manifested themselves in foreign policy especially after the Arab Uprisings. The wave of popular uprisings against the authoritarian regimes that started in Tunisia and soon spread to several Arab states in 2011 magnified the core ideas that already existed in AKP's worldview. Like the leaders of the *National Outlook* movement it evolved from, AKP leaders always differentiated between the regimes and the peoples in the MENA. This was a mirror image of their analysis of Turkish Republican history characterized by a wedge between the elites and the people. The Arab Uprisings represented that "the people" could finally come to power

in the Arab world as well (Baskan, 2018). This embracing of "people's power" was another novelty in Turkey's foreign policy toward the region and yet very much in line with AKP ideology. For Davutoğlu, who was the foreign minister at the time, this was the moment to end the Sykes-Picot order that was imposed on the region after World War I with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The Arab Uprisings presented an opportunity for the peoples of the region to take power and end the artificial divisions imposed on them first by the colonial powers and then by their authoritarian leaders. In such a context, Turkey was bound to lead by example and help facilitate this transformation. Such a view differed considerably from the secular supporters of the uprisings in its analysis of the transformation, as it was based on an Islamist and neo-Ottomanist worldview. Thinking that finally the time for the authentic voice of the people came and that voice was the voice of the political Islamists, the AKP openly supported the groups that subscribed to the Muslim Brotherhood ideology in *all* countries experiencing revolutionary upheavals.

Egypt's place in AKP's view of the transformations in the region was special as the most important Arab country and the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. The AKP extended its full support to the transition process and then to Muhammad Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, the leader of the *Freedom and Justice Party*, who became the first elected president of Egypt. The AKP government provided aid and expertise to the new regime (Altunışık, 2014a, pp. 342–343). Davutoğlu also talked about the possibility of a Turkish-Egyptian axis in regional politics (Shadid, 2011). Morsi was invited, together with HAMAS leader Khalid Mashal, to the AKP Convention in 2012 where he conveyed his and the Egyptians' "admiration for what the AKP had achieved in Turkey" and continued to a cheering crowd: "Erdoğan, you are not only a leader in Turkey now, you are a leader in the Muslim world as well" (Hürriyet Daily News, September 30, 2012b).

Later clearly upset by "losing Egypt," a strategic ally, with Morsi's ousting, the AKP used the coup as a metaphor at home to discredit the 2013 Gezi Park protests and other opposition to the AKP rule by invoking themes of victimization through the claim of a plot to topple the government in Turkey. There were also "mass demonstrations organized by the AKP and Islamist NGOs" against the coup in Egypt (Tür, 2019, p. 603). More significantly, Erdoğan made extensive references to the Egyptian coup in many of his public speeches and rallies and used it for domestic

purposes (Yahoo News, May 16, 2015; YouTube, 2019). The AKP's involvement in Egyptian politics was not only limited to anti-coup discourses; it also extended to hosting and supporting Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members in Turkey. As a result, "Turkey presented a safe refuge for the Muslim Brotherhood by providing financial and legal backing to establish TV channels and political support by publicly criticizing the military's coup" (Magued, 2018, p. 481). Erdoğan continued to talk against the coup, the election of Abdel *Fattah el-Sisi* as the new president and the treatment of Muslim Brotherhood members and especially Muhammad Morsi by the new regime. He also used the events in Egypt to criticize the West once again:

> Even if those who gave us lessons about rights, law and freedom, the president, elected by the free will of the Egyptian people with 52 percent of the vote, remains silent in the coup courts, we cannot remain silent. Just as we did not consent to the murder of the late Jamal Khashoggi being forgotten, we will never allow anyone to forget the tragedy of President Mohammed Morsi. We will fight for the clarification of the issue by making full use of the opportunities provided by international law. (*TRT Haber*, June 20, 2019)

Another foreign policy issue that the ideology of the AKP has influenced is Turkey's relations with Israel. The Palestinian issue has always been one of the quintessential issues of Turkish political Islamism. The *National Outlook* movement from where the AKP originally came has been traditionally very critical of Israel and its policies. Although there has been a general sympathy with the Palestinian cause in different political circles in Turkey, the Islamist perspective has always differed in its religious framing of the issue. Even though during the AKP rule there were at times signs of pragmatism, ideological perspective dominated the overall AKP approach to Israel. For instance, in its early years the AKP developed a working relationship with Israel. During the first AKP government, Abdullah Gül, who was then the foreign minister, visited Israel in January 2005, which was followed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit in May 2005. In November 2007, Israeli President Shimon Peres addressed the Turkish parliament, a first time for an Israeli president. Turkey's working relations with Israel and Syria allowed Ankara to mediate the conflict between them. In 2008, indirect talks started between Israel and Syria under Turkish mediation and five meetings were held. The AKP government also arranged a meeting between Israeli and Pakistani foreign

ministers in Istanbul in September 2005, the first official contact between the two countries. However, by the end of 2000s political and security relations between the two countries deteriorated with a series of crises, including the so-called Davos Affair. Speaking at the same panel discussing the Palestinian issue in Davos, Switzerland, the then-Prime Minister Erdoğan told Israeli President Shimon Press:

> Mr. Peres, you are older than I am. But the volume of your voice is too high. And I know this is because of the guilt psychology. My voice will not be that loud. Know this like that. When it is time to kill, you know how to kill well. I know well how you kill children on beaches, how you shoot them. I remember two former prime ministers in your country who said they felt very happy when they were able to enter Palestine on tanks. And you gave me numbers. I would give out a name too [referring to the prime minister saying he/she felt happy when entering Palestine], if maybe some of you are wondering. (Hürriyet Daily News, January 31, 2009)

The relations hit bottom with the *Mavi Marmara* incident in which Israeli Defense Force personnel seized a Turkish aid ship that was part of an international flotilla organized by NGOs and bound to Gaza, resulting in the death of nine Turkish citizens.

After consolidating itself domestically the AKP elites became increasingly critical of Israeli policies and hostile toward their leaders (Aydınlı & Erpul, 2021). Indeed, the evolution of AKP's relations with Israel can be considered an example of how "procedural pragmatism" works in foreign policy. While the AKP leadership did not necessarily consider Israel a rival or enemy in the early years of their rule, a certain ideological narrative has entered AKP officials' discourse since 2009 (Aytürk, 2011, p. 676 and 683). Beyond discourse, this ideological frame has also influenced with whom Turkey allies among the Palestinian actors. While increasingly engaging with HAMAS as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people after 2006, the relations between Turkey and the Palestinian National Authority and its leader Mahmoud Abbas deteriorated.

Another crucial example of the impact of the AKP's ideological outlook in foreign policy emerged with the uprisings in Syria. Relations with Syria before the Arab Spring represented AKP's pragmatism which was based on engaging Syria and waiting for a gradual political change in that country. Yet, the uprisings provided an opportunity for the AKP to hasten that process. The AKP expected a quick and swift change. Speaking in the early

days of the uprisings at an extended group meeting held at the party's headquarters, the then-Prime Minister Erdoğan said: "[W]e will go there in the shortest possible time if Allah wills it and embrace our brothers. That day is close. We will pray near the grave of Salahaddin Ayyubi and pray in the Umayyad Mosque. We will pray for our brotherhood freely in Hejaz Railway Station" (*Hürriyet Daily News*, September 5, 2012a).

According to the AKP, the Sunnis who constituted the majority in Syria would come to power if there was going to be a regime change. The AKP's religiously colored perspective on Syria, such as thinking of Sunni Islam as the main motivation in the uprisings and seeing Sunni Muslims as a monolithic group, influenced AKP's Syria policy. Although the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was, unlike its counterpart in Egypt, a weak actor in Syria, the AKP supported them and tried to turn them into the main actor of the opposition in the early days of the uprising. While the conflict itself went through several stages with different sets of parameters, both inside and outside Syria, Turkey stuck firmly to its policy of regime change in Syria for a long time. This position led to the deterioration of Turkey's relations with its allies and other countries with whom it had previously enjoyed reasonably close relations. It also created new problems for Turkey, including dealing with security threats, and exacerbated the refugee crisis.

The situation begs the question as to why it has been allowed to come to this. Barring an explanation that analyzes the policy as a series of misperceptions and miscalculations, it is clear that an explanation based solely on national interest fails to explain Turkey's policy. Another way of explaining the AKP's inflexible policy in Syria is to focus on ideological and/or personal reasons (Altunışık, 2016, p. 62). Such an analysis should focus on the influence of Erdoğan and Davutoğlu on the development of this policy. In any case, it is clear that Turkey has so far failed to achieve any of its objectives in Syria and its room for maneuvers has progressively diminished.

Relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia also have been affected by the AKP's ideological preferences in the MENA region after the Arab Spring. The AKP perceived the wave of change in the region as a window of opportunity. It was expected that now that the people in the region were demanding a change of authoritarian leaders, this would inevitably bring Islamist actors to power. By the same token, this would also mean increasing the influence of Turkey in the region. Then Prime Minister Davutoğlu called this as final "natural flow of

history" (Baskan, 2018, p. 272). Such an ideologically based political vision for the region was seen as a major challenge to their interest by the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the two countries that were not only threatened by the rise of Islamist actors they did not control but also had their own desires to play leadership roles in the region. This led to intense competition between these actors and the AKP and its supporters in the media and think tanks began their ideological attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Material Factors: Pragmatism and Domestic Political Objectives

The second key domestic variable that helps explain AKP's foreign policy is the party's perception of its own security and stability. Previously the Turkish state's threat perceptions about communism, Kurdish nationalism, and political Islam had an impact on Turkey's foreign policy toward the MENA region. In the 1950s, the Menderes government's view of the Middle East was influenced by its perception of communism as a threat at home and in the region and how this perception was connected to the Soviet Union. The threat perceived from Kurdish nationalism at home impacted Turkey's foreign policy toward the MENA especially in the 1930s as well as in the 1990s. Similarly, political Islam was identified as an important threat to the regime in the 1990s, and Turkey's foreign policy toward the region was affected by this consideration. However, under the AKP rule, the domestic political concerns were connected specifically with the continuation of the AKP rule, which was narrated as the only legitimate rule by "the people" as opposed to by the "elites." In this sense, the AKP rule was elevated to regime security. Thus, when the AKP felt that its rule was facing significant challenges, it responded by re-arranging the broad-based coalition the party needed to maintain its power, consolidating the traditional constituency, and all that has had an impact on foreign policy.

The AKP initially came to power as an outsider and perceived the traditional actors of the state as challengers to its authority. To deal with that, it established alliances with other "outsiders" such as the Kurdish political movement and the critics of the Kemalist regime, including the liberals. More significantly, it also allied with the Gülen movement, which provided a significant portion of the administrative cadre under AKP's rule. This domestic coalition was strengthened through foreign policy. In the case of the MENA, the general desecuritization of Turkey's foreign policy

was captured by the slogan of "zero problems with neighbors." In the 1990s, the perception that the regime was under threat due to the rise in political Islamism and Kurdish nationalism had increased the role of the military. These domestic political issues were transformed by political actors into matters of "security." In other words, they were securitized. The linking of these issues to the MENA, specifically to the developments in Iraq and the policies of Iran and Syria, had also securitized foreign policy and given the military an increased weight in foreign policy as well. Thus, desecuritization of Turkey's foreign policy in the MENA region opened the door for the AKP to end the military's role in foreign policy.

Within that context, the significant shift in Turkey's relations with the newly established federal region in Iraq, the KRG was specifically demonstrative. From the beginning, the AKP differed particularly from the military about Turkey's approach to the KRG. While the military prioritized the presence of the PKK in the KRG-dominated areas and emphasized military means to effectively handle this threat, the AKP preferred engaging the KRG. In the mid-2000s the AKP started several covert official meetings with the KRG officials in which the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, MIT) participated (Kayhan Pusane, 2020, p. 400). Yet it took time for the AKP to change Turkey's relations with the KRG. When in 2007 the then-Prime Minister Erdoğan announced that the government would establish direct talks with KRG, the then-Chief of Staff General Yaşar Büyükanıt responded that Turkey should launch a military operation in northern Iraq against the PKK which, according to him, was preparing to launch new attacks against Turkey under the protection of the KRG (Reuters, April 12, 2007). After launching a limited military operation in 2008 in response to the increasing number of PKK attacks, the AKP launched an opening to the KRG. It was clear that the relations with the KRG were very much part of domestic power struggles between the AKP and the military and were linked to AKP's alliance with the Kurdish political movement—both objectives very much related to the AKP's consolidation of power at home.

The process of the AKP initiated "Kurdish opening" in 2009 to find a solution to the ongoing Kurdish conflict went through several stages and reached new levels when, in 2012, Erdoğan allowed state officials to negotiate with the jailed leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan. In March 2013, Öcalan's letter to the people, which called for an end to the armed struggle, was read publicly both in Turkish and Kurdish during the Nowruz

celebrations in Diyarbakır. The linkage of all these domestic developments with AKP's foreign policy was underlined when Erdoğan met with the KRG President Masoud Barzani in a rally in Diyarbakır in November 2013. This was also considered an attempt by Erdoğan to recover his tarnished image after the Gezi protests in the summer of 2013 and to consolidate the support of the Kurdish constituency that remained distant to the protests (Çandar, 2013). Since then, these domestic alliances unraveled one by one. As the AKP consolidated itself domestically, its policies shifted toward populist "competitive authoritarianism" (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016), led to a change in domestic threat perceptions and internal alliances, and the "Kurdish peace process" (2014–2015) collapsed.

AKP's alliance with the Gülen movement also ended after years of competition between the two for dominance. The Gezi Park protests in the summer of 2013, the loss of general elections in June 2015, and the rise of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (*Halklarin Demokratik Partisi*, HDP) in Turkish politics were seen as challenges to AKP's electoral dominance since its establishment. Finally, the increased concerns over regime security after the failed coup attempt in July 2016 led to different policy preferences. In the meantime, the AKP effectively established an informal coalition with the ultra-nationalist National Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) and other nationalist actors in the system under the banner of "National Alliance" (*Cumhur İttifakı*), which became necessary for the AKP's staying in power.

The *nationalist turn* in domestic politics has had immediate effects on foreign policy. Such a transformation led to the AKP's adoption of more nationalist foreign policy agendas and militaristic diplomatic tools. Against this strategic backdrop, the frequent use of military power and risk-taking has become the preferred means for protecting Turkey's interests in the region, redefining Turkey's role vis-à-vis partners and adversaries alike while maintaining regime security and alliances domestically. This was principally seen in Turkey's policy toward Syria and Iraq and in its relations with Libya. Turkey has conducted four major military operations in Syria since 2018 and two in northern Iraq since May 2019. In the case of Syria and Iraq, Turkey's foreign policy increasingly began to center once again on the threat from Kurdish nationalism. Turkey has also engaged in a progressively rivalrous relationship with the bloc composed of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Israel. Their competition extended to the Horn of Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, paving the way for Turkey's

isolation in the newly developing geopolitical and geoeconomics context especially in the Eastern Mediterranean, as MENA actors began to ally themselves with the Republic of Cyprus and Greece. Turkey, in response, became more involved politically and militarily in the Libyan conflict by becoming one of the main supporters of the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) both politically and militarily in the civil war. This allowed the AKP government to sign a maritime delimitation agreement with the GNA that aimed to expand its exclusive economic zone in the Mediterranean in response to growing alliance among its rivals. All these developments created significant challenges to Turkey's interests in these regions.

Since 2020, new challenges have emerged to the AKP rule. The economic crisis that started in 2018 intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic and the global crisis. The inflation has reached to more than 80 percent in 2022 (Trading Economics, 2022a), whereas the Turkish Lira has lost its value against the US dollar by 44 percent (Trading Economics, 2022b). Youth unemployment has also reached more than 24 percent in 2022 (Statista, October 19, 2022). The adverse economic conditions were significant for the AKP to maintain its position in the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections on May 14, 2023. The narrative of economic success and the trickling down of wealth have traditionally been one of the main reasons for AKP's repeated electoral success. In addition to the economic crisis, the presence of almost 4 million Syrians in Turkey and AKP's overall liberal policy of migration has increasingly become a point of criticism of the AKP.

Faced with declining approval ratings, the AKP began to again utilize foreign policy. On the one hand, the economic crisis has made the continuation of militaristic foreign policy and confrontation unsustainable. On the other hand, the AKP began to search for financial support externally to manage the economy at least until the elections. As Turkey can no longer attract Western financial support or foreign direct investment, the government turned increasingly to other sources, including the Gulf in the MENA region. The reflection of all these transformations was the drive for normalization with several countries in the MENA region with which the AKP had a problematic relationship in the post-Arab Uprising era. Although there are regional reasons for this normalization, the domestic sources of normalization and the AKP's quest to remain in power are the primary drivers of Turkey's changing policy toward the MENA region.

The AKP focused on possible economic benefits in its drive for normalization with the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The normalization with the UAE came first and developed the fastest. In high-level mutual visits, several agreements were signed including a US $4.9 billion currency swap deal in local currencies (Reuters, January 19, 2022), and Abu Dhabi announced its plans for a US $10 billion fund for investments in Turkey (Khaleej Times, November 24, 2021). A side benefit of normalization with the UAE has been to cut the voice of a former mafia boss who fell out of with AKP and has been tweeting and sending videos from the UAE claiming illegal relations and businesses of AKP officials. Reset with Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, ended Saudi Arabia's boycott of Turkish goods that were in place since the crisis over Jamal Khashoggi's murder and had "cost three billion dollars annually" (Bloomberg, April 28, 2022). In addition, it is reported that the AKP is trying to attract investment from Saudi Arabia (*i24 News*, April 28, 2022) and more significantly in the short-term looking for a swap deal with Riyadh (Daily Sabah, September 25, 2022c).

The normalization of relations with the UAE and Saudi Arabia came as a surprise as President Erdoğan and other AKP officials and pro-AKP journalists have been highly critical of these countries. Particularly the UAE was accused of providing financial support to the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016. Thus, the reset of relations with these countries became a significant example of pragmatism in AKP foreign policy. Addressing a group of young people in Ankara in a meeting to mark the May 19 Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day, and faced with a question of how the relations with both Gulf countries have changed quickly, Erdoğan used both interest and ideology frames:

> These are our Muslim brothers. Sometimes we have had some difficulties, just as there is a fuss in the family, but we have overcome these problems now. We have now planned and are taking steps for all of our commercial relations, industry, defense industry, cultural and tourism, by overcoming them with both the Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi administration. (Daily Sabah, May 20, 2022a)

Equally unexpected was the quick turn in Turkey's relations with Israel. The normalization started with Israeli President Herzog's visit to Turkey and culminated in the mutual appointment of ambassadors in 2022 after four years of hiatus. Unlike the previous times, for instance in 2013–2016, the initiative for normalization came from Turkey (Lindenstrauss &

Daniel, 2022). An important element in normalizing relations with Israel seems to be to get the support of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States. President Erdoğan, in his trip to New York City for the annual meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2022, met with the President of the World Jewish Congress as well as representatives from several Jewish organizations in a separate meeting. Although the meetings were closed to the press, a pro-government newspaper in Turkey reported that Erdoğan mentioned his plans to visit Israel (Daily Sabah, September 20, 2022b). Such meetings and statements show that Erdoğan is a pragmatic leader, and not an entirely ideological actor. Normalization of relations with Israel also had a domestic dimension in terms of further increasing economic relations, tourism, and most significantly the possibility of transporting Israeli natural gas through Turkey. The AKP also began its efforts to normalize its relations with Egypt. Despite a slow start, the normalization of relations between the two countries progressed in the last few months. The earthquake diplomacy characterized by Egypt's sending aid to Turkey and Egyptian foreign minister's visit to earthquake-stricken areas facilitated further contacts and eventually mutual appointment of ambassadors in July 2023.

The most dramatic of all normalization efforts, however, is the AKP's announcement of its interest in normalization with the Bashar regime in Syria. There are ongoing talks at the intelligence level with Syria, and the AKP leadership, including President Erdoğan, voice their desire for normalization. Russia's efforts of mediating between the two sides have led to meetings between intelligence chiefs and defense ministers in December 2022. The planned meetings for further contacts have so far failed to materialize and yet the AKP government continues to voice its desire for normalization. The shift in Turkey's policy toward the Bashar regime can be viewed as the ultimate example of pragmatism. This change in policy clearly has domestic dimensions. It gives messages to the electorate on two issues that are of interest to most of the population irrespective of their party allegiance. One is the presence of large numbers of Syrian refugees in Turkey: as the economic problems increase, refugees have become a scapegoat. Cornered by the opposition that is critical of the AKP's refugee policy and aware that the economy is important for its constituency, the AKP is following a pragmatic approach to solve this problem. Thus, although normalization with the Bashar regime and the return of the refugees are complicated matters, giving a strong message at home and returning a symbolic number of refugees to Syria could be seen as important for

the AKP. The second message given to the electorate is that such normalization would help eradicate the possibility of an "independent Kurdish entity" in northern Syria and at least would roll back some of the gains of the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and the associated Democratic Union Party (PYD). Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in announcing his brief meeting with his Syrian counterpart on the sidelines of a meeting, for instance, said that "There must be a strong administration in Syria to prevent any division of the country. The will that can dominate every corner of its lands can only be achieved through unity and solidarity" (Daily Sabah, October 6, 2022d).

In short, in addition to its ideology, pragmatism has affected AKP's foreign policy toward the MENA region. This pragmatism is based on AKP's domestic goal of staying in power. The AKP's domestic political alliances as well as its economic and political needs have affected its foreign policy. In addition to expected material benefits, pragmatism has become a signaling tool for domestic and external audiences, stressing that the AKP and President Erdoğan are flexible actors.

Conclusion: Reconciling Ideology and Pragmatism

Ideology and domestic political considerations do not necessarily contradict each other. During its two decades in power between 2002 and 2022, the AKP was mostly successful in harmonizing these two elements. The early years of the AKP identity construction led to its activism in the MENA that in turn was useful in domestic consolidation of the party's power and changing the Turkish state's identity. The strategic depth doctrine that was developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu did in fact call for activism and leadership in the MENA region. In later years, particularly Israel after 2009, Egypt after the 2013 coup, Syria after the uprisings, Saudi Arabia after the Khashoggi murder, and the UAE after the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey have all become part of AKP's domestic consolidation efforts.

Yet reconciling ideology and pragmatism in foreign policy became increasingly difficult in recent years. As the literature argues, identity and ideology go beyond being used for domestic mobilization; in some instances, identity politics is path-dependent, and past decisions limit the possibilities of current policy (Saideman, 2002, p. 180). In fact, ideology and domestic political interests can offer diametrically opposed foreign policy preferences. In such situations, "identity violations" may affect a leader's legitimacy (Saideman, 2002, p. 180). For instance, the AKP's

strong political, economic, and military support to several opposition groups in Syria during its civil war is not an easy decision to reverse. Similarly, after years of demonizing Israel, it is difficult to justify the normalization of Turkish-Israeli relations. The 2022 Report on the Public Opinion Survey on Turkey's Foreign Policy showed that AKP voters are not supporting the AKP's recent normalization efforts in big numbers, and in two cases, namely normalization with Israel and Syria, those AKP supporters who opposed normalization are higher than those who supported it (Aydin et al., 2022). The AKP and its supporters in the media are trying to ignore this problem and justification of normalization after years of demonization of all of these countries' leadership by manipulating the interpretation of their ideologies and focusing on Turkey's economic and strategic interests, ultimately framing normalization as other countries' finally accepting Turkey's positions.

The distinction between ideology and pragmatism was not as visible or as strong as it seems to be the case at the time of this writing in AKP's foreign policy. The material interests of the AKP have not only co-existed with ideology but also "situated" and "contextualized" such interests (van den Bos, 2018). What is different today is that it is becoming more difficult for the AKP to reconcile its ideas and ideology with the party's material interests in foreign policy. However, the AKP has long shown its adaptability in that a "procedural pragmatism" has been at work in its foreign policy toward the MENA region. The AKP may continue to succeed in efforts to combine ideology and pragmatism in the long term, especially in its relations with the MENA countries, as it continues to utilize its ideational frames as the main element of its foreign policy. Yet, there may be limits to such framing (Obydenkova & Libman, 2014), which also means that AKP's "procedural pragmatism" will largely remain *ad hoc* and vulnerable.

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CHAPTER 6

Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans: A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of Motivations and Interests

Oya Dursun-Özkanca

The Western Balkans region carries a special geopolitical significance for Turkey's foreign policy due to various reasons, including deep cultural and historical ties, regional balance of power, and implications for regional peace and stability (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a; Eroğlu, 2005). Active diplomacy through bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral regional diplomatic initiatives for mediation, such as the ones with Bosnia and Serbia, and with Bosnia and Croatia contributed to the perception that Turkey has acted as a regional power since the 2010s, although Turkey's in this region was already apparent following the end of the Cold War.

Regardless of a keen interest in the Western Balkans for its links with Europe (Çakar, 1996), Turkey followed a traditional policy of non-involvement in the Western Balkans between the end of the First World

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_6

War (WWI) and the collapse of the bipolar world in the early 1990s. However, following the end of the Cold War, the regional and international developments led Turkey to revise its policy of long-lasting neutrality and status quo-oriented policy toward the Western Balkans. More specifically, the Bosnian War of the early 1990s led the public opinion in Turkey to strongly support Turkey's involvement. Turkey's leaders decided to get involved in the Bosnian crisis in an active yet calculated manner, as they considered an unstable Western Balkan region detrimental to Turkey's full membership in the European Union (EU). Moreover, they argued that Turkey had a considerable amount of leverage over the Western powers in the Bosnian war because the war was seen predominantly as a war between the Muslims and the Christians. Turkey's involvement in the region ebbed and flowed between the late 1990s and the 2010s.

The Western Balkans region is situated on alternative energy routes for Europe. Since the early 2000s the countries in the region are on a trajectory for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU membership. Nevertheless, in recent years, the Western Balkans have experienced serious setbacks in economic development, rule of law, and democratization, which have significantly slowed down both the EU and NATO integration momentum. The fact that there is no hot conflict in the region does not mean that there is positive peace. There are many "unresolved conflicts and an increasing appetite for irredentism and secessionism in the region" (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019b, p. 125). Besides rising populism, "the political elites in the region have increasingly realized that pursuing irredentist claims pays off electorally" (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019b, p. 112). Even though Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro are EU candidates, these Western Balkan countries' stalled accession process makes them particularly vulnerable to outside influences (Scazzieri, 2021). The lack of momentum on EU accession has exacerbated the long-term concerns among the transatlantic allies about the roles played by external actors in the region (e.g., Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran) (Bieber & Tzifakis, 2019; Dursun-Özkanca, 2019b; Maricacq & Cero, 2022). The December 2021 vote by the *Republika Srpska*, one of the two regional governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina to withdraw from the national institutions and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine raised concerns about the possibility of a renewed conflict in the Western Balkans region (Saric & Morcos, 2022). Such developments are met with serious concerns in transatlantic circles since the region is frequently referred to as the powder keg of Europe.

While Turkey has traditionally supported the Euro-Atlantic integration and enlargement of the EU and NATO as pathways to maintaining stability and peace and establishing democracy in the Western Balkans, its own EU accession process has entered a stalemate. Furthermore, Turkey's relations with the transatlantic actors have reached their lowest point over the last few years, especially with the freezing of its accession negotiation talks with the European Council in July 2019, the crises with France and Greece during the summer of 2020, and following the threats by Turkish President Erdoğan in 2021 to declare the ambassadors of Germany, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, and Norway as *persona non grata* in response to their call for Turkey to release Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala (Dursun-Özkanca, 2022).

This chapter adopts a neoclassical realist framework to provide an overview of the evolution of Turkey's engagement in the region, identifies the factors and developments that have been instrumental in shaping the relations between Turkey and the Western Balkans, and finally evaluates the current state of Turkey-Western Balkans relations by offering an analysis of Turkey's foreign policy activism in the region and the motivations behind it. Turkey's foreign policy toward the region is examined within the context of Turkey's membership in the NATO alliance and its relations with the EU. The chapter demonstrates that Turkey pursues *Realpolitik*, a pragmatic and interests-based, rather than an ideological foreign policy toward the region and concludes that Turkey's foreign policy oscillates between *boundary testing* and *boundary challenging* in the Western Balkans region, with some potential for *boundary breaking* in the future.

Neoclassical Realism and Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans

With a few notable exceptions (Alpan & Öztürk, 2022; Athanassopoulou, 1994; Bechev, 2022; Demirtaş, 2015; Dursun-Özkanca, 2016, 2019a; Rüma, 2011 and Vračić, 2016), the extant literature examining Turkey's Western Balkans foreign policy are descriptive and do not provide a theoretically grounded perspective. A newly burgeoning literature focuses on the de-Europeanization theory to explain Turkey's foreign policy toward the Western Balkans region (Alpan & Öztürk, 2022; Bechev, 2022; Demirtaş, 2015); however, this theory does not offer a sufficiently comprehensive explanation of Turkey's foreign policy toward the region.

Using this model to explain Turkey's foreign policy toward the Western Balkans, Demirtaş (2015, p. 126) argues that the Europeanization process has been instrumentally used by the Turkish foreign policy elites to "establish Turkey as *primus inter pares* [first among equals]" and that Turkey's de-Europeanization has negatively affected its foreign policy in the region. Similarly, Bechev (2012, p. 133) notes, "European integration, robust economic growth, increasing cultural attractiveness and the slowdown of the EU enlargement process have all enabled or pushed Ankara to pursue a more activist and unilateralist policy of engagement since 2009." While Bechev highlights the "dark side" of Europeanization arguing that "the global economic crisis shows that integration into the EU also generates vulnerabilities for institutionally weak and relatively poor countries dependent on the Brussels anchor" (Bechev, 2012, p. 134), he concludes that in its relations with the Western Balkans "Turkey owes more to its long-standing links to the West than to historical legacies which could be equally an asset and a drawback" (Bechev, 2012, p. 145).

A significant finding of these studies is that as Turkey's foreign policy has become de-Europeanized, the EU has lost its influence and leverage over Turkey's Western Balkans policies. Additionally, Turkey's policy toward the region has become more independent and assertive in the region. For example, based on over 80 semi-structured elite interviews in the region, Alpan and Öztürk (2022, pp. 58–59) concluded that the de-Europeanization process in Turkey's foreign policy "led to a soft power approach in the Balkans endowed with highly nationalist, religious, economic and neo-patrimonialist elements" and suggested that future studies on Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans examine the intersection between Turkish foreign policy and "the domestic factors and political processes."

This chapter follows this recommendation and shows that whereas Europeanization/de-Europeanization process is important, domestic ideology and pragmatic interests are important determinants in shaping Turkey's foreign policy approach toward the region. In many cases, Turkey's material interests are justified by using ideology (Dursun-Özkanca, 2022). Although the number of studies that use the neoclassical realist perspective to explain and understand Turkey's general foreign policy is growing (McLean, 2015; Şahin, 2020; Yeşilyurt, 2017), there are currently no studies that examine the Turkey-Western Balkans relations from this perspective. Thus, this chapter, which draws heavily from the *Framework of Intra-alliance Opposition*, contributes to the literature by

scrutinizing the connection between Turkey's domestic politics and foreign policy within the context of the Western Balkans.

As the volume's other chapters also highlight, the line between the international and the domestic is increasingly blurred. Whereas external factors impact what is happening domestically and vice-versa, it is important to keep in mind the *hierarchy* between international systemic and regional sub-systemic factors and domestic economic and political factors in influencing state action. The *Framework of Intra-alliance Opposition*, developed by Dursun-Özkanca (2019a), is based on this neoclassical realist understanding, and it conceptualizes three intra-alliance opposition behaviors that "middle powers" have at their disposal within an alliance system: *boundary testing*, *boundary challenging*, and *boundary breaking*.

As a process, *boundary testing* involves actions within an alliance for partners "to understand which lines are not to be crossed" (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a, p. 35). Boundary testing includes active diplomacy, entangling diplomacy, cheap-talk diplomacy, and economic statecraft. In *boundary testing*, the allies are committed to being part of the alliance and showing their strengths and potential contributions to the alliance. *Boundary challenging* represents an increase in the intensity of the instruments of statecraft used by the ally against the alliance and/or its members. It involves "interinstitutional balancing, cooperative balancing, strategic noncooperation, and costly signaling" (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a, p. 36). In *boundary challenging*, the challenging party seeks increased independence from the alliance. Finally, in *boundary breaking*, the ally "typically signals a dissatisfaction with membership in the alliance and an increasing willingness to transition into hard balancing" (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a, p. 6). Tools of statecraft used in *boundary breaking* include territorial/asset denial, alternative alliances, blackmail, and hostage diplomacy. In *boundary breaking*, the ally increasingly signals its willingness to operate from outside of the alliance (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019b). While moving from *boundary testing* to *boundary breaking* may be seen as escalatory, the allies may revert to lower intensity tools of statecraft at any given time.

A Brief Historical Overview (1923–2015)

The Ottoman Empire was first and foremost a Balkan Empire. The Republic of Turkey maintained cautious relations with the countries in the Balkans to avoid the perception of a neo-colonialist power (Kut, 1999).

For example, instead of following an expansionist policy, Turkey accepted many immigrants from the Balkans following its independence, which not only helped with increasing the homogeneity and the overall size of Turkish population in certain areas of the country (İçduygu & Sert, 2015; Kirişci, 2000). Nevertheless, since the late 1990s, but especially since the rise of the *Justice and Development Party* (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) in 2002, Turkey began to revive its identity as a former Balkan state and a natural power in the region (Danopoulos, 1997; Davutoğlu, 2001).

For the most part of the twentieth century, Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans remained passive (Novaković, 2020; Türbedar, 2011). During the first half of the 1950s, Turkey, as a member of NATO, engaged in talks with Yugoslavia and Greece to establish military cooperation under the framework of the Balkan Pact. However, the Pact became largely ineffective when the Yugoslav foreign policy toward the Soviet Union changed (Tahirovic, 2014). Following the failed Balkan Pact, Turkey limited its activities in the Balkans to that of bilateral relations with individual states in the region (Vuksanovic, 2017).

Since the 1990s, establishing regional peace and stability has been a top priority for Turkey's Western Balkans foreign policy, and the country's geopolitical location and historical, demographic, and cultural affiliations with the regional countries have been strategic assets for transatlantic security frameworks (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a; Eroğlu, 2005; Türbedar, 2011; Voskopoulos, 2013). As a member of NATO, Turkey played an important role in peacekeeping operations in the Western Balkans after the violent breakdown of Former Yugoslavia, most notably, during the civil wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. As it maintains the second-largest military in NATO, Turkey was among the biggest contributors to the peacekeeping operations in the region throughout the decade following the end of the Cold War.

In the aftermath of the civil wars in the Balkans, Turkey played a key role in the establishment of regional initiatives, such as the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), Stability Pact, South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), and NATO-led South-East Europe Initiative. Similar to the early years of the Republic, however, Turkey's foreign policymakers remained cautious and avoided an overtly assertive foreign policy toward the region in order to avoid criticism for pursuing an independent or aggressive, and for some a neo-Ottomanist, foreign policy (Kut, 1999).

Things changed quickly with the AKP's rise to power in Turkey in 2002. Especially after Ahmet Davutoğlu began his tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009, Turkey's activities in the region gained momentum through frequent high-level visits and bilateral and trilateral summits with the Western Balkan states (Bechev, 2012; Rašidagić, 2013). Turkey's ambitions in the region became clearer, as Turkey increasingly presented itself as a hegemonic regional great power. Turkey's fast economic growth and increasing socio-cultural attractiveness in the first half of the 2010s contributed to its activist and assertive foreign policy in the region (Bechev, 2012; Linden & İrepoğlu, 2013; Mitrović Mitrović Bošković et al., 2015).

Experts frequently highlight Turkey's soft power, especially among the region's Muslim populations. The country's overall image in the region benefits from its popular soap operas and movies (Hintz, 2016; Kütük, 2015; Rašidagić, 2013). The frequency of Turkish Airlines flights between Turkey and the Balkan capitals has enhanced Turkey's appeal as a popular tourism destination for people from the Balkans (Selçuk, 2012). Similarly, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı*, TİKA) added to the soft power of Turkey (Aydın-Düzgit & Keyman, 2014; Todorović, 2021) through the restoration of monuments, mosques, and other structures from the Ottoman era in several locations in the Balkans. The Turkish language has become popular through the help of Yunus Emre Institutes in the region (Ekinci, 2014). Diyanet (The Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey) has a growing presence in the region (Büyük, 2016; Öztürk, 2021) and "counters the Saudi and Iranian influences that introduce marginal interpretations of Islam" (Muhasilovic, 2018, p. 63). The involvement of both state and non-state actors in socio-cultural and economic sectors in the region significantly contributed to the humanitarian and entrepreneurial foreign policy pursued by Turkey.

Whether Turkey pursues a neo-Ottomanist policy seeking to restore "Ankara's position as a regional patron" (Bieber & Tzifakis, 2019, p. 11) toward the region remains a topic of heated academic and policymaking discussions (Bieber & Tzifakis, 2019; Tanasković, 2013; Taşpınar, 2008; Todorović, 2021; Türbedar, 2011; Yavuz, 2020). The most common view suggests that the emergence of Turkey's neo-Ottomanist foreign policy toward the region is a result of "the West's inefficient policies" during the Balkan civil wars of the 1990s and the rise of a pro-Islamist bourgeoisie who gained more power in Turkey as a direct result of the economic liberalization process since the 1980s (Eroğlu, 2005, p. 15; Yavuz, 2001). In

short, Turkey's influence in the region which started in the cultural and social areas earlier but became even more important in the early 2000s spilled over into the economic realm especially since the rise of the AKP in Turkish politics. However, there is still much to be seen in terms of determining how successful Turkey has managed to transform its socio-cultural and economic power into political power in the past 20 years.

Turkey's Foreign Policy Goals in the Region Within the Context of Its Deteriorating Relations with Transatlantic Allies, 2016—Present: A Case for Neoclassical Realism

As discussed in detail by Evren Çelik-Wiltse and Müftüler-Bac in their respective chapters in this volume, Turkey's deteriorating relations with its transatlantic allies have led the EU countries to continue to remain suspicious of Turkey's motivations in the Balkans (Bieber & Tzifakis, 2019; Scazzieri, 2021). The growing Turkish influence and the EU's suspicions about Turkey's intentions led to discussions of an EU-Turkey rivalry in the Balkans (Alic, 2010; Somun, 2011; Brljavać, 2011; Türbedar, 2012; Linden & İrepoğlu, 2013; Dursun-Özkanca, 2016; Scazzieri, 2021; Bechev, 2022). The EU's suspicions arose because Turkey did not engage in consultation with its transatlantic allies during the period of active diplomacy that resulted in several bilateral and trilateral agreements with the regional countries in the 2010s. Additionally, Turkey has primarily pursued a more autonomous and largely unilateral Western Balkans policy in recent years (Bechev, 2012; Bechev, 2022), to the chagrin of the European leaders. However, at the time of this writing, Turkey's goals in the region remain congruent with those of the transatlantic allies, and its foreign policy falls outside of *boundary breaking* vis-à-vis the West (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a). As Bechev (2022, p. 2, original emphasis) aptly notes, Turkey does not pursue an "inherently revisionist" strategy "driven by a desire to roll back Western influence" in the Western Balkans; instead, Turkey's policy "runs *parallel* – as opposed to *adversarial* – policy to that of the West." This parallel foreign policy can best be interpreted as part of Turkey's desire to act more independently of the West in an increasingly *boundary-challenging* way.

Turkish foreign policy behavior in the Western Balkans from 2002 until the first half of 2019 can be categorized as *boundary testing* with very

limited *boundary-challenging* behavior vis-à-vis the West (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a). The developments since 2019, however, indicate a shift that shows an oscillation between *boundary testing* and *boundary challenging* in Turkey's approach to the Western Balkans. Nevertheless, there is still a fundamental recognition among Turkey's policymakers that the country's NATO membership and EU candidacy are valuable assets in shaping the image of Turkey in the Balkans (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a). The EU, NATO, and Turkey all support regional peace and stability, as well as the EU and NATO membership of the Balkan countries. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine demonstrated that there are considerable concerns regarding stability and order in the region, and that Turkey, NATO, and the EU share similar interests in maintaining regional peace and stability that could be helped by continued transatlantic cooperation.

Besides political stability and regional peace, Turkey, the EU, and NATO share the goal of promoting economic prosperity in the region. The *Brdo Declaration* of the EU-Western Balkans Summit on 6 October 2021, issued under the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, concluded with the EU's "reaffirm[ation of] its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans." The EU "welcome[d] the commitment of the Western Balkans partners to the European perspective" and "reconfirm[ed] its commitment to the enlargement process and its decisions taken thereon, based upon credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality, and the principle of own merits." The EU also adopted the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) III legal framework, and in February of 2022 the European Commission unveiled a €3.2 billion investment package to support "21 transport, digital, climate and energy connectivity projects in the Western Balkans" (European Commission). This is the first major package of projects under the EU's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, which the Commission adopted in October 2020. The goal is to provide up to €30 billion, as a combination of grants, preferential loans, and guarantees, to the region in an effort to help close the development gap between the EU and the Western Balkans. Turkey welcomed the reaffirmation of the EU's commitment to economic development in the region and voiced its support for the *Brdo Declaration* (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Turkey prioritizes and highlights the significance of strengthening regional cooperation initiatives and supports regional ownership through institutions such as the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), which is an

all-inclusive, regionally owned and led cooperation framework and the SEECP. Turkey is not only one of the leading contributors to the budget of RCC and a member of its Board (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022) but also held the Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP in 2020–2021. In the 2021 Antalya SEECP *Summit Declaration*, the organization emphasized the importance of "enhancing regional connectivity in a political, economic, social, and cultural sense, supported in all areas by the Regional Cooperation Council as its operational arm" (SEECP, 2021).

While supporting the EU's approach to the Western Balkans, Turkey has been trying to position itself as a more independent *regional* actor vis-à-vis the transatlantic allies in the Western Balkans. Turkey's political leadership has put more emphasis on an economic opening and statecraft toward the region (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a) and emphasized the importance of pragmatic interests and Turkey's economic policies and investments in and toward the region and has even considered Turkish businesses as the "new Janissaries" in the Balkans (quoted in Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a). To further the country's economic interests, Turkey established visa-free travel regimes and free trade agreements with *all* non-EU member Balkan countries. Due to geographical proximity and similar habits in consumption, Turkish companies do very well in finance, construction, medical, and insurance sectors in the Balkans (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a). Turkish foreign direct investments rank highly in Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. In Serbia, for example, Turkish investments have been on the rise significantly (Hake & Radzyner, 2019). Importantly, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, Turkey effectively used an "assertive and ambitious health diplomacy" to boost its prestige and perception as a great regional power in the Balkans (Demirtaş, 2022). In September 2021, Turkey opened a consulate in Novi Pazar, a city in Serbia, which has a predominantly Muslim population (Cengiz, 2022).

Turkey's active diplomacy through bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral initiatives, and use of economic statecraft through free trade agreements with the countries, is a part of its pragmatic foreign policy in the Western Balkans. Turkey aims to establish itself as both an economic and political power in the region *before* these countries become EU members while calculating its policies so as not to be perceived as an actor directly challenging the EU's approach to the region. So long as Turkey's EU accession process remains deadlocked, and unless the Turkish political elites' feeling of being alienated from the West changes, Turkey's increasing influence in the region might help with the pursuit of an increasingly

independent foreign policy in the future or acting as a potential spoiler in the Western Balkans (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a).

As noted above, whereas the extant literature overwhelmingly suggests that Turkey pursues an ideologically based neo-Ottomanist foreign policy toward the Western Balkans, developments since 2016 and Turkey's ongoing support for the EU membership of the Balkan countries (Eralp, 2010; Linden & İrepoğlu, 2013; Türbedar, 2011) demonstrate that Turkey follows a pragmatic and interest-based policy (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a; Vuksanovic, 2021) with a two-fold aim to help the Balkan countries achieve economic development (Somun, 2011) and ensure economic gains for Turkey. In addition, the quest for becoming a power broker in the region and a desire to offer a "replacement community" are important drivers of Turkey's foreign policy in and toward the region (Linden & İrepoğlu, 2013, p. 237). In other words, even when the AKP government uses ideology to bolster Turkey's political power in the region, the interest-based economic and political calculations are the primary foreign policy determinants. In an opinion piece published in *Balkan Insight* Vuk Vuksanovic (2021) notes that Turkey's pragmatic foreign policy in the region demonstrates that "[Turkey] does not burn all bridges" in the face of disagreements with others. Even in some cases, Turkey attempts to "move away from being just a champion for the Balkan Muslims."

Realists argue that states, under the condition of anarchy and the resulting preference for self-help, primarily respond to the "constraints and opportunities" that are presented by the international system (Ripsman, 2017; Rathbun, 2008; Frankel, 1996). Whereas unit-level variables can provide important insights into a country's foreign policy choices, they are insufficient to explain Turkey's foreign policy in and toward the Western Balkans without a thorough analysis of international systemic variables. Considering the overarching power vacuum and the potential for future instability in the Western Balkans, Turkey's attempts to consolidate its regional influence and "have success stories in its foreign policy" (interview notes, quoted in Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a) are in line with realist principles.

Turkey prioritizes pragmatic considerations and follows an interest-, and not a particularly ideology-, based foreign policy toward the Western Balkans. The power vacuum that has existed in the region since the turn of the millennium has served as an important window of opportunity for greater involvement by Turkey (Alic, 2010; Stojanović, 2011; Yohannes,

2011; Türbedar, 2012; Bechev, 2012; Linden & İrepoğlu, 2013' Demirtaş, 2013, 2015, 2017; Dursun-Özkanca, 2016, 2019a). Against the background of the EU's multiple crises, including the fatigue with EU's enlargement process, the Brexit, Eurozone and the refugee crises, the rising anti-EU populism in the region, and the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, Turkey has partially succeeded in filling the void and consolidating its sphere of influence in its immediate neighborhood by pursuing a more active and independent foreign policy and using its cultural and economic clout. Turkey's quest for a greater influence in the changing international and regional balance of power in the Western Balkans and consequent policies to carve out a regional sphere of influence (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a) has become even more important as its own EU accession process halted and the EU lost its transformational leverage over the Turkish foreign policy (Dursun-Özkanca, 2022).

There are growing concerns about the potential *spoiler role* Turkey could play in the region, especially in the aftermath of Turkey's rapprochement with Russia (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a; Makovsky, 2015; Serwer, 2017). Although Turkey's Western Balkans policy has not shown any signs of revisionist tendencies to date (Bechev, 2012), "both Russia and Turkey are not only rising powers but, to varying degrees, revisionist powers, seeking fundamental change in global and regional affairs" (Kubicek, 2022, p. 5). In this regard, as Balta and Özdal notes in their chapter, the future developments in Turkish-Russian relations that entered into a new phase following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine will affect the foreign policies of both countries, including toward the Western Balkans. The early indicators point to Turkey's reaffirmation of its place within the NATO framework in the face of Russian aggression in its immediate neighborhood (Kubicek, 2022); however, a continued Turkish-Russian rapprochement might pave the way for Turkey to act as a spoiler in the Western Balkans.

The international systemic and regional sub-systemic factors are supplemented by numerous domestic political and economic factors in shaping Turkey's foreign policy toward the region. Turkey's deeply rooted cultural and historical ties with the Western Balkan region cannot be overstated, as these ties make it "less costly for Turkey to capitalize on its power and leverage in the Western Balkans, when compared to any other of its immediate neighborhoods" (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a, p. 42). Successive AKP governments have instrumentally used Islam and the history of the Ottoman Empire in the region not only to portray Turkey as an emerging

regional power and but also to present President Erdoğan as the leader of all Muslims in Europe (Aydıntaşbaş, 2019; Bieber & Tzifakis, 2019; Öztürk, 2021). These ties are also used strategically to bolster Turkey's economic interests (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a). Alpan and Öztürk (2022, p. 58) draw attention to "the use of religion synthesized with nationalism within the relations (normative soft power) and Turkey's economic investments in the region (material soft power) as well as neo-patrimonialism and personal relations between President Erdoğan and the political leaders in the region" (personalized soft power). However, these same factors also create problems for Turkey. More specifically, the region's non-Muslim populations such as the Croats, Serbs, and North Macedonians have a negative perception of Turkey due to the Ottoman historical legacy (Dursun-Özkanca, 2016; Micevski & Petrevska, 2021; Serwer, 2017; Türbedar, 2011; Vračić, 2016).

Following the Balkan leaders' support to President Erdoğan after the attempted coup in July 2016, Turkey applied pressure on the Balkan governments "to extradite Gülenists" (Bieber & Tzifakis, 2019, p. 18). Turkey's demands appear to have created some disagreements about the extent of support these countries should give to Turkey. Bechev (2022), for example, argues that "the cult of Erdoğan has become central to [Turkey's] presence in the [Balkans] region, often with divisive effects" (Bechev, 2022, p. 12). Similarly, some suggest that Turkey is beginning "a more Islamist push" in countries like Bosnia (Serwer, 2017), as the authoritarian tendencies of President Erdoğan increase and as Turkey's relations with the United States get more strained. All of these contribute to the perceptions of Turkey's increasing use of *boundary-challenging* foreign policy behavior in the Western Balkans against the West.

As it was mentioned before, Turkey wants to establish itself as a regional hegemon that has access to a bigger market share in the economies of the Western Balkans before these countries become EU members (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a). The *2019 TİKA Report on Turkish Development Assistance* (TİKA, 2019, p. 30) effectively illustrates the significance of development assistance in Turkey's diplomatic activism toward the Western Balkans. The report lists the following amounts in million US dollars for the following regional countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina $59.85 million, Albania $9.25 million, North Macedonia $8.06 million, Kosovo $5.20 million, Serbia $3.08 million, and Montenegro $1.78 million. While Turkey is not typically listed among the top ten donors in Albania and

Serbia, the *Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development* (OECD) lists Turkey among the top ten donors in Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo (2016).

Conclusions

Whereas Turkey has continued to support a transatlantic vision for the Western Balkans region by endorsing the Euro-Atlantic integration and enlargement of the EU and NATO as pathways to maintaining stability and peace and establishing democracy, the country seems to have adopted a more independent foreign policy especially since its own EU accession process entered a stalemate, and its relations with the transatlantic actors reached their lowest point in the post-2016 period. Whereas there is consistency in Turkey's motivations and interests in the region that has led to a Realist, pragmatic, and interest-based foreign policy, Turkey's increasing emphasis on the shortcomings of both the EU and NATO as stimulators of positive change in the region is noteworthy. It is true that the Western Balkans has a special place in Turkey's nationalist and Islamist discourse, and that Turkey expects to be taken seriously in its own hinterland, but it is still early to argue that Turkey will be able to dominate the region in the future.

Turkey alternatively uses active diplomacy, cheap-talk diplomacy, economic statecraft, and regional ownership in the region. While active diplomacy and cheap-talk diplomacy are categorized as tools of statecraft in *boundary testing*, economic statecraft is a tool that is in the intersection of all three processes of intra-alliance opposition (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019a). Turkey has shown its interest in pursuing an independent foreign policy in the region, in line with a *boundary-challenging* intra-alliance opposition behavior. As of December 2022, there is no significant indication of a Turkish *boundary-breaking* foreign policy behavior toward the Western Balkans within the transatlantic relations framework, as the AKP government continues to support the transatlantic initiatives. In a press conference in September 2022, when asked a question on the electoral amendments proposed by the *Office of the High Representative in Bosnia* and Herzegovina ahead of the October 2022 Bosnian general elections, President Erdoğan suggested that the presidential council members in Bosnia and Herzegovina should decide on the country's electoral laws and added that the High Representative "should not interfere in the process" (Güldoğan & Öztürk, 2022). The High Representative for Bosnia and

Herzegovina, together with the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was created in 1995 immediately after the signing of the Dayton Agreement which ended the 1992–1995 Bosnian War. The OHR serves to represent the countries involved in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement through the Peace Implementation Council. To this day, all the High Representatives named have been from EU countries, while their principal deputies have been from the United States.

In short, while Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans can be best classified as oscillating between *boundary testing* and *boundary challenging* in the Western Balkans at this time, further Turkish-Russian cooperation at the global level and in Turkey's surrounding regions and the increasing legitimacy crisis in both NATO and the EU might lead Turkey to engage in *boundary-breaking* behavior in the future.

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CHAPTER 7

One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy in Eastern Mediterranean (1923–2023): A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of Turkey as a Middle Power

Bezen Balamir Coşkun

The Eastern Mediterranean has been a region where the Republic of Turkey has had invested security interests and actively engaged since its establishment in 1923 due mainly to the region's enormous potential for conflict escalation. Long-standing antagonisms with Greece, the frozen conflict in Cyprus, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and more recently the wars in Syria and Libya are among the most important issues in understanding the Turkish foreign policy toward the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey has a significant interest in international recognition of the sovereignty of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, or Northern Cyprus, securing its energy interests, and playing a role in political

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_7

resolution of the various conflicts in the region. The establishment of the *Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum* (EMGF) in 2019 and Turkey's insistence on the *Blue Homeland Doctrine* are the most recent reflections of how the country tries to establish itself as a regional leader in this complicated neighborhood. In achieving its interests, Turkey has faced regional and extra-regional rivals. The developments in the region have consistently reinforced Ankara's chronic siege mentality, or the *Sèvres syndrome*,[1] which is a historically rooted belief that Turkey is surrounded by hostile forces that threaten country's core interests.

This chapter analyzes Turkish foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean region as a middle power. For this analysis, Neoclassical Realism is employed as a theoretical framework. The evolution of Turkish foreign policy in the region is documented and analyzed in four periods with a special emphasis on the last 30 years of the Republic: *Foundational Years of the Republic of Turkey (1923–1946)*, *Multi-Party Period (1946–1960)*, *Military Coups (1960–1985)*, and *Post-Cold War Period (after the 1990s)*.

Following a brief introduction of Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy from the perspective of Neoclassical Realism, the chapter reviews Turkey's goals in its relations with regional actors and significant domestic and international developments that have shaped these relations. Then, the current state of Turkish foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean is presented with a particular emphasis on wars in Syria and Libya and competition for valuable gas reserves of the region. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the regional opportunities and challenges for Turkey's ambition to become a regional hegemon with global ambitions as the country is getting ready to celebrate its centennial birthday in 2023.

Turkey as a Middle Power in the Eastern Mediterranean: Neoclassical Realist Point of View

The concept of power has been essential in the study of foreign policy analysis and in understanding global politics. States' foreign policies are often evaluated in accordance with their status based on the international distribution of power. Particularly, Neoclassical Realists explain foreign policy options of the states through domestic elites' decisions and

[1] For Turks, the Treaty of Sèvres symbolizes the dissolution of the empire and the carving up of Turkey by foreign powers. The historic effect of the treaty survives as a syndrome, which explains the vision of a nation under siege struggling for survival (Schmid, 2015).

perceptions, which are influenced by the state's material capabilities while taking the structure of the international system (Rose, 1998) as an important factor. In other words, Neoclassical Realism provides a framework for understanding the variations in state behavior under similar systemic pressures and considers intervening domestic variables such as state institutions, elites, and societal actors critically important in explaining different foreign policy choices (Rose, 1998, p. 160).

Based on Rose's (1998) basic assumptions and Krasner's (1983) definition of a regime as a set of roles and institutions with specific goals and motivations, Taliaferro (2006) developed a model to explain how states adapt their national policies to better respond to security threats. Taliaferro (2006) assumes that states are relatively cohesive at the elite level about political and social issues because of their unified perception of external threats, relative distribution of power, the offense-defense balance in military technology, and geographical proximity. Taliaferro's model identifies three strategies in a self-help international system: (1) maintaining the status quo in politics, security, and technology; (2) replicating other states' practices; or (3) innovating (Taliaferro, 2006, 467). The choice of strategy is determined by the state's power, institutional capacity, and the existence of a statist or anti-statist ideology (Taliaferro, 2006, 467).

As noted above, Neoclassical Realism attaches a significant importance to power as an instrument for ensuring the survival of the state. During the Cold War, the concept of middle power became an empirically strong analytical tool in the International Relations (IR) literature. A *middle power* is defined as "a state that holds a position in the international power spectrum that is in the 'middle'—below that of a superpower, which wields vastly superior influence over all other states, or of a great power, but with sufficient ability to shape international events" (Müftüler, n.d.). The characteristics of middle powers are the following. First, middle powers are in favor of multilateral foreign policy and formation of coalitions; second, they do not challenge the status quo; hence they are not revisionist or transformist; and third, they have highly institutionalized foreign services to disseminate foreign policy objectives through a wide network of diplomatic missions (Müftüler, n.d.).

Some IR scholars (Chapnick, 1998; Hynek, 2004; Carr, 2014) differentiate between traditional and emerging middle powers, and define middle powers from three perspectives, including hierarchical or positional, relational or behavioral, and functional. Hierarchically, a middle power is defined by its position, thanks to its objective material capabilities. The

behavioral model is based on the above-mentioned actions, which are considered specific to middle powers, such as a preference for multilateralism. Finally, the functional model is about the international involvement of middle powers, including their degree of activism, interests, and the ability to influence a decision.

As Neoclassical Realism's approach to power is relational, the international hierarchy of power provides a useful tool for assessing the state's level of vulnerability. Based on this perspective, Shin (2012, p. 134) proposes a definition of middle power as "a state actor which has limited influence on deciding the distribution of power in a given regional system but is capable of deploying a variety of sources of power to change the position of great powers and defend its own position on matters related to national or regional security that directly affect it." Thus, the main elements of a middle power are "limited influence on deciding the distribution of power in a given regional system" and "ability to change the position of great powers and defend its own position on matters related to national or regional security" (Shin, 2015, p. 1).

Against this theoretical and conceptual background, analysts and the observers have often identified Turkey as a middle power in international politics, as well as in the regional politics of the Eastern Mediterranean. Particularly after the end of Cold War, the middle power concept has been widely used to describe Turkey's ambition to expand its sphere of influence in its different neighborhoods (Müftüler & Yüksel, 1997; Oran, 2010; Hale, 2013; Parlar Dal, 2018; Kayhan-Pusane, 2021). According to Hale (2013, p. 1), for example, while Turkey is not a great power, it has considerable ability to act independently, resist pressure from great powers, and exert influence as a regional actor. In their analysis of Turkey's Transatlantic relations, Aksu Ereker and Akgül Açıkmeşe (2021) note a gradual shift in Turkey's position from Transatlantic middle power to a non-Western emerging power throughout the first decade of 2000s. Oran's (2010) authoritative account of Turkish foreign policy between 1919 and 2006 is also based on the premise that Turkey is a middle power. In a similar vein, Barlas and Güvenç (2014) consider Turkey as a middle power in their analysis of Turkey's Mediterranean politics between 1923 and 1933. Following the conventional approach (Hale, 1992, 2013; Oran, 2010), the chapter focuses on the international system and domestic factors and analyzes the first 100 years of Turkey's East Mediterranean engagement by employing Neoclassical Realist interpretation of the middle power concept.

Positioning and Balancing in the Wider Mediterranean: Formation Years of the Turkish Republic (1923–1946)

The first half of the formation years of Turkish foreign policy coincided with the inter-war period in the international system. As a medium-sized state in the middle of the East-West nexus, Turkey had to choose between partaking in a balance-of-power system and entering alliances, similar to the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century (Hale, 1992, p. 72). During this period, Turkey played on the balance of power between Britain-France, Germany-Italy, and the USSR (Oran, 2010). Indeed, the inter-war period was a clear test case of self-help doctrine for Turkey. While the Republic's approach to the Mediterranean region was drawn very broadly to include the Western Balkans and the Black Sea regions, Turkey did not have or follow a specific Mediterranean policy during the early years of the Republic. As Barlas and Güvenç (2014) underline, believing that self-help strategies were not sustainable in the long run, Ankara decided to employ the *strategy of helping others*. Especially after its admission to the League of Nations in 1932, Turkish diplomats preferred to follow the principle of "good international citizenship" (Barlas & Güvenç, 2014). While middle power state activism often means getting involved in global issues that do not directly concern them, a country can rise to the status of a middle power by first excelling in its own region. In the case of the Mediterranean, Turkey's regional friendly neighbor initiatives and leadership in this regard enabled the country to make significant progress toward becoming a middle power. For Ankara, the Balkan Pact, a treaty signed by Greece, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Turkey on February 9, 1934, in Athens, was a stepping-stone toward its further engagement with the wider Mediterranean region (Barlas & Güvenç, 2014).

Italy became the country to watch in the inter-war period closely, as Turkey's interests in the Mediterranean became more solidified. Turkish-Italian relations fluctuated between hostility and friendship, which was coined as *ami-adversion* by British diplomats. The "Mare Nostrum" slogan of Benito Mussolini, Italian Prime Minister from 1922 to 1043, and Italy's open threats to invade Antalya, the largest Turkish city on the country's Mediterranean coast, caused Ankara to seek Italy's containment in the region. Turkey's intention to contain Italy and the ambiguous relationship between the two countries at the time could be traced back to

Turkey's vivid memories of Italy's attacks on Tripoli and the Dodecanese[2] in 1912 and the Italian occupation of the southeastern part of Anatolia. Mussolini's adoption of an expansionist *tono fascista* discourse in foreign policy increased Turkey's security concerns in the Mediterranean (Barlas & Güvenç, 2014).

The Italian threat that became more imminent in the Mediterranean due to Italy's military exercise in the Aegean islands in 1935 and its attack on Abyssinia brought Turkey and Britain closer. Turkey's participation in the League of Nations sanctions regime against Italy's aggression caused a harsh Italian reaction. Italy's aggression in the Mediterranean and the open alliance between Italy and Germany paved the way for Turkey, a pro-status quo middle power in the region, to join an alliance with France and Britain. One of the concrete developments that led to Turkey's rapprochement with Britain and France was the sinking of some merchant ships by Italian submarines in the Mediterranean in 1937. After an international conference held in Nyon, Switzerland, Turkey agreed to act together with Britain to secure maritime traffic in the Mediterranean (Oran, 2010).

There was only one obstacle to the Turkish-British-French rapprochement, which was a crucial foreign political issue in the East Mediterranean: the future of Hatay.[3] In fact, the future of Hatay became the first important foreign policy issue for the new Republic. According to Barlas and Güvenç

[2] Until May 1912, the Dodecanese, a. k. a. Twelve Islands, was under Ottoman rule. Ottoman rule of the islands ended in 1912, when Italian forces seized the islands. Secret treaties on the future of the islands led to a dispute between Italy and Greece over the jurisdiction over the Dodecanese. In 1919 an agreement was reached whereby Italy would cede the Dodecanese to Greece except for Rhodes. However, Italy unilaterally denounced the accord and refused to carry it out. Italian sovereignty over the islands was confirmed by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. After the end of World War II, the Dodecanese temporarily came under British rule, with Greek participation. In the Paris Conference in 1946 it was that the islands should pass to Greece (Britannica, n.d.).

[3] The future of Hatay emerged as an important foreign policy issue after France's decision to grant independence to Syria in 1936. Although the Alexandretta Sanjak (Hatay) was within the borders of the *Misak-i Milli* (National Pact), it remained outside these borders by the Ankara Agreement (1921). As a result of this treaty, Sanjak was included by a special status in the Syrian territory under French mandate. The provisions of the Ankara Agreement concerning the Sanjak were confirmed by Article 3 of the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty. In 1936, the League of Nations recognized Hatay as a "distinct entity," thanks to Turkey's intense efforts. "Hatay State" was established in 1938. Just before World War II, France "gave" Hatay to Turkey. Hatay joined to the Republic of Turkey on June 23, 1939, by "the Final Settlement of Territorial Questions between Turkey and Syria" signed between Turkey and France (Kodaz, 2019).

(2014), the Hatay issue constitutes an interesting example that supports the argument that despite the "good international citizenship" discourse they utilize, middle powers pursue national interests *when* the opportunity arises. Only after the Hatay problem was resolved to its satisfaction, Turkey signed an alliance agreement with Britain and France in 1939 in a collective effort to contain the Italian threat in the wider Mediterranean. As a middle power, Turkey chose the path of alliance with the powerful actors in the system and benefited from multilateral diplomacy, especially within the framework of the League of Nations. Turkey's tactical use of diplomatic activism in the second half of the 1930s not only helped the country in its efforts to reshape the regional environment in the Mediterranean but also made it possible for the country to secure alliance with the European powers even though the Turkish government opted for non-belligerence in June 1940 following the German invasion of France and wanted to maintain its (active) neutrality before and during the early years of World War II (WWII). Turkey's decision was based on a clause in the alliance agreement, excusing Turkey from entering the war if military action might bring conflict with the Soviet Union.

While Turkey was worried about the increasing power and influence of the Soviet Union, there were also concerns about Italy's plans on the Balkans and on the Eastern Mediterranean. The entry of Italy into the war and its occupation of Greece in late 1940 meant that the triple alliance between Turkey, Britain, and France became operational. Turkey, which did not want to enter a war with Italy in the Mediterranean, rejected the request of Britain and France to join the war (Oran, 2010). In an effort to strengthen its policy of neutrality and to evade the British and French pressure, Turkey signed a non-aggression pact with German in 1941. In 1943, British Premier Winston Churchill and his military staff once again asked Turkey to join the war; however, the Ankara government did not change its position and remained neutral. In the autumn of 1944, Turkey welcomed Britain's landing of troops in Greece.

Aware of its limitations as a middle power to protect its territorial integrity, the Turkish government followed a strategy to stay out of the war as much as possible and maintained its balancing policy. Keeping a balance in its relations with the European states through cooperation through bilateral or trilateral agreements was Turkey's best course of action. The concern arising from Italy in the Eastern Mediterranean was successfully balanced by establishing close relations with Germany, on the one hand, and Britain, on the other.

Dealing with Domestic, Regional, and International Crises: Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean Policy During the Multi-party Period (1946–1960)

Threatened on two fronts by forces of the Axis and the Soviet Union, Turkey succeeded to remain non-belligerent until the final few months of WWII. Despite his success in keeping Turkey out of the war, President İsmet İnönü and his government gradually became unpopular because of the heavy tax burdens and centralized state system that were imposed during the war. Public discontent about the economy, coupled with İnönü's personal interest in the establishment of multi-party system, paved the way for the government's critical decision to liberalize the country's political system by permitting the formation of opposition parties. In 1946, the *Democrat Party* (Democrat Party, *DP*) was established. Under the leadership of Adnan Menderes, the DP was elected as the governing party in 1950 (VanderLippe, 2005). The fundamental changes in Turkey's political system and economic policies coincided with radical shifts in Ankara's balancing policy in the Mediterranean region.

After the end of WWII, Turkey joined the Western bloc against the Soviet Union. Turkey benefited from the American support through the Truman Doctrine (1947) and the Marshall Plan (1948). The Marshall Plan caused a profound post-war economic transformation in Turkey, especially in industrial and military development. To show solidarity with the Western bloc, in 1950, Turkey sent troops to defend South Korea from the North Korean incursion across the 38th parallel. Turkey's performance in the Korean War was a demonstration of good international citizenship, which in return opened the door for Turkey's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Turkish President Celâl Bayar signed the *Instrument of Accession* on February 18, 1952, anchoring Turkey's foreign policy orientation in the post-WWII era within the Western security framework.

When NATO was first established, the Mediterranean states including Italy, Turkey, and Greece were considered as the geographical periphery of the North Atlantic region. There were debates about their inclusion in the new security arrangement. France favored a separate Mediterranean pact, with Italy, Greece, and Turkey as participating members (Erkin, 1986). Britain, on the other hand, pressed for Italy to be included in the Brussels Pact instead of NATO or any other security framework. The United States (US) insisted to include Italy in the North Atlantic system (Folly, 1987).

After Italy's admission to NATO, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Necmettin Sadak, visited London, Paris, and Brussels to secure an internationally recognized arrangement for Turkey within the Eastern Mediterranean region. In a similar mission, Feridun Cemal Erkin, Turkish Ambassador to Washington, D.C., asked for support from the United States for a new regional pact in the Mediterranean (Erkin, 1986, p. 49), which would include other Eastern Mediterranean states, including Israel and several Arab states. For the US, the formation of such a pact for the region had too many complications due to Turkey's poor relations with most of the Arab states in the aftermath of Turkey's recognition of the State of Israel in 1949. Thus, instead of establishing a regional security pact in Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey and Greece were later admitted to NATO (Oran, 2010, p. 548) in 1952.

A new balance-of-power system in the Eastern Mediterranean was created following the end of the direct colonial rule of Britain and France in the late 1950s. The Soviets, with their anti-imperialist rhetoric, were quick in filling the power vacuum, and the US became increasingly dependent on its regional allies, including Turkey and Greece, to balance the Soviets, although neither Turkey nor Greece shares the same views and interests with the US in all foreign policy issues (Oran, 2010).

The Suez Crisis was the first regional crisis that Turkey was involved as a NATO member. Together with Britain and the US, Ankara condemned Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. Although Nasser's move did not pose a direct threat to Turkey's interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey's reaction had "largely to do with identifying itself closely with the West in the global context" (Sever, 2008, p. 124). Additionally, the Suez Crisis was significant regarding the regional dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean. After the crisis, and within the context of the Eisenhower Doctrine, the US became more engaged in the Middle East, leading to rapidly improving Egypt-Soviet relations. Interestingly, by declining the British invitation to participate in the Suez conference, Greeks made it clear that they sided with Nasser in the Suez crisis. In return, Egypt supported Greece in its claims over Cyprus, which, as the following pages document, became the most important foreign policy issue for Turkey in the Mediterranean region in later years.

Turkey's *relative autonomy* period of formation years came to an end with Turkey's NATO membership. During the 1950s, Turkey's main goal in the Eastern Mediterranean was to prove itself as a worthy ally and secure

Turkish membership of NATO. NATO membership constituted not only a security guarantee against the Soviet threat, but it was also an acceptance letter for Turkey to be a part of the Western community of nations. In this period, cooperation with the West became the leading principle of Turkey's foreign policy (Karaosmanoğlu, 1988). Besides the NATO framework, Turkey's bilateral relations with the US developed rapidly; Turkey showed a tendency to evaluate all international events through the perspective of NATO and the US. However, Ankara's choice to side with the US and Britain caused Turkey's increasing isolation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy and Cyprus Problem (1960–1985)

The short period between 1960 and 1985 was marked by three military interventions: the May 27, 1960, military coup, the March 12, 1971, military memorandum, and the September 12, 1980, military coup. The Turkish Military's increased presence in domestic politics was reflected heavily in the country's foreign policy decisions as well. Since this period also coincided with the American-Soviet détente, Oran (2010) identify this period as a period of real relative autonomy for Turkey. The clearest illustrations of the militarized tone of the period's foreign policy were embodied in the conflict over Cyprus and Turkey's disputes with Greece over territorial waters and continental shelf.

The most significant example of this new foreign policy environment was Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus in 1974. Ankara's unilateral act became a constant headache since the United States, the hegemonic power of the system (i.e., NATO), never approved Turkey's actions toward the Cyprus conflict. In fact, Turkey's Cyprus policy had already become a contentious issue between Turkey and the US in the 1960s. When controversies occurred in the enactment of the Cyprus Constitution, the US took sides with the Greek Cypriots. The violence that began in 1963 led to mutual accusations. The possibility of a military intervention became an important policy option for Turkey when President İnönü realized the vitality of the threat that Turkish Cypriots were exposed to. To prevent Turkey's intervention in Cyprus, and in an effort to prevent a major tension within NATO, in 1964, President Johnson sent his infamous letter to İnönü. The letter had dire consequences for Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy (Bölükbaşı, 2001), as it triggered an important and

long-lasting anti-NATO stance in Turkey, especially given what had transpired two short years before during the Cuban Missile Crisis that brought the world to the brink of a nuclear war. Political debates were accompanied with public mistrust about the reliance of NATO to protect Turkey against Soviet threat. The Johnson letter led to Ankara's attempts to improve relations with the Soviet Union and non-aligned states. From that year on, Turkey abandoned its solely pro-American foreign policy, reevaluated its dependence on American military technology, and started to buy military equipment from the Soviet Union which were then used during the military campaign to Cyprus in 1974.

In November 1967, inter-communal violence broke out again in Cyprus. Similar to the situation in 1964, Turkey was again unprepared for a military operation. In 1971, following the government's unsuccessful attempts at curbing domestic unrest, the generals presented Prime Minister Demirel with a memorandum asking him to step aside on March 12, 1971. Demirel resigned and martial law was declared. Between April 1972 and January 1974, the de facto rule of the Military continued. The military backed an amended Turkish Constitution to strengthen the state against civil society and created special courts to tackle all forms of dissent quickly and ruthlessly. During this short period, the Military also succeed in strengthening the role of the *National Security Council* in domestic and external politics of the country while ensuring that the fragmentation of the political party system remained in place. In January 1974, Bülent Ecevit, who assumed the leadership position in the CHP in 1972, came to power in a coalition with Necmettin Erbakan, who was leading the *National Salvation Party* (Milli Selamet Partisi, *MSP*).

In contrast to either cautious and multi-faceted policies during previous administrations, Ecevit did not accept a unitary state in Cyprus (Bölükbaşı, 2001) and adopted an assertive policy toward the Cyprus conflict, which resulted in Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus on July 20, 1974. The Ecevit government justified its action based on the Article 3 of the *Treaty of Guarantee* (1960).[4] Yet, Turkey's unilateral intervention in Cyprus

[4] The Treaty of Guarantee (1960) is part of the Treaty of Nicosia concerning the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus. The parties undertake to guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of Cyprus, and not to promote the union of Cyprus with other states or partition of the Island. The parties also agree that the integrity of the areas of the island under United Kingdom sovereignty shall also be respected.

resulted in the US Congress's decision to impose an arms embargo on Turkey in February 1975 (Bölükbaşı, 2001).[5]

Between the 1960s and 1980s, the Cyprus problem became one of the main determinants of relations with Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the most important foreign policy issue in Turkey-US relations. The inter-communal conflict that emerged in Cyprus also led to the end of the Turkish-Greek friendship that was in place throughout the 1950s. The Cyprus problem was later compounded by the sovereignty issues over the Aegean Sea. In particular, the dimensions of the territorial waters and continental shelf and the armament of the Aegean islands became important issues in Turkey's foreign policy in the 1980s and 1990s (Oran, 2010). The already existing tensions in Turkey-Greece relations became even more exacerbated with the declaration of the Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic (TRNC) in 1983. The deteriorating relations with Greece (and the US) due to the Cyprus problem and controversies over the Aegean Sea helped Turkey to choose the path of further reconciliation with the Arab Middle Eastern countries. Turkey began to support Arab countries during the Arab-Israeli wars in the 1980s.

In short, the period of 1960–1985 saw the increasing militarization in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy and the constant political crises between the military and the political elite on the one hand, and between the state and the society on the other. While Turkey's intervention in Cyprus may be considered uncharacteristically aggressive, domestic politics and Prime Minister Ecevit's belief system and foreign policy priorities explain this diversion from Turkey's usually non-interventionist and non-expansionist foreign policy. Turkey spent much of its energy and resources to tackle the Cyprus problem. Its internal instability during this period, coupled with the country's middle power limitations, made Turkey largely unable to achieve other objectives in the Eastern Mediterranean. As the cases of Johnson Letter and the US arms embargo illustrate, as a middle power Turkey did not have the capacity to pursue an entirely independent foreign policy. Although there were more questions being raised about Turkey's continued dependence on the US-led NATO security

[5]The United States administration imposed an arms embargo on Turkey in 1975 that lasted for three years. The U.S. arms embargo negatively affected Turkish defense capability. The embargo had a serious impact on the Turkish economy and defense capability because the Cyprus campaign required continuous logistical support, and Turkey was dependent on the US for many of its military supplies (see Durmaz, 2014).

framework, the economic liberalization process Turkey undertook under the leadership of Turgut Özal in the 1980s determined the course of Turkey's foreign policy in the 1990s and onward. Turgut Özal, who served as Turkey's eighth president (1989–1993), was the Deputy Prime Minister in the military government following the 1980 military coup. He later became prime minister (1983–1989) as the leader of the *Motherland Party* (Anavatan Partisi, ANAP) that won the parliamentary majority in the first post-coup general elections in 1983.

The First 20 Years After the End of the Cold War (1991–2010)

The post-Cold War period in Turkish politics reflects the global fluctuations and uncertainties that prevailed at the time. The victory of neoliberal ideas and globalization after the dissolution of the Soviet Union reinforced the liberalization efforts in every realm of Turkish society and politics. The increasing interdependence with the global economy and the international community made Turkey more vulnerable to external crises. Turkey's domestic politics, external relations, and security objectives were acutely affected by global events such as the First Gulf War (1991), the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, the war on terror, successive economic crises, Arab uprisings, and major civil wars and inter-state conflicts in Turkey's surrounding regions. Internally, the period was marked by the growing power of individual leaders and political ideas, but more importantly by the rise of the *Justice and Development Party* (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The AKP won the majority in the parliamentary elections in 2002, and it has been in power since then. The party's ideology and worldview have shaped Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean politics in the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

Despite its limitations as a middle power, Turkey followed a multilateral, multidimensional, and more assertive foreign policy since the initial years of the post-Cold War period. It is within this context that the Eastern Mediterranean region became a battlefield in Turkey's attempts to establish its dominance and strengthen its position in the regional balance-of-power politics. The control of Mediterranean access, oil transport, and overall socio-economic and political influence in the Eastern Mediterranean

have become the main strategic objectives of Turkey since the beginning of 1990s.

In addition to the ongoing problems in its relations with Greece, the dramatic deterioration of the Turkish-Syrian relations in the 1990s due mainly to the latter's open support to the *Kurdistan Workers' Party* (PKK) created problems for Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. The tensions between the two countries almost resulted in a war in 1998. To overcome the threats from Syria, Turkey developed strategic ties with other regional actors. In 1998, together with Israel and Jordan, Turkey engaged in naval exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean. A new but short-lived balance-of-power system became established in the region when, as a response, Greece developed its relations with Syria. The stalemate between Turkey and Syria came to an end following the capture of PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan and the signing of the Adana Agreement in late 1998 (Altunışık & Tür, 2006). The transformation of the Turkish-Syrian relations in the aftermath of the Adana Agreement and improved relations until the beginning of the Syrian war in 2011 between the two states strengthened Turkey's position in the region vis-à-vis Greece.

Using the diplomatic passport issued by the Greek Cypriot government, Turkey accused the Greek Cypriot regime's involvement in PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's escape to Nairobi, Kenya. The Turkish leaders also accused Greece of misleading Ankara about Öcalan's whereabouts. Having found a new balance in Turkey-Syria relations, Turkey's Foreign Minister, İsmail Cem, along with Greece's Foreign Minister George Papandreou initiated a Greek-Turkish reconciliation process. This initiative followed the civil dialogue that began after the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and in Greece during the summer of 1999. Despite the continuation of classical disputes at low levels, the period of détente between Turkey and Greece continued during the initial years of the AKP regime in Turkey and lasted until 2010.

During the same period, the AKP government improved Turkey's relations with the Arab world and introduced a new perspective on the Cyprus crisis. In 2003, the government reversed Turkey's long-lasting position on Cyprus and endorsed a UN plan to reunify the island. This policy was justified on the basis that Turkey needed to follow the principles of "zero problems towards neighbors" and "proactive and preemptive peace diplomacy." Between 2002 and 2013, with its growing economy and seemingly liberalizing politics, Turkey was recognized as a model country in regional politics and held a significant amount of soft power.

Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean Policy Since 2010

Increasing tensions with Israel and the Arab Uprisings upended Turkey's foreign policy goals in its surrounding regions, and in particular in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. Ankara's soft power approach, based primarily on the "strategic depth" doctrine discussed in detail in Chap. 1 of this volume, drastically changed. As opposed to its focus on "zero problems with neighbors" policy, Turkey's military presence in the region has since increased. Turkish-Israeli relations that had already begun to deteriorate in December 2008, when Israel started a three-week offensive in the Gaza Strip, reached a low point after the "Davos incident" in March 2009 and the "low-chair crisis" in January 2010. However, it was the "Mavi Marmara (or "the Flotilla") incident" of May 2010 that brought the two parties to a major crisis point. The tensions increased even further following the Israeli-Greek Cypriot deal on oil and natural gas exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In 2010, Turkey created a *Navy Task Force for the Mediterranean* in response to the Mavi Marmara incident. This was an early signal for Turkey's gradual securitization in the Eastern Mediterranean. With the start of the civil conflicts in several states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including Syria and Libya that are on the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey shifted its foreign policy and began to pursue traditional balance-of-power politics in the region. According to Kayhan-Pusane (2021), Turkey fully returned to military activism and hard power politics in the region after 2016. Uzgel (2020) suggests that the reason behind the recent militarization of Turkey's foreign policy has to do with the declining public support for the party after the attempted coup against the AKP regime in July 2016. As the AKP began to ally itself with the more nationalist segments of the society and shifted its liberal Muslim identity to an Islamist-nationalist one, the linkage between the party's survival and the state's survival manifested itself in foreign policy.

Turkey's military activism in regional crises was noticeable in such crises as the Syrian civil war and the Libyan crisis. Turkey became involved in these conflicts either as part of a multilateral effort such as the UN mandate in support of the UN-recognized Government of National Accord of

Libya in the Second Libyan Civil War (2020) or unilaterally through its cross-border operations in Syria.[6]

Several scholars (Adar & Toygür, 2020; Dalay, 2021) note that Turkey's military intervention in Libya was a part and parcel of Turkey's foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey used its entry into the "Libyan theater" to secure access to energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. A maritime deal was signed with Libya. In addition, the military activism in the Libyan civil war helped Turkey to counter Egypt in the wider Middle East and North Africa (Adar & Toygür, 2020; Dalay, 2021).

Most recently, the *Blue Homeland Doctrine*, which was inaugurated on February 27, 2019, defined the maritime areas under Turkey's jurisdiction and the means that provide safeguards under the international law, as well as the bilateral and multilateral treaties Turkey signed over the years.[7] According to Turkey's military and political elites, the doctrine does not favor an expansionist Turkish foreign policy in the region. On the contrary, they argue, the doctrine helps protect individual state rights, which contributes to global and regional peace in terms of both implementing international law and the possibility of regional countries benefiting from all resources equitably. The largest naval exercise in the history of modern Turkey that began on the same day that this Blue Homeland Doctrine was inaugurated and lasted for ten days was a demonstration of Turkey's ability to wage war simultaneously on three fronts: the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and Eastern Mediterranean.

The *Blue Homeland Doctrine* became instrumental in helping Turkey to place the protracted Cyprus conflict within a wider geo-strategic context. As the Cyprus issue gradually intersected with Turkey's claims over the oil and gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, oil exploration rights around Cyprus have become the subject of a major rift between Greece and Turkey. Greece has traditionally blocked Turkey's entry into the European Union (EU), and as a frozen conflict, the Cyprus issue has become an increasingly important obstacle for Turkey's EU membership.

[6] Operation Shah Euphrates (2014), Operation Euphrates Shield (2016), Operation Olive Branch (2018), Operation Peace Spring (2019).

[7] The Blue Homeland doctrine was developed by Admiral Cem Gürdeniz in 2006, then the head of the Turkish navy. The aim of the doctrine was to bolster Turkey's resilience at sea and to protect the country's maritime rights. The AKP government adopted this doctrine as a guiding principle, and after 2016, the Blue Homeland Doctrine became the backbone of Turkey's assertive and militarized foreign policy (Uzgel, 2020).

The predominant perspective within the EU is that Turkey is an *invader* in Cyprus.

Ankara pursued a logic of strategic autonomy after 2010, especially following the failed coup attempt in July 2016, which reinforced re-securitization in Turkish foreign policy (Christofis, 2022) toward the EU and Greece. Regarding oil exploration rights and the extraction of natural gas resources in the region, Greece attempted to establish various alliances with Israel, Greek Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan. In response to Greece's objective to use the continental shelves of its islands to extend their oil exploration rights, Turkey signed an agreement with the Haftar government in Libya to define Exclusive Economic Zones in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Greek Cypriots signed exclusive economic zone agreements with several countries, including Egypt and Israel. In response to this regional alliance, in August 2020, Turkey sent *Oruç Reis* survey vessel, escorted by warships for seismic research in the territory over which both Ankara and Athens claim jurisdiction. The standoff resulted in a "minor collision" between Turkey and Greece. Turkey announced that another drillship will search for natural gas in waters offshore Cyprus (Meredith, 2020), expressing its uncompromising commitment to defend its rights in the region. The maritime crisis that has been ongoing since then is a reflection of the geopolitical confrontations and power struggles between Turkey and Greece over the Eastern Mediterranean.

Domestic developments in Turkey, in conjunction with Turkey's ambition to become a non-Western emerging power (Aksu Ereker & Akgül Açıkmeşe, 2021), are also important in the continuation of the Greek-Turkish crisis. Both the AKP and the *Nationalist Action Party* (Milliyetci Hareket Partisi, MHP) use both the Cyprus crisis and the Turkish-Greek rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean to mobilize their base and maintain their joint majority in the Turkish parliament. In addition, the Turkish public no longer views the membership in the EU as a possibility, or even as an important foreign policy objective. The loss of US interest in the region and the distrust toward the EU have greatly contributed to the Turkish-Greek crisis in the region.

Conclusion

Turkey is a significant actor in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Since the formative years of Turkish foreign policy, Ankara has developed policies toward the Eastern Mediterranean in accordance with its middle power status (Kayhan-Pusane, 2021; Adar & Toygür, 2020; Dalay, 2021). As discussed throughout the chapter, despite the occasional periods of relative autonomy, Turkey has often experienced the limitations of a middle power in this region and has been unable to pursue an entirely independent foreign policy. Since 2002, the successive AKP governments have had the ambition to go beyond Turkey's middle power status in the Eastern Mediterranean with the goal of becoming an emerging power at the global level. The Syrian civil war and the many crises over maritime rights in the Eastern Mediterranean have led Turkey's leaders to increasingly consider the US, the EU, and NATO as unreliable allies. The West's objections to Turkey's demands regarding the Syrian civil war and criticisms of Turkey's decisions in the region have provided abundant opportunities for the Islamist-nationalist camp to gain more prominence in the country.

Yet, Turkey's status as a middle power has not changed. Turkey has found that despite its military strength and commitment to defending its rights, the govenment's policy options in the Eastern Mediterranean are constrained by the country's relative material power capabilities. To counterbalance the other regional actors, and to respond to the West's rejection of Turkey's priorities in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey has established a de facto alliance with Russia.

Given the long history of deeply rooted animosities between Turkey and Greece and the uncertain future of the situation in both Syria and Libya, it is difficult to predict whether Turkey's priorities or policies in the region will change. As the AKP regime continues to pursue populist policies to maintain the party's power, it is unlikely that Turkey and Greece can settle their disputes. Furthermore, unless there is a radical change in the EU's approach to Turkey, the Cyprus conflict will continue to raise the tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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CHAPTER 8

Turkey and the South Caucasus: Role of Memory and Perceptions in Shaping Turkey's Relations with Regional States

Ayça Ergun

The South Caucasus was a new land to discover, to learn, and to understand in order to initiate and formulate for the Turkish foreign policymakers in the early 1990s. Geographical proximity did not mean much since there was almost no interaction with the region before the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Prior knowledge on the region to shape foreign policy choices and initiatives was mainly the historical legacy which had both positive and negative connotations. Early writings on the Turkish foreign policy toward the region mainly portrayed Turkey as a successful role model for the post-Soviet countries with its consolidated nation and statehood, democratic experience, and secularism (Allison, 1996; Aydın, 2008; Aydın, 2010; Dal & Erşen, 2014; Erşen, 2013; Hunter, 1997; Köstem, 2019; Swietochowski, 1994, 1999). Although this was neither the intention nor the vision for the would-be policies, Turkey embraced

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_8

first an evolving and then an upgraded approach toward the region since there were major setbacks to initiate such a regional policy. The South Caucasus was not only a region experiencing post-Soviet transition with political and economic turmoil, but the region was also characterized by ethnic conflicts and wars. Turkey's entry into the region started with economic interests in mind. Turkey prioritized trade and investment in the region and then followed up with energy and transportation deals, securing the region's cooperation on a major project, namely Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline, to integrate the region—particularly Azerbaijan—into regional and global energy markets.

In the last three decades, Turkey has embraced three major identities in the region: regional power, historical friend and strategic ally, and historical enemy. All three identities are based on historical legacy but also have evolving characteristics. Turkey is a regional power, having initiated major energy and transportation projects along with its involvement either partially or fully into the security-building in the region. It is a historical friend and ally for Azerbaijan, whereas it constitutes a historical enemy and the Other for Armenia. Turkey's position as a strategic ally is rather constructed through consolidated bilateral relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia. Its regional policy is shaped in a geopolitical context where history matters, identity shapes, and perceptions dominate.

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of the goals of Turkey's foreign policy in the South Caucasus since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Using Constructivism, the chapter shows that Turkey's foreign policy choices and initiatives, along with their outcomes, have been largely determined within a geopolitical context where collective memory, history, and perceptions matter, identities (e.g., ethnic, religious, and linguistic) shape, and perceptions dominate the existing network of bilateral and trilateral relations. Turkey's foreign policy toward the South Caucasus is shaped in ways that, as Alex Wendt (1995) shows. He argues "social construction of international politics is to analyze how processes of interaction produce and reproduce the social structures—cooperative or conflictual—which in return shape actors' identities and interests and the significance of their material context". As such, collective memories delimit what is acceptable and not acceptable in foreign policy by helping to define a state's relations with others. Memories of past events that are particularly salient are hard to change over time even when external and internal contexts change.

The following section provides an analysis of the nature of Turkey's bilateral relations with three regional states: Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. The region is not a homogenous entity; treating Turkey's relations with each of these countries would give a better understanding of Turkey's foreign policy in and toward the South Caucasus. The chapter then focuses on the major opportunities and challenges in Turkey's relations in the region particularly after the 2020 Second Karabakh War, where Turkey might play a significant role while referring to conflicting co-existence of patterns of continuity and change. The patterns of continuity include the role historical memory plays in bilateral relations, with a specific focus on hostility; enmity, hatred with strong sense of "Othering" (i.e., between Azerbaijan and Armenia, between Armenia and Turkey, and between Georgia and Russia), enduring rivalries, competition, and potential conflict (i.e., between Russia and Turkey, and Iran and Turkey), continuing eagerness and assertiveness to increase sphere of influence and decisiveness (Russia); and Russia's attempt to restore its hegemonic power in the region with military bases in some form or another in all three countries of the region. The patterns of change include a more consolidated nation- and state-building process particularly in Azerbaijan, political will to initiate peace-building in the region, increased power of the Russian Federation and Turkey, and less internationalized context where cooperation schemes are discussed by regional actors.

The chapter concludes that three major themes will dominate whether Turkey will be able to continue its pro-active role in shaping regional politics and participating in regional cooperation efforts in the South Caucasus. These are, first, the fate of the peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia; second, the evolving process of normalization of bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey, and third, the tentative cooperation or "competitive cooperation" (Aydın, 2020), or the "flexible alignment" as Balta and Özdal note in their chapter in this volume, between Russia and Turkey.

An Overview of the Bilateral Relations Between Turkey and the South Caucasian States

Although Turkey does not have a holistic regional policy toward the South Caucasus due to the differences in its relations with individual regional states both in content and significance, Turkey's foreign policymakers treat the region as an important area where security and stability, along

with energy and transport projects, are the main concerns. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey's foreign policy toward the South Caucasus has been shaped by bilateral relations that are largely determined by identity, memory, and history. In this respect, Turkey's South Caucasus policy can be examined with reference to relations with Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, and the relationship among these three countries. Although Turkey has never been a neutral actor in the region where conflicts and wars along with other security matters dominate regional politics, its twin goals of providing military and political support to Azerbaijan and becoming a regional hub for the region's energy and transportation have sometimes created problems in devising the optimal foreign policy decision regarding the South Caucasus.

Turkey's role in the region is still evolving. Whereas the Turkey-Azerbaijan alliance has deepened and further consolidated over the years, the relationship between Turkey and Armenia continues to show considerable tensions. The historical enmity and the long-term process of "othering" have continued to shape the relations between Turkey and Armenia. Turkey's insistence on the resolution of the Karabakh conflict and restoring the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan as two pre-conditions before any potential for normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations has further consolidated the already enemy-like relations between two countries. Finally, Turkey's relations with Georgia have revolved mainly around energy and security cooperation through the Baku-Tbilisi Pipeline. The close trilateral cooperation between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline symbolizes the "othering" and exclusion of Russia and Armenia in these three states' vision for the future.

Azerbaijan-Turkey Relations

The bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey are special, exceptional, and privileged (Ergun, 2020b). The existing literature on bilateral relations focuses on the different dimensions of the motto of "one nation, two states," which has been frequently used to define the nature and the content of solidarity, strategic alliance, and partnership highlighting ethnic and linguistic affinities (Aslanlı, 2005; Cefersoy, 2001; Ergun, 2007; Ismayilov & Graham, 2016; Sultanov, 2016). Both countries attribute the highest value and importance to their relationship, both at the state and society levels. In addition to close relations at the state level, there is an intensive societal dialogue and unquestionable sympathy toward each

other. Public opinion polls in Turkey consistently show Azerbaijan as the best ally and friend of Turkish people (Aydın et al., 2022). Turkey was the first country to recognize the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan and provided full and continuous support during the many stages of the Karabakh conflict.

Two national leaders, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Neriman Nerimanov, are frequently referred to address to the deep historical roots of the reciprocal perception. On 14 October 1921, Atatürk told Ambassador İbrahim Abilof while he was presenting his credentials "We will be extremely pleased to see the Azerbaijani Turks will achieve their aims and live free and independent since their sorrows is our and their joy is ours too. We will assure you that Turkish National Assembly and its government will work hard to strengthen the loyalty and relations between two brotherly nations to make them stronger and solid."[1] When Atatürk wanted to pay back the money that Nerimanov provided to Turkey during the National Independence War, Nerimanov replied saying "Brothers do not owe each other. … Brothers are not debted to each other they hold each other's hand" (Veliyev, 2021, p. 349). The same emotional ties and connotations of existing solidarity are frequently referred to by all leaders in addressing to the bilateral relations. In the recent the Festival of Aviation, Space and Technology held in May 2022 in Azerbaijan, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated: "We are not so called but in essence two brotherly states and two nations who share both sorrow and joy."[2] Similarly, President Ilham Aliyev in his interview to a Turkish News Agency stated that "the motto of the one nation two states is a path for us. Our unity with Turkey is eternal."[3]

There are four main factors that ultimately determined the "one nation, two states" motto. First, Azerbaijan and Turkey share common historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic attributes. Although there is the decisiveness of the shared cultural patterns with an almost mutually understandable dialects, the underlying factors in highlighting these commonalities are mostly constructed. Turkey and Azerbaijan did not much intensive

[1] *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* (1959). Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları: 1., Ankara: Türk İnkılap Enstitüsü Yayınları., Vol: 2. p. 19 (cited in Hakimiyeti Milliye gazetesi, 13 Ekim 1921).

[2] https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-azerbaycan-teknofestte-sozde-degil-ozde-kardes-olan-iki-devletiz-683769.html.

[3] https://www.cnnturk.com/video/dunya/son-dakika-ilham-aliyevden-cnn-turke-ozel-aciklamalar.

interactions during the Soviet times; however, the glorified image of Turkey in the national memory of the Azerbaijanis as their savior at the beginning of the twentieth century is significant (Ergun & Çitak, 2020). The Azerbaijanis have a positive memory of their relations with the Turks, and they have preserved their gratitude and appreciation despite the long-time Soviet rule over Azerbaijan.

In addition, the interaction between Azerbaijani and Turkish intellectuals, along with their similar vision for a would-be nation state with a particular emphasis on Turkism and modernization, underlines the ideological basis of the special type of relationship. Traditionally, the Turks consider language as the main proof of having the same ancestry with the majority of people living in Central Asia and Azerbaijan. The closeness of the language spoken in Turkey and Azerbaijan was crucial in constructing an intensely positive image of each other during the first Turkish-Azerbaijani encounters immediately following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. These relations were further consolidated through official visits, the establishment of Turkish businesses in Azerbaijan, and the Great Student Project initiated by Turkish government, which provided scholarship to Azerbaijani students to get a degree from Turkish universities (Ergun, 2020; Ergun & Kondakçı, 2021).

Second, Turkey and Azerbaijan share a common enemy. The Armenian nation historically constitutes the main Other in both societies' historical conscience. While the entrenched historical grievances of the Azerbaijanis against the Armenians were revived by the Karabakh conflict (Altstadt, 1988), Armenia's efforts to ensure international recognition of the massacres of the Armenians during World War One (WWI) as so-called "genocide" created a strong Turkish reaction. Moreover, the assassination of Turkish diplomats by the Armenian terrorist association ASALA in Europe and the United States fueled the historical hatred and perceptions of enmity and threat. The Armenian efforts in European capitals and the United States for the recognition of the "Armenian genocide" became one of the main sticking issues in Turkey's relations with Europe and the United States. In short, Armenia as their common enemy made the Turkey and Azerbaijan even more united. Although the level of perceived threat from Armenia is not the same in both countries, Armenia still constituted significant challenges for both Turkey and Azerbaijan. For the Azerbaijanis, Armenians were associated with betrayal, loss of the territories, and a security threat; for Turkey, they are seen as challenging the existing geopolitics but definitely not as a security threat. For Azerbaijan, the war over

Karabakh created existential problems for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, inviolability of its borders, and its nation and state-building processes. Importantly, Turkey and Azerbaijan provided unconditional support to each other against Armenia. The Karabakh conflict and the continued focus on what happened to the Armenians during WWI contributed to not only the revitalization of a common memory focusing on friends and foes but also conversion of this memory into a collective identity and consciousness between Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Third, Azerbaijan and Turkey share common economic interests. Initiatives involving energy and transportation projects, along with increased Turkish investment in the region, created economic interdependence between two countries (Bilgin, 2007; Erşen & Çelikpala, 2019; İpek, 2006, 2019). The construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline materialized as a result of the increasing Turkish-Azerbaijani economic and political relations as well as both countries' desire to bring the oil from the region to the global market. This project was later followed by the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline and the Trans Anatolian Pipeline Project (TANAP), and finally by Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Project (BTKR). These projects progressively led to a mutual dependence, as leaders in both countries became increasingly interested in furthering their economic interests and maximizing profits. Indeed, the consolidation of the Turkey-Azerbaijan economic cooperation signified the formation of a joint vision about the future, impacting Turkey's foreign policy toward the region.

Finally, the fourth factor underlying the close relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan and providing reasoning for the "one nation, two states" perspective is the emotional and intuitional attachment of the Turkish public to Azerbaijan. Although the Turkish public has rather limited knowledge of Azerbaijani politics, there is strong sensitivity about the Karabakh conflict and great support to the Azerbaijanis in their fight against Armenia. The Azerbaijani people, on the other hand, are strong followers of Turkey's foreign and domestic politics, watch Turkish news and TV programs, support Turkish soccer teams, travel to Turkey quite frequently either for business or for touristic purposes, and even speak Turkish dialect when necessary (Ergun, 2020b). As noted above, collective memory, cultural affinities, and the similarity in language condition Azerbaijani sentiments and influence the public's views about what Turkey's role should be in the region.

The only time that Turkish-Azerbaijani relations had some tensions was when the *Justice and Development Party* (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) began its policy of normalization with Armenia. Constituting an exception, Turkey's so-called normalization process that began following the signing of the Zurich protocols, albeit not ratified by either Turkey or Armenia, in October 2009 constituted a serious threat to the preservation of the exceptional ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan and signaled a potentially significant rupture in their economic and political cooperation. Turkey underestimated the extent of the reaction from Azerbaijan, especially because the Turkey's leaders did not consult with the leadership in Baku prior to the Zurich protocols. Both the Azerbaijani state and public felt betrayed. However, the Turkish and Azerbaijani officials quickly engaged in an effort to save relations and were able to reconsolidate their partnership. The two countries agreed on the establishment of the High Level of Strategic Cooperation in December 2010, further institutionalizing their security partnership. Turkey and Azerbaijan also agreed to support each other "using all possibilities" in the case of a military attack or aggression against either of them. Plans to upgrade hardware for joint military operations, cooperation in "military-technical" areas, joint military exercises, and training sessions were also specified. Between 2010 and 2020, strategic partnership was coupled with major projects of construction of the BTKR and TANAP, which resulted in deepening of economic cooperation in the fields of energy and transportation. The BTKR, often referred to as "Iron Silk Road" Railway Project, has increased the importance of both Turkey and Azerbaijan globally while connecting Beijing to London (Kundu et al., 2014; Lussac, 2008). While the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline was a way to the Western markets, the TANAP is an instrument for tangible integration with European market where Turkey aims to become "the energy distribution hub of the region" according to President Erdoğan.[4]

The Second Karabakh War, which started in July 2020 and lasted for 44 days, was a turning point in the changing geopolitics of the South Caucasus. Although Turkey's moral and political support to Azerbaijan during this war was expected, the Second Karabakh War created an opportunity structure for both countries to intensify and deepen their existing

[4] Azerbaijani, Georgian Presidents In Turkey For TANAP Ceremony, RFE/RL, 17 March 2015, http://www.rferl.org/content/turkey-tanap-azerbaijan-georgia-turkmenistan-gas-european-union/26905698.html, 7 December 2017.

strategic and economic partnership. Between July and September of 2020, Turkey and Azerbaijan had joint military exercises based on the bilateral strategic agreement. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan issued a statement suggesting that the Turkish nation continued to stand by its Azerbaijani "brothers," as always "with all its resources" (Hongur, 2020) and interest in strengthening the Turkish-Azerbaijani solidarity.[5] Similarly, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that "Azerbaijan will surely use its right of self-defense to protect its people and its territorial integrity. In this vein, Turkey fully supports Azerbaijan with unwavering solidarity. We will stand by Azerbaijan whichever way it prefers."[6] Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu summarized this statement by saying: "We stand by Dear Azerbaijan in the field and on the table" (Varan, 2020). Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar added that Turkey would stand by "Azerbaijani Turkish brothers with all resources till the end" (Özer, 2020). Going one step further, during his visit to Baku, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that Turkey and Azerbaijan can even be counted as one state when necessary.[7] Turkish public followed the news on Azerbaijan and Karabakh during the entire period, and the media coverage of the war was extensive. The use of both countries' flags side by side in the major cities of Azerbaijan and on social media accounts was observable. Public celebrations after the cease-fire agreement on November 10 were held with both Azerbaijani and Turkish flags.

Turkey had a pro-active, assertive, and decidedly pro-Azerbaijan stance during the Second Karabakh War. On the one hand, Turkey's leaders consistently expressed and underlined Turkey's moral and political support to Azerbaijan without getting directly involved militarily in the war. On the other hand, the Turkish army and military schools provided training to Azerbaijani army, a practice that has been in place since the end of the Cold War. Today, Azerbaijan has a comparably well-equipped strong army and a well-trained military elite who work in close collaboration with their Turkish counterparts.

The Turkish-Azerbaijani strategic partnership that has deepened even further since 2020 and the economic interdependence that has intensified

[5] https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turk-milleti-her-zamanoldugu-gibi-bugun-de-tum-imkanlariyla-azerbaycanli-kardeslerinin-yanindadir.

[6] http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-94_-ermenistan-in-azerbaycan-a-karsi-baslattigi-saldiri-hk-sc.tr.mfa.

[7] https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-bakanimizin-azerbaycan-i-ziyareti-6-10-2020.tr.mfa.

significantly over the years are crucial in determining Turkey's priorities and continued interests in the region for the foreseeable future. Most recently, the Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan signed on 15 June 2021 was ratified by both countries in 2022 (Shusha Declaration, 2022). The Declaration underlines the importance of the unification of opportunities and potentials in political, economic, defense, culture, education, and health sectors. Repeating the importance of high-level strategic partnership and cooperation at all levels, the Declaration had a strong emphasis on security dimension of the bilateral relations particularly focusing on defense cooperation and affirmed both countries' "determination to act jointly in the case of a threat or an attack on the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of any of the parties, or the security of their internationally recognized borders" (Rehimov, 2022). This highlights yet another act and expression of both parties to deepen their alliance.

Armenia-Turkey Relations

Turkey recognized Armenia's independence in the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union but refrained from building diplomatic relations due to two main reasons. First, Article 11 of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia adopted on 23 August 1990 stipulated: "The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the '1915 Genocide' in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia." This was not only against Turkey's official stance on the 1915 events but also an act against its territorial integrity and recognition of internationally recognized borders. Second, Turkey considered Armenian withdrawal from the Azerbaijani territory of Karabakh as a precondition for establishing diplomatic relations.

The extant literature examining the bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey focuses largely on both countries' relations with Azerbaijan, which is heavily centered by the ongoing Karabakh conflict. Additionally, this literature emphasizes the Turkish-Armenian normalization, or reconciliation process, the role of the Armenian diaspora, and the Armenian claims of "genocide" as the key factors that inform the nature of Turkey-Armenia bilateral relations (Aktar & Giragosian, 2013; De Waal, 2010; Demir, 2007; Ekmekçioğlu, 2016; Hill et al., 2015; Giragosian, 2017; Göl, 2005; Göksel, 2012, 2019; Shiriyev & Davies, 2013; Grigoryan et al., 2019). The normalization process, which began with "football

diplomacy" and continued between September 2008 and April 2009, led to the signing of the Zurich Protocols in October 2009. However, the process came to an end when neither Turkey nor Armenia ratified the agreements. The relations between the two countries soured especially after 2013, which coincided with increasing Russian-Armenian security and military cooperation.

A new round of normalization process began following the reciprocal appointment of special envoys in December 2021. The new process started after the signing of a Russian-initiated ceasefire agreement that terminated the Second Karabakh War on 10 November 2020. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, underlined the fact that, unlike the previous normalization process, the Turkish side would take all steps after consulting with Azerbaijan and noted Turkey's unwillingness to act independent of or separate from Azerbaijan.[8] Significantly, the Armenian leaders decided to remove any direct linkage between normalization efforts and some of the most pressing and divisive issues this time around, including Turkey's acknowledgment of the Armenian claims of "genocide" and the resolution of the Karabakh conflict. In pursuing this approach, Yerevan decided to limit the focus of relations with Turkey strictly to bilateral relations, thereby removing any demands on or prerequisites for Turkey. While the Turkish side did not make an official announcement for a "no-precondition normalization process," the fact that Azerbaijan's regaining much of the territory during the 2020 war it had lost in 1993 made it easier for Turkey to commit to the process.

History matters, identity shapes, perceptions dominate, and geopolitics inform the largely tumultuous but at times thawing relations and the currently existing state of affairs between Turkey and Armenia. The events of 1915, which the Turkish side describes as a massacre and the Armenian side calls "genocide," paved the way for a process of mutual *Othering* that resulted in Turkish and Armenian enmity and hatred toward each other. The rather negative view of the Other was revived following the first Karabakh War in the late 1980s. The long history and the unchanging nature of these perceptions at the societal level are likely to create major hurdles for normalization efforts despite the significant symbolism of the process and the political willingness for diplomatic engagement of Turkish and Armenian political elites. In other words, although the political

[8] https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu-her-zaman-can-azerbaycan-in-yanindayiz-can-azerbaycan-hicbir-zaman-yalniz-degildir/2683619.

leadership in both countries may seem committed to the normalization of bilateral relationships, it will be difficult, if not totally impossible, to overcome historical prejudices and perceptions at the societal level.

In addition, the current process of normalization does include Azerbaijan. Inclusion of Azerbaijan in the process is important for Turkey's bilateral relations with that country. Following the then-Turkish president Abdullah Gül's visit to Yerevan to watch the FIFA World Cup game between the Turkish and Armenian national teams after receiving an invitation from his Armenian counterpart, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev canceled his trip to Istanbul for the Alliance of Civilizations Summit held April 2009 (Ergun, 2020b). At the same time, a delegation of Azerbaijani deputies came to Ankara to share their concerns with numerous groups in Turkey, including deputies, leaders of the political parties, and civil society representatives. Similarly, just after the signing of the Zurich Protocols, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release, stating that Turkey's decision "directly contradicts the national interests of Azerbaijan and overshadows the spirit of brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey built on deep historical roots" (Shiriyev, 2013). The tension in Turkey-Azerbaijan relations was overcome only when Turkey gave its unconditional support to Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh War where both countries acted as "one." As of April of 2023, Azerbaijan seems to have given its consent to the normalization process; yet, this consent is largely a tentative approval that is largely dependent on the nature of the country's relations with Armenia. In addition to Azerbaijan, Georgia should not be excluded from the process of normalization given the country's growing involvement in regional economic cooperation mechanisms, as well as its caution and reluctance toward involvement in cooperation with Russia and Russian allies in the region, including Armenia.

Georgia-Turkey Relations

Unlike Turkey's relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia, the bilateral relations with Georgia are framed with reference to domestic preferences and national interests, promotion of regional cooperation, and ethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus. The promotion and preservation of security and maximization of economic interest through energy are the primary drivers of Turkey-Georgia bilateral relations (Çelikpala, 2005; Demirağ, 2007). Despite Georgia's initial caution toward Turkey in the early years

of independence, there is no strong identity dimension either historically or culturally in shaping Turkish-Georgian relations. Perceptions and Turkey-Georgia relations are shaped by common security concerns, economic profit and regional cooperation, and strategic alliance becomes the key theme of these relations. According to Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey is the biggest trade partner of Georgia.[9] Moreover, over the past two decades, Georgian female labor and seasonal workers have become an important part of Turkey's workforce (Öksüz & Özgür, 2021; Toktaş & Çelik, 2017; Yalçın, 2015).

Turkey was the first country who recognized Georgia's independence in 1991, and the two countries signed the Agreement of Friendship and Good Neighborhood (Demirağ, 2007). Since then, Georgia has experienced significant problems in consolidating its nation and state-building processes. The long-lasting unrest and conflict with Abkhazians and South Ossetians resulted in the Russian involvement and invasion of the Georgian territories in August 2008. Turkey strongly supported territorial integrity of Georgia (Çelikpala, 2012). Moreover, Turkey's NATO membership and its accession process to the European Union have facilitated Georgia's desire to work with Turkey in the region (Mutlu, 2011) since Georgia also aspired to achieve a similar status with "its pro-Western and anti-Russia position" (Demirağ, 2007, p. 278).

Turkey-Georgia relations began to consolidate as a result of the two major energy projects and a transportation project: the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline (2005), Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum-Gas Pipeline (2006), and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Projects (2017). Turkey and Georgia are linked with "energy infrastructure" with these large-scale energy projects, which intensified their economic relations in other realms (Chkhikvadze, 2011). The visa-free regime that started in 2011 further allowed the Georgian and Turkish citizens to visit the other country using only their national identity cards, making it easier for Turkish businesses to establish contact in Georgia. The High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council was established in 2016 provided the basis for the deepening of the trilateral cooperation among Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. The troika is described as an "exemplary" strategic partnership and a "promising" and "ground-breaking" cooperation effort with connotations of a relationship that may result in a partial integration within the South Caucasus (Çelikpala & Valiyev, 2015; Shiriyev & Davies, 2013; Baban

[9] https://www.mfa.gov.tr/gurcistan-ekonomisi.tr.mfa.

& Shiriyev, 2010). The High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council represents Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan as "priority partners" (Valiyev, 2015) and represents the views that all three countries will have solidarity regarding territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Georgia and intensify their cooperation on energy politics.

Another important aspect in Turkey-Georgia bilateral relations is security concerns. Turkey provided "training to the Georgian troops, improving technical and logistical capabilities and modernizing military infrastructure" (Chkhikvadze, 2011, p. 2). This is not only significant for supporting Georgia when it was challenged first by the separatist movements, then the Russian invasion of its territory but also to ensure stability in both Turkey and Georgia "through strengthening a symbiotic relationship" (Ajeganov, 2016). It is within this context that overcoming security challenges seems to be strongly tied to Turkey's participation in economic and cooperation in the region. Whereas Azerbaijan's victory after the Second Karabakh War changed the geopolitical dynamics of the region, and although a final peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan has not been reached, Turkey is interested in seeing Georgia as a reliable partner of existing energy and transportation projects.

An Overview of the Turkey's Policy Toward the South Caucasus After the Second Karabakh War

The Second Karabakh War, which lasted for 44 days war, ended with Azerbaijan's successfully gaining the previously occupied territories. Armenia not only lost control over the Karabakh region but faced political turmoil within the country. The post-war geopolitics of the South Caucasus provided Turkey and Russia with a great opportunity to re-visit and re-define their roles and missions in the region where the reach of the European Union and the United States was extremely limited. Turkey became a game changer with a more pro-active and assertive foreign policy since July 2020 and has recently become more intent and interested in playing a balancer role in the region since the Russian Federation has consolidated itself as the main game-maker, status-provider, and mediator. With its army on the soils of the South Caucasian countries, as well as its role in initiating the ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia once again became the most important actor in regional security calculations.

Since the end of the Second Karabakh War, Turkey has been seen as an important power balancing against Russia. However, the existing status

quo is feeble. As of 2023, Azerbaijan still enjoys its victory since the acquisition of its occupied territories from Armenia that helped restore its territorial integrity and consolidate its nation and state-building processes. Immediate and fast reconstruction efforts in Karabakh further contributed to the restoration of Azerbaijan's sovereign rights and showed the country's determination to take full control over the region. From the perspective of Azerbaijan, the conflict is over, and the Karabakh Armenians are now considered citizens of Azerbaijan with no special status granted to them.

In contrast, the defeat in the Second Karabakh War resulted in political turmoil in Armenia. For the Armenian leadership, the status of the Karabakh Armenians is yet to be determined, preferably with the involvement of international actors. Since the efforts to date to achieve a final peace agreement have been futile, it is unclear what the future holds or how the relations between Armenian and Azerbaijan will impact Turkey's role in the region. One possible scenario to create peace involves the creation of a pact with Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, on the one hand, and with Turkey, Russia, and Iran, on the other. However, this option is questionable in terms of its sustainability and effectiveness due to the fragility of relations among the three regional powers—Iran, Turkey, and Russia. In addition, it is not easy to predict how long the existing alignment between Turkey and Russia in the region will last. Moreover, Georgia is intent on distancing itself from Russia in any schemes of cooperation where the former is involved. Georgia has shown a strong commitment to being integrated into the Western structures, particularly the European Union, and even submitted the country's application to the Union on 3 March 2022, less than ten days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Finally, Georgia declined to participate in the meetings of the foreign ministers of the five countries held on 10 December 2021 in Moscow. Thus although the South Caucasian countries underline the importance of regional cooperation, possibilities for regional integration face significant challenges.

Conclusion

South Caucasus remains fragile, and the future of regional cooperation is not easy to predict. There is a need to build trust, which requires overcoming past hostilities and showing goodwill and commitment for a peaceful co-existence in a stable and secure region. During and in the

aftermath of the Second Karabakh War, the region experienced its least internationalized period since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Lack of foreign involvement gave both Turkey and Russia the opportunity to consolidate their power as the two external actors in the South Caucasus. Turkey became more pro-active and assertive, underlining not only its major support for Azerbaijan but also its interest in regional cooperation. Russia, on the other hand, remained somewhat distanced while ensuring its role and restoring its position in the region by becoming the major mediator between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

As of April 2023, three main issues dominate the regional politics where Turkey's engagement and involvement matter significantly. These are the signing of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the process of normalization between Armenia and Turkey, and the future of the trilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Whereas the start of a second round of normalization process between Turkey and Armenia is promising and symbolically significant, there is no guarantee that a notable improvement of bilateral relations will occur in the near future. With the continuation of Azerbaijan's consent, Turkey-Armenia relations may gradually normalize in the long term. However, any substantive change in Turkey-Armenia relations will likely occur if and only when Azerbaijan and Armenia reach a mutually agreeable peace agreement. It is very likely that Turkey will not face any challenges in its ongoing strategic partnership with Azerbaijan and Georgia. Turkey-Russia collaboration and "flexible alignment" against the Western powers seem to remain intact.

Given the past failures of both the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in dealing with the Karabakh conflict (Aliyeva, 2006; Delcour & Wolczuk, 2021; Freizer, 2017; German, 2007; Simao, 2011, 2013) due to slow decision-making processes and inefficiency in using confidence- and peace-building instruments, what future impact the European intervention might mean in the region remains to be seen. Frequent visits by Toivo Klaar, the current EU Special Representatives for the South Caucasus and Crisis in Georgia, to the region shows the EU's increasing interest to become an actor in the peace-building process (Ergun, 2021). Increasing EU involvement will likely provide countries like Georgia with alternative policy options to pursue and help balance the Russian influence in the region. Turkey remains

to be the only external actor providing support to Azerbaijan and Georgia and working with these countries to establish regional connectivity through trade and transport. EU's intervention in support of these relations could boost Turkey's role in the region; however, as Müftüler-Baç explained in her chapter on EU-Turkey relations in this volume, the stalemate in Turkey's accession negotiations is creating frictions between Turkey and the Union, which can also impact the existing fragile balance in the South Caucasus.

Turkey's current position in the South Caucasus will continue to be strongly supported by Azerbaijan. While the trilateral relationship among Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey offers an opportunity for a stronger regional integration, extended cooperation, and further de-bordering of cultural and psychological boundaries in the region, Turkey's increasing relations with Russia and the democratic backsliding in the country may make Georgia reluctant to maintain or deepen its relations with Turkey. Finally, the outcome of the Turkey-Armenia normalization negotiations will be determined by the nature of the relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as any turbulence between these two countries would eventually have an impact on the process. In short, while the South Caucasian states and their allies underline the importance of regional connectivity, economic development, profit maximization, and the ongoing desire to deepen their relations, regional cooperation and deeper regional integration face significant challenges that are largely informed by the legacies of the past, historical memory, and conflicts of the post-Soviet era.

The South Caucasus region requires an elaborate, extensive, comprehensive cooperation mechanism to secure peace, security, and stability. Trade and transport continue to remain as the most relevant areas to further and deepen regional cooperation. Turkey does not seem to favor the involvement of the Western countries in regional politics. Turkish policymakers enjoy their prominent position in the region and may show reluctance to allow growing European involvement. However, a stronger EU presence in regional politics might just be what Turkey needs to maintain its pro-active role and continue to balance the growing Russian influence. Turkey has been an integral part of economic and security cooperation efforts in the South Caucasus. Its assertive position and restored role as a significant regional power seem to influence the process of peace and security-building and prospects for regional connectivity.

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CHAPTER 9

Turkey's Strategic Partnership with China: A Feminist Recount

Ayça Alemdaroğlu and Sultan Tepe

China and Turkey have had a volatile relationship since 1949. The two countries often found themselves on the opposite side of international conflicts, especially during the Korean War (1950). However, the contentious history took an unexpected turn. With Turkey's neoliberal policies, China has become a crucial focus of Turkish foreign policy in the past decade. The two countries elevated the bilateral relations to a "strategic partnership" status in 2010. This new mutually beneficial partnership has been praised

This chapter is based on and considerably extends Alemdaroğlu and Tepe (2020). We thank the editors for their feedback on our earlier draft.

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and has increasingly become crucial to promoting China and Turkey's domestic and global goals. The expanding Chinese influence in Turkey poses many questions about if and how the growing relationship between the two authoritarian countries affects their respective citizens and global order. On the one hand, surprising many, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan started referring to China as an ideal model for his policies (Karakış, 2021). Now Turkey seeks to emulate China's growth strategies and benefit from China's economic power in tackling its ailing economy, domestic political challenges, and contentious relations with neighbors.

On the other hand, under Xi Jinping, China has found a highly strategic foothold in Turkey—a NATO member with a large market for energy, infrastructure, defense technology, and a telecommunications hub at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Nevertheless, the relations between the two countries are marked by conflicting and converging interests. Both leaders aspire to tighten their authoritarian control domestically and create alternative global networks that challenge the hegemony of the United States and an international order based on Western-created institutions while espousing clashing ideologies of Chinese-style socialism and Sunni Islamism.

The cooperation between China and Turkey has expanded exponentially in recent years. Following Turkey's inclusion in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2015, several bilateral agreements ranging from health to nuclear energy were signed. China is Turkey's second-largest import partner after Russia (11.5% and 19.3% of imports, respectively).[1] Swap agreements, which allow trade with China to be conducted in Chinese yuan instead of U.S. dollars, grew from $1.6 billion in 2012 to $6 billion in 2021 and became critical to boosting Turkey's depleting foreign reserves, declining economy, and pre-election clientelist policies (Sönmez, 2022). The BRI projects provide Beijing with a strategic footing on the Mediterranean, while they have reinforced Turkey's strategy to assert itself as a transportation corridor, boosting Erdoğan's claim to global importance in international affairs. Energy is another sector where Turkey receives significant investment under the BRI umbrella. Beyond infrastructure and energy, the increasing Sino-Turkish partnership has deepened bilateral cooperation in the military and security fields (Isık & Zou, 2019). China's soft power is also encroaching through media influence and Confucius Institutes in prominent universities in Turkey (Boztepe, 2016).

[1] TUIK Data accessible at https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Foreign-Trade-Statistics-September-2022-45544 (last accessed on December 5, 2022).

Several foreign policy analysts positively view the deepening connection between China and Turkey as Turkey's ability to multiply its international partners and grow its economic gains (Chen, 2020; Çolakoğlu, 2013). However, such arguments remain incomplete. In this chapter, we use the relationship between the two countries to exemplify how Turkey's pragmatic adaptability in its international relations unfolds and provides the regime with financial securities while creating high democratic costs for the country. The chapter emphasizes the domestic factors focusing on the darker underbelly of the Sino-Turkish partnership, namely, the rampant anti-democratic practices and increasing domestic repressions in each country. In an era of global democratic regression, the increasing ability of authoritarian regimes to suppress dissent at home is often expanded by financial, technological, and moral support extended to them from outside or a lack of international pressure. In this analysis, we problematize the conventional investigations of Sino-Turkish relations based on the realist approaches. We offer a feminist critique of Turkey's foreign policy and question what the Sino-Turkish partnership means for different domestic groups and their ability to resist authoritarianism.

A Lost Perspective in Sino-Turkish Relations? From Strategic Realism to a Feminist Critique

Conventional approaches to international relations, rooted in Realism, rely on presumed coherent state interests with little attention to how those interests convey or gloss over numerous contentious processes. From this perspective, terms such as "strategic partnership," which define bilateral relations between Turkey and China, presume each country has monolithic interests. In contrast, constructivist approaches recognize diverse actors and power dynamics in forming state interests and norms. More significantly, for constructivists, state interests are not well-defined or fixed positions but changeable outcomes of many contentious processes, including inter-elite competition, ideational conflicts, democratic pressures from society, geostrategic concerns, and international norms. Our analysis draws from a constructivist perspective yet goes beyond viewing bilateral relations as simple bargaining between states and their leaders, where only they stand to gain or lose. As detailed below, our feminist critique emphasizes two points. We view state interests, norms, and inter-state relations not only as informed by diverse factors and actors but highlight the

limited role of women in them. More importantly, we focus on the impact of bilateral ties on different marginalized social groups.

This chapter contends that the formation of the norms that constructivists rightly recognize are outcome of contentious processes. Yet, we see the need to expand this approach by including women and marginalized groups. In examining the implications of Sino-Turkish relations, we adopt a feminist perspective as a necessary opening to examine the gendered nature of policies and the marginalization of minorities in international politics (Charli, 2003). Such an approach not only challenges the realist approaches' reified notion of the state and national interests but also enhances the constructivist approaches' call to better understand the formation of power relations and norms.

In line with the premise of this volume, our analysis builds on the feminist challenge to the International Relations scholarship (Parashar et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the analyses of bilateral relations continue to be dominated by numerous state and elite-centric assumptions about sovereignty, security, and national interest, which neglect marginalized groups, especially women and minorities. As Judith Ann Tickner (2018) notes, any researcher studying state behavior must be aware of the conflict- and control-centered depictions of international relations and the state's contradictory roles. The state can shield different groups against the international system or act as a perpetrator and can cause political, social, and economic inequalities. In line with Tickner's insights, we draw on the burgeoning field of feminist international relations to explain expanding Turkey-China relations from a multi-dimensional perspective. Similarly, we recognize the constructed nature of state interests and policies and take power hierarchies seriously in their formation and effects (Locher & Prügl, 2001).

From this vantage point, we draw attention to how the extant literature on interstate relations relies not only on the abstractions of national interests and security, constructed by specific interests of the ruling parties, groups, and elite—primarily men of dominant ethnic groups—but also actual policies. Given the predominance of the realist perception of international order and the assumptions about the desires of mankind, there is a need to consider how foreign relations and decisions about international conflict and cooperation are reflective of state identities, specific leaders' ideas, and ruling ideologies in countries where women and often minorities have minimal access to power (Tickner, 1988).

Therefore, the use of feminism in this chapter is not simply to "add" gender to well-entrenched analyses. Nor does it seek to add our perspectives as two women academics to Turkish foreign policy to restate solely the dominant approaches and terms used in foreign policy circles, especially within the context of China-Turkey relations (Peterson, 2004). Likewise, our analysis does not merely revolve around what the cozying up between President Erdoğan and President Xi Jinping means for women. Instead, we delve into what the Sino-Turkish relationship entails for democracy in Turkey. In contrast to the pervasive descriptive accounts that tend to consider increasing cooperation from the perspective of economic interests, we contend that these interests often mask their limited scope and how they privilege the dominant political elite and ideologies. Therefore, while our analysis suggests that a deepening partnership between China and Turkey may promote both countries' short-term economic and geostrategic interests, it is crucial to recognize the cooperation among authoritarian countries can foster solidarity in promoting unaccountable policies and anti-democratic practices, including human rights violations. Before, we explain our point of view further, we would like to take a brief look at the history of the two countries relations.

A Brief History of Turkey-China Relations

Sino-Turkish relations stretch back to ancient times when China was home to nomadic Turks who later migrated to the West and today's Turkey. Those who remained in China formed Turkic-language-speaking ethnic minorities such as Uyghurs. In the nineteenth century, as both the Ottoman Empire and Qing Dynasty faced European colonial expansion, they took notice of each other's developments. For instance, in 1873, Sultan Abdülaziz sent weapons to Chinese Muslims to fight against the Qing Dynasty (Çağaptay, 2019). In 1901, however, Sultan Abdülhamid, at the request of Kaiser Wilhelm II, sent a delegation led by Enver Pasha to China to calm Chinese Muslims and prevent them from joining the Boxer Rebellions against foreign influence (Çelik, 2015; Lee, 2018). These instances illustrate the historical roots of Turkey's involvements with the Uyghurs.

Modern-day diplomatic relations began with a treaty signed in 1934 but ceased soon after following the Communist Revolution in 1949 when Turkey aligned with the United States and Europe and moved its embassy to Taiwan. The two countries fighting on different sides in the Korean

War further strained the ties, which remained frozen until the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s (Fidan, 2013). Turkey recognized the People's Republic in 1971 when it became a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).[2] During the 1970s, the two countries did not have a close relationship until 1980 when the military coup in Turkey led to a significant shift. In a context where the European countries condemned Turkey's military leaders for human rights violations, China welcomed the representatives of the military regime. After ministerial visits in 1981 and 1982, the coup leader General Kenan Evren visited China in 1983. China's influential position as a member of the UNSC was appealing to Turkey's military leaders, given their questionable legitimacy in the international arena. Additionally, gaining China's support in the UNSC on critical issues such as Cyprus would help Turkey promote its own international agenda. Sino-Turkish interactions increased in the 1980s as both countries also strived to gain a market share in each other's rapidly opening economies.

With the independence of Turkish-speaking nations in Central Asia, the relations between the two countries took a different nature. Two troubling issues were Turkey's pursuit of influence in the region following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its support for Uyghurs in the context of anti-Han sentiments in the Xinjiang region, where a large majority of ethnically Turkic Uyghurs live in China. The Xinjiang region holds immense strategic importance for China due to its abundant natural resources, amplifying the importance of the Uyghur issue for China's increasingly authoritarian rule. Consequently, Turkish officials' high-level meetings with Uyghur opposition leader Isa Yusuf Alptekin in the early 1990s became a major point of contention in Sino-Turkish relations. As Uyghurs' political activism grew in the 1990s, China began to crack down on them domestically and abroad (Shamsuddin, 2021). In light of Turkey's support to Uyghurs between 1991 and 2000, China cut off its high-level official visits to Turkey (Çolakoğlu, 2013).

As Turkey pursued policies for economic integration into the world markets, it became clear that China was too big and important to clash over the Uyghur issue for Turkey's leaders. In the mid-1990s, Turkey began its efforts to improve the relationship. In 1998, the Anasol-D government restricted the activities of East Turkestani foundations in Turkey.

[2] For a timeline of Turkey-China relations, see: http://www.tuciad.org.tr/turk-cin-siyasi-iliskileri/#.

After an official visit to China, Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit declared that "the Turkish people and the State of the Republic of Turkey attach great importance to the unity of China … even though some circles in Turkey keep this issue on the agenda, which may put Muslims in Xinjiang in a difficult position … China is making some preparations for the development of that region with wide economic opportunities. The county's stance may become tougher if this becomes a political problem. Therefore, the sensitivity of the Chinese on this issue should be taken into account."

Despite the claims of Turkey's conservative pro-religious and nationalist parties to protect and defend the rights of Turkish and Muslim minorities abroad, such as Uyghurs, their efforts have remained limited. For example, in 1998, Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz signed a confidential circular ordering government ministers and bureaucrats to refrain from attending Uyghur events and security personnel to be vigilant about using the East Turkestan flag and banners in front of Chinese missions in Turkey (Inan, 2009). Turkey's new cautious yet strategic policy regarding Uyghurs in the late 1990s facilitated the easing of the relations, culminating in President Jiang Zemin's visit to Turkey in 2000, ushering in a new era of comprehensive cooperation, including policies to increase trade volume and energy cooperation (People's Daily, 2000).

Closer Than Ever? The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Beyond

Despite the historically volatile relations and clashing party ideologies, the bilateral ties between the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) and the Islamist Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) further improved in the 2010s, resulting in a "strategic cooperation." In the framework of the cooperation, and increase cultural awareness about each other in each country, Turkey celebrated the year 2012 as "the year of China" and China celebrated 2013 as "the year of Turkey." President Erdoğan, in addition to his official visits to China in 2012 and 2019, met President Xi Jinping numerous times in multilateral meetings, most recently in September 2022. Turkey's inclusion in the BRI expanded the scope of cooperation to a new height. The Chinese support for President Erdoğan following the failed coup attempt in July 2016 brought Erdoğan closer to China, emboldening the Turkish government's anti-West

posture. Several bilateral agreements have been signed to promote cooperation in sectors ranging from health to nuclear energy.

Turkey signed the BRI memorandum of understanding in 2015, aligning its goal of expanding connectivity with China via the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), also referred tobbed as BRI's middle corridor. The BRI, a brainchild of President Xi Jinping, encompasses a massive physical and financial infrastructure development project to connect China to the rest of Asia, Europe, and Africa. It was introduced in 2013 to revive and expand historical trade connections through new sea and land linkages, a modern Economic Belt, and the Maritime Silk Road Projects. In addition to transportation pathways and facilities such as ports and railroads, the ambitious BRI framework comprises a comprehensive agenda of policy coordination for economic development and cooperation; financial integration via mutual investment schemes; internationalization of currencies via swap agreements; free trade agreements; and cultural exchange (Kulaksız, 2019). While not all these targets are pursued uniformly in all BRI-affiliated countries, the BRI projects and investments in over 140 countries serve to grow the Chinese sphere of global influence (Du & Zhang, 2018).

As part of the infrastructure-building initiative, Turkey completed its part of the Baku-Tbilisi- Kars Railroad, linking Turkey to Georgia, Azerbaijan, and China. Turkey also completed the Marmaray undersea tunnel under the Bosporus and Ankara-Istanbul high-speed rail constructed by a Chinese-Turkish partnership, reducing the transportation speed from China to Europe from 1 month to 12 days. In 2015, a Chinese consortium bought 65% of Turkey's third-largest container terminal, Kumport, in Istanbul, acquiring a pivotal position in container transportation (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015).

The Chinese public and private companies also invested in several other infrastructure and energy plants in Turkey. The Hunutlu Thermal Power Plant, a coal-fired energy plant regarded as the flagship project of the BRI in Turkey, is the largest Chinese investment of $1.7 billion, producing 3% of the country's electricity (Global Times, 2022). However, the project is controversial from the environmentalist point of view as it further challenges Turkey's commitment to reducing net zero emissions in 2053. Chinese finance and/or companies are also involved in other infrastructure projects, such as the expansion of the Tuz Gölü underground gas storage project in Turkey. Despite the Turkish government's growing

interest in Chinese investment, however, major investment plans in the AKP's flagship mega-projects like the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge have been halted or put on hold (Bloomberg, 2021).

The lack of official and reliable data makes it challenging to know the exact amount of Chinese investments in Turkey. However, in 2021 Chinese ventures in Turkey accounted for less than 1% of Turkey's total foreign direct investment (Gürel & Kozluca, 2022, p. 10). According to the Turkish government, China had 1148 registered businesses in Turkey with a total investment of just over US$1 billion in 2022 (Avdaliani, 2023). These firms primarily invest in wholesale and retail, textiles, and mining sectors with little or no contribution to Turkey's economic development (Gürel & Kozluca, 2022, pp. 13–15). Nevertheless, Chinese banks and companies have shown strong interest in President Erdoğan's ambitious and controversial Canal Istanbul project, which aims to connect the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea through an artificial waterway, suggesting that China's role in Turkey may grow in the coming years (Taşkent, 2021).

Today, although China is Turkey's second-largest trading partner after Russia, it is also the most significant contributor to Turkey's account deficit. Bilateral trade, which grew exponentially from US$10 billion in 2009 to US$32 billion in 2021, significantly widened the trade deficit. In 2019, for instance, the trade volume with China was $22 billion, with a $20 billion deficit on the Turkish side (Gürel & Kozluca, 2022, p. 4). The imbalance seems unavoidable given that Turkey's exports primarily are of cheaper natural and agricultural products (e.g., marble or borates) while China's exports are high cost technology items such as computers and phones.

Assessing the full magnitude and effects of China's financial role in Turkey's economy and development is difficult due to sectoral variatons, the nature of companies, and the lack of or inconsistent data released by the Chinese and Turkish governments. However, it is not only the problem of data. Complicating the issue further is the lack of transparency in Turkey's state institutions. For instance, in 2020, China's Export and Credit Insurance Corporation, Sinosure, committed up to $5 billion to Turkey's Wealth Fund's (TWF) financing activities for BRI projects. TWF was established in 2016 to increase Turkey's assets by providing capital and guaranteeing ongoing and new investments. Nevertheless, the institution has a dubious legal status as an incorporated company whose board is headed by President Erdoğan (Sönmez, 2021). Unlike the wealth funds

often seen in oil-rich countries, which seek to secure profitable investments for already accumulated capital, TWF intends to raise funds through highly risky borrowing mechanisms, increasing the fragility of its debt-ridden economy and making countries like China even more important for its economy (Şahin, 2020). With limited transparency and accountability, the funneling of loans to institutions, like TWF with limited transparency and accountability, raises further concerns about the size and uses of Chinese funds in Turkey.

Cooperation in military and security is also a component of the deepening relationships between the two countries. In 2010, the Turkish-Chinese joint military exercises became the first between China and a NATO country. Chinese officers participating in the Ephesus 2018 military exercise indicated continuing cooperation (Gürcan, 2018). Since 2018, the two sides have strengthened their security and defense ties in professional military education, anti-terrorism, intelligence sharing, robotic systems, artificial intelligence, and cyberwarfare. For instance, Turkey's 2019 Bora ballistic missile, inspired by China's B-611, was born from this defense cooperation. The implications of this increasing security cooperation have significant repercussions that will be examined in more detail in the next section.

Some enthusiastic foreign policy analysts have been underlining the indispensability of China to Turkey's growth, assigning it a great future potential for the country's development and expanding geostrategic power. Others warn that the AKP's hopes for deepening its partnership with China have not so far been substantiated by strong economic and political cooperation at levels comparable to the E.U. and the U.S. (Ergenç, 2015). Turkey's economic crises and China's declining exports, expected to be around 10% create further challenges for growing the partnership (Bloomberg, 2023). Moreover, despite the eagerness of the Turkish government and the geostrategic importance of the the country, Turkey is hardly among the top countries (23rd out of 80) of Chinese investment (Gürel & Kozluca, 2022). Hence, even though the Turkish government urges more Chinese investment, it may not necessarily be the development-inducing type. The hitherto pattern in Turkey proves the case.

Nonetheless, despite warnings from international indices about Turkey's economic and democratic volatility, Chinese cash inflows was critical for Erdoğan's reelection bids. In June 2019 in a critical election month for Erdoğan facing economic decline and strong domestic opposition China's central bank transferred $1 billion to Turkey under the

renewed 2012 lira-yuan swap agreement, the largest cash inflow to date (Karakaya & Kandemir, 2019). As Erdoğan's popularity dwindled due to Turkey's severe currency shortage, China provided assistance again in June 2020. The swap deal allowed Turkish companies to use the Chinese yuan for trade payments, giving them access to international liquidity and indicating increased financial cooperation between the two countries. Turkey's business community repeatedly asked to close the trade gap, but China's dominance in trade relations limits the impact of such demands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey, 2021). However, the enhanced relations serve the interests of ruling regimes often at the expense of sidelining demands for democratization and undermining struggles for rights and freedoms by marginalized groups, ın particular ethnic minorities and women in each country.

Partners in Crime? Transnational Repression

As democracy is in decline globally, authoritarian collaboration and cooperation between autocratic leaders have become central to international relations. The detention, rendition, and deportation of dissidents in nondemocratic countries depend not only on domestic coercive tools but also on the international transfer of technology, information, cooperation between autocratic regimes, and the lack of international pressure. Perhaps one of the darkest aspects of the relationship between China and Turkey's has been the transfer of security and surveillance technology, along with their tendency to use each other's human rights violations as a political leverage when needed.

According to the Freedom House (2023), the highest number of acts of transnational repression occur among "not free" or "partially free" states, with China and Turkey being the most prolific perpetrators. They engage in the suppression of dissidents both domestically and internationally. Turkey accounts for twenty percent of all recorded incidents, including renditions, digital threats, family intimidation, Interpol abuse, and mobility controls against government opponents abroad in 2023. Among the targeted groups in Turkey are members of the Islamist Gülen movement, which involved in the 2016 failed coup, Kurdish politicians and opposition journalists, academics, and youth dissenters. Similarly, in China, the list of targeted groups is also extensive. However, the treatment of the Uyghurs, a predominantly Turkic-speaking Muslim minority

in Xinjiang province, sheds light on how the strategic interests of these two countries make their minority groups more vulnerable.

China's authoritarianism is most evident in its efforts to control the Uyghur community both within and beyond its borders. These policies, which many observers describe as crimes against humanity or even genocide, have intensified under Xi's presidency. Since 2016, Chinese authorities have confined the Uyghurs and other Muslims in "re-education" camps and confiscated the passports of Uyghurs outside the country, compelling them to return. China also uses its economic and geopolitical power to persuade foreign governments to harass, detain, and sometimes deport ethnic and religious minorities and refugees. Additionally, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) employs proxies and civil groups, such as diaspora associations, student groups, and scholarly bodies, to expand China's censorship and reach while maintaining plausible deniability.

Since the CCP took control of Xinjiang in 1952 and more steadily following the 2009 Xinjiang protests and the ensuing crackdown, Turkey has been a haven for the Uyghurs fleeing Chinese persecution. Turkey hosts approximately 50,000 Uyghurs, which makes it one of the largest Uyghur diaspora populations in the world. Until recently, President Erdoğan was one of the leaders who had openly criticized China. In 2009, then Prime Minister Erdoğan sent shock waves to Beijing when he said, "the incidents in China are, simply put, a genocide. There is no point in interpreting this otherwise" (Reuters, 2009).

However, Turkey's increasing dependence on China has come with a political cost, including increasing restrictions on the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey. In 2016, Turkey arrested prominent Uyghur political activist Abdülkadir Yapçan, who had lived in Istanbul since 2001 and initiated his extradition, a departure from its earlier position (Farooq, 2019). By the end of 2019, Erdoğan had considerably toned down his comments on the Xinjiang issue but his policies came under growing pressure from the domestic opposition (Duvar English, 2021). As Turkey's economic reliance on China has increased, its support for the Uyghurs has diminished significantly. Turkish officials continue to gently address the mistreatment of the Uyghurs while emphasizing their respect for China's national sovereignty (Daily Sabah, 2022). Moreover, the Turkish government has taken measures to control the Uyghur diaspora population and prevent them from acting in ways that could harm Turkey's relationship with its powerful partner.

Although restrictions on Uyghurs' political activism by Turkish governments are not new, what is noteworthy about Turkey's Uygur policy in the recent decade is its radical change from President Erdoğan's previously strong stance, calling China out for "genocide", to increasing police harassment, arbitrary detention, restrictions of mobility, and deportation of Uyghurs in Turkey (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2020). This shift is also manifested in the way Turkey plays down the Uyghur issue in diplomatic relations. For instance, the annual report from Turkey's ambassador to Beijing in 2019 conspicuously avoided any mention of "Uyghurs" throughout its 32-pages.[3]

Turkey's compliance with China's anti-Uyghur policy manifested most significantly with the signing of the Extradition Agreement in 2017, during President Erdoğan's visit to Beijing for the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. The agreement allows both countries to extradite each other's nationals, with exceptions for those with citizenship or asylum status (Euronews, 2019). While China ratified the treaty in 2020, Turkey has yet to do the same as of April 2023. Although Turkish officials refute claims that the treaty provides a legal basis for the deportation of Uyghurs from Turkey, and explain it as a routine measure similar to 32 other treaties signed with other countries for the extradition of criminals, in accordance with international law, the Turkey's opposition parties push for the recognition of the Uyghur issue at a higher level (Kashgarian and Şahinkaya, 2021). For example, Turkey's Good Party (İyi Parti, İP) prepared a report highlighting human rights abuses in Xinjiang, urging the Turkish parliament to recognize the "Uyghur genocide" (İyi Parti, 2021). Nonetheless, in Turkey's new presidential system, where Erdoğan makes decisions, the parliament is a procedural detail. Reports indicate that Turkey's government is complying with some of China's extradition requests by arbitrarily detaining and extraditing Uyghurs to third-party countries such as Tajikistan, where extradition to China is easier (Browne, 2020).

Turkey's increasing coercion of political dissent domestically and transnationally aligns with CCP's practices. The Freedom House highlights several cases, suggesting that despite the depiction of Turkey as a haven for Uyghurs, instances of activist intimidation, restrictions on mobility, and arbitrary detentions are common in the country (Freedom House, 2021b).

[3] http://eminonen.com/TC_Pekin_Buyukelciligi_2019_Faaliyet_Raporu.pdf. This report has been taken down since our last access on September 10, 2020.

For example, in March 2021, Seyit *Tümtürk*, head of the East Turkistan National Assembly, was detained at home during the Chinese foreign minister Wang Lee's visit to Turkey. *Tümtürk* described his detention during pro-Uyghur demonstrations as not an exception but an indication of the increasing difficulty of criticizing China in Turkey. According to *Tümtürk*, "Turkey has tremendous problems with the Western democracies right now, and its foreign policy is trying a new relationship with China and Russia. China knows that very well, and they are taking advantage of it" (MacDonald, 2021). China's long reach and increasing influence in the Middle East keep the threat of extradition of the Uyghur activists and dissent back to China intact (Karadsheh & Tüysüz, 2021). Turkey's extradition policies by way of third countries urge many Uyghurs to relocate to the United States and Western Europe (Kakissis, 2020). Turkey also committed to censor anti-China news stating that the regime "absolutely will not allow any activities targeting or opposing China in Turkey and take measures to eliminate any media reports targeting China" (Reuters, 2017).

The use of digital technologies by authoritarian regimes like China and Turkey to suppress dissent at home and abroad contributes to the spread of transnational repression. China is leading the wave of techno-authoritarianism, with its tech companies advancing in emerging markets to build smart cities, wireless telecommunications networks, and satellites (Hillman, 2021). For instance, Huawei, which was designated as a national security threat in the United States and elsewhere due to its ties to the Chinese government and military, increased its share from 3% in 2017 to 30% in 2019 in the Turkish phone market (Deutsche Welle, 2019). Similarly, ZTE bought 48% of Netaş, Turkey's primary telecom infrastructure provider, in 2016. Important projects managed by Netaş include digitalizing national health data and telecommunications for the new Istanbul Airport. These investments strengthen China's global power and create anxieties about facilitating other authoritarian states. Moreover, in Turkey, where government censorship on mass media is severe, and where the internet and social media serve as critical sources of information, allegations about the use of telecommunications infrastructure for state monitoring and repression are especially concerning.

While digital systems are neither inherently democratic nor oppressive, in the hands of authoritarian regimes, they become tools for coercion. China is notorious for using its technological capabilities to monitor, track down, discipline, and punish dissidents, as well as reaching out to the diaspora to threaten and coerce them into silence. The Human Rights Watch

reported on how the Chinese government has turned the Xinjiang region, with the majority Uyghur population, into a center for using innovative technologies for surveillance and control. The government has devised a policing software application that collects and aggregates massive amounts of personal information while alerting officials about suspicious people and activities, such as using more electricity than usual or hanging out with neighbors on the city streets (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

The Chinese state's repressive hand reaches out to the diaspora Uyghurs to track down, threaten, and coerce them by intimidating their families and relatives in Xinjiang, forcing the family members to call relatives abroad to prevent them from engaging in human rights advocacy. Social media is another area of authoritarian diffusion, where troll armies employed by China and Turkey use the government's propaganda and attack opposition, activists, and dissidents (Grossman et al., 2020). Both countries have a high capacity to filter and shut down their internet and social media.

It is noteworthy that Turkey's growing silence on China's ongoing persecution of Uyghurs dovetails with its increasing surveillance of its own dissidents and opposition at home and abroad. According to the Freedom House Country Report (2021a), in 2021, Turkey pursued its nationals in 31 states across continents and persuaded 17 host states to return 58 individuals to Turkey without due process. This was the highest number of renditions conducted in the given period. Moreover, the government promoted overseas nationalist groups, diplomatic missions, imams, and mosques to surveil and sometimes threaten Turkish exiles.

The Sino-Turkish partnership highlights that transnational repression is not just an unintended outcome but also a push for transnational authoritarian expansion. The treatment of local or international dissident groups in and by authoritarian states is contingent on the interests of the governing elites. When the origin state using transnational repression is an adversary, authoritarian states may protect the targeted groups and punish the perpetrators. However, when the origin state is a friendly and strategically important, they may silence activism and endanger the already vulnerable (Gorokhovskaia & Linzer, 2022). President Erdoğan's U-turn about the Uyghur case, similar to his move to return Jamal Khashoggi's murder suspects to Saudi Arabia, are examples of how economic anticipation led Turkey to drop off its earlier moral and legal objections to Chinese human rights violations and became a facilitator for repression of Chinese nationals in its territory (Chulov, 2022). Finally, what Turkey and other

authoritarian states get away with indicates not only the weakness of the international community to deal with state crimes but also expand the toolbox of autocratic states like Turkey, with sizeable populations abroad across borders. Furthermore, amid escalating tensions between Huawei and its Turkish partner telecom operator Turkcell over a defense tender, Turkey has reverted to its earlier position of publically disapproval of China's Uyghur policy, underscoring the volatility of strategic bargains between two countries (Al-Monitor, 2023).

Patriarchy Reinforced?

The regimes in China and Turkey thrive on a new mode of patriarchal authoritarianism (Chenoweth & Marks, 2022). Despite having gender egalitarian laws, both governments promote policies and discourses that reinforce traditional gender roles while marginalizing feminist organizations and movements as threats to national development. Although the ruling regimes in China and Turkey have different ideologies, their governing elite converge in overtly denouncing "feminism" as a foreign ideology.

The AKP government came to power in Turkey with widespread women's grassroots activities. The Party successfully removed the headscarf ban and adopted cash transfer support for girls' education. However, it has also adopted many neoliberal and socially conservative policies that undermine women's employment and empowerment. President Erdoğan has argued that women cannot be equal to men because they have a special role as mothers in nature, which is also central to their status in Islam (The Guardian, 2014). Consequently, the government adopted policies that promotes pro-natalist policies and limit reproductive rigths, encouraging women to have at least three children.[4] In the meantime, it helped establish pro-government and government-organized women's organizations as alternatives to feminist associations. These pro-government women's groups develop discourses that echo Erdogan, emphasizing

[4] Today, abortion remains legal up to the 10th week of pregnancy and up to the 20th week; for medical reasons, it is largely inaccessible. According to a 2017 survey of 58 public hospitals, most state hospitals (78%) only provide abortions in cases of medical necessity, and 11.4% refuse to provide abortion services under any circumstances, defying the law. See O'Neil (<CitationRef CitationID="CR54" >2017</Citation Ref>).

biological differences between men and women, and their complementariness rather than equality (Ayhan, 2019).

The Turkish government's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, the European Council's Treaty on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against and Domestic Violence indicate further erosion of women's protections and rights. In a country with one of the highest femicide rates in the world, and where courts find ways to mitigate punishment for perpetrators, any step back from the government's commitment to protecting women would only deteriorate the situation. Although Turkey's women's parliamentary representation has significantly improved in the last two decades, it is still at around 20 percent and below China's.[5] In any case, in Turkey's new presidential system, one-man rule overrules the parliament and other institutions of political participation (Adar & Seufert, 2021). Moreover, Turkey's government deploys security forces and local administrative bans to block feminist political mobilization and collective action in its efforts to undermine decades-long gains in women's rights.

Similarly, the Chinese regime fears dissident women's political participation. As President Xi Jinping consolidates his power, women's right-demands are silenced. While the president swore adherence to promoting gender equality, the CCP's policies push women out of political prominence and power. The recent Congress of the CCP in October 2022 is an example in point: for the first time in the last two decades, no woman made the cut to enter the 24-member Politburo, the Party's central decision-making body (Stevenson, 2022). While the Party states its dedication to women's employment rights, it urges them to have more children amid a looming demographic crisis. In a major policy shift in 2021, China lifted the penalty on families, which have more than a two-children limit and legalized the three-child policy, along with resolutions to facilitate child-bearing such as encouraging local governments to provide parental leave and improving childcare infrastructure (BBC, 2021). However, President Xi has also launched a campaign to suppress the population growth among the Uyghurs and other rural and ethnic minorities, forcing women to have birth control, abortions, and even sterilization, so much so that having what Beijing deems to have an excessive number of

[5] In 2018, only 17.4% of Turkey's parliament was women, against 24.9% of women in China's National People's Congress. Source: http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm. In 2023 elections, the percentage of women parliament members in Turkey rose to 20%.

children now puts women from ethnic minorities at risk of punishment by fines or even imprisonment (Longarino et al., 2021).

In 2018 China ranked 103 out of 149 countries on the World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap report. While such disparities make feminist movements more critical than ever, the Chinese government surveils and criminalizes feminist activism (Fincher, 2021; Yang & Zhou, 2023). Feminism, *nüquanzhuyi* in Chinese—literally "woman-powerism"—has received a politically charged negative connotation (Lu & Chao, 2019). For instance, in 2015, the Chinese government jailed five feminist activists for planning to distribute anti-harassment stickers on public transportation. While the activists were released soon after, the constraints and censorship on feminists became more intense online and offline, aiming to stifle the #MeToo movement, which was identified by Beijing as a Western cudgel against China. Moreover, women rarely bring harassment cases before the courts because Chinese courts provide stronger protections to alleged harassers than survivors, discouraging them from making complaints unless they have hard evidence. Finally, the masculine culture is spread as part of the ruling ideology. For instance, to impose China's "revolutionary culture," Beijing recently went so far as to forbid men from appearing "too effeminate" on television and social media (McDonald, 2021).

In short, despite their egalitarian laws, the Turkish and the Chinese political elite reproduce and reinforce gender hierarchies, target women's rights groups and minorities, and depict them as a threat to national survival and development. In both countries, sexism, homophobia, and anti-ethnic minority policies are essential pillars of the regime's polarizing discourse. Furthermore, women's reproductive rights are primarily denied and subsumed under authoritarian regimes' pro-natalist policies. Therefore, we believe that the deepening partnership between Turkey and China cannot be analyzed independently from their respective patriarchal authoritarianism. President Jinping and President Erdoğan promote women's rights discursively and strategically when it serves their respective political interests. However, they also engage in and benefit from bolstering support from platforms that are misogynist and homophobic. This is evidenced by the recent attempt of AKP and A its allied parties to cancel Law 6284, which provides protection for women against violence. This move was so controversial that it prompted even tled women politicians within the Party to oppose the party leadership. Consequently, understanding the context of democratic backsliding and its links to the backlash

against women's empowerment and gender equality is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of the evolving Sino-Turkish relations.

Conclusion

Once celebrated as a paragon of democracy and economic development in the Middle East, Turkey has seen a tremendous decline in both areas over the past decade. Under the leadership of President Erdoğan, the country has been grappling with a range of severe economic challenges and increasingly authoritarian policies. Similarly, while China's economic achievements and rise of a strong middle class are often praised, its unique blend of market capitalism and single-party state has given it technological and institutional capacity to marginalize and suppress its critics. Thus, despite their diverging characteristics, Turkey and China converge on their lamentable scores in human rights and democracy indices.

The relationship between the two countries has significantly strengthened, reaching the level of "strategic partnership" in number of important sectors, including energy, infrastructure, security and telecommunications. As President Erdoğan has distanced Turkey from its Western allies, his regime becomes increasingly dependent on other authoritarian countries. At the end of the day, his survival as a political leader depends on responding to the interest of economic and elites, and maintaining infrastructural development, while silencing opposition inside and outside the country. However, the oscilliating relations with these countries make Turkey and diaspora populations in Turkey vulnerable.

China has wielded a significant global power through development initiatives such as the BRI and its active role in multilateral organizations, including UN Human Rights Council. BRI emboldens China's global status, and its prominent contestation of the US power makes China as one of the most significant actors in the international system today. This new position gives China a transformative force for human rights and democracy globally. China is not only the largest single-party state in human history; it has also developed tools of global digital repression and censorship and control of tech companies, exporting surveillance technologies. As it seeks to sell its surveillance technology, it courts North Africa and the Middle East as part of its digital silk way. While China's expanded digital investments expand its ability to control its citizens, it has established itself as a model digital authoritarian state with many subtle strategies, undermining the UN human rights mechanism and its ability to hold any

government accountable for human rights violations. Thus, the expansion of China's power leads to the spread of digital repression, tipping the balance of power in favor of autocracies.

This chapter, it is crucial note that we've sought to move beyond a state-centric lens that portrays Sino-Turkish relations purely beneficial for Turkey's development and international standing. Instead, we've adopted a more nuanced, multi-faceted analysis that scrutnizes not only economic and security dimensions but also its impact on marginalized communities in both nations. Despite the growing economic and security cooperation, the relationship advances at the expense of ethnic and religious minorities and dissidents, who find themselves as political bargaining chips. The Uyghurs, who have taken refuge in Turkey since 1952, stand as poignant example. Both regimes have also undermined women's rights, pushing policies and narratives that aim to regulate gender roles and fertility, often sidelining the legitimate demands of women. Utilizing a theoretical framework that challenges traditional, masculine notions of power and "state interests", we argue that the strengthening ties between Presidents Xi and Erdoğan reflect political systems where women's issues are acknowledged only insofar as they align with the regimes' objectives. Both regimes selectively grant rights to preserve their own survival, showing dwindling tolerance for dissent. Examined through a feminist lens, the so-called "strategic relationship" between China and Turkey is revealed as a mechanism that bolsters the authoritarian capacities of both nations, with important repercussions for their marginalized populations.

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CHAPTER 10

Two Hallmarks of "New" Turkey's Foreign Policy: Humanitarianism and Africa

Aslı Ilgıt

Introduction

In 1998, Turkey's then Foreign Minister, İsmail Cem, described Turkey as a "pivotal country in the emerging Eurasian reality" and announced "new consciousness" in Turkish foreign policy that would highlight "the role of a shared history and of parallel cultural characteristics in all spheres of Turkish foreign policy." He was confident that with this new foreign policy approach of combining economic progressivism with historical and cultural affinities, Turkey would be able to "[transform] its former regional role into a global one" (Cem, 1998). Fifteen years later, another prominent former Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, again called for new analytical approaches and concepts to explain Turkey's new "multidimensional proactive foreign policy" and its "rising international status." Davutoğlu offered "humanitarian diplomacy" as "probably the most

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3_10

significant explanatory principle" of Turkish foreign policy (Davutoğlu, 2013a).

Africa found a notable place in these "new Turkey" and "new foreign policy" discourses and practices since the late 1990s. With a myriad of initiatives, such as the initiation of the "African Opening" in 1998, the declaration of the "Year of Africa" in 2005, the first Turkey-Africa Summit in 2008, and the formation of the "Turkey-Africa Economic and Business Forum" in 2016, to name a few, *Africa* has come to represent "change" in both Turkish identity and foreign policy discourses. Yet these discursive representations in foreign policy did not remain static and have evolved over time, especially under the current Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) rule. This chapter asks how this change has become possible, to what extent it has evolved, and what role Africa has played in Turkey's attempts to construct a new identity since the 1990s.

With these questions in mind, the chapter aims to contribute to the burgeoning literature on Turkish foreign policy and to the growing interest in Turkey-Africa relations by highlighting two interrelated yet understudied aspects of the identity and cultural drivers of foreign policy: ontological security and emotions. Underlining the importance of narratives and routine practices in the formation of the Self and drawing on the conceptual distinction between *fear* and *anxiety*, ontological security framework is based on the premise that deep uncertainties and unpredictabilities, caused by crises, threats, traumas, stigmatization, or criticism, first evoke anxieties, then challenge states' understanding of Self, and eventually disrupt their routinized foreign policy (e.g., Mitzen, 2006; Zarakol, 2010; Rumelili, 2015; Mitzen & Larson, 2017; Rumelili & Adısönmez, 2020). States, thus, seek not only *physical/material* but also *ontological* security and pursue certain actions to mitigate and manage these existential anxieties and maintain the story they tell to and about themselves (e.g., Steele, 2008; Subotic & Zarakol, 2013). In short, states seek security of the Self.

The lack of scholarly attention to the role of emotions and ontological security in Turkey-Africa relations in particular and in Turkish foreign policy analysis in general is an important omission, given the oft-cited and oft-articulated views, in especially policy circles, that Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy centers on "compassion and conscience," and that current Turkish-African relationship is based on "bridges of hearts" between the Turkish nation and African nations. This chapter not only examines Turkey's foreign policy in Africa but also proposes a complementary

research agenda on the identity framework that calls attention to the emotional dynamics and ontological security of Turkish foreign policy.

The chapter first introduces the literature on ontological security, emotions, and foreign policy in International Relations (IR). It then presents the elements of Turkish identity and foreign policy discourse since the 1990s, followed by a summary of Turkey's humanitarian and African initiatives. Next, the chapter examines the affective features of Turkey's new humanitarian foreign policy and African policy within the ontological security framework. In conclusion, the chapter proposes a complementary research agenda to better understand the identity and emotional elements of Turkish foreign policy in general and Turkey-Africa relations in particular.

Emotions, Ontological Security, and Foreign Policy in IR

As the past three years of COVID-19 pandemic have shown, certain feelings such as anxiety, anger, fear, hope, and empathy not only pervade people's daily lives but also shape the discussions about the "post-pandemic" future across the world. During this period, the oft-quoted axiom of "nothing is going to be the same again" implied simultaneously *hope* for a better future and a *worrying* prospect when thinking about state-society relations, neoliberal order, or freedom and security in the aftermath of pandemic. Moreover, this period also demonstrated that emotions and feelings are not only personal or individual but also a social and collective phenomenon permeating through societies and shared by communities, however small, large, poor, or rich.

Arguably, the pandemic magnified what many scholars have already been calling attention to the emotional dynamics and affective dispositions in and of global politics. Balta (2019), for example, describes the "spirit" of the contemporary era as one of "uneasiness" with uncertainty and associated feelings of insecurity and anxiety dominating personal and collective lives, thereby transforming violence, identities, and politics across the world. Other observers characterize this period as the "age of anger" with rage, humiliation, hatred, and resentment becoming prevailing and compelling features of contemporary societies (van Wyk, 2017). Such analyses are in fact part of a burgeoning scholarship in IR that has now established a thriving research agenda on emotions' importance in world politics as

well as their political nature (e.g., Bleiker & Hutchinson, 2008; Clément & Sangar, 2018; Crawford, 2000; Fattah & Fierke, 2009; Koschut, 2020).

Within this growing literature, two strands of scholarship in particular provide new insights into interstate relations and advance our understanding of the complexities of international politics and diplomacy. Drawing broadly from a constructivist ontology, scholars have shown that both states and non-state actors engage in "emotional diplomacy" in which they display particular emotions such as anger, guilt, or shame to indicate the volatility of the issue at hand, to project a particular image of the Self, to change the character of their relationship with *others*, or to actively engage with and respond to international criticism and public shaming (e.g., Hall, 2015; Ilgıt & Prakash, 2019; Naude, 2016; Pace & Bilgiç, 2017).

Closely associated with this research agenda is the long-established scholarship on state identity that particularly focuses on the constitutive role of emotions in constructing and securing agents' identity, that is, ontological security. Drawing on Laing's (1990) psychoanalysis and Giddens' (1990) sociological works, ontological security is about "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens, 1990, p. 92). Application of this individual-level analysis to international relations offers a conceptualization of security that differs from a more traditional understanding of security in IR in four aspects. Unlike "physical" security that centers on the notions of the security of the Body, the preponderance of survival, the presence of a threatening/dangerous external entity, and accompanying emotion of fear, ontological security framework emphasizes security of the Self, importance of stability, continuity and coherence of self-identity, and maintenance of constitutive narratives and routines of the Self. To put it differently, ontological security approach focuses on the socio-psychological foundations of actors' attachment to the stability of their self-understanding and the significance of narratives and routines in maintaining coherent and stable Self. Thus, ontological security points to the effort states undergo in constructing and sustaining coherent narratives of Self, which make certain actions and policies possible and rule others out (Kinnvall, 2004; Mitzen, 2006; Steele, 2008; Subotic, 2016).

Central to the ontological security approach is the role *anxiety* plays in triggering ontological insecurities. Drawing a distinction between *fear*, which is related to aversion from an external threat, and *anxiety* as "inner

unease" associated with uncertainty, ontological security focuses on anxiety as a constitutive and pervasive emotion that manifests itself in various forms, expressions, and degrees in politics. High degree of anxiety might destabilize states' relations, their sense of Self, and systems of meaning, all of which lead to increased insecurities. In order to manage and mitigate these anxieties and guard not just their physical security but also their self-identity, states develop mechanisms by establishing routine practices or maintaining stable autobiographies (Berenskoetter, 2014; Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2020; Mitzen, 2018). Studies show that ontological insecurities and states' responses to them become particularly rife when, for example, they face strong external criticism and shaming (Prakash & Ilgıt, 2017; Subotic & Zarakol, 2013), non- or mis-recognition of their particular identity (Gustaffson, 2016), or "critical situations" that rupture their routine practices (Ejdus, 2018).

Despite the ontological security perspective's strong emphasis on the stability and coherence of identity, more recently scholars also pay attention to the "positive" potential and double side of anxiety as well as its intermingling with other emotions in paving the way for change in identity and foreign policy. Gustaffson (2022) and Hagström and Gustaffson (2015), for example, demonstrate how Japan's identity change was possible due to domestic identity entrepreneurs' creative discursive redirection of Japan's anxiety in relation to China. Similarly, Rumelili and Çelik (2017) point to the dual role of anxiety especially in protracted conflicts where often actors' preference for status quo of conflictual relations over the uncertainty of post-conflict relations make peace policies hard to achieve. On the other hand, by unsettling the established systems of meaning, these existential anxieties also serve for positive purposes in creating space for change. Drawing on these insights, Kayhan-Pusane and Ilgıt (2022) demonstrate how anxiety's dual side and its co-existence with other emotions such as hubris has shaped the transformation of Turkey's relations with Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government throughout the 2000s.

In sum, states seeking ontological security and responding to uncertainty, ruptures, international criticism, or traumatic events demonstrate how such affective dispositions and emotions are a part of their understanding of the Self and shape their foreign policy. The following section will elaborate on the discussion developed so far within the context of Turkish politics since the 1990s.

Turkey's Ontological Security and Foreign Policy in the 1990s

In the early 2000s, the prevailing account of Turkey as a modern democratic Muslim country and a pivotal regional power with liberal economy soon raised "hopes" about its potential as a "new model" for the Muslim world (Fontaine & Kliman, 2013; Fuller, 2008; Pope, 2010; Taşpınar, 2012). This popular view of Turkey reflected not only the post-9/11 international political landscape dynamics that put Turkey's "moderate Muslim" character, pro-Western orientation, and military might in juxtaposition with the "radical" Muslim world and rising Islamist fundamentalism but also striking changes in Turkish politics, including rapid economic growth, wide-ranging political and social reforms, increasing foreign policy activism, and acquired EU membership candidacy. The initial euphoria, however, soon subsided with the rising tension and mutual distrust within the Turkish society, increasing authoritarian tendencies of the country's rulers, and a lack of effective leadership on the part of the political opposition (Ciddi & Esen, 2014; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Grigoriadis, 2009). More recently, observers point out Turkey's increasingly defiant, aggressive, unilateral, and militarist foreign policy exemplified by military incursions into Northern Syria, purchasing Russian missile defense system, or threatening the EU with refugee exodus (Adar, 2020; Hintz, 2019). While acknowledging the role of the regional and international factors in this transformation, many observers grant these changes to the rise of the AKP, as the party with roots to political Islam, and the consolidation of its power through controlling the government, the parliament, and eventually, the presidency for the last 20 years.

Turkey's dramatic transformation under the past 20 years of the AKP rule is undeniable. However, framing the debate on Turkey's identity and foreign policy within the 9/11 context or the AKP era alone presents a rather limited understanding of Turkish politics, underestimating prevailing ontological anxieties of Turkish elites since the foundation of the Republic in 1923. In fact, a growing body of ontological security scholarship demonstrates that Turkey's entry and integration into the international system as an "outsider" Other of the West and the traumatic memories of the conflictual end of the Ottoman Empire have left a deep scar in Turkey's *national habitus* since at least the eighteenth century (Adısönmez, 2019; Zarakol, 2010, 2011). This "stigmatization," the complicated relationship with the West, and violent encounters with the

Other(s) (especially Kurdish community) have become a constitutive part of the Turkish identity, producing over time a form other than "the Other" (i.e., *liminal and hybrid* identity), a particular imagined homogenous collectivity of secular nation-state, and an autobiography of an "ambivalent Self" (Çapan & Zarakol, 2019; Rumelili, 2012; Yanık, 2009, 2011). While Turkey's liminal identity portrays a self-understanding and self-positioning in between fluid spaces, that is, between West and East; Europe and Asia; Muslim world and the rest (Bilgin & Bilgiç, 2012; Rumelili, 2012), its imagined collectivity of Turkishness revolves around "preservation, glorification, and unity" of the "Turkish" state (Adısönmez & Onursal, 2020; Rumelili & Çelik, 2017).

These historically shaped identity discourses have not only been constantly reproduced by Turkey's political elites, but they have also been reinforced over time through foreign policy practices. The political elite's persistent use of the "bridge" metaphor or their rhetoric on being both Western/European and Asian/Middle Eastern/Muslim, that is, Turkey's partly Self/partly Other identity, not only shows their geographical imaginations and understanding of Self but also legitimizes and justifies their foreign policy goals (Rumelili, 2012; Yanık, 2009). The international system structured by the bipolarity of the Cold War consolidated Turkey's identity rooted in these narratives and provided the essential environment for Turkish foreign policy decision makers to maintain a coherent story of the Self and its role in the international system.

Yet such narratives also indicate Turkey's existential anxieties and the conditions under which these ontological insecurities might be provoked. Turkey's refusal to acknowledge and apologize for historical crimes like atrocities against the Armenians during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire or the political leaders' defiance when faced with international criticism for "culturally intimate" practices, that is, internally resonant actions and unifying aspects of identity even if they are source of external criticism or embarrassment, are two examples of Turkey's efforts to maintain its sense of Self and prevent challenges to its self-understanding (Prakash & Ilgıt, 2017; Zarakol, 2010). Similarly, the intractable conflict with the Kurds has its roots in identity-related insecurities provoked by violent encounters with nationalist groups during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and by reproducing those traumatic memories over time (Adısönmez, 2019). In fact, such historical "fear of loss of territory and abandonment" has turned into what is called the "Sevres Syndrome" after the Treaty of Sevres that formulated the partition of the Empire after

World War One, and become one of the pillars of Turkish national security culture ever since (Karaosmanoğlu, 2000; Yılmaz, 2006).

The end of the Cold War brought about a similar anxiety-provoking context for Turkey as it found itself facing a new international environment and domestic political scene. More specifically, the post-Cold War era presented serious challenges to the embedded narratives of Turkish identity and brought about the question of whether Turkey would maintain its Western orientation symbolized by its membership to various Western organizations such as NATO and the EU. Domestically, the (re) emergence of ideas of political Islam and ethnic Kurdish nationalism created serious threats to the dominant principles of secular national Turkish identity (Ilgıt & Özkeçeci-Taner, 2012).

Consequently, Turkish politics in the 1990s showed the signs of policymakers' struggle and attempts to mitigate serious anxieties about who Turkey was and what role it would play in the new era (i.e., Turkey's ontological security and foreign policy routines). In their assessment of challenges and uncertainties to "new" Turkey in the aftermath of the Cold War, Turkey's leaders underlined the country's "unique" position in facing new challenges and dramatic transformations from all of its neighbors and surrounding regions (Çiller, 1996). Such changes, they argued, required a new foreign policy understanding.

As the ontological security approach underscores, these discursive shifts and talk about a "new" understanding becomes possible due to the dual role of existential anxieties. In such uncertain times and facing challenges to the role and identity of Turkey, Turkish leaders not only tried to maintain and confirm at least parts of the story they tell about Turkey as a "Western-oriented, democratic, and secular" state but they also had a greater leeway in carefully constructing a new narrative of Turkey as a pivotal state situated not just in between East and West but instead at the "confluence of Europe, Asia and Africa, and three seas of historical significance where a blend of many cultures helped shape up [our] modern civilisation." Questions about Turkey's "true identity" were vehemently refused on the grounds that Turkey was, in fact, the "embodiment of all" (i.e., European, Asian, Balkan, Caucasian, and Middle Eastern), and for that, "unique, rich, and strong" (Cem, 1997). Thus, in the course of a few years, Turkey's leaders suggested, Turkey transformed itself from being "an outpost of a defence alliance" to "a far greater geopolitical and strategic role at the centre of a vast landmass stretching all the way from Europe to the centre of Asia" (Cem, 1997). Thus, as much as Turkey's

identity-related anxieties, especially at critical junctures, revealed preferences for stability and continuity of self-understanding, they also created opportunities for the ruling elite to develop new identity discourses and foreign policy practices such as Turkey's outreach efforts to Central Asia and South Caucasus and the formation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization to establish Turkey as a leading actor in the former Soviet spaces.

Hallmarks of Turkey's New Identity and Foreign Policy Discourse: *Africa* and *Humanitarianism*

Africa was initially formally defined as an "opening" with an official protocol, "Opening a Gateway to Africa," during the emerging uncertainties of the 1990s (Hazar, 2012). By 2015, Turkey's opening to Africa was "successfully completed," as announced by President Erdoğan (2015), and transformed into "Enhanced Partnership for Common Development and Prosperity" by 2021 (Erdoğan, 2021). Considering Africa's notable absence in Turkish foreign policy until the 1990s, this rapid discursive and policy transformation since the early 2000s is quite telling. From the early years of the Republic until the 1960s, Turkey had limited diplomatic contacts and minimum level of bilateral relations with African countries. Relations further deteriorated during the Cold War mainly due to Turkey's pro-Western oriented foreign policy, its alliance with former colonial powers, and its abstention or rejection of the independence of many African countries in the United Nations (Kavas, 2021; Tepeciklioğlu-Eyrice, 2012). Starting in the 1960s, signs of improvements included emerging diplomatic relations, signing of trade and cooperation agreements, and Turkey's providing foreign aid to a few African countries. The establishment of a new regional Africa desk in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the 1970s helped foster Turkey's mainly economic engagements with Africa throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (Tepeciklioğlu-Eyrice, 2016).

President Erdoğan's most recent declarations about the importance of Africa in Turkey's foreign policy clearly illustrate how Turkey's African opening gained momentum as well as new meanings under successive AKP governments since the adoption of the "Strategy for Enhancing Economic and Commercial Relations with Africa" in 2003. Starting with the declaration of the "African Year" and Turkey obtaining "observer" status in the African Union in 2005, the AKP governments embarked on

several initiatives in political, economic, security, humanitarian, and cultural fields designed, organized, and implemented together by public institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector in unprecedented pace and scope. Turkey-Africa relations evolved first and foremost through such high-level events as "Turkey-Africa Summits," "Turkey-Africa Forums," "Turkish-African Congress," organized periodically by Turkish governmental and nongovernmental agencies and think tanks such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General of Press and Information, Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK), the Scientific & Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), and the Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies (TASAM). Reiterating the historical ties between Turkey and Africa that go back to the Ottoman Empire, these diplomatic initiatives have brought together Turkish and African political elite, military personnel, business people, media owners, TV producers, and researchers for the last 20 years, thereby paving the way for new political, economic, commercial, and socio-cultural ties with African interlocutors. Consequently, in less than 20 years, the number of embassies on both sides has dramatically risen; Turkish embassies in Africa from 12 to 44 and African embassies in Turkey from 10 to 37 while bilateral trade volume has reached $34.5 billion. Turkish Airlines (THY) is now flying to 60 destinations within 40 African countries, contributing to both physical outreach and symbolic expansion of bilateral networks. Meanwhile, over 15,000 African students have so far received scholarships granted by the Turkish government (Çavuşoğlu, 2022).

Parallel to these developments, and perhaps the most striking feature of bilateral relations, is the ever-growing security ties, established through different types of military and defense agreements, arms deals, military training programs, joint military exercises, and Turkey's participation in peacekeeping operations in Africa (Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 2022; Alemdar, 2021; Sıradağ, 2018; Cannon, 2016). Africa has now become not only home of Turkey's largest military base abroad (in Somali) but also the biggest market for Turkish weaponry such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), armored vehicles, surveillance systems, mine clearance vehicles, and rifles, with a more than fivefold increase in arms sales from around $83 million to $461 million between 2020 and 2021 (Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 2022).

Turkish policymakers and foreign policy analysts describe Turkey's African policy as multidimensional, indicating various mechanisms, policy instruments, diplomacy tools, and divergent actors involved in this policy. Crucial in this web is President Erdoğan's personal involvement in and

commitment to Turkey's African policy. His 2011 Somalia visit, with an entourage of family members and cabinet ministers, to raise international awareness about the humanitarian tragedy in the country made him instantly a historic figure as the first non-African leader visiting Somalia for more than 20 years (BBC, 2011). By 2021, his frequent visits to more than 30 African countries established his reputation as the only non-African leader with the most visits to Africa.

Along with President Erdoğan's personal involvement, a myriad of public and private actors has in fact been part of this multidimensional policy. Since opening its first office in sub-Saharan Africa in 2005, Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) has become the government's main agency in Turkey's African policy with its 22 offices in 54 African countries. Engaging in a range of projects from building vocational training centers, hospitals, and schools to supporting women entrepreneurs and agricultural development, with a priority given to projects in health sector and "common" cultural heritage, TİKA aims to "increase the awareness of the continent and establish direct contacts with its people" (Kayalar, 2021). Among other public institutions, the Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMV) has expanded its educational network with more than 175 schools and 15 dormitories in 25 African countries, providing education from preschool to higher education (Akgün, 2021). Other government-affiliated non-profit organizations, such as Yunus Emre Institutes, Turkish Red Crescent, and Turkish Diyanet Foundation are an essential part of Turkey's outreach to Africa through their activities in education, culture, social, religious, and charitable services. For example, 8 of the 63 Yunus Emre Cultural Centers in operation worldwide to promote Turkish culture, art, and language are in Africa.[1] These public institutions consider their activities and services as "valuable strategic investment" playing a particularly important role in establishing sustainable relations and developing ties between peoples (Akgün, 2021; Kayalar, 2021). Similarly, the private sector either as individual companies or business associations such as Independent Industrialists and Business Association (MUSIAD), DEIK, not only engage in commercial activities but also contribute to public diplomacy through their humanitarian aid campaigns or support for raising awareness of Africa in Turkey.

These foreign policy initiatives and aid activities have gone hand in hand with an unprecedented rise in the creation of Africa-focused civil

[1] See https://www.yee.org.tr/en/corporate/yunus-emre-institute.

society institutions and think tanks in Turkey such as Africa Coordination and Education Center, Association of Researchers on Africa, Africa Foundation, Africa Friendship Association, and First Lady Emine Erdoğan's signature initiative, the Africa House. Similar to other public institutions, these non-profit organizations are established to support Turkey's "opening policy" through their work on building knowledge and raising awareness about Continental Africa, increasing communication and interaction as well as strengthening social and cultural ties between Turkey and Africa.

Despite being conceptualized more broadly and independently of Turkey's African policy, *humanitarianism* has become the most important pillar of Turkish foreign policy since especially the 2010s and is soon associated with Turkey's engagement in Africa. First coined by the then Foreign Minister Davutoğlu (2013b) as a concept reflecting Turkey's "compassionate and competent character" and depicting "human oriented nature" of its foreign policy, humanitarianism was later presented as "probably the most significant explanatory principle" (Davutoğlu, 2013a) of Turkish foreign policy and eventually became part of its formal description as "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy."[2] In the course of ten years, as Şeyşane and Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane (2022) argue, Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy has unfolded along three dimensions: *operational activities* in the form of large-scale and diverse humanitarian assistance, *humanitarian advocacy work* through international meetings and multilateral forums to raise awareness to certain humanitarian crises such as the 2012 Istanbul Conference on Somalia, and *norm-setting and institutional capacity building efforts* such as hosting the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul to mobilize the international support for the promotion and implementation of the UN Secretary General's Agenda for Humanity.

Turkey's remarkable outreach to Africa and its self-driven humanitarianism sparked considerable attention and conjecture, leading to a burgeoning literature drawn from two different yet complementary frameworks. On the one hand, there are studies that focus on the changing dynamics of Turkish foreign policy since the 2000s, especially its Neo-Ottomanist tendencies and regional/global power ambitions. These studies point to Turkey's political elites' emphasis on historical and cultural ties with African nations and Islamic civilization as guiding principle

[2] Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: https://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa.

for Turkey's African policy (Wheeler, 2011; Langan, 2017; Akça, 2019) or its assertive diplomatic attacks to gather support for its non-permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the early 2000s (Ilgıt & Özkeçeci-Taner, 2014; Tepeciklioğlu-Eyrice, 2012). Thus, Turkey's engagements with Africa serve, this body of research argues, Turkey's ambitions as an emerging middle power (Tank, 2020) or even global power (Donelli, 2021). Some observers suggest that it is the fundamental change in Turkish foreign policymakers' worldview especially after the European Union's (EU) rejection of its candidacy in 1997 in recognizing the economic potential of the continent (Özkan & Akgün, 2010). Still, others call attention to the most visible feature of Turkish foreign policy, that is, its "multidimensionality" in Turkey's African policy encompassing not only the traditional state-to-state diplomatic relations but also the participation and operations of several non-state actors such as civil society organizations, business sector, religious organizations (İpek & Biltekin, 2013). Finally, from an identity perspective, for some scholars, Turkey's African policy reflects a change in its geographical imagination of Self as an "Afro-Eurasian state" (Donelli, 2021), while for others it portrays a country "in search of itself—at home and abroad" (Vertin, 2019).

From another angle, studies with a broader approach place Turkey's humanitarianism in Africa in the context of "new donor/aid politics" in IR, examining particularly emerging donor countries' engagement with conflict-affected states and their conceptualization of security and development (Donelli, 2018; Keyman & Sazak, 2014; Özerdem, 2016; Tank, 2020). This literature has almost reached a consensus on the distinctiveness of Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy, often dubbed as "the Ankara consensus," "the AKP Model," or "the Turkish brand" (Altunışık, 2019; Donelli, 2018; Şeyşane & Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane, 2022). These studies contrast the peculiarities of Turkey's humanitarianism in Africa as a synthesis of the "traditional South-South Cooperation rhetoric, Islamic humanitarianism, and third-world discourses" with democratic liberalism of the West and authoritarian capitalism of China (Donelli, 2021). An interesting opposition to these studies' focuses on Turkey's uniqueness in the humanitarian field comes from Güner (2021) who calls attention to the racist underpinnings of the AKP's African policy and Turkey's newly founded humanitarian discourse. This growing scholarship on Turkey's African policy and humanitarianism provides important insights into the political, economic, and cultural motives and touches upon its reflection of Turkey's

new self-understanding. Yet much has been left unexplored about Turkey's ontological security concerns and affective contour of Turkey's African policy.

Turkey's Humanitarian Policy in Africa: *Anxious Yet Compassionate and Proud*

As mentioned above, the "New Turkey" discourse, circulated initially in the face of post-Cold War uncertainties, was a response to the ontological anxieties about who Turkey was and how Turkey would behave under such circumstances. In order to maintain a sense of Self and a sense of control over unpredictabilities, this new discourse was built on some embedded elements of Turkish identity narratives such as democracy and secularism. On the other hand, the ontological insecurity Turkey's leaders felt at the time also provided a chance to reinvent Turkey as a "pivotal" state and "cosmopolitan" country who not only "bridged" the East and West but was also located at the confluence of East, West, North, and South. Turkish leaders went to great lengths to define Turkey in the emerging geopolitical developments of the 1990s and emphasized Turkey's historical and cultural ties to its surrounding regions and self-positioning as a Euro-Asian country. These ontological anxieties coexisted and interacted with other emotions, particularly with the deep *disappointment* evoked by the EU's rejection of Turkey's long-held application for EU membership. As many observers noted, it was no coincidence that Turkey's turn to Africa in the form of an "opening" was formalized after the 1997 EU Summit.

Starting with the AKP rule in the early 2000s, the "new Turkey" discourse evolved, turning into an attempt to both reform Turkish politics and society in every way and establish a hegemonic discourse of Turkish Self built on the narrative of civilization and Turkey's "geo-cultural legacies" inherited from the Ottoman Empire (Hintz, 2018; Yanık, 2011). Duran (2013, p. 93) describes this civilizational focus as "a source of national and spiritual values, a symbol of belonging to the Middle East and the Islamic world, and a keyword for common humanitarian values." The portrayal of Turkey as a "central country" at the heart of historical, political, and geographical civilizations with a constructive and active role in global politics is reflection of the AKP's adversarial position vis-a-vis Europe/the West and the basis of its counter-narrative to the previous

representations of Turkey as a bridge between East and West or a torn country (Çapan & Zarakol, 2019).

This particular state biography of Turkey and the narrative of neo-Ottomanism created a cognitive model for Turkey's elites to not only understand and interpret their world but also locate Turkey in the international arena, as widely analyzed by Turkish foreign policy scholars. *Africa* and *humanitarianism* have become two of the hallmarks in Turkey's new identity and foreign policy discourse since the end of the 1990s, representing not only Turkey's "Afro-Eurasianness" but also its "virtuousness," both rooted arguably in its history and civilization (İbrahim, 2022; Langan, 2017). Fashioning Turkey as an Afro-Eurasian state is often attributed to President Erdoğan, yet former Foreign Minister/Prime Minister Davutoğlu (2013c) made earlier arguments in the 1990s about Turkey's identity as an Afro-Eurasian state.

Turkey's "humanitarian diplomacy," as Foreign Minister Davutoğlu (2013a, pp. 865–866) first explained, is an approach that combines "new" Turkey's "conscience and power" and adopted to "tackle both regional crises and issues" and "shoulder the responsibility of dealing with the full range of issues occupying the minds and consciences of mankind." This foreign policy approach is closely tied to Turkey's "determination to become an active actor during this period of rapid historical change." *Compassion* constitutes the "philosophical" foundation of Turkey's African policy, and it is this "essence, i.e., *attention, care, and compassion* based on a relation between equals that the African needs more than anything else today" (Davutoğlu, 2013c). Soon enough, *compassion, conscience, and bridging the hearts* became the discursive focal points of every actor from Turkey involved in African policy. (e.g., Demirtaş, 2021).

Thus, a new Turkish Self emerged through Africa and humanitarianism—a country that "helps" African nations in implementing "their wise policy of 'African solutions to African problems', rather than creating new relations of dependence, tutelage and exploitation" (Kalın, 2017), and whose humanitarianism, based on "winning together, developing together, walking together," brings a "paradigm shift" in the classical understanding of Africa as merely a market (Kayalar, 2021). So much so that Turkey's humanitarianism in Africa, First Lady Erdoğan noted, proves that "humanity can be the spirit of the state" (2021).

Over the course of 20 years, this self-positioning and a new foreign policy approach has, however, turned into a rhetoric of Turkish exceptionalism and self-conceit with Turkey's political elites constantly juxtaposing

Turkey's involvement in Africa with Europe's "shameful history/baggage of colonialism" or emphasizing Turkey's historically and civilizationally high moral standards (Demirtaş, 2021; Duran, 2021). In President Erdoğan's (2019) words, Turkey's African policy is "inspired by our faith, values and our unique past on the continent," and thus, as Turkey, "we do not leave a friend, whose door has not been knocked, a heart that has not been healed, and a state without cooperation in Africa." First Lady Erdoğan (2021), who is personally involved in Turkey's Africa engagements and who even wrote a book on her travels in Africa, was even more certain that through Turkey's African policy "history will show the difference between the oppressor and those who build up and revive."

Despite these developments, ontological insecurities once again extended to Africa and Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy after the 2016 coup attempt by the newly designated "Fethullahçı" terror organization (FETÖ). Formerly dubbed as "Gülenists" and considered as an essential component of Turkey's multidimensional African policy through their extensive business, education, and nongovernmental organization links in Africa, the group has become number one item on African policy agenda when the government embarked on a serious campaign to close down Gülen-affiliated schools or transfer them to government-affiliated institutions. The above-mentioned Turkish Maarif Foundation, for example, was established after 2016 to replace the educational services of the Gülen schools.

Conclusion: Complementary Research Agenda in Turkish Foreign Policy

As Hintz (2018) astutely observes, Turkish foreign policy has become an area of domestic identity contestation with the AKP's *Ottoman Islamist* understanding of Turkish national identity dominating Turkish foreign policy in the last 20 years by taking advantage of religious and cultural ties with neighbors in the Middle East and the Balkans and reclaiming its role as the leading (Sunni) Muslim power in the region. Tank (2020) and Vertin (2019) also show how the entanglement of Turkey's domestically constructed identity and foreign policy particularly played out in Turkey's African policy.

This chapter took such arguments one step further and called attention to seeking security of those identities and the affective contours of such

debates in Turkish foreign policy. As noted above, the underlying ontological insecurities Turkish leaders expressed since at least the 1990s were caused by "critical ruptures" in both domestic and international politics, by the mismatch between culturally intimate practices and externally expected behaviors or traumatic events. The associated feeling of anxiety, as ontological insecurity scholars demonstrate, presented its dual face in foreign policy, leading to preferences for status quo and stability on the one hand and opportunities for a change, however small, for a new narrative of Self and new foreign policy practices on the other. Furthermore, different manifestations of anxiety and its accompanying emotions such as disappointment or pride have shaped Turkey's discursive and policy transformation in its African policy.

This chapter also briefly highlighted the potential of an ontological security framework in examining the entanglements of domestic and foreign policy by highlighting the ripple effects of the AKP's securitization of a formerly allied domestic political actor, the Gülenists and their designation as a terrorist organization, on its African policy after the 2016 coup attempt. Taking over educational services and appointing government-run agencies to administer these activities, requesting African governments to recognize FETÖ as a terrorist organization, and shutting down any affiliated institutions were all attempts by Turkey's governing elite to mitigate those anxieties for the survival of the regime, equated to the security of Turkey.

Turkey-Africa relations is one of the topics wide open to further investigations. This chapter proposed one perspective that is missing from the currently available examinations. Ontological security perspective has the potential to provide new insights into Turkish foreign policy in general and Turkey-Africa relations in particular. It would be interesting, for example, to examine how Turkey's discursive representations of bilateral relations resonate with African nations and what kind of emotional responses Turkey's outreach triggers in the continent.

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CHAPTER 11

Conclusions: Pragmatic Adaptation as Turkey's Grand Strategy

Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner and Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe

As the Republic of Turkey is about to celebrate its centennial birthday in 2023, this volume brought together an all-women group of scholars to provide a historically grounded and theoretically rich examination of the continuities and changes in Turkey's foreign policy. The chapters charted the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy vis-*à*-vis several regional and global actors since the foundation of the Republic in 1923 and provided a discussion of the major developments in Turkey's relations with these entities, focusing specifically on the period following the end of the Cold War. While some chapters emphasized the continuities in Turkey's external relations in the past 100 years, others examined the significant changes and discontinuities in certain areas, making predictions about the future of Turkey's foreign policy and offering policy proposals.

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Three main findings emerge from a close reading of the volume's chapters. First, despite claims of "global" or "central" power, Turkey continues to present middle-power characteristics that impact its foreign policy in and toward different external actors and regions of the world. Second, the ongoing uncertainty in regional and world politics makes it difficult for Turkey to completely change course or make strong commitments in its external relations. Third, the competition over national role contestation despite the dominance of the ideology of the *Justice and Development Party* (AKP) at the state level has implications for Turkey's regional and global policy choices.

Turkey's Continued Position as a Middle Power in Global Politics and the Need for Caution

In International Relations (IR), a state is considered a middle power when its position is one in the international power spectrum that puts it below that of superpower, "but with sufficient ability to shape international events" (Müftüler-Baç, n.d.). In general, middle powers prefer multilateral foreign policy and formation of international regimes, institutions, and coalitions; second, they are not likely to challenge the status quo; and they have highly institutionalized foreign services that work within a wide network of diplomatic missions (Müftüler-Baç, n.d.). As Balamir-Coşkun noted in her chapter (Chap. 6), it is important to differentiate between traditional and emerging middle powers. As explained in Aksu-Ereker and Akgül-Açıkmeşe (2021), traditional middle powers like Canada, Australia, Sweden, or Norway are well-established, consolidated, and stable democracies while emerging middle powers are still far from this level and are still undergoing undemocratic practices in their political systems. Although Turkey has been a traditional middle power due to its considerable ability to act independently of its major allies (e.g., in the case of Cyprus) and exert influence as a regional actor, an argument can be made to suggest there has been a gradual shift in Turkey's position from a Transatlantic middle power to a non-Western emerging power since the early 2000s (Aksu-Ereker and Akgül-Açıkmeşe 2021). Turkey's status as a middle power in international politics is important to recognize because the gap between Turkey's self-conception of its own status and the status ascribed to it by other states—either by regional actors or great powers—will result in "status inconsistency" (Aydınlı, 2020). As long as a status inconsistency

exists, misperceptions about certain foreign policy decisions are likely to emerge, leading to impulsive or inconsistent foreign policy actions.

In their respective chapters, Dursun-Özkanca and Balamir-Coşkun maintained that the power hierarchy at the global level, as well as Turkey's capacity, significantly curtails Turkey's desire to pursue an independent foreign policy in the Western Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean regions. More specifically, according to Dursun-Özkanca, Turkey's foreign policy toward the Western Balkans manifests itself in ways that a middle power like Turkey can act within an alliance system that is led by a superpower (i.e., NATO). While she recognizes that Turkey's several actions in the region illustrate *boundary testing* and *boundary challenging* within the NATO alliance, Turkey's general foreign policy toward the region has not signaled *boundary-breaking* behavior. Dursun-Özkanca further notes in agreement with Bechev (2022, p. 2) that Turkey's policy in the Western Balkans "runs *parallel*—as opposed to *adversarial*—policy to that of the West."

Bezen Balamir-Coşkun's chapter (Chap. 7) demonstrated that although Turkey continued to follow a multilateral foreign policy within the framework of its Transatlantic alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean since the 1990s, a more multidimensional and assertive foreign policy in the recent years signaled Turkey's desire to move from its middle-power position to a core actor with a regional hegemon status. Turkey attempted to establish its dominance and strengthen its position in the regional balance-of-power politics. However, Balamir-Coşkun suggested, Turkey's limitations as a middle power came to the fore in the past decade as Turkey's actions created a different alliance system in the region that led to the country's isolation and as the effect of the wars in Syria and Libya and the ongoing competition for valuable gas reserves of the region became important for all regional states.

Ongoing Uncertainty in Regional and World Politics and the Need for Pragmatism

Turkey's foreign policy is shaped to a great extent by "an ever more turbulent, tumultuous global order increasingly characterized by multipolarity" (Müftüler-Baç, 2020, p. 180). The liberal international order that has evolved and dominated world politics under the hegemonic leadership of the Western bloc led by the US is facing multiple challenges,

especially as multiple states around the world are witnessing a rise of authoritarianism that is premised on a blend of conservatism and populism. President Erdoğan's proposition that the "world is greater than five" is a reference to the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and it signals that while still working within the Transatlantic framework, Turkey is interested in joining states that challenge the post-World War II (WWII) order either directly (i.e., Turkey's rejection of NATO membership of Finland and Sweden) or indirectly (i.e., increasing collaboration with both China and Russia).

Regionally, there are several ongoing conflicts and potential for further violence. Turkey's borders with Iraq and especially Syria remain causes of concern. While Turkey today has more control in these two border regions, this control depends heavily on actors that are external to the region. Moreover, the refugee issue and Turkey's cross-border operations in Syria create problems at home and in the region. Tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean have further escalated as the competition for exploitation of hydrocarbon resources increased and added a new dimension to regional competition that was once dominated by conflict over Cyprus, continental shelf, and islands in the Aegean Sea. Relations with Greece also remain extremely tense. The civil wars in Libya and Syria have consequences for regional security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean as well. Moreover, although there is some tranquility in the Caucasus at this time, the calmness in Armenia-Azerbaijan relations is fragile at best and depends heavily on Russian policy in the region. Finally, the war in Ukraine left Turkey in a conundrum which led Turkey both to stay away from the Transatlantic Alliance by not joining the sanctions toward Russia and to antagonize Russia by closing the Straits for war-time vessels, thereby creating tensions in Turkey's immediate periphery.

Despite these global and regional challenges to the liberal global order, there is no consensus on what the future holds for new global dynamics and power configurations. The number of issues and the nature and number of actors in global and regional politics are increasing, making policy-making much more complex and complicated. On the one hand, Turkey's membership in NATO, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the G20, as well as its EU's candidacy status give Turkey legitimacy in its relations with countries in surrounding regions and with great powers like China and Russia. On the other hand, Turkey's membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the

Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Economic Cooperation Organization, the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council), and Asia Cooperation Dialogue elevate the country's standing and importance within the Transatlantic alliance. Although "balancing" has been a traditional feature of Turkey's foreign policy since the Republic's establishment in 1923, Turkey must use diplomatic channels and soft power instead of actual use or threat to use military force (e.g., in Syria and against Greece), provocation (e.g., purchasing S-400 surface-to-air missile batteries from Russia), or intimidation (e.g., encouraging Syrian refugees to take the land route to Europe through Greece, in contravention of Turkey's commitments under the 2016 EU-Turkey refugee statement) in its efforts to create equilibrium in its external relations (BTI Country Report, 2022). It is within this context that our contributors' call for caution and prudence in Turkey's foreign policy seem relevant and important.

In their respective chapters on Turkey-US/NATO, Turkey-Russia, and Turkey-China relations, our authors focused on the characteristics and the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy at the global level. Evren Çelik-Wiltse argued in Chap. 2 that although Turkey-US/NATO relations have always involved issues of convergence and issues of divergence, it is only recently that the extreme deterioration in Turkey-US relations happened, leading the two sides to question each other's intentions as a dependable ally. Çelik-Wiltse attributed this deterioration to the rising "backlash" against "the establishment" (i.e., liberal international order led by the Western bloc) (Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Lake et al., 2021; Adler-Nissen & Zarakol, 2021) in which Turkey has increasingly found itself at a time when the majority of Turkey's population and the political elite are questioning the intentions of the US in regions surrounding Turkey. The rise of populist, authoritarian-leaning leaders such as Nigel Farage in the United Kingdom or Donald Trump in the US who flame the discontent in democratic states also gives oxygen to authoritarian leaders around the world who then use the growing discontent against the liberal international order as *recognition struggles* (Adler-Nissen & Zarakol, 2021). In this global environment, Turkey's policy choices and growing relations with countries like Russia and China seemingly help "foment disunity" within the Western bloc, leading some to consider Turkey as a "Trojan horse" within the Transatlantic alliance.

In Chap. 3, Evren Balta and Habibe Özdal suggested that the relationship between Russia and Turkey followed a similar pattern throughout the

Republic of Turkey's 100-year history, which has been shaped primarily by 2 factors: level of cohesiveness of the Western alliance at the global level and anti-Westernism in Turkey and Russia. According to the authors, while the internal cohesion declined within the Western bloc in the past decade, anti-Westernism increased in Turkey in the past two decades, but especially after the beginning of the Syrian civil war that led to the US support for Kurdish groups in the country. Balta and Özdal also noted the perceived role of the US in the attempted coup in Turkey on July 15, 2016, in the creation of a "flexible alliance" between Turkey and Russia. The 2016 attempted coup raised serious concerns for the AKP about the party's and thus the regime's security. Two important issues that can have future implications for Turkey in this newly minted "flexible alliance" are, first, the lack of institutionalization and, second, the dominance of personalistic diplomacy between President Erdoğan and President Putin. The lack of formal agreements and involvement of state bureaucracies might seem prudent at first to alleviate the concerns of Turkey's Western allies, Russia may well use it against Turkey in the future, especially if Turkey's dependability as an ally becomes more problematic and its role less prominent within the transatlantic alliance. Friendship agreements *a la* the agreements Turkey signed with different European powers before and during WWII should be seen as best examples of how a new friendship agreement with Russia can be devised.

Similarly, Müftüler-Baç focused on the role of systemic transformation due to a set of new global political dynamics, on the one hand, and changes in the European integration process, on the other. In her chapter on Turkey-EU relations (Chap. 4), she emphasized the changing role of the EU as a norming anchor in Turkey's, as well as some EU members' and candidate states', democratization process. According to Müftüler-Baç, the EU's increasing disinterest in the promotion of democracy and the emergence of alternatives to EU accession in the form of differentiated integration have not only helped Turkey's democratic backsliding but it has also helped determine Turkey's increasingly aggressive foreign policy behavior.

Finally, the recent history of Sino-Turkish relations further demonstrates Turkey's desire to balance the dominance of the West, which can at times be perceived, rightfully or mistakenly, as active participation in searching for alternatives to the liberal international order. Ayça Alemdaroğlu and Sultan Tepe argued in Chap. 9 that the ongoing interaction between Turkey and China not only would benefit from the current

hierarchical conditions *at home* and at the global level but also would facilitate and legitimize their very existence. In other words, while the Sino-Turkish relations can be viewed as a challenge to the Western domination in world politics, it is unlikely that this challenge would create a more egalitarian or democratic international system if it succeeds. Even in economic relations, Alemdaroğlu and Tepe argued, Turkey's position would be considered as inferior to that of China, and that the ruling regimes' interest in collaboration stems largely from consolidation of power at home at the expense of democracy.

Domestic Role Contestation and the Need to Be on the Right Side of History at the Global Level

Domestic role contestation has become a central topic in foreign policy analysis, especially in analyzing foreign policy continuity and change. Contestation over national role conceptions (NRC) is only one aspect of domestic competition over political power but it derives heavily from ideologies and ideational factors and can impact the roles states play in world politics. Very briefly, "the domestic role contestation approach identifies the key domestic actors that hold national role conceptions and hypothesizes that roles connect to foreign policy behavior via the domestic political process" (Kaarbo & Cantir, 2017). To say that the scholars of Turkish foreign policy have had a difficult time agreeing on Turkey's national role conception would be an understatement. This disagreement reflects the divisions within the population, as well as among the different bureaucracies and between the state and non-state actors in Turkey. In addition to the traditional articulation of Turkey as a "bridge" between the East and the West, scholars using both ideational and material factors have defined Turkey's NRC as a regional leader, regional protector, rule maker, active independent, leader of the Muslim world, mediator-integrated, anti-imperialist agent, liberator-supporter, role model, humanitarian actor, good neighbor, and dependable ally (see Altunışık, 2019 and Özdamar et al., 2014 for a review). Whereas Turkey is not alone for not having a "role consensus," the deep fault lines among the competing political ideas and ideologies that are important in the formation of NRCs have led to a "role inconsistency" in Turkey's recent foreign policy behaviors.

Turkey's foreign policy toward both the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the South Caucasus best reflects the role of domestic role contestation in the country. In her chapter (Chap. 5), Meliha Benli Altunışık suggested that the MENA region has always had a significant role in Turkey's state identity (e.g., Turkey as a Western state); however, it has acquired a more prominent place in Turkey's foreign policy especially since the coming to power of the AKP in late 2002. With a strong emphasis on AKP's domestic political considerations and objectives, specifically identifying ideational and ideological variables (e.g., Islamism) and material factors (e.g., staying in power) as main variables, Altunışık argued that the AKP ideology (i.e., Islamism and, more recently, nationalism) explains the general continuity of Turkey's high level of involvement in the MENA in the last two decades despite radical shifts in the international system. She further argues that the same ideational factors are used today to justify and rationalize several pragmatic foreign policy actions the AKP government have taken in the past few years (e.g., attempts to normalize relations with Israel and others). Altunışık concluded that the AKP's recent pragmatic foreign policy has drawn on the party's main ideological framework, claiming that they are solving the problems of the Islamic world and the more recent nationalist ideological framework.

Ayça Ergun's analysis of Turkey's foreign policy in the South Caucasus in Chap. 8 showed the importance of state identity that is shaped by history and perceptions of the Self and the Other. Turkey's foreign policy toward Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia is largely determined by the national role conception of Turkey in the region as a supporter of Azerbaijan and provider of security, which in turn legitimizes and justifies Turkey's interest in the management of transportation of oil and natural gas from the region. Whereas Turkey-Azerbaijan relations are special, exceptional, and privileged, Turkey-Armenia relations represent one of enmity, a result of mutual *Othering* that began in the early twentieth century. Finally, Turkey-Georgia relations demonstrate the importance of material interests for both countries, but Turkey's identity as a candidate state for full EU membership and its long-term relationship with the Union has enabled Turkey's leaders to work more dynamically and effectively with Georgian leaders.

Looking at the formation of state identity and consolidation of single-party dominance and their collective role in foreign policy from a more critical perspective, Ayça Alemdaroğlu and Sultan Tepe argued that the growing Sino-Turkish coordination and cooperation is a result of two

states acting in accord with ideas that help the ruling regime's power consolidation at home. In other words, the identities of both Turkey as a country where there is major democratic backsliding and China, a country that is already an authoritarian state, have enabled the ruling elites to find ways to support each other financially and politically at the global level while increasing their ability to suppress dissent at home. Alemdaroğlu and Tepe concluded that state interests derived from how the current leadership conceptualize the Turkish and Chinese state identities have paved the way for close relations between the two states, with very negative consequences for women, political opposition, and minority groups.

Aslı Ilgıt's analysis of Turkey's African policy provided a critical take on how state identity and cultural drivers of foreign policy, specifically emotions and the political elites' definition of security, which is tightly associated with the security of the ruling regime, became two important determinants of Turkey's opening to this continent. According to Ilgıt, while the transformation of Turkey's state identity has been an important part of the AKP's legacy, Turkey's entry and integration into the international system as an "outsider" Other of the West and the traumatic memories of the conflictual end of the Ottoman Empire have left a deep scar in Turkey's *national habitus* since at least the eighteenth century (Zarakol, 2010, 2011; Adısönmez, 2019), which led not only to a "stigmatization" but also to a complicated relationship with the West. It is within this context that any violent encounter with the Other(s) (e.g., Armenia, Greece, and the Kurdish community) have become a constitutive part of the Turkish identity, producing over time an autobiography of an "ambivalent Self" (Yanık, 2009, 2011; Rumelili, 2012; Çapan & Zarakol, 2019). Ilgıt's chapter aptly illustrated that while Turkey's liminal identity portrays a self-understanding and self-positioning in between fluid spaces (i.e., between West and East; Europe and Asia; Muslim world and the rest) (Bilgin ve Bilgiç, 2012; Rumelili, 2012), its imagined collectivity of Turkishness revolves around "preservation, glorification, and unity" of the "Turkish" state (Adısönmez & Onursal, 2020; Rumelili & Çelik, 2017). Ilgıt suggested that the international system structured by the bipolarity of the Cold War consolidated Turkey's identity rooted in these narratives and provided the essential environment for Turkish foreign policy decision makers to maintain a coherent story of the Self and its role in the international system despite Turkey's existential anxieties and the conditions under which these ontological insecurities might be provoked.

The end of the Cold War, but especially the wars in its neighboring regions that resulted in increasing great power involvement (e.g., American, Russian, and increasingly Chinese) and growing concerns about Kurdish resurrection and refugee issues, created the conditions under which Turkey's ontological insecurities visibly reemerged and led Turkey's leaders to pursue foreign policy that at times seemed paradoxical. While the strategic depth doctrine that shaped Turkey's foreign policy until 2013 was formulated as a Neo-Ottomanist response to these ontological insecurities, its demise following the Arab uprisings and domestic democratic backsliding created confusion among Turkey's foreign policy makers. It is within this context that *humanitarianism* became the most important pillar of Turkey's recent foreign policy and was soon associated with Turkey's engagement in Africa. Regardless of Turkey's material interests in Africa and the desire to establish a sphere of influence in an increasingly important region of the world, relations with African countries and Turkey's "compassionate and competent character" and depiction of "human oriented nature" of its foreign policy became important in Turkey's leaders' projection of power, morality, and prestige at the global level and helped in their effort to establish a new national role conception for Turkey as a humanitarian actor.

Grand Strategy and Turkish Foreign Policy

There is an increasing interest in discussing Turkey's grand strategy in the past few years. *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, a journal published by the Center for Strategic Research, which works under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, published a special issue in 2020 that included five articles that focused on the nature and content of Turkey's foreign policy and offered grand strategy proposals. Similarly, *Insight Turkey*, a publication by the SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, which is known for its close relations with the ruling AKP, devoted an issue to the same topic in 2021. In this issue, contributing scholars examined the "large-scale change in Turkish foreign policy, during the governance of the AK Party, [that] has led the state leadership to search for reformulation of the Turkish grand strategy" (Ataman, 2021).

In their article in *Insight Turkey*, Murat Yeşiltaş and Ferhat Pirinççi (2021) examined Turkish foreign policy in the past two decades and

argued that Turkey should adjust its grand strategy due to the changing international order and develop a comprehensive grand strategy to protect its national interests. Going a few steps further, Mustafa Aydın (2020, p. 203) explored the factors, or what he calls 'historical precursors,' of Turkey's grand strategy experience to identify indicators for its future grand strategizing efforts. These historical precursors include balancing major powers in international relations (e.g., Turkey's actions toward Soviet Union, Germany, and Britain during the World War II), the primacy of geography (e.g., Turkey's location that brands the country as a Balkan, Mediterranean, Eurasian, European, and Middle Eastern all at the same time, p. 212) and Western connection (e.g., NATO membership), the international system (e.g., Cold War), Turkey's growing sense of greatness and wish for regional supremacy (e.g., imperial past), and finally, economic development (e.g., economic needs). Aydın (2020, pp. 220–221) concluded that these factors could lead to an *internationalist* grand strategy that focuses on a "multi-faceted foreign policy concept," "a sustainable, long-term program for economic development," "an enduring, practical, and viable balance" in its external relations, and finally, a "co-centric circle of multilateral institutions and initiatives."

In his "Turkey's Grand Strategy as the Third Power: A Realist Proposal," Aktürk (2020, p. 152, also in 2021) suggested a *neighborly core* doctrine for Turkey's grand strategy, with a focus on keeping the military forces of the great powers, which are loosely defined as the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), "out of [Turkey's] immediate neighbors." In addition, he argued, "Turkey should seek integration with its immediate neighbors through bilateral or multilateral economic, political and security initiatives." According to Aktürk, Turkey needs to establish a "third power" position in areas where the Western powers and others (e.g., Russia) wage proxy wars.

In the same issue, Meltem Müftüler-Baç (2020, p. 178) proposed four scenarios for Turkish grand strategizing. The first scenario suggests a reformulation of grand strategy that focuses on Turkey's harmony and cooperation with its global partners in a world in which the US-dominated Western liberal international order expands by incorporating new members. In the second scenario, Turkey formulates a grand strategy that moves the country further away from its traditional Western allies to a new group of partners as the challenges to the Western-dominated liberal international order continue to come from the rising powers.

Müftüler-Baç's third scenario suggests Turkey becoming internationally isolated in "global governance constellations" as the country implements a grand strategy that results in further distancing from its Western allies while not allowing the country to form new cooperation patterns with emerging powers. Finally, in the fourth scenario, Turkey's grand strategy focuses on establishing a "network of similar-minded middle powers with which it could act together to balance out the American, Russian and Chinese-driven coalitions" (Müftüler-Baç, 2020, p. 186). Whereas Müftüler-Baç did not prioritize any of these scenarios, she concluded that while Turkey is among the important emerging actors in world politics due to its location, military and economic capabilities, and cultural ties with several regions surrounding the country, its response to the multiple challenges of global transformation and the country's material capabilities, including its integration into the global governance structures, will ultimately determine the Turkey's grand strategy.

Belgin Şan-Akca (2020) proposed democratic assertiveness as Turkey's grand strategy, which is domestically based and externally engaged. This grand strategy would be "democratic" in the sense that Turkey would implement persistent democratic reforms in the domestic realm, and "assertive" in its defense strategy. According to Şan-Akca (2020, p. 275), although the US-led norms-based international liberal order may be in decline, this does not mean that liberal ideas around the world will lose their legitimacy or durability, especially given that there is significant lack of globally encompassing alternative worldviews that "promise a better future to the societies worldwide."

Ersel Aydınlı's (2020) analysis provided a useful perspective in that it offered a process-based approach to grand strategizing for Turkey. Following a detailed examination of the main determinants of a grand strategy and focusing on the ongoing domestic and global uncertainties that make it difficult to devise a sustainable grand strategy, Aydınlı (2020, p. 247) argued that a non-geopolitical and non-ideological idea (e.g., growth), which helps prevent "inherent divisions and challenges … while remaining loyal to the country's aspirations," should determine Turkey's grand strategy.

A Proposal: Pragmatic Adaptation as Turkey's Grand Strategy

Based on these studies that explored Turkey's grand strategizing from different perspectives and provided concepts that enhanced the emerging literature on this topic (see, for example, Brands, 2014; Lissner, 2018; Silove, 2018), additional research on Turkey's foreign policy toward Russia (Zengin & Topsakal, 2021), the United Kingdom (Yiğenoğlu, 2021), the MENA region (Omidi, 2021) and Africa (Dahir, 2021), but specifically based on what we learned from the chapters in this volume, we suggest that Turkey's grand strategy should be one of *pragmatic adaptation*.

Pragmatism may be slippery term, touching on different domains of human behavior—psychological, philosophical, and political; however, in foreign policy analysis and grand strategizing, it can be viewed as an important organizing concept for policymaking (Phua, 2022). *Adaptation* refers to any behavior or collection of behaviors "that copes with or stimulates changes in the external [and internal] environment" of a state that "contributes to keeping the essential structures within acceptable limits" (Rosenau, 1970, p. 367). In this sense, adaptation refers to behaviors that have domestic and external implications. Pragmatic adaptation does not seek to find a solution to the tension between principle and pragmatism in state action in international relations. There are always important principles to follow in one's external relations, including the principles of non-aggression and non-intervention that Turkey must follow in its interactions with others. However, given the uncertainty in both regional and international politics, changing nature of warfare, rising global consciousness about the environment, increasing role and power of non-state actors at the global level, foreign policy makers should have the ability to make sound judgments as to what is *necessary* and *possible* in under certain circumstances and the latitude to follow those judgments (Claude, 1993).

During these domestically, regionally, and globally uncertain times, pragmatic adaptation as Turkey's grand strategy should be based on three pillars. First, Turkey has been an important middle power and must maintain its status by focusing on economic growth that has positive political and military implications. It is important that Turkey maintains a good balance between its global goals and economic, political, and military capabilities. Second, as a middle power where democratic backsliding has become a major concern, Turkey must change course domestically to

allow for democratic reforms and internationally by **enhancing solidarity** with other democratic middle powers and act in defense of democracy. As noted above, while the international liberal order may be in decline, this does not mean that liberal ideas around the world will lose their legitimacy or durability, especially given that there is a significant lack of globally encompassing alternative worldviews that "promise a better future to the societies worldwide (Şan-Akca, 2020, p. 275)." Third, Turkey must return to using diplomatic tools and pursue both flexible (ad hoc or non-institutionalized) and focused (institutionalized) multilateral efforts to resolve conflicts; engage in initiatives on climate change, socio-economic development, and technological advancements; and actively participate in bringing positive change to the lives of refugees in its surrounding regions and worldwide. In other words, while pragmatic adaptation suggests that Turkey pursue a pragmatic, thus rational—as opposed to completely ideologically based—grand strategy, this grand strategy should still focus on progressive ideals while taking into consideration the fluidity in domestic and global politics and recognizing that Turkey's state interests may not always coincide with the interests of the ruling elite. The centennial birthday of the Republic represents a constitutive moment for Turkey's future.

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B. Özkeçeci-Taner, S. Akgül Açıkmeşe (eds.), *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923–2023)*, Global Foreign Policy Studies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35859-3