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The Case of Islam in Turkey's Foreign Policy Under the “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi” (AKP) Leadership: The Intersection of Religion and Politics?

Ananya Atri

*Department of International Relations, Security & Strategy (IRSS),
O.P Jindal Global University, India*

Mira Gulsum Ungan

*Department of International Relations, International Black Sea University,
Tbilisi, Georgia*

ABSTRACT

With an emphasis on the use of Islam as a tool of statecraft, this article explores the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy under the "Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi" (Justice and Development Party) (AKP). It examines the transition from a conventionally secular, Western-focused strategy to one that is more regionally assertive and influenced by religion. This study examines how much religious ideology influences the foreign policy positions of prominent AKP leaders, including Ahmet Davutoğlu, Binali Yıldırım, Abdullah Gül, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The study explores the intricate relationship between religion, politics, and international relations using a comparative historical method and analytical frameworks like middle power theory, soft power, and smart power. It discusses how Turkey's Islamic identity has shaped its interactions with the Middle East, Muslim countries, and humanitarian diplomacy. A thorough grasp of Turkey's distinct foreign policy strategy, which strikes a balance between its Islamic identity and its ambitions for regional and international influence, as well as its negotiation of the complex relationships between secularism and religion in a democratic setting, is the goal of this study.

Keywords:

Turkey, AKP, Foreign Policy, Islam, Middle East, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Ahmet Davutoğlu.

INTRODUCTION.

Turkey, a nation with a majority of Muslims, is a secular democratic state, a candidate for EU membership, a member of NATO, and a staunch ally of the United States (Rabasa, & Larabee, 2008). A major turning point in Turkish politics has been reached under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (Turkish- Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or hereinafter “AKP”) over the last 20 years. Since the AKP's victory in 2002, discussions and disputes have arisen about Turkish politics on the domestic and international stages (Tobing & Nurwijoyo, 2020). The AKP government has frequently been charged with incorporating the religious stance and adopting an Islamic agenda, especially when it comes to foreign policy formulation because of its interest in mending the connections that Turkey had severed with the Muslim nations during the Kemalist administration (Tabak, 2017). In a variety of global contexts, religion has made a comeback into the political sphere throughout the last quarter of the 20th century (Gözaydın, 2013). The past years have seen the introduction of religion into international affairs. Those who charge Turkey with maintaining a religious foreign policy assert that the AKP party's understanding of foreign policy is fundamentally shaped by Islamic concerns (Criss, 2010; Cinar, 2011).

Furthermore, the AKP experience seemed to be the first opportunity for the world to see what an Islam-based political party would accomplish in a democratic and secular system when it gained complete power over the government (Cinar, 2011). It can be debated if it would it seek to connect Islam with the values of democracy, secularism, and liberalism, or would it seek to use its authority to Islamize the state and society? Nonetheless, Before the AKP's triumph in the 2002 general elections, religion always played a significant role in Turkish politics. Significant socially conservative wings were always present in the dominant center-right parties of the 1980s and early 1990s, the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi; ANAP) and the True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi; DYP) (Rabasa & Larabee, 2008). Even during the Selçuk and Ottoman eras, there was argument around the place of Islam in Turkish political leadership.

Turkey is significant not just because of its location in terms of global politics but also because of the example it sets for Islam and secular democracy, modernization, and globalization (Rabasa & Larabee, 2008). Of course, the Turkish experiment with rigorous

secularism and the leadership of the AKP, a party with Islamic roots, has led to debates about where to draw the lines between secularism and religion in public life. Turkey has a long history of attempting to combine Westernization and Islam, going back to the late Ottoman Empire (Rabasa & Larabee, 2008). As a result, Turkey stands out from other Muslim nations in the Middle East and has a better chance of avoiding the stark contrasts, breaks, and bloodshed that have marked the region's political modernization process. This is important because it answers the fundamental issue of whether Islam and democracy are compatible. Prominent figures in Turkish foreign policy, such as Erdoğan, Davutoğlu, and former president Abdullah Gül, are well-known for being devoted Muslims or for identifying as such. Yet, Representatives from the AKP contend that the party has no Islamist goals. Though their own religious beliefs may impact their choices, the AKP government's policies are generally informed by instrumental logic rather than exclusively religious concepts (Jung, 2012). Hence, the religious attitudes of the AKP leadership may matter in the cultural framing of Turkey's foreign policy. Crucially, though, one must distinguish between the decision-makers religious worldview and the actual policies that are put into place, which are primarily motivated by instrumental rationality.

Notwithstanding the ongoing discussions about its rule, the majority of Turkish citizens supported the AKP in gaining nearly two decades of power (Tobing & Nurwijoyo, 2020). Despite its Islamic foundations, the AKP has widespread political support that cuts beyond racial, socioeconomic, and religious divides. The scholastic community has closely examined Turkey's political transition under the AKP in light of the relationship between Islam and democracy (Findley, 2010). In general, the AKP was seen in its early years as a positive force for Islam and democracy in the Middle East. It is also often suggested that the AKP represents the birth of a new wave of "Muslim democracies" two years after the party won its first election (Nasr, 2005). Reputable think tank RAND Corporation expressed optimism in 2008 on the rise of AKP because it abandoned anti-Western rhetoric and endorsed values consistent with western values and thus AKP was seen as different from its predecessors (Rabasa & Larabee, 2008). Its approach to Islamic internationalism primarily centers on humanitarian diplomacy and instruments, with significant support from non-governmental efforts. It emphasizes engagement at the sociological and cultural levels and close state-to-state relations with Muslim nations. Through public diplomacy organizations, Turkey now has the means to establish direct communication with Muslim communities around the country. Turkey's aggressive tactics toward Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Ethiopia, Chad, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (the list might be extended)

served as a good example of this interdependence. During AKP era, non-governmental and humanitarian diplomacy had not only supplanted state-centrism, but its target audience had also grown. In the past, Muslim communities were largely the only ones to get humanitarian aid; but, during the AKP era, underprivileged communities of all faiths-Muslims and non-Muslims- in areas of poverty, violence, and conflict have received support while maintaining their Muslim identity

Since the Republic's creation, Turkey's foreign policy framework has given the Middle east a larger and larger role. While there were some shifts in the 1990s toward prioritizing the Middle East due to the Kurdish issue (Altunlık and Tür, 2005, 125–126), the AKP's new foreign policy regime marked a turning point in Turkey-Middle East ties. Turkey's pivotal role in the Middle East can be understood more favorably when one takes into account the current political unrest among Turkey's neighbors and Turkey's response to these developments. Relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran have improved, but ties with Israel have been worse. Calls on the UN Security Council to reach a compromise with Iran about its nuclear program, in an attempt to prevent a vote on sanctions against Tehran. Following the invasion of Iraq, Turkey and Iraq have entered a new phase of their relationship. Turkey's top concerns at the time were maintaining Iraq's integrity and avoiding the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. As a result of Davutoğlu's push for an open foreign policy, Davutoğlu met Barzani and Turkey recognized the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as an independent entity within Iraq. Erdoğan recently established the Turkish consulate in Erbil on March 31, 2011. Relations between Turkey and Syria have also changed. Although the primary explosive issues between the two nations at the end of the 1990s were the water issue and Syrian support for the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), which brought them to the verge of war over the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's capture in 1998, relations have since improved. Since Syria's perceptions of Turkey changed, the Turkish Parliament's decision to refuse to work militarily with the US in the invasion of Iraq marked a turning point in bilateral relations between Syria and Turkey.

During the 2008 Golan Heights negotiations, Syria and Israel were mediated by Turkey. Stronger economic and political ties resulted in the reciprocal lifting of travel visa requirements in 2009. The first Muslim nation to recognize Israel was Turkey and Israel has been Turkey's main source of weapons ever since. In the region, the two countries developed military, strategic, and diplomatic ties. However, a cooling-off phase begun in relations with Israel with the Hamas leader's 2006 visit to Turkey, intensified with President Shimon Peres receiving a famous "One Minute" reprimand from Erdoğan during the World Economic

Forum annual meeting in Davos in January 2009, and continued with the Israeli attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla's Mavi Marmara in May 2010.

Furthermore, this study examines the various ways in which Islamic communities and the state apparatus employ Islam as a tool for foreign policy. To address the role of Islamic religious soft power in foreign policy, this study will first draw on the literature on religious soft power. This paper will also examine Use of Islam, initially in foreign policy and then in domestic policy, and the different ways this use has been carried out at the request of an authoritarian regime. But how should we characterize Turkey's application of Islam as a tactic that has drawn criticism despite being viewed as moderate in certain regions and extreme in others? What grounds support the recent shifts in Turkey's use of Islam as a weapon of state power? And lastly, what kinds of reactions have these shifts sparked globally? This article employs a comparative history method to address these issues by concentrating on the modifications Turkey made to its foreign and domestic policies between 2002 and 2020, the changes it made to its state identity, the degree of democratic development, and the changing ways in which transnational Islamic state apparatuses and globally engaged Islamic communities operate. The increasing readiness of Turkey's leadership to better position the nation in the midst of internal political crises occurring in other states was a sign that the country had abandoned its conventional foreign policy tenets. The Muslim Brotherhood was one of the several political groups in the area that the ruling AKP had developed strong ties with and all of them had their origins in political Islam. It was hoped that these groups would gain traction and overtake their home nations, making Turkey, who has been a major supporter of them, the main outside force in each of them.

It can be argued that although Turkey does employ Islamic theology in its foreign policy, such acts do not have a constant expression when it comes to the leaders of the AKP. This study attempts to determine which of the AKP influential leaders has most heavily incorporated religion into their foreign policy thinking, in light of the presumptions held by many observers that the party's government is ultimately motivated by a religious agenda. Hence, this argumentative paper aims to analyze, comprehend, and discuss the influence of religion in Turkey's foreign policy of significant political elites of AKP: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Binali Yıldırım, Abdullah Gül, and lastly, Ahmet Davutoğlu. This paper analyzes and comprehends their foreign policies stance, and the extent (if any) it is influenced by religion to comprehend the overall stance of AKP. It dives into the historical context and also the theoretical framework that can be applied to understand the incorporation of religion in Turkey's foreign policy.

This research will be researching and discussing:

- How has Turkey's foreign policy changed by AKPs long-time governing system especially in religious context?
- What were the differences with AKP's political actor among Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Binali Yıldırım, Abdullah Gül, and lastly, Ahmet Davutoğlu.
- Does religion affect foreign policy in Turkey?
- Will something change in terms of Turkey's diplomacy, and political and foreign policies in terms of religion?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

Turkey's foreign policy dynamics are shaped by its geographic location at the intersection of numerous diverse areas and cultures in Asia, the Middle East, the Balkans, Central Asia, and Europe. Turkey has historically followed a path of Westernization since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, which peaked with admission discussions for membership in the European Union in 2005. Apart from Westernization, the overarching principles of Turkish foreign policy can be defined as maintaining the status quo, striking a balance between nations, and safeguarding the country's existing borders (Oran, 2002). From its inception, Turkey has been a member of Western organizations such as the OECD, NATO, UN, and the Council of Europe.

Four concepts can be used to analyze Turkish foreign policy. These are the AKP government period, the Republic period, the Cold War period, and the post-Cold War period. The foreign policy trend sought to balance both during and after the Second World War and after the Republic's establishment in 1923. Such policies have historically focused on Turkey's connections with the West, particularly concerning the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the European Union. These reforms were founded on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Western-inspired reforms. Turkey stood firmly on the side of capitalism during the Cold War, which split the world in two and prevented it from becoming communist. This turned out to be the defining feature of post-Cold War foreign policy, and

ties with the US remain a top concern to this day. Relations have changed since the end of the Cold War, with Turkey aiming to achieve its historic objective of EU membership and a stronger regional role in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. Turkey's influence in the Middle East has increased under the AKP regimes thanks to their implementation of the "Strategic Depth" concept. Since the AKP took office in 2002, Turkey's justifications for its foreign policy have tended to evolve. Turkey has moved away from a US-based foreign policy strategy and toward more independent foreign policy initiatives under Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.

After the Turkish Republic was formed in 1923, Atatürk's maxim "peace at home, peace in the world" served as the foundation for Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's primary goal as a newly independent nation was to win Western recognition. Attempts were undertaken during this time to resolve issues that had been carried over from the Ottoman Empire and that the Lausanne Treaty was unable to resolve. These include the Hatay boundary dispute with Syria, the England-Moul province dispute, the France-Missionary Schools dispute, and the Straits issue. Hatay became a part of Turkish territory in 1939 following protracted talks and disagreements between France and Turkey. Similarly, England and Turkey had long-running disagreements about Mosul. Hatay became a part of Turkish territory in 1939 following protracted talks and disagreements between France and Turkey. Similarly, England and Turkey had long-running disagreements about Mosul. Mosul, however, stayed outside of Turkish control, in contrast to Hatay. The Montreux Convention of 1936 finally put an end to the Straits issue by granting Turkey sovereignty and control over the Straits.

Regarding Turkey's position both before and during the Second World War, it decided to maintain neutrality. Turkey remained out of the war by maintaining a policy of balance and neutrality in the face of strong pressure. From an energy cooperation perspective as well as an economic one, relations with Russia have been improving. In Akkuyu, Mersin, Russia is going to construct a nuclear power plant; visa requirements have been lifted. Normalization of relations with Armenia is imminent. The first president to visit Armenia was Abdullah Gül, who did so in 2008 during a World Cup Championship football game. Nonetheless, several concerns remain that don't look likely to be resolved anytime soon, including the ongoing Nagorna Karabakh dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the border disputes between Turkey and Armenia, and the claims of genocide. With the shift from its identity-based and emotionally charged foreign policy to a "zero problem with neighbors" approach

(Öniş and Yılmaz, 2009)¹, Turkey has been using a provisional road map to neutralize its relations with Armenia. But this has strained ties with Azerbaijan. The Turkish government promised Azerbaijan that Turkey would not open the border with Armenia until the Nagorna Karabakh dispute was settled. The natural gas agreement that Azerbaijan and Turkey concluded in 2010 aided in the normalization of relations between the two nations.

Turkey used its cultural and historical ties to try to fill the role of "big brother" in the region left by the fall of the Soviet Union. Also, Islam was used as a foreign policy tool by AKP, and it is unclear whether this had any direct bearing on shifts in the country's internal political dynamics. Moreover, it examines the various ways in which Islamic communities and the state apparatus employ Islam as a tool for foreign policy. Indeed, throughout the presidency of the country's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and even until the late 1960s, Islam's influence in domestic politics was restricted. However, Turkey started utilizing Islam as a tool for foreign policy in the early 1970s.

This use of Islam in both internal and international affairs is congruent with the accepted resurgence of religion in international politics following the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent religious uprisings that occurred all over the world (Cesari 2014; Philpott 2009)². Turkish activities fall outside the purview of religious soft power and demonstrate the need for a broad definition that includes both hard and soft power in this scenario. This argument has been bolstered by the unfavorable responses Turkey received from nations it visited due to its economic and Islamic influence, different penalties for self-depiction, and the politicization of Islam. The AKP descended toward authoritarianism after proving at the beginning of its rise to power that it could unite Islam and democracy.

This led to changes in Turkey's state identity and concept of civilization. Western European nations like Austria, France, and Germany, who charge Turkey of spreading its own political Islam through other apparatuses, chiefly the Diyanet, are not pleased with the new definition and discourse of civilization that many African nations felt satisfied with (Ozturk and Sozeri

¹ Öniş, Z. and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, 2009, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 7-24

² Philpott, Daniel. 2009. *Has the study of global politics found religion?* *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 183–202. [CrossRef]

2018)³. Recently, discussions about closing mosques and expelling imams under Turkish authority have become commonplace in these nations. Similar cases could be found throughout the Balkans (Ozturk 2021)⁴. Additionally, Turkey has attempted to extend its religious sway from Cuba to Israel. Local religious organizations can continue existing and exerting influence in these nations despite occasional provocation from Turkey regarding the politicization of Islam and Islamic institutions. To understand how Turkey's use of Islam as a weapon in its foreign policy embodies a hybrid power, consider the following: between 2016 and 2019, Turkey maintained its influence by religious means in North Macedonia, Sweden, Germany, France, Bulgaria, and Albania. Foreign policymakers, diplomats stationed in the host nations, and representatives of Turkish transnational Islamic organizations such as the Gülen Movement and the Sulaimani Community are among the subjects covered by the media. The impact of religion both internally and in many spheres after 1980 is a common topic of conversation, but it is rarely explored in the context of religious soft power, and it has not been given a clear definition. In this context, religious soft power is typically used to identify global institutions or, for different reasons, legal or illegal organizations. It can be utilized both positively and negatively.

However, debates on whether or not countries could use religious soft power as a tool of influence in foreign affairs have recently flared up. However, it is evident that different actors in different locations are affected differently by Turkey's policies under the AKP: while certain groups are gravely concerned, others are quite pleased with Turkey's approach, which is heavily influenced by religion. Turkey could be categorized as a vague actor that does not use its power for its purposes and affects resources in a variety of ways.

³ Ozturk, Ahmet Erdi. 2018. *Transformation of the Turkish Diyanet both at Home and Abroad: Three Stages*. *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey* 27. [CrossRef]

⁴ Ozturk, Ahmet Erdi. 2021. *Religion, Identity and Power: Turkey and the Balkans in the Twenty-First Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

There is a complicated relationship between politics and religion. This is especially true when it comes to how religion influences foreign policy. Theoretically, it is still unclear how much religion influences foreign policy in a meaningful way (Warner & Walker, 2011). Of course, religion has a significant role in how both national and individual identities are constructed, as well as how foreign and domestic policies are framed culturally. As a result, it has been incorporated into constructivist approaches to international relations theory that highlight the significance of ideas in international politics. But how does religion affect decision-makers, state institutions, and political parties? Does religion function as a separate factor in politics, or does it merely serve as a useful tool for justifying political decisions? Religious worldviews may, on a micro level, inform individuals making decisions about what is appropriate to do. However, institutional and organizational limitations shape how individuals behave. At the moment, it is discussed in international media about how unique Turkish foreign policy is. Scholars and media pundits debate the evolution of Ankara's neighborhood policy, which has been dubbed the "zero-problem policy" with Turkey's neighbors by Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, using terms like "soft power," "activism," or the adoption of a new "eastern orientation." Scholarly discourse describes the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy in terms of a variety of processes, including the Europeanization, Middle Easternization, and even Arabization⁵ of Turkish politics (Criss, 2013). These terms' cultural allusions imply that we cannot fully comprehend foreign policy by using the realism tradition's lenses alone. States, their positions of power within the international system, and their individual national interests are important, but so are concepts and worldviews (Kirişçi, 2009).

In essence, as Max Weber once said, foreign policies represent the interests of a state, but ideas frequently dictate how those interests are carried out (Weber, 1995). In this sense, the formulation of foreign policy integrates concepts, geopolitics, and national interests.

⁵ Strong opponent of the Freedom and Justice party Nur Bilge Criss describes how she believes that women's clothing is being controlled by the government in the name of religion, new architecture designed with arabesque aesthetics for the conservative nouveau riche, and cultural norms being switched to make Turkey more Arab (Criss, N. B. (2013). *Dismantling Turkey: the will of the people?*. In *Islamization of Turkey under the AKP Rule* (pp. 43-56). Routledge)

Furthermore, domestic political variables have a significant influence on the beliefs and objectives of foreign officials. The connection between political elites, the general public, and state institutions is frequently unpredictable, and foreign policy is not isolated from this dynamic (Hill,1996). Viewed from that angle, for example, Erdoğan's foreign policy has been strongly correlated with the domestic supporters of his party and the political conflict with Turkey's Kemalist establishment, particularly the significant influence of the armed forces in Turkish politics. Returning to its previous approach to politics, the TSK has often focused on defense and security matters, seldom attempting to sway the civilian administration in other domains. Jenkins (2001)⁶ states that the TSK's security concept, which is based on Ottoman history, has been extensively construed to encompass risks to the state from the outside, including perceived challenges to Kemalism. The second was the legal procedures known as Ergenekon and "Sledgehammer" (Balyoz), which began in 2008 and 2010, respectively. These procedures neutralized and appeased the military's influence in Turkish politics. The coup attempt on July 15, 2016, was the third and maybe last step. It is quite likely that the TSK will now be subject to more civilian authority and supervision. The military was forced out of official positions of authority in the political process beginning in 2001 due to institutional changes. Most significantly, the military lost its participation in government agencies that regulate higher education and the media, and the MGK was turned into an advisory body under civilian government administration. For instance, the TSK maintained significant autonomy over the training and administration of its workforce, the deployment of the force during peacetime, and the distribution of financial resources. It also maintained a strong hold on military knowledge inside the Turkish state bureaucracy, giving it a near monopoly in areas like security policy, strategy, and defense planning. The TSK has resisted attempts to take a more active role in politics, even if it accepts one.

Promoting the use of soft power and zero problems in foreign relations, therefore, might also be understood as a strategy to minimize the military's influence on Turkish politics in both the internal and international worlds. Undoubtedly, the Syrian impasse and the Arab

⁶ Jenkins, G. (2001). *Context and circumstance: the Turkish military and politics*. New York: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

upheavals as a whole have shown the zero-problem strategy's limitations, but it also marked a departure from the conventional approach (Chiriatti & Donelli 2015). A diverse and multileveled approach is necessary for the understanding of foreign policy conduct since domestic and international politics are fundamentally interrelated components in the process of foreign policymaking.

Theorists argue that Ankara now has a multifaceted foreign strategy. Its rules on security have changed. It shifts its emphasis from military might to the use of "soft power," aims to be a global actor, and wants to mediate conflicts in the Middle East. Soft power consists of three elements: foreign policy, ideology, and culture. In international relations, religion, as soft power, which this study focuses on, may lead to facilitate convergence or conflict (Haneş & Andrei, 2015). It facilitates the blending of disparate religious systems, raises national interdependence, and increases the likelihood of pursuing shared goals and agreement. This thesis takes into account theories conceptualized by Joseph Nye Jr. and Ernest J. Wilson III. However, before that, it is crucial to note that the Realist theory, which is currently preeminent in the field of international affairs, centers on the idea of power. Neorealist approaches to international relations (IR) in academic works typically place more emphasis on hard power, whereas liberal institutionalist researchers view soft power as a crucial tool of statecraft. The primary distinction between soft and hard power is that the former persuades the subject to execute an action that the coercer desires, while the latter does so by coercion (Mahapatra, 2016).

According to scholar Joseph Nye (2006), a prominent scholar in IR, who grew in popularity in the 1990s for his concept of soft power, writes in his journal, "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics" that obtaining authority requires three things: coercion, payments, and attraction (soft power). Scholar Nye highlights the need for a balance between Hard Power and Soft Power in order to conduct effective foreign policy. The global "chessboard" of three dimensions has distributed power among numerous players, ensuring that the globe is no longer at the mercy of the military and economic titans of the international system. Power emphasises how important it is to draw people to your objectives and principles instead of forcing them to comply with demands or inducements. Through highlighting the significance of religion, culture, morals, and diplomacy in addition to conventional power resources, Nye's approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how governments may accomplish their goals and negotiate intricate international issues (Gomichon, 2013).

However, scholar Ernest J. Wilson III digs a little deeper on the hard vs soft power narrative and conceptualizes the concept of 'smart power' in his journal article "Hard power, soft power, smart power". Another creation of Nye, smart power is about figuring out how to combine resources into effective strategies. According to Wilson III (2008) smart power is the capacity of an actor to effectively and efficiently achieve their goals by fusing aspects of hard power and soft power in a way that reinforces one another. This idea is important because it tackles the necessity of combining various powers, particularly in reaction to shifting global circumstances and shortcomings in existing policies. Smart power is viewed as a means of overcoming the constraints of the conventional discussions between soft and hard power, providing a more thorough and successful approach to foreign policy (Wilson, 2008). Within the framework of smart power, cultural diplomacy can be viewed as a facet of soft power that enhances a country's overall capacity to effectively influence and interact with other countries.

Therefore, the shift in international politics towards the use of soft power may reflect the progressive waning of the Turkish military's political clout and the growing influence of the country's business community and general populace (Dolatabadi & Rezaei, 2022). Foreign policymaking in Ankara is now influenced by a variety of bureaucratic entities, business groupings, the media, and public opinion at large, rather than just the military and the minister of foreign affairs. The rationale behind these modifications to Turkish foreign policy is just as complex as the measures themselves. Turkey's foreign policy behavior is evident in the international system, in the context of the EU membership negotiations, both in terms of possibilities and limitations; in other words, geopolitical changes following the fall of the USSR; the worldwide impact of Islamist militant activity; and more general reconfigurations of the world's balance of power (Dolatabadi & Rezaei, 2022).

It is crucial to note that Prior to 2002, kemalism served as the foundation for Turkey's foreign policy (Killi, 1980). Turkey's 1937 Constitution contained six tenets of Kemalistic thought: nationalism, laicism, republicanism, populism, statism (with regard to economic policy), and reformism. Regional issues were secondary to Turkey's foreign policy objectives until the 1960s, when it did not confront regional challenges. Turkey sought to adopt a European identity and accede to the European Union, rather than maintaining its Asian identity. Therefore, its post-Cold War foreign policy strategy up until 2002 consisted of: taking advantage of the West's economic and industrial might; trying to be accepted as a member of European civilization; staying out of regional conflicts and crises (the so-called "zero

problems with neighbors" approach); and cultivating bilateral ties with all of the neighbors (Perthes, 2010).

'Middle Power Theory' is another significant theoretical dimension that encompasses the material and soft power elements. Turkey's population, economy, and geophagy appear to have placed it in a category between that of major powers and small nations⁷. Turkey appears to want to assume a middle-sized role in terms of power, according to these soft power indicators (Yalcin, 2012). It is well known that the leaders of Turkish foreign policy frequently characterize their country as a central power capable of acting autonomously both within its own borders and in international affairs (Yalcin, 2012). Turkey's foreign policy has been extremely calculated and passionate throughout the 20th century due to its location in a volatile geographic region and its trapping between the East and the West. Another explanation of middle power theory is the study poses the query of how to define "middle power" in a practical way. It makes the case that the realist and liberal approaches to the idea, while presented as alternatives in the literature, are actually merely two faces of the same coin (Yalcin, 2012). Actually, the liberal method provides an answer to the problem of whether "a state perceives itself as a middle power," whereas the realist approach provides an answer to the problem of whether "a state can be thought of as a middle power." These two aspects of the concept must be considered in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the idea and increase the likelihood of developing an applicable concept (Yalcin, 2012).

Identity politics is also in play in Turkish's foreign policy. As analyzed by Bacik (2010), the AKP made two significant contributions to the evolution of identity politics: (i) The party, which has a religious background, suggested a novel kind of agreement between the government and Islam. By doing this, it has emerged as a key player in identity politics; (ii) When the Islamists adopted the new stance on the Kurdish question, they underwent a significant denationalisation process facilitated by the AKP. According to Tobing & Nurwijoyo (2020) Islamism is defined as "ideologies and movements that strive to establish some kind of an Islamic order." It is obvious that Islamism seeks to construct an Islamic system. As an attempt to create and organize "the rationale and modalities of transcending

⁷ The following is the typology of small states: evaluation of a state's capabilities (military, political and economic power, strategic geographic location, effectiveness of the diplomatic office, participation in the international commerce system, etc.), which can be reduced to the level of influence a state can impose in comparison to other nations (Kassimeris, C. (2009). The foreign policy of small powers *International Politics*, 46(1), 84–101).

Islam in social, political, and intellectual domains,” post-Islamism differs in this instance (Tobing & Nurwijoyo, 2020). Erdoğan and the AKP adopted the latter interpretation of the link between Islam and the state.

Turkish Islamic exceptionalism (Mardin 2005) holds that because the ottomans and other formerly "Turkish" states played an imperial role in the development and maintenance of Islamic civilization, Turkey has an obligation to its fellow Muslims across the globe. It also suggests that the Islamic experience in Turkey is an authentic practice and existentially appropriate to modern life. In this way, Islam appears in Turkey's foreign policy as an internationalist call for Muslim unity as well as an international rivalry against extreme ideologies and behaviors (Tabak, 2017). Islamic internationalism advocates maintaining the ummah's self-sufficiency and fostering closer ties with Muslims around the globe (Tabak, 2017). Islamic internationalism advocates maintaining the ummah's self-sufficiency and fostering closer ties with Muslims around the globe. With strong support from the government, the degree of relationship also spans the societal and cultural spheres in addition to intergovernmental interactions.

Turkey's foreign policy was altered by the unanticipated wave of revolutions and upheavals that shook most Arab nations in 2011 (Hale, 2013, 259). Turkey tried to push itself onto a larger global stage at the start of the Arab Spring, offering its political structure as a template for the newly established governments in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Ankara lost out when the previous balance of power in the region was upset in 2011–2012, when military transition governments took control in Egypt and Libya and expelled Islamist organizations. In reaction, Turkey changed the course of its foreign policy. The transition from soft power to hard power during this phase should be interpreted as the beginning of the breakdown of the Kemalist principles embodied in Turkey's zero-problems with neighboring policies, its strategies of cultural pluralism and tolerance, and its rejection of moderation and mediation in international affairs.

The theoretical framework's application and evaluation, as well as its relationship to other important publications in the subject, will be discussed later. The theory for the analysis of religion in Turkey's foreign policy needs to be both the best and the most pertinent in order to enhance the scientific importance of the findings. Based on this justification, a new

theoretical framework—inspired by Warner and Walker's (2011)⁸ framework was created to investigate religion in foreign policy. Their approach essentially seeks to build on the work of their predecessors in the fields of comparative politics and international relations (IR) by examining religion in a country's foreign policy from the theoretical vantage points of constructivism, realism, liberalism, and agent-based institutionalism (ibid; Elman & Elman 2003)⁹. Through a qualitative case study, the salient features of these theories are operationalized into variables and causal mechanisms that will be used to examine religion in foreign policy. The analyses from the two points of view are finally discussed and made connections. The idea of causality, which is described as a process of factors interacting to produce an effect (with different approaches emphasizing different causal mechanisms), increases the likelihood of commensurability among the schools of thought. Combining the two points of view to produce a more comprehensive overview is standard procedure, and using two or more of these ideas at the same time is not unusual. An operational indicator in the analysis is considered proof of how Islam has impacted Turkey's foreign policy when it is shown to have been met, supporting the corresponding hypothesis. Fundamental to liberalism is the belief that common principles, which almost certainly include religious values, can be used to promote cooperation across states (Doyle 1983; Doyle 1986)¹⁰. (Warner and Walker 2011)¹¹. Furthermore, liberals think that states should prioritize absolute gains above relative benefits from other states. Along these lines, a theory (theory A) is put out suggesting that the Islamic principles of the AKP and the nation's trade strategy are related. When examining religion's influence on foreign policy, Warner and Walker emphasize the significance of defining the institutional features that surround religion since these features determine religion's capacity to affect political outcomes (theory B). The inference made from this literature is that Islam can affect foreign policy because of the way institutional structures have been created. According to constructivists, power is the capacity to persuade individuals that something is true or natural—possibly even against their interests (Wendt 2000)¹². As a result, the power of discourse—that is, the way an event or topic is

⁸ Warner, C. M. & Walker, S. G. (2011). *Thinking about the Role of Religion in Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis*. *Foreign Policy Analysis*,

⁹ Elman, C. & Elman, M. F. (2003). *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

¹⁰ Doyle, M. W. (1983). Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 12(3), 205-235.

¹¹ Doyle, M. W. (1986). *Liberalism and World Politics*. *The American Political Science Review*, 80(4), 1151-1169.

¹² Wendt, A. (2000). *A Social Theory of International Politics*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge University Press.

presented—gets a lot of attention. An event might have a wide range of interpretations due to the different ways it is presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

For reviewing literature in this area, authors of this analytical paper, first briefly skims through papers published by esteemed publishers, all written by Turkish political academics, discussing the AKP's ideology and the role of religion and making nearly diametrically opposed arguments before diving into stances of individual political figures of Turkey. Eligür (2010) in his paper “The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey” for instance, asserts that the AKP is an Islamist party that is opposed to democracy. However, in “Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey, an examination of the party's philosophy” by Hale & Ozbudun (2009) view the AKP as a secular, conservative-democratic party that vehemently rejects Islamism as a political ideology and is arguably making the biggest contribution to the spread of democracy in Turkey. The question of why the AKP differs so much from its preceding Islamist parties is raised by Hale & Ozbudun (2009). Their principal contention is that the AKP is not an Islamist or even an Islam-based party, nor does it draw any inspiration from Islam for its ideology, character, or platform. According to the writers, the AKP opposes Islamist worldview which aims at Islamizing the society by using the state's coercive power. In addition to being a conservative-democratic party, they view the AKP as secular in that it supports the state's neutrality towards religion.

The paper “Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey”, Yavuz (2009) adopts a more ambiguous position when referring to the AKP and its supporting social movement. He uses the terms "Islamic" and "Islamist" alternatively and he then claims that the AKP cannot be regarded as Islamic. Further, he argues that Islam affects the core identity of the ruling AKP and its conceptions of politics and identity. He claims that because the identity of the AKP is shaped both by what it wants to forget (Islamism) and what it wants to become publicly (conservative democracy), the Islam of the party is genuinely repressed as opposed to merely omitted from its identity and philosophy.

In “Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey”, Atasoy (2009) asserts that while the AKP is not explicitly defined as secular, it is unquestionably not an antisectionary party. However, Eligür (2010) who views Islamism and secularism as mutually exclusive, claims that the AKP opposes the secular, democratic system and targets the civil state. But unlike the other scholars, Yavuz (2009) believes that the AKP's Islamic affiliation

should not be viewed as an aberration or an exception because the existence of an Islamist party is a normal by-product of living in a Muslim culture. Yavuz states that religion and politics cannot be separated since they are closely engaged in the same issues of normative order and collective identity. According to him, Islam is so embedded in Turkish culture that it cannot be removed from any sphere of politics or society. Hence, it's not just AKP but any other party that rules Turkey. Like Hale & Ozbudun (2009), Atasoy (2009) emphasizes that the AKP has no intention of converting the political system or the public realm to Islam. Islam, as Atasoy (2009) illustrates, is, for the AKP, "our own authentic value system," the "basis of our deeply rooted ideational tradition," according to Erdoğan, and is presently being combined with, or reconfigured around, "universal standards" (Atasoy, 2009, 10).

Studying the Influence of religion in Ahmet Davutoğlu's foreign policy stance is also crucial for this study. Davutoğlu led Turkey as prime minister from 2014 to 2016, the year before Yilirim became prime minister. Prior to that, from 2009 until 2014, he served as the Foreign Affairs Minister. Needless to say, more importantly, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu has been an intellectual Islamic scholar, which makes his stance critical and imperative for this paper. As a political science and international relations scholar, Davutoğlu approaches foreign policy from an intellectual-Islamist viewpoint (Gözyayın, 2013). His comprehensive comprehension of Islamic ideas and their relevance to modern world affairs forms the basis of this viewpoint. Karaahmetoglu (2016) writes that Davutoğlu holds a significant position in the AKP's foreign policy. He became Prime Minister Erdoğan's senior foreign policy advisor in 2000 after writing the book "Strategic Depth," which is considered the theoretical cornerstone of AKP foreign policy. Gözyayın (2013) furthers this notion by contending that Davutoğlu's "strategic depth" ideology, influenced the evolution of Turkish foreign policy for nearly ten years. Turkey's foreign policy strategy draws upon its Ottoman-Islamic civilizational legacy as part of Davutoğlu's worldview. It differs from more conventional secular approaches to Turkey's foreign policy in that it incorporates Islamic principles and a rich historical background. Turkey is now seen by Davutoğlu as a "central country" as opposed to merely a link between the East and the West. This change in how Turkey is viewed in international relations represents a departure from earlier ideas about Turkey's strategic significance.

Undoubtedly, under Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey has turned its immediate and distant neighborhood into a field of foreign policy activism, in contrast to the relatively hands-off approach towards the Middle East that was a key component of the country's Kemalist political elite's foreign policies (Jung, 2012). Davutoğlu's slogan has somewhat reversed the

Kemalist understanding of encirclement, substituting a circle of friends for the ring of adversaries for a while. However, the weakening connections with Israel, the hostility with Iran over the deployment of NATO's early warning radar system, and the challenges in addressing the frequently perplexing reality of the "Arab spring" demonstrate how equally one-sided this approach to the Middle East is. It seems that issues with neighbors that are deeply divided not only between themselves but even inside their own populations are unavoidable.

Since 2002, Turkish foreign policy has been heavily influenced by the neo-Ottomanist beliefs of Davutoğlu (2001). Turkey wanted to play a significant role in the region's history in this regard. During this stage, Turkey's strategy was divided into two distinct time periods: 2011–present and 2002–2011. The first stage was characterized by Turkey's exercise of economic, diplomatic, and cultural influence over the Ottoman Empire's lands, including the regions of North Africa, the Middle East, the Balkan Peninsula, and other areas of strategic and national relevance (Dolatabadi & Rezaei, 2022).

According to Keyman (2009), Davutoğlu is one of the main forces behind Turkey's "proactive and multi-dimensional" foreign policy despite the fact that his foreign policy has its roots in the 1980s. According to Öktem (2010), Davutoğlu was the one who incorporated this allusion to the Ottoman Empire into a reevaluation of Turkey's and the West's roles from an intellectually Islamist or distinctly Islamic perspective. Gözaydın (2013) argues that We may follow Davutoğlu's belief that Muslim culture is an alternative to Western culture throughout his work and, by extension, his diplomatic career. He has written and published many papers, one of which, according to Davutoğlu's Ph.D. dissertation, his first book *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* makes the claim that studying contemporary Islam as a subject of social sciences—especially international politics—is hampered by the differences between Western and Muslim paradigms.

The author of this paper found Karaahmetoglu's (2016) analysis of Davutoğlu in his book "ROLE OF ISLAM IN FOREIGN" insightful and have included his claims throughout the paper. One of the arguments Karaahmetoglu (2016) contends that after Davutoğlu was appointed Foreign Affairs Minister and the Arab Spring began, the liberal, democratic discourses of the AKP during the first half of its tenure were supplanted by religious discourses. Indeed, the AKP adopted a Sunni Muslim-only interpretation of Islam.

Furthermore, the AKP's interpretation of the New Turkey discourse and new foreign policy is actually neo-Ottomanism, a process of "re-Islamization" combined with "re-Ottomanization."

Turkey gained prominence in the Sunni-Muslim world, particularly with the Arab Spring, and forged alliances with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and rivals in Syria. However, these developments ultimately proved detrimental to Turkish foreign policy. AKP discourses are at odds with the core tenets of the Turkish Republic and views this process as a return to the traditions and values of the Ottoman Empire, particularly the policies of Sultan Abdulhamit the Second (Karaahmetoglu, 2016, 12). Turkey's stance towards the people of Syria and Egypt while opposing the Iraqi government led by "Shia" al-Maliki was perceived as a retreat from Davutoğlu's "zero problems with neighbors" objective. As a result, several academics and opposition groups severely criticized Turkey's foreign policy.

When the then-AKP-controlled parliament attempted to choose Abdullah Gül, the country's foreign minister at the time, to be president, a political crisis broke out in the spring of 2007 (Migdalovitz & Zanotti, 2010). Gül is another significant political elite. Abdullah Gül has a long history of service in Turkey. From 2007 to 2014, he served as President of Turkey, taking office immediately before Erdogan. before going on to become the Foreign Affairs Minister from 2003 to 2007. In addition, he served as Turkey's prime minister from 2002 to 2003 for a single year. Rabasa & Larabee (2008) writes that as evidence of the AKP's true agenda, critics point to the party's hardline statements made in the 1990s, such as Abdullah Gül's declaration on the eve of the 1996 parliamentary election that "this is the end of the republican period" or Erdoğan's 1996 claims that democracy is merely a means, not an end, and that, in his capacity as mayor of Istanbul, he was "a servant of shari'a" and the "imam of Istanbul."

Hence, Rabasa & Larabee (2008) argues that these assertions suggest that political Islam is so powerful that only "hard" secularism could keep it from overpowering Turkey's political institutions. Gül's wife wears a head scarf, which secularists view as a symbol of both Islamism and backwardness. Gül has origins in the Islamist movement in Turkey. Therefore, the choice of the nation's president was seen as integral to the identity of both Islamists and secularists. Furthermore, they contended that since the AKP already held authority over the prime minister and the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Islamists would benefit from a lopsided political power structure in the government if the party also took over as president. The Turkish president serves mostly as a symbolic head of state, but he also has strong appointee powers and a bully pulpit. Recurring crises may have been anticipated as secularist critics kept an eye out for Islamist inclinations in the AKP government's actions ((Migdalovitz & Zanotti, 2010).

It was said that Turkey's failure in the upheaval of the Middle East resulted from its adoption of expansionist and pro-Sunni policies. Turkey recklessly ignored the uprisings in Yemen and Bahrain while endorsing the uprisings in Egypt, Syria, and Libya. Additionally, Turkey provided military backing to Omar al-Bashir, the leader of Sudan, during his trial by the International Criminal Court (ICC) over the Darfur case, raising questions about whether or not Sunni-Muslim policymaking was at play. Lastly, the embargo between Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey on Shia power centers in Yemen and Syria raises more concerns about the AKP's foreign policy.

Barkey (2018) writes that an increasing Islamification of Turkish foreign policy and a desire for regional leadership were signaled during the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring was interpreted by Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey's foreign minister at the time, as an Arab desire to imitate Turkey's achievements in not just electing the AKP but also in its attempts to revert to its Muslim heritage. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey was trying to reverse all the negative effects of Western dominance by creating a new regional order centered on the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

An unofficial policy of boycotting French goods was encouraged as part of Erdoğan's campaign against Macron and France in the latter part of 2020 to express displeasure for the French *laïcité* that allows the mockery of religious leaders and religions (Daventry 2020)¹³. Erdogan is serving as the President of Turkey (since 2014) and has held the position Prime Minister of Turkey for a long time from 2003–2014 before gaining the President's position. When the AKP was founded, Erdoğan made it clear that its members were only "Muslim democrats" and that the party would not be an Islamist organization (Rabasa & Larabee, 2008). Erdoğan's desire to profit from Western Islamophobia may be the driving force behind the boycott, but since the boycott is formally based on his Islamic convictions, it's also possible that these views have some bearing. Although there isn't a formal embargo on French goods, a significant portion of the Turkish Muslim community has changed their behavior due to Erdoğan's statements, therefore this may be seen as an unofficial trade strategy.

To put it succinctly, Erdoğan has demonstrated time and again that he is more than willing to damage Turkey's commercial relations with one of its main trading partners anytime he

¹³ *Turkey leads boycott of French goods in Muslim countries. But how effective will it be? Euro News.*

believes that doing so would benefit Turkey both domestically and regionally. This could also be interpreted as posturing towards the Islamic world, though, as no nation—let alone Turkey, which is spearheading the boycott—has officially outlawed French goods. It is contended that Erdoğan's boycott of French goods is a situation where trade is impacted by Islamic beliefs for the reasons mentioned above. Turkey's trade with Israel has increased to the point where it is now Turkey's second-largest Middle Eastern export destination, despite Erdoğan's calls for boycotts of France due to Islamophobia. (World Bank 2017)¹⁴.

Increasing commercial relations with Israel is perceived by many Muslim countries as trade with the enemy, as Turkey is a strong backer of the Palestinian state. The acts of the Israeli state in the region, historical disputes, and strict religious distinctions are the main reasons why many, if not most, Muslim populations despise Israel. President Erdoğan's survival instincts and the objectives of the new ruling coalition are reflected in Turkish foreign policy, which is responding to growing multifaceted challenges and (fix here) launching a new wave of activism. This period started with the departure of Prime Minister Davutoğlu and the appointment of Erdoğan loyalist Binali Yıldırım, not the coup attempts of July 2016.

Following the AKP's first loss of its parliamentary majority in the June 2015 general election (which it eventually won back through "repeat vote" manipulation), there have been whispers regarding Erdoğan's dissatisfaction with Davutoğlu's leadership of the party. It seems that ideology has little effect on Turkey's geopolitical path, despite the popular notion that the AKP's Islamist policies have alienated Turkey from the West. The relationship between the United States and Turkey was considered to be in its "golden age" between 2011 and 2013, as previously indicated, with the AKP's fervor for Islam. when Turkey was praised and promoted as a model to the wider region. Not only did the US and the EU support the AKP in its mission to dismantle the tutelage of Turkey's secular military well into the 2010s. On the other hand, the most volatile time in Turkey's Western relations they have occurred following this "imperialist" period when Erdoğan and the AKP abandoned long-guarded Islamist principles in foreign policy and united with ultranationalist erstwhile enemies against fellow coreligionists.

¹⁴ World Bank (2017). *Israel trade balance, exports and imports by country and region 2018*

The AKP decision-maker's confidence in their positions of power directly influenced the rise and fall of ideology as the main force behind foreign policy; as their confidence increased, so did the importance of ideology in decision-making. The country's rulers were able to publicize and pursue their ideal vision for Turkey and the wider region, which was informed by an overtly Islamist reading of the world, after consolidating popular support, seizing control of important state institutions, and feeling less constrained by threats from both the inside and the outside. It seems that Turkish policymakers concluded that Turkey needs a new approach to its foreign policy. In recent years, Turkey hasn't demonstrated that it is a strong participant in shaping developments in its region. Going so far as to draw attention to Turkey's suffering, others have noted that the strategy of "zero problems with neighbors" has given way to the unpleasant outcome of "zero neighbors without problems. "Turkish officials have taken a new stand on foreign policy, emphasizing the significance of conventional security concerns above all else, in view of the region's deteriorating security situation and its negative implications on Turkey's internal peace and stability.

Following Ahmet Davutoğlu's resignation as prime minister in the spring of 2016, it seems that Binali Yıldırım has adopted a practical foreign policy approach for Turkey. The operational purpose of this strategy is to make Turkey's allies larger while making its opponents smaller. The more practical objective of preserving Turkey's territorial integrity has progressively replaced the idealistic preference of supporting the region's change to match Turkish domestic ideals under the leadership of AK Party regimes. integrity and social cohesion amid the resurgence of traditional security concerns to the south.

Despite Turkish rulers paying a great amount of attention to improving relations with Russia and coming closer to China, one can hardly say that there were a lot of people arguing in favor of a Eurasian-centered stance in Turkey's international orientation. Despite responding to Russia's invasion of Georgia in the summer of 2008 far more subduedly than the US and many other EU members, Turkey was nonetheless concerned about Russia's use of force to impose its will on its neighbors. Ankara does not see the Russian challenge to the European continent's post-modern security arrangement as constructive.¹⁵ From the beginning of the regional upheavals until the middle of 2015, Turkey's primary foreign policy goal was to create a new regional order, with Turkey taking the lead in promoting regionalism and

¹⁵ Ziya Onış and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Turkey and Russia in a Shifting Global Order: Cooperation, conflict and asymmetric interdependence in a turbulent region," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (2016): 71–95.

representative democracy. Taking the lead was in line with Turkey's goal of helping to dismantle the influence of foreign powers in the region and install new power blocs under the AK Party government whose interests would be in line with Turkey's. During this time, it became clear that Turkey's goals and methods would not easily align. The leaders of the AK Party ignored warnings to exercise care because Turkey is likely to encounter mismatches between expectations and capacities, particularly with regard to Syria, and continued to believe that Turkey was in the right side of history. It was thought that Turkey's moral authority in the area would ultimately serve its interests, even in the event of any circumstances that would lead to a brief rift. After all, the alleged loneliness would be beneficial¹⁶.

Over the past six years, there has been a notable lack of participation in decision-making by parliamentarians and officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since 2014, Erdogan has taken the lead in determining Turkish foreign policy, with Davutoğlu's group playing a supporting role. Davutoğlu believed that in addition to giving up on its ambition to dominate the area, Turkey also needed to change its foreign policy strategy to one that was less ideological and more pragmatic. Turkey's geopolitical, security, and economic strategies have been more closely aligned with Russian perspectives under Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's management, especially since Binali Yildirim was appointed prime minister. The increasing sway of the Eurasianist perspective in Turkish foreign policy is not a new concept.¹⁷ Turkey's foreign policy in the post-2020 age, having examined the country's shift from multilateral-Westernism to Eurosianism and anti-Westernism during the three AKP periods. How the Erdoğan Administration should reorient its foreign policy to unblock the EU process and the US, which is harboring Fethullah Gulen, endorsing the PYD, and putting sanctions on Turkey, will be examined and addressed. As a result, the foreign policy perspective of Turkey will be presented concerning the country's disengagement or re-engagement with the West. Since Russia and the Syrian regime used excessive force at the beginning of 2020, violated the ceasefire in Idlib, and caused the Ukraine crisis in the first quarter of 2021, Turkey's multilateral Eurasian policy had to be re-evaluated. As a result, the post-2020 era can be defined as Western-centered multilateralism. Turkey must therefore pursue a multi-engaged and balanced foreign policy rather than engaging with one of the great powers, given the

¹⁶ David Gardner, "Turkey's Foreign Policy of 'Precious Loneliness'," *Financial Times*, November 16, 2015,

¹⁷ Patrick Kingsley, "Turkey in Turmoil and Chaos Since Purge Aimed at Dissenters", *The New York Times*, April 12, 2017.

conflicting interests it has with Russia in Idlib (Syria), Libya, and the Caucasus, the worsening of its relations with the EU nations that support Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Biden Administration's anti-Erdogan stance. Turkey's public opinion has responded to relevant countries in response to the government's disapproval of the US and Russian policies. The Turkish populace was dissatisfied with Turkey's attempts to improve relations with the US and the West. It led to the re-examination of past Western relationships and opened the door to the possibility of a new, psychologically nationalist and isolationist foreign policy. Turkey has long seen multilateralism and multilateral Westernism to be highly desired policy options, but little has been successful at various times. Stated differently, Westernism has always been Turkey's principal axis. Turkey's political and economic systems were developed in the framework of Westernization and modernization, and this viewpoint has dominated social life¹⁸.

Literature review of this thesis is incomplete without Migdalovitz & Zanoliti (2010) shedding light on the fact that The AKP was targeted by the public prosecutor in 2007 to be banned for serving as a “focal point of anti-secular activities,” but the party managed to endure it. Since then, the government has detained numerous well-known secularists and ultranationalists as well as serving and former military personnel on suspicion of hatching schemes to incite the armed forces into toppling the government. The administration addressed the root causes of a decades-long insurgency/terrorism by launching what became into a controversial "Kurdish opening." Additionally, it suggested constitutional changes, some of which critics worry would upset Turkey's balance between religion and secularism as well as the division of powers among the organs of government. These plays aimed to draw attention to the divisive political environment and the ongoing struggle for identity and power. Every side has supporters and detractors who spread opposing theories about what happened.

¹⁸ *Comparing the Bush, Obama, and Trump Foreign Policies: Continuity and Change in American Middle East Policy,* in *Ultra-Nationalist*

Policies of Trump and Reflections in the World, M. K. Öke and H. Avcı eds. Berlin: Peterlang, 2020, pp. 45-72

METHODOLOGY.

This paper uses a qualitative method of research that looks at existing data and archival research to analyze and interpret the role religion in Turkey's foreign policy. The initial action in conducting qualitative research is analyzing the general view of the AKP and then understand the views of significant political figures of AKP: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Binali Yıldırım, Abdullah Gül, and lastly, Ahmet Davutoğlu in their stance. Second, where existing evidence is gathered to construct a theoretical understanding that aims to provide the reasons and explanations, record keeping and the grounded theory model are used. In light of Turkey's current political prominence, this study seeks to elucidate the direct interplay of religion in Turkey's foreign policy due to strong Islamism position of AKP and its influential leaders.

This thesis provides a thorough and in-depth analysis of the underlying causes and circumstances that, in the AKP era, have incorporated Islamist influence in this foreign policy decision making. The researchers conduct document analysis on books, research articles, documents, government reports, and internet media from the pertinent time period in order to gather data. This thesis used both primary resources when providing records of evidence as they were initially reported or occurred, devoid of any interpretation or opinion and secondary resources for analyzing the same, fulfilling the goal statement and finding the research question and hypothesis. Nonetheless, as Cinar (2011) states that it is difficult for analysts and scholars to maintain critical neutrality when there are such stark differences amongst them over the same subject as seen in the literature review above, which is likely related to the importance of the implications these opinions have for the future of not just Turkey but the entire world.

The selected archival texts for this study are academic research articles that have addressed a similar field of inquiry as this work seeks to identify. The research used often answers questions such This essay examines the domestic backdrop of Turkish foreign policy through a specific perspective, starting with these theoretical realizations. It can be wondered how much religion influences Turkey's new foreign policy approach given the widespread observers' suspicions that the Freedom and Justice party (the AKP) government is ultimately motivated by a religious agenda. Do the changes in Turkey's foreign policy of today make sense as expressions of Islamist ideology? Does the AKP use religious concepts as a

significant negotiating tool when formulating its foreign policy? Thus, a data retrieval technique is chosen for this paper. The chosen literary works address religion and foreign policy in Turkey during the AKP government, and scientific research is discussed throughout the article. Qualitative content analysis is utilized for the study of data obtained via document analysis. Finding themes and trends in the data about the use of Islamism themes in foreign policy making was part of the analysis. The investigation, which is driven by the research question, aims to pinpoint if any one significant leader in the AKP has driven Turkey's foreign policy to include religious aspects than their significant counterparts.

It is crucial to point out that there is an increasing body of literature on Turkey's AKP and the role Islam plays in Turkey's political system overall indicating a growing interest from scholars in this area of study. However, more research is needed to fully close the knowledge gap regarding how specific influential individuals in the party use religion and Islam in its foreign policy endeavors. Without a doubt, tackling this research problem requires taking into account the research findings of earlier authors. This research would like to highlight the lack of literature regarding the interpretation of religious foreign policy stance of individual leaders of AKP, which is being implemented in practice as seen in this thesis's literature review section.

Additionally, there are a few limitations associated with this study that ought to be discussed. In the beginning, the study looks solely at one nation, Turkey. therefore, its findings may not be relevant to other countries. However, the connection with religion incorporation in foreign policy can still provide valuable insights and lessons for other nations to consider in their foreign policy Decision making and analysis. Furthermore, Most the research conducted in the area this paper aims to find were done by Turkish scholars in Turkish language. Hence, another significant limitation was the availability of the desired material in English languages as the authors of this paper found it difficult to find academically and peer-reviewed translations of paper from Turkish language.

Considering the continued fallout from the 2011 Middle East government collapse, the discussion surrounding the AKP's interpretation of Islam and politics has taken on even greater significance. Despite several assertion that the AKP cannot serve as a model for other Muslim nations, it is clear especially in light of the growing calls for democracy that the AKP government's model, with its distinctive fusion of Islam and democracy and despite its flaws and shortcomings, promises to become a viable alternative for a variety of Middle Eastern groups seeking democracy.

Furthermore, the reliance on secondary data sources may limit the availability of certain information or perspectives and can create biases. However, the researcher has taken measures to mitigate these limitations by utilizing a diverse range of data sources and employing rigorous qualitative content analysis methods. The results & discussion of the study will be presented in the following section and reviewed in light of the research questions and associated materials.

RISULTS & DISCUSSION.

This article focuses on religion as a factor in foreign politics and places Turkey's recent foreign policy activism in a home context. Although the AKP leadership's religious beliefs may influence how Turkey's present foreign policy is framed culturally, there aren't any obvious institutional or organizational processes in place at this time that would allow these beliefs to be translated into actual foreign policy. Therefore, it appears that religion is a dependent rather than an independent aspect in the AKP's decision-making process, similar to the policies of prior regimes¹⁹. Yet, it is important to note that the scenario that most concerns secularists is creeping Islamization. Many believe that the AKP has a covert plan to Islamize Turkish culture and that party members may persuade its leadership to take a more assertive stance on social problems. However, this situation may not be likely, though, for a number of reasons. First of all, it would likely encourage military involvement and deepen political division. The military should anticipate to become much more watchful for signals of creeping Islamization now that the AKP controls both the legislative and executive branches of government. Second, the majority of Turks are against a state founded on shari'a and in favor of a secular one. Therefore, the public would not be very supportive of an overtly Islamist policy. Third, the AKP's foreign policy has made joining the EU a priority. Giving

¹⁹ While the political decision-making of the leading AKP politicians might be affected by their religious worldview, their policies do not appear to be value-rational, i.e., independently guided by religious ideas, but rather follow the type of instrumental rationality that Weber identified as the main direction of action in the modern world. Consequently, as with the policies of previous governments, religion seems to represent a dependent rather than an independent variable in the AKP's decision-making (Jung, D. (2012). The domestic context of new activism in Turkish foreign policy: Does religion matter?. *International Journal*, 67(1), 23-38)

up on that objective will harm the AKP's credibility and reputation. Nearly half of Turkish citizens still want EU membership, despite the country's recent spike in discord.

After analyzing previous literature, theoretical framework and historical background, it can be deduced that Turkey's assertiveness in the international arena has grown. Turkey's internal political unrest is mostly caused by a power struggle that is still going on, which many see as a fight for the nation's identity. Secularism has been one of the "fundamental and unchanging principles" governing the Turkish Republic since its founding in 1923, making Turkey's secular identity unique among majority Muslim states. Additionally, there has been a great deal of domestic political friction due to this principle. Political parties have arisen over time to oppose rigid secularism and work towards giving the nation's Islamic character more prominence. These parties have been barred from politics each time. Founded in 2001, the AKP professes a conservative democratic position on the political spectrum despite its Islamist origins. The national elections of 2002 were decisively won by the AKP. The plan to ban AKP plays aimed to draw attention to the divisive political environment and the ongoing struggle for identity and power. Every side has supporters and detractors who spread opposing theories about what happened. There are times when the schism is difficult to distinguish because some secularists advocate the AKP's position in the name of democracy, while other AKP members disagree with the acts of their leaders.

Notwithstanding its Islamist origins, the AKP administration has refrained from openly pursuing an Islamist agenda, despite accusations from its detractors that it aims to infiltrate Islamists into the civil service and supports localized Islamization. Nonetheless, Cinar (2011) argues that the world was to see, for the first time, what an Islam-based political party might accomplish with complete governmental authority in a democratic and secular society thanks to the AKP experience. Nonetheless, The AKP has been able to capitalize on the current situation and has the backing of both the conservative and liberal groups that make up the majority of Turkish voters, as opposed to driving Turkey towards religious politics (Jung, 2012). By eschewing the national orientation ideology and adopting Muslim democratic conservatism instead, the party has successfully established itself within the center-right political spectrum of Turkey.

Indeed, foreign policy of Turkey is influenced by religion. For instance, Turkey's adoption of the Arab Spring does not appear to have been motivated by any clear or compelling political or economic rationale. Rather, Turkey's perspective was mostly Islamic or based on theology (Başkan & Taşpınar, 2021). Islamism does offer an analytical framework or lens through

which Ankara's foreign policy decision-makers might be comprehended. Upon analyzing the use of religion and Islam in the foreign policy positions of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Binali Yıldırım, Abdullah Gül, and Ahmet Davutoğlu, it is apparent that each has taken a distinct approach to this matter, even though they have all done so within the general framework of the AKP's ideology. Their foreign policy methods have been significantly shaped by religion and Islam, albeit to differing degrees in terms of emphasis and methodology. The President of Turkey at the moment, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has shown a discernible tendency to base his foreign policy choices on Islamic ideas. Throughout his time as prime minister and throughout his presidency, Erdoğan has consistently highlighted Turkey's Islamic past and its position as a global leader among Muslims. His reaction to the Arab Spring, in which he presented Turkey as a role model for other countries with a majority of Muslims wanting democratic reform, was one instance of this. In addition, Erdoğan has used religious rhetoric to criticize Western countries; this is seen in his demands for boycotts of France due to alleged Islamophobia.

When it came to foreign policy, Binali Yıldırım had a more practical stance than Ahmet Davutoğlu did. During Yıldırım's presidency, Turkey adopted a more *realpolitik* strategy that prioritised protecting its territorial integrity and forging relationships based on strategic goals rather than ideological precepts. Though they continued to be discussed, religion and Islam were less of a focus than they were under Erdoğan's government. Yıldırım placed little emphasis on ideological or religious affiliations and instead prioritised sustaining diplomatic relations with major regional countries like China and Russia.

A more sophisticated method of integrating theology into foreign policy is embodied by Abdullah Gül. Gül has been linked to the AKP's initial attempts to harmonise Islamic principles with democratic administration because of his origins in the Islamist movement. Tensions within Turkish society between Islamist and secularist forces were also present during his administration, nevertheless. Gül's wife's headscarf became a point of dispute, drawing attention to the continuous discussion about the place of Islam in society as a whole. Gül supported Turkey's Islamic history, but he also made a point of upholding secularism and pluralism, especially in his capacity as President. Of the four, Ahmet Davutoğlu is arguably the most ideologically motivated when it comes to utilizing religion in international relations. By placing Turkey's foreign policy inside a larger Islamic framework, Davutoğlu's notion of "Strategic Depth" highlighted the nation's cultural and historical links with the Muslim world at large. He aimed to establish Turkey as a leader in the area by highlighting its shared

Ottoman heritage and unity with other countries where the majority population is Muslim. His training being an Islamic scholar had a significant impact on Davutoğlu's foreign policy orientation, and he aggressively pushed an image of Turkey as an Islamically grounded bridge uniting the East and the West.

The AKP's position proved that secularism in Turkey does not pose a threat to Islam. Rather, secularism offers the AKP the chance to comprehend that Islam and Turkish society are inextricably linked. In this instance, the AKP was successful in uniting the political, economic, and sociocultural perspectives of Islamists. The Turkish nationalism and Islam are inextricably linked, according to the AKP, which has two significant ramifications. First, this indicates that the AKP's efforts to forge a stronger political base and win over support from the populace were successful in assisting the party in winning elections on a domestic level. Second, Turkey has been able to increase its soft power internationally, particularly among the Muslim world, because to the AKP's comprehension of the relationship between religion and state.

Hence, both domestic and foreign political analysts concur that Turkey has experienced several notable shifts in its foreign policy. AKP's approach to Islamic internationalism is primarily centered on humanitarian diplomacy and instruments, with significant support from nongovernmental efforts. It emphasizes engagement at the sociological and cultural levels, as well as close state-to-state relations with Muslim nations. Through public diplomacy organizations, Turkey now has the means to establish direct communication with Muslim communities around the country. Turkey's aggressive tactics toward Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Chad, Niger, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (the list might be extended) served as a good example of this interdependence as a result, during the AKP era, nongovernmental and humanitarian diplomacy had not only supplanted state-centrism, but its target audience had also grown. In the past, Muslim communities were largely the only ones to get humanitarian aid; but, during the AKP era, underprivileged communities of all faiths—Muslims and non-Muslims—in areas of poverty, violence, and conflict have received support while maintaining their Muslim identity.

Turkey has steadily emerged as one of the most giving donor nations in this regard (Global Humanitarian Assistance 2013)²⁰. Due to its capacity to employ humanitarian diplomacy decisively and its participation in such a sensitive process, IHH is seen as "an important model for other NGOs in the Muslim World" (Turkey Agenda 2014a)²¹. But in this endeavor, IHH wasn't working alone. Turkey supported the negotiations by designating a diplomat to act as a mediator and oversee the MILF's (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) disarming by the peace agreement.²² Islamic internationalism advocates maintaining the ummah's self-sufficiency and fostering closer ties with Muslims across the globe. The scope of the partnership is not limited to intergovernmental interactions; it also encompasses civic and cultural spheres, with substantial support from the government. Such a relationship has been well-facilitated by Turkey's public diplomacy tools and nongovernmental humanitarian groups. Turkey is increasingly accused of adopting an Islamic foreign policy and endorsing radical Islamists as relations between the two countries have grown closer.

However, the AKP administration is not the only one making this charge. Nongovernmental humanitarian organizations have also been the focus of accusations that they assist radicals. The term "party" alludes to the internal composition of the governing party, shifts in the ranks of the leadership, and the ideologies, political agendas, and worldviews advanced by influential members of the government. The term "coalition" refers to the official and unofficial political and socioeconomic alliances that the ruling party forms with other political parties and interest groups both locally and globally. Furthermore, it has never been Turkey's diplomatic practice to hold foreign nationals without charge or trial in detention centers to use them as negotiating chips in power struggles with their governments²³. Erdoğan's personalization of Turkey's state institutions has also rendered his family's

²⁰ *In 2012 Turkey was the fourth-largest donor state.*

²¹ (April 7). "IHH Contributes to Peace in the Philippines." Available at www.turkeyagenda.com/ihh-contributes-to-peace-in-the-philippines-524.html.

²² (In an interview with the head of the humanitarian diplomacy division, the author of the journal *Manifestation of Islam in Turkey's Foreign Policy*.pdf that Turkey's role in the process is exaggerated and it was IHH that informed the official diplomatic missions regarding the developments May 13, 2015)

²³ The Turkish president made an unsuccessful bid to exchange a US pastor accused of spying and jailed in Turkey, with Fethullah Gulen, who is based in the US. Similarly, the Turkish government released a Turkish-German journalist, who was arrested for spreading "terror-ist propaganda," after a lengthy bargaining process with the German officials (Tremblay 2018).

interests and his political ambitions inseparable from Turkey's national goals. Thus, the central issue facing the state turned into a highly individualized power battle between Erdoğan and Gülen. Keep in mind that actually, this power battle between Erdoğan and Gülen was just the beginning of the diplomatic political conflicts.

CONCLUSION & FURTHER DIRECTION.

Since politics especially foreign policy making and decisions in itself is something really open to mutation, it has an ability to shape by the time and the current situation. This paper could support the ideologies and views, starting from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's time to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and all the prime ministers of Turkey plus their decision-making processes while changing experiments not only in economic yet diplomatic, political, and democratic stages.

Examining Turkey's case and its importance on diplomatic, and political grounds could contribute to border discussions about the evolution of future global power dynamics and the potential reconfiguration of international norms. Furthermore, the research could be highlighted as a concept of the foreign policy in Turkey and how it affects in the long run and whether there can be any more threats to the economic, diplomatic, and political changes. These theories could inform future discussions about responsibilities led by practices and potential vulnerabilities faced by developing states. However, it's important to know that AKP leadership believed that this absolute and practically unconditional alliance with the West went against centuries of the nation's history. An economically stronger Turkey ought to have been able to overcome these restrictions and pursue a more autonomous foreign policy more in line with its Muslim and Ottoman roots as the heir apparent to a vast empire. After the first ten years of AKP leadership, Turkey's new foreign policy was designed to serve a societal ideal that was more influenced by socially conservative values and religion than the ideational function of foreign policy during the Republican era. Syria was the first country where Turkish foreign policy strayed significantly from its established principles. Turkey abandoned its failed attempts to persuade the Bashar al-Assad administration of the necessity of political reform and adopted an agenda for regime change. For the first time in history, Ankara had attempted to overthrow a regime in a neighboring state using its might, as seen in the case of Syria.

With time, Turkish diplomacy and foreign policy will likewise change and develop. Stability, internal transformation, and regional ownership for revolutions will be the defining characteristics of the Turkish approach to development. But defining a new regional order based on regional interests and sensitivities will be Turkey's primary concern. Furthermore, the crucial matter of ties with Europe in general and the European Union in particular still has to be addressed. It is no secret that there is a dearth of mutual trust and a lack of affection between Erdogan and most Western European politicians. Though that condition may already be realistic, European authorities and the EU still prefer to view Turkey as an outsider, rather than as a candidate nation. Their intention is to maintain a purely transactional relationship with Ankara. The new German National Strategy Document generously extends membership to all Black Sea riparian nations but does not even mention Turkey by name.

Turkey continues to value its participation in NATO and its potential membership in the EU, but in recent years, it has shown a growing inclination to become more involved in the Middle East and to draw closer to China and Russia. Whether this is referred to as "strategic autonomy," "Eurosianism," or "Middle Easternization," it is clear to say that Turkey no longer has a predominately pro-Western outlook on its external environment. The progressive decline of Western supremacy in world politics cannot be the only explanation for the weakening of Westernism in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey has been experiencing increased security fear in recent years, mostly due to U.S. policy in the Middle East during the previous fifteen years. When, if that Turkey's attempts to aid in the soft-balancing of Western powers bring it closer to these nations and other non-Western international bodies. It has not been demonstrated that Turkey is a revolutionary state seeking to fundamentally alter the liberal international order. Turkey would more likely choose the present liberal system if it were more likely to accurately reflect the current balance of power in the globe.

The study examined Turkey's foreign policy, taking a wide range of factors into consideration. Turkey is increasingly accused of adopting an Islamic foreign policy and endorsing radical Islam. Yet, the AKP leadership is not alone in this claim, Turkey's adoption of legitimate Turkish Islamic customs is made easier by Islamic internationalism, which presents Turkey as the global champion of Islam. However, Turkish Islamic customs offer a means of liberating oppressed Muslim communities and nations from extremist control. This allows Muslims to act with confidence in their Muslim identity while standing in opposition to Islamic radicals which in the end effects on relations with foreign countries and the decision-making in Turkey.

It is crucial to note that the authors of this paper choose not to support a biased line of thinking related to religion or Islam, instead advocating that to gain a better understanding of Islam's place in Turkish foreign policy, the emphasis should be moved from viewing Islam as an ideology that dictates foreign policy and that the AKP government either embraces or rejects, to view Islam as a vernacular practice with a variety of incompatible depictions and indicators in foreign policy.

Turkey's allies will have to work harder to have productive conversations with a larger spectrum of groups than just the conventional centrist and security elites. These groups will include the emerging Islamist and Turkish nationalist movements. These factors' foreign policy preferences are changing, thus early discussion may help guarantee more moderate approaches in the years to come. Lastly, realistic expectations about Turkey's place in the world should be maintained. It is possible that Turkey will become a more powerful regional force in terms of politics, the military, and trade. However, it faces geopolitical obstacles in the Middle East and Eurasia that go beyond national resources. An effective Turkish foreign policy will depend on having strong alliance partnerships, which will have their own set of limitations, especially in an era where security ties are becoming slenderer and more conditional. More generally, it seems doubtful that Turkey's long-standing issues with identity and its place in many international "systems" will ever be entirely resolved, nor is such a resolution required. Although some of the core components of the Kemalist tradition may disappear or change, Atatürk's legacy is probably going to have a significant impact on Turkey's political development and set it apart from other European nations.

Considering the Upcoming Decade

How Turkey's political leadership chooses to define the nation's position as a growing power will largely shape the country's foreign policy preferences during the next ten years. Turkey's self-perception of its new position will thus be a fundamental component of continuity in its foreign policy. Whether or not Turkey's political leadership is reorganized following the pivotal 2023 elections, Ankara's judgment of itself as a growing power in a multipolar world will always be a part of Turkey's future diplomacy. Over the past ten years, this identity has been construed in a way that has fostered unilateralism. Turkish officials wanted to show that their nation had developed the capacity to pursue an independent foreign policy, both to internal and external stakeholders. The conflicts that come with this kind of extreme unilateralism made formulating strategy much more difficult and jeopardized the country's established alliances, which were already vulnerable to several Middle East-related

instability. However, these conflicts also contributed significantly to the development of a domestic narrative about Turkey's unstoppable growth and the unfavorable responses of foreign powers seeking to limit and restrict Turkey's independence and activity in foreign affairs. Decoupling foreign policy from domestic political considerations is the first step. It will be necessary to strike a new balance between the demands of a more responsible and mature foreign policy and those of a democratic administration answerable to the people. This new knowledge ought to play a key role in curbing the inclinations of the ruling class to use foreign policy as a tool for achieving domestic objectives.

Given that the recently elected political leadership in Turkey held aims that were shared by prior administrations, the first ten years may be appropriately seen as an extension of the country's historical foreign policy orientation. One of the primary goals, for example, was to improve Turkey's relations with its transatlantic allies; specifically, EU where its membership is prioritized. Turkey endeavored to utilize its standing as a dependable, strategically important ally serving as a conduit between the West and Middle Eastern stakeholders on a regional level. During those years, Ankara served as a mediator in addition to engaging in cautious diplomacy to foster stronger ties with Syria which this research will be talking about it in middle east part. This research also talked about the start of second phase of the Turkish foreign policy headed by the AKP, which was first influenced by a reinterpretation of Turkey's identity and possible diplomatic position. Ahmet Davutoglu spearheaded this intellectual endeavor for a large portion of his tenure as foreign minister, and he had the support of then-prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in this difficult, aspirational, and ultimately futile undertaking. This shift was mostly motivated by ideology. Specifically, the country's foreign policy was to be redirected by Turkey's governing political elites to take into account the country's shifting domestic political environment. The fundamental idea behind this mode of thought was that Turkey has been compelled to follow the West in directions against its own religious interests ever since the country became a republic.

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