

**Understanding the Sources of Turkish Foreign Policy Change towards
the Middle East during the Justice and Development Party (AKP) era: An
Empirical Examination**

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Abbreviations

- **AKP** (Justice and Development Party)
- **CHP** (Republican People's Party)
- **DP** (Democratic Party)
- **EC** (European Commission)
- **EEC** (European Economic Community)
- **EU** (European Union)
- **FP** (Virtue Party)
- **GCC** (Gulf Cooperation Council)
- **Millî Görüş** (National View)
- **MP** (Motherland Party)
- **MNP** (National Order Party)
- **MUSIAD** (Independent Businessmen Association)
- **NATO** (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)
- **NDP** (National Development Party)
- **NSC** (National Security Council)
- **NSP** (National Salvation Party)
- **OIC** (Organization of Islamic Cooperation)
- **ORMER** (Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Sakarya University)
- **ORSAM** (Middle East Strategic Research Centre)
- **PKK** (Kurdish Workers' Party)
- **RP** (Welfare Party)
- **SDE** (Institute of Strategic Thinking)
- **SETA** (The Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research)
- **SP** (Felicity Party)
- **TESAM** (Centre For Turkey's Economic and Strategic Studies)
- **TPP** (True Path Party)
- **TURKSAM** (Turkish Centre for International Relations and Strategic Analysis)
- **TUSIAD** (Turkish Industrialist and Businessmen Association)
- **UNSC** (United Nations Security Council)
- **USAK** (International Strategic Research Organization).

Abstract

Since the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) victory and government in 2002, Turkey entered a new phase in its history and witnessed major changes in all social, economic, and political aspects. Turkish foreign policy went through huge transformations and the new AKP government was able to revolutionise Turkey's international position. In particular, relations with Middle Eastern countries have tremendously improved and Turkish interests and role have been growing ever since.

This thesis investigates the sources of change in Turkish foreign policy since 2002 towards the Middle East, focusing on the role of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) as a ruling party in particular on the changes it went through in the first ten years from 2002 to early 2012. The significant changes in Turkish foreign policy appeared under the AKP government became one of the most debated issues in this field and created a puzzle that many scholars attempted to explain. Therefore, the thesis engages in recent debates between the different scholars and analysts in the literature and argues that there is a need for a more inclusive approach that can recognize the complex and multilateral nature of the Turkish case. The aim is to assess and evaluate the plausibility of the available competing explanations in the literature in explaining such foreign policy outcomes.

Therefore, the thesis borrows and builds on the works of Alexander George & Andrew Bennet (2005), and Derek Beach & Rasmus Pedersen (2013) by adopting the Process Tracing Methodology, which helps to facilitate a better critical analysis and systematic evaluation of the selected explanations. The results of this thesis demonstrate that single factor based explanations actually drive researchers away from achieving a comprehensive explanation and only help provide a partial picture. Therefore, the best way to go forward is by adopting a much more inclusive and multiple factors based approach recognising the important opportunity that foreign policy theories offer in looking at the Turkish case from different perspectives. The results of this thesis suggest that the best way for understanding Turkish foreign policy change is by recognizing the multiple roles of domestic and international economic, political,

and ideational sources, as well as the role of policy makers, particularly that of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ahmet Davutoglu.

The contribution of this thesis lies within its analysis bringing the wide range of explanations in the literature together, exploring and summarizing the vast number of data in a more simplified manner, and examining the value and plausibility of the competing explanation to try and arrive at the most comprehensive explanation, all under one piece of work. Therefore, this thesis establishes a useful foundation for researchers to adopt and take forward in future studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1. Background of the study

The aim of this thesis is to examine the main causes behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 under the Justice and Development Party government. The thesis main research question is; what are the main sources behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East under the rule of the AKP government since 2002? There have been several attempts by many scholars and analysts to answer such question who offered a number of different and competing explanations. The existence of multiple competing explanations represents the gap in the literature that this thesis aims to fill. Therefore, in answering the main research question, the researcher will offer an assessment that can help identify which of the multiple competing explanations offered in the literature in explaining Turkish foreign policy change and transformation represent the most plausible and comprehensive answer. The existence of multiple explanations in the literature that need to be closely assessed and examined in order to identify the most valuable one, highly contribute to the necessity of this thesis. Therefore, the thesis will offer an analysis of the literature on Turkish foreign policy, testing the plausibility of the wide range of theoretical hypotheses offered. This will be carried out through the use of Process Tracing methodology, which enables the researcher to evaluate and assess the value and validity of the competing explanations through specific examination tools and tests. Furthermore, the

thesis goal is to identify the most comprehensive explanation in the literature so far and to establish a foundation for future researchers to build on and develop. On the other hand, it is important to clarify that the thesis does not aim to establish and represent a new explanation as opposed to the already existing ones. Instead, its main goal is to assess and evaluate the significance of the current competing theoretical explanations in an attempt to arrive at the most comprehensive one.

Turkish politics and foreign policy have witnessed critical changes over time facing a number of challenges as well as opportunities through history. Since the creation of the Turkish republic by Kemal Ataturk in 1923, Turkey substantially moved away from its previous Ottoman lands. The new Turkish leader was concerned with building the new republic and its national identity¹. The aim was to build a Western-oriented identity that would be closer to Europe and the West in general than it is to the East. In foreign policy terms, Ataturk adopted a very Western-oriented foreign policy and paid very little attention to its Arab and Middle Eastern neighbours². The new Kemalist establishment and elites in Turkey became the most powerful and exclusivist foreign policy makers for a long time. Turkey went through a number of coups and domestic instabilities as well as increasing regional conflicts. Turkish foreign policy was mainly based on military security and hard power approach leading to a more intense region³. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold

¹ Dov Waxman, "Islam and Turkish National Identity: A Reappraisal," *The Turkish Year Book of International Relations* 30, no. 1, (2000): 1-22.

² Oguz Unal, *Turkiye'de Democrasinin Dogusu, Tek parti Yonetiminden Cok Partili Rejime Gecis Sureci, (The Emergence of Democracy in Turkey, the Transformation Process from One Party to Multi-Party Regime)*. (Istanbul, Milliyet Yayin A.S., 1994), 117. Cited in Hakan Yilmaz, "Democratization from Above in Response to the International Context," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 17 (1997): 1-38.

³ Kemal Kiripci, "Turkey's Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times," *Institute for Security Studies*, no. 92 (2006): 11.

War, Turkey had to adapt to a changing new international system. Since then, a number of scholars and researchers paid attention and illustrated that Turkey's foreign policy witnessed immense changes⁴. Turkey had to face the challenge of dealing and coping with the new multi-polar international system after a long bi-polar system. Such change in the international system gave Turkey the opportunity to expand its role, while maintaining "coercive power"⁵. However, Turkey faced very tough challenges after the Cold War, such as the ethno-national conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus as well as an increase of the Kurdish problem. As a result, Turkey reassessed its international position and was described as a state undertaking "new activism"⁶. Turkey had to engage in a much more active foreign policy due to the consequences of this new international system transformation.

Therefore, Turkey's regional position became much more positive and showed some proactive policies. This was mainly evident since the 1990 Gulf War showing some signs of interest in the Middle East towards the end of 1990s⁷. Another crucial event that had a significant impact on Turkish foreign policy and position was the tragic 1999 Izmit earthquake⁸. Turkey witnessed a strong level earthquake that resulted in major loss of lives and high casualties. This incident represented a black mark in the history of Turkey and affected the

⁴ See, Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari., eds., *Turkey's New World – Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy* (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000); Sule Kut, "The Contours of Turkish Foreign Policy in the 1990s," In *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power*, eds., Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

⁵ Ziya Onis, "Turkey and the Middle East after September 11: The Importance of the EU Dimension", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 2, no. 4 (2003): 84.

⁶ Sabri Sayari, "Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era: The challenges of multi-regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no.1 (2000): 169-182.

⁷ Sharon Otterman, "IRAQ: U.S.-Turkey Relations", *Council on Foreign Relations*, (March 21, 2003), accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-us-turkey-relations/p7795>.

⁸ BBC, News, "Turkey hit by huge earthquake," August 17, 1999, accessed January 12, 2016, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/17/newsid_2534000/2534245.stm.

life of many of its citizens. Turkey received aid and support from many countries. Greece a neighbour with whom it had experienced major historical conflicts and poor relations, was one of the first countries to offer aid and support⁹. Turkey was highly appreciative of Greece's position in this event. On the other hand, during the same summer, only a month later, Athens was also hit by a powerful earthquake that was one of the most costly and devastating events in the history of Greece¹⁰. This time Turkey was one of the first to help and offered necessary assistance. The Turkish aid was one of the first to arrive and there was continues governmental communication and cooperation between the two. Such events have resulted in mutual sympathies and created an atmosphere of friendship. Therefore, at Helsinki Greece withdrew its long-standing opposition for Turkey's membership in the European Union¹¹. Moreover, Turkish-Greek earthquake diplomacy was taking place between the two, which highlights a growing concentration of both countries on mutual interests. These events and developing relations between Turkey and Greece influenced Turkey's foreign policy especially regarding its troubled neighbours. This is important for us to take into account because such events represented a major breakthrough in the relations between Turkey and Greece. Therefore, it can be argued that this represented another major turning point in the history of Turkish foreign policy.

Another major development in Turkish foreign policy approach was after the 9/11 attacks. The post 9/11 environment created more opportunities for

⁹ Dimitris Keridis, "Political Culture and Foreign Policy: Greek-Turkish relations in the era of European integration and Globalization," (NATO Fellowship Final Report, 1999), accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/97-99/keridis.pdf/>.

¹⁰ Mark Tran, The Guardian, "Death toll rises in Athens earthquake," September 8, 1999, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/sep/08/marktran>.

¹¹ Keridis, "Political Culture and Foreign Policy".

Turkey to play a positive role in the Middle East¹². This was demonstrated through Turkey's efforts in hosting the "Dialogue of Civilization" between the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Conference¹³. However, such transforming Turkish foreign policy and outlook was still not significant until the AKP came to power in 2002. The new AKP government showed both political and economic commitment in helping Turkey become a key global player. AKP officials, most notably Ahmet Davutoglu, believed that Turkey has a great history and geo-strategic location contributing to its significance and therefore should be an important political and economic international player¹⁴.

However, most of the academic and scholarly attention was given to Turkey after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003¹⁵. The Turkish parliament refused to give US troops access through Turkish lands in its war against Saddam's regime¹⁶. This was quite unexpected and raised many questions among academics. The period since 2002 marked a new phase in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey showed a much more assertive and proactive foreign policy compared to the past. AKP government managed to change the image of Turkey's traditional hard power foreign policy and pursued a soft power policy instead. Turkey improved its relations with its neighbouring Middle Eastern states and became heavily involved in Middle Eastern affairs. Economically, Turkey was able to develop its economic cooperation and integration with the

¹² Kanat, 224.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ahmet Davutoglu, *The Strategic Depth: Turkey's international position* (2001), illustrated that Turkey is a product of the Ottoman history and empire, and that Turkey needs to recognise its history and significant strategic location to help overcome conflicts in the region.

¹⁵ Kanat, "Understanding Changes in the Foreign Policy of Nations", 220.

¹⁶ Otterman, "IRAQ: U.S.-Turkey Relations".

Middle East. A high number of economic agreements and treaties were signed, and the list goes on.

Turkey growingly adopted a very pro-active international role and participated in many different international organizations. Turkey has been a member of NATO, United Nation's Security Council, the G20 Industrial Nations, Alliance of Civilizations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Economic Cooperation Organization, World Trade Organization, Black Sea Economic Cooperation Business Council, European Free Trade Association, Association of Caribbean States, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and many more¹⁷. It is also important to note that Turkey has negotiated accession to the European Union and is still fighting for it because the current Turkish government believes that Turkey is part of the European family¹⁸.

On the other hand, Turkey was able to play a crucial role in mediation efforts in different international conflicts and events. She was able to play as a crucial mediator between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, Syria and Israel, and between Iran and the U.S¹⁹. Turkey was also able to develop the so-called "zero problems with neighbours' policy"²⁰. This new approach by the AKP government has been crucial to its foreign policy for the last decade. Turkey has had different historical conflicts with its neighbours and was able to develop a policy that can allow them to overcome such conflicts.

¹⁷ Balkanalysis, *Turkey*, "International Organizations", accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.balkananalysis.com/turkey/international-organizations/>.

¹⁸ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey-EU relations," accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-the-european-union.en.mfa>.

¹⁹ The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, *Contemporary Turkey in the World - New role, new resources?*, 2012, accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.fiia.fi/fi/event/456/c/>.

²⁰ Richard Falk, "Turkey's Foreign Policy: Zero Problems with Neighbours Revisited," 2012, accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2012/02/09/turkeys-foreign-policy-zero-problems-with-neighbors-revisited/>.

Those conflicts were with Armenia, Cyprus, Caucasia, Kurds, and others. This foreign policy approach has been at the centre piece of Turkey's foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu's foreign policy agenda and was able to push Turkey forward in terms of its historical conflicts. Such important Turkish role makes Turkey a more interested actor to consider in many events and at the same time highlights its growing influence.

Another critical moment in Turkey's history was when relations with Israel reached its lowest point. In December 2008 and January 2009, Israel launched an offensive in the Gaza Strip killing and injuring many civilians²¹. As a result, the Turkish government reacted in an unprecedentedly way. Turkey announced its dismissal of mediation efforts between Israel and Syria²². This high tension between Turkey and Israel was not witnessed before. Turkey has had very good relations with Israel since 1948 and was able to develop relations in different levels of cooperation²³. However, the deterioration of relations went further after the Israeli attack on Gaza aid flotilla, which made Turkey very disappointed and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan demanded that Israel should be punished for its bloodshed²⁴.

Such Turkish foreign policy changes and the opening up to its Middle Eastern neighbours raised more interests in exploring the nature of Turkish foreign policy and its determinants for the last decade. Therefore, undertaking

²¹ BBC News, "Gaza crisis: key maps and timeline," January 18, 2009, accessed March 12, 2016, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7812290.stm.

²² Nicholas Kimbrell, "Turkey shelves mediation between Syria, Israel over Gaza," 2009, accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/Jan/01/Turkey-shelves-mediation-between-Syria-Israel-over-Gaza.ashx#axzz28EN9BMip>.

²³ Hasan Kosebalaban, "The crisis in Turkish-Israeli relations: What is its strategic significance?," XVII, no. 3, (2010), accessed March 13, 2016, <http://mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/crisis-turkish-israeli-relations-what-its-strategic-significance>.

²⁴ Ian Traynor, "Gaza flotilla raid draws furious response from Turkey's prime minister," 2010, accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/01/gaza-flotilla-raid-turkey-prime-minister-israel>.

such case for a PhD thesis will indeed enhance our experience and knowledge of such research topic and area of study.

In addition, the Turkish role in most recent and biggest issue in the Middle East and the Arab World known as the “Arab Spring” was another critical point in the history of Turkish foreign policy since 2011. During the Arab spring, the Turkish role became even more interesting because Turkey was able to re-adjust its foreign policy in order to deal with such situation. It is interesting because prior to the Arab revolutions, Turkey was able to build a more cooperative relation with many of the governments who recently face popular uprisings and were overthrown. This, at the beginning, created a significant challenge to the Turkish efforts with its Arab neighbours²⁵. However, the AKP government was able to clarify its position in support of people’s demands and urged for genuine reforms²⁶.

Turkey insisted that security, prosperity, and freedom were needed for all Arabs and was able to represent itself as a successful democratic model in the region²⁷. This indeed helps develop Turkey’s regional soft power and influence. On the other hand, some argue that Turkey was in fact reluctant at the beginning and dealt with different countries facing revolutions differently²⁸. For example, Turkey had a great amount of investments in both Libya and Syria and was supporting more peaceful reforms to avoid instability that could affect their interests heavily. Whereas, in Tunisia and Egypt Turkey had relatively low

²⁵ Adam Balcer, “Turkey as a Source of Inspiration for the Arab Spring: Opportunities and Challenges”, in *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean*, eds., Stephen Calleya and Monika Wohlfeld (Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, 2012), Ch 19.

²⁶ Ibrahim Kalin, “Turkey and the Arab Spring,” 2011, accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.mei.edu/content/turkey-and-arab-spring>.

²⁷ Balcer, Op cit.

²⁸ Ziya Onis, “Turkey and the Arab Spring: Between Ethics and Self Interest,” *Insight Turkey* 14, no.3 (2012): 45-63.

investment levels, and was more flexible in supporting the people's demands from the beginning²⁹. The Arab spring is a highly critical period of time for the Middle East and particularly will reshape the nature of the region in the coming future. The debate on Turkish role in the Arab spring is very interesting to consider in this thesis.

However, it is important to clarify that this research does not intend to cover the very latest developments in the Arab Spring due to a number of reasons. First of all, the initial goal of the thesis was to explain the "causes" of foreign policy changes that occurred during the AKP government since 2002. The researcher aims to analyse the first ten years of the AKP government from 2002-2010, where most foreign policy changes took place and highly covered in the literature. Secondly, due to the length and word limits for this PhD thesis highlighted in the university guidelines and regulations, it would be very difficult to include and fairly analyse the recent regional developments beyond 2012. In addition, currently, the events in the Middle East are very frequently changing and this could affect the research and keeping track of up to date data. Therefore, the Arab Spring and Turkish role in the Middle East needs a PhD on its own as many events and issues have emerged since 2012. The thesis however can be a good starting point for future studies to take this research further and investigate the most recent developments.

2. Understanding foreign policy analysis: a theoretical introduction

It is important to understand what is foreign policy and its main sources that derive states behaviour and relations. Before going into the main discussion

²⁹ Sebnem Gumuscu, "Turkey's reactions to the Arab spring," 2012, accessed March 22, 2016, <http://yalejournal.org/2012/05/turkeys-reactions-to-the-arab-spring/>.

chapters of this thesis, it is very useful to build a theoretical background that can help explore the different sources that shape states' foreign policy, which can give us useful insights to understanding the sources of Turkish foreign policy in this case that will be critically examined throughout this thesis. This will be re-visited in chapter nine in an attempt to explore the way in which different foreign policy theoretical readings help us understand the value of the different domestic, international, material, and ideational sources of foreign policy, and particularly their role in shaping Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East.

Foreign policy analysis is an important field of study that is also related to the field of international relations' (IR). Foreign policy analysis examines the strategies put forward by states in order to accomplish their foreign policy goals and objectives. A proper study of the different sources related to the construction of foreign policy instruments should pay attention to the way in which the preferences adopted by states influence their interaction with other units of the international political system.³⁰ The purpose of this section is to present an introduction of foreign policy analysis theory to help understand its development and main theoretical interpretations. The aim is to acknowledge the significance of the different sources that affect foreign policy making, and particularly that of Turkey, which will be reflected throughout this thesis in the coming chapters. The aim is to analyse the different sources of foreign policy, giving special attention to the external, domestic and ideational aspects that influence the decision-making process, considering the different theoretical schools and their interpretations of what shapes states' foreign policies and behaviours. There are several theories in this field of study, however the

³⁰ Valerie, Hudson. *Foreign policy analysis: classic and contemporary theory*. (Lanham: MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013): 43.

researcher will focus on few of the main and influential theories. This includes an analysis of some works in the literature on foreign policy analysis and international relations in order to build a clear picture.

There are a number of sources that inform the decision-making process in the field of foreign policy. The domestic sources of foreign policy may be regarded as the organisational structure composed of the different actors involved in the decision-making process. It has been argued that the different agencies that are involved in setting preferences in the field of foreign policy follow certain procedures in order to identify the relevant issues and propose possible options to be implemented by those in charge of making decisions.³¹ Decision makers are usually presented with a set of options already articulated by the multiple different agencies and actors involved in the field of foreign policy analysis.³² On the other hand, Foreign policy is also subject to significant external constraints. The changes that take place in the international political system are powerful sources in which states set the preferences that guide their interstate relations. Furthermore, important historical events may bring about a recalibration of the set of priorities that guide the scheme of foreign policy of any given state.³³ Moreover, Foreign policy is also subject to material and ideational factors. To begin with, the size of the territory and the level of economic development and technological advancement indicate the extent of the capabilities possessed by any given state in order to project its national interest.³⁴ At the same time, the ideational perspective is an important factor

³¹ Hudson, 61.

³² Hudson, 64.

³³ Hudson, 77.

³⁴ Hudson, 90.

that determines the manner in which national states build their foreign policy strategies.

One of the important aspects highlighted in the literature on foreign policy is the role of human agency as the most significant unit of analysis of foreign policy. This is because the relations that take place between states are suggested to be rooted in the behaviour displayed by the agents in charge of deploying foreign policy mechanisms. Hudson (2005) argued that this is of crucial importance in order to understand the patterns of change and continuity that unfold in the international political system.³⁵ Moreover, Schuett (2010) highlighted the importance of considering the human nature argument that originated in Thucydides work *The Peloponnesian war*. Schuett argued that the notion of human nature in international relations is not dead. He added that in fact post-classical-realism “rely on hidden assumptions about human nature”.³⁶ It is worthwhile to highlight that the decision-making process could be impacted by irrational behaviour as well that emerge from the emotional response that policy-makers have in relation to the variables that affect the strategic thinking related to the issue that is being discussed. For instance, during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, some of President John F. Kennedy’s advisers (such as General Curtis LeMay and General Maxwell Taylor) wanted to make a decisive response to the acts of provocation set in motion by the Soviet Union. This emotional response can be understood by the deep anti-Communist sentiment of the advisers.³⁷

³⁵ Valerie, Hudson. "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1.

³⁶ Robert, Schuett. *Political realism, Freud, and human nature in international relations: the resurrection of the realist man*. (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³⁷ Steve, Smith. Amelia, Hadfield. and Tim, Dunne. *Foreign policy: theories, actors, cases*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 201.

Gideon Rose (1998) highlighted four main theories of foreign policy. First, there is the Innenpolitik theory; which states that there is a link between the domestic and ideological environment and the way that foreign political mechanisms are enacted.³⁸ However, Rose maintains that Innenpolitik theorists do not explain why countries that have similar values behave in a different manner. For instance, the United States, which is a country that is ruled by a democratic system of government, has adopted a more militaristic attitude than Western European countries.³⁹

Second, the Offensive Realist perspective, built by scholars such as John Mearsheimer, suggests that national states maximise power in order to enhance their security within the context of the security dilemma under the anarchic condition of the international order. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that offensive realists do not explain in clear terms why certain countries respond to the security dilemma in an offensive way, whilst others choose not to react aggressively to the uncertainties that exist in the system of states.⁴⁰ Third, Rose highlights the defensive realist perspective, advocated by scholars such as Kenneth Waltz, who called for new thinking and revised theories as a result of the changing conditions of international politics especially after the end of the Cold War⁴¹. Waltz's theory suggests that whilst the system of states is anarchic, the incidence of the outbreak of violence is relatively rare. Most of the time, the state of anarchy encourages states to adopt moderate policies and restraint to ensure security. Rose stated, "In the defensive realist

³⁸ Gideon, Rose. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Pol. World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 145.

³⁹ Rose, 147.

⁴⁰ Rose, 149.

⁴¹ Kenneth, Waltz. "Structural Realism After the Cold War," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 5-41.

world rational states pursuing security can often be relaxed, bestirring themselves only to respond to external threats, which are rare”.⁴²

Fourth, Rose also highlighted the increase of a neoclassicist persuasion within the Realist tradition in the realm of foreign policy. This school of thought states that the ultimate aim of national states is not to enhance their security, but to ensure that the composition of the international order responds to their aims and preferences.⁴³ In order to do so, states will pursue comprehensive action geared towards recreating the international environment in their image. At the same time, in order to fully appreciate the implications of the neoclassicist approach there needs to be an examination of the historical circumstances that motivate the deployment of foreign policy mechanisms as well as the cultural elements that lead certain states to configure the regional/international environment in their own image.⁴⁴

The rationalist approach to the study of foreign policy is another significant element highlighted in the literature. The rationalist perspective that informs the decision-making process in the field of foreign policy is based on the idea that the state is the most important unit of analysis in order to understand the manner in which countries position themselves in the international political system.⁴⁵ The basic idea posited by the rationalist camp is that the state has certain geopolitical objectives that need to be maximised in order to preserve the national interest. In this context, there is a persistent link between the rationalist thinking on foreign policy analysis and the realist

⁴² Rose, 149.

⁴³ Rose, 152.

⁴⁴ Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 148.

⁴⁵ Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 151.

interpretation of interstate relations.⁴⁶ According to Mintz and DeRouen (2010), the rationalist model is shaped by the assumption that the foreign policy apparatus of a national state outlines certain preferences in accordance with the optimal value derived from their application.⁴⁷ The rationalist approach applied to the decision making process is enacted by identifying the specific issue to be resolved. There is also a process of information gathering on this issue that permits the policy-maker to make the necessary recommendations on the course of action to be taken.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is possible to argue that the decision-making process is described by the rationalist camp as a set of choices that need to be evaluated for the purposes of selecting the most optimal alternative in the context of the resources and the knowledge that is available on the issue that is being tackled.⁴⁹

The Realist school of international relations regards the state as the main unit of analysis of the international order. According to classical realists such as Morgenthau, the ultimate objective of national states is to ensure their own survival by adopting a self-help attitude in security matters.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Richard Ned Lebow (2007) argued that "Classical realists have holistic understandings of politics that stress the similarities, not the differences, between domestic and international politics, and the role of ethics and

⁴⁶ Jack, Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield," *International Organization Int. Org.* 48, no. 02 (1994): 279.

⁴⁷ Alex, Mintz. and Karl, DeRouen. *Understanding foreign policy decision making.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 69.

⁴⁸ Steven, Walker. Akan, Malici. and Mark, Schafer. *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders, and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations.* (London: Routledge, 2011): 11.

⁴⁹ Herbert, Simon. *Models of Man,* (New York, NY: John Wiley, 1957): 63.

⁵⁰ Hans, Morgenthau. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace.* (New York NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948): 78.

community in promoting stability in both domains”.⁵¹ Dunne and Schmidt (2005) were able to combine both classical and contemporary realism and presented their main pillars of thought. The authors presented three main ideas that all realists share: 1- Statism, which means that states are recognised to be the main actors in the international system; 2- Survival, that states main aim and concern is to always survive and will take necessary actions to ensure it; and 3- Self-help, which means that states will act independently due to the absence of a higher authority at the international level that would ensure the security of states.⁵² Similarly, Wohlforth (2008) in his work on “Realism and Foreign policy” illustrated the importance of self-interest behaviour in world politics and the importance of power-*centrism*. He argued, “Power is the fundamental feature of politics. Once past the hunter-gatherer stage, human affairs are always marked by great inequalities of power”.⁵³

In addition, Liberalism is another key and influential school of thought that represent important ideas in the field of international relations. Prominent Liberal scholars, such as Immanuel Kant, Michael Doyle, Francis Fukuyama, and Robert Keohane, highlight the importance of democracy, individual freedom, civil society, and free market economy⁵⁴. Furthermore, neo-liberalism or neo-liberal institutionalism contributed through the emphasis on the role of international institutions in shaping international relations. Unlike realism that

⁵¹ Richard, Lebow. (eds.) “Classical Realism” in T. Dunne, M. Kurki, and S. Smith. *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2007): 53.

⁵² Tim, Dunne. and Brian, Schmidt. (eds.) “Realism” in John, Baylis. and Steve, Smith. *The Globalization of World Politics*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵³ William, Wohlforth.(eds.) “Realism and Foreign Policy” in Steve, Smith. Amelia, Hadfield. and Tim, Dunne, *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 32.

⁵⁴ Scott, Burchill. “Liberalism” in Scott. Burchill et al. *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd edition (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

regards the state as the main actor in international politics, liberalism suggests that international institutions, such as the United Nations play an important role that cannot be ignored in affecting states' behaviour and relations⁵⁵. This includes the European Union as one of the most important international actors that tend to play a major role in European states' foreign policy and Turkish foreign policy as well, which will be discussed further in the following chapters. In addition, free trade is seen as an important element in international relations that helps develop cooperation between states. The Liberal theoretical interpretation highlights the role of economic interests and free trade in shaping states behaviours and encouraging more cooperation on common interests⁵⁶. Therefore, Liberalism is key to our understanding of states relations and is an influential theory that highlights important ideas in the literature that researchers need to take into account.

On the other hand, constructivism has been an influential theory that helped develop the literature on international relations and analysis of states' behaviour. Constructivism is a theory that provides key ideas in international relations theories. Hopf (1998) illustrated that constructivism is a challenger to the continuing dominance of international relations in the United States.⁵⁷ He argued that such theory provides an alternative understanding of international politics. Hopf added, "Constructivism offers alternative understandings of a number of the central themes in international relations theory, including: the meaning of anarchy and balance of power, the relationship between state

⁵⁵ Robert, Keohane. "Twenty Years of Institutional Liberalism," *International Relations* 26, No. 2, (2012): 125-138.

⁵⁶ Burchill, 63.

⁵⁷ Ted, Hopf. "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, No. 1. (1998): 171-200.

identity and interest, an elaboration of power, and the prospects for change in world politics".⁵⁸ All of which are necessary to the analysis of states' relations and foreign policy.

Alexander Wendt (1992) is one of the main influential thinkers in the constructivist school of thought. His work responded to the neo-realist interpretation that the anarchic international system is fixed, Wendt suggested that the international system can change with the change of shared knowledge, norms, and ideas. He stated that it is more about interaction that generate structure and that "structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process".⁵⁹ Constructivism aims to integrate the norms that regulate intrasocietal relations into the scheme of foreign policy.⁶⁰ For example, this can be seen in a distinctive manner in the case of Germany after the reunification of the country in 1990. The liberal social norms that regulated the social and political life of the Federal Republic of Germany were influential in creating a scheme of foreign policy centred around European and Atlanticist tenets. This state of affairs indicates the importance of ideational factors in the formulation of foreign policy strategies.⁶¹ Another example illustrated by Khong (2008) in his work on "Neoconservatism and the domestic sources of American foreign policy: the role of ideas in operation Iraqi freedom". Khong looked at the causes of the 2003 Iraq war and was able to use a constructivist analysis in his investigation. He argued that the neoconservative ideas under the Bush

⁵⁸ Hopf, 172.

⁵⁹ Alexander, Wendt. "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2. (1992): 394.

⁶⁰ Henning, Boekle. Volker, Rittberger. and Wolfgang, Wagner. (ed.) "Constructivist foreign policy theory" in Volker, Rittberger. *German Foreign Policy Since Unification-Theories and Case Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001): 106 and 121.

⁶¹ Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 25.

administration played an important role in the American decision to invade Iraq⁶². In addition, Schonberg (2007) argued that we should not only look at the relative power relationship between states, but also their ideational framework to be able to understand their foreign policy⁶³. Although the author used American foreign policy in his case study, it is still important as it represents a valid tool of analysis for any other state and particularly that of Turkey in this case study.

Theories analysed above are very helpful in this thesis as they enable the researcher to take into account the role of the different external and domestic, material and ideational sources. Understanding the sources of Turkish foreign policy transformation towards the Middle East through different theoretical viewpoints is very important in this case. Such theories help the researcher examine the role of a number of different foreign policy sources and pave way for an inclusive approach. Therefore, building a multilevel analysis of Turkish foreign policy is valuable, particularly in understanding the transformation of relations with its neighbouring Middle East.

3. Research Problem

The significant changes in Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government towards the Middle East became one of the most debated issues in this field. The literature demonstrated a high number of different competing explanations and hypotheses. There were increasing different interpretations attempting to explain such foreign policy changes. However, there was a noticeable

⁶² Yuen, Khong. (eds.) "Neoconservatism and the domestic sources of American foreign policy: the role of ideas in operation Iraqi freedom" in Steve, Smith, Amelia, Hadfield, and Tim, Dunne. *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁶³ Karl, Schonberg. "Ideology and Identity in Constructivist Foreign Policy Analysis". The proceedings of the Sixth Pan-European Conference, Turin, Italy, 12-15 September 2007. (St. Lawrence University Canton: New York, 2007): 2-36.

disagreement over what caused such changes. Some scholars saw that as a turn away from the West (shift of axis) as a result of AKP's Islamist ideology and preference of developing closer ties with the Middle East. Others regarded this change as an AKP attempt to revive the Ottoman past and is pursuing a neo-Ottoman foreign policy. Others gave more attention to the role of economic and security interests. The European Union was another major element of this debate and a number of scholars have agreed to the important influencing role of the EU over Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, the problem is that the literature has demonstrated a large number of different and conflicting hypotheses explaining the causes of this Turkish foreign policy change. There is a major lack of consensus and an intense debate over the reasons behind this foreign policy change. The existence of such multiple explanations can lead observers to different directions away from arriving at a comprehensive answer. This spells out the current gap in the literature and adds to the justification of the researcher's choice of this research topic.

This research problem highly motivates the rise of a number of questions that need to be addressed in this thesis. First of all, the initial questions that come to researchers' mind are; 1- what are the real sources behind the change of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East that was clearly taking place since 2002? 2-Why is Turkey promoting a pro-active foreign policy approach towards the Middle East, despite Turkey's long history of disengagement? 3- Is Turkey really moving itself away from its traditional European and the Western allies? 4- Has foreign policy change really been influenced by the rise of "Islamism", "neo-Ottomanism" in Turkish foreign policy, as many have argued? 5- What is the most comprehensive explanation provided in the literature so

far? And 6- How do we analyse this debate and assess the value of the competing explanations in the literature? These are the initial questions of the research and ones that need to be explored throughout this thesis, which were also highlighted by some scholars in this field. Secondly, another critical question to consider in this study would be; why are there a high number of conflicting theoretical explanations in the literature? The fact that different scholars and analysts have arrived at different conclusions highly contributes to the puzzle. This in return raises another question to whether if single factor explanations can really say much? The Turkish case study is a highly complex one due to its geo-strategic location, great history, and complex identity. Moreover, another important question that needs to be addressed here is to what extent has the different regional and international events played a role in Turkish foreign policy change? Or was it a change from within? An analysis of the role of both external and domestic factors need to be looked at as well as measuring the extent to which both might have affected each other. These critical questions along with many others highlight the significance of developing a more critical approach that can discuss a wide range of factors and assess their role behind Turkish foreign policy change.

In addition to the noticeable descriptive works in the literature⁶⁴, several scholars were not able to investigate all possible variables and factors that could give better understanding of the Turkish foreign policy regarding the Middle East. Instead, they were only investigating around one or two variables at a time. Therefore, this motivates this thesis further to undertake a multidimensional research approach of investigation.

⁶⁴ Kanat, p. 220.

4. Research Design

This thesis aims at investigating the sources of change in Turkish foreign policy since 2002. It focuses on the role of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) as a ruling party and the changes that came about since the party took power in the first ten years from 2002 to early 2012. The reason for choosing to focus on the period between those two dates is because 2002 is the year that the AKP won its first elections and took government. Since then Turkish foreign policy witnessed immense foreign policy changes particularly during the first two terms of AKP government. The choice to stop at 2012 is due to the recent regional developments led by the Arab Spring that entered Turkey into new foreign policy environments, which does not link directly to the thesis's initial research question. Therefore, as mentioned above, Turkish foreign policy since the eruption and development of the Arab Spring deserves further studies, in particular an analysis of whether or not there is a "continuation" or "discontinuation" of AKP foreign policy directions.

What this thesis aims to find out is the possible necessary and sufficient causes of change in Turkey's relations with the Middle East and its growing role. Furthermore, the thesis aims to assess and evaluate the plausibility and credibility of the available explanations in the literature in explaining such foreign policy outcomes. This will be done through the use of the Process Tracing methodology, which will be analysed in greater details below. A major contribution of this study is that the methodological tool helps facilitate a better critical analysis and examination of available hypotheses. The aim is to offer the most plausible and comprehensive explanation that can help us understand this particular case better. One of the major advantages of using Process

Tracing in this situation is that it helps researchers to establish a solid ground that would allow them to go forward in future studies. Overall, the thesis aims to analyse and bring the wide range of explanations in the literature together, explore and summarize the vast number of data in an understandable manner, and examine their value and plausibility, all under one piece of work.

The results of this thesis will demonstrate that relying on a single based explanation actually further the gap in the literature and that the only way to go forward is by adopting a much more inclusive and multiple factors approach. Furthermore, due to the complexity of the Turkish case, one must “cast the net wider” to try and achieve a comprehensive explanation. Furthermore, the results will suggest that each of the explanations chosen in this study do have some explanatory value as they contribute to providing partial explanation each on its own. In addition, the results of this thesis contribute to the argument that Turkish foreign policy change took place as a result of multiple economic and political international, domestic, and individual factors. The goal is to re-organize and rearrange the wide range of data and explanations in the literature in a more logical manner and develop a systematic evaluation assessing the explanatory value of the theoretical hypotheses provided in the literature that would allow researchers to build a better understanding of this case study.

5. Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis will be divided thematically into ten chapters. The researcher aims to structure the thesis in a manner that can simplify the complex nature of this research topic.

Chapter One is the introduction that will provide a background of the research and introduce the topic for the reader, while at the same time raise

critical research questions and demonstrate the findings of the research to the reader. This includes an illustration of the research problem and the possible ways that this thesis aims to solve it and eventually fill in the gap. In addition, this chapter aims to analyse the nature of foreign policy analysis and its main theoretical interpretations as well as in the field of international relations mainly building on the work of Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne, in their book *Foreign policy: theories, actors, cases* (2012), and Christopher Hill, in his book *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy* (2003). Introducing foreign policy analysis and its main theoretical interpretations is important to build an understanding of the way in which foreign policies are constructed and particularly that of Turkey's foreign policy during the AKP government. This includes considering important questions that are key to the research, such as what is foreign policy analysis? What are the sources of foreign policy? And what does foreign policy analysis theories tell us about understanding states' foreign policy making?

Chapter Two illustrates the research methodology applied in this thesis and the way in which the researcher is going to go about collecting and analysing available data. Furthermore, this chapter aims at introducing what is Process Tracing methodology and how it will be developed throughout the thesis. This includes critically analysing this methodology as well as assessing its strengths and analysing its limits.

Chapter Three is the literature review, which critically discusses the literature and its developments, paying attention to the most influential scholars in this field and the significance of their works. The aim is to illustrate the nature of the literature and explore the growing theoretical debate over the research

topic. Furthermore, it will identify the gap in the literature and the way in which this thesis aims to cover this gap and contribute to knowledge.

Chapter Four will illustrate the nature of Turkish Foreign Policy *prior* and *after* 2002 when the AKP government took control. The aim is to help the reader understand the difference in Turkish foreign policy before and after 2002 and what we mean by Turkish foreign policy change. The main question that this chapter aims to answer in order to know that it has actually changed. is: If Turkish foreign policy changed since 2002, what did it look like before that? Therefore, this chapter discusses the historical development of the Republic's foreign policy. Looking at main events i.e. WWII, The Cold War, and after the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the new world order, the Gulf War of 1991, September 11, and many others. The chapter also includes an analysis of the development of Islamism in Turkey, Islamist political parties, and their role in affecting foreign policy making. Furthermore, the chapter focuses on the formation of the AKP and its policy agendas as well as the way Turkish foreign policy operated since their victory in 2002 and the development of relations between Turkey and its Middle Eastern neighbours as well as its deepening involvement and role in regional issues providing sufficient examples.

Chapter Five critically analyses and examines the notion of "Islamism" and "Islamist ideology" as a cause behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002. The goal is to evaluate its plausibility in understanding Turkish foreign policy change. This includes an illustration of the different works supporting such explanation and exploring their significance.

Chapter Six will focus on and examine the so called "ideational" or "non-material" theoretical explanations that are based on the roles of Turkish identity

politics and the notion of neo-Ottomanism as causes behind such foreign policy change. The aim is to critically analyse those different arguments and how they might have played a role in changing the course of Turkish foreign policy.

Chapter Seven on the other hand will look at the “pragmatic” and “materialist” based explanations presented in the literature as causes behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East. The first examines the role of economic interests and the most influential scholars who supported such claim as the cause behind Turkish foreign policy. The second section focuses on the role of national security and security interests' explanations presented in the literature, particularly in dealing with the Kurdish issue and its effects on Turkish-Middle East relations most notably with Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

Chapter Eight will offer a critical analysis and examination of the role of the European Union as one of the most important external actor that affected Turkish politics and foreign policy for a long time. It examines the extent of which the EU played a role in changing the relations between Turkey and its Middle Eastern neighbours and whether it has been the main source of change or not. The issue of the EU will be given a whole chapter due to its high importance and the "very great attention" given to it by many scholars and analysts in the literature.

Chapter Nine aims to re-visit the foreign policy analysis section in chapter one in order to help assess how different foreign policy theoretical interpretations have helped advance our understanding of Turkish foreign policy and its recent developments. Chapter ten summarises the overall research test results and argument highlighting the necessity of applying a wider approach in this field of study while taking into account the different

foreign policy theories that help analyse the multiple sources of Turkish foreign policy in order to achieve a comprehensive explanation. This includes the importance of recognising the effective roles of international and domestic political, economic, and ideational sources as well as individual decision makers.

Chapter Ten is the concluding chapter that will summarize the findings and results of the thesis. This includes a demonstration of the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis and the difficulties that the researcher faced in conducting this work. The conclusion will also analyse the implications of this thesis and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Research Methodology

1. Research Strategy

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the research data collection methods and sources that it will use in the analysis of this case study. This will include the explanation and justification of the sources used. A discussion on the significance of this case study and researcher's justification of choice will bring the section to a close.

1.1. Choice of Sources

As the Turkish case is a widely discussed topic both academically, officially, and through media, it would be inaccurate to rely on a single data set. The use of mixed method data collection strategies is very common in social sciences as it allows researchers to make a "comprehensive empirical description of the subject being studied, with an emphasis on accumulating the information needed to understand the causes and consequences with a minimum of error"⁶⁵. Therefore, the methods of data collection will comprise a mixture of both primary and secondary sources. This will include the use of books, as will be included in the literature review chapter, written by prominent Turkish and international scholars, which gives the necessary academic foundation of the thesis. The books in this thesis were written by both Turkish and non-Turkish scholars, in both Turkish and English languages. Books in Turkish languages however are mostly used as secondary references cited in English written books and works by Turkish scholars and analysts. Books were mainly

⁶⁵ See William Axinn and Lisa Pearce, *Mixed method data collection strategies* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

collected from Exeter University libraries, electronic library and J-Store (e-books), and from different Turkish think tanks and institutions in Ankara both in digital/electronic and print copies.

Furthermore, Journal articles represent another significant side of this thesis' analysis as they help bring about the latest critical analyses and recent hot topics. There are a number of critical journals involved in Turkish politics and foreign policy such as the *Turkish Journal of Politics*, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, *Turkish Journal of International Relations*, *Middle East Policy Quarterly*, *Foreign Policy Journal*, and many more. Moreover, there are a large number of journal articles also published by different institutions, such as *The Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research* (SETA), *Institute of Strategic Thinking* (SDE), *International Strategic Research Organization* (USAK), *Turkish Centre for International Relations and Strategic Analysis* (TURKSAM), and *Centre For Turkey's Economic and Strategic Studies* (TESAM).

Another important sources for this thesis are data collected from the large number of Turkish and international newspapers and other news sources from the Internet. These include Hurriyet, Turkey Zaman, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, BBC, CNN, Aljazeera, Alarabiyah, and many more. Although newspapers can be sometimes bias and support certain agendas and political groups, either with the AKP government, or against it supporting opposition, they highly contribute to the value of data in this thesis.

Other Internet sources include archives; interviews (interview transcripts); speeches published on YouTube and other places (by Turkish leaders and important decision makers); government papers and documents

(published by their departments i.e. the official website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, official European Union, and European Council on Foreign Relations); and J Store which have been very helpful in giving access to many important academic works, archives and journal articles necessary for this study.

1.2. Interviews

Apart from secondary sources, important primary evidence is collected through the use of interviews. Using interviews is an important tool for collecting primary data from subjects who lay within the heart of this thesis's analysis⁶⁶. It is important to highlight here that interview data play a central role in the researcher's analysis and highly contribute to the analysis and particularly in the Process Tracing tests method of the different hypotheses and explanations included in this thesis⁶⁷. Interview data will help examine the value of the different explanations and assess their demanding standards to establish causation in this case study. The researcher conducted a number of semi-structured interviews in Turkey as well as Saudi Arabia. Interviewing officials from Saudi Arabia helps, to some extent, understand some views from the Middle Eastern side. The fact that the researcher is from Saudi Arabia, it is a good opportunity to analyse such official views from one of the most important countries in the Middle East as an example. The individuals interviewed from Saudi Arabia contribute to the thesis because they have long experiences in this field. They have also had the opportunity to directly deal with their Turkish

⁶⁶ See Nigel King and Christine Horrocks, *Interviews in qualitative research*, (Sage, 2010).

⁶⁷ Oisín Tansey, "Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-Probability Sampling." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 40, no.4 (2007): 765-772.

counterparts in a number of events and occasions and exploring their views on how they see Turkey's approach towards Saudi Arabia and the key elements of their relations. This helps the researcher to identify whether such interviews' data support or devalue some of the explanations examined in this thesis.

Furthermore, the great advantage for using interviews is that it gives more flexibility of questions and enables the researcher to go further and engage in a discussion. Interviews provide the opportunity to have a closer study to the language officials are using in their answers, where they are coming from, and the different terminology they use, which help draw important insights to the analysis⁶⁸.

Those interviews were conducted with Turkish and Saudi officials i.e. Professor Yasin Aktay (AK Party Deputy Chairman), Professor Mesut Ozcan (Chairman of the Foreign Ministry's Diplomacy Academy and advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs), Dr.Fayez Al-Shehri (President of Saudi-Turkish Parliamentary Friendship at Shoura Council of Saudi Arabia), and Prof. Yahya Mahmoud ibn Junaid (Secretary-General of King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh). On the other hand, academics and experts from Turkish and Saudi universities and think tanks are highly beneficial as they contribute to the critical analysis of this research away from diplomacy and formal answers. These experts also included, Professor Birol Akgun (Chairman of SDE 'Institute of Strategic Thinking'), Professor Ersel Aydinili (Professor of IR at Bilkent University and executive director of the Fulbright Commission), Dr. Saban Kardas (President of ORSAM 'Middle East Strategic Research Centre' and faculty member at the department of International Relations at TOBB

⁶⁸ Ibid, 1-25.

University of Economics and Technology in Ankara), Professor Murat Yesiltas (Director of Security Studies at SETA, a member of ORMER 'Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Sakarya University, and a faculty member in the department of International Relations at Sakarya University), Professor Selcuk Colakoglu (Vice President at USAK the 'International Strategic Research Organization' and the director of the USAK centre for Asia-Pacific Studies), Professor Suheyl Sapan (Professor of history specialized in Ottoman and Turkish modern history, at the department of history in King Saudi University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia), and others.

The above interviewees were chosen after investigating the most suitable individuals who can contribute to the analysis of this thesis and research topic. Some officials were chosen due to their direct involvement and long experience with the Turkish government's foreign policy including individuals who are senior advisors in the Turkish ministry of foreign affairs and other government institutions. However, most of the interviewees are academics and experts specialized in Turkish foreign policy studies and international relations. They were heads of key think tanks and research institutions and organisations. The purpose of choosing such experts is that they contribute to a large extent to the evaluation of the competing explanations this study focus on and investigate. They add to important critical perspectives away from formal and diplomatic answers that are usually given by government officials. The questions and discussion in those interviews are mainly based on interviewees views and position towards the current theoretical debates in the literature and which of those they believe is more useful, as well as the best way to go forward to achieving a comprehensive explanation to understanding

the causes of Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 under the AKP government.

The choice of using semi-structured interviews lies within the advantage that interview style allows more flexibility for both the interviewee and the researcher to elaborate further on the topics and questions covered in this thesis⁶⁹. Moreover, a semi-structured interview helps ensure that participants do not go out of line and drift away from the initial topic⁷⁰. The questions were mainly prepared beforehand, but due to the nature of this topic other smaller questions came up from interactions during interviews. Interviews were usually asked to elaborate further in order to fully understand their positions. The questions were set up in the most appropriate style suitable for this research and its methodology (Process Tracing). For example, interviewees were asked for their reply and position towards certain theoretical explanations and debate in the literature, using specific case studies and examples. This significantly contributes to the assessment and evaluation process in the thesis.

In addition, interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the interviewees and full understanding of the nature of the interview. They were notified that they have the right to stop the interview and withdraw at any time. Audio recording helped keeping a complete accurate record of what each individual have said⁷¹. It also gave the researcher more freedom to listen and

⁶⁹ See Joanne Horton, Richard Macve, and Geert Struyven, "Qualitative research: experiences in using semi-structured interviews," in *The real life guide to accounting research*, eds., Christopher Humphrey and Bill Lee (Elsevier Science, Amsterdam, 2004), 339-357.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See Paul Gill, Kate Stewart, E. Treasure, and B. Chadwick, "Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups," *British dental journal* 204, no. 6 (2008): 291-295.

respond without being busy taking notes, allowing better eye contact and communication with interviewees.

Before the interviews took place, the researcher explained, once again, the nature of the research and its aims to the interviewees. The reason this was done so that the interviewees can understand the nature of this research and the questions asked, which enables them to engage in a more suitable manner. The main interview topics discussed are central to the research analysis. Those topics include, the role of Turkish national identity and changes in the elite structures as domestic sources behind Turkish foreign policy change, Islamism and the development of Political Islam in Turkish politics and its influence over foreign policy making, the concept of neo-Ottomanism and the Ottoman revival by the AKP government, the role of national security and the Kurdish problem behind Turkish regional engagements and relations with bordering Middle Eastern states, the role of economic interests and the growing global competitive market driving Turkey to search for new regional economic opportunities, Turkish-EU relations and the membership process's influence on Turkish foreign Policy and relations with the Middle East, and the change in the balance of civil-military relations and democratization process.

The interviewees were asked for their views and assessments of such themes and their role as causes behind recent Turkish foreign policy change. They were also asked about their position towards the current theoretical debates, how such single based approach explanations have been useful so far, and whether they agree that there is a growing need for researchers to develop multilevel/multiple factors approaches in this field to try and arrive at more convincing explanations. The questions were set in a way to help the

evaluation of those themes and explanations in a way to support the Process Tracing methodology employed in this thesis.

The method of interview data analysis went through a process of coding, decoding, and categorization in order to apply them more accurately and within the relevant themes discussed in the chapters. First of all, the interview data were highlighted and coded distinctively (others might call it indexing or thematic coding)⁷². The codes and their related data were then divided into groups or sections. Some of them represented main topics, while others were listed under other topics. This paved way for the researcher to move from having a big list of codes into lists of categories, with related codes and divisions of categories. They were again revised a number of times and went through a process of modification. The final categories included were then labelled. This included analysing the connections between those categories. Finally, the researcher identified central concepts that reflect the meaning attached to the data. Overall, this enabled the researcher to interpret results and identify stronger meanings that are central to the research analysis.

It is important to highlight here that interview data will be applied in this thesis's chapters as necessary and appropriate depending on the theme of the chapters and choosing suitable interview data accordingly. The researcher does not intend to apply all interview data in each chapter or use statistical measurements. Instead, the researcher will apply interview data depending on topics and themes discussed in each of the coming chapters and data will be chosen depending on their relevance and contribution. Appropriate interview data will be applied depending on the interviewees' answers as answers may

⁷² See Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson, *Making sense of qualitative data: complementary research strategies* (Sage Publications, Inc, 1996).

vary. In other words, some interviewees did not give much emphasis and gave a very simple answer while other elaborated more and gave very important examples to be included in this thesis. The aim is not to assess the quantity; it is more about assessing the quality and value of each interview data to this research.

1.3. Justification for the Choice of Research Topic

Since the war on Iraq in 2003, much of the academic and media attention was given to Turkey. Many analysts and journalists expressed their surprise after Turkey's decision refusing to allow the American troops to use Turkish territories in their war against Saddam's regime. Turkey was famously known for its close alliance with the West and most notably the United States for a very long time. As a politics and international relations student from the Middle East, this topic became increasingly interesting. Through studying a couple of modules that looked at the Turkish Ottoman history and the politics of the modern Republic, the question that kept emerging was; why did Turkey improve its relations with the Middle East, despite its long history of disengagement?

The thesis therefore comes as a response to what have been represented in the literature. Although the literature has been influenced by a number of descriptive analyses⁷³, there have been a number of investigations made that aimed at explaining the sources of change in Turkey's foreign policy since the early 2000s. However, as mentioned above, different scholars and authors came to different conclusions and represented arguments that have even pointed at opposite directions some times. These are all beneficial and

⁷³ Kanat, 220.

misleading at the same time. It is beneficial to take into account the different possible explanations to such change in Turkey's foreign relations with the Arab world. However, it is misleading because it creates confusion to observers who seek a solid explanation. Such unclear picture in the literature has been the source of motivation to take further investigation that seeks to cover such gap in the literature and contribute to knowledge.

2. Process Tracing method of analysis

In order to better understand what we mean by Process Tracing and how it functions, it is important to explore its definition first. One of the most famous definitions by Collier (2011) define it as “the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator”⁷⁴. Process Tracing has been an important tool for both quantitative and qualitative analyses. There has been more attention given to it in recent studies than ever before. However, it has been argued that many scholars, who have claimed to be using Process Tracing, did not fully understand it and therefore were not able to rigorously apply it⁷⁵. However, it is important to understand that it is a method that allows us to review and evaluate causal claims. In other words, we can trace backwards the causal process that has produced the case's outcome. It allows us to unfold the case to be able to trace back the original cause.

⁷⁴ David Collier, “The Teacher: Understanding Process Tracing,” *Political Science and Politics* 44, no. 4. (2011): 823-30.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 823.

Process Tracing was derived from the field of Cognitive Psychology in America around the 1960s and 1970s⁷⁶. It was used in Psychology as a way of investigating intermediate steps in cognitive mental processes to try and understand the way in which humans make decisions. However, this was later used by Alexander L. George (1979) and appropriated Process Tracing as a way to explain the use of evidence from different case studies to make assumptions about historical explanation⁷⁷. Although Process Tracing was largely viewed as a way to explain individual decision-making, George was able to develop this method in his work to be used also for making inferences from both macro-level and structural explanations of different historical cases⁷⁸.

George and Bennet (2005) offered a very useful definition for Process Tracing and stated that it is the use of “histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case”⁷⁹. In the same volume, they later added “ the Process Tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable”⁸⁰. Furthermore, David Collier (2011) in his works *The Teacher: Understanding Process Tracing*, he stated “process tracing can make decisive contributions to

⁷⁶ Andrew Bennet and Jeffrey Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical roots to best practices,” *Simons Papers in Security and Development*, School for International Studies, Vancouver; Simon Fraser University, no. 21, (2012).

⁷⁷ Alexander George, “Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison,” in Paul Gordon Lauren (ed.), *Diplomatic History: New Approaches*, (New York: Free Press, 1979).

⁷⁸ Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 142.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 206.

diverse research objectives, including: (a) identifying novel political and social phenomena and systematically describing them; (b) evaluating prior explanatory hypotheses, discovering new hypotheses, and assessing these new causal claims; (c) gaining insight into causal mechanisms; and (d) providing an alternative means⁸¹. These are very influential definitions to this thesis because they help clarify the way the researcher can find and use available evidence and eventually trace back to the original cause or causes to the change of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East.

2.1. Why is Process Tracing Methodology necessary for this research?

The necessity of Process Tracing in this thesis lies in its ability to enable the researcher to test the different competing theoretical explanations and assess their evidences' sufficiency and necessity to establish causation that can explain Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002. This means that Process Tracing helps minimize confusion as a result of the different competing explanations offered in this case and helps identify the most plausible explanation that can better clarify our understanding.

Process Tracing raises the question of how "X" generate a sequence of conditions that come together one way or another to produce "Y"?⁸² Therefore, Process Tracing allows the researcher to validate the different theoretical hypotheses and explanations that attempted to explain the causes behind Turkish foreign policy change. Regarding this particular case study, there are a number of different and competing explanations to the research question and

⁸¹ Collier, 824.

⁸² George and Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development*; Kevin Ford, et al. "Process tracing methods: Contributions, problems, and neglected research questions," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 43, no.1, (1989): 75-117.

therefore Process Tracing will enable this research to narrow down the wide range of hypotheses offered in the literature to an eventually much clearer and simplified manner. Process Tracing is very distinct and has been a very growingly influential qualitative research method. However, it has not been used in this field of study and literature on Turkish foreign policy change, which further adds to this thesis's both originality and contribution.

Process Tracing also enables us to better understand the role of causal mechanisms that comes between the independent and dependent variables to make well-built inferences about how outcomes come about. Therefore, using Process Tracing in this thesis is necessary as it is the best tool that enables researchers to examine and evaluate the value of the different existing explanations presented in the literature. As this thesis aims to explain Turkish foreign policy outcome, Process Tracing develops a useful method for establishing causal mechanisms as well as testing existing ones, which empowers the researcher to arrive at the most plausible explanation so far.

2.2. Process Tracing literature review

The literature on Process Tracing has been increasingly influential and prominent, particularly in Political Science. This field of study has been developed rapidly over nearly half a century. There have been a number of influential thinkers in this literature who have had major influence to the development of Process Tracing method. However, I only intend to include thinkers who have applied this method to Political and Social Sciences. In 1979, Alexander L. George a Political Scientist in Stanford University was able develop the term Process Tracing as a way to explain historical explanations

through the use of evidence from within case studies in his book *Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison*⁸³. Alexander's work can be seen as one of the most influential Process tracing texts in social science. Moreover, Stephen Van Evera (1997) is another scholar worth mentioning who initially formulated four types of Process Tracing tests⁸⁴. Those tests include; *Straw in the Wind Test*; *Smoking Gun Test*; *Hoop test*; and *Doubly Decisive test*. These tests are developed for the purpose of being able to either take on board or eliminate different evidence collected to make it easier for researches to trace back the initial cause and how such tests affect other proposed theories in the field. The researcher will however go in more details with those tests in the coming sections. Stephen's work plays an important role in the development of Process Tracing in the literature, and represent a useful guide for researchers like myself.

Since then, the work on Process Tracing witnessed increasing recognition by different scholars. For example, Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett (2005)⁸⁵, from my research, I have found that this has been one of the main texts referred to when explaining Process tracing by many researchers. George and Bennett were able to explain ways to develop case study research that should generate results valuable for policy makers. Furthermore, they offered a comprehensive discussion of Process Tracing, highlighted the significance of within-case analysis, and emphasized on the concept of typological theories. The importance of this book lies in its comprehensive outline and development of Process Tracing.

⁸³ George, "Case Studies and Theory Development".

⁸⁴ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. (United States; Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁸⁵ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*.

What is more, there have been a number of researchers who wrote about this particular method of analysis. These include the works of Oisín Tansey (2007)⁸⁶, who focused on explaining the relationship between Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing. This work illustrated the importance of Elite interviewing as a way for collecting data and its benefits for Process Tracing. This is interesting for my thesis to consider as the researcher intends to interview a number of key figures in the Turkish government and influential academics. Therefore, such work enlightens me to using those interviews as critical evidence for better conclusions.

Moreover, there have been major developments in the work on Process Tracing. Scholars were able to link such method to the study of international politics and international relations. This development adds great influence to my thesis because it brings it closer to the field of Turkish foreign policy and highly contributes to my understanding of Process Tracing. Jeffery T. Checkel (2005) in his work *It's the Process Stupid! Process Tracing in the study of European and International Politics* was able to illustrate the importance of the use of Process Tracing⁸⁷. His work is influential because it focuses on the role of understanding causal mechanisms in international relations and particularly in cases of European and international politics. Such work presents a very useful guidance to understanding the role of Process Tracing. Jeffery used an example worth noting; he looked at the theory of democratic peace from the field of international relations and tried to show how such assumption was

⁸⁶ Tansey, Oisín, "Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for non-probability Sampling," *PS: political science & Politics* 40, no 4, (2007): 765-772.

⁸⁷ Checkel, Jeffrey T., "It's the Process Stupid! Process Tracing in the study of European and International Politics," *Centre for European Studies*, no.26, (2005), accessed March 24, 2016, http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-publications/workingpapers/working-papers2005/wp05_26.pdf.

reached through tracing causal mechanisms. Although Checkel stressed the importance of Process Tracing, he was able to criticize some aspects of this method. Such criticism contributes to our understanding of Process Tracing and its limits. Therefore, Checkel's work holds a great value to my thesis and particularly with providing very useful examples that helps me and other researchers in this field to use.

Furthermore, Jeffery T. Checkel and Andrew Bennet (2012) were able to produce another important piece of work titled *Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices*⁸⁸. I believe that this particular piece of work is both critical and central to the study of Process Tracing because it was able to successfully identify the philosophical foundations of Process Tracing and how researchers should carry it out. This is crucial because there has been some confusion over the way to apply process tracing. Therefore, this works present clear steps on how to employ Process Tracing as a way for researchers to avoid inferential errors. Moreover, the authors have included some useful examples for us to consider, such as the puzzle over the reason why "the Cold War ended without a shot being fired". Such engagement with cases in international politics motivates readers to engage and think critically about the advantages of using Process Tracing.

What's more, useful international relations examples used in the study of Process Tracing, can also be found in another work by Andrew Bennet (2010) "Process Tracing and Causal Inference" in *Rethinking Social inquiry: diverse tools, shared standards*⁸⁹. Bennet looked at three main important examples in

⁸⁸ Bennet and Checkel, "Process Tracing: From Philosophical roots".

⁸⁹ Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," In Henry E. Brady and David Collier, ed. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, 2nd edition, (Lanham, MD. Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 207–2019.

the field of international relations. These examples include, questioning why the Soviet Union did not involve militarily in the revolutions of Central Europe in 1989, compared to its military intervention in the case of Hungary in 1956; Why the United Kingdom and France did not use their force in dealing with the crisis of Fashoda in 1898; and why in the middle of World War One, Germany expanded her military activities regardless of her likelihood to be defeated. Bennet usefully investigated those examples in his chapter and engaged with the roles of Process Tracing. This is another influential piece of work to my thesis because although the examples presented here are not relevant to my case study, they are in fact parallel to my study and can be of useful guidance for me and other international relations scholars and researchers.

Scholars have divided process Tracing into three main variants in the literature. For example, Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen (2011) in *What Process Tracing is actually tracing? The three variants of Process Tracing methods and their uses and limitations* illustrated the importance for researchers to understand that PT should not be seen as a single method⁹⁰. Therefore, they divided PT into three main variants and explained each with in-depth details including when and how to use them. The three variants incorporate *theory building, theory testing, and explaining outcome*, which I will go into greater details in the following sections. This particular work is very critical to my thesis, as it is going to help direct my work to successfully conduct this method of analysis. This work is particularly useful because it provides very

⁹⁰ Beach, D. & Pedersen, R. B., "What is Process Tracing is actually tracing? The three variants of process tracing methods and their uses and limitations," Paper prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, The University of Aarhus, 1-4 September, 2011, accessed 24/ 03/ 2016, http://pure.au.dk/portal/files/40422940/APSA_paper_Beach_and_Pedersen_final.pdf.

important and useful graphs that help clarify this method in a simple way. What is more, it is very important for us as researchers to understand Process Tracing and its different tests that researchers need to go through when evaluating evidence. Without testing the plausibility of the data we collect, we cannot acknowledge their importance and validity to the case study we are investigating. Therefore, David Collier (2011) in his article *Understanding Process Tracing* highlighted the most important tests that Process Tracing uses-formerly introduced by Van Evera (1997)-to test its causal inferences⁹¹. These included *Straw in the Wind Test*, *Hoop test*, *smoking gun test*, and *doubly decisive test*. Collier was also able to present a useful example “the Silver Blaze” for us to take into account. This article is critical to my thesis because we can apply the tests offered by the author and follow its steps to try and reach a solid explanation.

On the other hand, there are some critics that were raised by some scholars regarding Process Tracing. Those critics mainly focused on two major problems: the “degree of freedom” problem and the “infinite regress” problem. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba (1994) in their work on *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* suggested that the great level of detail in Process Tracing could result in an Infinite regress of studying causes connecting any two links in the sequence of causal mechanisms⁹². Furthermore, other scholars like Andrew Bennet (2010) in his chapter “Process Tracing and Causal Inference” in *Rethinking Social inquiry: diverse tools, shared standards* also argued that when facing few cases

⁹¹ Collier, Op cit.

⁹² King, Keohane, and Verba., *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. (United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 1994), 86.

with great numbers of variables in qualitative research, the problem of degrees of freedom can arise⁹³.

Another possible setback looked at in the work of Andrew Bennet and Alexander L. George (1997) on *Process Tracing in Case Study Research* suggesting that there could be more than one hypothesized causal mechanism coherent with any particular set of Process Tracing evidence. They stated, “When this problem of indeterminacy arises, there is no absolute standard for excluding alternative hypotheses that may be spurious”⁹⁴. Therefore, avoiding such problems is important to be able to arrive to a plausible conclusion. The critics available in the literature on Process Tracing are very helpful because it helps us understand the possible obstacles that we could face in this type of analysis and therefore avoid them.

2.3. Putting Process Tracing into practice

Beach and Pedersen (2011, 2013) argued that there are three main types of Process Tracing that an investigator needs to recognize and adopt before analyzing the data. They include A) Theory-building Process Tracing, B) Theory-testing Process Tracing, and C) Explaining outcome Process Tracing⁹⁵. However, they all share the aim to study causal mechanisms.

A. Theory-building Process Tracing

⁹³ Bennet, “Process Tracing and Causal Inference”.

⁹⁴ Bennet and George, “Process Tracing in Case Study Research,” *MacArthur Foundation Workshop on Case Study Methods*, 1997, accessed 24/03/2016, <http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/kritzer/teaching/ps816/ProcessTracing.htm>.

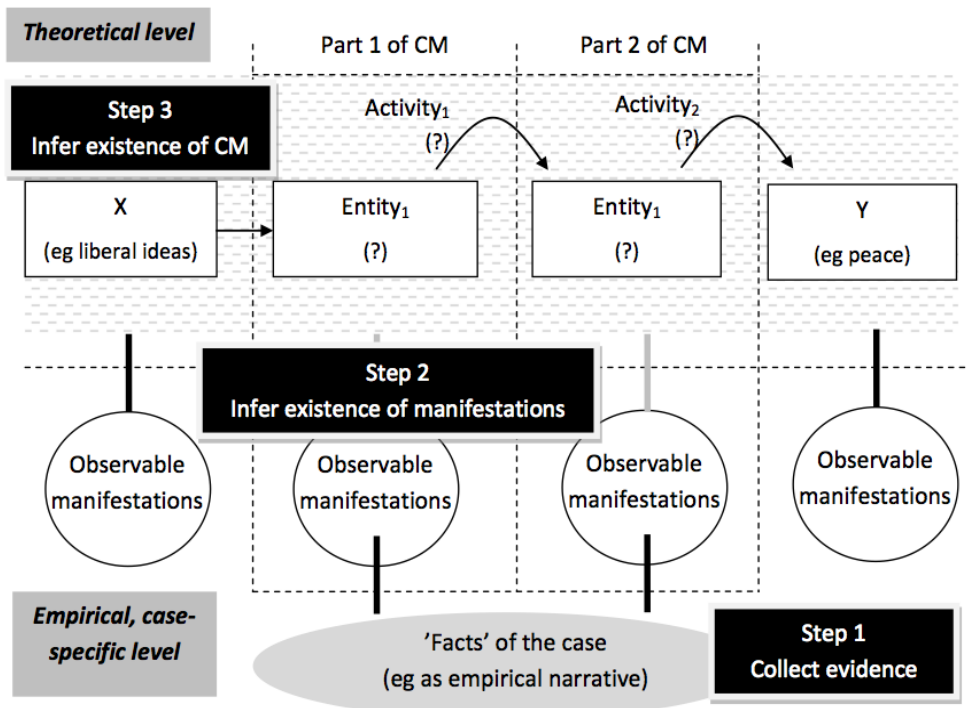
⁹⁵ Beach and Pedersen, “What is Process Tracing is actually tracing?,” and Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, (University of Michigan Press, 2013).

Theory-building Process Tracing is a method to build a theory that attempts to propose a valid explanation that can also be applicable to other multiple cases. Therefore, this method should be used in Process Tracing when the researcher is unsure of the possible mechanisms that links X to Y. Furthermore, this method is useful if there have been no attempts by previous researchers to explain, in a given case, the causes of the outcome. Doyle (1892) in his work *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* argued that it is a mistake that we theorize before we have data. It is common for researchers to build a theory first in their work and then find possible evidence and materials that support their hypothesis or theories⁹⁶. He added “Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts”⁹⁷. In Process Tracing, researchers are expected to look and search for evidence in a case that would potentially allow them to build a theory. This sounds very convincing because it will lead to a much more plausible theory at the end, but this would mean that a researcher would not know what to expect at the end of his investigation. This in other words would save the researcher from proposing a weak theory that does not have a valid explanation. The following diagram in figure 1 can give a good picture of the process when using theory building.

⁹⁶ Doyle, A. Conan, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (London: George Newnes, 1892).

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

Figure1. Theory-building Process Tracing⁹⁸



Please note (CM= Causal Mechanisms, bold lines = primary inferences, shaded lines = secondary inferences, area with shaded lines = what is being traced).

Step one of theory building Process Tracing involves the collection of evidence available for the specific case investigated. The researcher can then build a general sense of her/his hypothesis from observable manifestations. Although theory building is an inductive method, there is a deductive side to it. Researchers most likely look for inspiration from previous theoretical work that offers some kind of guidance. Step three; represent the second level of a researcher's building of inferences from causal mechanisms that he or she find on their own after observing manifestations represented in previous studies.

According to Beach, D. & Pedersen, R. B. (2011), theory- building Process Tracing, consists of materials that are used to put together a

⁹⁸ Beach and Pedersen. *Process-Tracing Methods*, 18.

hypothesized theory, infer from evidences that are found mirrors to the apparent implications of underlying causal mechanism⁹⁹. Therefore, we can say that theory-building Process Tracing allows researchers to present a theory that explains a given case and can also be of use beyond a single case.

This method will not be suitable for this research because the aim of this study is to evaluate and examine the already established explanations in the literature in an attempt to arrive at the most plausible one that can help solve this puzzle. Such Process Tracing method would be suitable for establishing new theories in explaining certain outcomes, not testing existing ones. Theory-building method is best used when researchers know (Y) the outcome and have not yet known (X) the cause and are also unaware of how X led to Y¹⁰⁰.

B. *Theory-testing Process Tracing*

On the other hand, theory-testing Process Tracing is a very influential method in recent Process Tracing case studies. This is because researchers who attempt to use Process Tracing are usually looking to test different theories in a case and examine their value them as a way to assess and provide explanation to the case study that would benefit the literature they are involved in. Theory testing is a deductive method, which means that it tests if proposed hypothesized causal mechanisms exist in a case. This method is used when there are previous theories presented to a case, but a researcher is uncertain whether there is a causal mechanism that links X and Y¹⁰¹.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 16.

¹⁰⁰ CDI, "Applying Process Tracing in Five Steps", *Centre for Developing Impact (CDI) Practice Paper Annex 10*, 2015, p. 2, accessed March 24, 2016, http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/5997/CDIPracticePaper_10_Annex.pdf;jsessionid=DCEC4E165BDD65569C79A01EDDE154AC?sequence=2.

¹⁰¹ Beach and Pedersen, "What is Process Tracing is actually tracing?," 7.

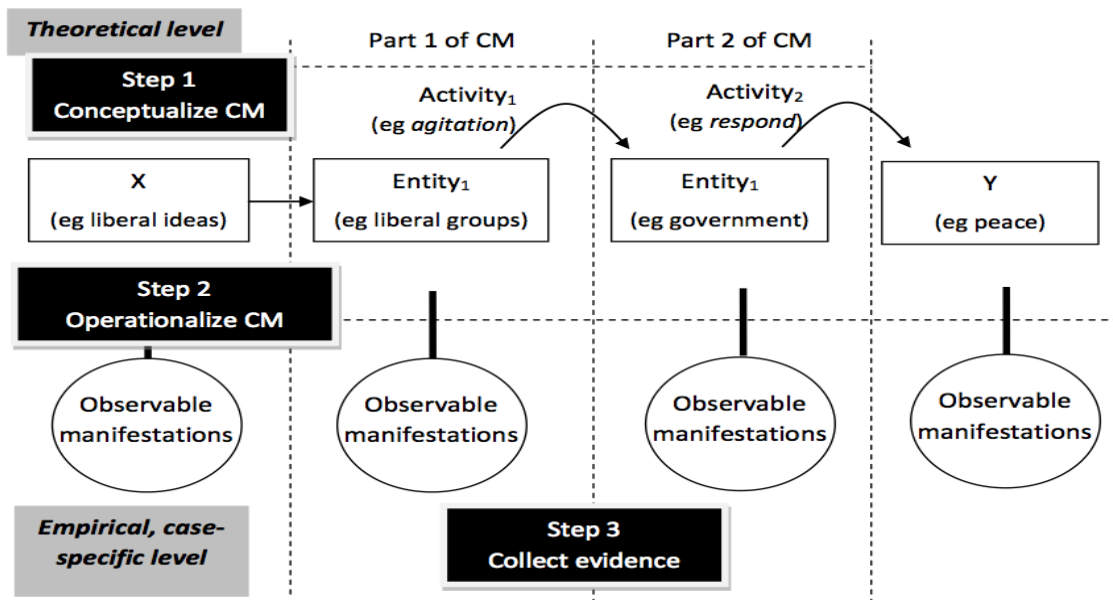
It is theory centric, which means that it can be of help to other case studies. It helps researchers eliminate and take on board the different variables proposed by previous studies as well as finding new alternative explanations. This variant of Process Tracing allows us to test the validity of previous theories made on the case study and have the opportunity to challenge them and produce new explanations that might not have been considered yet. One of the advantages of theory testing is that it allows us to use a mixed method. Mixed method analysis is good for researchers who use a mix of both case specific and general causal mechanisms to help explain the case. This is important because it makes a researcher's theory applicable for multiple cases and beyond a single case. This method implies a structured empirical test that identifies if there is a hypothesized causal mechanism exists in a case's evidence. The predicted manifestations are then checked whether they are present or not after gathering different empirical materials. Depending on the evidence gathered (strong or weak), a researcher can then infer that the hypothesized causal mechanism is present or not¹⁰².

The difference between theory building and testing here is that, in theory testing, theory comes first before the gathering of evidence. Researchers make their hypothesized theories and then an in depth investigation is carried out through the collection and analysis of empirical data and evidence to test whether the theories presented are actually valid. Theory-testing method is mainly used when researchers are aware of X (the cause) and know (Y) the outcome, but need to identify the causal link between them and explain why

¹⁰² Andrew Bennet, "The mother of all "isms": Organizing political science around causal mechanisms," in Ruth Groff, ed. *Revitalizing causality: realism about causality in philosophy and social science* (London: Routledge, 2008), 205-219.

and how X led to Y¹⁰³. Figure 2 below illustrates the steps that a researcher should take when using theory testing Process Tracing.

Figure 2. Theory-testing Process Tracing ¹⁰⁴



Note: The bold lines= the inferences made in theory-testing PT.

Step one involves the conceptualization of causal mechanisms between X and Y based on previous theories. This is done to test that if hypothesized causal mechanisms were present. Step two then involves the operationalization of the theorized causal mechanism. This means translating theoretical probabilities into case-specific predictions. Step three is completed through the collection of evidence to show if **a)** the hypothesized mechanism was present **b)** whether if it went as expected or there were only some parts of the mechanisms that were present.

C. Explaining Outcome Process Tracing

¹⁰³ CDI, "Applying Process Tracing in Five Steps," 2.

¹⁰⁴ Beach and Pedersen. "What is Process Tracing is actually tracing?," 10.

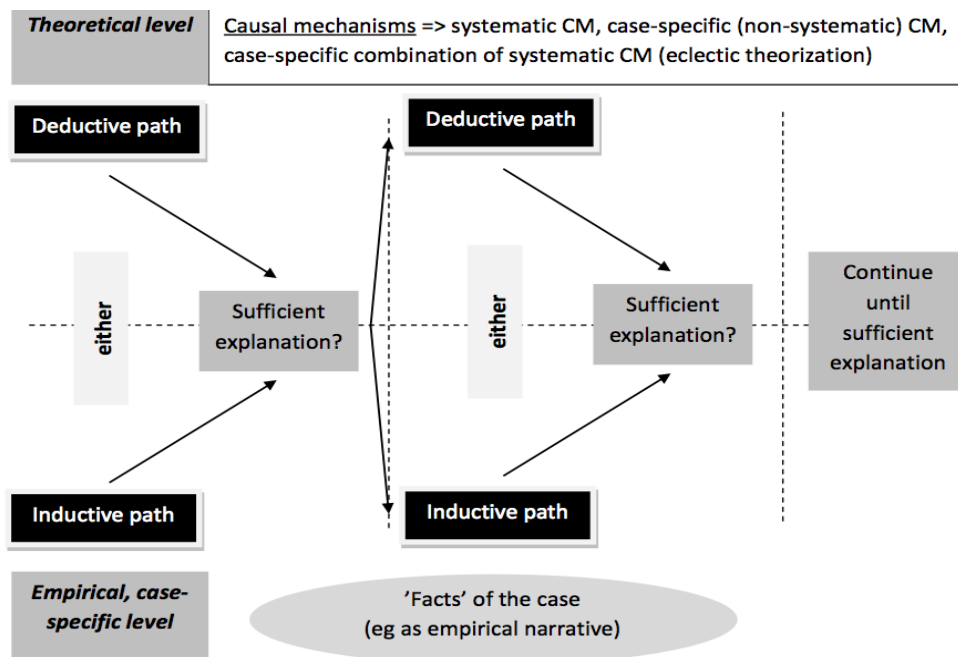
Explaining outcome Process Tracing is a method that aims to explain causes of a particular outcome¹⁰⁵. Unlike theory building and testing, explaining outcome is used mostly for case specific studies. Although explaining outcome is usually used in history studies, it is believed that a good explaining outcome Process Tracing will have, one way or another, theoretical aims that allows it to be useful for multiple cases outside the single case¹⁰⁶.

Explaining outcome is a method that aims at establishing causal mechanisms to try and build a plausible explanation of an outcome. Another factor that distinguishes this variant from the other two methods is that a researcher has the opportunity to choose either a deductive or inductive path. This means that the researcher can test the existing mechanisms from the literature and establish new mechanisms that may have not been looked at to build a better explanation. However, it is important to clarify here that the researcher is following a 'deductive' method where he aims to test the already existing hypotheses in the literature to better explain the outcome and does not attempt to establish a new explanation at this stage. The graph below is very useful for readers because it shows the steps that a researcher should go through when using explaining outcome Process Tracing.

¹⁰⁵ Gerring, John, "Single-Outcome Studies: A Methodological Primer," *International Sociology* 21, no. 5 (2006): 707-734.

¹⁰⁶ Beach and Pedersen. "What is Process Tracing is actually tracing?," 22.

Figure 3. Explaining Outcome Process Tracing¹⁰⁷



Explaining Outcome Process Tracing is the most suitable method of Process Tracing for this research case study. Unlike Theory-Building and Theory-Testing, Explaining Outcome is commonly used when Y (the outcome) is known and not sure what X (the cause) is and we are not confirmed what caused Y¹⁰⁸. In this case, we know the outcome (Turkish openness and foreign policy interests towards the Middle East and increasing role), but we are not sure yet about the causes of such outcome. This is because there have been a number of attempts to explain the causes that led to this outcome, but these were highly competitive suggesting different answers. Therefore, the thesis aims to examine those competing explanations and assess their plausibility in establishing a valid causal mechanism that effectively explains X and the link between X and Y in order to achieve a “minimally sufficient explanation”. What’s

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 25.

¹⁰⁸ CDI, “Applying Process Tracing in Five Steps,” 2.

more, this method allows the researcher to eliminate and take on board the different hypotheses in an attempt to arrive at the most comprehensive explanation. The Turkish foreign policy case study can be regarded as both case-specific or centric and also suitable for establishing causal mechanisms that can be useful for other cases.

Overall, the three variants presented by Beach and Pedersen are vital to Process Tracing method and provide useful guidance for researchers depending on the nature of the case they are focusing on. However, this is not all there is in Process Tracing. After locating which method is most suitable, the researcher will then need to test the different explanations and their evidences in his analysis. Testing evidence is necessary for this thesis because it minimizes the risk of having too many confusing data that may or may not be important to explain the outcome. Therefore, by testing the validity of the different explanations presented in the literature on Turkish foreign policy, the researcher will eventually reach a more solid conclusion. While using Process Tracing, the researcher will test the proposed explanations using a number of Process Tracing tests of inferences designed to examine the validity of those explanations. In other words, Process Tracing tests allows the researcher to identify the most convincing theoretical hypothesis in the literature that present a sufficient explanation of the causal mechanism that can also clearly explain link between X (independent variable) and Y (Dependant variable or outcome). Therefore, the following section will analyse in greater details the different tests that the researcher will use in this study.

2.3.1. Process Tracing Tests of Inferences

The main aim of Process Tracing is to evaluate evidence to be able to arrive at a valid explanation. Therefore, at the heart of Process Tracing lays the empirical tests presented by Stephen Van Evera (1997)¹⁰⁹. Evera presented four important tests that allow researchers to deduct and add evidence to reach a conclusion. Those tests consist of a *Straw in the Wind Test*, a *Hoop Test*, a *Smoking-Gun Test*, and a *Doubly Decisive Test*. They help researchers to confirm and eliminate the different theories that attempt to give answers to their cases. Figure 4 below shows the way in which the different tests are carried out.

Figure 4. Originally formulated by Stephen Van Evera (1997)¹¹⁰

Sufficient To Establish Causation (b)		
	No	Yes
Necessary to Establish Causation	Straw in the Wind	Smoking Gun
No	<i>Passing</i> affirms relevance of hypothesis but does not confirm it. <i>Failing</i> suggests hypothesis may not be relevant, but does not eliminate it.	<i>Passing</i> confirms hypothesis. <i>Failing</i> does not eliminate it.
Yes	Hoop	Doubly Decisive
and	<i>Passing</i> affirms relevance of hypothesis but does not confirm it. <i>Failing</i> eliminates it.	<i>Passing</i> confirms hypothesis eliminates others. <i>Failing</i> eliminates it

Bennet (2010) provided an interesting table that showed clearly the four different tests including their effects on other rival hypotheses. This table was

¹⁰⁹ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 31-32.

however built on categories formulated by Van Evera (1997) that is shown above. However, the choice of which test a researcher should use for a particular piece of evidence has been debated in this field¹¹¹. The decision of choosing a test depends mainly on the pieces of evidence collected. For example, if there is weak, both unnecessary and insufficient evidence for establishing causation, a researcher should use the *straw in the wind test*, while if there is a piece of evidence that is both necessary and sufficient a researcher should then be using the *doubly decisive test*. This will however be explained in greater details in the below sections.

Figure 5. Andrew Bennet (2010: 210)¹¹²

		SUFFICIENT FOR AFFIRMING CAUSAL INFERENCE	
		No	Yes
NECESSARY FOR AFFIRMING CAUSAL INFERENCE	No	1. Straw-in-the-Wind	3. Smoking-Gun
		a. Passing: Affirms relevance of hypothesis, but does not confirm it.	a. Passing: Confirms hypothesis.
		b. Failing: Hypothesis is not eliminated, but is slightly weakened.	b. Failing: Hypothesis is not eliminated, but is somewhat weakened.
		c. Implications for rival hypotheses: Passing <i>slightly</i> weakens them. Failing <i>slightly</i> strengthens them.	c. Implications for rival hypotheses: Passing <i>substantially</i> weakens them. Failing <i>somewhat</i> strengthens them.
	Yes	2. Hoop	4. Doubly Decisive
		a. Passing: Affirms relevance of hypothesis, but does not confirm it.	a. Passing: Confirms hypothesis and eliminates others.
b. Failing: Eliminates hypothesis.		b. Failing: Eliminates hypothesis.	
	c. Implications for rival hypotheses: Passing <i>somewhat</i> weakens them. Failing <i>somewhat</i> strengthens them.	c. Implications for rival hypotheses: Passing <i>eliminates</i> them. Failing <i>substantially</i> strengthens.	

¹¹¹ See Freedman, David A. *Statistical Models and Causal Inference: A Dialogue with the Social Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹¹² Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference", 207–2019.

1. **Straw in the Wind Test** involves evidences that are neither sufficient nor necessary to establish causation. This test represents evidence with the least demanding standard compared to other tests, where evidence is much weaker in explaining a certain case. Therefore, this type of test is used when there are weak explanations or ones that do not explain much on their own. If passed, however it can raise the validity of a given hypothesis, but at the same time, failing will raise considerable doubts about it. Passing this test affirms relevance, but does not confirm it. On the other hand, failing this test reduces the level of relevance to a given hypothesis, but at the same time, does not eliminate it. However, we have to acknowledge that passing a number of *Straw in the Wind* tests adds up to the importance or affirmative evidence¹¹³. As we can see from figure 5 in the table above, a hypothesis passing this test will only slightly weaken other rival explanations. Furthermore, failing this test will also only slightly strengthen other explanations.

2. **Hoop Test** includes evidence that is necessary, but not sufficient to establish causation. Evidence for this test set a more demanding standard compared to *Straw in the Wind*. Furthermore, the advantage here is that by failing this test a researcher can eliminate an explanation. In order for an explanation to remain under consideration, it must “*jump through the hoop*”. However, passing it does not by itself add much importance or confidence in that explanation. Passing this test affirms relevance of the hypothesis, but does not confirm it. The implication of passing this test will somewhat weakens rival explanations. On the other hand, if an explanation fails this test, it will somewhat strengthen other competing explanations. Therefore, this type of test is usually

¹¹³ Collier, “The Teacher: Understanding Process Tracing”, 826.

used to disqualify other rival explanations¹¹⁴. However, we can still draw strong evidence if we have multiple explanations passing this test¹¹⁵. This test is best used when we have evidence that set a more demanding standard compared to the evidence used in the straw in the wind test.

3. **Smoking-Gun Test** is best used when an explanation's evidence show to be sufficient but not necessary to establish causation. In other words, evidence that makes great sense, but is not necessary at all times. Smoking gun test involve evidence that are much more significant and set a more demanding standard than the ones used in both *Straw in the Wind* and *Hoop Tests*. As shown in figure 4 and 5, passing this test confirms a given hypothesis, while failing does not eliminate it, but is somewhat weakened. Therefore, this test is mostly used to confirm a hypothesis. Moreover, the implication of passing this test is that it will substantially weaken alternative ones, and if it fails, it will in fact somewhat strengthen rival explanations. Therefore, the smoking gun test plays a crucial role in qualitative research, if passed; it will confirm a given hypothesis that enables researchers to reach a strong conclusion.

4. **Doubly Decisive Test** tends to involve evidence that set the most demanding standard out of all. It involves evidences that are both necessary and sufficient. This type of test is very important because it allows researchers to confirm their hypotheses and totally eliminate others. On the other hand, if a hypothesis fails this test, it will be eliminated and will substantially strengthen rival ones. Stephen Van Evera (1997) used a useful example of a camera recorder in a bank, which makes it necessary and sufficient to show if the

¹¹⁴ Bennet and Checkel, "Process Tracing: From Philosophical roots", 19.

¹¹⁵ Mahoney, James, "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences", *Sociological Methods and Research* 41, no. 4 (2012) 7.

person in hand matches the features that are cached in the camera in a robbery situation¹¹⁶. Therefore, this type of test is the most important test because if a hypothesized theory passes this test, it will be confirmed. However, it is argued that passing a *Doubly Decisive Test* is highly difficult to achieve in qualitative research and particularly in social sciences¹¹⁷.

Overall, those four causal inferences tests have played an important role in the field of Process Tracing and have been increasingly used. In this thesis, the researcher will use those four tests depending on the evidence available to help reach a solid explanation. The choice of tests for the different explanations will be based on the value of their evidences and their demanding standards as illustrated above. It is important to remind the reader that one of the most important methods of analysis that this study will rely on in testing the validity and plausibility of existing explanations is interview data. As mentioned above, interviews are conducted with both professionals and experts as well as officials and academics highly experienced and involved in this field of study. This highly contributes to the researcher's assessment and ease's the process of using the above Process Tracing tests. Therefore, it is vital to highlight that it is not about the number of pieces of evidence the researcher can get, but it is in fact the value of the evidence found as well in relation to competing explanations.

Finally, the explanations selected in this thesis will be tested through Process Tracing tests of inferences. However, the strategy in Process Tracing is not to make each explanation go through all four tests each time, but instead select the right test for each explanation. The selection of tests will be based on the value and significance of evidence each explanation provide. In other

¹¹⁶ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 31-32.

¹¹⁷ Collier, "The Teacher: Understanding Process Tracing", 827.

words, the researcher must first analyse the significance of evidence, their demanding standards, and assess their necessity and sufficiency in establishing causation and affirming causal inference, as explained in figure 5. The researcher will examine the different data collected in order to see whether the causal process each explanation represents is in fact evident and explains the case study.

2.3.2. The 4 steps strategy in measuring and testing the value of explanations chosen in this study

It is important here to stress that through analysing the explanations discussed in each chapter, the researcher develops a four steps strategy in the examination of each explanation to complement and make easier the development of Process Tracing tests.

- 1- The first step will be an illustration and exploration of the nature of each explanation (containing several studies). This includes looking at the work of different scholars and their arguments that support such explanation and analyzing their evidence to identify their possible strengths. In other words, the aim of this step is to give a clear idea of the nature of each explanation, who the main scholars are, and based on what evidence they defended such arguments.
- 2- The second step is to examine available empirical data, archival documents, and others to be able to raise critical questions that such explanations might not have considered or looked at. Here the researcher will develop a critical engagement, where a number of questions are posed, which enables the researcher to identify possible limitations of those explanations.

- 3- The third step will analyse possible critics of those explanations and other opposite arguments that might contest them to highlight possible weaknesses. As the research topic engages with a highly debated literature, it would be crucial to identify and analyse the critics other studies have made against others. This will significantly enable the researcher to identify possible flaws and errors, which help determine their contributing value.
- 4- The fourth and final step will be applying interview data collected (as illustrated above). Interviews represent one of the central methods of data collection in this thesis, from the fieldwork of this study, which highly contribute to the value of theoretical assessment. Interview data will enable the researcher to further assess the sufficiency and necessity of the explanations under examination. This will be carried out through exploring interviewees' views and ideas towards such explanations and which they think is most plausible.

It is through these steps that the researcher will be able to assess the value of each explanation and both its necessity and sufficiency in establishing causation that can completely explain the causes of Turkish foreign policy change. This will then allow the researcher to appropriately locate the type of Process Tracing test of inferences, as illustrated above, for each of the explanations examined.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review

Since the AK Party (Justice and Development Party) took power in 2002, Turkey had witnessed an important turning point in its history and foreign policy. A country that has been characterised by its secular system and Western values, is now ruled by a party that is seen as an Islamic oriented one that does not fear to identify itself as an Islamic and Middle Eastern one. Since the refusal to allow US troops to use Turkish territories in its war against Iraq in 2003, the adoption of pro-active foreign policy towards the Middle East, with increasing mediation role, its leadership role and participation in international organisations and particularly in the Organisation of Islamic Conference, and its intense democratic efforts and improved relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours, more increasing attention was given to Turkish politics and foreign policy¹¹⁸. As a result, Turkish politics and foreign policy became a highly debated topic in this field¹¹⁹ and one that brought the attention of many Turkish and non-Turkish scholars and analysts. The debate brought up a large number of works that attempted to explain the causes of such foreign policy change in attempts to provide adequate explanations. Along with the increasing academic works, a number of questions were arising, such as “Who lost Turkey?”¹²⁰, “Is

¹¹⁸ Kilic Bugra Kanat, “Continuity of Change in Turkish Foreign Policy Under the JDP Government: The Cases of Bilateral Relations with Israel and Syria,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (2012): 230.

¹¹⁹ Kanat, “Understanding Changes in the Foreign Policy of Nations,” 219-220.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

Turkey Turning away from the West?”¹²¹, including questions over AKP’s hidden political agendas¹²².

Furthermore, the debate has, to an extent, divided the literature into two main theoretical debates, Ideational vs Pragmatic theoretical interpretations of Turkish foreign policy change. A number of scholars have highlighted this divide and illustrated the current debate in the literature¹²³. Other events that caught the attention of the researcher and motivated him for choosing this research topic, which also brought the attention of many more analysts and scholars, was after witnessing Turkey’s relations with Israel reach its lowest point. In December 2008 and January 2009, Israel launched an offensive in the Gaza Strip killing and injuring many civilians¹²⁴. As a result, the Turkish government reacted in an unprecedentedly way. Turkey announced its dismissal of mediation efforts between Israel and Syria¹²⁵. This high tension between Turkey and Israel was not witnessed before. Turkey has had very good relations with Israel since 1948 and was able to develop relations in different levels of cooperation¹²⁶. However, the deterioration of relations went further after the

¹²¹ Kilic Bugra Kanat, “AK Party’s Foreign Policy: Is Turkey Turning away from the West?,” *Insight Turkey* 12, no. 1 (2010): 205-225, Cited in Kanat, “Understanding changes in Foreign Policy of nations,” 220.

¹²² Kanat, “Understanding Changes in Foreign Policy of Nations,” 220.

¹²³ Examples of Scholars who highlighted those theoretical debates, see Ibrahim Kalin, “Turkish Foreign Policy between Ideology and Realpolitik,” *Middle East Institute*, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.mei.edu/transcripts/turkish-foreign-policy-between-ideology-and-realpolitik>. ; Bulent Aras Aylin Gorener, “National role Conceptions and Foreign Policy Orientation: The Ideational Bases of the Justice and Development Party’s Foreign Policy Activism in the Middle East,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 1 (2010): 73-92; and Nick Danforth, “Ideology and Pragmatism in Turkish Foreign Policy: From Ataturk to the AKP”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 7, no.3 (2008): 83-95.

¹²⁴ BBC News, “Gaza crisis: key maps and timeline,” January 8, 2009, accessed October 2, 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7812290.stm.

¹²⁵ Nicholas Kimbrell, “Turkey shelves mediation between Syria, Israel over Gaza,” January 1, 2009, accessed September 30, 2012, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/Jan/01/Turkey-shelves-mediation-between-Syria-Israel-over-Gaza.ashx#axzz28EN9BMip>.

¹²⁶ Hasan Kosebalaban, “The crisis in Turkish-Israeli relations: What is its strategic significance?,” accessed October 10, 2012, <http://mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/crisis-turkish-israeli-relations-what-its-strategic-significance>.

Israeli attack on Gaza aid flotilla, which made Turkey very disappointed and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan demanded that Israel should be punished for its bloodshed¹²⁷. Such deterioration in the Turkish-Israeli relations raised the interests of many in exploring transformations in Turkish foreign policy.

Moreover, Turkish foreign policy and role in the most recent and biggest issue in the Middle East and the Arab World known as the “Arab Spring” is another source of interest. During the Arab spring, the Turkish role was of great interest because Turkey was able to re-adjust its foreign policy to be able to deal with such situation. It is interesting because prior to the Arab revolutions, Turkey was able to build a more cooperative relation with many of the governments who recently faced popular uprisings. This created a challenge to the Turkish foreign policy approach of “Zero Problems with Neighbours” because all efforts made could go wasted. However, most interestingly, the AKP government was able to clarify its position in support of people’s demands and urged for genuine reforms¹²⁸. Turkey insisted that security, prosperity, and freedom are needed for all Arabs and was able to represent itself as a successful democratic model in the region¹²⁹. This indeed helps develop Turkey’s soft power and influence. On the other hand, some argued that Turkey was in fact reluctant at the beginning and dealt with different countries facing

¹²⁷ Ian Traynor, “Gaza flotilla raid draws furious response from Turkey’s prime minister,” accessed October 8, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/01/gaza-flotilla-raid-turkey-prime-minister-israel>.

¹²⁸ Ibrahim Kalin, “Turkey and the Arab Spring,” accessed October 4, 2012, <http://www.mei.edu/content/turkey-and-arab-spring>.

¹²⁹ Adam Balcer, “Turkey as a Source of Inspiration for the Arab Spring: Opportunities and Challenges,” in Stephen Calleya and Monika Wohlfeld, eds. *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean* (Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, 2012).

revolutions differently¹³⁰. For example, Turkey had a great amount of investments in both Libya and Syria and was supporting more peaceful reforms to avoid instability that could affect their interests heavily¹³¹. Whereas, in Tunisia and Egypt Turkey had relatively low investment levels, she was able to support people's demands from the start¹³². The Arab spring is a highly critical period of time for the Middle East and particularly will reshape the nature of the region in the coming future. However, the debate on Turkish role in the Arab spring is very interesting to consider in this thesis.

In addition, the Turkish previous Foreign Minister and current Prime Minister, Professor Ahmet Davutoglu is another source of interest to this thesis because he has been an important driving force to the development of Turkey's foreign policy. He has a strong presence and an interesting character, increasingly recognized as the "Architect of Turkish foreign policy" for the last decade¹³³. He published a number of articles and books in English and Turkish languages and was also able to translate them into many other languages. One of his most inspiring books was the *Strategic Depth, Turkey's international position*, (2000)¹³⁴. This book is particularly valuable to this thesis because it explains how Turkey has a multidimensional value in world politics due to its

¹³⁰ Ziya Onis, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: Between Ethics and Self Interest," *Insight Turkey* 14, no.3 (2012): 45-63; and Yasar Yakis, "Turkey after the Arab Spring: Policy Dilemmas," *Middle East Policy Council XXI*, no. 1 (2014), accessed March 24, 2016, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/turkey-after-arab-spring-policy-dilemmas>.

¹³¹ Sebnem Gumuscu, "Turkey's reactions to the Arab spring," *Yale Journal*, accessed October 8, 2012, <http://yalejournal.org/2012/05/turkeys-reactions-to-the-arab-spring/>.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Eduard Soler i Lecha, "The Conceptual Architecture of Turkish Foreign Policy: An update in light of regional turbulence," *CIDOB*, no. 18 (2011), accessed April 9, 2016 http://www.cidob.org/content/download/32360/522105/file/DOCUMENTOS_WEB_MEDITERRANEO_18.pdf; and MEE, "Davutoglu: architect of Turkish foreign policy to be new PM," *Middle East Eye*, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/davutoglu-architect-turkish-foreign-policy-be-new-pm-2142298220>.

¹³⁴ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position* (Kure Yayinlari, 2000).

historical depth and geo-strategic location, as will be explained further in bellow sections. Furthermore, Davutoglu gave several lectures and talks in many different international institutions and universities regarding his vision of the Turkish foreign policy and how he saw the future success of Turkey regionally and globally. Davutoglu was also able to redirect the Turkish foreign policy through the introduction of the so-called “Zero Problems with Neighbours” since he was appointed as Foreign Minister in 2009¹³⁵.

The AKP government was able to rethink about its neighbours and the way it can overcome the problems that were left by previous governments. As a result, Turkey was able to confront and solve many of her problems with some of her neighbours and was able to build new relations¹³⁶. One interesting talk that Davutoglu gave on Turkish foreign policy and relations with Europe, in the Institute of International and European Affairs on 11th of March 2010, was particularly useful. He was able to articulate his vision of the Turkish role in the international arena. This particular talk was in itself very motivating for me to try and understand the source of influence in Turkey’s foreign policy. He stated, “The new image of Turkey will be an image of soft power, culturally inclusive, economically prosperous, and security and military stability providing”¹³⁷. As a political scientist and a researcher, such critical statement by the foreign minister enables me to raise questions to why and how the AKP government is behaving in such a pro-active attitude in the Middle Eastern region after

¹³⁵ Richard Falk, “Zero problems with neighbors revisited,” accessed October 7, 2012, http://www.sundayszaman.com/sunday/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=270478.

¹³⁶ Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Policy of Zero Problems with Neighbours,” accessed October 4, 2012. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa>.

¹³⁷ Ahmet Davutoglu, “Turkish Foreign Policy,” accessed October 8, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwfoTCoSbE&playnext=1&list=PL5D09C8ABFCB5398D&feature=results_main.

Turkey's long history of disengagement? Therefore, such puzzle is the source of interest to this thesis as well as a justification of choosing this particular subject of analysis.

In the search for understanding about Turkish foreign policy, particularly its recent shift towards the Middle East, this thesis pulls from and builds on the work from two major sources of arenas; studies on Middle East Politics and its relations with Ottoman and post-Ottoman Turkey, and the literature on Turkish politics and foreign policy.

This thesis aims at investigating the reasons behind the recent shift of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East, knowing that this region was not of high interest to Turkey since its post-Ottoman formation. This literature review aims at identifying key authors and texts that focused on this particular case study and to discuss the relevant theoretical framework to this research question. Moreover, the literature review will engage with the ongoing debates and extract information that can help answer the research question. The materials are going to be organised thematically in order to simplify the concepts and ideas that are covered in this dissertation. The materials chosen in this review were selected through relevance and potential contribution to this thesis. Although they vary in terms of their contribution in different chapters, they are all relevant and important because together they help form an overall understanding of the study area. The thesis and literature review focus on six main themes; 1- Islamism and AKP as a party with Islamist roots; 2- the role of identity politics and change of elite structures as domestic sources; 3- the concept of neo-Ottomanism and its influence over AKP's foreign policy agenda; 4- the role of economic interests and AKP's project of building up a powerful

global economy; 5- the role of security concerns and national security interests particularly regarding the Kurdish problem and the PKK; and 6- the influence of external actors mainly the European Union, and the effects of Turkish-European integration process on Turkish foreign policy transformation.

First of all, in understanding the historical Turkish foreign policy lack of interest in the Middle East by Turkey prior to 2002, a number of important texts were useful that help build a historical background, which will be a central theme in the next chapter 3. An old, but influential book that looked at the history of the republic of Turkey in this literature was *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East* by Karl Kruger (1932)¹³⁸. The author explained how Turkey became a republic and the main role of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk. He was also able to illustrate how the new nationalism came to replace pan-Islamism. The author showed how Ataturk changed Turkey in its political, economic, educational, and cultural aspects. This book is useful as a way to introduce and give a background on which principles the new Turkish republic was formed. This enables us to understand the foundation of the Kemalist stance in Turkey and its level of influence. What is more, Philip Robins (1991) in his work *Turkey and the Middle East* illustrates some of the most important points to why Turkey was not involved as much in the Middle East since the end of the Ottoman Empire until early 1990s¹³⁹. Philip argued that there has been a “noticeable lack of scholarly research on Turkey”¹⁴⁰. The author argued that although there has been a lack of interest in the Middle East compared to Europe, the Middle East was still an important region for Turkey. He stated that it is unjustifiable that all

¹³⁸ Kruger, Karl, *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1932).

¹³⁹ Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 1.

Europeanists, Sovietologists and Arabists ignored such state. He added that even in Turkey itself, academics did not give much attention to such foreign policy direction, which reflects the Kemalist view of Turkey's foreign policy priorities. Philip's work aimed to counter the argument that Turkey's relations with the Middle East are not important and that Turkey played an important role in different events in the region such as the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf war as well as the issue of Kurds and the spread of Islamism.

Philip produced another book in 2003 known as *Turkish foreign policy since the Cold War: Suits and Uniforms*¹⁴¹. This book focuses on Turkey's foreign policy issues since the Cold War. The author looked at the way in which Turkish foreign policy is affected by the changing international system around it and included the domestic motivators of Turkish foreign policy. Although this book was produced in 2003, it tends to focus on Turkey during the 1990's. Alon Liel (2001) in his work *Turkey in the Middle East: Oil, Islam, and Politics* focused on Turkey's relations with the Middle East and particularly with Israel¹⁴². The author tends to also look at the economic side of the story in Turkey's relations with the Middle East. This book is concerned with Turkey's Middle Eastern policies during 1970-2000. Another book that can help identify the way in which Turkey's foreign policy was prior to the AKP government is *Turkish Foreign Policy: New Prospects* by Clement Dodd (1992)¹⁴³. Particularly the chapter by Andrew Mango *Turkish policy in the Middle East: Turning danger to profit* was able to give a clear picture on how Turkey regarded the region. He stated, "The

¹⁴¹ Philip Robins, *Turkish foreign policy since the Cold War: Suits and Uniforms* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers Ltd, 2003).

¹⁴² Alon Liel, *Turkey in the Middle East: Oil, Islam, and Politics* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

¹⁴³ Clement Dodd, eds., *Turkish Foreign Policy: New Prospects* (Huntingdon: Eothen, 1992).

founding fathers of the Turkish republic believed that, in its last phase, the Ottoman Empire has expended to no good purpose the human and material resources of Anatolia in the lands inhabited by the Arabs. They were determined not to repeat the mistake”¹⁴⁴. The chapter further illustrated how Turkey found it more important to develop relations with the West. Although this book is outdated, it allows us to understand the historical Turkish prospect of the Middle East.

A key text that contributes to this thesis is *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A changing Role in World Politics*, by Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydin (eds.) (2003). This piece of work is important because it offers an analysis of Turkey's foreign policy not only towards the Middle East, but also to other directions¹⁴⁵. This book offers very relevant chapters to this particular research area, such as “Turkey and the West” and “Turkey and its neighbours”. It explains the nature of Turkey's relations with the West and most importantly Europe, particularly regarding the EU membership. On the other hand, it also focuses on the regional political nature and how this had affected Turkey's involvement with its neighbours, particularly after 9/11. Therefore, this book will contribute to the analysis and understanding of Turkey's foreign policy, particularly in the 21st century. Furthermore, another book by Barry Rubin et al. (2002), *Turkey in World Politics: an emerging multiregional power*, also tend to cover different Turkish foreign policy issues in a number of chapters including the Middle East¹⁴⁶. The most relevant was “The future of Turkish policy toward

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 58.

¹⁴⁵ Tareq Ismael and Mustafa Aydin, eds., *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A Changing Role in World Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

¹⁴⁶ Barry Rubin, et al. *Turkey in world politics: an emerging multiregional power* (Bogazici University Foundation, 2002).

the Middle East” by Kemal Kirisci¹⁴⁷. The author argued that although historically the Middle East was not of high priority, Turkey played an indirect role in assisting Western efforts to deny the Middle East to the Soviet Union¹⁴⁸. The author also covered the security challenges that Turkey had to face with the Middle East, particularly with the Kurdish PKK issue.

Furthermore, Sedat Laciner (2001) in his work *From Kemalism to Ozalism, the Ideological Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy*, one of the contributing works to the historical Turkish foreign policy analysis in chapter 3, argued that there have been a number of ideological developments in Turkish foreign policy starting from Kemalist isolationism to Ozalist neo-Ottomanism¹⁴⁹. Laciner illustrated that Turkish foreign policy cannot be explained by only looking at Kemalism. He stated, “Turkish foreign policy has not demonstrated a unbroken continuity and that drastic changes in Turkish foreign policy positions cannot be explained simply by looking to the Kemalist model”¹⁵⁰. Laciner provided a useful critical analysis of the development of Turkish foreign policy during different periods of history. This included the formation of the Kemalist identity and state, which was highly reflected in its isolationist foreign policy; the neutrality and cautious policy during the Second World War; the pro-western position particularly in the Cold War period; and the post-Cold War developments and role of Turgut Ozal in revolutionising Turkish foreign policy. Laciner’s work is important, but will be useful for the historical background part of this research

¹⁴⁷ Kemal Kirisci, “The future of Turkish policy toward the Middle East,” in Rubin B., et al. *Turkey in world politics: an emerging multiregional power* (Bogazici University Foundation, 2002).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 122.

¹⁴⁹ Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism, The Ideological Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy” (PhD thesis, Kings College, University of London, 2001).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 2.

as his work focused on the periods of Kemal Ataturk and Turgut Ozal mainly from early 1920s to early 1990s.

Moreover, Brian Beeley (2002) presented several important points that need to be considered when analysing Turkey's Foreign policy¹⁵¹. His work on *Turkish Transformation: new century, new challenges* presented important contributions from different professionals and academics. The book tends to focus on the different domestic and international challenges that are facing the republic at the start of a new millennium. Although other key texts have represented different external challenges to Turkey, this book's high importance to this thesis comes from its analysis of the internal challenges. These include the problem of identity, the issue of minorities, views over Islam, and the role of Women. Therefore, it would be very useful to analyse those domestic issues and particularly to examine their effects on Turkey's foreign policy. Therefore, the books mentioned above will not be of great importance to this thesis outcome. However, they can be very useful as a way to understand the historical background of Turkey's relations with its neighbouring Arab states. Such works will be beneficial particularly for the coming chapter 3, which aims to illustrate the nature of Turkish foreign policy before and after 2002.

One of the most important and popular themes in the literature on recent Turkish foreign policy, which can be placed under the "ideational" theoretical mainstream as mentioned above, is the role of political Islam and AKP's "Islamist" ideology in changing the course of Turkish foreign policy. Since the AKP took power and ruled Turkey, many scholars viewed the AKP and its policies with great suspicion. The level of suspicions varied depending on how

¹⁵¹ Brian Beeley, et al. *Turkish Transformation: new century, new challenges* (The Eothen Press: England, 2002).

each scholar and analyst viewed the AKP and its founding members. For example, Soner Cagaptay (2006) in his work *Preventing Turkey's Popular Slide Away from the West* argued that Turkey was actually moving away from the West and its traditional Western allies and moving closer to the Middle East and the Islamic World¹⁵². Cagaptay argued that Turkey under the AKP has moved closer and built ties with “anti-Western” governments and groups such as Iran and Hamas. He further argued that more anti-European sentiments were witnessed and there are clear signs of Turkish foreign policy disengagement with its Western allies during the AKP government. Moreover, Ihsan Dagi (2008) argued that the AKP founding members “have emerged from the cadres of the first organized political representative of Islamism in Turkish politics, known as the ‘National view movement’ led by Necmettin Erbakan”¹⁵³. On a different paper, Soner Cagaptay (2009) argued that the AKP is an Islamist political party due to its members’ experiences in previous Islamist parties in Turkey and therefore it is not surprising to see such shift in Turkish foreign policy interests towards the East, the Muslim world, and particularly the Middle East¹⁵⁴.

Similarly, Zia Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz (2009) in their article *Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP era* suggested that Turkey’s foreign policy during the AKP era have

¹⁵² Soner Cagaptay, “Preventing Turkey’s Popular Slide Away from the West,” *Policy Watch* 1093, April 2006, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/preventing-turkeys-popular-slide-away-from-the-west>.

¹⁵³ Ihsan Dagi, “Turkey’s AKP in Power,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 25-26, accessed 22 September 2015, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v019/19.3.dagi.html.

¹⁵⁴ Soner Cagaptay, “Is Turkey Leaving the West?,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 26, 2009, accessed October 10, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2009-10-26/turkey-leaving-west>.

witnessed a major change¹⁵⁵. They argued that although in the early years of AKP government there was a noticeable strong emphasize on Europeanization, however this was later changed. They stated, “The discontinuity is marked by a shift from a commitment to deep Europeanization to loose Europeanization and a simultaneous shift to soft Euro-asianism”¹⁵⁶. On the other hand, Valeria Giannotta (2010) in her paper *Is Turkey turning its face from the West?* argued that although Turkey is becoming more involved with the Middle East, it does not necessarily mean that she is turning away from the West¹⁵⁷. She stated, “To be a proactive regional and global player Ankara increases its relations with neighbouring areas and widens its perspectives without moving away from the West”¹⁵⁸. Similarly, Graham E. Fuller (2008) *The new Turkish Republic: Turkey as a pivotal state in the Muslim world* is vital¹⁵⁹. The author compared Turkey’s foreign policy between its early creation to early 21st century and the recent years particularly since 2004. He argued that Turkey is trying to reconnect itself with the Middle East after turning its back for a long period of time. Most interestingly, in his chapter six “The Re-emergence of Turkish Islam”¹⁶⁰, the author argued that the AKP was successful because it did not ignore the EU and the West, but instead, it expanded its foreign role to the Muslim world. Such information is vital because it helps understand the way in which the AKP balances its foreign policy between the East and the West. This will also tell us

¹⁵⁵ Ziya Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz, “Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign policy activism in Turkey during the AKP era,” *Turkish Studies* 10, issue. 1, (2009): 7-24.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 25.

¹⁵⁷ Valeria Giannotta, “Is Turkey turning its face from the West?,” (Paper presented in the SGIR 7th Pan-European conference “Politics in Hard Times” – Stockholm, Sweden, September 9-11, 2010), accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.eisa-net.org/be-bruga/eisa/files/events/stockholm/is_TR%20turning_its_face_from_the_West.pdf.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

¹⁵⁹ Graham Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 49-66.

more about the AKP's foreign policy goals. Therefore, engaging with such debate will be of great importance to this thesis and its examination.

A very important piece of work presented by Svante E. Cornell (2012) titled *Changes in Turkey: What drives Turkish Foreign Policy?* He argued that the role of Turkey in the Middle East has been much greater particularly in the second term of the AKP government¹⁶¹. This was added by explaining the AKP's ambition towards the Islamic World and how the AKP is determined to increase its regional role especially when the author referred to Erdogan's speech in the victory of his third term. The author illustrated the AKP's international aim stating "By 2023, the republic's centennial, the AKP has promised Turkey will be among the world's ten leading powers"¹⁶². Such works contribute to the thesis because they help us draw very useful insights. Therefore, it is critical to consider the notion that Turkey's recent shift or re-engagement with the Middle East was a result of AKP's Islamist outlook and pro-Islamic lenience.

This will however be further critically examined in this thesis in order understand whether such claims do represent a useful explanation or not, especially that there are many other scholars who disagree with such arguments. For example, other scholars think the AKP as party serving Turkey's national interests just like any other state seeking to maximize its gains and benefits. An interesting piece of work that shows how Turkey became much closer to the Middle East and how the AKP affected such foreign policy was by Nikolaos Raptopoulos (2004). In his work *Rediscovering its Arab*

¹⁶¹ Svante Cornell, "Changes in Turkey: What drives Turkish foreign policy? Changes in Turkey," *Middle East Quarterly* 19, no. 1, (2012): 13-24.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 13.

*neighbours? The AKP imprint on Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East*¹⁶³, the author argued that Turkey is currently following a distinct foreign policy that serves its national interest and that Turkey under the AKP has expanded its benefits from its neighbouring Arab states as a way to fulfil its national interests in the region. Turkey's opening doors to the Middle East can be seen as beneficial both politically and economically. Such work is important because it explains not only the AKP's role, but also considers Turkey's national interests.

Furthermore, Ayse Zarakol (2011) in his work *Turkish Foreign Policy in the AKP's Third Term* provided a similar argument that focused on the AKP's third term and suggested that Turkey's foreign policy is facing more towards other parts of the world and mainly its neighbouring Middle East¹⁶⁴. He added that the AKP's second and third term is "marked by an ambitious foreign policy that drifted away from Turkey's traditional partnerships with the West and toward the betterment of relations with regions previously neglected by Turkey, such as the Middle East, North Africa, and Eurasia"¹⁶⁵. Furthermore, Hakan Yavuz (2006) in his book *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party* regarded the period under the AK Party as a new Turkey¹⁶⁶. This book describes the economic, social, and historical background of the ruling party. It also covers how neo-liberal economic policies affected Turkey. The book further looks at the roles of both internal and external factors that played key roles in the transformation of political Islam. This book will be of great interest

¹⁶³ Nicolaos Raptopoulos, "Rediscovering its Arab neighbours? The AKP imprint on Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East" *Les Cahiers du RMES*, 2004, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.rmes.be/1-NR1.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ Aysse Zarakol, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the AKP's Third Term" *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, no. 189, (2011): 1-5.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Hakan Yavuz, eds., *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006).

to my thesis as it helps explore the nature of the AKP and its founding members in an attempt to draw attention to their religious and political experiences.

Another important theme of analysis in this thesis is the role of AKP new ideas and 'soft power' foreign policy approach, which is a term, referred to when describing Turkey's recent role in the Middle East. Therefore, the work presented by Nicholas Danforth (2010), *Ideology and Pragmatism in Turkish Foreign Policy: From Ataturk to the AKP*, is particularly interesting because it investigates the role of ideas and ideology in Turkey's foreign policy, which will eventually contribute to answering the thesis question¹⁶⁷. The author contributes by arguing, "In formulating their approaches toward Europe and the Middle East, Turkish leaders have seldom been influenced by the ideologies that determine their domestic politics"¹⁶⁸. He also suggested that Ataturk's disengagement and AKP's re-engagement with the Middle East were simply "practical responses to strategic realities". Such argument is vital to consider in the analysis to try and develop a bigger picture to understand the ideological nature of the AKP and the role of such ideas in Turkish foreign policy transformation.

Furthermore, an interesting piece of work by Bulent Aras (2009) *Turkey's rise in the greater Middle East: peace-building in the periphery* was useful¹⁶⁹. Aras argued that Turkey has been playing an important peacemaker in the periphery and that both the US and EU are becoming more appreciative of Turkey's efforts in the region. The most important roles that the author focused

¹⁶⁷ Nicholas Danforth, "Ideology and Pragmatism in Turkish Foreign Policy: From Ataturk to the AKP" *Turkish policy quarterly* 7, no. 3, (2008): 83-95.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 83.

¹⁶⁹ Bulent Aras, "Turkey's rise in the Greater Middle East: peace-building in the periphery," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 11, no.1, (2009): 29-41.

on were Turkey's mediation efforts in Iraq and between Syria and Israel. He argued that the domestic transformation in Turkey and its new foreign policy vision is behind its emergence as a peacemaker. He added, "In this environment of pluralism in foreign policy-making, Turkey has acquired a new foreign policy identity, which led to the emergence of a self-confident, multi-dimensional and dynamic foreign policy approach"¹⁷⁰. Bulent's work is useful because it tends to explore the Turkish role in the region as well as investigating the reason behind it. The argument represented by Bulent is helpful for us to take into account domestic transformations when analyzing the sources of change in Turkey's foreign policy.

Another book that discusses some of the AKP domestic influence and ideology practice is *Torn Country: Turkey between Secularism and Islamism* by Zeyno Baran (2010)¹⁷¹. The author illustrated the way in which the AKP has been practicing its internal politics and how it affected Turkey. However, the most interesting part of this work was about the role of media in presenting the AKP's ideology. The author illustrated that the AKP created its own media outlets and was able to embark its ideology and build an image that serves its interests. Furthermore, the author was able to explore the AKP's economic success. Turkey's economy was in great growth for the last number of years and this is granted to the AKP. Such economic success plays a role in AKP's overall success and influence in Turkey. This work is important, as it will contribute to the thesis analysis when thinking about the AKP's behaviour

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 30.

¹⁷¹ Zeyno Baran, *Torn country: Turkey between Secularism and Islamism* (United States: Hoover institution press, 2010).

internally and the tools this government is using to expand its popularity and success, which at the same time reflects on its external behaviour as well.

The work by Soner Cagaptay (2006), *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in modern Turkey: who is a Turk?* Is particularly interesting as the author tends to use a comparative research on policies regarding citizenship and ethnicity in mixed ethnic and religious states including Turkey¹⁷². Cagaptay provided a close examination of the role of religion in shaping Turkish national identity. He argued that the previous Ottoman “Millet System” contributed to the division of Turkish society, affecting their later views of nationalism and national identity. This book is important to consider when thinking about religion and ethnicity in Turkey and how this would affect its foreign policy making.

Similarly, Ann Dismorr (2008) in his work *Turkey Decoded* tends to question the nature of Turkish Identity since the creation of the Turkish republic by Kemal Ataturk and the possible challenges that an Islamist party like the AKP might pose to such identity¹⁷³. This book tends to question the democratic nature of Turkey and the role of the AKP in it, as well as the way in which Turkey could become a model to its neighbouring Arab countries. The author also covers other foreign policy issues, such as the EU and the US, Israel, and other Arab states. Regarding the Middle East, the author argued that there is an obvious proactive position on Middle Eastern policy by the AKP. He added, “Turkey’s Middle Eastern policy has become increasingly ambitious and high profile”¹⁷⁴. This is a very interesting textbook because the author was a former Swedish Ambassador to Turkey and who visited some of its Arab neighbours.

¹⁷² Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?* (Routledge: London & New York, 2006).

¹⁷³ Ann Dismorr, *Turkey Decoded* (London; San Francisco: Saqi, 2008).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 175.

Such experience added to the importance of his work. Although this book tends to tackle a number of issues, there are some important parts covered by the author, particularly the Turkish Middle Eastern policy.

Moreover, a number of scholars have highlighted the key role of identity in foreign policy making. For example, Hasan Kosebalaban, a prominent Turkish scholar, who presented a very interesting study on *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* (2011). Influenced by constructivist theoretical framework of International Relations, he explored how Turkey's competing national identities had a major impact on Turkish foreign policy making¹⁷⁵. The study covers the historical Turkish foreign policy development and the different national identities that played a role in such development. Kosebalaban argued that four main national identity groups; Secular Nationalists; Islamic Nationalists; Secular Liberalists; and Islamic Liberalists have historically shaped Turkish politics and foreign policy. However, Kosebalaban Locates the AKP under the Islamic Liberalist identity group, arguing that this is due to their assertive globalist foreign policy and the AKP government's interest in the integration with Europe as well as the increase of interest in neighbouring countries. His main argument was that different contesting national identity groups in Turkish modern history have played a central role in shaping Turkish foreign policy. Kosebalaban's work is very interesting and useful in minimizing the struggle for researchers in understanding the role of national identity and the different types that exist in Turkey.

¹⁷⁵ Hasan Kosebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Similarly, Yucel Bozdaglioglu (2003) in his book *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach* argued that Turkish foreign policy has been shaped by national identity. For example, the Turkish Western identity, since the years after the War of Independence, has been the major character of the republic's foreign policy dimension¹⁷⁶. His work further analyses the important roles of Islamic, National, and Western conceptions in Turkish domestic politics, criticizing the rational-choice analysis by some scholars in the literature¹⁷⁷. Bozdaglioglu suggests that Turkish foreign policy clearly depends on the distribution of power between Secularists and Islamists.

Moreover, Enver Gulseven's work on *Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Period: Relations with the EU, Greece and the Middle East* is particularly interesting¹⁷⁸. Enver's work offered a critical analysis and argued that the literature has been largely dominated by rationalist interpretations. He stated, "Most scholars approached the issue from a rationalist perspective by fixing security as the main foreign policy goal of Turkey and focusing merely on external structural imperatives as the main determinant of Turkish foreign policy. Only a small share of research in this area dealt with the impact of identity and domestic factors."¹⁷⁹ Enver's work aimed at developing an analysis that can find links between Turkish identity and foreign policy preferences. He argued that identity has a direct relationship with Turkish political interests and foreign policy. Enver used the constructivist theoretical interpretation in his analysis and argued that it is more helpful compared to

¹⁷⁶ Yucel Bozdaglioglu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*, (Routledge, 2004), 46.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Enver Gulseven, "Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Period: Relations with the EU, Greece and the Middle East" (PhD thesis, Brunel University, 2010).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 14.

other rationalist explanations. The role of identity politics is one of the important themes that this thesis intends to further analyse and examine in order to highlight the extent to which such explanation provide a comprehensive account.

On the other hand, not only did some scholars view the AKP as an Islamist party with an Islamic political identity, but also as a party with neo-Ottoman sentiments and ideology. For example, there are a number of definitions found of neo-Ottomanism. A useful one provided by Nimet Seker (2009) in his work *Turkey's Strategic Depth: A Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy* states, "Neo-Ottomanism is a term used by critics to describe this return to a notion of a Turkey exerting power over its traditional Ottoman sphere of influence; those who use the term mean to imply that the new foreign policy involves the revival of imperial ambitions"¹⁸⁰. Tarik Oguzlu (2008) in his work *Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?* argued that Turkish foreign policy has been increasingly becoming involved in the Middle East. He argued that Turkey will very much be affected by Middle Eastern events than European ones. Tarik believes that this is due to the bargaining power the Middle East offers for Turkey¹⁸¹.

Furthermore, Einar Wigen (2009) in his article, *Turkish Neo-Ottomanism: A turn to the Middle East?* argued that Turkey has been adopting the neo-Ottoman foreign policy led by Ahmet Davutoglu, the man who invented the term in Turkish political dictionary, and further stated, "its neo-Ottomanist approach

¹⁸⁰ Nimet Seker, "Turkey's Strategic Depth: A shift in Turkish Foreign Policy," August, 2009, accessed September 20, 2015, <https://en.qantara.de/content/a-shift-in-turkish-foreign-policy-turkeys-strategic-depth>.

¹⁸¹ Tarik Oguzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?," *Turkish Studies*, 9, no.1, (2008): 3-20.

to foreign policy is not only focused on Muslim countries. Turkey has recently made serious progress in its relationship with Armenia, and the border between the two countries is set to open in the near future. Instead of dominating existing geographical units, Turkey appears to try to create a region of their own, the centre of which is Ankara”¹⁸². Similarly, Ryan Evans (2014) in his work *Turkey’s Shifting Strategic Culture*, argued that there has been two main dominant strategic cultures in modern Turkey; the republican strategic culture that emerged with the creation of the republic and the new republican elites led by Atatürk; the second is the neo-Ottoman strategic culture that emerged with the “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” that came after the 1980 coup and the leadership of Turgut Ozal¹⁸³. He believes that the republican strategic culture has been fading since then and much more weakened during the AKP’s era representing on the other hand a stronger neo-Ottoman geostrategic culture supported by a neo-Ottoman elite. For example, the author argued that Erdogan has been following the same principles and policies of the “first neo-Ottoman national leader” Turgut Ozal.

Moreover, Mustafa Sahin (2011) in his work, *Islam, Ottoman Legacy and Politics in Turkey: An Axis Shift?* agrees that since the AKP took power, there has been a clear transformation and return of neo-Ottomanism and that there has been a deliberate re-reading of Turkish history¹⁸⁴. He states, “A closer look at the ideas championed by the AKP party and the resulting changes in Turkish

¹⁸² Einar Wigen, “Turkish Neo-Ottomanism: A turn to the Middle East?,” *Security policy library*, 19, no.3, (2008):19.

¹⁸³ Ryan Evans, “Turkey’s Shifting Strategic Culture”, *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 2014, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://www.fpri.org/geopoliticus/2014/09/turkeys-shifting-strategic-culture-part-i>.

¹⁸⁴ Mustafa Sahin, “Islam, Ottoman Legacy and Politics in Turkey: An Axis Shift?,” *The Washington Review of Turkish & Eurasian Affairs*, 2011, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/islam-ottoman-legacy-and-politics-in-turkey-an-axis-shift.html>.

politics, clearly demonstrates that this transformation is not purely Islamic and therefore is not an axis shift. This process is rather a result of deliberate reading of Turkey's history and its relevance to the contemporary politics"¹⁸⁵. However, Cagaptay's work on *The AKP's Foreign Policy: The Misnomer of "neo-Ottomanism"* (2009) suggested that the notion of neo-Ottomanism in describing Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East is misleading¹⁸⁶. He argued that it is in fact more accurate to describe it as an "econo-Islamist" foreign policy because Turkey's foreign policy, in his view, is affected by the AKP's religious views of the world and its economic interests. This is particularly interesting because it allows us to think about the importance of Turkish economic interests that are behind such recent foreign policy re-direction. Neo-Ottomanism is one of the themes that this thesis aims to critically analyse and assess its significance in understanding Turkish foreign policy change since 2002. Although the Ottoman Empire does not exist anymore, it would be interesting to analyse and take into account such explanations suggesting that Turkey still has imperial ambitions in its foreign policy and critically examine them to assess their significance and contribution to this field of study.

However, others looked at the key role Professor Amet Davutoglu, the previous Foreign Minister and current Prime Minister, played in "constructing" Turkey's new foreign policy that led to such transformations. Davutoglu is one of the most important and influential individuals that will be focused on in this thesis due to his highly influential roles both as an academic and a politician. One of his most famous works *The Strategic Depth: Turkey's international*

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Soner Cagaptay, "The AKP's foreign policy: The misnomer of neo-Ottomanism," *The Washington Institute*, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-akps-foreign-policy-the-misnomer-of-neo-ottomanism>.

position (2000) Davutoglu argued that the values of nations are affected by their historical depth and geo-strategic location¹⁸⁷. Ahmet asserted Turkey's connections to its neighbours and that Turkey is the natural successor of the Ottoman Empire and has the chance to become a "Muslim super power". This book is therefore crucial because it gives us the ability to understand Turkey's source of change in her foreign policy and the importance of such ideas represented by Davutoglu. Another important point to take into account is the Turkish "Zero Problems with neighbours" a policy presented by Ahmet Davutoglu that was adapted by the AKP. This can be argued that it was a way to solve historical issues with her neighbours in order to be able to start a new page. This is an important policy that needs to be focused on because it shows the way that Turkey has changed her foreign policy. His work on *Turkey's Zero Problems Foreign Policy* (2010) illustrated the main principles of Turkey's new foreign policy agendas regarding its neighbours¹⁸⁸. This work is particularly interesting because one of the main reasons to write this paper was to try and explain how Turkey was able to make a nuclear fuel swap with Iran. Ahmet stated that Turkey's relations with its neighbours follow a more cooperative track and more economic interdependence. The author further stated "Turkey's considerable achievements in its regional relationships have led policymakers to take this principle a step further and aim for maximum cooperation with our neighbours"¹⁸⁹. The above works by Davutoglu was highly crucial to my thesis because he is the current foreign minister and he is also regarded as the

¹⁸⁷ Davutoglu, Op cit.

¹⁸⁸ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Turkey's Zero Problems Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C.: Foreign Policy (FP), 2010, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://ift-newspaper.aub.edu.lb/reserve/data/s11244/s11244.pdf>.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 4.

architect of the new Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, such information in the literature will help us build a better understanding.

Furthermore, Volker Perthes (2010) in *Turkey's Role in the Middle East: An Outsider's Perspective* discussed Davutoglu's zero problems policy¹⁹⁰. The author argued, "Zero problems is a wise policy principle, not only with regard to Turkey's relations with its immediate neighbours but – and this should not be forgotten – to all relevant actors in its wider Middle Eastern neighbourhood"¹⁹¹. However, Bulent Aliriza and Stephen Flanagan (2012) in *The end of Zero Problems? Turkey and shifting regional dynamics* argued that this zero problems policy is under threat¹⁹². They added, "The escalating crisis in Syria and related regional turbulence are complicating Turkey's important relationships with both Iran and Russia"¹⁹³. The Zero Problems policy and its limitations are very important to this thesis. Therefore, such publications help further investigate this aspect of Turkey's foreign policy.

On the other side of the literature, a number of prominent scholars in the field of Turkish foreign policy studies have been analysing the shift in Turkish foreign policy since 2002 from an economic perspective. Arguments highlighting the pragmatic and materialist side of Turkish foreign policy can be traced back to the neo-liberal and neo-liberal institutionalist theoretical interpretations of international relations. For example, Ziya Onis (2011) in his work *Multiple Faces of the "New" Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics*

¹⁹⁰ Volker Perthes, "Turkey's Role in the Middle East: An Outsider's Perspective," *Insight Turkey* 12, no. 4, (2010): 1-8.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 4-5.

¹⁹² Bulent Aliriza, and Stephen Flanagan, "The end of Zero Problems? Turkey and shifting regional dynamics," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2012, accessed April 12, 2016, http://csis.org/files/publication/120413_of_aliriza_flanagan.pdf.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 28.

and a Critique, criticized the way in which some scholars in the literature based their understanding of Turkish foreign policy shift towards its neighbours within an ideological and identity context¹⁹⁴. Instead, Onis argued that it is important to look at the economic side of Turkish foreign policy to better understand its recent “shift of axis”. He argued that recent foreign policy decisions have been increasingly driven from below through key economic actors and civil society¹⁹⁵.

Similarly, Faruq Ekmekci and Abdulkadir Yildirim (2012) in their work *The AKP and the Eastern Turn (?) of Turkey: An Economic Analysis*, were also highly critical of the ideational claims in the literature and argued that there are no pro-Muslim and anti-Western trends driving Turkish foreign policy, instead AKP’s foreign policy has been influenced by “economic rationale”¹⁹⁶. They argued that Turkey’s openness and increase of relations with its neighbouring countries in the region have been driven by AKP’s aim to enlarging and diversifying both the market for external energy supply and the market for Turkish goods¹⁹⁷.

In response to explanations supporting the claim that there is an Islamisation of Turkish foreign policy under the AKP, Ekmekci and Yildirim argued that if we are to take the Islamist and anti-Western ideology arguments into account, this would mean that Turkey’s Islamist government would be more likely to reduce economic relations with pro-US countries and increase with anti-US countries for example. However, they argued that statistical evidence showed that Turkey’s economic trade relations with US-friendly states have

¹⁹⁴ Ziya Onis, “Multiple Faces of the “New” Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique,” *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 1, (2011): 47-65.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 55.

¹⁹⁶ Faruq Ekmekci and Abdulkadir Yildirim, “The AKP and the Eastern Turn (?) of Turkey: An Economic Analysis,” *International Strategic Research Organization*, vol.5 (2012): 37-60.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

drastically increased¹⁹⁸. In addition, Mustafa Kutlay (2011) in his work *Economy as the 'Practical Hand' of 'New Turkish Foreign Policy': A Political Economy Explanation*, looked at Turkish foreign policy from a political economy point of view particularly through using the functionalist and interdependence approaches¹⁹⁹. Kutlay argues that in post-2001 Turkey, the internationalization of the 'Anatolian Tigers' has been the 'practical hand' of Turkish foreign policy²⁰⁰. Like many scholars sharing similar approach, the author has been highly critical of the overemphasis on "security-based" and "identity-based" approaches in the literature in understanding Turkish foreign policy. He argued that the 2001 economic crisis influenced all Turks and paved way for important and "radical" reforms since then. He added, key business associations, such as TUSIAD, MUSIAD, and SIADs, supported new Turkish reforms²⁰¹. Therefore, such works highlight the importance of considering economic interests and the way in which Turkey under the AKP has successfully developed international economic ties and trade agreements.

On the other hand, the security dimension of Turkish foreign policy has also had reasonable attention by some scholars and analysts, which further highlights the current debate. Again, here some chose to focus on a single factor based analyses and approach, which is the role of security threat and concerns in Turkish foreign policy. Such explanations' influence can also be traced back to the realist theoretical interpretations of international relations where security lies in the heart of its theoretical interpretation. For example, an

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 53.

¹⁹⁹ Mustafa Kutlay, 'Economy as the 'Practical Hand' of 'New Turkish Foreign Policy': A Political Economy Explanation', *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 1, (2011): 67-88.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 67.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 72.

interesting article by Stephen Larrabee (2007) entitled *Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East*, argued that Turkey's new approach and role in the Middle East is a "response to structural changes in its security environments since the end of the Cold War"²⁰². For example, the 2003 American invasion of Iraq is seen to be an event that drew Turkey into the Middle East affairs. According to Larrabee, Saddam Hussein for a long time has provided stability for Turkish Southern border with Iraq. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein leads to huge security problems for Turkey and primarily from Kurds. The Turkish government realized the potential of a growing Kurdish nationalism and derives for autonomy. Therefore, Turkey sought to build ties with Iran and Syria to be able to cooperate in solving such threat and complex security problem.

Similarly, Sonmez Atesoglu (2011) in his work, *Security of Turkey with Respect to the Middle East*, looks at the important role of Turkish security concerns in shaping its relations with and behaviour towards the Middle East²⁰³. The study particularly focused on Turkey's relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran, whom they share borders with, with regards to common security concerns mainly the Kurdish issue and the PKK. The author argued that Turkish security concerns and threats posed by the PKK changed Turkey's foreign policy priority towards these states in the expense of its relation with Israel.

On the contrary, Cengiz Dinc (2011) in his article, *Turkey as a New Security Actor in the Middle East: Beyond the Slogans*, argued that Turkish foreign policy has moved beyond "slogans" in the sense that Turkey under the

²⁰² F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East", *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4, (2007): 103.

²⁰³ Sonmez Atesoglu, "Security of Turkey with Respect to the Middle East", *Perceptions* XVI, no. 2, (2011): 99-110.

AKP government has become more “relaxed” and “flexible”²⁰⁴. Similar to some scholars mentioned above, Dinc argues that Turkey has adopted a soft power approach making it much closer to the European strategy. Turkey is viewed to have been matured and is able to develop new different strategies to deal with security concerns. In addition, he stated that the domestic transformation, democratization process, and economic development have been key factors behind such foreign policy transformation²⁰⁵. Here the author confirms that the Turkish openness and new approach to the Middle East has been shaped by different domestic reasons more than anything else.

In addition, another part of the debate comes from the believe that external actors play a significant role in effecting Turkish foreign policy making and most importantly for the Turkish case, the European Union. For instance, Gokalp, D. and Unsar, S. (2008) in their work *From the Myth of European Union Accession to Disillusion: Implications for Religious and Ethnic Politicization in Turkey*, have focused on how Turkey failed to succeed in its EU membership application as well as explaining how the AKP faced a huge challenge from the EU²⁰⁶. Furthermore, they stated that the EU suspended talks with Turkey in December 2006²⁰⁷. They argued that the Turkish accession to the EU was a myth and an illusion. Such article can support the argument that such EU membership failure paved more way for the AKP to expand its foreign relations with other parts of the world to be more effective specifically since their second term in power.

²⁰⁴ Cengiz Dinc, “Turkey as a New Security Actor”, *Perceptions* XVI, no. 2, (2011): 61-80.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Gokalp D. and Unsar, S. “From the Myth of European Union Accession to Disillusion: Implications for Religious and Ethnic Politicization in Turkey,” *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 1 (2008): 93-116.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 94.

Moreover, David L. Phillips (2004) suggested in his work *Turkey's dreams of accession* that the failure in Turkey's membership in the EU will result in a reaction that would not serve the EU and the US in the region²⁰⁸. The author argued that the US should use its influence to convince the EU to accept Turkey as a member because it will benefit them to serve their interests in the region and to make Turkey a model of democracy to the Muslim world. He added that turning their back to Turkey "would set back domestic reforms and radicalize religious extremists"²⁰⁹. What is more, the article titled *The Turkey-EU-US Triangle in Perspective: Transformation or Continuity?* by Ziya Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz (2005) illustrated the importance of the US role in the Turkish-EU relations²¹⁰. The authors however stated that the US was not successful in making the Turkish-EU integration work. Therefore, such pieces of work in the literature suggest that it is very likely that the shift and deep interest in the Middle East by Turkey can be a reaction to its failure in Europe. Although I might not entirely agree with the authors' argument, it is interesting to consider in my analysis.

On another side of the debate, some scholars saw Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East as an "important" asset and an advantage for Turkey's EU membership process, as well as that Turkish regional policy serves its relations with Europe. For example, Sinan Ulgen (2009) in his work *Turkey's Route to the EU maybe via the Middle East* argued that Turkey's proactive policies in the Middle East and diplomatic efforts as well as mediations would

²⁰⁸ David Phillips, "Turkey's Dreams of Accession," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 5 (2004): 86-97.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 87.

²¹⁰ Ziya Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz, "The Turkey-EU-US Triangle in Perspective: Transformation or Continuity?" *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 2 (2005): 265-284.

attract the European Union²¹¹. Ulgen stated, “Turkish accession would not, as European federalists like to argue, lead to a weaker Europe. On the contrary, Turkey’s membership would make Europe a more influential and capable world power”²¹². For Ulgen and other optimists, the Turkish engagement and influence in the Middle East actually increase its asset value for Europe.

Furthermore, Steven Everts (2004) in his work *An asset but not a model: Turkey, the EU, and the wider Middle East*, argued that Turkey’s Middle East approach is an asset for the EU, but not a democratic model for the Middle East²¹³. He argued that Turkey could play an important role in influencing EU-Middle East policy. The author added, “Turkey’s accession will increase the salience of the Middle East, and accelerate the Union’s already deepening involvement in the region”²¹⁴.

Therefore, it is clear that there are even further disagreements between scholars who favour the EU approach due to the noticeable different ways they perceive how Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East is linked to its position towards Europe. From the literature on Turkish-EU relations, one can draw two main competing arguments regarding the role of the EU in Turkish foreign policy change. Some saw Turkey’s increasing role and the improved relations with Middle Eastern states as an asset and advantage for the EU, while others saw it as a result of the EU rejectionist behaviour, which pushed Turkey to pursue such foreign policy directions in the search for alternatives and new zones for

²¹¹ Sinan Ulgen, “Turkey’s Route to the EU maybe via the Middle East,” *Europe’s World.org*, February 1, 2009, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://europesworld.org/2009/02/01/turkeys-route-to-the-eu-may-be-via-the-middle-east/#.VqDV5zbnLzJ>.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Steven Everts, “An asset but not a model: Turkey, the EU, and the wider Middle East,” *Centre for European reform*, October 2, 2004, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://www.cer.org.uk/publications/archive/essay/2004/asset-not-model-turkey-eu-and-wider-middle-east>.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

influence. Such scholarly discussions are highly valuable to the analysis in this thesis and especially in examining the European Union's role as a cause behind Turkish foreign policy change towards its Middle Eastern neighbours.

On the other hand, Kilic Bugra Kanat's work on "Understanding Changes in the Foreign Policy of Nations: The Turkish Case and the Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy", in book *History, Politics and Foreign Policy in Turkey* (2011), argued that the literature on Turkish foreign policy represented a number of what he calls "monocausal explanations" that only managed to explain a "partial picture" of the Turkish case²¹⁵. He stated, "Although some of these earlier analyses provided a partial picture of the changes in Turkish foreign policy making, these explanations were, however, incomplete and insufficient in creating a comprehensive account of the transformations of Turkish foreign policy"²¹⁶. Therefore, Kanat's work offered a new method of analysis. His work mainly derived from the work Jacob Gustavsson (1998) and theory of foreign policy change²¹⁷. Kanat borrowed Gustavsson's model of "The Causal Dynamics of Foreign Policy Change" and applied it to the Turkish case. Similarly, in his work on *Continuity of Change in Turkish Foreign Policy Under the JDP Government: The Cases of Bilateral Relations with Israel and Syria* (2012). Kanat presented an interesting argument regarding the changes in Turkey's relations particularly with Syria and Israel. He argued that although there are many who attach such changes in those bilateral relations to the AKP government, they are actually traced back to periods prior to 2002²¹⁸. Kanat

²¹⁵ Kanat, 221.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Jacob Gustavsson, *The Politics of Foreign Policy Change: Explaining the Swedish Reorientation on EC Membership* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1998), Cited in Kanat, "Understanding Changes in the Foreign Policy of Nations," 213-218.

²¹⁸ Kanat, 232.

offered an interesting analysis of Turkish foreign policy starting from the end of the Cold War until recent events. This particular work is useful to this thesis's analysis, particularly when analyzing some historical accounts of Turkish foreign policy and the important development in the bilateral relations with Syria and Israel. Another interesting and more recent article by Kanat titled *Derivers of Foreign Policy Change in the AK Party Decade* (2013) where his analysis focused on three main levels including; the regional politics changes; the global increasing activism; and the effects of public opinion and civilization²¹⁹. He analysed the importance of the AKP ambitious outlook and aim for a better global role, as well as the increasing domestic influence presented by civilians and the public on foreign policy making. Interestingly, Kanat this time looked at some of the challenges of the Arab Spring of Turkish foreign policy especially regarding Syria.

Bill Park is another important scholar who represented an inclusive account of Turkish foreign policy. His work on *Modern Turkey: People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World* (2011), focused on the role of globalization and its impact on Turkish foreign policy²²⁰. The prime goal of his work was to analyse how globalization affects Turkey and the process of Turkish foreign policy making. Park gave a very useful theoretical background in an attempt to define what is globalization and the impact it has on states. Particularly, he argued that globalization enables the transcendence of many different issues across the world including economy, terrorism, and Islam,

²¹⁹ Kilic Bugra Kanat, "Derivers of Foreign Policy Change in the AK Party Decade", *SETA Foundation Washington, D.C.* May 2013, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://setadc.org/drivers-of-foreign-policy-change-in-the-ak-party-decade/>.

²²⁰ Bill Park, *Modern Turkey: People, State, and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*, (Routledge, 2011).

which have great impact on the foreign policy of Turkey. In addition, the author argued that globalization has decreased the role of borders between Turkey and its neighbours and pushed for greater relations enabling Turkey to pursue a multi-level foreign policy. He added that the Turkish society has successfully adapted to the global age through new technology, particularly social media, and travelling. Park's work looked at the role of ideology and ideational roots as well behind Turkish foreign policy developments. Including the key roles of Europeanization and globalization in transforming the Turkish political life and society.

Finally, it is useful for this thesis to look at some of the works that analysed the Turkish role in the Arab spring and how such event has affected Turkish foreign policy making for the last number of years. The thesis, however, will only be covering the beginning of the Arab spring and this is because it is very hard to determine where such events are going or how they will end. Steven A. Cook (2011) in his article *Arab Spring, Turkish Fall*, argued that the Arab uprising seemed 'tailored made' for Turkey to exert its influence on the region²²¹. However, Turkey in fact looked clumsy in dealing with the current Arab Spring. The author added, at the beginning Turkey was doing well in the Arab upheavals particularly with the case of Egypt. On the other hand, Turkey seemed to struggle when it came to dealing with the case of Libya. Steven argued that Turkey found it quite difficult at the beginning to cut ties with the Qaddafi regime and objected the NATO plan for a no-fly zone. He stated, "Turkey's leaders are looking less like the new Ottomans they've imagined

²²¹ Steven Cook, "Arab Spring, Turkish Fall," 2011, accessed April 18, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/05/05/arab_spring_turkish_fall?hidecomments=yes

themselves to be and more like stumbling politicians afraid of a new regional order”.

Furthermore, Burak Bilgehan Ozpek (2011) argued in his paper ‘*Arab Spring*’ or ‘*Turkish winter*’? That Turkey’s foreign policy since 2002 went through serious challenges and the most recent was evident in the Arab spring²²². Moreover, The work by Hannah Stuart (2011) *Turkey and the Arab Spring* shows that Turkey’s role in response to the Syrian revolution was very supportive²²³. Turkey publicly criticizes Assad’s actions against the demonstrators and called for the government to resign. In addition Nathalie, Tocci et al. (2011) in *Turkey and the Arab Spring: Implications for Turkish foreign policy from a Transatlantic perspective*, illustrated the important role that Turkey would play as a successful Islamic democratic model for the Middle East²²⁴. Therefore, the role of Turkey in the Arab spring would be important to consider in determining some very recent changes in Turkish foreign policy. The above-mentioned works help us understand the beginnings of the Arab Spring and how the Turkish policy was affected as well as the way in which Turkey was able to deal with such increasing challenges.

Overall, from the literature above, it can be said that there is enough information that enables the researcher to take on this thesis. However, it is important to clarify that primary sources are also going to play a strong role, as they will play a contributing role as well as adding to the originality of this work.

²²² Burak Bilgehan Ozpek, “Arab Spring’ or ‘Turkish Winter?,” *Near east Quarterly*, accessed April 4, 2012, <http://www.neareastquarterly.com/index.php/2011/09/07/arab-spring-or-turkish-winter/>.

²²³ Hannah Stuart, “Turkey and the Arab Spring”, A Henry Jackson Society Strategic Briefing, 2011, accessed April 18, 2012, <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/cms/harriercollectionitems/turkeyandarabspring.pdf>.

²²⁴ Nathalie, Tocci et al. *Turkey and the Arab Spring: Implications for Turkish foreign policy from a Transatlantic perspective* (Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2011).

The research question fits in well with the information provided in the literature. However, there is a gap in the literature that needs to be explained. First of all, there was a noticeable amount of descriptive work in the literature on Turkish foreign policy, which has also been highlighted before in Kanat's work (2011) as well²²⁵. This is because a number of scholars and authors seem to have mainly described Turkey's foreign policy. This means that they described 'what' happened in terms of events and changes of relations with its neighbours and the EU without focusing enough on explaining 'how' and 'why'. However, we cannot ignore that there were efforts made to investigating the factors that led to such foreign policy changes.

Such investigations have disappointingly confused the researcher as an observer. Those works represented different answers to the case. For example, there were studies that looked at the role of the AKP Islamic nature, or the effect of Middle East policies on the European Union application, or even questioning if Turkey was actually leaving the West. These are all relevant and valid studies that contributed to the literature. However, due to the complicated nature of Turkey, such studies did not yet give a clear picture to the main source behind Turkey's new foreign policy agenda in the Middle East.

This leads to the second part of the gap where a large number of scholars and analysts have presented several different and in many cases contradictory explanations to what caused Turkish foreign policy to change. In addition, the work by Bill Park (2015) on *Turkey's Isolated Stance: an ally no more, or just the usual turbulence?* is particularly interesting. His work focused on the recent challenges posed by regional affairs and the impact it had on

²²⁵ Kanat, p. 220.

Turkey's relations with Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Israel²²⁶. Park argued that recent regional circumstances most notably the Arab Spring have confronted Turkish foreign policy and the AKP government. For Park, Turkey's position has been affected by the growing regional events, not only with some of its Middle Eastern neighbours, but also with its Western allies.

As mentioned earlier, having such a heavy theoretical debate over the sources of Turkish foreign policy change is academically healthy, but at the same time, can be misleading, where observers can end up with a variety of explanations not knowing which of them is the most plausible one. So far, the works and their explanations in the literature have managed to provide some important elements of Turkish regional foreign policy, each on its own. Such gap increases the demand for more inclusive and wider analyses that could represent a comprehensive explanation.

Therefore, this thesis aims at filling this gap by providing an analysis that tries to identify the most plausible explanation of change behind Turkey's new foreign policy agenda under the AKP. This will be conducted through an examination of the different explanations and theoretical hypotheses provided by previous scholars in the field in the search for the most valuable. The literature provided a number of answers and explanations to this research question, but unfortunately the result was a mixture of different and even contrasting answers. An observer that seeks an answer will arrive at a list of explanations that could, and did at least from a personal experience, create a puzzle. This puzzle comes from questioning the sufficiency and necessity of the answers provided. Therefore, there needs to be an analysis that provides a

²²⁶ Bill Park, "Turkey's Isolated Stance: an ally no more, or just the usual turbulence?" *International Affairs* 91, no. 3 (2015): 581-600.

solid explanation for observers out there that they can confidently rely on when thinking about Turkish foreign policy change. This thesis will represent the strength of its argument through its examination and evaluation of the different explanations provided in the literature through the use of Process Tracing Methodology, illustrated in chapter 2, which enables the researcher to conduct close up examination and test the validity and plausibility of the multiple competing theoretical hypotheses in the search for the most possible comprehensive explanation so far. Therefore, this thesis intends to represent a method that allows observers to understand the validity of other alternative explanations in comparison. What this research is trying to offer is not new, but unique in its method of analysis and examination of the literature on Turkish Foreign Policy. Moreover, one of the main advantages for this thesis is its re-organization of the wide range of data in a more understandable manner under one piece of work, which can be highly valuable for researchers in future studies. This further includes a re-arrangement of the competing explanations (which were provided by different Turkish and international scholars in the literature) making them easier to observe and analyse.

Overall, the literature review has been useful in highlighting key works and publications that are of high importance, discussing the nature of the literature and the theoretical debate that exist within. The aim was to critically summarize the most important explanations and key concepts in this field of study under investigation, hence exploring their strengths and weaknesses to further facilitate the researcher's analysis. Notably, this includes highlighting the gap in the literature and the necessity to apply a method of analysis that can fill this gap. The above-analysed themes will be divided into the coming chapters,

in accordance with the methodology applied, in an attempt to represent a clear and more organized thematic structure of analysis to make it easier for the reader to follow. Therefore, this chapter is critical as it builds an important academic foundation and an important source that paves the way for greater analysis in coming chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

Turkish Foreign Policy Before and After 2002: Analysing the Difference

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the nature of Turkish politics and foreign policy prior to 2002 and how it changed after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power. For readers to understand the recent Turkish foreign policy changes and transformation, it is necessary to understand how Turkish foreign policy used to operate prior to 2002. Since the creation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, foreign policy has been shaped by isolation and non-activism. Atatürk aimed at maintaining and protecting the survival of the new republic. He was also giving most of his attention to the establishment of a new Turkish secular identity as the new character of the state. One of the most important times that determined Turkish foreign policy was during the Cold War. Turkey sought to join the Western Camp and its membership in NATO by 1951, while adopting a cautious foreign policy towards its neighbours. After the end of the Cold War and with the emergence of the new world order, Turkey witnessed another major turning point in its foreign policy dimension. The end of the bipolar system enabled Turkey to apply a multidimensional foreign policy approach allowing it to move freely and readjusting itself in accordance with the new system. However, Turkey maintained a hard power politics for a long time and securitization of foreign policy was a central character, which was highly evident in the Kurdish case. Since the end of the cold war, Turkish politics was mainly instable and

witnessed several military coups and interventions. Tensions between Islamist and secular establishments in the country were becoming more evident. The development of political Islam entered a number of phases and was successfully able to influence both domestic and foreign politics of the country despite the military and secularists' efforts to weaken such development. The shift towards a multiparty system in 1950 and the rule of Adnan Menderes paved way for the emergence and development of Islamist movements and since then Turkey entered a new era. Although Islamist parties were faced with tough measurements and military coups, they still managed to come back and rise again one after the other. However, the most important event was evident in 2001 when all political parties were abandoned including Islamist parties, which led to the creation of the Justice and Development Party led by previously known Islamist figures like Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul. The newly established AKP was a conservative-democratic party who won the elections of 2002 and managed to rule Turkey until this day.

Turkey under the rule of the AKP entered a new phase and witnessed major changes in all social, economic, and political aspects. Turkish foreign policy also witnessed huge transformation since 2002 and the AKP government was able to revolutionise Turkey's international position. In particular, relations with Middle Eastern countries have tremendously improved culturally, economically, and politically. Although relations between Turkey and Middle Eastern states have been witnessed before during the era of Turgut Ozal for example, the AKP managed to take it into another level never witnessed before in the history of the republic. However, since the emergence of the Arab Spring, Turkey faced a number of challenges to the stability of its relations with its Arab neighbours

and tensions were evident in some cases and particularly regarding the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Turkey's conflicting interest with Saudi Arabia and some Gulf states regarding that issue. However, the most significant fact here is not primarily the development or deterioration of relations between Turkey and its neighbouring Middle Eastern states; it is in fact the growing Turkish involvement and influence over Middle Eastern affairs within the last decade and is expected to remain so in the coming future.

In order to give enough and clear analysis of the topic, this chapter will be divided into seven main sections. The first one will offer a background on the important Turkish geo-strategic location and social structures. This section is important because if we take the geographic position and location of Turkey into account, we will understand its' strategic significance which contributes to its international position. Furthermore, the social structure in Turkey is a complex one and therefore needs clarification before we go into details about the nature of relations between secularists, nationalists, and Islamists. Understanding the Turkish identity role in foreign policy making is of central theme to this dissertation. Secondly, I will analyse the nature of relations between Turkey and the Middle East prior to 1923. The aim here is to illustrate the level of deep relations and dependence that Turkey shared with other Arabian providences during the Ottoman era and how this was radically changed after the collapse of the Empire. The third section will focus on and evaluate the politics and foreign policy orientation of the new republic and how Kemal Ataturk played a major role in re-shaping it. The fourth and fifth parts aim to analyse and examine Turkish foreign policy dimension during the Cold War and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These parts will cover a vital period

of times that affected Turkey's foreign policy direction and position in world politics. The sixth section will critically analyse the development of political Islam in Turkey and the way in which Islamist movements came to influence and shape the political life. This will be a critical part of the chapter representing Islamist growth in Turkish politics and influence as well as the effects it had on foreign policy making and particularly towards the Middle East. The seventh and final section of this chapter is going to illustrate the emergence and development of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2001. The section aims to analyse the way AKP has managed to transform and revolutionise Turkey's politics and foreign policy elements. This section however will be discussed in much further details in the coming chapters examining the causes of such foreign policy transformation and particularly towards the Middle East.

1. Significance of Turkish geographical position and social structure

Turkey enjoys a very important geostrategic location that contributes to its weight and influence in international politics. It is a country that bridges between the two continents of Asia and Europe²²⁷. Therefore, Turkey has a special intercontinental geography that makes it unique and different. For example, the region of Marmara is situated in both Asian and European Continents. Moreover, Turkey is at the same time located between highly volatile regions, such as the Caucasus, Balkans, and Middle East. It borders Greece, Bulgaria in the northwest, the former USSR (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia), and

²²⁷ Nezihi Cakar, "A Strategic Overview of Turkey," *Journal of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1998): 1.

Iran to the east, and Iraq and Syria to the south²²⁸. It is a unique country that can be considered as an Asian, European, Balkan, Caucasian, Middle Eastern, Black Sea and Mediterranean country all at the same time. Such unique geographical location is vital to Turkey's influence and engagement with many different international affairs.

In a talk presented to the Institute of International and European Affairs in March 2010, Ahmet Davutoglu, who was the Turkish Foreign Minister at that time, stated, "*in post-cold war era we realized that our geography is not a wing, it is a central geography a pivotal geography, where Turkey has a multidimensional geography*"²²⁹. The realization of the importance of Turkey's geographic location by policy makers plays an important role in using such geostrategic-position to the country's favor and to serve its interests. Moreover, the Anatolian region of Turkey for instance has witnessed greatest civilizations, such as the Anatolian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman²³⁰. This geostrategic position of Turkey has played central roles in many international events that made Turkey an asset for external powers and enabled it to play a significant role i.e. this was seen in WW2 and during the Cold War. What is more, Turkey is positioned in a region that witnessed the birth of three monotheistic religions, precisely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

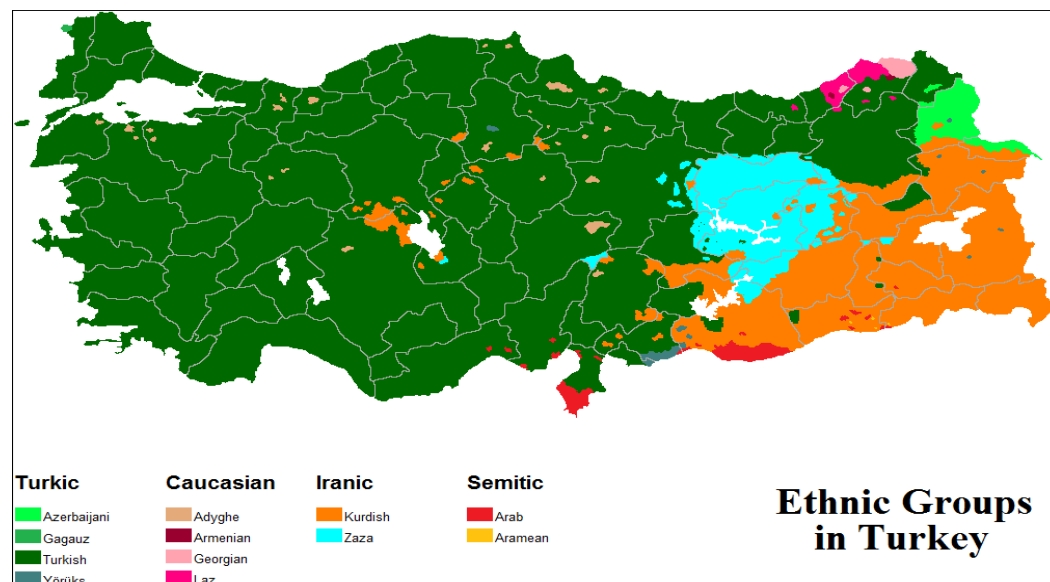
²²⁸About. Geography, "Turkey," *about.com*, accessed October 8, 2012, <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blcturkey.htm>.

²²⁹Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkish Foreign Policy," *the Institute of International and European Affairs*, 12 March 2010, accessed December 9, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwfoTCo_SbE.

²³⁰Chatham University, "History & Culture of Turkey: From Anatolian Civilization to Modern Republic," *Global Focus 2010-2011*, accessed December 9, 2014, http://www.chatham.edu/academics/globalfocus/archives/turkey_1011/pdf/history_culture.pdf.

Such religions and civilisations have certainly made a significant mark on the way in which societies of those lands think, preserve themselves and others around them as well as in the way they relate themselves to the past and future²³¹. As a consequence of such complex, Turkey constitutes a number of ethnic and religious identities. These include Turkish, Arab, Kurdish, Armenian, Aramean, Georgian, Azerbaijani, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and others²³². As illustrated in the map below, Turkey is represented by multiple identities that at the same time show how diverse and secular the Turkish society has been.

Figure 1. Ethnic identities in Turkey²³³



Another distinctive feature about the Turks is that when they travelled from Central Asia, the cultures of the areas they arrived and lived in were not destroyed. Instead, Turks were able to adapt and merge with their own culture

²³¹ Yuksel Soylemez, "Turkey: Western or Muslim?," *Turkish Review*, (1992):45-46, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism, The Ideological Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy" (PhD thesis, Kings College, University of London, 2001).

²³² Cem Safak Cukur, Maria Rosario T. De Guzman, Gustavo Carlo, "Religiosity, Values, and Horizontal and Vertical Individualism—Collectivism: A Study of Turkey, the United States, and the Philippines," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 144, no. 6, (2004): 613-634.

²³³ Google Images, "Ethnic Groups in Turkey", accessed December 9, 2014, <http://nealrauhauser.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/turkey-ethnic.png>.

and others. They lived with the Greeks and other Christian communities, but kept their Islamic identity. Therefore, Turkey was and still is a place that hosts a mixture of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim populations in a location that borders between the Islamic East and Christian-Jewish West²³⁴. Such mixture and complex characters that structured the Turkish society have created some kind of an “identity crisis” that many authors have focused on²³⁵. However, this can be seen from a positive point of view that Turkey is a very diverse country that represents a mixture of cultures and religions, which in turn increases its openness towards the world and therefore contribute to its’ importance.

In terms of foreign policy making in Turkey, it has never been an easy case due to its geographical location. Being positioned in a territory that borders Europe, Asia, and the Middle East makes it significant for Turkey to ensure its border security and national sovereignty. Therefore, it can be argued that Turkey also had to seek powerful friends and allies in the international arena that can ensure its safety and security when they are threatened. Furthermore, due to the political instability of bordering countries and neighbouring regions, Turkey needed to guarantee a firm control and protection of its’ borders. Consequently, the geostrategic location that Turkey enjoys can be both beneficial and threatening at the same time.

It can be seen that Turkey enjoys a very unique mixture of a complex geographical position and a blend of various ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. This makes Turkey a very special country and opens new

²³⁴ Arthur Cyr, “Turkey and the West,” *Perceptions*, (1996): 108-119, Cited in Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism, The Ideological Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy” (PhD thesis, Kings College, University of London, 2001).

²³⁵ Dogu Ergil, “Identity Crisis and Political Instability in Turkey,” *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no.1, (2000): 43-62.

opportunities, while at the same time, poses a number of political, economic, and social challenges and difficulties. The reason why I aim to explain the nature of Turkish geography and identity is because I believe that they play an important role in Turkish. This section does not aim to go into a deep analysis of the way that identity affect Turkish Foreign Policy, instead it offers an introduction and background to the reader of the important geographic and social formation and structure, which will most certainly contribute to this thesis' analysis. We will see how Ataturk tackled this issue and the way in which he attempted to establish and build a new and unified National identity that can represent the overall sense of Turkishness to the outside world. However, the next few sections of this chapter will illustrate how Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East looked like prior to 2002. This is very significant as it enables the reader to distinguish the difference between prior and post 2002 foreign policy dimensions towards its neighbouring region as well as their possible determinants.

2. The nature of relations between Turkey and the Middle East prior to 1923

Turkey and particularly Istanbul played a major role during the Ottoman rule. Istanbul presented the home of central authority and administration for the Empire²³⁶. It was an Empire that controlled most parts of Anatolia, the Balkans, Caucasus, North Africa, and the Arab Middle East²³⁷. The nature of relations between the central authority of the Empire and those provinces and territories were characterised by the appointment of military and other governors to

²³⁶ Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (London: Routledge, 1992), 8.

²³⁷ Necati Ucuzsatar, "The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the Foundation of Modern Turkey under the Leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk," *Journal of Istanbul Kultur University* 2, (2002): 55-68.

manage those conquered provinces. Some of which were from Turkey while others came from the same provinces they governed²³⁸. What is more, some 'notables' in those provinces were also given some power and independent control, but certainly with Ottoman administrative control²³⁹. Furthermore, Governors would have to deal with maintaining control and deal with any issues that may rise and if necessary seek central authority's support. Every province was administered in accordance to the hierarchy of administration. Provinces were referred to in Ottoman terms as *Vilayet* or in Arabic *Wilaya* and the governor would be called as *Vali* or *Wali*. Governors were also referred to as *Pasha*, a very prestigious term given to individuals of power i.e. Governors²⁴⁰.

However, the Ottoman Empire was able to sustain power for more than Four Hundred Years. It represented one of the largest and longest surviving Empires in history. Unfortunately, the Empire was not able to keep up with the development of Europe and its influence, predominantly after the "Post-Enlightenment Thinking" and Industrial Revolution²⁴¹. The Ottoman Empire declined considerably and was not able to maintain control over its' provinces. This was added by European intervention and occupation mainly by the British and French powers. Ultimately, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was evident after World War One (1914-1918), a war that represented an Ottoman

²³⁸ Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule: 1516-1800* (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 48.

²³⁹ Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983), Cited in Ebubekir Ceylan, *Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq: Political Reform, Modernization and Development in the Nineteenth Century Middle East*, (I.B.Tauris, 2011).

²⁴⁰ Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 48.

²⁴¹ Sevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913: trade, investment, and production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Cited in Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (I.B.Tauris, 2004).

weakness in comparison to the Great Powers of the West (Allied Powers)²⁴². The emerging Nationalist movement later led by the most influential character Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, ended this long lived Empire and established a newly Turkish Republic with its capital Ankara.

Writing on the nature of relations between central authority of the Ottoman Empire and controlled provinces can take a very long time and go into significant details including the Administration divisions, taxation, land tenure, and many others. However, the reason for including it in this chapter is to try and give a general sense of the significant historical relations between Istanbul and the Ottoman Provinces i.e. Arabian Territories. This is helpful because it allows us to understand the characteristics of the relations between the two nations while at the same time appreciate the considerable transformation of relations after the collapse of the Empire and the establishment of the new Republic.

3. The Turkish Republic: a new outlook and foreign policy dimension

The Empire that occupied most of the Arab Provinces, and Parts of Southeast Europe, North Africa, and the Caucasus, became one that barely managed to control its central territory. However, what came out of this struggle was an influential figure that changed Turkish history. This figure is known to be Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, a General that served the Ottoman Empire and later created the Republic of Turkey. A Republic that was fundamentally different from its prior authority. Therefore, the main question here is what role did Ataturk play in making Turkey the world's First Secular Muslim Republic?

²⁴² Lawrence Sondhaus, *World War One: The Global Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

In order to answer this question, it is important for us to understand Ataturk's life and ideology that led him to such success. Mustafa Kemal came from a family with ordinary financial situation and was able to receive intensive military education since he was 12 years of age²⁴³. We have to take into account that Mustafa received his education and served in the military while the Ottoman Empire was getting weaker at that time. This is important because Ataturk believed that there was corruption and decadence and therefore his purpose was to fight it and modernise Turkey²⁴⁴. By his late twenties, Ataturk was among the revolutionary young Turks, who have had high influence on him. To many, he was a true representative of Young Turk, particularly that he is a soldier, well educated, and French speaking who had a vision of Modernization for Turks. Thus, Ataturk was able to take leadership of the Young Turks movement and established the Republic by 1923²⁴⁵.

After achieving victory in resistance against the Ottoman Empire and war against occupying forces, the Republic of Turkey was established. Ataturk had full support militarily, but less politically. In other words he was seen as a figure that can guide them to liberation, but was not seen as the new political leader at the beginning²⁴⁶. However, Kemal sought to end the Imperial rule. Ataturk aimed at limiting the Caliphate system to Turkey's territories and wanted to disengage with the Imperial past. This was achieved after the Lausanne Treaty in 1922-23 after long talks and negotiations that put an end to occupation and

²⁴³ BBC, "Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938)", *History*, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/ataturk_kemal.shtml.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Frank Tachau, "The Political Culture in Kemalist Turkey" in Jacob M. Landau, *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, Westview Press, 1984), Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

achieve peace²⁴⁷. Turkey was given full independence and recognition as a new country by 1923²⁴⁸. This was a victory and an important turning point in the history that paved way for transformation under Kemal's rule.

There have been a number of critical changes that took place in Turkey under Ataturk that formed a new national identity and political ideology. One of the first and most important decisions made, was the abolishment of the Caliphate in 1924²⁴⁹. This marked an important breakaway from the long direct Religious Muslim relations. Furthermore, such decision had a direct impact on the nature of Turkish-Middle Eastern relations in the coming years. In addition, we can see that the new Republic's foreign policy took a fundamental step away from the direct link and relations it used to enjoy for a very long time. However, this decision was also faced with rage and anger among some Turks²⁵⁰. It is critical to take this on board because it gives us the picture that not everyone in Turkey accepted what Ataturk presented. This will help us further understand the challenges to the Kemalist system that came about in the later stages.

Ataturk was very aggressive in the way he sought to change Turkey. A typical example of this was when he took over, he restructured the parliament and limited opponents influence²⁵¹. Kemal was under growing pressure and criticism and his opponents were executed and prosecuted under the

²⁴⁷ MFA, "Lausanne Peace Treaty", *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, accessed May 8, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty.en.mfa>.

²⁴⁸ R. Kasliwal, "The Foreign Policy of Turkey Since 1919," *The Indian journal of Political Science* 7, no. 1 (1945): 391, accessed May 2, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42743793?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

²⁴⁹ Cezmi Eraslan, "The abolishment of the Caliphate and Turkey's Transformation to Modern State," *atam*, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-50/abolishment-of-the-caliphate-and-turkeys-transformation-to-modern-state>.

²⁵⁰ A Ender, "The Origins and legacy of Kemalism," *lib.com*, accessed May 7, 2015, <https://libcom.org/library/origins-legacy-kemalism>.

²⁵¹ William Hale, "Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics", in David Shankland, ed., *The Turkish Republic at Seventy-Five Years, Progress-Development-Change*, (Huntingdon: The Eothen Press, 1999), 92, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

“Maintenance of Order Law”²⁵². Many saw this as a position towards authoritarianism. Groups, such as liberals, Marxists, and Conservatives were suppressed and seen as opponents of this new Kemlist secularism. Furthermore, the Kurdish Revolt of 1925, also known as the “Sheikh Said Rebellion”, was faced with brutality and witnessed huge bloodshed²⁵³. We have to remember that the Kurds however played a central role in the success that Kemal had in the War of Independence between 1919 and 1922 fighting against the Armenians and winning a victory for Ataturk by Kurdish forces²⁵⁴. Kemal gave hope for Kurds to gain autonomy in order to maintain Kurdish support during the War²⁵⁵. However, later Kemal did not keep up with his promises and saw the Kurdish issue as a threat to the new “united” Turkish identity that he was building²⁵⁶.

Furthermore, Ataturk associated his vision of developing a modern state with the adoption of Western values and technology moving away from the “darkness” and “backwardness” of the East and the Muslim Ottoman past²⁵⁷. This however created separation and division among Turks, between people who identify themselves in accordance with Western culture and Secularism and others who familiarized themselves with the conservative Islamic culture.

²⁵² Jeff Schubert, “History of Anti-Terrorist laws in Dictatorships,” *Jeff Schubert’s blog*, November 10, 2005, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.jeffschubert.com/index.php?id=7>.

²⁵³ Robert Olson, “The Kurdish Rebellion of Sheikh Said (1925), MT. Ararat (1930), and Dersim (1937-8): their impact on the development of the Turkish Air Force and on Kurdish and Turkish nationalism,” *Die Welt des Islams* 40, no.1 (2000): 67-94.

²⁵⁴ Gerard Chaliand, *A people without a country: The Kurds and Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1993), 46-49, Cited in Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism”.

²⁵⁵ David McDowall, *The Modern History of the Kurds*, 2nd ed., (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 196.

²⁵⁶ Armenak Tokmajyan, “Turkey, Syria, and the Kurds,” *Washington Review*, April 2012, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/turkey-syria-and-the-kurds.html>.

²⁵⁷ Jacob Landau, ed. *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Brill, 1984), 129-136.

Here we can see the process of constructing a national identity that did not suit all citizens, but with hegemony and power this was largely achieved.

With the creation of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Atatürk assumed domination and the "Kemalist Influence" was in progress. There were other major decisions along with the abolishment of the Caliphate that we need to take into account. Atatürk's main aim was to bring the Turkish society "up to the Western level" that was seen as the ideal model for him²⁵⁸. Kemal saw the access to the Western world as the best way for enlightenment and survival. Therefore, since 1924; Islamic "*Sharia*" law was abandoned, state control over education increased, the calendar was changed to the Gregorian one, Islam was announced to be the official religion of the state, but far away from involving in the constitution of other political activities, the Arabic Alphabet was changed to the Latin Alphabet, Friday prayers were to be said in Turkish language not Arabic any other Muslim nation, and imposed the wearing hat as the official dress code as a way to replace the religious fez and other head wares²⁵⁹. Such reforms had major impacts on Turkey and the Turkish population. This was seen as the best way to secularize and modernize society into a Western image.

Kemalism was by now seen as a movement of its own that has a distinct ideology and identity. As a result, this had a direct relation with Turkey's new foreign policy direction. The national identity and political ideology of the Republic was represented by this secular Western oriented behaviour. With the

²⁵⁸ Yilmaz Altug, "Atatürk and Building of a modern nation state," *atam.gov*, 2013, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-07/ataturk-and-building-of-a-modern-nation-state>.

²⁵⁹ Artun Unsal, "Atatürk Reforms: Realization of an Utopia," *paper presented to the seminar on Nehru and Atatürk*, New Delhi, November 28, 1981, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/44/685/8712.pdf>.

expanding Kemalist domination, it was evident that Atatürk was seen as a hero and saviour. Atatürk aimed at re-building and re-constructing a nation to suit the ambitions and dreams that he had for a long time. According to Anna Marisa Schon (2013), “these reforms, even more than previously the political reforms, had two aims and consequences: Firstly, they served the purpose of diminishing the possible influence of Islam on society in different ways, and secondly, the reforms constituted an approximation of Europe. Essentially, in the framework of the Kemalist reforms secularization came to equal Westernization”²⁶⁰.

Such drastic changes resulted in conducting a foreign policy based on both Westernization and Secularism. Therefore, a Westernization campaign took place and Turkey made all efforts to develop its relations with the West. Kemal argued that there is only one civilization known as the Western civilization and that it was inseparable and had to be entirely embraced²⁶¹. In order to totally adopt Western thinking and beliefs, a deep and strong relationship had to be built. This will indeed bring with it disengagement with the Islamic and Ottoman past. Therefore, Turkey developed a strong Turkish-European and Turkish-Western relations on different levels.

As a result, the Turkish foreign policy during Atatürk was highly determined by its Pro-Western legacy²⁶². Therefore, Turkey took a supportive

²⁶⁰ Anna Marisa Schon, *The Construction of Turkish National Identity: Nationalization of Islam and Islamization of Nationhood* (Netherlands: Tilburg University, 2013) accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.tilburguniversity.edu/upload/4a61e225-9a7a-4c58-a55c-dc711ca52b44 Anna%20Marisa%20Schoen%20-%20The%20Construction%20of%20Turkish%20National%20Identity.pdf>.

²⁶¹ John Redmond, *The next Mediterranean enlargement of the European Community: Turkey, Cyprus, and Malta* (Dartmouth Publishing Group, 1993), 21, Cited in Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism”.

²⁶² Oguz Unal, *Türkiye’de Demokrasinin Dogusu, Tek parti Yonetiminden Cok Partili Rejime Gecis Sureci* (*The Emergence of Democracy in Turkey, the Transformation Process From*

foreign policy towards Western and European international positions and policies. Ataturk did not challenge the European policies in the region and instead took a supportive position attempting to integrate further with Europe and the Western World. Hence, Turkey went further trying to be part of the European Co-operation and Integration. Turkey did not even bother about some the European positions against it at the beginning and still wanted to improve relations. For example, Britain supported the Anti-Turkish Campaign in WWI and in the War of Independence ²⁶³ and was reluctant to represent their ambassadors in the new capital Ankara²⁶⁴, but this was ignored by Turkey and insisted in improving relations.

The main characteristics that we can draw of Turkey's foreign policy at that time were; Isolation, Pragmatism, and Rationalism ²⁶⁵. Omer Kurkcuoglu (1981) in his article '*An Analysis of Ataturk's Foreign Policy, 1919-1938*' illustrated that Turkey's foreign policy was shaped by: 1- Dialogue with everyone 2- Use of Contacts and Links 3- No trust of other actors and 4- Separation between individual and government affairs²⁶⁶. However, due to the devastating political and economical results of the War of Independence and World War One, Turkey's main aim was to protect itself and keep away from

One Party to Multi-Party Regime). (Istanbul, Milliyet Yayin A.S., 1994), 117, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

²⁶³ Omer Kurkcuoglu, "Turco-British Relations Since the 1920's," in Hale and Bagis, eds., *Four Centuries of Turco-British Relations, Studies in Diplomatic Economic and Cultural Affairs* (Northgate: The Eothen Press, 1984), 81, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

²⁶⁴ Oya Silier, "The place of Anglo-Turkish relations in the Foreign policy of the Turkish Republic (1923-1939)," accessed May 7, 2015, http://www.politics.ankara.edu.tr/dergi/tybook/11/Oya_Silier.pdf.

²⁶⁵ Berke Dilan, Ataturk Donemi Turkiye'nin dis Politikasi, 1923-1939 (*Turkish Foreign Policy in Ataturk Period, 1923-1939*), (Istanbul: Alfa, 1998), 6-7, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

²⁶⁶ Omer Kurkcuoglu, "An Analysis of Ataturk's Foreign Policy, 1919-1938," In *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 20, (1981), 157-160, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

wars and therefore the concept of “Peace at Home and Peace Abroad” was one of the main pillars of Turkey’s foreign policy²⁶⁷. Turkey avoided to engage with any form of aggressive foreign policy and was mainly concerned about its own safety and support from Western powers. Therefore, Turkey’s objectives were to ensure its territorial right and maintain peace in order to carry out reforms. Francis Fukuyama (1992) argued that such foreign policy ensured Turkey’s future power²⁶⁸.

Turkey was surrounded by previous Ottoman territories that could have posed threats to the stability and safety of the Republic, if careful measures were not taken. Consequently, the policy of ‘non-alignment’ was another feature of Turkey’s foreign policy and this was evident by its neutral stance during a time when defeated countries of WWI were trying to change the balance of power and the winners to defend the *status quo*²⁶⁹. Turkey’s neutral position in the international arena at a time of political instability in the region and around the world was a very important key step to Turkey’s national development. Instead of involving in different international affairs and taking part in different organizations, Ataturk sought to focus on the structuring and development of the new Republic²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁷ Roderic Davison, “Peaceful Foreign Relations: An Achievement of Ataturk,” In *AUSBF Dergisi* 36, no. 1, (1981): 167, Cited in Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism”.

²⁶⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End Of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 256-257.

²⁶⁹ Mehmet Gok, ‘Cumhuriyet Donemi Turk Dis Politikasinin ic ve Dis Kaynaklari’, (*The Internal and External Sources of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Republican Era*), in Ataturk Turkiye’sinde, 1923-1938, Dis Politika Sempozyumu, (*The Symposium on Foreign Policy in Ataturk’s Turkey*), (Istanbul: Bogazici University, 1984), 54, Cited in Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism”.

²⁷⁰ Oya Akgonenc , “A Study of Political Dynamics of Turkish Foreign Policy with particular reference to New Trends in Turco-Arab Relations: 1960-1975,” (PhD thesis, The American University: Washington D.C., 1976), 40, Cited in Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism”.

However, this did not mean that Turkey did not want to develop friendship with the West; in fact it needed its support as well. One of Ataturks main aims was to gain friendship of the Western powers. It was both for the integration with Western Civilization and protection of a new and weak state. Another good example can be found on Turkey's position towards the Moroccan Rif War or Rebellion in early 1920s. Due to Turkey's keenness on Western support, it did not challenge the Spanish or French powers over this issue, despite its anti-imperialist attitude²⁷¹. What is more, the League of Nations was another important interest for Turkey. The League would give Turkey Western support and protection. Therefore, Turkey joined the League of Nations by 1932²⁷², a Western institution that can pave way for further cooperation.

The national identity that Ataturk built was mainly characterized by its Anatolian-Turkishness, National, Secular, and Western. At the same time, the political ideology featured; modernism, secularism, republicanism, statism, and nationalism²⁷³. Those new national identity and ideological characteristics helped generate a foreign policy that is mainly shaped by its pro-Western, avoiding Ottoman and Muslim past, and isolationist. Such characteristics and foreign policy practices formed what became known as "Kemalism" and "Kemalist foreign policy".

²⁷¹ Nur Bilge Criss, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East," *Journal of MERIA* 1, (1997): 3, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.rubincenter.org/1997/01/criss-and-bilgin-1997-01-03/>.

²⁷² Yucel Guclu, "Turkey's Entrance into the League of Nations," *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1, (2003): 186-206.

²⁷³ Mete Tunçay, "Kemalism," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, 2015, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0440>.

Moreover, Ataturk was able to develop six main principles that represented the main characteristics of Kemalism. These are also known as the six arrows also drawn on the CHP symbol²⁷⁴. They stand for Republicanism, Nationalism, Populism, Statism, Secularism/Laicism, and Revolutionism²⁷⁵. Republicanism means that Turkey would be led by a parliamentary democracy with an independent judiciary. This can also be seen as a way to try and shift people from being servants of the Ottoman Empire to being citizens of Turkey with a democratic rule that allows people to rule themselves. Nationalism, in the sense to be proud of the new nation state and defend its territories, consequently keeping Turkey independent from any Imperialist rule or external threat. Furthermore, populism by building respect among all citizens and eliminating separation between any classes and individuals as well as making this revolution a social revolution that saved the Turks.

Moreover, Statism means that Turkey will have to act in a way that is nationally beneficial. This includes the state's ownership and responsibility of natural resources and industrial institutions. Secularism, also regarded as Laicism (Originating from French Secularism), is another distinctive feature of Turkey that Ataturk implemented, which meant a separation of religion from the state and from other educational and government affairs. This also built an understanding that citizens should have independence of faith and thought. On governmental level, it meant that government institutions should be free from any kind of religious influence or dominance. The Kemalist revolution was an

²⁷⁴ Turkkaya Ataov, "The Principles of Kemalism," in *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 29, (Ankara: Ankara University, 1960), accessed April 7, 2016, <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/44/1567/17013.pdf>.

²⁷⁵ Enver Ziya Karal, "The Principles of Kemalism", in Kazancigil, A. and Ozbudun, E., eds., *Ataturk: Founder of a Modern State* (London: C. Hurst, 1981), 11-36, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

extreme secular revolution that opposed the dominance of Islam over both institutions and citizens, and finally, Revolutionism, in the sense that Ataturk came to replace traditional institutions with modern ones. This includes reforming the country in a way that it can be more modern and away from traditionalism²⁷⁶. These principles generally summarize the overall ideas and aims of Ataturk. He was successful in a way that Turkey and Turkish society never looked the same as it used to be. This change was also evidence with the large wave of reforms that took place and changes in both domestic and foreign policies.

However, after the death of Ataturk, Turkey witnessed another major World War. This time Turkey's role was not as direct as it was in the First World War. Ismet Inonu, the new Turkish president and leader of the Republican People's Party, aimed at keeping Turkey neutral²⁷⁷. An Anglo-French-Turkish treaty of mutual assistance was concluded in October 1939²⁷⁸, which promised assistance to Turkey in times of war by France and Britain. A non-aggression Pact was also signed with Germany later in 1941²⁷⁹. These were important foreign policy decisions that were believed to help protect Turkish sovereignty. There were some attempts to improve Turkish-Russian relations, witnessing a number of agreements²⁸⁰, Turkey sought to ally with European Powers. During the Second World War, Turkey managed to keep itself neutral and away from pressure of joining in most of the wartime²⁸¹. However, Turkey only officially

²⁷⁶ Karal, 11-36.

²⁷⁷ John M. Vanderlippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy: Ismet Inonu and the formation of the Multi Party System, 1938-1950* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011).

²⁷⁸ Erik J. Zürcher, *A Modern History, Revised Edition* (IB Tauris & CO Ltd, 1997), 203.

²⁷⁹ William M. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy Since 1774* (Routledge, 2013), 64.

²⁸⁰ Nicholas Tamkin, *Britain, Turkey and the Soviet Union, 1940-45: Strategy, Diplomacy and Intelligence in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

²⁸¹ Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War: an 'active' neutrality* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

announced war against the Axis Powers in February 1945²⁸². This was a tactical foreign policy decision at a time when the United Nations was established. Due to Turkey's strategic thinking, it became one of the first members of the UN²⁸³.

4. Foreign policy and position during the Cold War

The Cold War was another crucial period in Turkish foreign policy. The World was entering a War of Tensions between the Western (The United States and NATO) and Eastern blocks (Soviet Union). Turkey was in a position that aimed at ensuring the development of relations with the West after joining the UN. It was benefiting from American aid after the 1947 Truman Doctrine and 1948 Marshall Plan²⁸⁴. Further links were established, such as becoming a member in 1948 in the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), enjoyed membership in the Council of Europe in 1950, and joined NATO in 1952. This shows the way in which Turkey was determined to intensify its alliance with Europe and the West. The NATO is a particular case that we need to consider when thinking about Turkish Foreign Policy. Turkey was able to join NATO after its participation in the Korean War. A brigade was sent to serve under UN command between 1950 and 1953²⁸⁵. This marked a major steppingstone marking Turkey's serious commitment to the West economically and militarily.

²⁸² Murat Metin Hakki, "Surviving the Pressure of the Superpowers: An analysis of Turkish Neutrality during the Second World War," *Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University*, 2007, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.ucc.ie/chronicon/3/hakkfra.html>.

²⁸³ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey's Relations with the United Nations," *MFA*, accessed May 9, 2015, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-the-united-nations.en.mfa.

²⁸⁴ Senem Ustun, "Turkey and the Marshall Plan: strive for aid," (MA thesis, University College London, 1997), accessed May 9, 2015, <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/44/1569/17035.pdf>.

²⁸⁵ Michael J. Varhola, *Fire and Ice: The Korean War, 1950-1953* (Da Capo Press, 2000), 145.

Turkey became increasingly economically and militarily dependent on the West and established a relationship better than ever before.

Although Turkey had to face a number of coups and political instability, its foreign policy mainly remain on the same track. However, we cannot deny that American-Turkish relations deteriorated in some occasions, particularly regarding Turkish-Greece conflict²⁸⁶. American economic aid became less significant with Turkey's association with the OEEC. Another important period for Turkey during the Cold War was the 'Cuban missiles Crisis' in the 1960s. Turkey became a central player between Russia and the U.S.²⁸⁷. Russia demanded the removal of the mid-ranged atomic warhead Jupiter missiles that were given to Turkey in exchange for removal of missiles from Cuba. This was an important point in history of Turkish Foreign Policy. Turkish-USSR relations interred another phase from 1964 with the Turkish *rapprochement*. Reasons for such act included a response to America's position on Cyprus, need for further economic assistance, and growing anti-American sentiment²⁸⁸. Turkey entered a new phase in its relations with the Eastern block, witnessing intensive talks and increase in both exports and imports between both sides.

Although that my thesis does not intend to fully cover issues over Cyprus and Greece, I still think that it is important for us to understand Turkey's foreign policy regarding those matters as they also had direct affects on Turkey's relations with the West and America in particular. Another Cyprus crisis was

²⁸⁶ Tozun Bahcheli, et al., "Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy," *United States Institute of Peace* 17, (2005), accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/pwks17.pdf>.

²⁸⁷ Suleyman Seydi, "Turkish-American Relations and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1957-63," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 3, (2010): 433-455.

²⁸⁸ Mustafa Aydin, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures during the Cold War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 1, (2000): 103-139.

witnessed in 1974 that involved Turkish intervention, which highly intensified tensions with Greece²⁸⁹. This in return worsened Turkey's relations with the U.S, while at the same time, relations with the Soviet block were improved and the USSR did not show much concern over Turkey's intervention in Cyprus²⁹⁰. It is important to note that this incident resulted in one of the lowest levels of relations between American and Turkey in history. However, after many attempts, relations were slowly growing again especially after 1978 when the American embargo was fully lifted²⁹¹. Although Turkey and the U.S. have had some tensions during the Cold War period, Turkish foreign policy was still mainly following Western interests²⁹². It can be argued therefore that Turkey did not give much attention to the Middle East and the Muslim World, for the sake of preserving support of the West. In 1958 for instance, Turkey supported the British intervention in Jordan and the American intervention in Lebanon²⁹³. Another strong evidence can be found when Turkey supported France during the Algerian Independence War²⁹⁴. These are some of the examples that show the extent of Turkish Western-Oriented foreign policy during that time. This identifies the way in which Kemalism has influenced Turkish foreign policy even long after Kemal's death.

²⁸⁹ Theodor Couloumbis A., *The United States, Greece, and Turkey; The Troubled Triangle* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 75-105.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 194-195.

²⁹¹ Hackett, C., "Ethnic Politics in Congress: The Turkish Embargo Experience," in Said Abdul, A. ed., *Ethnicity and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1977), Cited in Nasuh Uslu, *The Turkish-American Relationship Between 1947 and 2003: A History of A Distinctive Alliance* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003).

²⁹² Saban Calis, "*The Role of Identity in the Making of Modern Turkish Foreign Policy*" (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1996), Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

²⁹³ Gonlubol, M. et al. eds., *Olaylara Turk Dis Politikasi*, (Turkish Foreign Policy with the Events), (Ankara and Istanbul: Alkim Kitabevi, 1989 and 1990) pp. 303-305, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

²⁹⁴ Gerger, H. (1998), *Turk Dis Politikasinin Ekonomi Politigi, Soguk Savas'tan Yeni Dunya Duzenine*, (The Political Economy of Turkish Foreign Policy, from the Cold War to the New World Order), (Istanbul: Belge Yayinlari) p.77, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

On the other hand, there were other events that witnessed Turkey's support to her Arab neighbors. Turkey was in supported the Arabs side in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. Relations slightly improved and in 1973 Turkey announced that Israeli occupation of Arab territories was unacceptable. At the same time Turkey confidently open air space for the Soviets for aid purposes²⁹⁵. Another step forward that we can take into account is Turkey's joining in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1969²⁹⁶. This can be seen as a way forward to strengthen relations with the Muslim World. Turkey supported the PLO after its recognition in the UN as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians and permitted the opening of an office for the PLO in Ankara and in late 1970s.²⁹⁷

On the other hand, Turkey's relations with the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans during the Cold War can be regarded as low in profile. Relations with Central Asia and the Caucasus were not existent in a time where the USSR tried to keep Turkey's influence far from those areas and feared Pan-Turkism. While Turkey was keeping itself inline with Ataturk's policy of dealing with the Turks who are living within the borders of the republic²⁹⁸. On the other hand, Turkey's relations with the Balkans were slightly better. They managed to maintain political and economic relations with states in the Balkan areas. However, this was still limited due to the Soviet Union's dominance and control over that region.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Ari Tayyar, *Gecmisten Gunumuze Ortadoğu-Siyaset, Savas ve Diplomasi*, (Bursa: MKM Publishing, 2008), 373-374, Cited in Nedim Yalansız, "Turkey-Middle East Relations in the Cold War Era and the Great Powers" 4, Issue. 2, (2012): 393-402.

²⁹⁶ Organization of Islamic Cooperation, "Member States", *oicun.org*, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.oicun.org/3/28/>.

²⁹⁷ Tayyar, 376.

²⁹⁸ Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in Post-Cold War era: The Challenges and Multi-regionalism," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no.1, (2000): 173.

²⁹⁹ Sayari, p. 176.

However, by the end of the Cold War the balance of relations with the US and Turkey were changing again. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution, tensions between great powers increased and Turkey allied itself with the West. As a result Turkey was able to sign in 1980 a Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement with the U.S.³⁰⁰ In general, during late 1980s the Soviet Union did not appreciate Turkey's close ties with America and posed huge criticism, while at the same time, Turkey condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and allowed Afghani refugees to enter Turkey³⁰¹. The Soviet Union appeared weak and faced major internal instability and its collapse and end of the Cold War in 1989 meant that Turkey was no longer threatened and is now allied with the greatest power in the World entering a New World Order.

Overall, Turkey transformed itself from being a country that did not belong here or there, to an important Western partner. Joining the NATO was highly critical to Turkey and was able to increase its security and in different events showed how important Turkey was as a member of this organization. The Cold war was a period of high tensions and close to confrontations and Turkey was able to play a major part and her foreign policy has made its mark in this war. We can see that Turkey took a very pro-Western foreign policy direction, while at the same time, did not try hard enough to build closer ties with the Middle East.

5. Foreign policy after the end of the Cold War and the new World Order

³⁰⁰ William Hale, *Türk Dis Politikası 1774-2000*, (Istanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Publishing, 2003), 171-172, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, 173.

With the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the New World Order, many small and large states sought to change their foreign policies and roles in international politics accordingly. For Turkey, post-Cold War led to major changes in its foreign policy that changed its international position and role since then. The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the emergence of violent ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and Caucasus as well as the radical changes in the landscape of Eastern Europe, created new opportunities and new challenges at the same time. Therefore, Turkey sought to adopt a more active foreign policy and take advantage of those new opportunities as well as tackling new regional challenges that affects its own security and sovereignty. On the other hand, it is important to understand that the intensified Kurdish problem has been a major factor that further developed the challenges Turkey had to deal with, which had a direct effect on its foreign policies. For example, Turkey had to rethink about its regional strategic partnership and particularly with Iran, Iraq, and Syria in order to be able to deal with the Kurdish issue and the security threat of the PKK. Therefore, such new risks, challenges, and opportunities posed by the new post-Cold War era helped Turkey to break away from its Kemalist foreign policy tradition.

This was significantly evident in the era of Turgut Ozal, a man who changed the balance of power against Kemalists, was able to revolutionize Turkey's foreign policy and its international position. The period between 1983 and 1993 of Ozal's role in Turkey witnessed a major turning point. What is more, he was able to restructure the political ideology of the country and made Turkey a very important regional and international player. Ozal's participation in Turkish

politics can be tracked back to the 1980 military coup³⁰². It was a coup that came as the third coup in the history of Turkey. The first was in 1960 ending the Menderes period by Adnan Menderes³⁰³, which I will go into more details in the coming sections. The second coup d'état was in 1971 also known as “coup by memorandum” that came as a result of the increasing instability and chaos in the country³⁰⁴.

However, the 1980 coup d'état was led by Kenan Evren, a military General who wanted to end radicalism and restore the civilian parliamentary rule³⁰⁵. It was also in a time when Turkey had to face economic drawbacks and with the forming of the new government, the National Security Council (NSC) appointed Turgut Ozal as Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs³⁰⁶. Ozal had a more business-oriented mindset that believed in the importance of economic prosperity. Therefore, he carried out a number of economic reforms that resulted in a better economic performance in 1981 and after³⁰⁷. Furthermore, he was able to create the Motherland Party and marked an important presence in 1983 elections in the parliament³⁰⁸. However, he carried out his revolutionary ideas when the military slowly started losing its power over

³⁰² Sedat Laciner, “Turgut Ozal period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Ozalism,” *Turkish Weekly* 2, (2009), accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/333/turgut-ozal-period-in-turkish-foreign-policy-ozalism.html>.

³⁰³ Cihat Goktepe, “The Menderes Period (1950-1960),” *Turkish Weekly*, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/60/the-menderes-period-1950-1960.html>.

³⁰⁴ Aljazeera, “Time line: A history of Turkish coups”, *Aljazeera*, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/04/20124472814687973.html>.

³⁰⁵ Karpas, K., “The Military, the State, and Politics,” in Heper, M. and Evin, A. (eds.), *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 149.

³⁰⁶ Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, “Turgut Ozal,” *tccb*, accessed May 9, 2015, http://www.tccb.gov.tr/pages/past_presidents/turgut_ozal/.

³⁰⁷ Kilicbay, A., *Turk Ekonomisi, Modeller, Politikalar, Stratejiler*, (The Turkish Economy, Models, Policies, Strategies), (Ankara: Turkiye Is Bankasi, 1991), Cited in Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism”.

³⁰⁸ Ustun Erguder, ‘The Motherland Party, 1983-1989’ in Heper, M. and Landau, J. (eds.), *Political parties and Democracy in Turkey*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1991), 151-153.

the government and after his victory and assuming presidency in 1989³⁰⁹. Ozal's politics was famous with its pragmatic side to it. Therefore, Turkish Foreign Policy during Ozal's period was dominated by its pragmatic thinking.

The term "Ozalism" became famous in the post-Cold War period with Turgut Ozal's revolutionizing Turkey's position in the international arena. The remarkable changes in the international system with the revolution of Turkish economy donated to Ozalism as a new political wave in Turkey that made its mark in Turkish history. Ozal was able to contest the Orthodox Foreign Policy ideas, style, and structure in Turkey³¹⁰. He stated, *"In foreign policy the days of taking a cowardly and timid position are over. From now we will pursue an active policy based on circumstances... My conviction is that Turkey should leave its former passive and hesitant policies and engage in an active foreign policy"*³¹¹. Therefore, we can see the way Ozal was trying to transform Turkey into a new actor that should play a much influential role in international politics. Turgut Ozal was seen to be a moderate Muslim who did not agree with the Kemalist understanding of secularism and was also against the Arab version of Islamism. Furthermore, Ozal believed that Turkey was in need of an "Anglo-Saxon secularism" and a "Turkish version of Islam" open-minded towards other religious groups³¹².

In terms of Turkish foreign policy, Turgut Ozal sought to restore the Turkish position and international relations after a long period of isolation and military dominance. He saw that integration with the West as an important step

³⁰⁹ Laciner, Op cit.

³¹⁰ Sedat Laciner, "Ozalism (Neo-Ottomanism): An Alternative in Turkish Foreign Policy?," *Journal of Administrative Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2003-2004): 162-202.

³¹¹ Laciner, Op cit.

³¹² Ibid.

towards better relations. Turgut Ozal regarded Turkish people as “European Muslims” and that Turkey is part of Europe. For instance, in one of his famous books *‘Turkey in Europe, Europe in Turkey’* (1991) argued that Turkey is always European and is actually part of Europe³¹³. He called for better understanding between Turkey and the West particularly Europe and believed that Turkey can solve many of its problems and achieve prosperity and security through joining the EC. Furthermore, the end of the Cold War changed the balance of power in the region and reduced the Russian threat for Turkey. Therefore, allying with the Western powers headed by the United States was a very beneficial step. Moreover, Turkish relations during Ozal’s period improved especially after a long history of tensions regarding the Cyprus conflict. Therefore, it can be said that Turkey and the United States entered a new period of better relations³¹⁴.

On the other hand, in order to gain Western support and engagement, Ozal had to re-engage with the neighboring regions and make more efforts to develop relations with the Balkans, the Black Sea, and the Middle East. As a result, Turkey witnessed improved relations with these regions and particularly on economic terms. Hence, Ozal was able to develop economic relations with neighboring states, particularly with the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC)³¹⁵. The economic factor was increasingly becoming important in shaping relations with the Middle East, while oil prices were on the rise and the increasing dependency of Turkey on oil. Ozal

³¹³ Turgut Özal, *Turkey in Europe and Europe in Turkey*, (Nicosia, Northern Cyprus: K. Rustem & Brother, 1991), Cited in Sedat Laciner, “From Kemalism to Ozalism”.

³¹⁴ Sabri Sayarı, “Turkey and the United States: Changing Dynamics of an Enduring Alliance,” in Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydin (eds.), *Turkey’s Foreign Policy in the 21st Century, A Changing Role in World Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 30.

³¹⁵ Abdulkadir Civan, et al., “The effect of new Turkish Foreign Policy on international trade,” *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 3 (2013): 108.

was very much keen to developing relations with the West by trying to convince Western powers that Turkey was an influential and important power in the region, particularly the middle East. For instance, during the Gulf War of 1990 and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Turgut Ozal recognized that this chance for him to persuade the United States that Turkey is an important regional ally and fully supported the coalition against Saddam Hussein to free Kuwait³¹⁶. Overall, the Turkish-Arab relations were mainly based on economic interests and this played an important role in the growth of Turkey's economy. For example, Ozal introduced Islamic Banking (interest free banking system) in Turkey and performed Hajj in a way to promote relations and economic cooperation with the Middle East and the Islamic World³¹⁷.

The pre and post-Cold War periods in Turkey saw major waves of changes and domestic tensions between the traditional secular establishment and the new centre-right reformists. Turkey's foreign policy was mainly characterized by its isolation and skepticism at the beginning of the Republic. This was slowly changing due to both domestic and international changing environments, which paved way for Turkey to entre the international arena and play and much influential role. However, in order to understand the changing nature of Turkish foreign policy, one must analyse the domestic political dynamics and changes that took place. The development of Turkish domestic politics was shaped by a noticeable struggle between the secular camp of Kemalism and the right-wing political Islamists. This in turn had a major impact

³¹⁶ Sharon Otterman, "IRAQ: U.S.-Turkey Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations*, (March 21, 2003), accessed May 6, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-us-turkey-relations/p7795>.

³¹⁷ Metin Herper, "Islam, Conservatism, and Democracy in Turkey: Comparing Tugut Ozal and Recep Tayyip Erdogan," *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 2 (2013): 146.

on Turkey's foreign relations and policy. In addition, to understand the current AKP ruling party's ideology and foreign policy, one must also understand the development of Political Islam in Turkey.

6. The emergence and development of Political Islam in Turkey

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the way in which political Islam became one of the most important features in Turkish politics. Political Islam has certainly been central to understanding Turkish politics, which at the same time saw major shifts and changes of foreign policy directions when Islamists were highly influential and took part in the decision making process. The development of political Islam in Turkey is unique and took part in a number of phases in the republic's history. The evolution of Islamism has certainly affected Turkish foreign policy and particularly towards the Middle East. This section of the chapter will also pave way for understanding the emergence and establishment of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) that took power since 2002.

Although Turkey is regarded as a secular country, it is however populated by a majority of Muslims that account for around 99%³¹⁸. Therefore, this gives us some insights to why Islamist parties have had growing popularity in the past few decades. The experience of political Islam in Turkey after the creation of the newly Republic in 1923 was very tense and full of tensions. As Kemal Ataturk the founder of the new Republic was concerned in creating a new Turkish identity and image away from its previous Ottoman identity, Islamists in Turkey were isolated and their main concern was how to survive

³¹⁸ BBC News, "Muslims in Europe: A country guide," December 23, 2005, accessed April 14, 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4385768.stm>.

under such drastic and radical changes taking them away from Turkish Islamic traditions. Since 1923, Turkey was controlled by a single party known as The Republican People's Party (CHP) led by Ataturk until his death in 1938 and later by Ismail Inonu until 1950³¹⁹. Therefore, the first phase of Political Islam in Turkey was characterized by its weakness and isolation. The role of Islamists in the early years of the republic was weak and had very little influence over Turkish politics.

However, this has changed since the democratic transition took place in 1946 with the introduction of the multi-party system³²⁰, which created more space for other political parties to emerge and a new platform and opportunity for Islamists. This transition from authoritarianism to political liberalization had a major impact on Turkish politics and society ever since. The Republican People's Party led by Ismail Inonu lost its power and monopoly over Turkish politics in 1950 and therefore the new Democratic Party (DP) led by Adnan Menderes won the elections and ruled until 1960. Turkey entered a new era that famously became to be known as the Menderes period³²¹. Therefore, Prime Minister Menderes enabled more democratization and openness to religious participation in the political process and established more political room for Islamist groups to build and organize themselves. Adnan Menderes gave more recognition and respect to the importance of Islam and the rural traditions. The call to prayer was allowed to be read in Arabic, which was banned during Ataturk's rule, radio stations were allowed to broadcast citations

³¹⁹ Huri, Tursan, *Democratisation in Turkey: the role of political parties* (P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2004), 37.

³²⁰ Ergun Ozbudun, *Party Politics & Social Cleavages in Turkey*, (Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2013).

³²¹ Cihat Goktepe, "The Menderes Period (1950-1960)," *Turkish Weekly*, 2013, accessed April 14, 2015 <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/60/the-menderes-period-1950-1960.html>.

of the Quran, and Islamic education was growing in schools. As a result, conservative Muslims and rural areas and citizens were able to gradually enter the political competition. Turkey feared the Soviet threat and therefore a shift towards democracy would allow it to enter the “Western block”. Therefore, Turkey adopted the Marshall Plan, participated in the Korean War, and joined the NATO in 1952³²². The Menderes period is regarded as an important turning point in the history of political Islam in Turkey. Prime Minister Menderes became increasingly popular and succeeded in winning the elections of 1954 and 1957³²³.

Unfortunately, the democratic dream was crushed by Kemalist elites who were represented by the military and bureaucracy staging a military coup and ended the Democratic Party government on 27th of May 1960. Furthermore, DP members were imprisoned and Adnan Menderes was executed along with the Foreign and Finance ministers after putting them in front of a military court accusing them for violating the constitution³²⁴. Turkey was led by the military since 1960 through the “National Unity Committee” until 1961. However, the 1961 constitution brought about a new era that paved way for more freedom including freedoms for religious groups³²⁵. By 1964, the Justice Party was created by Suleyman Demirel, a man who won the elections in 1965 and created a majority government. The Justice Party came to rule Turkey for the

³²² Mustafa Akyol, “Trends in Turkey and the Future of Islamic Modernism,” *The Islamic Monthly*, 2012, accessed April 14, 2015, <http://theislamicmonthly.com/trends-in-turkey-and-the-future-of-islamic-modernism>.

³²³ Goktepe, Op cit.

³²⁴ World Bulletin, “The execution that still overshadows politics,” *World Bulletin*, 2013, accessed April 14, 2015, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/historical-events/118185/the-execution-that-still-overshadows-politics>.

³²⁵ Dogu Ergil, ‘dentity Crises and Political Instability in Turkey’, *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 2, (2000): 54.

next four years³²⁶. However, the most important event that had a major impact on the history of political Islam in Turkey was the 1969 Milli Gorus "National View" manifesto by one of the most influential Islamist figures in the history of Turkey Necemettin Erbakan³²⁷. He was an intellectual figure from Istanbul Technical University who was very concerned about the religious grounds in Turkey that have been affected by the Kemalist elites and called for the return to traditional values³²⁸. Erbakan was influenced by Mehmet Zahid Kotku, an Islamic scholar, who also supported the creation of the first Islamic party in 1970 known as the National Order Party (MNP) calling for a new political and economic order through Islamic principles³²⁹. Shykh Kotku became one of the most important religious leaders in Turkey providing MNP and other important figures in Turkish politics, such as Turgut Ozal and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the religious guidance and legitimacy.

However, only one year later, the MNP was dissolved by another military intervention and Erbakan went into exile out of Turkey by 1971³³⁰. Only a year later, Erbakan returned to Turkey and established NSP (the National Salvation Party)³³¹. Again this party did not move much away from its previous one and kept much of its Islamist agendas. The NSP's slogan was *yeniden büyük türkiye* "A great Turkey once again" calling for the return to Islam and Muslim way of

³²⁶ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Suleyman Demirel", *mfa*, 2015, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/suleyman-demirel.en.mfa>.

³²⁷ Ismail Duman, "Turkey's Erbakan and his National View Movement", *World Bulletin*, 2011, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=70763>.

³²⁸ Ali Erken, "Re-Imagining the Ottoman Past in Turkish Politics: Past and Present," *Insight Turkey* 15, no.3 (2013): 171-188.

³²⁹ Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country: Turkey Between Secularism and Islamism* (Hoover Press, 2010).

³³⁰ Daily News, "Chronology of Political Islam in Turkey," *Hurriyet daily news*, February 4, 2001, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetcailynews.com/chronology-of-political-islam-in-turkey.aspx?pageID=438&n=chronology-of-political-islam-in-turkey-2001-02-04>.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

life³³². Erbakan's popularity during the 1970's increased and Islamism became much stronger and influential. In the 1973 elections, NSP managed to win 48 seats in the parliament making for the first time an official entrance for Islamists to the Turkish government³³³. Most interestingly, Erbakan agreed to join a coalition government with its old enemy the Republican People's Party led by Bulent Ecevit in 1974³³⁴. Erbakan for the first time became the deputy prime minister in control of a number of ministries and promoted the return of *Sharia* in Turkey³³⁵. This enabled Erbakan to pave way for NSP members and other Islamists to access government institutions that eventually affected the secular state. Unfortunately, this coalition government only lasted for Nine months and through the rest of the 1970s Turkey witnessed high tensions between Islamists and leftists. Banu Eligur in his book *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (2010) argued that Turkey during the 1970s entered a period of high tensions and referred to it as being "on the brink of a civil war" and stated that "the Turkish political scene was characterized by a thorough ideological polarization between right-wing ultranationalists and radical left-wing groups, a long with a lack of decisive authority on the part of the government"³³⁶

As a result, a military intervention was evident in 1980 and banned all political parties including NSP, but this time the military pursued a different policy towards Islamists and the religious discourse. According to Hakan Yavuz (2003) "since the 1980 coup, the Turkish state has pursued a dual-track policy

³³² Carkoglu, A., & Rubin, B. M, eds., *Religion and politics in Turkey* (Psychology Press, 2006), 40.

³³³ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic political identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2003), 210.

³³⁴ Alon Liel, *Turkey in the Middle East: Oil, Islam, and Politics* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 11.

³³⁵ Gareth Jenkins, *Political Islam in Turkey* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 132-134.

³³⁶ Banu Eligur, *The mobilization of political Islam in Turkey* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 85-88.

of cooptation and containment by opening more options to Islamist groups to participate in political and economic processes³³⁷. Therefore, Islamists were integrated into the democratic process, which gave another major opportunity for political Islam to flourish again. It can be argued that the Turkish military establishment during the cold war tried to stop the Communist and left-wing ideologies' influence and threat by increasing the role of Islam³³⁸. Therefore, religious education received intense support and became mandatory in schools³³⁹. However, the 1982 constitution defined Turkey as a secular state and was put to a referendum. Kenan Evren was appointed president and the National Security Council maintained power over Turkish politics³⁴⁰. However, Erbakan was able to come back again to the political arena in 1983 by establishing the Welfare Party (RP)³⁴¹, but this time it took the Welfare Party some time to reach a political success. However, most importantly, Turgut Ozal a man known to be a successful bureaucrat and an important figure in the politics of Turkey emerged the same year with the establishment of the Motherland Party (MP), which was regarded as a centre-right nationalist party³⁴². The National Security Council did not abandon the newly formed Ozal's party. Therefore, between 1983 and 1993 he managed to win the

³³⁷ Yavuz, *Islamic political identity*, 213.

³³⁸ Ron E. Hassner, ed. *Religion in the Military Worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 209.

³³⁹ Pradyumna P. Karan, *The Non-Western World: Environment, Development and Human Rights*, (Routledge, 2004), 476.

³⁴⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, 'Military Interventions: Army-Civilian Relations in Turkey before and After 1980', in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, ed. *State, Democracy and the Military*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 153, Cited in Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism".

³⁴¹ Global Security, "Welfare Party", *Global security*, 2013, accessed May 11, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/tu-political-party-rp.htm>.

³⁴² Metin Heper and Sabri Sayari, eds. *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, (Lexington Books, 2002), 163-178.

election, become Prime Minister, and later as President, which marked a period of significant transformation known as the “Ozal period”³⁴³.

As mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, Turgut Ozal’s business and economic experiences were very evident in his successful economic policies. On the other hand, political Islam went through another important period of success during his term, a term that lasted for around ten years and brought about drastic changes to the political and economic situations in Turkey. For example, Ozal’s economic policies gave rise to a new middle class that was referred to as the “Anatolian Bourgeoisie”. This new emerging class had links and ties with traditional and Islamic culture³⁴⁴. Furthermore, Islamists were given more freedoms that increased their powers and were able to get intensive financial support for private schools and universities. For instance, Fethullah Gulen one of the most important and leading Islamist scholars was able to fund and establish schools both in and out of Turkey. Gulen’s followers were able to teach Islamic principles and his ideas that were famously known to involve science and Western thinking as well³⁴⁵. Therefore, the Gulen movement became one of the most important religious movements that played a central role in the Islamic experience in Turkish history. Moreover, Islamists were able to access influential media and newspaper chains³⁴⁶, which enabled them to be

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ M Hakan Yavuz, ed. *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party* (University of Utah Press, 2006), 1-4.

³⁴⁵ Bulent Aras and Omer Caha, “Fethullah Gulen and His Liberal ‘Turkish Islam’ Movement,” *MERIA Journal* 4, no. 4, (2000), accessed May 11, 2015, <http://www.rubincenter.org/2000/12/aras-and-caha-2000-12-04/>.

³⁴⁶ Gert Brojka, “Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era from Kemalism to Post-Kemalism in the New World Order,” *Academia. Edu*, accessed May 11, 2015, http://www.academia.edu/2203484/TURKEY_IN_THE_POST_COLD_WAR_ERA_FROM_KEMALISM_TO_POST_KEMALISM_IN_THE_NEW_WORLD_ORDER.

heard and gain more popularity. Hence, it can be argued that Ozal's reforms created more space for political groups to rise and particularly Islamist ones.

During the 1980s, the Welfare Party RP led by Erbakan went through an important period of development. For example, in 1987 the Welfare Party received 7.16% in parliamentary elections³⁴⁷, but needed 10% more to have representation in the parliament. Although during 1980s there were no Islamist representations in parliament, the RP was still in the process of development. However, during 1990s, Islamist presence was increasing and this was evident during the 1994 parliamentary elections when the RP gained 19% of votes, which enabled them to have representation in parliament, and most importantly gained 21.38% of votes in 1995 national elections³⁴⁸. Therefore, in 1996 the Welfare Party managed to form a coalition led by Erbakan with the True Path Party (TPP)³⁴⁹, another conservative party headed by Tansu Ciller. They agreed to divide ministries between them and shared power of rule. This marked the first Islamist party to rule Turkey since the creation of the Republic. Some policies by Erbakan were seen to be quite controversial, such as the customs' union with the European Union, and treaties with Israel³⁵⁰. However, Erbakan still tried to push for a more Islamist foreign policy calling for the so called (D-8) an Islamic Economic Grouping for example³⁵¹. Fearing that Erbakan would further Islamize Turkish society and Turkish foreign policy, the

³⁴⁷ Paschalis Zilidis, "Turkey and European Union. Problems and Prospects for Membership," (MA diss., Naval Postgraduate School): 11, accessed May 11, 2015, http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/1481/04Jun_Zilidis_NSA.pdf?sequence=1.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 11.

³⁴⁹ Risa Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 212.

³⁵⁰ Angel Rabasa and Stephen Larabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey* (Rand Corporation, 2008), 43.

³⁵¹ Berdal Aral, "An Enquiry into the D-8 Experiment: An Inceptient Model of an Islamic Common Market?," *Turkish Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 1&2 (2005): 89.

military and secular establishments were highly alarmed. Hence, this led to the short living of his rule and resignation in 1997 after a lot of pressure in a so-called “silent coup”³⁵². The Welfare Party was later banned by the constitutional court in 1998 and Erbakan was forbidden from political action. The first Islamist party and prime minister rule in Turkey was short lived and Erbakan became much weaker after banning him for a five year period.³⁵³

Despite Erbakan’s ban from politics, he was able to involve in the making of the new Virtue Party (FP) in 1998³⁵⁴. However, this time they had to tone down their criticism of the secular establishment and build a new image of their party³⁵⁵. Despite all of this, the Virtue Party was also banned in 2001 and the party MPs were able to form two new parties; the Justice and Development Party (AKP) a modern reformist and “Conservative-Democratic” party, and the Felicity Party (SP) a more traditional party following the classical Islamist ideas³⁵⁶. Between 1999 and 2002, Turkey was ruled by the Democratic Left Party (DSP) led by PM Bulent Ecevit³⁵⁷. The emergent of the new reformist AKP party in 2001 established by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul was a major turning point in the history of Political Islam in Turkey, a party that would

³⁵² Michael M. Gunter, “The Silent Coup: The Secularist-Islamist Struggle in Turkey,” *Journal of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 21 (1998): 11, Cited in Mehmet T. Kuru, “Globalization and Diversification of Islamic Movements,” *Political Science Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2005): 253-274.

³⁵³ James M. Dorsey, “Turkish Court Ban on Islamist Welfare Party Boomerangs, Widening Gulf With EU,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1998, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.wrmea.org/1998-march/turkish-court-ban-on-islamist-welfare-party-boomerangs-widening-gulf-with-eu.html>.

³⁵⁴ Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 63.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 68.

³⁵⁶ Zeynep Atalay, “Civil Society as Soft power: Islamic NGOs and Turkish Foreign Policy,” in Kastoryano, R. ed. *Turkey Between Nationalism and Globalization* (Rutledge, 2013), 170.

³⁵⁷ Pelin Turgut, “Bulent Ecevit,” *The Independent*, November 7, 2006, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/bulent-ecevit-423240.html>.

come to successfully rule Turkey since 2002 and lead a transformation of the country on all levels.

7. The Justice and Development Party era: economic, political and foreign policy transformations

The AKP came at a time when Turkey had the biggest economic crisis in the history of the republic that they suffered few years before particularly during 2000 and 2001³⁵⁸. Therefore, the newly emerged Justice and Development Party (AKP) gave hope for new changes and won the elections of 2002³⁵⁹. This was seen as a victory for a new centre-right political party with religious roots. The new party was led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan who became Turkey's new Prime Minister and serves today as its President. Leaders of the AKP asserted in a number of occasions that it is not an Islamist party, and compared themselves to the European "Christian democratic" political parties³⁶⁰. The formation of the AKP saw an important departure from its leaders' traditional Islamist root. The new party came to offer a new image and phase in the experience of political history of Turkey.

The most important factor that is attributed to the AKP government was its success in weakening the military influence over the central government and involvement in Turkish politics and decision-making. The military establishment has been very much involved in shaping the political life since the formation of

³⁵⁸ Anne O. Krueger, "Turkey's Economy: A Future Full of Promise," *International Monetary Fund*, May 5, 2005, accessed May 12, 2015.

<https://www.imf.org/external/np/speeches/2005/050505.htm>.

³⁵⁹ The Economist, "Erdogan triumphs—with plenty of help from his enemies," November 7, 2002, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/node/1433284>.

³⁶⁰ Hasan Turunc, "Islamicist or Democratic? The AKP's Search for Identity in Turkish Politics," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 15, (2007): 79-80.

the Republic in 1923. Erdogan's government took steady and significant measures in weakening such historical power and influence. For instance, several military figures and high-ranking officers were put on trial and imprisoned and many other military and kemalist associated underground groups who attempted to overthrow the AKP government³⁶¹. AKP leaders believe that the military should only be concerned with military issues and leave politics for politicians³⁶². Therefore, it can be argued that there has been a shift in the balance of civil-military relations and this enabled Turkey to enhance the development of its democratic process. Hence, for the first time in Turkey, an elected civilian government has much more power than the military³⁶³.

Moreover, during the rule of the AKP government, Turkey witnessed a significant democratic transformation. Erdogan's government managed to succeed in the parliamentary elections and presidential vote in the parliament³⁶⁴. The motivation behind this democratic development was also part of Turkey's commitment to joining the European Union. Turkey had to change and improve its democratic position in order to succeed in the full membership to the EU negotiations. According to Leila Piran in her book *Institutional Change in Turkey: The impact of European Reforms on human rights and policing* (2013), democratization and improvement of policing and

³⁶¹ Sarah Rainsford. "'Deep State Plot' Grips Turkey," *BBC News*, 4 February 2008, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7225889.stm>.

³⁶² Barcin Yinanc, "It's the people, not the AKP, who sent the military to the barracks," *Daily News*, March 5, 2015, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/its-the-people-not-the-akp-who-sent-the-military-to-the-barracks.aspx?pageID=449&nID=79195&NewsCatID=412>.

³⁶³ E. Fuat Keyman, "Post-vesayet, Sivillesme, Demokratiklesme," *Radikal*, January 15, 2012, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=HaberYazdir&ArticleID=1075796>.

³⁶⁴ Ahmet Uysal, "The Turkish model of democracy and development prevails," *Turkey Agenda*, April 3, 2014, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.turkeyagenda.com/the-turkish-model-of-democracy-and-development-prevails-493.html>.

human rights records have been to a large extent affected by the European Union and added that the AKP commitment for democratization was driven by “Turkey’s EU membership bid”³⁶⁵. Therefore, Turkey was as the new regional democratic model and the most successful Muslim democracy that inspires the rest of the Islamic World and particularly the Middle East.

On the other hand, when analyzing Turkish foreign policy since 2002, we see that an even greater transformation took place. After a long history of Turkish in-active foreign policy, the AKP came to revolutionize Turkey’s position once again. Turkey opened its doors to all continents and was able to develop diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations with many different nations. One of the most important doors was opened towards the Middle East and Turkey was able to re-engage with its neighboring Arab states especially after a long history of disengagement. Since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, Turkey played an increasingly important role in the region. Turkey joined the war on terrorism and was an important member of the anti-terror coalition³⁶⁶. Furthermore, as a result of this invasion on Iraq, Turkish security concerns increased and particularly regarding the Kurdish issue and its conflict with the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK). Therefore, Turkey was able to develop security cooperation and efforts with some of its Arab neighbors, such as Iraq and Syria in dealing with this security concern³⁶⁷.

³⁶⁵ Leila piran, *Institutional Change in Turkey: The impact of European Reforms on human rights and policing* (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25.

³⁶⁶ Faruk Logoglu, “Turkey, A Partner In The War On Terror,” *Middle East Forum*, May 31, 2002, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.meforum.org/299/turkey-a-partner-in-the-war-on-terror>.

³⁶⁷ Meliha Altunisuk and Tur Ozlem, “From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish Relations,” *Security Dialogue, Middle East Technical University* 37, no.2 (2006): 217-236. accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/school-of-international-relations/css/workingpapers/Altunisik&Tur,%20Syr-Turkey.pdf>.

In addition, the Turkish government was able to expand and develop its economic relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours. Hence, the level of exports to the Middle East increased dramatically and at the same time Turkey witnessed an increase of Arab investments in Turkey³⁶⁸. This economic re-engagement with the Middle East played a major role in Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern states, which in return created more opportunities and contributed towards its economic power. The AKP was able to gain popular support and sympathy of the Turkish peoples due to its successful economic policies. In less than a decade, Turkey managed to become an important and leading international economy. According to the World Bank, Turkey is the 18th largest economy in the world³⁶⁹. Furthermore, Erdogan also promised to make Turkey reach the top ten economies in the World by 2023³⁷⁰. This has been one of the strongest reasons behind AKP's continued success in the elections until today.

On the other hand, the AKP government was also successful in the mediation efforts in different international conflicts and events. For instance, Turkey was able to play as a critical mediator between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, Syria and Israel, and between Iran and the United States³⁷¹. Moreover, the AKP was also able to establish and develop the

³⁶⁸ Turkish Weekly, "Turkish Trade Patterns Shift With Political Dynamics," March 7, 2015, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/132094/turkish-trade-patterns-shift-with-political-dynamics.html>.

³⁶⁹ The World Bank, "Turkey Overview," accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview>.

³⁷⁰ Constanze Letsch, "Turkey's economic success threatened by political instability," *The Guardian*, January 9, 2014, accessed May 14, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/09/turkey-instability-threatens-economic-success-erdogan>.

³⁷¹ Kutsutilaisuus, "Contemporary Turkey in the World - New role, new resources?," *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, (May 3, 2012), Available at: <http://www.fiia.fi/fi/event/456/c/> (accessed May 14, 2015).

famous “zero problems with neighbors policy” and adopt a Soft Power approach³⁷². This has been crucial in Turkish foreign policy for the last decade. Turkey has had different historical conflicts with its neighbors and was able to develop a policy that can allow them to overcome such conflicts. Those conflicts were with Armenia, Cyprus, Caucasia, Kurds, and others. This Soft Power policy approach has been at the center piece of Turkey’s previous Foreign Minister and current Prime Minister Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu’s foreign policy agenda and was able to push Turkey forward in solving many of its historical conflicts with bordering and neighboring countries. Such important development makes Turkey a key regional and international player to consider, which at the same time highlights its growing influence over key regional events.

What is more, Turkey was able to advance its relations with many countries that previously shared very minor or even non-diplomatic relations at all. For example, Turkey opened several new embassies in many African and Latin American states for the first time³⁷³. Thus, Turkey today enjoys a very proactive international role and is participant in many different international organizations. Turkey is a member of NATO, United Nation’s Security Council, the G20 Industrial Nations, Alliance of Civilizations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Economic Cooperation Organization, World Trade Organization, Black Sea Economic Cooperation Business Council, European Free Trade Association, Association of Caribbean States, and the Organization for Security

³⁷² Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Policy of Zero Problems with our Neighbors”, *mfa*, (2011), Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa> (accessed May 14, 2015).

³⁷³ Ditchley Foundation, Annual Lecture XLVIII delivered by Ahmet Davutoglu, “Changing Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing World?”, (July 14, 2012), accessed May 14, 2015, <http://www.ditchley.co.uk/conferences/past-programme/2010-2019/2012/annual-lecture-xlviij>.

and Cooperation in Europe, and many more³⁷⁴. It is also important to note that Turkey has negotiated accession to the European Union and is still fighting for it because the current Turkish government believes that it is part of the European family³⁷⁵.

Within the last few years, the so-called Arab Spring has challenged Turkey's regional policy. A popular uprising that took place since 2011 in the Middle East toppling Arab governments one after the other. This has had a major impact on Turkey's relations with those authorities. Therefore, AKP's new vision and stable relations with regional governments have been greatly confronted. Turkey became to be seen as a source of inspiration and a good democratic model for the Arab population³⁷⁶. Although the Arab Spring challenged the Turkish-Middle East policy, Turkey still remained to be a central player in the politics and events of the region. The AKP government established an increasingly important position for Turkey both regionally and internationally and therefore it would be unthinkable to say that Turkey since the Arab Spring has returned to turning its back away from the region. Instead, Turkey remained heavily involved and particularly in the cases of Egypt and Syria. According to Soner Cagaptay (2012) Turkey has focused its foreign policy more towards the Middle East in the hope for becoming a regional power³⁷⁷. Turkey's interest in the Middle East remains high and the current tensions between Turkey and

³⁷⁴ Balkanalysis, "Turkey, International Organizations," accessed May 15, 2015, <http://www.balkananalysis.com/turkey/international-organizations/>.

³⁷⁵ Turkish Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey-EU relations", 2011, accessed May 15, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-the-european-union.en.mfa>.

³⁷⁶ Adam Balcer, "Turkey as a Source of Inspiration for the Arab Spring: Opportunities and Challenges," in Stephen Calleya and Monika Wohlfeld, eds., *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean* (Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, 2012), 370-386.

³⁷⁷ Soner Cagaptay, "Turkey's foreign policy pivot," *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 2012, accessed May 15, 2015, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/mar/21/opinion/la-oe-cagaptay-turkey-pivot-20120321>.

other Arab States due to the recent political development in the region reassures that Turkey is still a central player and will remain so for a long time. Such developments of Turkish role and increased interests in the region will be further analysed in the coming chapters and particularly examining the causes of such foreign policy transformation.

Conclusion

It can be argued that the Turkish politics and foreign policy went through four critical phases. The first phase started after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 with the rule of Ataturk. Turkish politics was under the influence of a monopoly system of government with a nationalist and secular identity. Foreign policy was characterised by its isolationist, non-active, pro-Western, and anti-religious position, a period that became famously known as the “Kemalist” era. The second wave came as a result of the introduction of the multi-party system that gave more space for other political parties to emerge and operate, thus giving the chance for political Islam to re-emerge and for Islamists to have growing influence over the politics and foreign policy of the country. One of the key players in the development of political Islam was Necmettin Erbakan who played a major role in maintaining and supporting a number of Islamist political groups. Islamist parties did not have great impact on Turkey’s foreign policy at the beginnings and the Turkish administration was mainly concerned with its alliance with the western camp during the Cold War.

It is only during the third phase since the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the new world order that Turkey sought to re-establish its international position and foreign policy interests. One of the main figures that

helped revolutionise Turkey's international position and stimulate its foreign policy was Turgut Ozal, an individual having deep attachment to Islam, accompanied by a strong liberal and pragmatic business mindset. It is only during this phase that a new "Anatolian Bourgeoisie" middle class emerged that had strong links with traditional Islam. Ozal's foreign policy was very successful in opening new channels of economic and diplomatic relations with many countries and most notably with Middle Eastern states. Relations with the Middle East were becoming more visible and more economic interests were built. Furthermore, during this third phase, the prominent Islamist character Necmettin Erbakan ruled Turkey for a very short time between 1996 and 1997. However, his rule gave significant insight to the development of the political life in Turkey. Erbakan gave priority and more attention to Middle Eastern and Muslim countries over Western countries, while at the same time did not directly challenge Turkish-European and Israeli relations at that time.

Furthermore, Turkey's political instability and unclear foreign policy particularly towards the Middle East came to an end with the emergence of the AK Party and victory in 2002 bringing a fourth and critical wave changed both the domestic and foreign policy characters. This fourth wave that we are still witnessing, brought about radical transformation and re-shaped Turkey's image. Domestically, the AKP was able to challenge and weaken the military and Kemalist establishments. There was a noticeable development in the democratic process and there was a major shift in the military-civil relations. In terms of foreign policy, it can be argued that the AKP re-revolutionised Turkey's position and role in international politics. Turkey since 2002 opened new doors

and paved ways for new opportunities for cooperation with the Middle East and many other countries in the world including Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Turkey's economy became increasingly stronger and powerful compared to its situation during previous governments. Major economic co-operations and interdependences were built with Middle Eastern States and other international economies. Thus, Turkey had one of the leading economies in the world and is seeking to enhance it even further. The regional role became much stronger and influential and Turkey became a central player in most regional and Middle Eastern affairs. There has been a noticeable shift from Hard Power politics to Soft Power as a tool for re-engagement and settlements of historical conflicts and this was particularly evident regarding the Kurdish issue. Moreover, Relations with Arab neighbours were established and went through major cooperative efforts on all cultural, economic, and political levels. Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East during this fourth wave entered a new era. Relations with Israel were deteriorating and the AKP government became openly critical of Israel's behaviour towards the Palestinians and the region as a whole. Due to these critical foreign policy changes, Turkey became recognised as a new significant player in the region whose role is of high strategic importance.

However, since the explosion of popular uprisings in the Middle East, Turkey's new foreign policy vision was challenged and a number of obstacles emerged. Security threats increased as a result of the Syrian revolution and relations with other Arab states deteriorated particularly with the Gulf Monarchies led by Saudi Arabia over the Egyptian case and the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite these challenges, Turkey still remains a critical player in

regional affairs and is highly involved in those Arab revolutions. Turkey sought to stand by the Arab populations and their demands. A noticeable shift in Turkey's strategy in the Middle East from dealing with Arab governments to supporting and gaining popularity among their populations. Hence, AKP's regional influence remains and its role is becoming increasingly significant especially in dealing with the Syrian and Iraqi cases as well as the recent war on ISIS. However, the most important question here that needs to be examined is what caused AKP's extensive regional Middle Eastern interest and engagement since 2002? Thus, this leads us to the coming chapters that aim to investigate the possible causes of such foreign policy changes by evaluating and assessing the accuracy of previous theoretical hypotheses introduced by scholars and researchers through Process Tracing method of analysis to try and arrive at a solid conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

Islamism and the Role of Political Islam in Challenging Traditional Turkish Foreign Policy Dynamics

Introduction

Since the 2002 elections and the Justice and Development party's (AKP) Turkey witnessed considerable changes in particular regarding the transformation in its foreign policy. Most notably, Turkey became a very active international player opening up to many regions including Europe and the Middle East. The most controversial and debatable consequence of this was the increase of Turkish political and economic interests and influence over the region. Turkey was able to re-engage actively with its Middle Eastern neighbours and increase relations and cooperation on all political, economic, and cultural levels on both bilateral and multilateral platforms. It was able to increase mediation efforts between conflicting states that helped develop its regional role and position among the Arab states. More diplomatic efforts were made in key cases such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the peace process between Arab states and Israel. On the other hand, Turkey was able to expand its economic interdependence with her neighbouring Middle Eastern states. Stronger economic ties were established and bilateral trade reached its highest levels. Moreover, the Turkish government realized the importance of being culturally inclusive with neighbouring regions not only Europe and the West in general, but also with the Middle East.

This brought the attention of many researchers in this field who attempted to explain the causes of such foreign policy change of behavior towards the Middle East, especially after having a long history of

disengagement. The dominant question in this field of study was attempting to understand the causes of this foreign policy change. Therefore, there have been many attempts by researchers and scholars to explain the reasons behind such transformation and change. As an observer and researcher of political science who became very interested in this field of study I was puzzled by the way scholars came up with different, and in many cases, contradictory theories and answers to this question. The literature on Turkish foreign policy became influenced by multiple theoretical mainstream explanations most notably; Realism, Neo-Liberalism, and Constructivism. Scholars were influenced by different schools of thought and this reflected on their academic work. As a result, to understand the reason behind Turkey's Middle Eastern-regional foreign policy development any researcher will come across a number of different explanations. These include, the role of Islamism and Islamist ideology, Neo-Ottomanism, National Identity, Economic interests, EU influence, National Security, and others.

Therefore, this chapter aims to develop an analysis that helps evaluate the different theoretical hypotheses provided by previous scholars. This will be carried out through using Process Tracing method of analysis, as it allows us to test the value of the different explanations presented in the literature. This Chapter will be focusing primarily on the concept of Islamism and Islamist ideology and political position of the AKP as a source behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002.

As mentioned earlier in the methodology chapter, the advantage is that Process Tracing allows us to examine the strengths and weaknesses of those different hypotheses. Moreover, it enables us to take on board or eliminate any

explanation as well as help search for an alternative one. Furthermore, Process Tracing will help identify the possible limitations of any explanation and how it may have failed to explain intervening inferences. Empirical evidence of primary and secondary sources, as well as collected data from my fieldwork and interviews will be employed to this purpose.

Therefore, this chapter aims to examine the notion of Islamism and Islamist ideology, and its influence over Turkish foreign policy as the cause behind Turkey's foreign policy change towards the Middle East. The first step will be to evaluate the arguments in support of this theoretical explanation and illustrating their limitations. These include AKP's Islamist roots and its leadership past involvement in the development of political Islam in Turkey; the Islamist sentiments in the writings, speeches, and statements by the two most influential leaders of the party, Ahmet Davutoglu and Recep Tayyip Erdogan; and finally the increased "anti-Western" behaviour mainly reflected by the deterioration of the relations with the American administration and Israel. In other words, the aim of this first step is to give a clear idea of the nature of each explanation, who the main scholars are, and based on what evidence they defended such arguments. The second step in this chapter is to examine available empirical data, archival documents, and others to be able to raise critical questions that such explanations might not have considered or looked at. Here the researcher will develop a critical engagement, where a number of questions are posed, which enables the researcher to identify possible limitations of those explanations. The third step will analyse possible critics of the Islamist based explanations and other opposite arguments that might contest them to highlight possible weaknesses. The fourth and final step will be

applying interview data, which will enable the researcher to further assess the sufficiency and necessity of the explanations under examination. This will be carried out through exploring interviewees' views and ideas towards such explanations and which they view to be most plausible.

This chapter's outcome will illustrate that the Islamist ideology notion in understanding Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government is in fact very weak and requires further revision. Although there are very clear pro-Islamic sentiments and behaviour in the AKP government, one cannot understand all aspects of Turkish foreign policy primarily by looking at it from this angle. The results show that scholars who have used this notion in their explanation, failed to explain other non-Islamist elements present in the AKP's policies regarding non-Islamic states and regions as well as the West. Some of them have fallen into the trap of adapting oriental thinking in understanding Turkish politics in general, while at the same time, others presented works that looked very political oriented. Such explanations are weak because they tend to overemphasize the role of Islamism and look at Turkish foreign policy from one single angle. However, the results show that due to some pro-Islamist components in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East, particularly with its support to the Muslim Brotherhood, we cannot totally eliminate this hypothesis. The study shows that the Islamist explanation fails a *Straw in the Wind* Test. This means that this explanation is neither sufficient nor necessary for affirming causal inference. In other words, failing a Straw in the Wind Test suggests that the hypothesis may not be relevant, but at the same time does not eliminate it. The implication of this result is that this explanation is highly weakened, while it strengthens the existence of rival explanations.

1. Islamism and Islamist ideology as the driving force behind foreign policy change

Since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power, many analysts viewed the new government's policies and behaviour with great suspicion³⁷⁸. This was mainly due to the party's leaders' direct involvement with past Islamist Political Parties and influential Islamist figures such as Necmettin Erbakan, a man who was able to establish a number of Islamist parties that challenged the Secular Military establishment. However, despite the AKP leaders' assertion that they are not an Islamist party that is moving away from the far right to be closer to the centre and regard themselves as "Conservative-Democrats"³⁷⁹, a number of analysts and scholars in this field of study still believe that the AKP maintains its Islamist core roots. With the development of relations and opening towards the Middle East and the greater Islamic world, more and more scholars believed that such new foreign policy is actually driven by political Islam and that the AKP is in fact a party that has "Islamist hidden agendas"³⁸⁰. Therefore, the aim of this section is to analyse the role of Islamism as a driving force behind Turkish foreign policy making during the last decade to give a clear idea of the nature of this explanation, who the main scholars are, and based on what evidence they defended such argument. Furthermore, this will include the examination of available empirical data, archival documents that should help the researcher's evaluation.

³⁷⁸ Ehud Toledano, "The AKP's New Turkey," *Hudson Institute*, April 22, 2011, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.hudson.org/research/9846-the-akp-s-new-turkey>.

³⁷⁹ Hakan Yavuz, "Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP)," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, accessed Oct 10, 2015, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0924>.

³⁸⁰ Ergun Özbudun and William Hale, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 22.

In order to do so, this section will be divided into five main parts; the first part will discuss the nature of AKP's Islamist roots and whether this is strong enough to suggest its current Islamist position. The second part will examine the evidence presented by some scholars after the analysis of key leading AKP members' speeches and statements in support of their Islamist interpretation.

The third part aims to critically assess the claim that Turkey has adopted an anti-Western behaviour. This includes analysing the fluctuating nature of relations between Turkey and the United States as well as paying a closer look on AKP government's behaviour towards American-Middle East policies during the last decade. Furthermore, this part will also examine the latest development of Turkish-Israeli relations and analyse the reasons behind their deterioration in the last few years. The fourth part will discuss the argument that there is an "Axis Shift" in Turkish foreign policy that moves away from the West. Finally, after illustrating the different arguments proposed by scholars and observers, I will critically engage with them to test the validity of their positions by using counter arguments presented in this field of study as well as providing evidence and data that challenge such claims.

2. Political Islamist roots of the AKP

Prior to the AKP's elections victory in 2002, many observers and media analysts have regarded the AKP as a "fundamentalist party" and after the elections they referred to it as an "Islamist party"³⁸¹. This is mainly due to its founding members' involvement with mainstream political Islam for a long time prior to the establishment of the Justice and Development Party. Ihsan Dagi (2008)

³⁸¹ Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

argued that the AKP founding members “have emerged from the cadres of the first organized political representative of Islamism in Turkish politics, known as the ‘National view movement’ led by Necmettin Erbakan”³⁸². Furthermore, Soner Cagaptay (2009), argue that the AKP is an Islamist political party due to its members’ experiences in previous Islamist parties in Turkey and therefore it is not surprising to see such shift in Turkish foreign policy interests towards the East, the Muslim world, and particularly the Middle East³⁸³.

Since 1950s, Islamist parties gradually became stronger and influential and managed to pave their way into Turkish political life. However, this led to a clash with the secular establishment and its institutions mainly against the military³⁸⁴. As a result, Islamist parties had to suffer closure and banning coups whenever they were seen to be threatening the secular nature of the state³⁸⁵. The National View was seen as an opposition movement to the foundation of the Republic and therefore was shut down by the Constitutional Court³⁸⁶. A coup d’état against the Welfare Party took place in 1997 and against the Virtue Party in 2001³⁸⁷. A number of the newly established party AKP in 2001 members were highly active in previous Islamist parties. This is one of the main reasons why critics suggest that the AKP is an Islamist party with a deep Islamist affiliation at its core.

³⁸² Ihsan Dagi, "Turkey's AKP in Power," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 25-26, accessed 22 September 2015, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v019/19.3.dagi.html.

³⁸³ Soner Cagaptay, "Is Turkey Leaving the West?," *Foreign Affairs*, October 26, 2009, accessed October 10, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2009-10-26/turkey-leaving-west>.

³⁸⁴ Hasan Turunc, "Islamicist or Democratic? The AKP's Search for Identity in Turkish Politics," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 15, (2007): 81.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Dagi, 26.

³⁸⁷ Dagi, 81.

However, it is important to clarify that when the Virtue Party was closed by the Constitutional Court in 2001, its party members were divided between those who are regarded as “traditionalists” who formed the Felicity Party (FP) that maintained its traditional Islamist values and ideology, and the “moderates” who established the AKP moving away from its traditional Islamist lineage to follow new and more moderate ideology and political goals³⁸⁸. This newly established party presented itself as a “conservative-democratic” one in support of democratic values, human rights, and open market economy.

Despite this moderate step away from traditional Islam, scholars such as Birol Yesilada and Barry Rubin in their book *Islamization of Turkey under the AKP rule* (2013), argued that the AKP leadership had “Islamist reflexes” and added that “Once in the government, the AKP elite encountered the powerful institutions and norms of the state and **had to** conform to the roles prescribed by the positions they came to occupy”³⁸⁹. This meant for some the integration of a party who had Islamist roots into the secular political system became a reality.

This leads us to an interesting critique suggesting that the AKP is practicing the so-called “*Takiyye*”, where they would hide their true views to escape prosecution and to move observers’ attention away from its traditional Islamist foundation and hidden values³⁹⁰. It is therefore believed that the AKP’s hidden agenda is to build an Islamic identity that would challenge the secular establishment³⁹¹. Those types of critics usually refer to examples such as the headscarf issue and the controversy over adultery as well. Opposition parties

³⁸⁸ Dagi, 26.

³⁸⁹ Birol Yesilada, *Islamization of Turkey under the AKP Rule* (Routledge, 2011).

³⁹⁰ Dagi, 26.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

and critics have always looked at the AKP with growing suspicion, fearing that this party will challenge and bring an end to Turkey's secular foundation. Galip Dalay and Dov Friedman (2013), argued that the AKP was able to learn from the mistakes of the previous Islamist parties in Turkey³⁹². Therefore, the AKP was able to develop its own "unique" position in their domestic and foreign politics³⁹³.

Similarly, M. Hakan Yavuz (2009) in his book *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* argued that the AKP is an Islamist party that was forced to hide its Islamist identity fearing that it would follow the same fate as its Islamist parties that preceded it. He added, "Islamic ideas and an Islamic worldview are still included in the identity of its leadership and might also be included in the AKP's deep-seated philosophy, but the AKP never uses the explicit language of political Islam, and indeed often feels compelled to stress that it is not an Islamic party"³⁹⁴. Yavuz argued that the newly emerging Turkey under the AKP is based on three main principles, "removing secularism as a source of polarization by reimagining "the meaning and function of authoritarian secularism", redefining political community on the bases of Ottoman cosmopolitanism rather than ethnic nationalism, and bolstering the democratic state by encouraging "a thickened civil society" and a reduced role for the public sector"³⁹⁵. A large number of scholars, who regard the AKP as an Islamist political Party or a party with an Islamist hidden agenda, stress on the

³⁹² Galip Dalay and Dov Friedman, "The AK Party and the Evolution of Turkish political Islam's Foreign Policy", *Insight Turkey*, 15, no.2, (2013): 123-139.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

³⁹⁵ Powell Russell, "Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey," November 1, 2010, *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 396 (2010): 33, accessed 27 August 2015, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2234108>.

experience and role of AKP Party founders with previous Islamist parties in Turkey and their Islamist affiliation and hidden agenda to explain the Islamic nature of current Turkish foreign policy.

3. Speeches and statements by leading members of the AK Party

Another major evidence used by critics of the AKP's government is the speeches and statements made by leading party members that demonstrated their Islamist mindset. A number of works have been written about how the speeches, statements, and writings of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ahmet Davutoglu demonstrated the party leaders' Islamic orientation. The aim of these studies was to monitor and pay close attention to any signs that could link those influential politicians to the previous Islamist engagement that they insist are no longer following.

3.1 Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Erdogan's experience in political Islam started during the 1970s and 1980s when he was an active member of Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party. He later was appointed as Mayor of Istanbul in 1994 and served for few years. Erdogan became the Prime Minister of Turkey after the AKP victory in 2003 and served for three terms until he became the 12th president of the Republic in 2014³⁹⁶. Since the formation of the AKP and Erdogan's leadership, more attention was given by analysts to his statements and speeches in an attempt to understand the party's mind set. Analysts who criticize the AKP are viewed by this government with great suspicion and mistrust. This is because they point out

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

statements made by Erdogan when he was Mayor of Istanbul in 1990s, such as “Thank God, I am for Sharia”, “One cannot be secularist and a Muslim at the same time”; and “for us democracy is a means to an end”³⁹⁷.

According to Toni Alaranta, (2015) in his book *National and State Identity in Turkey: The transformation of the Republic's Status in the International System*, “it is explicitly clear to the party's constituency that the party is much more than a political party. It is, as the leadership puts it, an expression of a historical ‘cause’ (*dava*)”³⁹⁸. The author quoted one of Erdogan's statements: “As I have said before, even though the AKP was formed no longer than thirteen years ago, we are the expression of a holy march, a holy cause (*Kutlu bir dava*) originally inaugurated centuries before”³⁹⁹. Toni Alaranta therefore argues that “When these words are read within their relevant political and historical context, it is crystal clear that the AKP is a political movement that represent political Islam”⁴⁰⁰. Furthermore, Svante E. Cornell in his paper, *What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy?* (2012), has also focused his analysis on AKP leadership statements and speeches suggesting that there are “plenty” of statements that support the AKP's Islamist ideology⁴⁰¹. Svante's focus on Erdogan's statements includes the assimilation of Turks in Germany would be “a crime against humanity” in 2008; referring to Sudanese leader Al Basheer that “a Muslim cannot commit genocide” in 2009 and to other statements that are “strikingly evocative” towards Israel and the Jewish state including the expression of

³⁹⁷ Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim democracy*, 10-11.

³⁹⁸ Toni, Alaranta, *National and State Identity in Turkey: The Transformation of the Republic's Status in the International System* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 98.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Svante E. Cornell, "What drives Turkish foreign policy?." *Middle East Quarterly* 19, no.1 (2012), accessed, August 20, 2015, <http://www.meforum.org/3129/turkish-foreign-policy>.

regret about the fact that Turkey had recognised the state of Israel⁴⁰². Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Erdogan conducted a series of visits to the Arab countries, referred to as the “Arab Spring tour”, the most important one to Egypt⁴⁰³. He was welcomed like a hero and made a speech that had strong incentives for Egyptians and the Arab World. Erdogan showed his full support of the democratic transition in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. A conference entitled *Turkish Foreign Policy under Erdogan: What drives it?* Organised by the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at the Johns Hopkins University (November 2014), discussed the ideology of the AKP and its leaders’ Islamist nature. On that occasion, Michael Reynold insisted on that “Erdogan’s views are very much shaped by Islam”⁴⁰⁴. To Reynolds, the American administration’s foreign policy decision mistakes towards Turkey and the increased tensions in their relations, was a result of America’s failure in understanding Turkish politics and Turkey’s foreign policy drivers⁴⁰⁵.

3.2 Ahmet Davutoglu

Ahmet Davutoglu is another major character who received a lot of attention due to his high level of influence on Turkish foreign policy making. Prior to 2002, Davutoglu was a well-known academic and scholar working both in Malaysia and Turkey and managed to write over 300 articles and 3 books⁴⁰⁶. Davutoglu

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Cumali Onal, “Erdogan receives hero’s welcome in Cairo,” *Today’s Zaman*, September 12, 2011, accessed October 10, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_erdogan-receives-heros-welcome-in-cairo_256604.html.

⁴⁰⁴ Behlul Ozkan and Michael Reynold, “Turkish Foreign Policy Under Erdogan’s Presidency: What Shapes it?,” *School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)*, November 18, 2014, accessed, August 20, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1S5zQl1-iA>.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Behlul Ozkan, “Early writings reveal the real Davutoglu,” Interview by Al-monitor. *Almonitor*, August 13, 2014, accessed October 10, 15, <http://www.al->

was chosen to be in the top 100 thinkers list in the foreign policy magazine⁴⁰⁷. In 2003, he became the advisor to the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan for around 7 years and he was later appointed Foreign Minister in 2009⁴⁰⁸. He became known as the “architect” of the new Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government. Davutoglu played a major role in the transformation of Turkish foreign policy and particularly in the opening up and the adoption of the so-called “multidimensional foreign policy”⁴⁰⁹. He is famous for his academic works on Turkish foreign policy and his attempts to turning his theoretical work into reality. These include his most famous book *Strategic Depth* (2000), *Civilizational Transformation and the Muslim World* (1994), and his PhD thesis *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* (1993)⁴¹⁰.

Critics have been focusing on Davutoglu’s work and his theoretical hypotheses on Turkish foreign policy and Turkey’s position in the international system. Svante E. Cornell’s work (2012) looked at Davutoglu’s writings and argued, “It is dominated by a deep conviction in the incompatibility of the West and the Islamic world, and by resentment of the West for its attempt to impose

monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/08/zaman-davutoglu-ideologue-behlul-ozkan-academic-akp-islamic.html.

⁴⁰⁷ Anatolia News Agency, “Turkey’s Erdogan, Davutoglu in Foreign Affairs top 100 thinkers,” *Daily News*, November 29, 2011, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-erdogan-davutoglu-in-foreign-affairs-top-100-thinkers.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkeys-erdogan-davutoglu-in-foreign-affairs-top-100-thinkers-2011-11-29>.

⁴⁰⁸ Bulent Aras, “Davutoglu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Todays Zaman*, June 30, 2009, accessed October 10, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/todays-think-tanks_davutoglu-era-in-turkish-foreign-policy_179504.html.

⁴⁰⁹ AA, “Turkey pursues a multidimensional foreign policy,” *Anadolu Agency*, April 15, 2014, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-pursues-a-multidimensional-foreign-policy/255159>.

⁴¹⁰ For more information on Ahmet Davutoglu publication visit, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-pursues-a-multidimensional-foreign-policy/255159>.

its values and political system on the rest of the world”⁴¹¹. Cornell quoted some of Davutoglu’s arguments and statements and stated that understanding the ideas and thinking of such top foreign policy decision makers helps us understand the way Turkish foreign policy is shaped⁴¹². According to Kerem Oktem (2010), Davutoglu introduced a reconsideration of the Turkish role from an Islamic position⁴¹³. In a workshop on “IR and Islam: Turkey’s Political Islam and Foreign Policy” part of the 8th Pan-European Conference (2013) at the University of Warsaw, Zenon Tziarras, a PhD researcher participant from Warwick University, argued that the AKP government does have an Islamist ideology, but this is limited in its foreign policy making due to different domestic and international circumstances⁴¹⁴. Tziarras also referred to some of Davutoglu’s statements. For example, he quoted Davutoglu’s when he was the foreign minister in 2009 saying: “As in the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman Balkans were rising, we will once again make the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East, together with Turkey, the centre of world politics in the future. That is the goal of Turkish foreign policy and we will achieve it”³⁹. He argued that this tells us that a “more assertive foreign policy orientation can be

⁴¹¹ Svante Cornell, “What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy? Changes in Turkey,” *Middle East Quarterly* 19, no. 1, (2012), accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.meforum.org/3129/turkish-foreign-policy>.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Kerem Oktem, “New Islamic actors after the Wahhabi intermezzo: Turkey’s return to the Muslim Balkans,” (2010): 1-58, accessed 21 August 2015, <http://balkanmuslims.com/>.

⁴¹⁴ Zenon Tziarras, “Political Islam and elite ideology and Turkish foreign policy,” *8th Pan-European Conference on International Relations*, University of Warsaw, (September, 2013), accessed 26 August 2015, <http://www.coiris.org/sa06-7-ir-and-islam-turkeys-political-islam-and-foreign-policy/>.

³⁹ Quoted in, Hillel Fradkin and Lewis Libby, “Erdoğan’s Grand Vision: Rise and Decline,” *World Affairs*, (2013), accessed August 26, 2015, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/erdogan%E2%80%99s-grand-vision-rise-and-decline>.

identified, informed by the Ottoman past and political Islamic notions, at least on a rhetoric level”⁴¹⁵.

Moreover, Bahlul Ozkan (2014) an intellectual who once was one of Davutoglu’s students and claims to have studied his writings, argued that Ahmet Davutoglu is an “organic intellectual of Turkey’s Islamists”, who has been working as a columnist at the Islamic Daily in the 1990s and publishing articles in Islamist journals since 1986⁴¹⁶. He added that Davutoglu’s most influential work *Strategic Depth’s* main argument is that “Turkey should expand its influence in the Balkans, Caucasus, and the Middle East”⁴¹⁷. In an article entitled *Turkey, Davutoglu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism* (2014), Ozkan argued that Davutoglu was the first who managed to apply a rationalistic and Islamist foreign policy⁴¹⁸. Other critics gave more attention to Davutoglu’s speeches and statements since he became foreign minister. It is argued that Davutoglu stated that Turkey should be a leader of the Islamic world and that Arab nationalist lack legitimacy and that “naturally” the successors of these governments are Islamist Parties particularly the Muslim Brotherhood whom the AKP have had strong historical ties with⁴¹⁹. Pamela Geller (2015), in a work published by the Middle East Media Research Institute, argued that there have been a number of “anti-western statements” made by PM Davutoglu that represent the level of hostility of the AKP government towards the West⁴²⁰. She collected and quoted

⁴¹⁵ Tziarras, 20.

⁴¹⁶ Ozkan and Reynold, Op cit.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Behlul Ozkan, "Turkey, Davutoglu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism," *Survival* 56, no. 4 (2014): 119-140.

⁴¹⁹ Alexander Christie-Miller, “Davutoglu, Erdogan’s vision man, saw Turkey as an Islamic World leader,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 2, 2015, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2015/0302/Davutoglu-Erdogan-s-vision-man-saw-Turkey-as-an-Islamic-world-leader>.

⁴²⁰ Pamela Geller, “Anti-West statement by Turkish President Erdogan and PM Davutoglu: Muslim countries must ‘unite and defeat the successors of Lawrence of Arabia’; ‘No one will

different statements. For example, in a recent speech held in front of a gathering of Turks who lived in Europe during his visit to Zurich for the World Economic Forum 2015, PM Davutoglu said:

“I again call this out from Zurich: Islam is Europe’s indigenous religion, and it will continue to be its indigenous religion. From Andalusia to the Ottomans, and, half a century ago with the holy march of our people who came here from every corner of Anatolia. The sound of the azan [Islamic call to prayer], brought by these heroes to Europe, the domes of the mosques with which they dotted this continent, will all be protected. We will continue to fight against all the hands that reach out to harm them [the mosques]. I kiss the foreheads of my brothers who carried the tekbir [i.e. the call “Allahu Akbar”] to Zurich. May Allah bless those who raised you. Blessed be those who came here with just a suitcase, in poverty, but with rich hearts filled with their faith [Islam]. How holy those people were, who came and sowed the seeds here, which will, with Allah’s help, continue to grow into a huge tree of justice in the centre of Europe. No one will be able to stop this”⁴²¹.

Such statements by Davutoglu are considered an important reflection of his Islamist outlook and it constitutes a major source for the Turkish foreign policy direction of the last 13 years. However, the main question here is to what extent such statements have actually been visible and reflected in Turkey’s foreign policy on the ground? This will be further analysed in the coming sections as part of the process tracing testing.

4. A growing anti-Western behaviour?

A number of scholars have used the fluctuating nature and deteriorations of relations with different Western states and governments including Israel as evidence to support their critics towards the AKP government and claims that

be able to stop’ the rise of Islam in Europe,” *Global Jihad*, accessed 21 August 2015, <http://pamelageller.com/2015/02/anti-west-statements-by-turkish-president-erdogan-and-pm-davutoglu-muslim-countries-must-unite-and-defeat-the-successors-of-lawrence-of-arabia-no-one-will-be-able-to-stop-the-rise-of-islam-i.html/> ; & MEMRI, Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed 21 August 2015, http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/8431.htm#_edn8.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

there has been a noticeable “Islamization of Turkish foreign policy” under the AKP rule⁴²². Others suggested that Turkey is “*Leaving the West*” and that there is an “*Axis Shift*” of Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government⁴²³. Soner Cagaptay (2009) in his article *Is Turkey Leaving the West?* stated, “In early October, Turkey disinvited Israel from Anatolian Eagle, an annual Turkish air force exercise that it had held with Israel, NATO, and the United States since the mid-1990s. It marked the first time Turkey's governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) let its increasingly anti-Western rhetoric spill into its foreign policy strategy, and the move may suggest that Turkey's continued cooperation with the West is far from guaranteed”⁴²⁴. In another article published by the Washington Post (2009), Cagaptay argued that Turkey under the AKP has taken a turn away from the West in its foreign policy⁴²⁵. He added, “Liberal political trends are disappearing, E.U. accession talks have stalled, ties with anti-Western states such as Iran are improving and relations with Israel are deteriorating”⁴²⁶.

This part will focus on the arguments forwarded by scholars and analysts that looked at the deterioration of relations with the United States and Israel as evidence for Turkey's anti-western foreign policy derived by AKP's Islamist agenda. Therefore, this part consists of two main sections; the first will be looking at Turkish-US relations under the AKP government and how some

⁴²² Birol Yesilada and Barry Rubin, ed., *Islamization of Turkey Under the AKP Rule* (Routledge, 2011).

⁴²³ Soner Cagaptay, "Is Turkey Leaving the West?." *Foreign Affairs* 26 (2009); Ahmet Sozen and Devrim Sahin, "Perception of Axis Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: An Analysis through "Butterfly Effect," *Izmir Review of Social Sciences* 1, no.1 (2013): 47-63.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Soner Cagaptay, "Turkey's turn from the West", *Washington Post*, (2009), accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/01/AR2009020101672.html>.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

critics have viewed this; the second section will analyse the nature of Turkish-Israeli relations and its recent fall back. However, the relations between Turkey and the European Union and the membership issues will be looked at in the coming chapter because it needs a larger section on its own in order to address this topic with a more adequate analysis.

4.1 Turkish-US relations and behaviour towards US-Middle East policies

Historically, Turkey has developed ties with the United States and managed to maintain good relations with it for a long time. Turkish-US alliance can be traced back to the Cold War after the end of the Second World War. The American administration at that time saw the importance of building a strategic alliance with Turkey against the Soviet expansionism and influence. The development of this alliance was further strengthened after the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Turkey's membership in 1951, which manifested "a close bilateral alliance within the multilateral context of the main Western collective defence organization"⁴²⁷. Relations between the two countries were clear based on mutual interests; Turkey supporting US interests and countering Soviet expansion, in return for US support and security assistance and efforts in fighting against the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK)⁴²⁸. Relations generally remained healthy and cooperation on economic and security affairs maintained. Turkey developed strong alliance with the United

⁴²⁷ Bulent Aliriza and Bulent Aras, "US-Turkish relations: A review at the beginning of the third decade of the post Cold War era," *Centre for Strategic and International Studies* (2012): 1, accessed August 24, 2015,

http://csis.org/files/publication/121107_Aliriza_USTurkishRelations_Web.pdf.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid*, V.

States and the West during the Cold War, while applying very cautious foreign policy towards Middle Eastern states⁴²⁹.

However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, Turkey entered a new phase in its foreign policy. Turkey's foreign policy became more active and was able to apply a "multi-dimensional" foreign policy. However, Turkey remained heavily dependent on its hard power politics and on the securitization in its foreign policy. At this regard, Paula Sandrin (2009) argued that using hard power in dealing with external problems contributed to viewing Turkey as "a post-Cold War warrior", a "coercive regional power", and "regional bully"⁴³⁰. However, relations with the United States remained important for both states and particularly both on a strategic and security level. For example, Turkey supported the American position in the 1990 Gulf War⁴³¹ and in the American War on Terror post 9/11⁴³².

However, this alliance witnessed a drastic change in the last decade. Turkey's negative views over US policies in the Middle East became much more evident. The first major drawback in Turkish-US relations happened during the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. Turkey opposed US invasion and did not allow the American troops to enter Iraq from the Turkish Northern borders⁴³³. This was due to America's changing policies and positions towards the Kurdish issue. The Turkish government was concerned about the possibility that this

⁴²⁹ Paula Sandrin, "Turkish Foreign Policy after the end of Cold War – from securitizing to desecuritizing actor," *Changing Turkey* (2009), accessed August 24, 2015, <http://changingturkey.com/2009/09/30/turkish-foreign-policy-after-the-end-of-cold-war—from-securitizing-to-desecuritizing-actor-by-paula-sandrin-university-of-westminster/>.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Sharon Otterman, "Iraq: U.S.-Turkey Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 31, 2003, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-us-turkey-relations/p7795>.

⁴³² Desmond Fernandes, "Turkey's US-backed War On Terror: A Cause For Concern?," *Variant*, 27 (2006), accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.variant.org.uk/27texts/Kurds27.html>.

⁴³³ William Hale, *Turkey, the United States and Iraq* (Middle East Institute, 2005).

invasion could lead to a strengthening of the Kurdish PKK and to the establishment of a Kurdish state in the North⁴³⁴. According to William Hale (2005), Turkey's rejection was an important turning point that created a major impact on US-Turkish relations and US-Turkish Middle East policies⁴³⁵. Hale illustrated that such event has changed the nature of the long strategic Turkish-US relations.

The AKP government became highly critical of US regional policies, relations deteriorated, and anti-American sentiment increased⁴³⁶. Aylin Guney in her article *Anti-Americanism in Turkey: Past and Present* (2008), argued that the AKP had a problem making a decision over the 2003 Iraq issue due to pressures from its "grassroots", and added, "Despite having an overwhelming majority in Parliament with 363 seats, the AKP would have had difficulty passing the decision wanted by the Americans regarding Iraq since it came from an Islamist political tradition which opposes declaring war against a fellow Muslim country"⁴³⁷. The Turkish government was highly critical of the Bush administration and the Turkish-US "strategic partnership" reached its lowest levels. However, signs of a new positive era of relations came after President Barack Obama was elected in 2008⁴³⁸, especially with his new multilateral approach in his foreign policy. Obama's first international visit was to Turkey in 2009 and one of the most important signals of improvement was Obama's view

⁴³⁴ Banu Eligur, "Turkish-American Relations Since the 2003 Iraqi War: A Troubled Partnership," *Middle East Brief*, no.6 (2006): 1. accessed August 24, 2015, <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB6.pdf>.

⁴³⁵ Hale, Op cit.

⁴³⁶ Stephen Larrabee, "Troubled Partnership: Turkish-US relations in an era of Global geopolitical change," *RAND*, (2010): iii. accessed August 24, 2015, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG899.pdf.

⁴³⁷ Aylin Guney, "Anti-Americanism in Turkey: Past and Present," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no.3, (2008): 477.

⁴³⁸ Larrabee, xiii.

of Turkish-American friendship as “model partnership”⁴³⁹. However, this optimism did not last for long. Only a year later another major dispute emerged over the Iranian nuclear problem.

An increasing number of analysts questioned Turkey’s relations with the United States and the West in general after the Turkish “No Vote” on sanctions against Iran at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)⁴⁴⁰. Turkey was able to sign an agreement with Iran on nuclear fuel swap known as the “Tehran Declaration” along with Brazil in 2010⁴⁴¹. The American government rejected such deal and forwarded new sanctions against Iran⁴⁴². Turkey’s position was not in favour of such sanctions and voted against. Some argued that this escalation of tensions and the Turkish decision of “No vote” was a result of the Gaza flotilla raid by Israeli forces also known as the Mavi Marmara incident in May 2010⁴⁴³. Israeli alliance is highly critical to American interests and Turkey’s hostile reaction towards Israeli behaviour and policies has been a central point of dispute between Turkey and the US. The Turkish approach towards Iran made many observers to ask whether America has lost its Turkish ally or not. Therefore, such Turkish lenience towards Iran was not surprising to some

⁴³⁹ Ahmet K. Han, “From “Strategic Partnership” to “Model Partnership”: AKP, Turkish-US Relations and the Prospects under Obama,” *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, no. 23 (2010): 77-112.

⁴⁴⁰ Fulya Ozerkan, “Turkey’s no vote on Iran sanctions a ‘strong rebuke,’ former US politician says,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, June 16, 2010, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetcailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=turkey8217s-no-vote-on-iran-sanctions-was-a-strong-rebuke-2010-06-16>.

⁴⁴¹ Julian Borger, “Text of the Iran-Brazil-Turkey deal,” *The Guardian*, May 17, 2010, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/julian-borger-global-security-blog/2010/may/17/iran-brazil-turkey-nuclear>.

⁴⁴² James Reini, “US rejects Iran nuclear deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil and sets up new sanctions,” *The National*, May 20, 2010, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/us-rejects-iran-nuclear-deal-brokered-by-turkey-and-brazil-and-sets-up-new-sanctions>.

⁴⁴³ Kadir Ustun and Kilic Bugra Kanat, “US-Turkey Relations in the AK Party Decade,” *SETA Policy Brief*, no.62 (2013): 9.

scholars and this is seen as part of AKP's pan-Islamist policies and openness to the Islamic world⁴⁴⁴.

Moreover, the Arab Spring has been another major issue that affected Turkey's foreign policy. With the development of popular uprisings in the Middle East, Turkish-US relations entered a new phase. The uprising in the Middle East brought about significant security concerns for both Turkey and the United States. Turkey at the beginning of the revolutions was quite hesitant in its response towards popular uprisings against Arab dictatorships. This was particularly evident regarding the Libyan uprising due to Turkey's high economic interests in that country⁴⁴⁵. Turkey invested a lot of its foreign policy efforts to develop good relations and cooperation with those governments. The Arab Spring challenged Davutoglu's "Zero Problems With Neighbours" policy after working closely with Arab regimes for a number of years⁴⁴⁶. The Turkish approach to the Arab uprisings was to contribute to regional peace and stability, while at the same time supporting the demands of the Arab peoples⁴⁴⁷.

Therefore, the American administration recognized the importance of Turkish regional role. As a result, intensive diplomatic efforts were made between Turkey and the US regarding this issue especially as both governments have vast interests in this region⁴⁴⁸. Observers saw the

⁴⁴⁴ Kenneth H. Williams, ed., *Rethinking: A Middle East in Transition* (Marine Corps University Press, 2011), 117.

⁴⁴⁵ Fares Thaher Al-Fayez, "The Turkish Strategic Restrictions towards the Arab Revolts," *Journal of Politics and Law* 6, no.2 (2013): 138.

⁴⁴⁶ Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2010, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/20/turkeys-zero-problems-foreign-policy/>.

⁴⁴⁷ Ustun and Kanat, 11.

⁴⁴⁸ İlhan Tanir, "How the Arab Spring is Transforming Turkish-American Relations," *Turkish Policy* 10, no.3 (2011): 75. accessed October 11, 2015, http://turkishpolicy.com/pdf/vol_10-no_3-tanir.pdf.

importance of the Turkish democratic model to the Middle East⁴⁴⁹. Turkey became heavily involved and this was seen by its support to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and in other Arab states. According to Alexander Murinson (2012), “The electoral successes of Muslim Brotherhood- affiliated parties and groups, such as Ennahda in Tunisia and the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, provided Turkey with an opportunity of creating a belt of moderate Islamist regimes in the region”⁴⁵⁰. Furthermore, Anat Lapidot-Firilla (2012) in an international conference entitled “Political Islam: Is Turkey a Model?” held by the institute of National Security Studies (INSS), argued that the AKP government is challenging the Western world and the Kemalist establishment by adopting the civilization discourse argument by claiming leadership of the “Islamic Civilization”⁴⁵¹.

Although this thesis does not aim to cover the later development of the Arab Spring and most recent issues, it is important to highlight that more efforts have been made in fighting terrorism and particularly the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq. Turkish-US relations entered a new phase due to their mutual security interests regarding the war against terrorism. Turkey and the U.S. administration have discussed a coalition protected “Safe Zone” inside Syria in return to allow US military and air force to use Turkish military bases in its fight against ISIS⁴⁵². The US has provided real-time intelligence to Ankara on PKK

⁴⁴⁹ Anna Secor, “Turkey’s Democracy: A Model for the Troubled Middle East?,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52, Issue 2 (2013): 157-172.

⁴⁵⁰ Alexander Murinson, “Turkish foreign policy in the twenty first century,” *Mideast Security and Policy Studies*, No. 9 (2012): 17.

⁴⁵¹ Anat Lapidot-Firilla, “A new version of Nationalist Islam?,” *INSS*, (accessed August 25, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG6qIwGlvXU>).

⁴⁵² Simon Tisdall, “Syrian Safe Zone: US relents to Turkish demands after border crisis grows,” *The Guardian*, July 27, 2015, accessed 25 August 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/27/syrian-safe-zone-us-relents-to-turkish-demands-border-crisis-kurd-uk-military>.

movements and provided most of the capabilities used by the Turkish armed forces against the PKK. Therefore, it can be argued that Turkish-US relations went through different phases and became much more diverse during the AKP government. The fluctuation in their relations is due to a number of global and regional circumstances and changes that are taking place.

4.2 Turkish-Israeli relations: a new phase

Turkey has been one of the first countries to recognize the state of Israel in 1949⁴⁵³. Since then, Turkey and Israel maintained good relations and strategic security and intelligence cooperation. Turkey recognized the importance of keeping good relations with Israel as this helps in the development of Turkish-US relations and the Western world in general. However, it is important to understand that Turkish-Israeli relations have fluctuated from time to time depending on different events. For example, after the 1956 Suez Crisis, Turkey “downgraded” its relations with Israel⁴⁵⁴. Moreover, in 1980, Turkey closed down its consulate in Jerusalem after the Israeli announced that Jerusalem was the eternal capital of Israel⁴⁵⁵.

Bilateral relations and cooperation mainly increased in late 1980s and 1990s on all economic, political, cultural and security levels. According to Umut Uzer (2013), national interests were so close that “the two countries were on the verge of establishing an informal alliance against Syria, Iraq and Iran due to common threat perceptions”⁴⁵⁶. During this highly cooperative environment

⁴⁵³ Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country: Turkey between Secularism and Islamism* (Hoover Institution Press, 2010).

⁴⁵⁴ Umut Uzer, “Turkish-Israeli relations: their rise and fall,” *Middle East Policy Council* XX, no.1 (2013), accessed August 25, 2015, <http://www.mepec.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/turkish-israeli-relations-their-rise-and-fall>.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

between the two countries, Turkey remained cautious towards its Arab neighbours. Turkey and Israel viewed each other as important strategic partners.

Since the AKP took power in 2002 Turkish foreign policy and relations with Israel took gradual shifts. During the first term of Erdogan's rule, Turkish-Israeli relations remained in good condition. Turkey even adopted intensive mediation efforts between Syria and Israel⁴⁵⁷. However, as relations with Europe and the West deteriorated since the 2003 Iraq war, Turkey opened up to the East and became closer to the Arab and Muslim world. This brought along a change in Turkish behaviour towards Israel and its actions in the region. Turkey suspended its mediation efforts between Israel and Syria in 2008 after Israeli attacks on the Gaza strip⁴⁵⁸. Since this Israeli operation, Turkish-Israeli relations took a sharp down turn. This was followed by the famous Davos incident in the G20 summit 2009 when Erdogan told Israel's president Shimon Peres "You know killing very well" referring to the Israeli killing of Palestinians in Gaza⁴⁵⁹. A second incident that further escalated tensions between Turkey and Israel occurred a year later. It was the Israeli attacks on the humanitarian ships known as Gaza flotilla and storming the Turkish Mavi Marmara ship killing and injuring civilian pro-Palestinian activists⁴⁶⁰. The flotilla incident caused significant damage in the relations of the former allies. Turkey withdrew its

⁴⁵⁷ Peter Walker, "Syria and Israel officially confirm peace talks," *The Guardian*, May 21, 2008, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/may/21/israelandthepalestinians.syria>.

⁴⁵⁸ Today's Zaman, "Turkey suspends mediation between Israel and Syria," *Today's Zaman News*, December 29, 2008, accessed October 12, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/latest-news-turkey-suspends-mediation-between-israel-and-syria_162622.html.

⁴⁵⁹ Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "Davos 2009 Recep Tayyip Erdogan Prime Minister of Turkey," January 29, 2009, accessed October 12, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3HeHOJkiuk>.

⁴⁶⁰ BBC, "Gaza flotilla raid: No Israel charges over Mavi Marmara," *BBC News*, November 6, 2014, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29934002>.

ambassador from Israel and Erdogan called for Israel to be punished for the killings and the bilateral military cooperation was cancelled as well⁴⁶¹.

Some scholars saw this as an increase of Turkish anti-Israeli behaviour adopted by AKP government. Svante Cornell (2011) for instance suggested that the only way that the change in Turkish foreign policy towards Israel can be understood is by understanding the AKP ideology: “the salience of anti-Western and Islamist thinking in the Turkish government”⁴⁶². He further argued that Turkey was increasing “solidarity with Islamist causes and regimes” and that “AKP leaders appear to have returned, at least to some extent, to the more Islamist thinking that motivated them prior to the moderation of the conservative movement in 2001-2002 and the founding of the AKP”⁴⁶³. Furthermore, during the Arab Spring, Turkey-Israeli relations remained low. After the military coup against Egypt’s elected president Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013, Turkey’s PM Erdogan accused Israel of being “behind the ouster of Egypt’s Islamist president Mohammed Morsi”⁴⁶⁴. This shows the way Turkey remained highly suspicious of Israeli policies in the region.

On the other hand, the Turkish government increased its support and alliance with Hamas - an Islamist political organization regarded as a terrorist organization by Israel and the US – which is seen by some analysts as an important signal of AKP’s Islamist affiliation. For examples, Harold Rhode, a former official in the US defence department stated in the *Jerusalem Issue Brief*

⁴⁶¹ Hürriyet Daily, “Turkish PM Erdoğan calls on world to punish Israel over deadly attack,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, January 6, 2010, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=erdogan-speaks-2010-06-01>.

⁴⁶² Svante Cornell, “Turkish foreign policy under the AKP: The rift with Washington,” *The Washington institute for near East policy*, no.3 (2011): 3.

⁴⁶³ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁶⁴ Suzan Fraser, “Erdogan: Israel behind Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi’s ouster,” *Huffington Post*, August 20, 2013, accessed August 25, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/20/erdogan-israel-egypt_n_3784716.html.

Series in May 2010 “their Islam is more in tune with the fanatically anti- Western principles of Saudi Wahhabi Islam”⁴⁶⁵. Furthermore, Thomas Friedman (2010), a columnist at *New York Times*, stated in an article entitled *Turkey goes from Pliable Ally to Thorn for U.S.*, argued that, “Turkey’s shifting foreign policy is making its prime minister, Recep Tayyep Erdogan, a hero to the Arab world, and is openly challenging the way the United States manages its two most pressing issues in the region, Iran’s nuclear program and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process”⁴⁶⁶.

In an article entitled *Crisis in Turkish-Israeli relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity* (2012) Banu Eligur argued that the recent Turkish enmity towards Israel is a result of Turkey’s Islamist foreign policy towards the Middle East⁴⁶⁷. She further stated, “the AKP government formed close political and economic relations with political Islamist regimes like Iran, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Hamas, and Hezbollah” and that this “new Turkish foreign policy led to a crucial divergence of strategic interests between Turkey and Israel”⁴⁶⁸. Similarly, Gallia Lindenstrauss and Süfyan Kadir Kivam in their article *Turkish-Hamas relations: between strategic calculation and ideological affinity* (2014) argued that the Turkish AKP government has ideological affinity with Hamas. They stated, “With both Hamas and the Justice and Development Party seen as linked to the global Muslim Brotherhood movement, there also

⁴⁶⁵ Hugb Pope, “Pax Ottomana? The mixed success of Turkey’s new foreign policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no.6 (2010): 161.

⁴⁶⁶ Sabrina Tavernise and Michael Slackman, “Turkey goes from pliable ally to thorn for U.S.,” *The New York Times*, June 8, 2010, accessed August 26, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/09/world/middleeast/09turkey.html?_r=0.

⁴⁶⁷ Banu Eligur, “Crisis in Turkish-Israeli relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 48, issue 3 (2012).

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 429.

seems to be an ideological affinity between the two”⁴⁶⁹.

Although this thesis does not intend to engage with very recent regional developments, it is necessary however to highlight that the recent developments in fighting the so called “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and growing worries of Turkey and Israel of a spill over, both recognize the importance of increasing military engagement against terrorist targets on their borders. However, Turkey’s main military collaboration against ISIS is with the United States and the international coalition troops, while Israel is conducting its own strikes on the Syrian border also in cooperation with the US and Jordan⁴⁷⁰. The war against ISIS could be seen as an opportunity for creating a new platform for bilateral cooperation. In this light, the question regarding Turkish-Israeli relations still persists and future relations are far from predictable.

5. Assessing the limits of the “*Islamist*” approach and explanations in understanding Turkish foreign policy

A large number of scholars and analysts argued that the recent change in Turkish foreign policy driven by political Islam, represented by the AKP government and its leadership’s Islamist ideology. The arguments presented in the literature asserted that the AKP government has *Islamist hidden agenda, pan-Islamist leadership, and Islamist domestic and international affiliation*. The evidence they focused on a number of facts and events. Some looked at the

⁴⁶⁹ Gallia Lindenstrauss and Sufyan Kadir Kivam, “Turkish-Hamas relations: between strategic calculation and ideological affinity,” *Strategic Assessment* 17, no.2 (2014): 10.

⁴⁷⁰ Gul Tuysuz and Zeynep Bilginsoy, “Ministry: Turkey joins coalition airstrikes against ISIS in Syria,” August 29, 2015, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/29/europe/turkey-airstrikes/>; Roi Kais, “Jordan, Israel cooperate in face of ISIS threat”, June 25, 2014, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4534226,00.html>.

AKP leadership Islamist roots and the way in which a number of its founding members were associated with previous Islamist parties in Turkey. Others collected and analysed the writings, statements, and speeches of the two most influential figures in the party (Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ahmet Davutoglu) that had any connection or links to Political Islam. While others paid more attention to the changes in relations between Turkey, the United States, and Israel focusing on the recent tensions.

This section of the chapter aims to identify possible critics of the Islamist explanation in understanding Turkish foreign policy as well as applying interview data, which will enable the researcher to identify possible errors and weaknesses to help determine the Islamist explanation's contributory value.

The explanations presented above are found to be weak and lacking of comprehensiveness in their approach. In other words, they fail in taking into account and explaining the different AKP policies that suggest otherwise i.e. commitment to EU membership and criteria; developments in the democratization process; economic liberalization; and openness and cooperation with other non-Muslim countries. Furthermore, some of those studies seem to have taken certain events for granted and dismissed the fact that there are other reasons behind the disagreement or escalation of tensions between Turkey and Western or “non-Muslim states” than simply an Islamist ideology or agenda. What is more, some of those arguments seemed very one sided and bias because they have been focusing on one aspect of Turkey’s foreign policy and its policy makers. For example, some studies focused on the allegedly “anti-western” and aggressive speeches against Western states and other pro-Islamist statements, while at the same time disregarding any other

form of positive statements towards Western states and negative statements towards some governments in the Muslim World.

A number of analysts have disregarded the complicated nature of Turkish history and society and their modernization process, while simply treating it as another Middle Eastern state. Turkey cannot be compared to any other country in the Middle East due to its unique social conditions, geo-strategic position, and historical development. Therefore, it can be argued that some of those studies fall into the orientalist approach of understanding Turkish foreign policy⁴⁷¹. In my interview with Dr. Saban Kardas, president of the Middle East Strategic Research Centre (ORSAM) in Ankara he argued that “The problem is that most of the literature on Turkish foreign policy are not necessarily theoretical, they are more policy oriented and not theoretically oriented. However, they are at the same time based on either approach”⁴⁷². The main reason why such claim fails to explain the cause behind Turkish foreign policy since 2002 is because it disregards other possible explanations that we need to take into account. However, this does not necessarily mean that we should totally ignore it, instead we need to adopt a more holistic and balanced approach.

The aim of this section is to assess the plausibility and accuracy of the Islamist approach. In doing so it will examine the strengths and weaknesses of this approach by testing it through the process tracing methodology to assess whether it will or not survive the test. First of all, each point illustrated in the

⁴⁷¹ Gurkan Zengin, “Orientalist Steriotypes and Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Sundays Zaman*, August 21, 2010, accessed September 20, 2015 http://www.todayszaman.com/columnists_orientalist-stereotypes-and-turkish-foreign-policy_219622.html.

⁴⁷² Saban Kardas, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, October 13, 2014.

sections above will be discussed separately. Secondly, counter arguments will be included in order to further explain the limitation of the approach. In addition, it will assess the necessity of taking into account such explanation when analysing Turkish foreign policy in the last decade.

When looking at the Islamist roots of the AKP we understand that AKP leaders emerged from the well-known Islamist “National View Movement” led by Necmettin Erbakan and have been associated with previous Islamist parties, but does that necessarily make them Islamists? With the emergence of the AKP and its split from the Virtue Party in 2001, AKP founding members changed the Islamist ideology and pursued a new path based on “conservative-democracy”⁴⁷³. Party leaders refused any attachment to political Islam and argued that they are now representing a wider range of the Turkish society from right to left. Moreover, the AK Party is the largest political party in Turkey with around 258 members⁴⁷⁴. Interestingly, many of them did not have any engagement with previous Islamist parties and, according to one of my interviewee in Ankara, some young men who came from very liberal families who even “drink Alcohol sometimes”. In addition, recent incidents of alcohol drinking by AKP officials have been on the news as well⁴⁷⁵. However, when examining the claim that the AKP is an Islamist party, it is necessary to first define Islamism and identify the main characteristics of an Islamist party in order to know if that applies to the AKP or not. According to Ihsan Dagi (2008),

⁴⁷³ Muge Aknur, ed., *Democratic Consolidation in Turkey: State, Political Parties, Civil Society, Civil-Military Relations, Socio-Economic Development, EU, Rise of Political Islam and Separatist Kurdish Nationalism* (Universal Publishers, Boca Raton, 2012), 167.

⁴⁷⁴ Cansu Colakoglu, “Turkey Between Elections,” *Harvard Political Review*, October 6, 2015, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://harvardpolitics.com/world/turkey-elections/>.

⁴⁷⁵ Hurriyet Daily, “Turkey’s ruling AKP demands resignation of ‘alcohol drinking’ official,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 4, 2014, accessed August 28, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-ruling-akp-demands-resignation-of-alcohol-drinking-official.aspx?pageID=238&nID=68671&NewsCatID=338>.

Islamism “refers to political activism that aims to form a polity inspired, if not defined, by the principles of Islam, and envisages the construction of an Islamic society through the agency of the state”⁴⁷⁶. This means that an Islamist party would adopt an Islamization project on the country and will most likely fight against any type of Western Democratic principles and liberal values, but was this actually the case with the AKP in Turkey?

AKP leaders have repeatedly asserted that such label does not exist in its agenda. Instead, it is a party that adopted far more liberal principles. For example, the Economist (2008) stated, “No Islamic party has been as moderate and pro-Western as the AKP, which catapulted into government in 2002 promising to lead Turkey into the European Union”⁴⁷⁷. Unlike Necmettin Erbakan “The Father of Turkish Islamism” who rejected the idea of joining the European Union, one of AKP’s main foreign policy goals was to join the European Union⁴⁷⁸. Moreover, Ihsan Dagi (2008) in his article *Turkey’s AKP in power* argued that the AKP government appears to be far less of an Islamist party and more as one that is pro-Western, market oriented, and populist⁴⁷⁹. The AKP was able to transform Turkey by enhancing the democratization process and minority rights including non-Muslims and Kurds⁴⁸⁰, proving its distance from Islamist parties whose aim was to transform the country into a “Caliphate” adopting religious principles and sharia law. In fact, since 2002, the

⁴⁷⁶ Ihsan Dagi, “Turkey’s AKP in power,” *Journal of democracy* 19, no.3, (2008): 26. accessed August 28, 2015, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v019/19.3.dagi.pdf.

⁴⁷⁷ The Economist, “A state prosecutor wants to ban the ruling party,” *The Economist*, March 19, 2008, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/node/10881280>.

⁴⁷⁸ Firat Cengiz, Lars Hoffmann, ed., *Turkey and the European Union: Facing New Challenges and Opportunities* (Routledge, 2014), 182.

⁴⁷⁹ Dagi, Op cit.

⁴⁸⁰ Alparslan Nas, “Democratization in Turkey: the end of the First Republic?,” *Open Democracy*, October 14, 2013, accessed October 12, 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/alparslan-nas/democratization-in-turkey-end-of-first-republic>.

AKP government adopted a number of reforms in line with European norms in human rights, civil-military relations, and judicial system.

According to Leila Piran (2013) in her book *Institutional Change in Turkey: The Impact of European Union Reforms on Human Rights and Policing*, the AKP government was able to carry on a large-scale institutional transformation based on democracy and human rights⁴⁸¹. However, it is important here to explain that the Islamist roots of the AKP and some of its leadership Islamist experience cannot be simply erased completely from their memories. Their previous experience in past Islamist parties and engagement with Erbakan's political movement *Milli Görüş* must have played a role in shaping their views and thinking. Such effects are evident analyzing their position regarding the headscarf and religious education for example⁴⁸², issues which lay at the heart of the democratic debate in Turkey. Some scholars have used such examples as strong evidence for the AKP's Islamism and Islamist agenda, while at the same time disregarding issues regarding the liberal and democratic transitions in the country, the respect of minority rights and others that are not involved in the notion of political Islam, at least to their perception of political Islam. Therefore, it can be argued that although there might be some pro-Islamic policies by the AKP government that can be located at the party's historical Islamist roots and experience, there are also other policies that make the party closer to the centre than it is to the right. Therefore, it is more efficient to regard the AKP government as a conservative-democratic and one that is

⁴⁸¹ Leila Piran, *Institutional Change in Turkey: The Impact of European reforms on Human Rights and Policing* (The United States: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁴⁸² Tulin Daloglu, "Turkey allows headscarves for young students," *Al Monitor*, September 24, 2014, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/09/turkey-headscarves-early-education-allowed.html>.

much more moderate compared to other Islamist parties both in Turkey and the Islamic world in general.

On the other hand, analysts who relied on the speeches and statements of Ahmet Davutoglu and Recep Tayyyp Erdogan have fallen into the mistake of overlooking the role of verbal statements in general. First of all, it is difficult to deny that such leading party members have showed some pro-Islamist positions in their speeches and statements, but it would be a major mistake to take them for granted without studying their policies on the ground. They fail to explain the Turkish increasing interests in other non-Muslim countries and nations, such as in Africa and Latin America. The AKP government has employed intense diplomatic efforts to increase relations and cooperation between the two sides. Furthermore, the AKP government has been the most successful government in negotiating Turkey's membership to the European Union, regardless of EU rejections. Turkey has shown great commitments to apply and adopt the Copenhagen Criterion for membership. The AKP was able to develop economic ties between Turkey and Europe as well as other non-Muslim states around the world.

More security efforts and collaborations with the US and the international community in fighting terrorism took place. During AKP rule, an increase in civil liberties and push for more democracy has been witnessed. Interestingly, when the AKP won the elections in 2002, a large number of journalists in Western media regarded the party as an "Islamist" one. Despite all this, soon after adopting the Copenhagen Criterion and showing greater commitments, the same journalists changed their view and called it a party with "Islamist roots". A couple of years later, when the government passed a number of important

reforms, they referred to it as a “reformed Islamist party”⁴⁸³. It seems like many Western journalists and observers are influenced by the Islamist notion in their understanding of the current government. This demonstrates the limitation of their analysis and understanding of Turkish politics. Therefore, it can be said that such views have been proven to be limited and simplistic.

Moreover, a number of studies have suggested that Turkey has been developing an “anti-Western” position turning its back to the West adopting an “axis shift” in its foreign policy. These statements are not accurate and they generalize the issue paying less attention to the details of specific events and circumstances that led to tensions with some Western states. If Turkey under the AKP has turned its back to the West, then what explains their keenness in joining the European Union and their cooperation with the US on a number of economic and security issues of mutual interest? However, one cannot deny that there have been a number of disagreements and clashes of opinions over some regional issues, but these were rational and pragmatic choices to serve Turkey’s regional interests and not due to AKP’s “Islamist” approach. With Turkey’s geo-strategic location and with the current globalized world where regional and international issues become very interlinked along with the increasing globalized international economy, it is nearly impossible for Turkey to disengage and turn its back to the Western world.

The argument presented in the literature that there is an “Axis Shift” in Turkish foreign policy is in fact very weak and does not reflect the reality of events out there. Unfortunately, a number of scholars have fallen into the orientalist trap and made very strong distinctions in their studies between East

⁴⁸³ Yavuz, 1.

and West. For example, Ozlem Demirtas Bagdonas (2012) in his work *A shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy or a marketing strategy? Turkey uses of its uniqueness vis-à-vis the West/Europe*, suggested that the axis shift argument fails to explain Turkish foreign policy motives and stated instead, “Turkey’s ‘recent’ turn to the Middle East as well as the discourses that evoke Turkey’s ‘bridge’ and ‘central state’ roles in the last decade show continuity in the logic of Turkey’s foreign policy practices, rather than an axis shift or a break with the past”⁴⁸⁴.

A lot of the attention has been given to the development in Turkish-US relations within the last decade. It has been argued that there has been a noticeable deterioration of Turkish-US relations during this time without taking into account that there has been a continuous cooperation on issues of mutual interest at the same time i.e. the war on terror, economic cooperation, and other political and security issues of common concern. Yes, Turkey’s relations with the United States have witnessed major changes as a result of many factors including domestic change and transformation in Turkey, regional changes, and the attitude of the American administration towards Turkey’s increasing regional engagement.

A number of events have played a role in shaping Turkish-US relations, such as the 2003 Iraq war, the economic crisis, the Iranian nuclear issue, and the recent Arab Spring. However, this does not mean that there was a continuing deterioration in relations, instead a disagreement over certain events and issues. To be more accurate, Turkish-US relations fluctuated during the

⁴⁸⁴ Ozlem Demirtas Bagdonas, “A shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy or a marketing strategy? Turkey uses of its uniqueness vis-à-vis the West/Europe,” *Turkish journal of politics* 3, no.2 (2012): 111.

last decade and did not remain bad the whole time. Instead, Turkey's regional foreign policy under the AKP has been trying to be more independent and gain self-confidence. Adopting an autonomous regional foreign policy to serve its interests away from being a US "junior partner" in the region does not mean to be anti-western. Since the AKP took power, Turkish foreign policy has been revised.

Saban Kardas (2011) argued that "the drive for autonomous action became a defining feature of Turkish foreign policy throughout the 2000s, as a result of which relations with the United States entered a new era, characterized by a growing number of frictions"⁴⁸⁵. However, he believes that these frictions were not the only character that shaped their relations; instead "both cooperation and competition have become routine features of the bilateral ties, which is examined in various issue areas and regions"⁴⁸⁶. The increasing relevance of Turkey as regional power due to its stronger economic and political ties in Middle Eastern states made the American administration see the AKP government with great suspicion and rethink its relations particularly regarding important regional issues. Indeed, Turkey's geographic role and regional interests have grown drastically shaping its foreign policy and this makes it less willing to follow an American lead that might put at risk its interests. However, this does not mean that Turkey is "turning its back" to the US or the West, Turkey in fact needs their support and alliance on many issues. Since the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011, Turkish-American communication and cooperation increased.

⁴⁸⁵ Saban Kardas, "Turkish-American relations in the 2000s: Revisiting the basic parameters of partnership?," *Journal of International Affairs* XVI, no.3 (2011): 25.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

The American administration saw the importance of a Turkish role and its partnership in an increasing hostile region. According to Ilhan Tanir (2011), “the Arab Spring not only helped the US and Turkey to grow closer but also helped diplomats on both sides comprehend the local factors that affect each other’s’ lives and interests”⁴⁸⁷. With the development of the Arab Spring and especially the escalation of the Syrian crisis and the emergence of ISIS, Turkey and the US became much keener to collaborate in tackling regional issues and in the current fight against ISIS. Such developments in the region and the growing Turkish-American cooperation in the attempt to solve them have significantly weakened the arguments suggesting that there is an “axis shift” or a Turkish turn away from the US and the West.

On the other hand, the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations is also believed to have been the result of AKP’s Islamist affiliation and of Islamist foreign policy agendas that seek to serve its Islamist aims at the expense of losing a long-standing regional partner. Furthermore, it is argued that there have been noticeable anti-Israeli sentiments within the Turkish leadership. The deterioration of relations between Turkey and Israel was not a result of AKP’s “Islamization” of foreign policy; it was in fact the result of a number of events that led to such tensions. The Turkish government did not welcome Israel’s aggressive behaviour towards the Palestinians and its continuous breaking of international law.

First of all, it can be argued that Turkey’s hostile position towards Israel has been a “reactive” one. An important question arises here, if Israel did not behave in such aggressive ways against Gaza and the humanitarian ships,

⁴⁸⁷ Ilhan Tanir, “How the Arab Spring is transforming Turkish-American relations,” *Turkish policy quarterly* 10, no.3, (2011): 77.

would Turkey still follow that same level of hostility towards it? As mentioned earlier, a number of years after they won the elections, the AKP government played an important role in the Arab-Israeli peace process and played an important mediating role between Israel and Syria who were very close to sign a peace agreement. Turkey's withdrawal from the mediation came as a result of Israel's aggression on Gaza. This was purely a "reaction" towards Israeli behaviour and since then Israel continued with its aggression targeting the civilians and attacking humanitarian ships as in the case known as the "Marmara crisis".

What is more, the majority of the Turkish population did not welcome the historical Turkish-Israeli friendship. In fact, there has been a growing anti-Israeli sentiment among Turks⁴⁸⁸. In the international conference entitled *Ten Years since the rise of power of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey* (14-15 November 2012), organized by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), Prof. Umut Uzer, in his presentation, argued that historically the Palestinian problem had had great sympathy not only among conservatives and Islamists in Turkey, but also among the "extreme left wing" and argued that a number of secularist politicians and journalists have been highly critical of Israeli policies in the Palestinian territories⁴⁸⁹. He added, "while the style and the sympathy of the current PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan might have intensified the conflict with Israel, another government would have had difficulty on

⁴⁸⁸ Umut Uzer, "Ten Years since the rise of power of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey," *Institute for National Security Studies*, November 14-15 2012, accessed October 12, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGC6OMoNVSI>.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

continuing warm relations with Israel because of the negative public opinions regarding Israeli actions in Palestinian territories⁴⁹⁰.

This negative perception of Israeli policies is not new in Turkey and most importantly not primarily related to conservative groups. Therefore, we cannot merely attribute the growing anti-Israeli attitude to the AKP government. It is important to note here that with the deterioration of the relations between Turkey and Israel had two important effects: first that Turkey was able to win the hearts and minds of many in the Middle East⁴⁹¹; and the second is that the number of votes in the 2011 elections were extremely higher than the 2002 and 2007 elections jumping from around 11 million votes in 2002 to over 20 million in 2011⁴⁹². Such changes give us critical insights in analyzing Turkish-Israeli relations and Turkish regional foreign policy. According to such statistics and taking into consideration the new Turkish image in the Middle East as a result of tensions with Israel, it can be argued that rationally this have helped the AKP to win more domestic support as well as more popularity in the Middle East. Therefore, such calculations should not be ignored by analysts, who simply suggest that this was exclusively due to Islamist ideology adopted by the AKP.

Having said that, it is believed that, while the AKP is pursuing an anti-Western and anti-Israeli foreign policy, there is a growing support by the AKP government for Islamist organizations mainly for the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkey has expanded its interests and influence in the Middle East, but to

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Hasan Kosebalaban, "Turkey and the Middle East: Interests or Identity?," *International conference at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)*, November 14-15, 2012, accessed September 26, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2e6iu_QZGo.

⁴⁹² Alberto Nardelli, "Turkish Election Results: What You Need to Know," *The Guardian*, June 8, 2015, accessed 26 September 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2015/jun/08/turkey-election-results-what-you-need-to-know>.

become a successful regional power would require more access to new zones of influence. Access for political influence is very much limited when there are nationalist governments operating in the Middle East. The best opportunity for greater influence in the region was seen when the Arab uprising started. Behlul Ozkan, in a conference at the Johns Hopkins School of advanced international studies entitled *Turkey's Foreign Policy under Erdogan's Presidency: What shapes it?* (November 2014), argued that before the Arab Spring, the aim was to turn the Middle East to an economic "hinterland" for Turkey, and that after 2011, Davutoglu saw the opportunity and importance to increase Turkey's influence in the Middle East especially after the toppling of authoritarian regimes which had strong nationalist positions that made it harder for Turkey to practice its influence in those areas⁴⁹³. Furthermore, Ozkan believes that the AKP's aim was to replace those nationalist governments in the Arab world with Islamist parties because it will make it much better and easier for Turkey to get greater access to regional influence⁴⁹⁴. Islamist parties in the newly emerging Middle East are looking at the AKP as a successful example and role model, which makes it natural for the AKP government to play a leading role for those newly established governments.

AKP's support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab states does not necessarily reflect an Islamist ideology; instead I believe it is a decision based on pragmatic and rational tendencies to serve Turkish interests in the newly emerging governments and gain greater political, economic and social influence as well as popular support. In a seminar on *Understanding the Transformation: AK Party era in Turkey*, organized by the

⁴⁹³ Ozkan and Reynold, Op cit.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

Centre for Turkey Studies (CEFTUS) held in the House of Lords in London (27th March 2015), Etyen Mahcupyan, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, stated, “the regional environment has changed since the Arab Spring and therefore Turkey had to readjust its policies accordingly”⁴⁹⁵. He argued that the Arab Spring forced Turkey to change its strategy towards the Middle East, from communicating directly and only with national governments to communicating with other Arab nations. This is because of the unstable situation of the Arab governments. Governments can change, but nations stay the same. Having to win the hearts and minds of Arab masses is highly critical as it gives far greater chance of accessing influence and legitimacy in order to play a leading regional role. From the Davutoglu’s writings and statements discussed earlier in this chapter, we realize the seriousness of the Turkish government in seeking regional leadership. Davutoglu urged Turkey to take advantage of its historical Islamic and geo-strategic positions as a way to increase its influence in the Middle East. Therefore, we can understand that the current AKP’s support for the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East mainly serves its national interests and contribute to its leading regional role and it is not primarily a result of its Islamist agendas.

On the other hand, we cannot attribute AKP’s support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt entirely on the alleged AKP’s “Political Islam”. What about the role of Turkish civil-military relations and rivalry in affecting AKP’s position towards the Egyptian case? The balance of civil-military relations’ experience in Turkey and the AKP role cannot be ignored. A significant part of the

⁴⁹⁵ Etyen Mahcupyan, “Understanding the Transformation: AK Party era in Turkey”, *Centre for Turkey Studies*, March 27, 2015.

democratization process in Turkey was limiting the military role in controlling the political life. The AKP was successful in weakening the role of the military in Turkish domestic politics and in balancing civil-military relations after a long history of military dominance⁴⁹⁶. It can be argued therefore that the Turkish position against a military coup and dominance in Egypt is not surprising at all. Many see Turkey as a successful democratic model for the Middle East, one that can bring hope and help in the regional democratic transformation⁴⁹⁷. Turkey condemned the Egyptian military interference into the new democratic political life and the 2013 coup d'état against a democratically elected government⁴⁹⁸. The AKP argued that military dominance over politics will hinder the democratic transition in Egypt whose core purpose was toppling a dictatorship ruled by a military man, Hussni Mubarak. It is critical that analysts pay more attention to the role of civil-military relations' experience in Turkey and how that affected Turkey's position towards the Egyptian case in particular after the military coup led by the current president General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Simply focusing on the role of political Islam behind Turkish support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt can be misleading. Such simplistic approach represents another gap in the literature and further analysis on this is very much needed. Therefore, the role of the Turkish civil-military relations' experience during the AKP rule in understanding the Turkish position towards the Egyptian case and the support for the Muslim Brotherhood against the Egyptian military

⁴⁹⁶ Ariana Keyman, "Civil-Military relations in Turkey," *E-International Relations Students*, May 21, 2012, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/05/21/civil-military-relations-in-turkey/>.

⁴⁹⁷ Adam Balcer, "Turkey as a Source of Inspiration for the Arab Spring: Opportunities and Challenges," in Stephen Calleya & Monika Wohlfeld, ed., *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean* (Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, 2012), 370.

⁴⁹⁸ Mustafa Akyol, "Turkey Condemns Egypt's Coup," *Al monitor*, August 21, 2013, accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/08/reasons-turkey-against-egypt-coup.html>.

represents another fact that contributes to the weakness of the Islamist approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy.

In addition, other scholars have looked at the improved Turkish-Middle East relations from a totally different perspective away from this Islamist interpretation. For example, an interesting work by Kilic Bugran Kanat (2012) titled *Continuity of Change in Turkish foreign policy under the JDP government: The cases of bilateral relations with Israel and Syria*, he argued that the causes of rapprochement with Syria and increased political, economic, and social relations accompanied by a deterioration of relations with Israel can in fact be traced back before the AKP was established and took power⁴⁹⁹. Kanat argued that these were caused by both the transformation of regional politics and domestic politics prior to 2002.

Furthermore, Kanat stated, “even though the JDP government and its leadership played a key role in strengthening and intensifying the change in relations with these countries, the changes started much earlier, in most instances as a result of changing regional dynamics and Turkey’s threat perception in the late 1990s”⁵⁰⁰. The author argued that since the Luxembourg Summit, Turkey sought to diversify its foreign policy, which paved way for improved relations with Syria. He added, since the end of the Cold War, Turkey went through an identity crisis and security crises, which made it move closer to Israel at the time. However, with the changing regional politics and newly emerging international system, Turkey went through a process of re-thinking

⁴⁹⁹ Kilic Bugran Kanat, “Continuity of Change in Turkish foreign policy under the JDP government: The cases of bilateral relations with Israel and Syria,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 4, (2012): 232.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

about its foreign policy position and saw the need for adopting a much more active foreign policy.

It is very clear that “Islamist” explanations are largely weakened and fall short in explaining the real derives behind Turkish foreign policy since 2002. The arguments presented in support of this claim lack detailed analysis of particular events and policies adopted by the AKP government that suggest otherwise. As we have seen earlier, these analyses have been mainly bias and relying on a singular point of view. For example, Saban Kardas, in his interview, argued that the religious identity and ideology debate is important, but it is impossible to explain everything. He said that “It is a major mistake to say that the AKP is an Islamist party. I believe the recent debates on Islamism in Turkey are not based on analytical concepts, they are rather policy motivated”⁵⁰¹. Furthermore, professor Mesut Ozcan, Chairman of the Foreign Ministry’s Diplomacy Academy and Advisor to the foreign minister, in his interview spoke about the current studies that claim that the AKP is an Islamist party and replied, “if both domestic and foreign critics suggest that the AKP is an Islamist country, then they should too say that half of the population are Islamist”. He added that “when we look at the current ruling political party, it is obvious that there are certain Islamic elements in their identity, but at the same time, there are several Western elements as well”⁵⁰².

Mehmet Ozkan, a senior researcher at the Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research (SETA), in his interview, also stated, “I totally disagree that the AKP is an Islamist party. However, I rather call it ‘**an Islamic-sensitive party**’, which means that Islam is not the main force deriving their

⁵⁰¹ Saban Kardas, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, October 13, 2014.

⁵⁰² Mesut Ozcan, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 18, 2014.

foreign policy, but they care about the Muslims and is Islamic sensitive in foreign policy i.e. the issue and suffering in Palestine or the massacres in Burma”⁵⁰³. Similarly, Jahit Tuz, senior advisor to Member of Parliament and former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, in his interview stated, “first of all, when you form an “Islamist” party, it means that you will not be representing all Turks. On the other hand, if you say you are a Secular nationalist party you will still have the same problem. Here the AKP comes into place with a new idea in Turkey creating a party that represent all parts and backgrounds of Turkey. There are both conservative and liberal members and supporters of the party as well as different backgrounds, such as my self I am a Turkish-Kurd”⁵⁰⁴.

It is interesting here to look at this issue from a Middle Eastern perspective and explore what would some officials and experts in Saudi Arabia (the second field work country) say about this. It is important to analyse the way in which those interviewees observe and perceive the AKP and Turkey’s openness to them. For instance, Professor Yahya Mahmoud ibn Junaid, Secretary-General of King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, in his interview argued that Erdogan was able to gain popular support when he was Mayor of Istanbul⁵⁰⁵. Ibn Junaid stated, “He has an Islamic Religious perspective, but he is not a Political Islamist”. He added, “Yes Erdogan supported the growth of Religious schools and Shari’ah Colleges. He supported the teaching and learning of Arabic language due to its importance in Islam and because it is the language of the Holly Quran”. For Ibn Junaid, this does not necessarily represent a political position; it is clearly a religious point of view.

⁵⁰³ Mehmet Ozkan, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 17, 2014.

⁵⁰⁴ Jahit Tuz, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 20, 2014.

⁵⁰⁵ Yahya Mahmoud ibn Junaid, interviewed by author, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 24, 2014.

Regarding his view on AKP's image and political position, he stated, "I believe that the AKP is a very moderate Islamic party and is closer to the centre than it is to the right". Such 'Saudi' view is understandable especially when compared to conservative Islam in Saudi Arabia. The Turkish version of Islam and practices are perceived to be quite moderate compared to many other Islamic nations including Saudi Arabia. Dr. Fayez Al-Shehri, President of Saudi-Turkish Parliamentary Friendship at the Shoura Council of Saudi Arabia, shared a similar view. He argued that although the founding members of the AKP have a long history of experience with Islamist political parties, they have successfully managed to change their positions and principles⁵⁰⁶. He stated, "Some analysts usually refer to Erdogan as a graduate of the Religious Vocational Islamic High School, but this was in early 1970s". Al-Shehri further argued that it is very difficult for someone to confirm that the AKP and its founding members have "hidden Islamist agendas", especially when there is not much to grasp when it comes to AKP's policies and practical reality.

Al-Shehri agrees that AKP officials have openly demonstrated their Islamic values and that they are proud of their Islamic heritage, but this does not make them Islamists. He argued that many observers, especially in the West, fall into the mistake of not being able to differentiate between AKP's Islamic heritage and values, and political positions. As being the president of the Saudi-Turkish Parliamentary friendship, Dr. Al-shehri highlighted that most of the work and collaboration between Saudi Arabia and Turkey is based on mutual interests and future relations. He added that our relations and cooperation with Turkey is not based on Islamic agendas and any matters

⁵⁰⁶ Fayz Al-Shehri, interviewed by author, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 13 2014.

discussed that would involve religious issue would be done under the umbrella of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Therefore, it can be argued that Turkey's openness to the Middle East involve a much deeper and complex factors than just due to its Islamic lineage towards the Islamic world.

Overall, in the interviews carried out in the fieldwork, all participants, who are all experts and professional academics and government advisors, disagree with this claim and they seem to all agree that one cannot understand the complex nature of Turkish foreign policy by relying on such notion. Such Islamist explanations mainly emerged during the establishment and first few years of AKP government, but since then have significantly fallen short. Such explanations of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East seem to underestimate the roles of regional economic interests and security concerns for examples. They also fail to explain other elements of the AKP's policies that suggest otherwise.

Therefore, when applying Process Tracing tests of inferences and study the evidence provided by scholars and their counter arguments, along with other empirical and primary interview data collected in my field work mentioned above, it appears that the concept of Islamism in understanding Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East since 2002 fails to survive a *Straw in the Wind Test*. Evidence of such explanation show to have a very low demanding standard due to its weakness to stand against evidence collected and analysed in this research. The reason behind the researcher's selection and application of a *Straw in the Wind Test* is because Islamist explanations do not provide evidence that can either rules it in or out. Furthermore, interview data have considerably weakened its reliability and significance in explaining Turkish

foreign policy change. It became clear that evidences are neither sufficient nor necessary for establishing causation. In other words, failing a *Straw in the Wind Test* suggests that this hypothesis may not be relevant, but at the same time does not eliminate it.

The Islamist hypothesis is not relevant in understanding the causes behind Turkish foreign policy interests in the Middle East, but due to the clear existence of some pro-Islamic sentiments in the AKP's policies, we cannot totally eliminate it. This Process Tracing test does not confirm this hypothesis and at the same time does not eliminate it. As a result, the implication of failing this test is that it slightly weakens this hypothesis and slightly strengthens rival explanations at the same time. So far, Islamist explanations show to be one of the weakest in this study and present the least demand on the researcher's knowledge and assumptions. To further simplify and clarify this process of examination, figure 1 below table summarizes the main points of the Islamist explanation and its value in the thesis so far.

Figure 1. Assessment of the Islamist explanation in Process Tracing

<p>Explanation 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AKP's Islamism and political Islam caused Turkish foreign change towards the Middle East since 2002.
<p>Evidence constituting this explanation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historical Islamist roots and experiences of AKP founding members. - Pro-Islamist statements and references by leading members of AKP. - Anti-Western behavior: deteriorating relations with the US and Israel.
<p>Process of examining empirical evidence and interview data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AKP leaders have publicly announced the abandonment of Islamist past, commitments to democratization, and commitment to EU membership. On the other hand, showed strong affiliation with Islamic heritage and members were proud to express their Islamic identity.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statements do not suggest much as they are not truly reflected by policies and particularly foreign policies i.e. increase of relations with non-Muslim states in Africa and Latin America. - Relations with the US have actually been fluctuating and were not in decline between 2002 and 2012. Some efforts remained and particularly on security levels. On the other hand, Turkey's criticism of Israel is more of a reaction of Israel's increasing irresponsible behavior in the region and especially after the war on Gaza and the Marmara incident. Evidence suggests that more civilian criticism has been recorded and that this has also influenced Turkish policy makers. This is not necessarily due to AKP's Islamist agenda, especially after noticeable Turkish mediation between Israel and Syria during AKP government's first term. - Interviewees showed clear disagreement with the Islamist notion and explanations.
<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set the least demanding standard for researcher's knowledge and assumptions. - Weak evidence that does not either rule the explanation in or out. - Neither necessary nor sufficient to establish causation (<i>Not necessary because the AKP does not declare itself as an Islamist party and has not yet been sufficiently proven to be one. Not sufficient because it does not represent a satisfactory explanation and does not have strong enough evidence as examined through empirical evidence and interview data</i>). - Therefore, fails a Straw in the Wind Test.
<p>Implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explanation is slightly weakened, but not eliminated. - Slightly Strengthens rival explanations in the study.

Conclusion

The Islamist critic has been haunting the AKP since day one. After the victory of 2002 elections, AKP's leaders asserted in a number of occasions that the AKP has abandoned its classical Islamism and are now more liberal and democratic. AKP's leaders like to be referred to as "Conservative Democrats" just like the German Christian Democratic Union and the centre-right. However, since the AKP sought to increase relations and role in the Middle East and the

Muslim world in general, many analysts and scholars viewed such foreign policy developments with great suspicion. As a result, increasing works focusing on the AKP Islamist ideology were carried out. Some scholars argued that AKP's political Islam came from its leaders' Islamist historical experience, while others looked at the academic work and verbal statements of Ahmet Davutoglu and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. On the other hand, others looked at the deterioration of relations with the US and Israel, and the improved relations with Iran, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood as driven by strong Islamist insights.

The chapter evaluated the plausibility of the Islamist explanation through applying the four steps strategy. First the researcher analysed the main components of this concept and the different arguments presented in the literature supporting them. Secondly, examined empirical data, archival documents, and raised critical questions. Third, the researcher analysed available critics of Islamism and political Islam as a source of Turkish foreign policy change, as well as analysing other contrasting arguments that critically reviewed the Islamist explanation and helped highlight possible weaknesses. In addition, the researcher applied interview data, which helped in assessing the sufficiency and necessity of the explanations under examination. This was carried out through reflecting on interviewees' views and ideas in assessing the explanatory value of this explanation.

After testing the Islamist explanation through analyzing opposite arguments presented in the literature and use of empirical evidence and interview data, results show that the Islamist ideology concept in understanding Turkish foreign policy since 2002 is in fact very weak and requires further revision. Although there are clear signs of pro-Islamic elements and behaviour

by the AKP government that can be attributed to its historical Islamist experience, it is impossible to understand all aspects of Turkish foreign policy by simply looking at them through the Islamist “lenses”. The results showed that analysts in favour of this explanation failed to explain the other non-Islamist elements of AKP policies regarding the development of relations and cooperation with non-Islamic states like China and Russia and other countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America as well as the West. According to some scholars, some critics have fallen into the trap of orientalism by generalizing and overemphasizing the role of Islam in Turkish foreign policy. While at the same time, others presented works that looked very policy oriented. Such explanations are weak because they tend to overemphasize the role of Islamism and look at Turkish foreign policy from one angle. However, due to some pro-Islamist policies in the Middle East, we cannot totally eliminate such hypotheses. The study shows that the Islamist explanations fail to survive a *Straw in the Wind Test*. Meaning that they are neither *sufficient* nor *necessary* for affirming causal inference. In other words, failing a Straw in the Wind Test make them slightly irrelevant, but at same time cannot be eliminated. The implication of failing a Straw in the Wind Test weakens the Islamist explanation, while strengthens other competing ones.

CHAPTER SIX

The Roles of Neo-Ottomanism and Identity Politics as Sources of Turkish Foreign Policy Change

Introduction

The first part of this chapter will examine the concept of Neo-Ottomanism and the claim that it has been the main driving force behind Turkey's foreign policy making. In particular, it will focus on the analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and on whether we should ignore such claim or not. In order to achieve this goal, this section will include an illustration of Davutoglu's Strategic Depth doctrine; the speeches and statements by AKP leaders in support such claim; the Soft-Power element of Turkish foreign policy used by some scholars as an aspect of the neo-ottoman regional project; and the examination of the notion of "re-Ottomanization" of Turkish foreign policy by the AKP's government.

This part of the chapter aims at examining the significance of the neo-Ottoman concept in understanding Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East under the AKP's government. This will be carried out through applying the "4 steps Strategy" mentioned in the methodology chapter. The first step will analyse the main components of this concept and the different arguments presented in the literature in its favour. The second step in this chapter is to examine available empirical data, archival documents, and others to be able to raise critical questions that such explanations might not have considered or looked at. Here the researcher will develop a critical engagement, where a number of questions are posed, which will enable the researcher to identify

possible limitations of those explanations. The third step will analyse possible critics of the neo-Ottoman based explanations and other opposite arguments that might challenge them to highlight possible weaknesses. The fourth and final step will be applying interview data, which will enable the researcher to further assess the sufficiency and necessity of the explanations under examination. This will be carried out through exploring interviewees' views and ideas to help understand such explanatory value.

The results of this chapter will show that the argument of Turkish neo-Ottomanist foreign policy fails to survive a *Hoop Test* as a consequence and that it will be eliminated from this study. A major weakness of this concept comes from the fact that there are a number of "distinct" definitions of neo-Ottomanism in the literature adding to its complexity and limitation. Moreover, it fails to explain Turkey's foreign policy interests and presence in the regions outside the former "Ottoman lands" such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Therefore, the implication of failing a *Hoop Test* is that it strengthens other competing explanations considered until now.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the role of national identity in Turkish foreign policy making since 2002. In particular, it will focus on the complex nature of ethnic and religious identities in Turkey; the change of elite structure and the emergence of a new middle class since the 1990s; and the notion of the Islamic identity and Muslim "Umma". This part will highlight the existing debate over Turkish national identity that is characterized by some scholars as Neo-Ottoman, Islamist, Islamist-Liberal, and conservative-democrat. This variety of definitions demonstrates a major weakness in the literature and in the value of the identity role hypotheses as a whole. This part

aims to evaluate whether national identity has been the main cause behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East or whether it has played a minor role. This identity explanation will be put to test through the analysis of its critics, the presentation of empirical evidence, and by providing data from interviews.

The results of this part will show that the identity explanation is useful in understanding Turkish foreign policy change as it successfully demonstrates the impact that national elites and the business class, influenced by the discourse of national identity, have on the process of foreign policy decision making. However, one of the major weaknesses of the identity explanation is the existence of different and contradictory characterizations of Turkish national identity. Furthermore, scholars who used the notion of identity in understanding the cause behind Turkish foreign policy change have failed to explain the significance of different external factors such as the US and institutions mainly the European Union as well as the role of different emerging security concerns posed by neighbouring countries and in the region. Although the notion identity does not explain all aspects of Turkish foreign policy, it managed to survive and pass a *Hoop Test* in the process tracing method applied. This means that the identity role will remain under consideration and cannot be eliminated from the study as it still gives us useful insights into important aspects of Turkish foreign policy. Passing a *Hoop Test* affirms relevance but does not confirm it; while at the same time weakens other rival explanations presented in this study.

Overall, the results of this chapter will show that the concept of neo-Ottomanism has no significance in explaining foreign policy change and the causes behind it. Its weakness led to its elimination from the study so far. While,

on the other hand, the role of identity explanation have proven to be much more powerful and useful in understanding one of the important derives behind Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East, highlighting the substantial role of Turkish national identity in affecting foreign policy making. However, both explanations seem to overlook the significant roles of the European Union, security concerns, economic interests, and other pragmatic aspects of Turkish foreign policy in the region.

1. What does it mean neo-Ottoman foreign policy?

Neo-Ottomanism has been an important concept used by a number of scholars when trying to understand Turkish politics. This has been evident in a large number of studies where analysts utilized the concept while analysing Turkish foreign policy. It is a popular concept widely applied in this field of study long before the establishment of the AKP. It is not a new concept or one that came as a result of AKP's policies. However, the concept lacks questioning and examining in the literature and therefore needs further analysis. The aim of this part of the chapter is to analyse the notion of Neo-Ottomanism and its main arguments. This includes examining available empirical data, archival documents, which enables the researcher to raise critical questions.

This chapter argues that, despite its frequent use in the literature, the concept of neo-Ottomanism does not have any real explanatory power in understanding Turkish foreign policy under the AKP's government. This part will be divided into four sections: The first section will try to define neo-Ottomanism and its key elements. This will include arguments presented by some scholars in this field of study that support such explanation and agree to

the existence of this notion. The second section focuses on the “Strategic Depth Doctrine”, a book presented by Ahmet Davutoglu in 2001. The section will explain the main principals of this book and Davutoglu’s main argument. Furthermore, the analysis will focus on how several scholars tend to refer to this book as a source for understanding Turkey’s neo-Ottomanism and foreign policy change since 2002. The third section aims at covering the way in which some critics have referred to a number of Erdogan’s and Davutoglu’s statements and speeches that show links to neo-Ottomanism. These are included because, for the critics, they represent important evidence in support of their argument, which deserves further analysis and examination. The fourth and final section will be an assessment of the above critics and arguments in favour of the neo-Ottomanist explanation, putting it to the test in order to assess its plausibility.

1.1 Understanding the concept

In order to understand the significance of the concept, it is necessary to define what Neo-Ottomanism means and then identify where it can be found in Turkish foreign policy since 2002 under the AKP’s government as suggested by many. The term was first introduced by Cengiz Chander, a Turkish academic and a columnist, in an attempt to understand Turkey’s new move towards a more active a diversified foreign policy after the Cold War⁵⁰⁷. The term became prominent during the 1990s and during Turgut Ozal’s rule. However, there are a number of definitions found of neo-Ottomanism. A useful one provided by Nimet Seker (2009) in his work *Turkey’s Strategic Depth: A Shift in Turkish*

⁵⁰⁷ Anita Sengupta, *Myth and Rhetoric of the Turkish Model: Exploring Developmental Alternatives* (Springer Science & Business, 2014): 87.

Foreign Policy states, “Neo-Ottomanism is a term used by critics to describe this return to a notion of a Turkey exerting power over its traditional Ottoman sphere of influence; those who use the term mean to imply that the new foreign policy involves the revival of imperial ambitions”⁵⁰⁸. Critics therefore suggest that Turkey’s foreign policy under the AKP has been very much following an imperial direction⁵⁰⁹.

Since the AKP took power, Turkish foreign policy has been carefully watched with great suspicion. The openness towards the Balkans, Caucasias, and the Middle East regions were seen to be an attempt by Turkey to regain its historical imperial dominance. A number of scholars support the view that Turkey is pursuing a neo-Ottoman foreign policy. For example, Tarik Oguzlu (2008) argued that Turkish foreign policy has been increasingly becoming involved in the Middle East, “Middle Easternising” according to him. He states that Turkey will very much be affected by Middle Eastern events than European ones. Tarik believes that this is due to the bargaining power the Middle East offers for Turkey⁵¹⁰. Furthermore, Einar Wigen (2009) in his article, *Turkish Neo-Ottomanism: A turn to the Middle East?* argued that Turkey has been adopting the neo-Ottoman foreign policy led by Ahmet Davutoglu, the man who invented the term in Turkish political dictionary, and further stated, “its neo-Ottomanist approach to foreign policy is not only focused on Muslim countries. Turkey has recently made serious progress in its relationship with Armenia, and

⁵⁰⁸ Nimet Seker, “Turkey’s Strategic Depth: A shift in Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Qantara.de*, August 7, 2009, accessed September 20, 2015, <https://en.qantara.de/content/a-shift-in-turkish-foreign-policy-turkeys-strategic-depth>.

⁵⁰⁹ Arda Baykal, “Where are Turkey’s new international relations taking it?,” *International Affairs of Defense Section*, 2010, accessed September 18, 2015, <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05348.pdf>.

⁵¹⁰ Tarik Oguzlu, “Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?,” *Turkish Studies* 9, no.1, (2008): 3-20.

the border between the two countries is set to open in the near future. Instead of dominating existing geographical units, Turkey appears to try to create a region of their own, the centre of which is Ankara⁵¹¹.

Ryan Evans (2014) in his work *Turkey's Shifting Strategic Culture*, argued that there has been two main dominant strategic cultures in modern Turkey; the republican strategic culture that emerged with the creation of the republic and the new republican elites led by Ataturk; the second is the neo-Ottoman strategic culture that emerged with the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" that came after the 1980 coup and the leadership of Turgut Ozal. He believes that the republican strategic culture has been fading since then and much more weakened during the AKP's era representing on the other hand a stronger neo-Ottoman geostrategic culture supported by a neo-Ottoman elites. For him "This neo-Ottoman strategic culture accepts diverse, substantial identities; prefers more balance in Turkey's Western-Eastern orientation; seeks greater regional power, if not regional hegemony; favours activism and involvement, particularly in the Middle East and broader Muslim World; and views security as a far broader concept than territorial integrity"⁵¹². He further argued that Erdogan has been following the same principles and policies of the "first neo-Ottoman national leader" Turgut Ozal. Ryan made interesting comparisons between Ozal and Erdogan and argued that there are many parallels, adding, "In some cases, where Ozal fell short, Erdogan has succeeded. But in others Erdogan has fallen into the same traps"⁵¹³. Similarly, Mustafa Sahin (2011) agrees that

⁵¹¹ Einar Wigen, "Turkish Neo-Ottomanism: A turn to the Middle East?," *Security policy library* 19, no.3, (2008):19.

⁵¹² Ryan Evans, "Turkey's Shifting Strategic Culture," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 2014, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://www.fpri.org/geopoliticus/2014/09/turkeys-shifting-strategic-culture-part-i>.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

since the AKP took power, there has been a clear transformation and return of neo-Ottomanism and that there has been a deliberate re-reading of Turkish history. He states, “A closer look at the ideas championed by the AKP party and the resulting changes in Turkish politics, clearly demonstrates that this transformation is not purely Islamic and therefore is not an axis shift. This process is rather a result of deliberate reading of Turkey’s history and its relevance to the contemporary politics. This deliberate attempt of reconfiguring Turkish politics is a normative shift in defining Turkey’s history, culture and identity which have been dominated by Ataturk’s Kemalist legacy. This transformation represents a ‘return of the repressed’; the Ottoman legacy which is best explained by, as this paper argues, Neo-Ottomanism”⁵¹⁴.

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011, Turkey had to deal with a region that is facing structural changes and it is significantly instable. Therefore, this led to Turkey change some of its foreign policies in order to adapt to the new changes. Tensions increased with some Arab national governments most notably Syria, a fact that for many marked the end of the Davutoglu’s “Zero-problems with neighbours” policy. However, interestingly, Turkey remained heavily involved in regional affairs and sought to play a greater role in this critically changing environment. Consequently, more and more critics focused on the Turkish role in the Middle East during the Arab uprisings and heavily regarded it as a continuation of AKP’s neo-Ottoman legacy. Paolo Quercia (2011) in his paper *The Turkish neo-Ottoman foreign policy and the Arab Spring*, argued that since 2002 the AKP has increasingly showed its

⁵¹⁴ Mustafa Sahin, “Islam, Ottoman Legacy and Politics in Turkey: An Axis Shift?,” *The Washington Review of Turkish & Eurasian Affairs*, 2011, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/islam-ottoman-legacy-and-politics-in-turkey-an-axis-shift.html>.

commitment to neo-Ottoman revival. For Paolo Quercia, the Arab Spring will dominate Turkey's foreign policy had played an important role in characterizing the political evolution of the AKP government⁵¹⁵. Furthermore, Omer Taspinar (2011) stated that the AKP's neo-Ottomanism filled a vacuum of strategic leadership in the Arab World⁵¹⁶. Omer Taspinar argued that there are three main factors that help us understand the AKP neo-Ottomanism: "the willingness to come to term with Turkey's Ottoman and Muslim heritage"; "a sense of Turkey's *grandeur* and self-confidence in Turkey's role in the world"; and "its goal of embracing the West as much as the Muslim world"⁵¹⁷.

Professor Serhat Erkemen, head of Department of International Relations at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University and Middle East ex-advisor at ORSAM 'Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies', in his interview, agreed with the notion of neo-Ottoman foreign policy and arguing that, "Regarding the Middle East, there are two main concepts existing in the literature, the first regards the role of Islam and the second looks at the historical role. I believe that Turkey does not have the mentality which classical Islamic approach has towards the Middle East". Then he added, "Turkey is trying to abandon the idea of separating borders, what type of integration does Turkey want from the Middle East? If Turkey is against having borders with the Middle Eastern states that means Turkey is against sykspecot"⁵¹⁸.

⁵¹⁵ Paolo Quercia, "The Turkish neo-Ottoman foreign policy and the Arab Spring," *Quarterly*, no.1, (2011): 11-15.

⁵¹⁶ Omer Taspinar, "The Turkish Model and its Applicability," in Tocci, Nathalie, et al. *Turkey and the Arab Spring: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy From a Transatlantic Perspective* (German Marshall Fund: United States, 2011), 11.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, 9-10.

⁵¹⁸ Serhat Erkemen, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 21, 2014.

Many scholars try to understand Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East from this perspective and are tracking any regional Middle East policies in support of this view. Furthermore, they seem to include both Eastern and Western Turkish policies in defining this neo-Ottomanist approach. However, it is important to note that there are a number of different interpretations of neo-Ottomanism, many of which failed to clarify its definition and characteristics, which further complicate and weaken the concept as a whole. Nick Dabforth (2014) argued that understanding the concept neo-Ottomanism depends on how we view the Ottoman Empire in the first place. He further argued that there are several Ottoman Empires that persist in the Turkish imagination⁵¹⁹.

1.2 Davutoglu's "Strategic Depth"

One of the most important intellectual works of Ahmet Davutoglu was his book *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position* (2000)⁵²⁰, a book that has been recognized as the main inspiration behind Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP government. Through his work, Davutoglu was able to construct a new foreign policy vision for Turkey. His main argument was that Turkey made a mistake by ignoring its neighbouring regions and therefore should play a more active role and exert its influence in the Balkans, Caucasia, and the Middle East⁵²¹. The book was published one year before the establishment of the AKP party. After the elections victory of 2002, Davutoglu became advisor to Erdogan

⁵¹⁹ Nick Danforth, "The Empire Strickes Back," *Foreign Policy*, 2014, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/27/the-empire-strikes-back-2/>.

⁵²⁰ Ahmet Davutoglu's book, *The Strategic Depth: Turkey's international position*, (2001), illustrated that Turkey is a product of the Ottoman history and empire, and that Turkey needs to recognise its history and significant strategic location to help overcome conflicts in the region.

⁵²¹ Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "The Davutoglu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy," *Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)*, no. 8, (2010): 4.

– the Prime Minister at the time and current President – playing a central role in engineering Turkey’s new regional and international position. Since he was appointed as the Turkish Foreign Minister in 2009, Turkey’s foreign policy improved its international cooperation and diplomatic relations. For example, Turkey was able to open new embassies in countries that never hosted a Turkish embassy before in Latin America⁵²². Ahmet Davutoglu became known as the architect of Turkey’s new “active” foreign policy⁵²³. This section of the chapter aims to illustrate the main ideas that Davutoglu presented in his book as well as analyzing its critics.

One of the main arguments presented in this book is that “a nation’s value in world politics is predicted on its geo-strategic location and historical depth”⁵²⁴. Turkey’s location is one of the most important factors that contribute to its international important position. It is a country that connects the West to the East and the Muslim world. It borders the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. It shares borders with Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Such position gives Turkey an enormous importance, but also a great responsibility, being located in a region of continuous tensions and instability. Therefore, Davutoglu believes that Turkey should take advantage of such position to expand its political, economic, and cultural interests increasing its influence in those regions. For Davutoglu,

⁵²² MFA, “Statement by H.E. Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu at the Meeting of Turkey-CARICOM Consultation and Cooperation Mechanism,” *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, July 18, 2014, accessed October 13, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/statement-by-h e -mr -ahmet-davutoğlu-at-the-meeting-of-turkey-caricom-consultation-and-cooperation-mechanism -18-july-2014 -istanbu.en.mfa>.

⁵²³ MEE, “Davutoglu: Architect of Turkish Foreign Policy to be new Prime Minister,” *Middle East Eye*, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/davutoglu-architect-turkish-foreign-policy-be-new-pm-2142298220>.

⁵²⁴ Joshua W. Walker, “Learning Strategic Depth: Implications of Turkey’s New Foreign Policy Doctrine,” *Insight Turkey* 9, no.3, (2007): 33.

“Turkey is a European country, a Middle Eastern country, a Black Sea country, a Mediterranean country, a Caspian Sea country, even a Gulf country through access”⁵²⁵. Davutoglu’s work created a *new geographical imagination* for Turkey. He argued that Turkey has a geographical depth that “places Turkey right at the centre of many geopolitical areas of influence”⁵²⁶.

Davutoglu rejects the idea that Turkey is a *Wing State* or a state that plays a *bridge Role* between East and West. Instead, he argues that Turkey needs to play a central role in regional and international affairs. Turkey’s location, history, and power contribute to its centrality and confidence in international affairs. Therefore, the geographical depth of Turkey has been highlighted as an important source for a more active foreign policy. His thesis encourages Turkey to apply a *Multi-Dimensional Foreign Policy* expanding its cooperation and diplomatic relations to other regions in the world as a way to help expand Turkey’s political, economic, and cultural interests. Davutoglu asserts that this should help promote regional and international peace, stability, and prosperity. According to him, “Turkey cannot wait forever at the EU door, and needs to develop a genuinely multi-directional foreign policy by utilizing its geostrategic advantages”⁵²⁷.

Another major element of Davutoglu’s work, which also represents one of the most important new Turkish foreign policy principles, is the *Balance between Freedom and Security*. Davutoglu argued that it is essential for Turkey to provide security for its citizens, but not at the expense of their freedoms and

⁵²⁵ Ahmet Davutoglu, “Ahmet Davutoglu on Turkish Foreign Policy,” *The Institute of International and European Affairs*, February 27, 2015, accessed September 21, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwfoTCo_SbE.

⁵²⁶ Alexander Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no.6, (2006): 947.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*, 952.

human rights. In his article *Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An assessment of 2007* (2008), he stated, "if there is not a balance between security and democracy in a country, it may not have a chance to establish an area of influence in its environs. The legitimacy of any political regime comes from its ability to provide security to its citizens; this security should not be at the expense of freedoms and human rights in the country"⁵²⁸.

Since the end of the Cold War, freedom and liberal values became very much important internationally. However, with the increase of terrorism and high security alerts since the attacks of September 11th 2001, national security became the top priority of states' agenda resulting in limiting citizen freedoms. For those states, controlling citizen's freedoms makes it easier to fight terrorism, but this is not the case so far as terrorism still flourishes and is on the increase. However, Davutoglu's argument suggested that states that fail to balance between freedom of its citizens and state security would turn into authoritarian regimes⁵²⁹. Therefore, Turkey's aim under the AKP was to achieve such balance first by adopting the Copenhagen criteria for joining the EU and introducing new reforms to give more freedoms for minorities especially the Kurds, and secondly combating terrorism and any security threat without restricting citizens' movements and daily lives. For example, Davutoglu argued that during the war with the PKK, elections continued and Turkey did not announce a state of emergency⁵³⁰. However, this balance may not have been achieved in the best possible way. According to Ibrahim Kalin in his work *Foreign Policy: Continuity and change* (2011), Turkey under the AKP was able

⁵²⁸ Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 1, (2008): 79.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

to reach a balance between freedom and security. However, Turkey yet needs more work to improve this equilibrium⁵³¹.

Moreover, an important argument in the Strategic Depth approach is to increase Turkey's regional influence through the use of *Soft Power*. This concept was first introduced by Joseph Nye after the end of the Cold War in 1990 and discusses the idea of classical power and the new role of soft power. Nye takes into account the role of coercion, persuasion and attraction to influence the behaviour of others to achieve specific outcomes needed without using force or military aggression⁵³². He contributed to the literature by introducing the role of non-material sources of power including culture, political values, and foreign policy, which also involve non-state actors⁵³³. Following Nye's path, Davutoglu argues that Turkey has been widely seen as a hard power with strong military through history and particularly during the Cold War and therefore this image needs to change⁵³⁴. Adopting a Soft Power approach enables Turkey to gain further access to influence particularly in the Middle East. Turkey's history, culture and geography should help promote Turkey's Soft Power image rather than viewing them as obstacles. This enables Turkey to advance its regional and international strategic communications. Hence, a Soft Power dimension in Turkish foreign policy will play a central role in paving the way for further political

⁵³¹ Ibrahim Kalin, "Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change, in Bechey Dimitar (eds.), *What Does Turkey Think* (European Council of Foreign Relations: London, 2011), accessed September 28, 2015, http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR35_TURKEY.pdf.

⁵³² Joseph Nye, "The Changing Nature of Soft Power," *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 2 (1990): 177-192; Joseph Nye, "Notes for a Soft Power Research Agenda" in Felix Berenskoetterve M. J. Williams (eds.), *Power in World Politics* (Routledge: London, 2007), 162-172.

⁵³³ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (Public Affairs: New York, 2004).

⁵³⁴ Ahmet Davutoglu, "Ahmet Davutoglu on 'Turkish Foreign Policy,'" *Institute of International and European Affairs*, March 12, 2010, accessed October 13, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwfoTCo_SbE.

and diplomatic relations – playing mediation roles and rhythmic diplomacy – and economic cooperation. Therefore, “A country’s soft power capacity defines the success of its public diplomacy as much as does the integrity and efficacy of its policies”⁵³⁵. Turkey and the Middle East lived together for many centuries under the Ottoman rule and therefore share many similarities while at the same time developed some differences after the establishment of the new republic. The soft power element of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East, therefore, comes to strengthen the historical common features.

According to Aylin Şenol (2010), “the soft power assets of Turkey in the Middle East range from democracy to culture, foreign policy to economy, in a sense including all aspects of life”⁵³⁶. Davutoglu tends to use certain elements of the Ottoman history, identity and culture to benefit Turkey’s international position and foreign relations. Professor Yahya Mahmoud ibn Junaid, from the Secretary-General of King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh- Saudi Arabia, argued that Turkish officials supported the intellectual and cultural collaboration with the centre. He stated, “Turkey and Turkish representatives have been keen to exchanging and developing cultural ties with us. For example, President Erdogan attended the opening of the “Jerusalem Gallery” in Riyadh, Dr. Davutoglu also visited the centre and he gave a speech and a debate. There were many Arabic books that were requested by them that we sent and we were able to open two libraries in Turkey as well”⁵³⁷. This shows how the AKP’s government is willing to enhance cultural ties and understanding

⁵³⁵ Ibrahim Kalin, “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey,” *Journal of International Affairs* XVI, no.3, (2011): 8.

⁵³⁶ Aylin Şenol, “Understanding the New Activism of Turkey in the Middle East: Turkey as an Emerging Soft Power,” (PhD thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2010): 38.

⁵³⁷ Yahya Mahmoud ibn Junaid, interviewed by author, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 24, 2014.

of each other with Middle Eastern countries and this fits well with their soft power element of foreign policy. On the other hand, the AKP's government was able to use the media for promoting Turkey's image in the Middle East.

An interesting study by Osman Bahadır Dincer and Mustafa Kutlay's on *Turkey's Power Capacity in the Middle East: Limits of the Possible, An Empirical Analysis* (2012), suggested that Turkey was able to establish Arabic speaking TV channels like TRT channel, Turkish television series, Arabic news sites, and other personal blogs. However, they argued that these are limited and fall behind other competing channels and news sites in reaching Arabs⁵³⁸. On the other hand, Dr. Mehmet Ozkan, an advisor researcher and member of the SETA foundation, he stated, "I believe that the influence of Turkish television series was not a planned one. Aljazeera International produced a documentary where they interviewed some of scripts writers and producers of Turkish television series and their answer was that they produced and worked on these shows for Turks and for financial benefits as well, but they never had in mind that those shows will be famous in the region"⁵³⁹. He suggested that the TV series and shows famous in the Middle East today were not a product of a planned government project. Although soft power has been one of the most important aspects of Turkish foreign policy since 2002, it has not yet been able to reach its ultimate goal.

Another major concept developed in the Strategic Depth volume was the *Zero-Problems with Neighbors*. A policy believed to be necessary for Turkey's regional and international success. Davutoglu argued that Turkey should find

⁵³⁸ Osman Bahadır Dincer and Mustafa Kutlay, "Turkey's Power Capacity in the Middle East: Limits of the Possible, An Empirical Analysis," *USAK Reports*, no. 12-04, (2012): 30-31.

⁵³⁹ Mehmet Ozkan, Interviewed by Author, Ankara, Turkey, March 17, 2014.

solutions and develop a new free-problems atmosphere with neighbours particularly with its bordering ones. The Zero-Problem doctrine was seen necessary especially that Turkey is located in a very turbulent and difficult area. By overcoming problems with neighbouring states, Turkey would present itself with a new image, supporting its position for membership in the European Union and promoting further political and economic regional cooperation. This new philosophy developed by Davutoglu received high attention both domestically and internationally. Davutoglu was able to transform such theory into practice and Turkey was able to overcome many of its conflicts and disagreements with its neighbouring countries. However, this strategy was highly challenged with the emergence and development of the Arab Spring and became the target of heavy criticism⁵⁴⁰.

In addition, Davutoglu's vision of Turkish Ottoman past is one that it gives Turkey great historical depth that creates a strategic advantage for the country. Furthermore, this historical depth makes Turkey unlike any other ordinary state, because it has been the centre of the Islamic civilization for many centuries. He believes that this should contribute to the cultural enrichment and Turkish identity as a political actor⁵⁴¹. Richard Folk (2004), argued that Davutoglu emphasized the "accommodative" nature of the Ottoman Empire at its peak⁵⁴². Unlike secular Turkish politicians, Davutoglu believe that Turkish Ottoman historical experience is an important element that contributes to Turkey's international position and therefore needs to be utilized in Turkey's advantage.

⁵⁴⁰ Piotr Zalewski, "How Turkey Went From 'Zero Problems' to Zero Friends and Lost its Leverage Everywhere," *Foreign Policy*, August 22, 2013, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/22/how-turkey-went-from-zero-problems-to-zero-friends/>.

⁵⁴¹ Richard Falk, "Reconsidering Turkey," *Zaman*, October 6, 2004, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?10711-Reconsidering-Turkey>.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

Moreover, Davutoglu referred to the Ottoman past as a time that witnessed multiple cultures living at harmony and gave examples of cities like Bagdad and Sarajevo. According to Christopher Caldwell “What is new about Davutoglu's formulation is that it looks to Ottoman history for inspiration”⁵⁴³.

Overall, as mentioned above, the Strategic Depth doctrine of Ahmet Davutoglu stresses the importance of recognizing the geographical and historical depth of Turkey as well as the importance of re-positioning itself in the international arena. Furthermore, in his view, Turkey should expand its influence in the Middle East, Balkan, and Caucasian states through implementing soft power. According to his book, Turkey should become a regional leader and key international player.

However, the strategic depth doctrine received many critics among scholars suggesting that Davutoglu is promoting “Ottoman Revival”⁵⁴⁴. For example, Alexander Murinson (2006) argued that Davutoglu is a neo-Ottomanist thinker who demands an active regional engagement. He stated, “Ahmet Davutoglu is the architect of the new Turkish foreign policy concept. His ‘Strategic Depth’ doctrine calls for an activist engagement with all regional systems in Turkey’s neighbourhood. Davutoglu is a truly neo-Ottoman thinker”⁵⁴⁵. Furthermore, Omer Taspinar (2011) in his work *The Three Strategic Visions of Turkey*, argued that Davutoglu’s work and AKP’s neo-Ottoman vision is a continuation of Turgut Ozal’s approach. He added, “Davutoglu’s main argument is that Turkey is a great power that has neglected its historic ties and

⁵⁴³ KURE, “Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position,” *kureyayinlari*, 2014, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.kureyayinlari.com/EnglishBlog/6>.

⁵⁴⁴ Hillel Fradkin and Lewis Libby, “Turkey and the Dream of Ottoman Revival,” *Hudson Institute*, May 17, 2013, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.hudson.org/research/9604-turkey-and-the-dream-of-ottoman-revival>.

⁵⁴⁵ KURE, “Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position”.

diplomatic, economic and political relationships with its neighbouring regions (Middle East, North Africa, the Balkans, and Eurasia), dating back to the Ottoman era. It should be noted that this “neo-Ottoman” vision is not an imperialist agenda. It is also very different from policies advocated by Necmettin Erbakan, the Islamist leader of the now defunct Welfare Party⁵⁴⁶. Here the author is defining Turkey’s neo-Ottomanism in a new way far from its original Ottoman imperialist vision.

The same author in a different article on *Turkey’s Middle East Policies: between Kemalism and Neo-Ottomanism* (2008) argued that there are two major factors deriving Turkey’s new foreign policy in the Middle East: neo-Ottomanism and the Kurdish challenge⁵⁴⁷. The term neo-Ottoman seems to be popular among scholars and journalists who tend to view any type of Turkish engagement and active policy in the former Ottoman territories negatively. This notion of neo-Ottomanism in understanding Turkish foreign policy has not been significantly challenged and still is very popular in the literature and among Western media. The usefulness of this concept in understanding Turkish foreign policy will be further examined and tested in the final part of this section of the chapter.

1.3 AKP leadership’s “Ottomanist” statements and references

Once again, a number of scholars and analysts have been focusing on Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s and Ahmet Davutoglu’s statements and speeches, tracing not only any reference to political Islam, but also any reference to the Ottoman

⁵⁴⁶ Omer Taspinar, “The Three Strategic Visions of Turkey,” *US-Europe Analysis Series*, no.50, (2011): 1.

⁵⁴⁷ Omer Taspinar, “Turkey’s Middle East Policies: between Kemalism and Neo-Ottomanism,” *Carnegie Papers*, no.10 (2008): 1.

past as evidence for the existence of the AKP's neo-Ottomanist vision. An interesting study by Ali Erken (2013) on *Re-Imagining the Ottoman Past in Turkish Politics: Past and Present*, focused on the Ottoman references of AKP leaders. Erken argued that there are increasing references to the Ottoman history in the party leadership's discourse⁵⁴⁸. He further stated, "The AK Party won the 2002 elections with a great majority in the Parliament and the party elite started to show that they would make use of the Ottoman heritage in carving out a new vision for the country's foreign policy"⁵⁴⁹. Furthermore, Erken referred to a number of speeches and statements of different AKP's elites. He went further to compare Erdogan's vision to that of Necmettin Erbakan's and argued that there are noticeable similarities. Using one of Erdogan's statements, the author referred to Erdogan's speech after the Marmara Flotilla and the increasing tensions with Israel, when he said: "We speak as the grandchildren of the Ottomans, who host you when you were exiled from Spain"⁵⁵⁰. On another occasion, Erdogan also commented, "Presiding over the heritage of our ancestors, the Ottoman State that ruled the World for 600 years, we would revive the Ottoman consciousness again"⁵⁵¹. On the other hand, according to Erken, Ahmet Davutoglu argued in a conference held by *Türk ocakları* in 2011 that Turkey will "keep a close eye" on previous Ottoman lands and quoted Davutoglu stating:

"Just as a state [meaning the Ottoman Empire], the political centre of an ancient civilization was torn apart in twelve years from the Tripolitanian War in 1911 to 1923, and foundational elements of this state were psychologically and historically divided apart to be replaced by a new Republic founded in 1923 as a nation state and the leftovers of this

⁵⁴⁸ Ali Erken, "Re-Imagining the Ottoman Past in Turkish Politics: Past and Present," *Insight Turkey* 15, no.3 (2013): 171-188.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid, 179.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid, 184.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

heritage took on the mission of “order” conveying the World certain values, now we need to unify the elements of this broken and fragmented nation again. The question is how do we unify this geography? How do we build a new generation, who can shape the flow of history marching towards the future with a great hope from these divided histories? Therefore, “Towards the Great Turkey” is the right title [meaning the title of conference].”⁵⁵²

Erken’s study therefore suggests that the Ottoman past played a major role during the AKP’s rule as a model for Turkey’s geopolitical vision. Most recently, some media sources focused on PM Davutoglu’s statement that he would bring the Ottoman justice system and order back. The Hurriyet Daily News quoted him during his meeting with party members of the AKP headquarters congratulating them for the Eid al-Fitr on 17 of July 2015, saying “God willing, we will bring the order and justice of the Ottomans to today and into tomorrow”⁵⁵³. Since the Arab Spring, more studies emerged suggesting that the AKP’s government is perusing a neo-Ottoman foreign policy. Paolo Quercia (2011) in his article *The Turkish neo-Ottoman Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring*, illustrated that since the third term victory of the AKP in 2011, it became clearer that this government is adopting a neo-Ottoman foreign policy⁵⁵⁴.

The author focused on Erdogan’s victory speech on 12th of June 2011 and argued that this victory speech provides a clear evidence of this. He quoted part of Erdogan’s speech, “Believe me, today Sarajevo has won just as Istanbul has won; and Beirut has won just as Izmir has won; Gaza and the West Bank have won just as Diyarbakir has won. Today the Middle East, the Caucasus,

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ HDN, “Turkish PM promises to bring back ‘Ottoman justice, order,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 17, 2015, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-pm-promises-to-bring-ottoman-order-justice.aspx?PageID=238&NID=85581&NewsCatID=338>.

⁵⁵⁴ Quercia, “The Turkish neo-Ottoman foreign policy”.

the Balkans have won as Turkey has won”⁵⁵⁵. Quercia argued that this neo-Ottoman tone is adopted without a reason and that this was a well-structured metaphor⁵⁵⁶.

In addition to the vocabulary signs, others focused on the Ottoman images that the AKP’s government has shown so far. For example, in a visit by Mahmoud Abbas to Ankara in January 2015, Erdogan welcomed him at the new presidential palace - AK Saray – with a classical imperial style presented by 16 warriors each representing one empire of Turkish history starting from the Hunnic Empire, all the way to the Ottoman Empire⁵⁵⁷. Walid Shoebat – a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood – argued that the image presented by Erdogan represents a clear sign of an Ottoman revival. In his article *The many reasons why Erdogan is reviving the Ottoman Empire and the coming Caliphate* (2015), he stated, “Erdogan by intrigue and deception is changing set times and set laws took over the most powerful Muslim nation on earth and is now reviving its dead image to everyone’s astonishment”⁵⁵⁸. This is despite AKP leadership’s constant rejection of being classified as Neo-Ottomans. If so, what does it mean then? What does such references and images tell us? Is there something missing in these critics’ analysis? This will be further examined in following sections.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 14.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ RT, “Erdogan welcomes Abbas in Ottoman Empire style ceremony,” *RT News*, January 13, 2015, accessed 23 September 23, 2015, <http://www.rt.com/news/222027-erdogan-abbas-ottoman-welcome/>.

⁵⁵⁸ Walid Shoebat, “The many reasons why Erdogan is reviving the Ottoman Empire and the coming Caliphate”, *Shoebat.com*, January 20, 2015, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://shoebat.com/2015/01/20/many-reasons-erdogan-reviving-ottoman-empire-coming-caliphate/>.

1.4 Testing the validity of the concept in understanding Turkish Foreign Policy change

The purpose of this section is to test the validity of the neo-Ottoman approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy. A central element that will contribute to this evaluation is the application of interview data, which will enable the researcher to identify possible errors and weaknesses to help determine the explanation's contributory value.

First of all, it is important to state that neo-Ottomanism has been constantly rejected and refused by the AKP's leadership which stated that the Turkish engagement with the former Ottoman regions is the result of a rational and pragmatic foreign policy. In an interview with *Balkan Insight* in 2011, Davutoglu stated, "I am not a neo-Ottoman. Actually there is no such policy. We have a common history and cultural depth with the Balkan countries, which nobody can deny. We cannot act as if the Ottomans never existed in this region. My perception of history in the Balkans is that we have to focus on the positive aspects of our common past"⁵⁵⁹. If we break it down and try to understand the concept, the term neo-Ottomanism refers to two main factors; imperialism in a sense that Turkey is seeking to establish a new empire similar to that of the Ottoman Empire; and secondly the term focuses explicitly on territories previously under Ottoman rule. Davutoglu argued in one of his speeches, "Why is it that when the whole of Europe is casting off its borders and unifying they don't become the Neo-Romans or the New Holy Roman Empire, but when we call for the peoples who lived together just a century ago to come together once

⁵⁵⁹ Altin Raxhimi, "Davutoglu: 'I am not a neo-Ottoman'," *Balkan Insight*, April 26, 2011, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/davutoglu-i-m-not-a-neo-ottoman>.

again, we are accused of being Neo-Ottomans?"⁵⁶⁰. What is more, the critics of neo-Ottomanism fail to explain Turkey's expansion of foreign policy reaching beyond old Ottoman territories. Turkey under the AKP managed to increase its diplomatic relations and economic cooperation with countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America far away from its pre-Ottoman lands. On the other hand, others suggested that even not all pre-Ottoman lands have been the primary focus in AKP's foreign policy. Soner Cagaptay in his article *The AKP's Foreign Policy: The Misnomer of Neo-Ottomanism* (2009) argued that if we pay a closer look at Turkish foreign policy, we see that Turkey has been focusing more on the Middle East and "ignoring other areas of the Ottoman realm"⁵⁶¹. Therefore, we can see that if we apply the term to the practical side of Turkish foreign policy, it would fail to explain both Turkish interest in reaching areas beyond the Ottoman lands, and the disengagement with other countries in the Ottoman realm.

Another major weakness in applying this concept is that there are different definitions and explanations of what neo-Ottomanism means. According to Agnes Czajka and Edward Wastnidge (2015), "An analysis of foreign policy literature as well as broader, non-academic and policy discourses referencing 'neo-Ottoman foreign policy' reveals the presence of a variety of distinct interpretations of neo-Ottomanism, many of which retain a degree of vagueness and ambiguity that decreases the analytical and explanatory value

⁵⁶⁰ Cina Kiper, "Sultan Erdogan: Turkey's Rebranding Into the New, Old Ottoman Empire," *The Atlantic*, April 5, 2013, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/sultan-erdogan-turkeys-rebranding-into-the-new-old-ottoman-empire/274724/>.

⁵⁶¹ Soner Cagaptay, "The AKP's Foreign Policy: The Misnomer of Neo-Ottomanism," *The Washington Institute*, 2009, accessed 23 September 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-akps-foreign-policy-the-misnomer-of-neo-ottomanism>.

of the concept itself⁵⁶². They further added, “If Turkish diplomacy were to promote an explicit ‘neo-Ottoman’ agenda - however that might be defined - it would be diplomatic suicide. There is not one state in the former Ottoman domains that would wish to see any kind of assertive Turkish influence. Indeed the ‘neo-Ottoman’ label has been used pejoratively in the regional press and much analysis of perceived Turkish over ambition⁵⁶³. Moreover, Nick Danforth (2014) argued that understanding the concept of neo-Ottomanism depends on how we view the Ottoman Empire in the first place. He further argued that there are several Ottoman Empires that persist in the Turkish imagination⁵⁶⁴. As a result, it can be argued that neo-Ottomanism lacks a common definition and is an elusive term that can mean different things and can even include new characteristics that were not primarily associated with the Ottoman Empire.

Behlul Ozkan, an academic and a former student of Davutoglu, studied Davutoglu’s writings, statements and speeches, argued that it is a mistake to regard Davutoglu as a neo-Ottomanist, and instead Ozkan regards him as a pan-Islamist⁵⁶⁵. In a conference organized by the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at John Hopkins University, entitled *Turkish Foreign Policy Under Erdogan’s Presidency: What Shapes it?* Behlul Ozkan stated, “Davutoglu is not a neo-Ottomanist because Davutoglu never believed

⁵⁶² Czajka, Agnes, and Edward Wastnidge. “‘The Centre of World Politics?’ Neo-Ottomanism in Turkish Foreign and Domestic Politics,” *Isanet*, 2015, p. 2, accessed 23 September 2015, <http://web.isanet.org/Web/Conferences/GSCIS%20Singapore%202015/Archive/a1b05e35-80f6-40ae-9c56-b5708c5c321e.pdf>.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid*, 6.

⁵⁶⁴ Danforth, Op cit.

⁵⁶⁵ Behlul Ozkan, “Turkey’s Imperial Fantasy,” *The New York Times*, August 28, 2014, accessed September 28, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/29/opinion/ahmet-davutoglu-and-turkeys-imperial-fantasy.html?_r=0.

in Ottomanism. He is a pan-Islamist⁵⁶⁶. Ozkan argued that Davutoglu even criticized Turgut Ozal, who ruled between 1983 and 1993, and his neo-Ottomanism for being theoretically “unprepared, pragmatic, and generalistic”. Ozkan further stated that Davutoglu refused Ozal’s neo-Ottomanist approach in trying to protect Turkey’s territorial integrity by Western support, just like what the Tanzimat reforms, which were a number of reforms established to prevent the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, aimed to achieve during the Ottoman era⁵⁶⁷. In other words, Davutoglu is against the neo-Ottoman’s vision of solving Turkey’s problems through Western support and is instead supporting the establishment of an independent foreign policy.

Another limitation to the neo-Ottomanist ideological understanding of Turkish foreign policy was also presented in Nick Danforth’s work (2008). He argued that scholars have overemphasized the role of domestic identity and ideology in determining Turkish foreign policy, both now and in the past. He states that review of the pragmatic concerns that shaped Turkey’s international relations during key periods in its history –under Ataturk, during the Cold War and under Turgut Ozal– will provide the background for the claim that pragmatic concerns have influenced the AKP much more than any Islamist ideology⁵⁶⁸. Danforth argued that Davutoglu’s support of engagement with the Middle East was more based on a pragmatic perspective, arguing that Turkey have missed important opportunities due to the Kemalist “ideology fixation on Europe”⁵⁶⁹.

⁵⁶⁶ Behlul Ozkan and Michael Reynold, “Turkish Foreign Policy Under Erdogan’s Presidency: What Shapes it?,” *School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)*, November 18, 2014, accessed August 20, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1S5zQ11-iA>.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Nick Danforth, “Ideology and Pragmatism in Turkish Foreign Policy: From Ataturk to the AKP,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 7, no.3 (2008): 85.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, 91.

Here Nick Danforth stresses the importance of Turkish economic interests in the Middle East and that by simply focusing on AKP's ideological motives is ignoring the pragmatic side of Turkish foreign policy regional interests.

Interviews conducted by researcher also suggested that using neo-Ottomanism as a way to understanding Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East is not useful. For example, Dr. Fayz Al-shehri, a member of the Shoura Council in Saudi Arabia and the President of Saudi-Turkish Parliamentary Friendship, in his interview stated, "Yes Turkey has a new foreign policy approach under the AKP, but I don't believe that it is a neo-Ottoman one, it is more of an 'Erdoganist' approach"⁵⁷⁰, suggesting that the AKP led by Erdogan is actually following a new approach. Al-shehri further added, "The Ottoman Empire does not exist anymore and there is no valid foundation for arguing that the AKP members are neo-Ottomanist"⁵⁷¹. In addition, Professor Yahya Mahmoud ibn Junaid, Secretary-General of King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, argued that the Middle East and the Arab governments have welcomed Turkey and this is another fact that we have to take into account⁵⁷². He stated, "I believe that it is natural for Turkey to open its doors to the Middle East. Closing its doors is not natural". He further argued, there is a great geographical and historical ties that Turkey share with the rest of the region. Dr. Yahya believes that "Turkey needs her Arab neighbours and vice versa". Therefore, suggesting that an opening to the Middle East should not be surprising and it is certainly a mistake to view it with such suspicion. We have to keep in mind that Professor Yahya and Dr. Fayz are key experts from

⁵⁷⁰ Fayz Al-Shehri, interviewed by author, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 13 2014.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Yahya Mahmoud ibn Junaid, interviewed by author, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 24, 2014.

Saudi Arabia and they provide an important viewpoint from outside Turkey being from one of the most important countries in the Middle East. On the other hand, Professor Yasin Aktay, the Foreign Affairs Deputy Chairman and one of the founding members of the AKP, argued in his interview that the Neo-Ottoman critics are “far from reality”⁵⁷³. Although we want to see the Muslim World in a better situation, “this does not make us want to control them”. He used the case of Palestinian political dispute between Fatah and Hamas as an example. He stated that the Egyptian effort to bring Hamas and Fatah together was met with “applause” by Turkey. He stressed “we do not care who takes lead in peace and mediation efforts in the region as long as it is for the better”. Aktay argued that Turkey does not aim to dominate the region or become a regional hegemony. Instead, Turkey wants to play a greater positive role and is willing to cooperate with other Arab governments in doing so⁵⁷⁴. Although this is coming from an AKP’s official, it gives us significant insights of the fact that instead of dominating regional politics, the AKP welcomes and encourages governments in the Middle East to play a greater regional role along with Turkey for the benefit of all.

Moreover, Suheyl Sapan, a Turkish Professor specialized in Ottoman and Turkish political history at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia, told me in his interview that the AKP realized that focusing primarily on the West is not going to take them anywhere, “Turkey will remain within its borders”, and therefore wanted to increase relations with the Middle East also for both economic and geo-political interests⁵⁷⁵. He added “the argument that Turkey is

⁵⁷³ Yasin Aktay, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 19, 2014.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Suheyl Sapan, interviewed by author, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 26, 2014.

pursuing a neo-Ottoman foreign policy has no ground and does not make sense, especially when we see Turkey expanding its relations and interests to countries outside the Ottoman hinterlands”⁵⁷⁶. Similarly, Ersel Aydinili, a well-known Turkish scholar and Professor at Bilkent University in Ankara and executive director of the Fulbright Commission, argued that the Ottoman Empire is gone and with it its people and that there will only be one Ottoman Empire and there will never be another one⁵⁷⁷. Aydinili stated, “the AKP believe that the Ottoman Empire has left a vacuum in the region, and that this vacuum is still there. So, that space can be filled. Therefore, calling that as a Neo-Ottoman would not be accurate. Acknowledging the gap or space in the region and trying to fill it, is a pretty much a Realist policy”⁵⁷⁸.

Furthermore, Jahit Tuz, a senior advisor to Member of Parliament and former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, argued that Turkey aimed to build a common platform with Middle Eastern states especially that both share a common history, religion and culture, but this does not suggest, at all, that Turkey wants to control the Middle East and revive the Ottoman Empire⁵⁷⁹. He added, “The Turkish strategy is a win-win one, which means both Turkey and the Middle East benefit from each other’s relations. If Turkey was pursuing a Neo-Ottoman policy, it will be totally against its interests in Europe and the West, which is not the case with the AKP”. On the other hand, only one of my interviewees, Dr. Serhat Erkmen, as mentioned earlier, seemed to have agreed with the neo-Ottomanist notion suggesting the example of lifting visa restrictions between Turkey and other Middle Eastern states; however, he never stated

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Ersel Aydinili, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 18, 2014.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Jahit Tuz, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 20, 2014.

directly that the AKP is a neo-Ottomanist government or one that is following a neo-Ottomanist foreign policy agenda⁵⁸⁰.

If we pay closer attention to some of the arguments mentioned earlier in support of the existence of the neo-Ottoman AKP's ideology, we find that they have been ignoring some facts that may suggest otherwise. Although some of the speeches and images presented by the AKP may present a *Smoking Gun* evidence for some analysts supporting this claim, I believe that this can be the case if this was truly reflected in AKP's policies. For example, as mentioned above by Behlul Ozkan's arguments, we realize that Davutoglu was actually critical of the Tanzimat reforms of the Ottoman Empire and believed that Turkey should not mainly rely on the West for modernization and development, but this also requires opening up to different regional and global lands and peoples and certainly not only with former Ottoman provinces⁵⁸¹.

Erdogan's welcome ceremony for President Mahmud Abbas did not present an Ottoman image as many have argued. In fact, the warriors standing in the picture published via international media were actually representing 16 different empires of Turkish history and certainly not all of them belonging to the Ottoman Empire however some critics focused only on the Ottoman costume. This can rather be viewed as one of the first examples of the AKP's use of soft power aiming at reminding the world the uniqueness of Turkish history. Another example regularly mentioned by critics was Davutoglu's references of the Ottoman past and its importance. Davutoglu called for the importance to understand their Ottoman past and stated that one cannot simply erase it from history. Being proud to be a Muslim makes you an Islamist, and

⁵⁸⁰ Serhat Erkmen, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 21, 2014.

⁵⁸¹ Ozkan and Reynold, "Turkish Foreign Policy Under Erdogan's Presidency".

recognizing the importance of the Ottoman history of Turkey makes you a neo-Ottomanist? I believe that Davutoglu was attempting to find some common grounds between Turkey and the Middle East to gain access for influence in that region and to enhance bilateral cooperation by promoting the idea of a common history and religion. The neo-Ottoman argument ignores many important aspects including the roles of the European Union, security concerns, and economic interests. The previous studies based on this argument often fall into the trap of ignoring evidence that might suggest otherwise and of choosing picking data that support the primary theoretical hypothesis instead.

Overall, this notion fails to explain the cause behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 and shows that a more of a holistic approach in in this sense is very much needed. I agree that Turkey is following a policy seeking more regional power and a bigger global role, but to directly associate it back to the Ottoman Empire is not so convincing, at least according to the results of this thesis. According to the evidence found by scholars who disagree with the neo-Ottoman explanation, empirical evidence, and primary interview data, this concept fails a *Hoop Test* in the Process Tracing method. Evidence of the Ottomanist explanations set a more demanding standard compared to the Islamist explanations. Evidence of a *Hoop Test* usually does not set a sufficient criterion for accepting the explanation, but it establishes a necessary criterion.

However, Ottomanist hypotheses must “*jump through the hoop*” to remain under consideration in this study. Here, it is a very similar situation to the Islamist explanations in the previous chapter, but the main difference lay within the value of evidence provided. Although the value and significance of

evidence differ to that of the Islamist explanations, interview data results seem to be quite similar. All interviewees, except one, have disagreed with these Ottomanist explanations, which highly contributed to their failure. The failing a *Hoop Test* means that the concept of Neo-Ottomanism is eliminated in this stage of the process due to its weakness and incapability of providing a comprehensive explanation. This means that the Ottomanist notion should not remain and no longer be considered in this thesis. Compared to the *Straw in the Wind Test*, failing a *Hoop Test* has a much stronger implication for competing explanations. The implication is that it somewhat strengthens the likelihood of other competing explanations so far in this study. To further simplify and clarify this process of examination, the below table summarizes the main points of the neo-Ottoman explanation and its value in the thesis so far.

Figure 1. Assessment of the neo-Ottoman explanation in Process Tracing

<p>Explanation 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 was a result of AKP's neo-Ottomanism and aim to revive the Ottoman Empire.
<p>Evidence constituting this explanation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognizing the importance of the Ottoman historical ties with the Middle East and particularly through Ahmet Davutoglu's work and writings (i.e. Strategic Depth). - AKP leaders' "Ottomanist" statements and references. - Turkey seeking a leadership role.
<p>Process of examining empirical evidence and interview data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of consensus in defining neo-Ottomanism = definition problem. - History cannot be ignored or deleted. Instead is mainly used for establishing common grounds for further cooperation. - Ottomanist references and statements were not necessarily reflected in Turkish foreign policies. Evidence show that the AKP is exploiting Turkey's greater Ottoman history to strengthen Turkey's global image and prestige. - Yes, Turkey is certainly seeking a leadership role, but not a hegemonic one that aim to "control" the region.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The AKP recognized the power vacuum in the region and aims to fill it with positive contribution seeking regional stability. - Fail to explain Turkey's openness beyond its previously Ottoman lands i.e. Africa, South America, and East Asia. - Majority of interviewees disagree with the neo-Ottoman hypotheses and do not support such claim. Only one interviewee agreed and supported this claim.
<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence set a more demanding standard. - Simplified and overemphasized. - Fail to provide a holistic explanation. - Does not contribute to the study any further. - Necessary, but not sufficient to establish causation (<i>Necessary as Ottoman Empire represent an important period of Turkish history and demonstrates a critical part of Turkish-Middle East relations as well as Turkey's image that cannot be disregarded. Therefore, it is necessary to consider when analyzing the nature of Turkish-Middle East relations, but it has not been sufficient enough to explain recent foreign policy change and evidence was proven to be weak and not convincing</i>). - Therefore, fails a Hoop Test.
<p>Implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explanation is eliminated. - Somewhat Strengthens rival explanations in the study.

2. Turkish Domestic Politics: The Role of National Identity

This second part of the chapter aims at examining the significance and role of national identity on foreign policy change. A number of scholars have presented different arguments supporting the identity approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to first demonstrate and analyse those arguments, and then evaluate and test their plausibility in answering the research question. Secondly, is to examine available empirical data, archival documents, and others to be able to raise critical questions that such explanations might not have considered or looked at. Here the researcher will develop a critical engagement, where a number of questions are posed,

which enables the researcher to identify possible limitations of those explanations. The third step will analyse possible critics and other contrasting arguments that might contest the identity approach to highlight possible weaknesses. In addition, the final step will be applying interview data, which will enable the researcher to further assess the sufficiency and necessity of the explanations under examination. This will be carried out through exploring interviewees' views and ideas towards such explanation.

This part of the chapter will be divided into four main sections. The first section will attempt to show the complex nature of identity and the identity crisis that is witnessed in Turkey. It is important for us to understand the characterization and components of the Turkish sub national-identities before we go into further analysis into the topic. The second section aims at looking at the role of national identity and its main features. It will engage with the existing debate over the classification of the current national identity represented by the AKP. The third section focuses on the role of the Islamist and neo-Ottomanist identity and the notion of the "Islamic Umma". In addition, the fourth section analyses such arguments and tries to understand how those conclusions were established. The purpose of section four is to submit the identity approach and arguments to the process-tracing test. This will be done by referring to empirical data and evidence as well as interview data conducted as part of this study.

The prime argument is that the identity approach is useful and contributes to our understanding of Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East. However, this approach does not explain all aspects of Turkish foreign policy. It overlooks the roles of external factors, such as the United States and the European Union. Furthermore, it does not take into account the

impact of the constantly changing and transformative nature of the international system on foreign policy making. This study however does not aim to engage with the agency-structure relation's debate. What's more, scholars who are influenced by realist thinking argued that external security threats also have a great impact on state's foreign policy behaviour. Therefore, arguments within the identity approach in the literature on Turkish foreign policy seem to have not been able to explain such factors. Unlike the neo-Ottoman explanation, discussed in the previous section, results show that the identity approach passes a *Hoop Test* of process tracing. However, this does not mean that it confirms it as the primary cause behind Turkish foreign policy change. Instead, it only affirms relevance, which means that it cannot be eliminated so far as it offers some useful insights. However, it is a very highly debated topic on both the international relations' theoretical level and on Turkish foreign policy studies.

2.1 The complex nature of Turkish identity/ies

It is important to first understand the nature of Turkish identity and what makes it so unique and different from any other Arab or Muslim countries around the World. One of the major themes of Turkey's distinctiveness in the region is that it hosts a large number of different ethnic and religious identities. Due to its significant geographical location and long history, ethnic identities in Turkey today include; Turkic, Kurd, Arab, Albanian, Armenian, Assyrian, Azerbaijani, Greek, Persian, Bosnian, Chechen, Circassian, and many more. On the other hand, there are different religious identities as well, such as Muslims, who are the overwhelming majority including Sunnis, Shias and Alawites, as well as

Christians, Jews, and others⁵⁸². However, such complex nature of identities in Turkey has been a source of identity conflict particularly with conservatives, seculars, and Kurds. Therefore, forming a unified Turkish national identity has been one of the most difficult tasks so far.

Since the abolishment of the Ottoman Empire and its Sultanate and Caliphate, and the creation of the Turkish republic in 1923, Kemal Ataturk tried to build a new identity for Turkey and the Turkish population. He aimed at creating a new monolithic state based on pro-Western identity and image⁵⁸³. Ataturk believed that Turkey could only become a modern nation state by following and adopting Western modernization. Therefore, he abolished the Caliphate System and introduced new reforms - *Atatürk Devrimleri*⁵⁸⁴. Ataturk introduced a series of reforms covering all political, economic, social, and cultural aspects. The aim was to establish a new form of Turkish state and national identity. This included the abolishment of the Arabic language with the introduction of the Latin alphabet instead. Furthermore, traditional Islamic hats such as the Fez and Turban were abandoned and made illegal and replaced with Western looking hats and a new dress code⁵⁸⁵. Moreover, the Islamic traditional calendar was also changed and replaced with the Christian/Georgian one, and the Adhan was changed from Arabic to Turkish⁵⁸⁶. In addition, religious schools were closed and the Ministry of Religious Endowments

⁵⁸² Nigar Karimova and Edward Devereil, "Minorities in Turkey," *The Swedish Institute of International Affairs*, no. 19 (2001).

⁵⁸³ Ahmet Kuru and Alfred Stepan, ed., *Democracy, Islam, & Secularism in Turkey* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 79.

⁵⁸⁴ Toni Alaranta, *National and State Identity in Turkey: The Transformation of the Republic's Status in the International System* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 74.

⁵⁸⁵ Alper Y. Dede, *Islamism, State Control Over Religion and Social Identity: Turkey and Egypt* (PhD thesis, Western Michigan University, 2008), 77-78.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

eliminated⁵⁸⁷. All this aimed at changing Turkey's traditional identity and creating a new one more in line with Europe and the Western World.

However, these came at the expense of all religious and ethnic identities. Ataturk was repressive against other identity groups or minorities in order to ensure the survival of this new Turkish identity based on Western image. For example, Kurdish identity was disregarded and seen as a major threat to the unification of the new Kemalist national identity⁵⁸⁸. However, the important question to be asked here, was Ataturk successful in creating a new Turkish identity? I believe Ataturk was able to weaken the Islamic traditional elements of the Ottoman past and other ethnic minorities, but he was not able to totally eliminate the plural nature of Turkish identity. In other words, Ataturk failed to achieve national consensus. Instead, the Kemalist secular identity was able to survive thanks to a single party system of government and to an authoritarian rule⁵⁸⁹. Therefore, since the emergence of the multiple party system, Turkey saw an increasing support among the population for Islamist parties in particular by the conservative masses⁵⁹⁰. The Kemalist identity was mainly represented by the new secular elites, bureaucrats and national government. Whereas the majority of rural and middle class populations did not totally agree with this transformation. Therefore, there was a noticeable disregard of the multiple identity nature of Turkey by secularist foreign policy makers prior to 2002, who mainly looked to the West.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Mustafa Akyol, "The Origin of Turkey's Kurdish Question: An Outcome of the Breakdown of the Ottoman *Ancien Régime*," (MA thesis, Bogaziçi University, 2006).

⁵⁸⁹ Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country: Turkey between Secularism and Islamism* (Hoover Institution Press, 2010), 29.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid, 29-51.

This created a conflict between the conservative and secular identity groups. Seculars, believe that Ottoman historical and religious identity has been a source of backwardness and chaos⁵⁹¹, and that Western identity and modernization is the key for success, whereas conservatives believe that Muslim Turks, who are the overwhelming majority, should be proud of their history and religion and for who they are⁵⁹². This conflict reflected in both domestic and foreign politics. On the domestic level, there have been an intense protests and tensions between the secular establishment, mainly represented by the military and secular elites, and conservative political parties and groups. For example, since the adoption of the multiparty system in 1945, there has been an intense conflict between right wing conservatives and secular nationalists.

As mentioned in chapter three, since 1945, Islamist parties were gradually gaining more support and power in Turkish political life. This was mainly characterized by Necmettin Erbakan and his Milli Gorus followers. However, the rise of Islamist parties was not stable; it went through a lot of struggle and pressure by the secular establishment. As a result, a number of Islamist political parties were abandoned and many Islamist activists were imprisoned. However, Islamists would still continue their efforts and growth in influencing Turkish politics. For example, Necmettin Erbakan had to establish a number of parties, one after the other, such as The National Order Party (MNP), The National Salvation Party (MSP), The Welfare Party (RP), The Virtue

⁵⁹¹ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Toward an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gulen Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 205.

⁵⁹² Etyen Mahcupyan, "Understanding the Transformation; AK Party Era in Turkey," *Centre for Turkey Studies Roundtable*, March 27, 2015, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://ceftus.org/2015/04/10/ceftus-roundtable-understanding-the-transformation-ak-party-era-in-turkey-with-mr-etyen-mahcupyan/>.

Party (FP), and recently The Felicity Party (SP)⁵⁹³. The continuous emergence of Islamist parties in Turkish history was a result of the Kemalist authorities' abolishment and abandonment of them from the political life. However, after numerous efforts, Erbakan became the first Islamist Prime Minister to rule Turkey in 1996⁵⁹⁴. However, this was not the end of the conflict, Erbakan did not last for long, and was forced to step down one year later by the military. A number of coups took place and the conflict became very fierce⁵⁹⁵ until the establishment and victory of the AKP in 2002, which is a more moderate party coming from the Islamist root.

On the other hand, the most dominant identity conflict in Turkey has been with the Kurds, a conflict that affected Turkish security and political stability for a long time. The Kurdish problem has been one of the most controversial issues in Turkish history. Kurdish minorities have been neglected and repressed since the creation of the republic. They were seen as a threat to the unity, stability, and national security of Turkey⁵⁹⁶. The Kurds who live inside Turkish territories did not enjoy equal rights and freedoms until lately, which is still a debated topic. As a result, this affected the Kurds in their rights for political representation, in the right to receive an education in their language and in other fundamental rights until the AKP government came into power.

The PKK, a Kurdish militant group, an internationally recognized terrorist group, intensified the conflict, carrying out a number of bombings and attacks

⁵⁹³ Birol A. Yesilada, "The Virtue Party," in *Political Parties in Turkey*, (Routledge, 2013), 62-69.

⁵⁹⁴ BBC, "Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's first Islamist PM, dies," *BBC News*, February 27, 2011, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12590773>.

⁵⁹⁵ Aljazeera, "Timeline: A history of Turkish coups," *Aljazeera News*, April 4, 2012, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/04/20124472814687973.html>.

⁵⁹⁶ Evin Cheikosman, "Turkey's violations to human rights towards Kurds: A hindrance on admittance to the EU," *Ekurd Daily*, January 3, 2013, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2013/1/turkey4388.htm>.

inside Turkey⁵⁹⁷. The Kurdish minority issue and the PKK have had direct impact on both the domestic and foreign policies of Turkey for a long time. Turkey had to deal with this security problem engaging in military cooperation and diplomatic efforts with some of its bordering neighbours i.e. Iran, Iraq and Syria. Domestically, the AKP has given more rights to Kurdish minorities than ever before, compared to previous governments⁵⁹⁸. This is still one of the most controversial issues in Turkey. The Kurdish issue represents one aspect of Turkey's identity crisis.

2.2 National identity and the change of elite structures

Although Turkey has a great mixture of ethnic and religious social identities, a number of scholars argued that Turkish foreign policy making has been influenced by the national identity of the ruling elites. Furthermore, it has been argued that the change in Turkish foreign policy since 2002 has been the result of the change in elite structures and national identity. This did not come up suddenly in 2002 with the victory of the AKP, but was part of an ongoing process that was taking place during Ozal's period⁵⁹⁹. During this time, a new elite started to emerge represented by powerful Anatolian businessmen⁶⁰⁰. The elite structure since the creation of the republic was dominated by the Secular elites who controlled key positions and had great economic power in the country. However, another social group started to emerge contributing to the change of elite structures in Turkey. According to Kamil Yilmaz in his work *The Emergence*

⁵⁹⁷ Yonah Alexander, Edgar H. Brenner, and Serhat Tutuncuoglu Krause, eds., *Turkey: Terrorism, Civil Rights, and the European Union* (Routledge, 2008), 8.

⁵⁹⁸ Cengiz Gunes, Welat Zeydanlioglu, *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation and Reconciliation* (Routledge, 2013).

⁵⁹⁹ Taptuk Emre Erkoç, "Economy and Democratization: Turgut Ozal era in Turkey," *Journal of Business Economics and Political Science* 3, no.6 (2014): 55-74.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

and Rise of Conservative Elite in Turkey (2009), “Turkey since the 1980s that have paved the way for the emergence and rise of a “new social group,” that is, a religiously more conservative elite which can also be defined by an amalgam of “Islamic and modern”⁶⁰¹. Yilmaz argued that Ozal’s economic and liberal reforms gave rise to a new middle class, which contributed to the existence of the current AKP’s government⁶⁰². For him, the AKP is a product of a process of changing elite structure that started during Ozal’s rule.

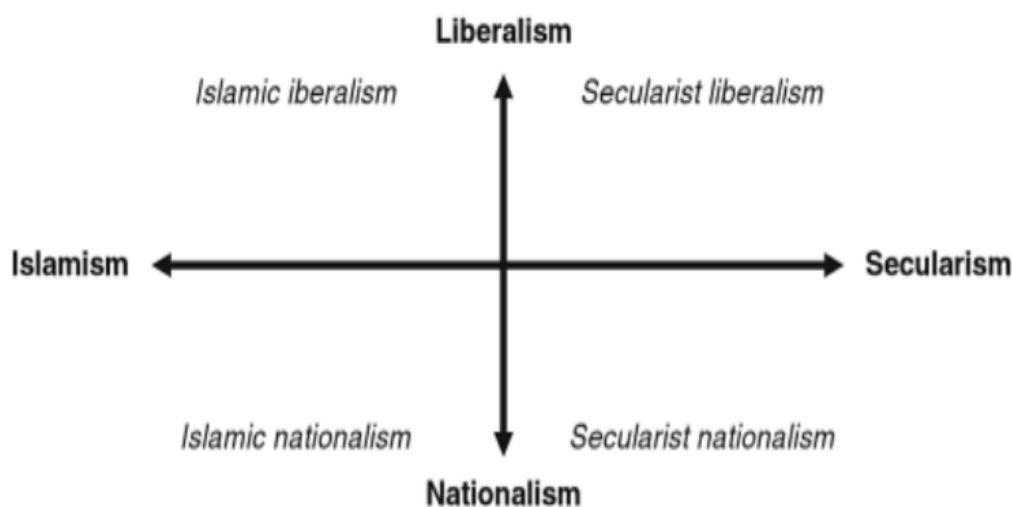
Hasan Kosebalaban, a prominent Turkish scholar, presented a very interesting study on *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* (2011). Influenced by constructivist theoretical framework of International Relations, he explored how Turkey’s competing national identities had a major impact on Turkish foreign policy making⁶⁰³. The study covers the historical Turkish foreign policy development and the different national identities that played a role in such development. Kosebalaban developed a very useful graph showing the way in which Turkish politics and foreign policy historically been shaped by four main national identity groups.

⁶⁰¹ Kamil Yilmaz, “The Emergence and Rise of Conservative Elite in Turkey,” *Insight Turkey* 11, no.2, (2009): 114.

⁶⁰² *Ibid*, 121.

⁶⁰³ Hasan Kosebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Figure 2. Hasan Kosebalaban's Four Major Identities in Turkish Politics⁶⁰⁴



In a conference held by the INSS (The Institute for National Security Studies) in November 2012, Kosebalaban stated, “Turkish identities are influenced by two sets of questions; the dilemma or discourse between Islamism and Secularism, and Liberalism and Nationalism”⁶⁰⁵. For him, the vertical line on the graph demonstrate the economic side where liberals seek to make Turkey an economic global player, whereas nationalists want to limit access to global market and maintain economy it under state control⁶⁰⁶. On the top half of the graph, Kosebalaban located on the left Islamic Liberals and on the Left Secular Liberals. Islamic Liberals are the ones who want Turkey to be a global economic and political player, while maintaining their Islamic identity. Whereas, Secular Liberals who are living a secular lifestyle and maintain secular ideals of the republic by Ataturk, but also want Turkey to become a global player.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid, 8.

⁶⁰⁵ Hasan Kosebalaban, “Turkey and the Middle East: Interests or Identity?,” *INSS - The Institute for National Security Studies’ Conference*, November 14-15, 2015, accessed October 15, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2e6iu_QZGo.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

On the other hand, on the bottom half of the graph he located the Islamic Nationalists and Secular Nationalists. Islamic Nationalists represented by Islamist political parties in Turkish political history who are less supportive of liberal and Western values. Whereas, Secular Nationalists who are the hard line Kemalists who seek to limit Turkey’s global role and believe that it should not participate in regional and international affairs. Furthermore, Kosebalaban in his work developed another table that helps further explaining the above graph. The table individuates where different Turkish political parties fit in and their foreign policy agenda.

Figure 3. Turkey’s syncretic ideologies: present and historical representative actors and foreign policy outlooks⁶⁰⁷

		<i>The question of Islam vs. secularism</i>	
		<i>Islamism</i>	<i>Secularism</i>
The question of liberal globalism vs. nationalism	<i>Liberal globalism</i>	Islamic liberalism AKP Globalist/assertive	Secularist liberalism DP, AP, and ANAP Globalist/pro-Western/assertive
	<i>Nationalism</i>	Islamic nationalism MSP, RP, (SP) nationalist/Pro-Islamic/assertive	Secularist nationalism CHP Nationalist/isolationist

Kosebalaban Locates the AKP under the Islamic Liberalist identity group, arguing that this is due to their assertive globalist foreign policy and the AKP government’s interest in the integration with Europe as well as the increase of

⁶⁰⁷ Kosebalaban, 8.

interest in neighbouring countries. He added, “Islamic liberalism seeks integration within liberal Western institutions with an authentic Islamic identity and assertive diplomacy”⁶⁰⁸. Kosebalaban separates AKP from previous Islamist parties. He located Islamist parties namely the National Salvation Party (MSP), The Welfare Party (RP), and Felicity Party (SP) under the Islamist Nationalism. This is due to their great pro-Islamic policies and support for integration with the Muslim World under Turkish leadership. However, according to him, both Islamic Nationalists and Islamic Liberalists share the fact that they both lay “Islamic Sensitivity at the centre of their identity”⁶⁰⁹. The author’s main argument is that Turkish foreign policy has been shaped by different contesting national identity groups in Turkish modern history. Kosebalaban’s work is very interesting and useful in minimizing the struggle for researchers in understanding the role of national identity and the different types that exist in Turkey.

Similarly, Yucel Bozdaglioglu in his book *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach* (2003) argued that Turkish foreign policy has been shaped by national identity. For example, the Turkish Western identity, since the years after the War of Independence, has been the major character of the republic’s foreign policy dimension⁶¹⁰. His work further analyses the important roles of Islamic, National, and Western conceptions in Turkish domestic politics, criticizing the rational-choice analysis by some scholars in the literature⁶¹¹. Bozdaglioglu suggests that Turkish foreign policy

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Kosebalaban, Op cit.

⁶¹⁰ Yucel Bozdaglioglu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach* (Routledge, 2004), 46.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

clearly depends on the distribution of power between Secularists and Islamists. In another article presented by the author entitled *Modernity, Identity, and Turkish Foreign Policy* (2008), Bozdaglioglu argued that the identity power struggle between Secularists and Islamists in Turkish history has been affecting the foreign policy direction⁶¹². For example, Seculars were able to build institutions that gave them more power and protection mainly through the military, judicial, and elite structures and therefore were able to shape Turkish foreign policy for a long time. However, with the evolution and expansion of political Islam, Turkey's foreign policy witnessed some changes particularly during the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of Necmettin Erbakan and Turgut Ozal. Furthermore, with the AKP's success in weakening the secular establishment and power, mainly through the military, Turkish foreign policy witnessed a dramatic change. Therefore, the power struggle between those identity groups, have been central to Turkish foreign policy making.

In an interesting seminar attended by the researcher on 21st of October 2014 titled *Turkey's Foreign Policy: A Middle Power's Quest for Status*, organized by Bilkent International Security and Strategy Seminar (BISSS) held at the Bilkent Hotel, Dr. Ozgur Ozdamar, a Professor of International Relations at Bilkent University, presented important data and findings from his project on "Turkey's Foreign Policy Roles: An Empirical Approach", in association with TUBITAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey)⁶¹³. One of Dr. Ozdamar's central themes in the project was to explore and analyse the attitudes of social elites towards Turkish foreign policy roles. The project

⁶¹² Hasan Kosebalaban, "Modernity, Identity, and Turkish Foreign Policy", *Insight Turkey* 10, no.1 (2008): 55-76.

⁶¹³ Ozgur Ozdamar, "Turkey's Foreign Policy: A Middle Power's Quest for Status," (Seminar presentation, Bilkent Hotel, Ankara, Turkey, October 21, 2014).

included 50 elite interviews were conducted in different Turkish cities, such as Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Erzurum, Antalya, and Diyarbakir. Foreign policy elite interviews also included officials from the bureaucracy, academia, businesses, civil society, and media. Dr. Ozdamar argued that there were three main roles that those elites identified with Turkish foreign policy and they are; “model country”, “regional power”, and “bridge country”⁶¹⁴. For him, Turkish elites are concerned with regional and local roles more than international or global ones. Such elites’ ideas can be seen as an important factor that could have led to Turkish increasing regional role.

Furthermore, O. Bahadir Dincer in his article *Transformation of Political Identity in Turkish Foreign Policy* (2011) stated, “Transformation under way in Turkish foreign policy, one that is inextricably linked to the change in the country’s identity”⁶¹⁵. He argued that previously Turkey identified itself in line with the Western world and therefore gave very little attention to the Arab world, whereas since the AKP took power, a more inclusive perception of identity emerged. This was seen in its influence on Turkey’s international stabilizing role, for example⁶¹⁶. Therefore, by Turkey’s re-identifying itself in relations with its neighbouring and Islamic region, a more active foreign policy towards the Middle East emerged.

Furthermore, in an interesting PhD thesis entitled *Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy in The Post Cold War Period: Relations with the EU, Greece, and the Middle East* (2010) by Enver Gulseven, suggested that a

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Osman Bahadir Dincer, “Transformation of Political Identity in Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Turkish Weekly*, September 27, 2011, accessed October 3, 2015, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/2011/09/27/comment/transformation-of-identity-in-turkish-foreign-policy/>.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

constructivist approach is more helpful for us to understand Turkish foreign policy compared to the rationalist analysis. The author argued that Turkey has had a major problem in having an insecure identity, which led to the fluctuation and instability of foreign policy making⁶¹⁷. He added, “The extent of debates and the existence of a strong opposition to change in both domestic and foreign policy issues, namely the adoption of EU-related reforms and a new Cyprus policy, was actually a reflection of Turkey’s contested identity. Due to a lack of consensus on its state identity, Turkish politics have been ambivalent and the resulting foreign policy preferences have been unstable”⁶¹⁸, suggesting that there never has been national identity consensus, which has directly affected Turkish foreign policies. Such discussions on the role of identity in Turkish foreign policy are very much complicated due to the plural nature of “sub-national” identities who have also been affecting Turkish politics particularly with the recent reforms and democratization process. However, this approach led by constructivist thinking will have to be further examined in the following sections and tested to understand the level accuracy and relevance it presents in trying to understand Turkish foreign policy change in the ten years between 2002 and 2012.

2.3 Islamic identity and the “global Umma”

A number of scholars who have been influenced by the constructivist theoretical framework have suggested that AKP’s Islamist identity is related to the Islamic “Umma” (All Muslims) and that this gives it a sense of duty towards it. For

⁶¹⁷ Enver Gulseven, “Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy in The Post Cold War Period: Relations with the EU, Greece, and the Middle East,” (PhD thesis, Brunel University, 2010).

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

example, Osman Gultekin (2015) in his work, relying on the constructivist theoretical school of thought, stated, “A constructivist ‘ummah’ identity approach serving for realist purposes is found to be the most accurate explaining theory for the transformation of the Turkish foreign policy”⁶¹⁹. Gultekin argued that since the AKP took power in 2002, a new constructed “Umma image” in a pan-Islamist contextual framework in foreign relations has taken place. Furthermore, he presented Ahmet Davutoglu’s Strategic Depth as the main source behind building such image and foreign policy. His work gives us some insights on alternative explanations to the realist or pragmatic ones. For Gultekin, the constructivist explanation is more inclusive and is successful in taking into account the domestic elite’s identities and interests.

Alexander Murinson (2012) in his work *Turkish Foreign Policy in the Twenty First Century*, argued that the AKP has been pursuing a neo-Ottoman foreign policy, which gave a central place of Islam in the foreign policy agenda⁶²⁰. He also tend to look mat Davutoglu’s work as a source behind AKP’s vision and the way it identifies itself in relation to the Islamic Umma and the pride of its heritage and tradition. For him, the identification of self (Turkey) as part of the Muslim Umma and one that has great responsibility towards it, due to Turkey’s Islamic history and rule, have been a significant source behind Turkey’s Middle Eastern policies and foreign policy transformation in general⁶²¹. Here an emphasis has been given more on the Islamic “Ottoman” identity of the

⁶¹⁹ Osman Gultekin, “Inquiry on Pan-Islamist Feature of the Recent Turkish Foreign Policy with Constructivist Perspective,” (ECPR General Conference, de Montreal University, August 26-29, 2015), p. 1, accessed October 3, 2015, <http://ecpr.eu/Events/PaperDetails.aspx?PaperID=26296&EventID=94>.

⁶²⁰ Alexander Murinson, “Turkish Foreign Policy in the Twenty First Century,” *Mid East Security and policy Studies*, no.97 (2012): 1.

⁶²¹ *Ibid*, 12.

AKP. Therefore, this generates not only a Pan-Islamist foreign policy, but also a neo-Ottoman one.

Furthermore, in an interesting study by William Joseph Bullen (2009) examined the role of national identity in affecting Turkish foreign policy making. Bullen argued that the AKP's "neo-Ottomanist" identity, "one that blend between modern, secular, and Western customs with traditional Ottoman and Islamic culture"⁶²². He added, "As a result of the historical aspirations and effectiveness of neo-Ottomanism, the neo-Ottoman identity grew until it became solidified in 2002 with the election of the AKP as the dominant political party. As the neo-Ottoman identity was consolidated as the dominant national identity in Turkey, this change in identity paralleled a change in Turkey's foreign policy"⁶²³. His study looked at the Turkish increased political and economic relations with neighbouring Arab countries and the view of being a regional leader. However, the author stressed a number of important points on the limits and weaknesses of his study and the notion of identity in understanding Turkish foreign policy, which will be further examined as part of the test on the identity explanation later on.

Moreover, after the Arab Spring, a number of scholars also have tried to understand Turkey's foreign policy position towards the Middle East from an identity approach. Hossein Mofidi Ahmadi (2015) highlighted the central role of Turkish national identity in shaping Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab Spring. He stated, "Turkey's foreign policy actions following the developments that have come to be collectively known as the Arab Spring arose from the

⁶²² William Joseph Bullen, "The Dynamic between National Identity and Foreign Policy in Turkey," (MA thesis, Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey, 2009): 5.

⁶²³ Ibid, 72.

country's identity components, as has been the case with other regional countries"⁶²⁴. The author explained that there are three main "identity components" to be taken into account, the Turkish, Islamic, and European "layers". The Turkish layer of the state's identity, represent the link between the developments in Syria and Iraq and their impact on the Kurdish question, which is part of the Turkish identity problem. Ahmadi argued, "Ankara has been very intent on introducing a new concept of being Turkish, which would also include the Kurdish minority in the country. This process, which has come to be known as "normalization of the Kurdish problem," faced a serious challenge due to the sudden breakout of regional developments, which have been described as Arab Spring"⁶²⁵.

Secondly, on the Islamic layer of Turkish identity, Ahmadi argued that Turkey feels alarmed about the Iranian Shia influence in the region, highly critical of Western policies in the Middle East, and its support for a democratic transformation in those countries through the support of Islamist figures. The third layer of Turkish identity affecting Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab Spring has been its European identity. The author suggests that this was evident with Turkey's alliance with a number of European countries in trying to remove the Assad regime. On the other hand, Ahmadi argued, "Ankara saw its own interests dependent on making efforts to help establish more democratic and more broad-based governments in its surroundings. In fact, from the viewpoint of Turkish officials, absence of broad-based nation-states in the

⁶²⁴ Hossein Mofidi Ahmadi, "Turkey's foreign policy after the Arab Spring: An Identity-Based Approach," *Iran Review*, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Turkey-s-Foreign-Policy-After-the-Arab-Spring-An-Identity-Based-Approach.htm>.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

region is one of the most important factors that have caused a wide gap between Shias and Sunnis in the Arab Middle East”⁶²⁶. Therefore, for him, an identity-based approach is the best way to understand Turkey’s policies towards the Middle East subsequent to the developments of the Arab uprisings.

2.4 Putting the identity approach and explanations to the test

This part of the chapter aims to identify the value of the identity-based explanations in understanding Turkish foreign policy, as well as applying interview data that enable the researcher to identify possible weaknesses to help determine the explanation's contributory value.

From this research and evidence provided above, it is important to understand that Turkish identity plays an important role in shaping foreign policy making. However, does this identity approach help explain all aspects of Turkish foreign policy? And is the only source behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002? There are some limits to this explanation and approach that weaken its plausibility and comprehensiveness in explaining the reason behind Turkish foreign policy not only since 2002, but before? This section of the chapter aims at examining the effectiveness of this approach as an explanation through the use of different empirical evidence and interview data collected during the fieldwork. It will show that although the notion of identity offers important insights in explaining certain foreign policy outcomes, it is still limited due to a number of reasons. First of all, there is no consensus over defining Turkish national identity. Scholars have offered different characterizations of Turkish identity, such as Islamist-Liberal identity,

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

Islamist identity, Neo-Ottoman identity, and an identity that has three different Turkish, Islamist, and European layers. Secondly, the identity explanations fail to recognise the important roles of some external factors, such as the US, NATO, UN, and the European Union in affecting some foreign policy decisions. In addition, it has been criticised by scholars who argue that this approach ignores the rational and pragmatic side of Turkish foreign policy particularly through Turkey's economic desires.

As analysed above, there have been a number of different interpretations on the AKP's national identity and its effects on Turkish foreign policy. Four main arguments within the identity debate have been influential. The first, suggests that the AKP identity is an "Islamic-Liberal" or a "Conservative-Democratic" one. That supports democratic principles through adopting the Copenhagen criteria; seek a global role, assertive, and opening up to new zones of influence particularly in the Middle East and the Islamic world in general. The second argument looks at the Islamist historical nature of the AKP's leaders and the government's increasing interest in the Islamic world, describing the party as one that holds an "Islamist" identity. The third argument suggest that Turkish foreign policy since 2002 has been shaped by the AKP "neo-Ottomanist" identity, which has a mixture of both western, liberal and Islamic elements all at the same time. The fourth argument suggests that there are actually three different components of Turkish identity that affect its foreign policy making, specifically the Turkish, Islamic, and European identity layers. This represents a lack of consensus and unified understanding of Turkish national identity in the literature. Scholars who use identity to understand foreign policy in Turkey have characterized the AKP and the current national

identity differently. As a result, this led to different conclusions and explanations within the identity approach on its own, which further contribute to the complex variety of answers available in the literature.

Islam seems to be the central element in Turkish current national identity identified in the literature. However, this was also criticised by some scholars who disagree not with the existence of such identity component, but with the degree of its impact. For example, Frevzi Sarac in his work *Turkish Foreign Policy in Theory and Practice* (2010) argued that the notion of Islam in Turkish national identity does not actually gives us a complete picture or useful insights. Sarac stated, "Despite the past relations of AKP leaders, I believe that Islam does not play a decisive role in TFP. Turkey is not only strengthening relations with Iran, Syria, and Iraq, but also with its other neighbours like Greece and Armenia. Moreover, as Turkey wants to consolidate its relationship with Organization of the Islamic Conference, it also wants to consolidate its relationship with European Union, or wants to be more influential in the United Nations"⁶²⁷. The author presented a very useful example focusing on the number of Turkish formal visits to Western and Islamic states in order to obtain some useful information that could tell us something. Sarac argued that in 2009 the Turkish foreign minister at that time, Ahmet Davutoglu, made 93 formal international visits. 47 of them were made to European Countries, whereas 22 to the Middle East and 15 to Asia, and 9 to the US⁶²⁸. Such statistical analysis, to him, provides clear evidence that Islam is not the main derive of Turkish foreign policy.

⁶²⁷ Frevzi Sarac, "Turkish Foreign Policy in Theory and Practice," *Washington Review*, 2010, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/turkish-foreign-policy-in-theory-and-practice.html>.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

What's more, Faruk Yalvac in his work *Approaches to Turkish Foreign Policy: A Critical Realist Analysis* (2014) argued that scholars who used identity approach "fail to discuss how identities are translated into state power, nor is it so clear that identity-based foreign policy is based less on geopolitical considerations leading, for instance, to different policies when and if security of a state is at stake"⁶²⁹. The author questioned if Turkey was starting to follow a less state-interested policy today due to its changing social identity?

Another major weakness comes from the fact that identity explanations overlook the role of the changing international environment and the existing external powerful players that affect Turkey's foreign policy making. For example, in many occasions Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu asserted that Turkey is adapting to the changing international environment and system and becoming an active international player. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the international system changed from being a bipolar system dominated by The USSR and the US, to a unipolar with the United States as the only great power as well as the emergence of the so called "New World Order". This transformed the international system and had a major effect on different states including Turkey. It is evident how Turkey sought to change its foreign policy position and become more assertive after the end of the Cold War.

Similarly, Turkey has been affected by the transformation and changes that took place in the international system since then. For some scholars, including Ahmet Davutoglu, think the transformation in Turkish foreign policy

⁶²⁹ Faruk Yalvac, "Approaches to Turkish Foreign Policy: A Critical Realist Analysis," *Taylor & Francis Online* 15, issue. 1 (2014), accessed October 4, 2015 <http://changingturkey.com/2015/07/31/the-quote-of-the-month-approaches-to-turkish-foreign-policy-by-prof-faruk-yalvac/>.

has been a response to the changes in the international system and environment. In a conference held in the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), on February 10, 2012 in Washington, Davutoglu explained how the international system since the end of the Cold War have had a great impact on both Turkish domestic and foreign policy making⁶³⁰. He stated that there were three main international “*earthquakes*” that affected Turkish domestic and foreign policies. The first was in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, changing the geo-political structure with the emergence of new states and transformations taking place in Eastern Europe, Caucasias, and Central Asia. This created for Turkey the need to reassess its international position and roles. The second earthquake came in 2001 with the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which led to a new international security vision and approach. The third earthquake was more complex one emerging in 2011 as a result of both a European economic crisis, and regional political transformation known as the “Arab Spring”⁶³¹. For Davutoglu, all of these three international earthquakes were central to the changes and transformation of Turkish foreign policy.

Furthermore, the United States has been a major external player that affected Turkish foreign policy making in particular towards the Middle East. The American Middle East policies do have an effect on Turkish interests in the Middle East. One cannot disregard the role of US hegemony on states and their behaviours. For example, since the US War on Iraq in 2003, instability, security problems, and Iranian engagement, all increased concerns for Turkey and

⁶³⁰ Ahmet Davutoglu, “Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu Remarks at CSIS,” *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, February, 10, 2012, accessed October 15, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdCsd4Ak_Ak.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

especially in relation to the Kurdish issue and the PKK⁶³². Other US policies regarding Iran, Iraq, and Syria have also been highly critical by the Turkish administration, which affected Turkish-US relations for some time.

Other important international actors are the international institutions. The most influential international intergovernmental institution on Turkish politics has been the European Union. The EU has been a major force behind the changes in both domestic and foreign policies of Turkey⁶³³. The AKP adopted the Copenhagen criteria and pushed for democracy and this was also reflected in its foreign policy norms of changing its hard power image to more of a soft/civilian power like similar to EU promoting democracy, peace, and stability in the region⁶³⁴. Furthermore, with the development of the Arab Spring and particularly the Syrian conflict, Turkey became highly affected by the flow of refugees and spill over, and the development of security threats by terrorist groups mainly ISIS. These were other major and more recent external contributors affecting Turkey's foreign policy position towards the Syrian crisis, for example.

On the other hand, the identity approach in the literature on Turkish foreign policy did not emphasize the significant role of economic interests in shaping it. Turkey's economy under the AKP's government witnessed a drastic improvement and AKP's leaders frequently addressed the importance of having a strong economy. Therefore, there was an increase in Turkish economic international cooperation and relations with a particular attention paid to

⁶³² Ebru Canan-Sokullu, *Debating Security in Turkey: Challenges and Changes in the Twenty-First Century* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 126-127.

⁶³³ Ozlem Terzi, *The Influence of the European Union on Turkish Foreign Policy* (Ashgate Press, 2010).

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

opportunities in new markets. Trade between Turkey and the Middle East reached significant levels compared to figures before 2002⁶³⁵. Turkish economic interests in the Middle East have been a key element in Turkish-Middle East relations for a long time. According to Javier Albarracin (2011), the World Bank stated that “Turkey account for 50% of the GDP of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including Israel and Iran”⁶³⁶. What’s more, the author stated that regardless the major global economic crisis in 2010, Turkey’s economy continued to grow for around 8.9%, the highest growth rate in Europe and third in the world⁶³⁷. This shows the level of importance and role of economic interests for Turkey under the AKP’s administration. This does not mean that identity does not matter, but rather that there are other factors that shape Turkish foreign policy and interests in the Middle East and elsewhere.

John Mersheimer, a prominent Realist scholar, gave an interesting lecture at the Turkish Foreign Ministry titled *Turkish Foreign Policy: A realist’s Assessment* in October 2012. He focused on the importance of Turkish power and security threats in the region that affect Turkish foreign policy⁶³⁸. Mersheimer argued that the most two powerful players in the region are Turkey and Iran. He looked at the importance of population and wealth in this power relation and argued that Turkey is in a good position compared to Iran’s population growth rate and economic situation. Mersheimer also looked at the

⁶³⁵ Hurriyet Daily, “Turkey and Arabs seek to boost economic ties,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, September 26, 2013, accessed October 16, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-and-arabs-seek-to-boost-economic-ties.aspx?pageID=238&nid=55142>.

⁶³⁶ Javier Albarracin, “The Role of Turkey in the New Middle Eastern Economic Architecture,” *Economy and Territory*, 2011, p. 234, accessed October 5, 2015, http://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxius-adjunts/anuari/med.2011/Albarracin_en.pdf.

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ John Mersheimer, “Turkish Foreign Policy: A Realist’s Assessment,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 4, 2012, accessed October 5, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geC1vNBj2Yk>.

security threat as another major element that affects Turkey, a threat that comes mainly by the PKK and other troubled neighbours, which share borders with Turkey. For example, the development of the Syrian issue, increase of Syrian refugees, and increasing security threats by ISIS and the PKK affected Turkish relations and behaviour towards the Assad regime, as well as Iran and recently Russia, due to the growing military presence in Syria threatening of Turkish borders. Security threats also forced Turkey to seek alliance and join the international coalition against ISIS as well as attacking the PKK⁶³⁹. Mershiemer further argued that any state aims at maximizing its relative power and the ideal situation for Turkey is to be a regional hegemon to ensure that no one can “fool around”. At the same time, the second goal for states is to have a smart foreign policy or a smart “Grand Strategy” to deal with threatening environments⁶⁴⁰. Turkey is located in a very hostile environment and this had a direct effect on its regional foreign policy objectives and behaviour. Mershiemer’s main argument highlights the importance of Turkey’s position in the balance of power and the threat environment that surrounds it. This demonstrates the existence of other factors that affect Turkey’s foreign policy besides identity.

From the interviews conducted for this thesis, it is possible to notice an important difference among the interviewees about the characteristic of Turkish national identity and its role in understanding Turkish foreign policy change under the AKP’s government. Some agreed that identity is central to our understanding of Turkish foreign policy, but they also stated that we should not

⁶³⁹ Gul Tuysuz and Zeynep Bilginsoy, “Ministry: Turkey joins coalition airstrikes against ISIS in Syria,” *CNN News*, August 29, 2015, accessed October 16, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/29/europe/turkey-airstrikes/>.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

eliminate all other factors. For example, Dr. Saban Kardash, President of the Middle East Strategic Research Centre (ORSAM), argued that actually there is more than one identity group that is affecting Turkish foreign policy, and that's what makes Turkey different and complicated to many. Kardas further stated, "The religious identity is important, but we cannot explain everything through it either. In other words, it means something, but it does not mean everything"⁶⁴¹. Furthermore, Professor Murat Yasiltas, Director of Security Studies at SETA Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research, agreed with Kosebalaban's approach for understanding Turkish national identity and its effect on foreign policy⁶⁴². However, Yasiltas also mentioned in his interview the importance of the economic side of Turkish foreign policy. He argued, "AKP foreign policy carry both material interests and social or ideational aspects as they complete and support each other"⁶⁴³. Similarly, Professor Selcuk Colakoglu, Vice President at USAK the 'International Strategic Research Organization' and the director of the USAK centre for Asia-Pacific Studies, supported Kosebalaban's argument and further stated "every ten years, the identity of Turkish politics is changing somewhat"⁶⁴⁴.

Dr. Mesut Ozcan, chairman of the Foreign Ministry's Diplomacy Academy and Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his interview argued that National identity and its input is subject to change⁶⁴⁵. He argued that in the past we can say that the identity of the elites were reflective in Turkey's foreign policy i.e. Secular-Kemalists. He added, "Turkey is currently in a much better

⁶⁴¹ Saban Kardash, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, October 13, 2014.

⁶⁴² Murat Yasiltas, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, October 14, 2014.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Selcuk Colakoglu, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 17, 2014.

⁶⁴⁵ Mesut Ozcan, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 18, 2014.

democratic situation compared to its past. With the continuing victories of the AKP, we can say that the party represents the majority of people in Turkey and elections are best evidence". Dr. Ozcan argued that since the end of the cold war, identity politics and the effects of identity groups on foreign policy making in Turkey has been growing rapidly. He stated, "As we have seen more and more people are being proud of their identity groups and are putting forward their demands". Here, Dr. Ozcan suggests that it is not the "national identity" of a certain elite group that influence Turkish foreign policy, but instead the different identity groups in Turkey that are growingly becoming influential in foreign policy making. However, he argued that we should not overemphasize the role of identity in Turkish foreign policy change, as there are a number of other factors that need to be considered at the same time. He argued that the vast changing regional and international environments also affect foreign policy making and particularly Turkey due to its important strategic position.

On the other hand, only one interviewee suggested that the AKP has a strong Islamic identity that directly affects its behaviour and foreign policy outlook especially towards its Muslim neighbours. For instance, Professor Serhat Erkmen, suggested that although Davutoglu stated that he is an Islamic Liberal, "when you read his writings you find him Islamic Nationalist, especially in the strong emphasis he makes on the Turcoman cases in Syria and Iraq"⁶⁴⁶. However, Erkmen also tends to highlight the important economic role in shaping Turkish-Middle East relations. He stated, "Whenever the Turkish prime minister or foreign minister goes to a country, they bring with them a high number of businessmen to sign some agreements and contracts. The AKP then facilitates

⁶⁴⁶ Serhat Erkmen, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 21, 2014.

these businessmen activities”⁶⁴⁷. Although there were some differences in the way interviewees viewed Turkish identity and its effect on foreign policy, they all share the idea that focusing on identity role on its own without considering other factors is misleading.

Therefore, it can be argued that the identity approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy is important, but does not explain all aspects affecting Turkish foreign policy making, particularly regarding the Middle East. As mentioned earlier, there has been a wide range of arguments and definitions over Turkish national identity and its role presented in the literature. Furthermore, although, constructivists in international relations theories may have included the pragmatic and material explanations in their theories, scholars in the literature on Turkish foreign policy favouring identity approach seem to have failed to explain the significant role of economic interests, security concerns, changing international environment, and international actors in shaping Turkey’s foreign policy directions. However, this does not mean that the identity approach can be eliminated from this study, but rather that it constitutes a weak explanation.

Therefore, from the empirical evidence and from the data collected from the interviews, the identity explanation in understanding Turkish foreign policy change since 2002 has passed a *Hoop Test* in the theory testing Process Tracing methodology. This means that evidence found helped the identity hypothesis to “*jump through the hoop*” and remain under consideration. Similar to the Ottomanist explanations in the first half of this chapter, identity explanations seem to set a more demanding standard than the Islamist

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

explanations. However, identity explanations seem to pass a *Hoop Test* this time. After analysing the data collected, empirical evidence, and interview data, identity explanations seem to give a much greater value than the neo-Ottoman explanations. Unlike the noticeable disagreement among interviewees regarding the neo-Ottoman explanations, there seem to be a much greater agreement with the identity role in Turkish foreign policy. However, identity explanations were not confirmed due to the interviewees' suggestion that such explanations do not explain the whole picture. Instead, there are other factors that need to be acknowledged that have played a role as well, such as economic interests and the role of the EU and other external factors. Passing a *Hoop Test* affirms relevance of hypothesis, but it does not confirm it. Although it does not represent a sufficient criterion for accepting the explanation, it however establishes a necessary criterion. The implication of passing a *Hoop Test* is that it somewhat weakens other explanations so far. In other words, it somewhat weakens the plausibility of other explanations, without excluding the possibility that alternative hypotheses may be relevant. To further simplify and clarify this process of examination, the table below summarizes the main points of the Identity explanation and its value in the thesis so far.

Figure 4. Assessment of the Identity explanation in Process Tracing

<p>Explanation 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turkish identity politics has been the domestic source behind Turkish foreign policy change under the AKP government.
<p>Evidence constituting this explanation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The role of national identities over history in Turkey. - The change of elite structures and the emergence of a new conservative bourgeoisie. - AKP Islamic-liberal/Conservative-democratic identity as a source of motivation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foreign policy affected by the distribution of power between Secular and Islamic identities.
<p>Process of examining empirical evidence and interview data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There has been a noticeable change in elite structures since 1980s with an emergence of new elite contesting traditional groups challenging the Kemalist traditional elites. - Noticeable disagreement over the AKP identity characters as a political party and national identity groups over history. - Identity politics in Turkey represent an important element of Turkish foreign policy that should be taken into account. - Consensus among interviewees over the important role of national identity in Turkish foreign policy making. - Interviewees have largely demonstrated that there are other factors along with identity that need to be included. - Identity explanation is useful, but not strong enough on its own to represent a comprehensive explanation.
<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence set a more demanding standard compared to Islamist and neo-Ottomaist explanations. - Useful explanation and needs to be considered. - Explains an important part of the picture, but does not explain the whole picture on its own due to the complex nature of the Turkish case. - Necessary but not sufficient to establish causation (<i>Necessary because identity politics is one of the most important elements in shaping international relations and states' affairs and therefore needs to be considered as it has proven to explain an important part of the Turkish case, but the explanation has not been successful to sufficiently explain the entire case on its own representing only part of the answer</i>). - Higher demand for a more inclusive approach and multiple factors explanation. - Therefore, passes a Hoop Test.
<p>Implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affirms relevance of explanation, but does not confirm it. - Somewhat weakens rival explanations in the study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine and test the plausibility, through Process Tracing method, of two of the main ideational explanations presented

in the literature on Turkish foreign policy; the concept of neo-Ottomanism, and the notion of national identity. This chapter has been a continuation of the previous chapter in the sense that they both cover ideational and non-material explanations and arguments presented in the literature. The prime focus of this chapter has been on the notions of neo-Ottomanism and national identity explanations. The researcher was able to evaluate and test the plausibility of those explanations through applying the four steps strategy. First the researcher analysed the main components of those concepts and the different arguments presented in the literature supporting them. Secondly, examined available empirical data, archival documents, and raised critical questions that such explanations might not have considered or looked at. The researcher developed a critical engagement, where a number of questions were posed, which helped identify limitations of those explanations. The third step required an analysis of available critics and other contrasting arguments that critically reviewed the neo-Ottoman and Identity explanations and helped highlight possible weaknesses. The fourth and final step of applying interview data enabled the researcher to further assess the sufficiency and necessity of the explanations under examination. This was carried out through exploring interviewees' views and ideas in assessing their explanatory value.

Therefore, the first part of the chapter analysed the concept of neo-Ottomanism and its main characteristics in an attempt to help define this concept. However, it was evident that a number of distinct definitions exist in the literature. Furthermore, the section demonstrated the existing variety of arguments presented in the literature by different scholars who use this concept in understanding different Turkish foreign policies under the AKP. Some have

focused on Ahmet Davutoglu's work known as "Strategic Depth" as the source of neo-Ottomanist foreign policy, while others paid more attention on the statements and speeches delivered by Davutoglu, as a foreign minister and currently as a prime minister, and Erdogan in his prime ministry time and presidency. However, the concept of neo-Ottomanism has been proven to be significantly weak in explaining Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002. This is because it fails to explain Turkey's foreign policy expansion and influence to countries and regions far away from the former Ottoman territories. On the other hand, the diversity and complex range of definitions presented in the literature demonstrate a major weakness in the concept itself. There has been no consensus over the characteristics of neo-Ottomanism as well as its affect over Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, according to the evidence found, this explanation have failed to survive a *Hoop Test* in the process tracing, which eliminates it from this study, while at the same time strengthens other competing explanations so far.

The second part of the chapter covered the notion of identity and its role in shaping Turkish foreign policy, particularly towards the Middle East. Turkey is unique compared to other countries in the Middle East due to its geographical location and complex nature of the existing multiple ethnic and religious identities. This, to a large extent, made it very difficult for researchers to define and understand the role of identity in Turkish foreign policy making. However, scholars were able to develop arguments focusing on the role of national identity shaped by the national elite and powerful business class. The identity explanations have presented very useful insights in understanding Turkish foreign policy change since 2002. The emergence of a new conservative middle

class and business groups during the 1990s has paved way for the change of elite structures from one that was mainly represented by secular elites, to a more conservative-liberal business class elites. This emerging conservative middle class has been highly supported by the AKP since 2002. However, the problem with the identity approach is that scholars have presented distinct explanations of the current national identity ranging from a neo-Ottomanist identity, Islamist-Liberal identity, and Islamist identity. Such variety of definitions highly weakens the important contribution that such explanations can offer.

At the same time, the fact that such explanations overlook the importance of other external factors that might affect Turkish foreign policy they also undermine the significance of this approach. The United States' hegemony and policies in the Middle East have had great impact on Turkish foreign policy and particularly towards the Middle East. Since the US invasion of Iraq, Turkey had to deal with increasing security threats by terrorist groups and the PKK. Furthermore, the increasing regional instability as a result of this war affected the Turkish regional stability and peace building approach for example. Another external body that had major impact on both Turkish domestic and foreign policies during the AKP era was the European Union. The AKP's government has taken necessary measures to apply the Copenhagen criterion as part of its EU membership access. Therefore, a number of important reforms were introduced that transformed Turkey. The Turkish administration has been arguing that Turkey's Middle East policy is an asset for the EU as it presents an important and strategic Eastern gate, as it will be further explained in chapter 6. Although identity approach does engage with some of these debates, it seems to ignore some evidence and looks at all foreign policy changes towards

the Middle East from a predominantly identity side. Therefore, after analysing critics of this approach and applying necessary empirical evidence and primary interview data, the identity approach seem to have passed a *Hoop Test* in the process tracing methodology. This means that this has to remain under consideration and cannot be eliminated from the study, as it still gives us useful insights for understanding important aspects of Turkish Foreign Policy. Passing a *Hoop Test* affirms relevance but does not confirm it; while at the same time weakens other rival explanations in this study.

So far, approaches that are listed under the ideational side of the literature, mainly influenced by the constructivist school of thought in International Relations, have been showing both strong and weak insights to understanding Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East and the driving force behind that. For example, the Islamist approach was highly weakened after testing its plausibility in chapter 4, but it was not eliminated due to some of the existing pro-Islamist policies by the AKP. On the other hand, the neo-Ottomanist concept failed to survive the test it failed in explaining the reality behind many of AKPs' policies and therefore had to be eliminated, whereas the identity approach has proven to be the strongest explanation among ideational accounts. However, none of the examined ideational approaches, in chapters 4 and 5 so far, have successfully presented a complete and comprehensive explanation for all the different aspects of Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, this study has to examine other explanations offered in the literature by scholars who applied and favored the so-called "materialist" and "pragmatic" approaches in understanding the causes behind Turkish foreign change since 2002 beyond the theoretical debate.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Economic Interests and Security Concerns as Sources of Turkish Foreign Policy Change

Introduction

The literature on Turkish foreign policy, particularly the case of the Middle East, has been shaped by two mainstream theoretical debates: “Ideational” vs. “Pragmatic”. So far, chapters four and five looked at and analysed the “ideational” part of this theoretical debate in the literature on Turkish foreign policy based on ideology and identity explanations. They looked at the roles of political ideology of the AKP including the role of Islamism, neo-Ottomanism, and Turkish national identity in an attempt to understand Turkish foreign policy transformation towards the Middle East. This chapter, on the other hand, aims at covering the second part of this theoretical debate focusing on the “pragmatic” aspects and role in understanding the cause behind Turkey’s change of approach towards its neighbouring Middle Eastern countries. This second part of the literature has been largely dominated by economic and security based explanations. Therefore, this chapter aims at analysing and examining the significance of understanding this foreign policy change.

Therefore, this chapter will be divided into two parts; the first part will focus on the economic based explanations, including the notion of Turkey emerging as a “Trading State” and the idea of promoting economic interdependence. The second part of the chapter will cover the security-based approach provided in the literature. This includes the long-standing Kurdish problem and Turkey’s counter PKK strategies, as well as the highly instable and hostile region Turkey is located in. Later, both parts and together with the

theoretical explanations of this chapter will be examined and tested through the Process Tracing theory testing method. The purpose is to know whether any of these competing explanations in the literature present a plausible and comprehensive understanding the cause behind Turkey's new approach towards the Middle East since 2002. The test will be conducted through the application of available empirical evidence, possible counter arguments and critics, and collected interview data from the fieldwork of this thesis to test them against and analyse their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, results of this chapter will show that the economic approach in the literature seems to pass a *Hoop Test*, presenting a necessary but not sufficient cause. This means that this is highly important to consider in this study because it helps explain a considerable part of Turkey's Middle East approach under the AKP government.

However, there are some weaknesses demonstrated in the lack of explaining and taking into account certain international actors and events that might have affected Turkish foreign policy away from any economic issues. In other words, it is important, but we cannot understand the case solely through it. The implication for passing a *Hoop Test*, is that it strengthen it while at the same time somewhat weakens other rival non-economic based explanations in the literature so far. This means that the economic factor in understanding Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East cannot be eliminated. On the other hand, the security approach of the literature fails a *Straw in the Wind Test* showing that it is neither sufficient nor necessary to affirm it as the cause behind such foreign policy change. In other words the security approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since

2002 is a weak explanation and one that does not explain much “on its own”. Security concerns have played a role in shaping Turkey’s relations with countries like Syria, Iraq, and Iran who all share borders with Turkey and are directly involved with the Kurdish issue. However, with the de-securitization process and approach to countries beyond Turkey’s borders, the explanation does not take into account other non-security factors i.e. economic, ideological, cultural, and other international actors that might have affected Turkey’s Middle East outlook and caused this new opening. As a result, failing this test reduces its relevance and cannot be used as a plausible explanation. However, it is important to note that failing this test does not eliminate it. As long as Turkey has to deal with certain security issues and especially the endless Kurdish problem, security explanations can give us insights to understand particular policies directly related to security threats. Therefore, the security theoretical hypothesis, in this case study, shows that it can only explain “part” of the answer. The implication of failing this test is that it slightly strengthens other competing explanations in the study.

Therefore, the economic-based approach seem to give stronger indications and valid insights compared to the security-based approach. Choosing which test to apply for each explanation in this thesis depends on the evidence at stake. However, the similarity between the economic and security theoretical approaches is that both cannot be eliminated from this study, as they both tend to explain some aspects of this new Turkish-Middle East policy. This reminds us so far that Turkey, as mentioned at the opening of this thesis, is a highly complex country operating in a highly complex region. Therefore, it is very much difficult and almost impossible to explain Turkey’s regional political,

economic, and cultural openness and re-engagement with the Middle East through one theoretical lens or a singular approach.

1. The role of economic interests

Economic interests have increasingly been a central theme contributing to international relations and foreign policy making for a long time. With the development of globalization, the importance of economic relations has increased dramatically. A large number of successful foreign policies have been recently measured by their economic impact. Since the Cold War, international trade has been a central theme in leading foreign policy making for many states. Leaders of countries in both the Western and Eastern worlds, as many would like to refer to, have increasingly recognized the benefits of international trade. Barriers to international trade have been greatly minimized and liberalized by developments of international law and efforts by the World Trade Organization (WTO), which contributes to the centrality of economic interests in understanding international relations.

The aim of this section of the chapter is to assess the role of economic interests in understanding Turkey's foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 and whether it was the main contributing factor, as many have argued, or not. As this chapter's purpose is to analyse the pragmatic and materialist side of Turkish foreign policy, economic interests and trade relations are central to such analysis. However, has economic interests been "the deriving factor" behind Turkish reengagement with the Middle East? That's the most important question that I aim to answer in this section. In doing so, this section of the chapter will be divided into three main parts. The first part will illustrate the economic growth and success witnessed in Turkey during the AKP

government and particularly in their first two terms. This will include important facts and figures that help demonstrate to the reader the level of economic growth witnessed and policy efforts made by the government that can give us useful insights to the AKP keenness in serving Turkey's economic interests in the region. The second part aims to critically analyse the different explanations and theoretical hypotheses presented in the literature that prefer to understand Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East from an economic perspective supported by the realist and neo-liberalist theoretical interpretations of international relations. The purpose of this part is to understand such explanations and the evidence they are based on in order to be able to examine their credibility. The third and final section will examine the economic explanations of Turkish foreign policy change through analysing existing critics of such notions and their potential weaknesses. This will include the use of different empirical evidence and interview data collected in my fieldwork. Testing the economic variable will be through the use of Process Tracing, as usually followed in this thesis, which will enable us to understand the importance of this concept and its sufficiency and necessity as a variable in answering the thesis's main question.

1.1 The growing Turkish economic interests in the Middle East: facts and figures

The aim of this part is to illustrate the economic situation and development since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power. This will offer useful insights to the government's seriousness and commitment to serving Turkey's economic interests, which will highly reflect in understanding its foreign policy making. Therefore, this part aims at first giving a brief explanation of the

economic situation and the way in which Turkish foreign policy was not primarily driven by economic interests since the creation of the republic and how this changed since 2002. Secondly, the AKP commitment to economic growth and prosperity demonstrated by the new economic reforms and policies. This will include some important facts and figures showing the major difference compared to previous government and AKP economic commitment and success. Finally, will briefly analyse what the Arab Spring meant for Turkish economic relations and trade with Arab countries and the critical challenges it brought about. The argument of this part mainly rely on the fact that since 2002, Turkey has been very successful in increasing its economic interdependence and trade relations with Middle Eastern states leading to a tremendous economic growth and prosperity in Turkey changing the political landscape for the AKP and its popularity. However, are significant economic facts and figures enough in supporting the economic explanation in understanding Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East? This leads us to examining the arguments put forward by scholars and academics in support of such notion to try and arrive at a solid conclusion.

Since the establishment of the republic by Kemal Ataturk in 1923, economic interests did not significantly affect Turkey's foreign policy. The new Republic's aim was to ensure its survival and domestic unity at a time of intense political instability just after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Instead, security concerns were the main elements that characterized Ataturk's foreign policy for a long time to protect the new-born republic⁶⁴⁸. Much of the new policies concentrated on empowering the new single party government and

⁶⁴⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End Of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 256-257.

implementing new reforms. Security dimensions were the main themes that shaped Turkish foreign policy for a long time. However, a major turning point emerged with the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War brought about new opportunities for Turkey and necessities to reshape its foreign policy especially with the emergence of a new World Order and growing Liberalization of global economy. Therefore, during the 1980s, there was a noticeable change in Turkey's foreign policy priorities. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Turgut Ozal's government in 1980s was very successful in developing new economic reforms. Furthermore, Ozal managed to put economic interests as a key element in Turkish foreign policy making. Turkey's economic situation was not in a good shape and was in great need for such changes. As a result, Ozal played a central role in the development of Turkey's economy and supporting it into becoming a productive country that can contribute the global market. Ozal's main aim was to develop economic relations with neighboring countries as it played an important role in improving relations at the same time. Ozal believed that by developing mutual interests, risks will be lower and conflict can be much easier solved⁶⁴⁹.

Another major element characterizing Ozal's period was the emergence of a new conservative business elite who played and still plays an important economic role in Turkey and affect economic policies. Ozal supported the Anatolian entrepreneurs who were behind the transformational power in supporting democratization, human rights, rule of law, and became heavily

⁶⁴⁹ See Sedat Laciner, "Ozalism (Neo-Ottomanism): An Alternative in Turkish Foreign Policy?," *Journal of Administrative Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2003-2004): 162-202; and Abdulkadir Civan, et al., "The effect of new Turkish Foreign Policy on international trade," *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 3 (2013): 108.

involved in foreign policy⁶⁵⁰. This new group became famously known as the Anatolian Tigers “*Anadolu Kaplanları*”⁶⁵¹. Ozal was a very business oriented man with a pragmatic mindset who believed in economic prosperity. It can be argued that Turgut Ozal was the main figure building the modern economic infrastructure of Turkey. A good example of his economic commitments was his establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC)⁶⁵². Ozal believed that regional peace promotes successful economic relations and all countries in the region can benefit⁶⁵³. This, for many, is very much similar to what the AKP government has been doing for more than a decade. Many scholars have originated AKP’s foreign policy aims to Turgut Ozal and that current AKP officials are seen as followers of Turgut Ozal’s footsteps⁶⁵⁴. However, it is important to mention that the EU established a Customs Union with Turkey in 1995 covering trade of industrial goods between the two. Although this was two years after Ozal’s government, it can be argued that many of his work and efforts led to such achievements. Prior to the AKP government, Ozal’s government was the government which most prioritized economic interests in its foreign policy making. However, Turkish foreign policy before 2002 was mainly characterized by its security orientation and hard power⁶⁵⁵.

⁶⁵⁰ Taptuk Emre Erkoc, “Economy and Democratisation: Turgut Ozal Era in Turkey,” *Journal of Business Economics and Political Science* 3, no. 6 (2014): 68.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Sabri Sayarı, “Turkey and the United States: Changing Dynamics of an Enduring Alliance,” in *Turkey’s Foreign Policy in the 21st Century, A Changing Role in World Politics*, eds., Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 30.

⁶⁵³ Oktay F. Tanrisever, “The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and its Strengths and Weaknesses in promoting the Globalization of the Black Sea Region: 1992-2012,” *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies (OAKA)* 7, no. 13 (2012): 57-72.

⁶⁵⁴ Khash Hemmati, “Turkey Post 1980 Coup D’etat: the Rise, the Fall, and the Emergence of Political Islam,” *Illumine* 12, no. 1 (2013): 70.

⁶⁵⁵ Tarik Oguzlu, “Soft power in Turkish foreign policy,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, issue. 1 (2007): 81-97.

The second and most important turning point in Turkish history and foreign policy emerged with the formation and victory of the AKP in 2002. One of the main challenges to this new government was the economic crisis that was evident in 2001. The new government had to deal with many economic problems and therefore aimed to develop a number of reforms and new economic policies. The AKP promised to fix the economic crisis at that time and achieve economic prosperity. The AKP promised to build a powerful economy and reach by 2023 the top 10 economies of the world⁶⁵⁶. One of the most significant factors behind AKP's economic policies' success is that they introduced new reforms that lay within the context of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the European Union regulations⁶⁵⁷. The new AKP government introduced new policies for the banking system, privatized state owned projects, and took necessary measures to increase public finance with avoiding debts. Therefore, the AKP was successful in reforming the Turkish economy, which made Turkey do better than expected during strong European economic crises.

Turkey's economy extensively grew and recovered from its crisis prior to 2002. For example, during only the first term of government, the national income increased at an annual rate to around 7% and inflation rate decreased from 30% to approximately 9.7%⁶⁵⁸. The table below presented by Mehmet Ugur (2008) in his work *Turkish Economic Policy under AKP government: an*

⁶⁵⁶ Constanze Letsch, "Turkey's economic success threatened by political instability," *The Guardian*, January 9, 2014, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/09/turkey-instability-threatens-economic-success-erdogan>.

⁶⁵⁷ Mehmet Ugur, "Turkish economic policy under AKP government: an assessment for 2002-2007," *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*, accessed January 10, 2016, https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/18235/1/MPRA_paper_18235.pdf.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 5.

assessment for 2002-2007 demonstrates the basic economic indicators between 2001 and 2007 during the first two terms of the AKP government.

Figure 1. Basic Economic Indicators Turkey 2001-2007⁶⁵⁹

Section I	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007*
Real GNP growth rate (%)	-9.5	7.9	5.9	9.9	7.6	5.9	5.0
CPI inflation (%)	68.5	29.7	18.4	9.4	7.7	9.7	8.4
Unemployment rate (%)	10.4	11.0	10.3	10.3	10.2	9.9	9.5
Average real interest rate (%)	35.5	30.5	33.9	15.3	6.0	11.6	7.0
Section II							
Public sector primary balance (% of GNP)	5.5	5.1	6.2	7.2	6.8	6.6	6.7
Interest payments (% of GNP)	22.6	17.6	15.4	11.7	7.9	7.4	7.6
Public sector balance (% of GNP)	-17.1	-12.5	-9.1	-4.6	-1.2	-0.8	-0.9
Net debt of public sector (% of GNP)	90.4	78.4	70.3	64.0	55.3	44.8	41.0
Section III							
Current account balance (% of GNP)	2.4	-0.8	-3.4	-5.2	-6.3	-7.9	-7.3
National saving rate (% of GDP)	19.0	21.0	20.0	22.0	18.0	16.0	n.a.
	* = Estimate						

This is an interesting table as it helps us understand and compare Turkish economic growth rates before and during the AKP government. Moreover, Mehmet Ugur (2008) also stated that AKP's economic success came with "its embracing of the pre-established stabilization policy framework and structural reform agenda supported by the IMF and the World Bank"⁶⁶⁰. On the other hand, the decision to adopt new democratic reforms in accordance with the EU part of Turkey's accession process was another major contribution that allowed for better liberal economic reforms and policy framework. Turkey's economic relation with the EU has been very beneficial for Turkey and was recognized as a "win-win" game⁶⁶¹. For example, since the Ankara agreement

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid, 5-6.

⁶⁶¹ Turkish Review, "Turkey and the EU: win-win or game over?," accessed January 10, 2016, http://www.turkishreview.org/reports/turkey-and-the-eu-win-win-or-game-over_540817.

in 1963, Turkey enjoyed membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) leading to the Customs Union agreement in 1995⁶⁶². This did not include important sectors, such as agricultural products⁶⁶³. However, these were all part of the Turkish accession efforts that contributed to the 2005 accession negotiations.

The growing Turkish economy since 2002 paved the way for more integration and stronger role in the international market. Turkey managed to reach out to new markets in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. For example, Turkish trade to Asian markets (including the Middle East) account for around 39.1% of Turkey's exports in 2012⁶⁶⁴. Furthermore, according to Erdal Tanas Karagol (2013) Turkey reached its historic highest volume of exports at \$151.8 billion⁶⁶⁵. Turkey is a member of a number of important international economic organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), G20 Industrial Nations, and many other international organizations that include different economic efforts and relations. Turkey's economy was successful in gaining its international position. For example, in 2002 when the AKP government was first established, Turkey was the 26th biggest economy in the world and only seven years later in 2009 Turkey became the 16th biggest economy⁶⁶⁶. This was even during a time of global economic crisis.

⁶⁶² Hayati Yazıcı, "Turkey-EU relations and the Customs Union: Expectations Versus the Reality," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (2012): 25-37.

⁶⁶³ Ibid, 34.

⁶⁶⁴ Erdal Tanas Karagol, "The Turkish Economy during the Justice and Development Party decade," *insight Turkey* 15, no. 4, (2013): 125.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ World Bulletin, "Turkish economy 16th biggest, Greece ranked 35, IMF report says," accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news/58497/turkish-economy-16th-biggest-greece-ranked-35-imf-report-says>.

Part of AKP's economic success was the recognition to build new platforms for better economic relations with its neighbouring Middle East. Along with the Zero-Problems with Neighbours foreign policy, comes economic relations and interdependence, as manifested in Davutoglu's work and writings pushing for further regional engagement⁶⁶⁷. Economic interdependence was one of the most influential concepts represented by Davutoglu. Economic interdependence is recognized as one of the most important components of Turkish foreign policy particularly with its neighbours⁶⁶⁸. According to Murat Yasiltas and Ali Balci (2013) the AKP push for economic interdependence represent "a move from a security-based foreign policy to one in which political and economic tools are highlighted, and which is based on economic interdependence among neighbouring countries⁶⁶⁹. Therefore, since 2002, economic relations between Turkey and Middle Eastern states have significantly increased and particularly regarding trade relations.

⁶⁶⁷ Joshua W. Walker, "The sources of Turkish Grand Strategy-'Strategic Depth' and 'Zero-Problems' in Context," in *Turkey's Global Strategy*, ed., Nicholas Kitchen (LSE IDEAS,2011), 6-12.

⁶⁶⁸ Murat Yasiltas and Ali Balci, "A dictionary of Turkish foreign policy in the AK Party era: A conceptual map," *Centre for Strategic Research (SAM)*, no. 7 (2013): 20.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

Figure 2. Turkey: Trade with Arab Countries 1990 - 2008⁶⁷⁰
(in million USD)

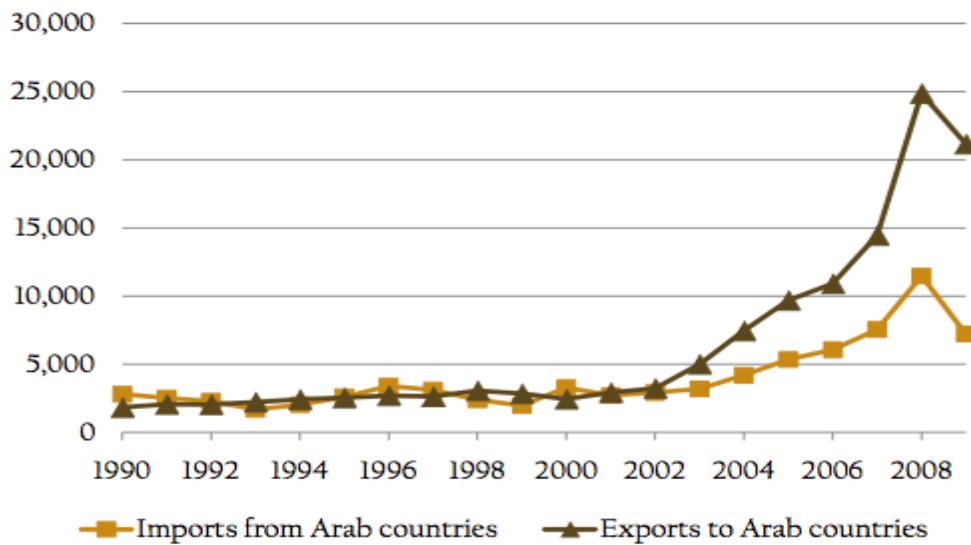
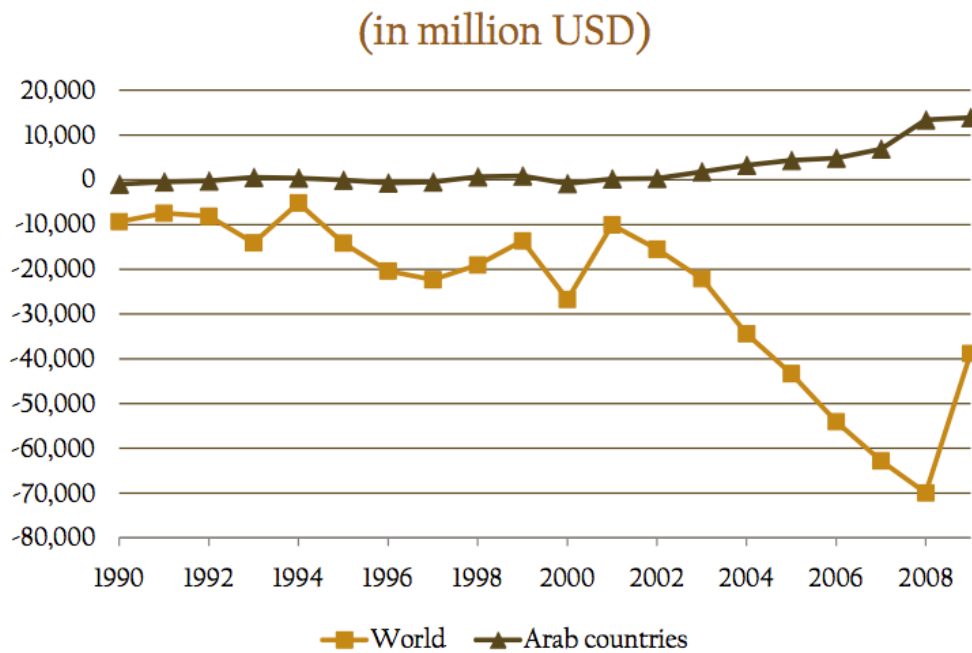


Figure 2 above illustrates the level of trade growth between Turkey and the Arab states between 1990 and 2008. It clearly shows how since 2002 the level of both imports and exports have significantly increased reaching around 10.5 billion dollars' worth of imports and 25 billion dollars of exports. This shows how Turkey during the first two terms of AKP government enjoyed a healthy trade surplus. Furthermore, this demonstrates that the AKP has significant economic interests in the Middle East and the Turkish commitment to keeping good relations that can enhance such economic developments.

⁶⁷⁰ Nader Habibi and Joshua W. Walker, "What Is Driving Turkey's Reengagement with the Arab World?," *Crown Centre for Middle East Studies*, no. 49 (2011): 2.

Figure 3. Turkey: Trade balance with the Arab countries and with the entire world 1990 – 2008⁶⁷¹



The graph above also gives us important insights to understand the significance of Turkish trade with the Arab countries in comparison to the rest of the world. For example, Turkey's largest export market in 2008 was the United Arab Emirates (UAE)⁶⁷². Turkish products particularly industrial supplies became heavily present in Arab markets especially with products like steel, different types of metal, and wooden products. However, we have to understand that Turkish exports and trade in general went through fluctuations and were not increasing all the time. For example, regarding the exports to the UAE, the 2009 financial crisis in Dubai resulted in a major setback in trade relations between Turkey and the UAE⁶⁷³. However, Turkish exports remained high in the Middle East in general.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid, 3.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

Turkey managed to develop a number of free trade agreements with countries like Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia and many others, which led to the significant increase of both economic and social relations⁶⁷⁴. Other agreements included the abandonment of visa requirements for entry between Turkey and other Arab countries that enhanced free movement of citizens and paved way for more tourism in Turkey at the same time⁶⁷⁵. What is more, a number of important energy (oil and gas) regional projects were developed. This included the building of oil and gas pipelines linking Turkey and other major Arab countries to European markets one of the most important known as the Euro-Arab Mashreq Gas Market Project, aiming to develop the integration of regional energy markets⁶⁷⁶. Interestingly, Turkey also managed to develop energy agreements and plans with Iran and a number of Turkish companies worked in Iran on projects of both construction and infrastructure⁶⁷⁷. Therefore, a number of scholars saw this as a determining factor shaping their relations. For instance, some stated that the Turkish-Iranian economic cooperation on different fields have played an important role in Turkey's positive behaviour and welcoming of the 2009 Iranian re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad and Turkish vote against economic sanctions in UN security Council against Iran⁶⁷⁸. The AKP government aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and

⁶⁷⁴ European Commission, "Trade", accessed January 12, 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/turkey/>.

⁶⁷⁵ Nilgun Arisan Eralp, "Turkey's Visa Policy: Has Turkey given up its demand of free movement in the EU?," *Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey*, accessed January 12, 2016, http://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/1265644881r3929.Turkeys_Visa_Policy_Has_Turkey_Given_Up_its_Demand_of_Free_Movement_in_the_EU.pdf.

⁶⁷⁶ Hurriyet, "EU-Turkey agree on Arab gas pipeline cooperation," *Hurriyet.com.tr*, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/eu-turkey-agree-on-arab-gas-pipeline-cooperation-8871261>.

⁶⁷⁷ Andre Bank and Roy Karadag, "The Political Economy of Regional Power: Turkey under the AKP," *GIGA Research Unit: Institute of Middle East Studies*, no. 204 (2012): 12.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 12-13.

economic interdependence in order to fulfil its promises and reach its goals. A number of smaller states with smaller economies in the Middle East have benefited from such Turkish activities and push for better regional economic cooperation. Therefore, it can be argued that economic authorities in the Middle East have also welcomed Turkey's efforts and developed policies to increase relations and economic cooperation with Turkey. The AKP government's keenness to improving Turkish-Arab relations and particularly on economic terms have been very noticeable, which to a large extent drew a lot of academic attention to analysing the role of Turkish economic interests in the Middle East that shaped Turkey's new foreign policy approach since and made Turkey emerge as a "Trading State"⁶⁷⁹. One of the most relevant examples used in the literature is that Turkish officials have drawn more attention to the Middle East compared to the West. According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between the years of 2003 and 2011, Turkish officials, most notably Mr. Erdogan, have paid more visits to Middle Eastern countries compared to European countries, for example⁶⁸⁰.

From the interviews conducted as part of the fieldwork for this thesis, all interviewees seem to have agreed on the importance of Turkish economic interests in the Middle East. For example, Professor Birol Akgun, Chairman of the Institute of Strategic Thinking (SDE) in Ankara, explained that with many of AKP governments' official visits to the Middle East, the Prime Minister took with him a number of important businessmen and officials from the financial sector in order to promote economic cooperation and create new business

⁶⁷⁹ Kemal Kirisci, "The transformation of Turkish foreign policy: The rise of the trading state," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 40 (2009): 29-57.

⁶⁸⁰ Habibi and Walker, "What Is Driving Turkey's Reengagement", 5.

opportunities that benefit both sides⁶⁸¹. He added, “The new capitalist and Anatolian bourgeoisie are much more globalized. They helped explore new markets in the Middle East and other places. With the experience of exploring new markets, the confidence was boosting and AKP self-confidence too”⁶⁸². Professor Akgun argued that due to this combined government and private sector efforts in developing Turkey’s economy, the AKP appeared very successful, the economy grew significantly and everyone in Turkey is benefiting from this growth. He added “The total national income and GNP have tripled in 10 years between 2002 and 2010”⁶⁸³.

However, Professor Selcuk Colakoglu, Vice President at USAK the ‘International Strategic Research Organization’ and the director of the USAK centre for Asia-Pacific Studies, in his interview stated, “the AKP supported businessmen, but they mainly operated independently. Businessmen and companies made in many cases the first step of cooperation with other companies in other countries including in the Middle East”⁶⁸⁴. Colakoglu further argued that most of the Turkish business circles consist of small and medium enterprises, so they acted independently including NGOs for aid purposes. He added, “Turkey’s economy is a private economy, this means that there have been business actors and NGO’s from Turkey who operated independently”. Therefore, it is important here to point out that agreeing to the importance of economic interests in the Middle East does not mean that Turkish-Middle East policy is only based on economic interests and was not, as mentioned above,

⁶⁸¹ Birol Akgun, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 20, 2014.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁴ Selcuk Colakoglu, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 17, 2014.

completely directed by the state. This will however be further discussed with reference to other interviewees as well in the coming sections.

With the emergence and development of the popular Revolutions (Arab Spring) since 2011, new challenges came with it. Turkey had put so many efforts to build a sustainable political and economic relations and cooperation since 2002. The new AKP government applied the so called “Zero Problems with Neighbours policy” in order to solve long standing conflicts between Turkey and its close neighbours as well as other regional Middle Eastern states. However, this Arab Spring represented a new turning point for the future of relations between Turkey and the Middle East. The AKP government have increased economic ties and political relations with many of those ruling dictators for a long time, disregarding its democratic and liberal values for economic and political benefits. These efforts were highly affected in many of those turbulent Arab states. As a result, concerned Arab states faced huge economic problems and weaknesses and Turkish trade volume to those countries was also affected⁶⁸⁵.

According to Engin Sorhun (2012), “Arab Spring movements have bigger negative impacts on Turkish export market than on imports from the Spring countries. Arab Spring has shrank the Turkish export demand by about 4% on average and the Turkish import demand by 6% on average”⁶⁸⁶. Turkish economic interests have been dramatically affected by the development of the

⁶⁸⁵ Abidin Oncel and Amna Malik, “The Arab Spring and its impact on the foreign trade of Turkey,” *Research Gate*, 2015, accessed January 15, 2015, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289525609> The Arab Spring and its Impact on the Foreign Trade of Turkey.

⁶⁸⁶ Engin Sorhun, “Is the ‘Arab Spring’ Turkey’s Winter?,” *Dogus University*, 2012, p. 12, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://ecomod.net/system/files/Paper-Engin%20SORHUN.pdf>.

Arab Spring and therefore this raises many questions to whether Turkey will remain highly interested in the region or the Middle East became to be viewed as a source of trouble again. Turkey's position at the beginning of the Arab Spring was hesitant and was not sure how to act in response to those uprisings. Was Turkey quickly willing to go against its interests in those Arab countries that required extensive efforts and cooperation? Or should Turkey support the freedoms and liberty of those angry Arab citizens? That was a tough question to answer at the beginning of the uprisings. Soon after, Turkey became more in line with supporting the demands of the popular uprisings, risking its relations with many Arab governments particularly with those directly involved, such as Libya, Egypt, Syria and others. The Arab Spring has even affected Turkey's relations with Iran over Syria. The Egyptian crisis and Turkish support for the Muslim Brotherhood resulted in a growing tension between Turkey and some of the Gulf states particularly Saudi Arabia (an important oil exporting economy and importer of Turkish products).

Despite the negative impact on Turkish economy and economic interests in the Middle East brought about by the Arab Spring, Turkey remained highly involved in the affairs of the Middle East and particularly in the affairs of the Arab Spring playing a central role in Syria for example. This takes us back to the thesis's question and concern about the main causes and determinants behind Turkish foreign policy. If Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East was driven by economic interests, then what explains the current Turkish deep foreign policy involvement in the Middle East? Is there actually a single factor shaping Turkish-Middle Eastern foreign policy? Or are there multiple factors? These questions develop our critical thinking and importance

of considering other variables when analysing Turkish foreign policy. These questions lie at the heart of this thesis and will therefore be reflected throughout this study in order to reach a solid conclusion.

1.2 Economic interests as causes behind Turkish foreign policy change towards its Middle Eastern neighbours

A number of prominent scholars in the field of Turkish foreign policy studies have been analysing the shift in Turkish foreign policy since 2002 from an economic perspective. Arguments highlighting the pragmatic and materialist side of Turkish foreign policy were mostly based on the neo-liberal and neo-liberal institutionalist theoretical interpretations of international relations. The purpose of this section is to analyse some of the different explanations presented in the literature supporting the role of economics in determining Turkish foreign policy since 2002. This is important as it paves way for us to examine their reliability in understanding Turkish foreign policy change and to be able to test such interpretations through Process Tracing methodology in the following section. Therefore, the aim of this section is to understand the different explanations based on economic interests in this field of study, by whom, and based on what evidence to support their arguments. It is important to note however that I will engage critically and examine these arguments in the following section.

Ziya Onis (2011) in his work *Multiple Faces of the “New” Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique*, criticized the way in which some scholars in the literature based their understanding of Turkish foreign policy

shift towards its neighbours within an ideological and identity context⁶⁸⁷. Instead, Onis argued that it is important to look at the economic side of Turkish foreign policy to better understand its recent “shift of axis”. The author stated, “there are solid political economy fundamentals and legitimate reasons for Turkey to pursue a multi- dimensional and more assertive foreign policy in the emerging multi-polar world system”⁶⁸⁸. He argued that Turkish foreign policy is no longer in the hands of diplomats and politicians only; instead recent decisions have been increasingly driven from below by key economic actors and civil society⁶⁸⁹. Economic actors and key business groups in Turkey have been working very closely with the AKP government as part of the project of building a strong Turkish economy. The Turkish government cannot work on its own to build a strong economy to perform well even during critical international economic crisis. On the other hand, Onis argue that the 2008-2009 international financial crisis also played an important part in “accelerating the shift of the economic axis of the global system from the ‘west’ to the ‘east’ or from the ‘north’ to the ‘south’⁶⁹⁰. For example, China and the BRIC countries became much stronger as a result of this international crisis⁶⁹¹. As a result, “The West, especially the EU, turned out to be a less attractive destination in terms of purely economic benefits while the rising “East” or “South” appeared to be increasingly more attractive in terms of future trade and investment”⁶⁹². For Onis, these were all contributing economic factors that accelerated Turkish foreign policy shift,

⁶⁸⁷ Ziya Onis, “Multiple Faces of the ‘New’ Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique,” *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 1 (2011): 47-65.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 47.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 55.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

⁶⁹¹ Ziya Oniş and Ali Burak Guven, “The Global Financial Crisis and the Future of Neo-liberal Globalization: Rupture versus Continuity,” *Koç University GLODEM Working Paper*, no. 10-01 (2010).

⁶⁹² Onis, 55.

which already started since 2002. Overall, the author argues that Turkish foreign policy has been affected by the changing global economic context paving the way to the opening of new global markets as well as to the diversification of Turkish economy.

Similarly, Faruq Ekmekci and Abdulkadir Yildirim (2012) in their work *The AKP and the Eastern Turn (?) of Turkey: An Economic Analysis*, were also highly critical of the ideational claims in the literature and argued that there are no pro-Muslim and anti-Western trends driving Turkish foreign policy, instead AKP's foreign policy has been influenced by "economic rationale"⁶⁹³. They added, "As a result of increasing integration with the global economy, a rising Anatolian bourgeoisie and middle class, a relative desecuritization of Turkish foreign policy, Turkey in recent years have transformed into what one scholar called, a 'trading state'."⁶⁹⁴ They argued that Turkey's openness and increase of relations with its neighbouring countries in the region have been driven by AKP's aim to enlarging and diversifying both the market for external energy supply and the market for Turkish goods⁶⁹⁵.

Ekmekci and Yildirim presented important statistical data illustrating the significant increase in Turkish trade relations with non-Western countries and particularly the Middle East. They argued that if we are to take the Islamist and anti-Western ideology arguments into account, this would mean that Turkey's Islamist government would be more likely to reduce economic relations with pro-US countries and increase with anti-US countries for example. However,

⁶⁹³ Faruq Ekmekci and Abdulkadir Yildirim, "The AKP and the Eastern Turn (?) of Turkey: An Economic Analysis," *International Strategic Research Organization (USAK)*, vol.5 (2012): 37-60.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 40.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

according to them, statistical evidence showed that Turkey's economic trade relations with US-friendly states have drastically increased to 454% between the years of 2002 and 2010⁶⁹⁶. Therefore, they stated, "our findings refute that Turkey's Eastern turn takes place at the expense of relations with the West and lend support to the argument that the AKP's foreign policy is guided more by an economic rationale than by ideology"⁶⁹⁷.

Furthermore, other analysts looked at the role of both political and economic factors significantly contributing to each other and increasing Turkey's overall global position. For example, the work of Abdulkadir Sivan, Savas Genc, Davut Taser, and Sinem Atakul (2013), titled *The Effect of New Turkish Foreign Policy on International Trade*, is particularly useful. They illustrated the important relationship between the political and economic sides of Turkish foreign policy that complement each other⁶⁹⁸. In other words, Turkey utilizes its economic strength in order to fulfil certain political goals. Particularly, their study looks at the role of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's foreign political visits in influencing Turkey's international trade. They argued that the AKP's aim was to help recover the country's economic crisis of 2001 and understood that it would not be possible to do that by relying on identity politics. Instead, AKP's foreign policy was shaped by economic rational goals. Therefore, Turkey's "zero problems with neighbours" foreign policy approach and unproblematic relations with neighbouring states in the region was designed for economic benefits⁶⁹⁹. They stated, "Turkey discovers new markets with the help of the relationships

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid, 53.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid, 53.

⁶⁹⁸ Abdulkadir Sivan, Savas Genc, Davut Taser, and Sinem Atakul, "The Effect of New Turkish Foreign Policy on International Trade," *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 3 (2013): 107-122.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid, 109.

it establishes through its Muslim counterparts; and in these new markets, it finds new zones of influence and bilateral relations. International trade is one of the leading instruments of Turkish foreign policy. This is not merely an incidental issue; it forms a new platform that accelerates bilateral relations on a real political field. Increasing mutual dependence through trade has enabled Turkey to establish more predictable and sustainable relations with other countries”⁷⁰⁰. The authors asserted that the noticeable increase in Turkish relations with the Middle East and the greater Islamic world should not be interpreted as shift away from Turkey’s traditional allies and pro-Western foreign policy instead Turkey’s heavy regional involvement and increased relations seek to achieve better regional security and stability that will highly contribute to better economic policies. In addition, the overall hypothesis of the article suggests that with more political and diplomatic visits taking place between Turkey and any other state, an increase in trade relations is expected.

Moreover, Mustafa Kutlay (2011) in his work *Economy as the ‘Practical Hand’ of ‘New Turkish Foreign Policy’: A Political Economy Explanation*, looked at Turkish foreign policy from a political economy point of view particularly through using the functionalist and interdependence approaches⁷⁰¹. Kutlay argues that in post-2001 Turkey, the internationalization of the ‘Anatolian Tigers’ has been the ‘practical hand’ of Turkish foreign policy⁷⁰². Like many scholars sharing similar approach, the author has been highly critical of the overemphasis on “security-based” and “identity-based” approaches in the literature in understanding Turkish foreign policy. Kutlay stated, “In recent

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid, 110.

⁷⁰¹ Mustafa Kutlay, “Economy as the ‘Practical Hand’ of ‘New Turkish Foreign Policy’: A Political Economy Explanation,” *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 1 (2011): 67-88.

⁷⁰² Ibid, 67.

foreign policy initiatives, Turkey seems to be following the functionalist framework so as to exploit economic opportunities and interdependence in further *institutionalizing* its relations with neighbours⁷⁰³. He argued that the 2001 economic crisis influenced all Turks and paved way for important and “radical” reforms since then. New Turkish reformists were supported by key business associations, such as TUSIAD, MUSIAD, and SIADs⁷⁰⁴. Furthermore, Kutlay looked at the important role of pro-EU reforms that enabled further economic developments. In addition, he argued that the increasing Turkish openness towards the Middle East and Central Asia was highly promoted by the newly emerging Anatolian bourgeoisie⁷⁰⁵. Furthermore, Turkish business associations supported Turkey’s new foreign policy approach towards its neighbours. Kutlay’s main argument is that Turkey’s main driving force for the new soft-power approach has been the economy and trade⁷⁰⁶. He stated, “Turkish finance capital has turned out to be the practical hand of Turkish policy-makers in the region”⁷⁰⁷.

In addition, another important work that supports the economic notion of Turkish foreign policy in the AKP era is *The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State* (2009) by Kemal Kirisci. His work offered a conceptual framework based on the notion of the “trading state” by Richard Rosecrance as well as the “two-level diplomatic games” by Robert Putnam to emphasize economic interests’ effects on Turkish foreign policy⁷⁰⁸. Kirisci stated, “behind current Turkish foreign policy lies the rise of a trading state;

⁷⁰³ Ibid, 70.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid, 72.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid, 74.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid, 77.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁷⁰⁸ Kirisci, 29-57.

bearing this in mind will help analysts to understand Turkish foreign policy better in regard to countries in its immediate neighbourhood as well as countries further away”⁷⁰⁹. He argued that the emergence of Turkey as a trading state is not new. In fact this can be traced back to the era of Turgut Ozal in the 1980s. This was interrupted and challenged by the military establishment. However, the AKP managed to bring back the trading state and reached new levels⁷¹⁰. On the other hand, Kirisci stressed out that the current Turkish trading state has not yet reached its goal and is facing a number of challenges. Those challenges are coming from both domestic and international levels. Domestic political instability and tensions between the ruling party and secular elites is seen as one of the main challenges to the rising trading state. On the other hand, international economic crises and political conflicts i.e. the Arab Spring and Syrian crisis have had a direct impact on Turkish trade and economic relations with many Arab states involved in these revolutions. This affected Turkey’s economic performance and its currency levels in the global financial market especially with the growing threat of a “spill over” and growing numbers of Syrian refugees. Therefore, it can be argued that with more domestic and international political and economic stability, the trading state is going to survive.

Overall, all of the works mentioned above share the idea that the literature on Turkish foreign policy has paid inadequate attention to the economic role in Turkish foreign policy. Furthermore, they all share the fact that economic considerations have represented a major derive behind Turkey’s new foreign policy approach under the AKP government. This shows that there is a

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid, 52.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid, 53.

growing academic attention focusing on economic aspects of Turkish foreign policy, while at the same time contributing further to the current academic theoretical split in the literature i.e. Ideational vs Pragmatic explanations, or realists, neo-liberalists, and constructivist theoretical perspectives. Although no one denies Turkey's economic commitments and international trade, it is important to question and examine the argument that economic interests have been the "main" deriving force shaping Turkish foreign policy since 2002. Therefore, the following section will offer an examination of such arguments and assess their validity and plausibility in understanding Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East during the AKP government.

1.3 Can economic-based explanations tell us everything?

Since the AKP took power in 2002, its' leaders regularly emphasized the importance of developing Turkey's economy and recovering from the crisis. Furthermore, Ahmet Davutoglu stressed the importance of developing economic regional and international cooperation. Economic interdependence for example was one of Davutoglu's central themes in his works. Therefore, the large economic growth, notably between 2002 and 2010, shows the level of AKP's keenness in achieving their economic goals. On foreign policy terms, as mentioned above, there were significant cooperation and trading agreements and efforts made to strengthen Turkey's interdependence with its Middle Eastern neighbours and economic benefits. Therefore, No one can deny AKP's economic interests and their effect on Turkish foreign policy making. However, it is important to identify whether economic concerns were the only driving force behind Turkey's foreign policy transformation and notably towards the Middle

East, as some may have suggested in the literature. The main question that we need consider is to what extent did economic interests shape Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East? To answer this question, it is important to examine the claims that support such notions of Turkish foreign policy and assess their comprehensiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to consider critics and counter arguments as well as empirical evidence and interview data that can help us evaluate whether economic interests were the main sources behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002.

A large number of the works that looked at Turkish foreign policy from an economic perspective relied on the neoliberal theoretical interpretation of international relations, focusing on economic significance for states interests. They also highlighted the role of interstate cooperation and "free market" economy for economic benefits in shaping states behaviour. The neoliberal approach also seems to focus on the idea that economic cooperation is important as it will create institutions and regimes that can also help solve conflicts⁷¹¹. However, this idea is challenged by realists for example, who instead view security (with military accounts) as the most important goal for states that shape their behaviour and relations⁷¹². For example, scholars who highlight the security dimension of Turkish foreign policy, draw attention to the growing regional security problems especially imposed by the Kurdish issue and other conflicts, arguing that they were the central driving force behind Turkey's "Zero Problem with Neighbours" approach. It can be argued that the

⁷¹¹ Anup Shah, "A Primer on Neoliberalism," *Global Issues.org*, 2010, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.globalissues.org/article/39/a-primer-on-neoliberalism>.

⁷¹² Emily Tripp, "Realism: The domination of security studies," *e-international relations studies*, 2013, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/06/14/realism-the-domination-of-security-studies/>.

work of scholars who represent the realist understanding of foreign policy making, suggest that this new foreign policy approach highlighted Turkey's security concerns as well, aiming to eliminate long standing conflicts and security threats. This highlights the fact that the new AKP government also had key security concerns on their agenda and not primarily economic ones, which will be further analysed in the following section of this chapter on the role of security concerns.

Moreover, another critique come from the fact that neoliberal approaches tend to ignore the role of power and its centrality in states agenda. AKP officials and mainly Ahmet Davutoglu asserted that Turkey aims to become a regional and global power and a key international player⁷¹³. Turkey's power comes from a number of aspects starting from its geo-strategic position to its military capability. An important element of AKP's aim of building a regional power also stems from the idea of regional influence and political roles in key events. Here, realists argue that power is also a central theme in Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government⁷¹⁴. This was translated in Turkey's opening of new zones for influence in the region as well as its' leading in mediation efforts in an attempt to increase its role and position. On the other hand, constructivists for example criticize this neoliberal approach for not recognizing the "structure" behind state behaviours⁷¹⁵. The roles of ideology

⁷¹³ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Minister Davutoğlu stresses that the mission of young generation Turkish diplomats is to transform Turkey into a global power," *mfa.gov.tr*, 2011, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/foreign-minister-davutoglu-stresses-that-the-mission-of-young-generation-turkish-diplomats-is-to-transform-turkey-into-a-global-power.en.mfa>.

⁷¹⁴ Fevzi Sarac, "Turkish Foreign Policy in Theory and Practice," *The Washington Review of Turkish & Eurasian Affairs*, 2010, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/turkey-foreign-policy/>.

⁷¹⁵ Yucel Bozdaglioglu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach* (Routledge, 2004).

and identity in domestic politics of Turkey are very important to consider as they do have an effect on foreign policy making. Constructivists in this field of study emphasize the importance of national identity and the ideology of the new elite in affecting the process of Turkish foreign policy making⁷¹⁶.

Apart from the theoretical debate in this literature, another interesting fact that needs to be considered is that part of Turkey's assertive and multidimensional foreign policy was a noticeable increase in Turkish-African relations, also referred to as the "African Initiative"⁷¹⁷. Although, Turkey tried to develop economic ties with African countries, some argued that a number of African countries that Turkey opened new embassies in, such as Somalia for example, do not have the basic economic platform to develop cooperation and may in fact cost Turkey in aid and humanitarian issues a lot. According to World Bulletin (2013), Ahmet Davutoglu stated, "The humanitarian dimension of the initiatives launched by Turkey is as important as the economic and political dimensions," he added. "Today every Turkish embassy which is opened in Africa, every businessman, every non-governmental organization and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) have carried out their projects in terms of humanitarian diplomacy"⁷¹⁸. Davutoglu also asserted that, "Turkey has not been involved in Africa merely to develop its national strategies and display its economic and political power, but rather to also share in the problems of the African people"⁷¹⁹.

⁷¹⁶ Yucel Bozdaglioglu, "Modernity, Identity and Turkey's Foreign Policy," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 1 (2008): 55-76.

⁷¹⁷ Hasan Kanbolat, "Turkey's African Initiative," *Today's Zaman*, 2013, accessed January 16, 2016, http://www.todayszaman.com/columnists_turkeys-african-initiative_304018.html.

⁷¹⁸ World Bulletin, "Number of Turkish embassies in Africa reaches 34," *Worldbulletin.net*, 2013, accessed January 16, 2016, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/servisler/haberYazdir/116850/haber>.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

In the interview with Professor Mesut Ozcan, chairman of the Foreign Ministry Diplomacy Academy and Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated, “Turkey opened embassies in many countries that do not offer much economic benefits like the counties in Africa where Turkey is giving more than is receiving from those regions”⁷²⁰. He added “Turkey wants to have a say in different international issues and become globally represented”⁷²¹. This gives us the understanding that Turkey has a political intention by its expansion of diplomatic representation and relations with many countries around the world. Prof. Ozcan argued that such relations would later potentially allow businessmen and companies to recognize each other and build economic ties⁷²². This is also because Turkey is not rich in terms of its natural resources. Turkey became increasingly known for its intervention in Africa and particularly in areas of humanitarian crises and need for aid and assistance⁷²³.

On the other hand, scholars and analysts who view Turkish foreign policy from an economic perspective seem to ignore the role of different international political factors that may have contributed to the development in Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government. One of the most important international actors that play a central role in Turkey’s foreign relations and policy particularly regarding the Middle East has been the United States of America. In an international Conference held in the University of Oxford titled *Turkey’s Foreign Policy in a Changing World: Old Alignments and New Neighborhood* (2010),

⁷²⁰ Mesut Ozcan, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 18, 2014.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ Charles Kagwanja, “Turkey in Somalia: Building relations using brotherhood, aid and dialogue,” *The East African.co.ke*, 2013, accessed January 16, 2016, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/OpEd/comment/Turkey-in-Somalia-Building-relations-using-brotherhood/-/434750/1898800/-/151h56s/-/index.html>.

Omer Taspinar in his lecture on *The US and the New Turkish Policy*, argued that Turkey “enters the US’s field of vision either when it moves closer to the Middle East or, when Turkey plays a more activist foreign policy in its own region”⁷²⁴.

He added, since 9/11, for example, The U.S had Turkey on its agenda and had a view that Turkey can play a good democratic model for the Muslim World, which according to Taspinar was in line with Davutoglu’s and the AKP vision⁷²⁵. Furthermore, the European Union has been a key international player and high in the Turkish agenda for a long time. Since the AKP took power in 2002, government officials expressed their commitments to joining the European Union and fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria⁷²⁶. Turkey received increasing normative political pressures regarding its conflict with Armenia and affected Turkish-Armenian relations along with other countries involved in this historical conflict most notably Azerbaijan⁷²⁷. Furthermore, Turkey also received pressure regarding its relations with Greece and Cyprus issue⁷²⁸. Overall, it has been widely shared that the European Union has been a contributing factor to Turkey’s foreign policy transformation. Professor Serhat Erkemen, Head of Department of International Relations at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University and Middle East advisor at ORSAM ‘Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies’, in his interview argued that we cannot ignore the role of the

⁷²⁴ Omer Taspinar, “The US and the new Turkish policy”, in *Turkey’s Foreign Policy in a Changing World: Old Alignments and New Neighborhood*, (Oxford International Conference, April, 30 – May, 2, 2010), p. 13, accessed January 16, 2016, <https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/reportfromtfpconf.pdf>

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Turkey-EU relations,” *mfa.gov.tr*, 2011, accessed January 16, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-the-european-union.en.mfa>.

⁷²⁷ Ozlem Terzi, *The Influence of the European Union on Turkish Foreign Policy* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013), 89.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

EU as an external actor influencing Turkey's foreign policy⁷²⁹. He added, "I agree that Turkey's policy in the Middle East has been important to Turkish-EU relations. Turkey is trying to help improve its position in Europe and its accession process also in its Middle East approach, especially in the first two terms of AKP government"⁷³⁰. Other arguments in this field of study included that there has been a Europeanization of Turkish Foreign Policy⁷³¹, while others stressed Turkey's Middle East approach as "Stretching the Bow Towards the East so that the Arrow can hit the West"⁷³², which will be further analysed and examined in the following chapter.

Therefore, we cannot understand Turkey's foreign policy transformation just from an economic perspective. There are other important domestic and international factors that influenced Turkey's foreign policy and particularly towards the region. The economic driven approaches fail to explain some foreign policy decisions, such as the deterioration of relations with Israel and support for Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt for examples. Although economic interests have been central to Turkey's foreign policy goals, as mentioned above, there are other international factors and events that highly contributed to Turkey's approach to the Middle East as well. Therefore, it can be argued that understanding Turkey's foreign policy approach towards the Middle East since 2002 from an economic perspective is useful, but fail to explain other political and non-material aspects of Turkish-Middle East

⁷²⁹ Serhat Erkemen, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 21, 2014.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Meltem Muftuler-Baç and Yaprak Gursoy, "Is There a Europeanization of Turkish Foreign Policy? An Addendum to the Literature on EU Candidates," *Turkish Studies* 11, issue. 3 (2010): 405-427.

⁷³² Haoues Taguia, "Turkey: Stretching the Bow Towards the East so that the Arrow can hit the West," *Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 2011, accessed January 16, 2016, http://www.aljazeera.net/mritems/streams/2011/6/13/1_1067816_1_51.pdf.

relations. Hence, it can be said that some scholars have overemphasized the role of economic interests and failed to take into account other factors in their analysis. On the other hand, one cannot fully understand Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government without including the role of economic interests. Therefore, this contributes to recognizing the need for adopting a balanced and holistic approach in this field of study.

Going back to interviews and participants' ideas on the role of economic interests in Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East, Dr. Saban Kardas, President of ORSAM 'Middle East Strategic Research Centre' and faculty member at the department of International Relations at TOBB University of Economics and Technology in Ankara, argued that economic interests have always been key to Turkish foreign policy⁷³³. He stated, "AKP support for economic interdependency and trade with the Middle East and other regions in the world also reflect the domestic economic transformation in Turkey". Here Dr, Kardas is linking domestic economic developments with external economic interests of the state. However, he argued that economic interests is not the only feature in Turkish-Middle East relations, there are other key elements that contributed to Turkey's regional openness, such as the aim to increase political role and influence. Kardas further stated, "Yes economic interests are very important and Turkey wants to benefit from the Middle East, but this is not the only cause to Turkey's regional re-engagement ", suggesting that economic interests represent one of the main causes behind increased Turkish-Middle East relations and Turkish regional engagement.

⁷³³ Saban Kardas, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, October 13, 2014.

Moreover, Professor Murat Yasiltas, Director of Security Studies at SETA, a member of ORMER 'Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Sakarya University, and a faculty member in the department of International Relations at Sakarya, agreed to the importance of economic ties that Turkey built with its Middle Eastern neighbours and argued that the AKP has adopted a "win-win" strategy⁷³⁴. He stated, "With more economic ties, more social and cultural awareness and understanding of each other will emerge. And with more understanding and social connectedness, more economic relations will be favored in return." Yasiltas argued that the AKP came at a time where there was major economic crisis and aimed at fixing this problem. Therefore, a key objective in their approach was to increase economic interdependency and benefits with "everyone". However, Yasiltas also recognizes the role of other non-economic factors behind Turkish foreign policy change. For example, he highlighted the central role of Professor Ahmet Davutoglu (the current Prime Minister) and argued that Davutoglu is a very interesting figure in the making of Turkey's new foreign policy approaches towards the Middle East and the world in general. He added, "The principles introduced by Davutoglu reflect AKP's core thinking and foreign policy aims". Suggesting that Davutoglu's role as a key individual decision maker has been very influential and played a critical role in transforming this new Turkish foreign policy approach.

Similarly, Dr Mehmet Ozkan, Advisor and Researcher to SETA specialized in Political Science and International Relations and an editor for "Insight Turkey" at SETA, argued that Turkish economic relations in the Middle East help benefit other political and social aspects between the two sides⁷³⁵.

⁷³⁴ Murat Yasiltas, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, October 14, 2014.

⁷³⁵ Mehmet Ozkan, Interviewed by Author, Ankara, Turkey, March 17, 2014.

He stated, “You mainly know people by trading with them. While knowing them, you create a social bound that is beneficial for both sides for a long term”. He added, “There were different levels of economic relations depending on the country. For example, countries like Egypt, Sudan, Syria, and Iraq Turkey aimed at increasing its trade to those countries more than expecting their investments in Turkey like the Gulf. However, when asked about the emphasis on the economic role as a cause of foreign policy change, he replied “Every country maintain some economic aims and external trade. However, in the Turkish case, although economic factors take a big share, they cannot tell us everything on their own”. He gave an example of the Turkish diplomatic mediation efforts and argued that economic factors cannot give a sufficient enough explanation of such foreign policy behaviour without considering other political domestic and external factors along with economic ones.

In addition, Dr. Yahya ibn Junaid, Secretary-General of King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, argued that Turkish-Middle Eastern relations and particularly with Saudi Arabia has several economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions⁷³⁶. He stated, “I don’t believe that Turkey’s re-engagement with the Middle East is mainly based on Economic interests”. This is a very important statement because Dr. Yahya made such statement after practically working with the Turkish side on many other levels other than business. On the Cultural side, Dr. Yahya stated, “Turkey and Turkish representatives have been quite serious about exchanging and developing cultural ties with us. For example, President Erdogan attended the opening of

⁷³⁶ Yahya Mahmoud ibn Junaid, interviewed by author, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 24, 2014.

the “Jerusalem Gallery” in Riyadh, Dr. Davutoglu also visited the centre and he gave a speech and a debate. There were many Arabic books that were requested by them that we sent and we were able to open two libraries in Turkey as well”.

From the evaluative steps conducted above by examining empirical evidence and interview data, the results show that the economic explanation seems to pass a *Hoop Test*. In order to remain under consideration in this study, the explanation must “jump through the hoop”. This means that economic factors are necessary but not sufficient to understand Turkish foreign policy change since 2002. Necessary in the sense that we cannot eliminate such explanation due to its importance because without it, our analysis will certainly be incomplete, but at the same time not a sufficient explanation because it does not fully explain all causes as it ignores a number of other factors as demonstrated by empirical evidence and interview data. Overall, passing a *Hoop Test* affirms relevance and failing would have eliminated it from this study. The implication of passing the *Hoop Test* somewhat weakens rival explanations in the study, but does not eliminate them. Similar to the Identity explanation, The *Hoop Test* is used here for the economic explanation because evidence seem to set a more demanding standard compared to the evidence used in the *Straw in the Wind Test* for other rival explanations, such as the Islamist and neo-Ottomanist explanations analysed in previous chapters. To further simplify and clarify this process of the examination, the below table summarizes the main points of the economic explanation and its value in the thesis so far.

Figure 4. Assessment of the economic explanation in Process Tracing

<p>Explanation 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turkish economic interests and goal of becoming a global economic power led Turkey to open up towards its Middle Eastern neighbours in the search for new economic opportunities.
<p>Evidence constituting this explanation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facts and figures suggest that there is a growing economic Turkish interest and commitments to develop its economic relations with Middle Eastern States. - Key economic actors and business elites have been highly influential in the process of Turkish foreign policy making. - Increasing global economic integration and Turkish transformation into a “trading state”. - An increasing relationship and integration between Turkey’s political goals and economic gains (Political Economy).
<p>Process of examining empirical evidence and interview data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence suggest that Turkish economic ties and trade figures represent a key feature of its relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours and foreign policy. - Interviewees highlighted the important role of the rising business elites and the so-called “Anatolian Tigers” in influencing Turkish foreign policy direction. - Interviewees also mentioned that there are other factors that we should include along with economic factors and we cannot totally understand the causes of change from solely an economic perspective. There are other non-economic factors i.e. political ideology, regional environment and security, and identity politics. - Evidence illustrated that Turkish foreign policy openness has not mainly been a result of economic factors i.e. Turkish increased relations with poorer countries that Turkey supported financially in Asia and Africa.
<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence set a more demanding standard compared to Islamist and neo-Ottoman explanations, similar to identity explanation. - Highly visible feature of Turkish-Middle Eastern relations. - One of the most prevailing explanations in the literature. - Necessary but not sufficient to establish causation (<i>Necessary as economic relations has been a growing necessary feature in international relations. Facts and figures demonstrated the significance of Turkish-Middle Eastern economic relations. Therefore, we cannot build an understanding without taking into account economic elements of Turkish foreign policy. However, it has failed to represent a sufficient explanation of the whole picture on its own</i>). - More need for a wider approach that is also inclusive of economic factors.

- Therefore, Passes a <i>Hoop Test</i> .
Implication:
- Affirms relevance of explanation, but does not confirm it.
- <i>Somewhat weakens</i> rival explanations in the study.

2. The security dimension of Turkish foreign policy

Going back to Ahmet Davutoglu's work "Strategic Depth", a central theme that he highlighted was Turkey's potential to becoming a central country and a key international player⁷³⁷. Therefore, Davutoglu's strategic vision suggests that Turkey should solve its conflicts with all neighbouring countries and eliminating security threats. One of the most important methods presented to the Turkish foreign policy level was his "Zero-Problems with Neighbours" policy for the aim to solve these problems as they represented major challenges to Turkey's security and role in the international arena. Furthermore, Davutoglu argued that Turkey should change the image that is surrounded by enemies⁷³⁸. Instead, Turkey should start a new cooperative and peaceful environment that would pave way for Turkey to become a positively contributing country and a key global player. Although Davutoglu support the idea of eliminating security threats, he insists that Turkey should at the same time balance between security and freedom⁷³⁹. In other words, implementing necessary security

⁷³⁷ Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "The Davutoglu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy," *Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)*, no. 8 (2010), accessed January 16, 2016, http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/KEIMENO-EPΓΑΣΙΑΣ-8_2010_loGrigoriadis1.pdf.

⁷³⁸ Ekrem Eddy Guzeldere, "Turkish Foreign Policy: From 'Surrounded by Enemies' to 'Zero Problems'," *C·A·P Policy Analysis*, no. 1 (2009): 14-19, accessed January 17, 2016, http://kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ESDP/104878/ichaptersection_singledocument/db0c1f35-b755-4721-90ee-05c064769dca/en/2.pdf.

⁷³⁹ Ahmet Davutoglu, "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring," *Turkey Policy Brief Series (tepv)*, 2012, accessed January 17, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/site_media/html/bakanmakale_tepv.pdf.

measures domestically and on an international level should not be on the expense of people's freedoms. Taking into account the instable and highly complicated nature of regional politics in the Middle East, the "Zero Problems" policy was significantly challenged. Security concerns have always dominated Turkish domestic and foreign politics to the extent that it emerged to be known as a "hard power" state for a long time⁷⁴⁰.

However, since the AKP took power in 2002, Turkey's security approach became changed, replacing "hard-power" politics with "soft-power" and "rhetoric diplomacy" in solving regional conflicts and security issues⁷⁴¹. The Kurdish issue has been one of the central themes characterizing Turkey's security problems. Prior to 2003, the Kurdish question was mainly regarded as a domestic and regional issue. But since the American invasion of Iraq, the Kurdish question became highly internationalized drawing significant international attention. The Kurdish issue has been a central security problem for Turkey for a very long time particularly regarding the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) and its military activities in Turkey. Therefore, the new AKP government aims to establish new measures along with military based security ones. Those new measures marked a new era for Turkey in dealing with its domestic and regional security problems and conflicts.

There have been a number of important scholars who looked at Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East from a security dimension. These include the nature of relations with Iran, Syria, and Iraq⁷⁴². Such studies will be

⁷⁴⁰ Meliha Benli Altunisik, "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 2 (2008): 41-54.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

⁷⁴² Robert Hatem and Mark Dohrmann, "Turkey's Fix for the 'Kurdish Problem' Ankara's Challenges," *Middle East Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (2013): 49-58.

discussed further below and must be examined to understand the level of security role in shaping Turkey's relations and foreign policy in the Middle East.

The purpose of this section is to analyse the role of security concerns in shaping Turkey's foreign policy and relations with the Middle East under the AKP government and most importantly since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The aim is to examine the validity and plausibility of this approach in understanding Turkey's foreign policy change towards its neighbouring Middle East since 2002. In order to do so, this section of the chapter will be divided into three main parts. The first part, will analyse Turkey's security approach prior and after the AKP government. This includes the discussion over the transformation from a "hard power" to a "soft power" state. The second part aims to illustrate and analyse the main security-based arguments and explanations found in the literature and their evidence to support such approach. The third section will be a critical one examining and testing the comprehensiveness of a security-based approach through applying it to the Process Tracing theory testing method. This will incorporate the use of empirical evidence, critics and counter arguments that may suggest otherwise, as well as the use of primary interview data.

2.1. Security dilemma and its effects on Turkish foreign policy

Turkey's unique position and geo-political location in the global map contributes to its significance. However, this comes with the expense of being located at the centre of an instable region connecting to the Balkans, Caucasia, and the Middle East. Turkey's security politics have been regarded as one that has been highly challenged. However, such security priorities have drastically

transformed during the twenty first century. The AKP government played a major role in the transforming Turkey's approach from a "win-lose approach" or "zero-sum" to a "win-win approach"⁷⁴³. In other words, security has changed from being mainly based on military and hard power measures to being represented in other forms of diplomacy and soft power.

2.1.1 Turkish security approach prior to AKP government

Since the establishment of the Republic by Ataturk in 1923, Turkey's security and survival was a top priority. Coming out of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the new Turkish Nationalist-Secular elites were seen to be distrustful of both European Powers and neighbouring countries, especially the newly emerging Middle East⁷⁴⁴. The priority of survival characterized Turkey's behaviour for a long time. Turkey was bounded with complex and tough conflicts in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Caucasia. At the same time, Turkey witnessed an increasing security challenge by the violent ethnic conflict with the Kurdish populations. Therefore, the new Turkish Republic had to face tough times and deal with violent conflicts. This in return had a string impact on Turkish foreign policy and Turkey's hard power military and security approach.

The Cold War was another phase that affected Turkey and paved way for a major security achievement in gaining membership in the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) in 1952⁷⁴⁵. Turkey successfully joined the NATO after its participation in the Korean War. Turkey sent a brigade to serve under

⁷⁴³ Volker Perthes, "Turkey's role in the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* 12, no. 4 (2010): 7.

⁷⁴⁴ Sedat Laciner, "From Kemalism to Ozalism: the ideological evolution of Turkish foreign policy," (PhD thesis, University of London, 2001), 116.

⁷⁴⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Turkey: 60 Year in NATO", *nato.int*, 2012, accessed January 17, 2016, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/80056.htm>.

the United Nations' command in early 1950s⁷⁴⁶. This marked an important development in Turkish-Western relations in general especially with offering its military commitments. Turkey was able to increase its security by allying with the Western Block and protect the country from the Soviet threat and expansionism after the Second World War. According to Yasemin Celik (1999), Ankara's role in containing the Soviet Union had affected its foreign policy direction and behaviour⁷⁴⁷. Conflicts remained during the course of the Cold War and were not solved i.e. conflict with Greece and the Cyprus problem, which affected Turkish-US relations⁷⁴⁸. Another major event shaping Turkey's security foreign policy at that time was the 'Cuban Missiles Crisis' during 1960s. This brought Turkey to the middle of Cold War affairs. The mid-ranged atomic warhead Jupiter missiles given to Turkey in exchange for the removal of missiles placed in Cuba⁷⁴⁹. This was an important point in history of Turkish Foreign Policy. Overall, it can be said that, "During the Cold War, most strategic analysts saw military threats as the primary source to states; therefore, it was understandable that they also considered the use of force as the primary response"⁷⁵⁰.

Turkey's relations with the Middle East and the Muslim World remained low and supported Western-Middle East policies. For example, in 1958 Turkey

⁷⁴⁶ Bruce Steele, "Korea: Gallant allies: The Story of the Turkish Brigade," *University Times* 32, issue. 21 (2000), accessed January 17, 2016, <http://www.utimes.pitt.edu/?p=3015>.

⁷⁴⁷ Yasemin Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999).

⁷⁴⁸ Ali L. Karaosmanoglu, "Turkish security culture: Evolutionary or carved in stone," *Perceptions and Misperceptions in the EU and Turkey*, (2009): 30, accessed January 17, 2016, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lang=en&id=109334>.

⁷⁴⁹ Jim Hershberg, "The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: The 40th Anniversary," *The George Washington University: The National Security Archive*, issue. 5 (1995), accessed January 18, 2016, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/moment.htm.

⁷⁵⁰ Ebru Canan-Sokullu, *Debating Security in Turkey: Challenges and Changes in the Twenty-First Century* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 39.

supported the British intervention in Jordan and the American intervention in Lebanon⁷⁵¹. Another example was Turkey's support for France during the Algerian Independence War⁷⁵². These are some of the examples that show the extent of Turkish Western-Oriented foreign policy during that time. This demonstrated the way in which Kemalism has influenced Turkish foreign policy even long after Kemal Ataturk's death.

With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution, tensions between great powers increased and Turkey allied itself with the West. As a result Turkey was able to sign in 1980 a Defence and Economic Cooperation Agreement with the U.S.⁷⁵³ Regarding Middle East affairs, Turkey was not willing to directly involve in one of the longest wars in the history of the Middle East between Iraq and Iran (1980-88) also known as the First Gulf War. Instead, Turkey kept a careful watch on its borders and stayed neutral⁷⁵⁴. On the other hand, Turkey condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and allowed Afghani refugees to enter the country⁷⁵⁵. The Soviet Union appeared weak and faced major internal instability and its collapse and end of the Cold War in 1989 meant that Turkey was no longer threatened and is now allied with the greatest power in the World entering a New World Order.

⁷⁵¹ Ara Sanjian, *Turkey and her Arab neighbours, 1953-1958: a study in the origins and failure of the Baghdad pact* (Archive Editions Ltd, 2001).

⁷⁵² Hasan Kosebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* (Springer, 2011), 80.

⁷⁵³ William Hale, *Turk Dis Politikasi 1774-2000*, (Istanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Publishing, 2003), 171-172. Cited in Nedim Yalansiz, "Turkey-Middle East Relations in the Cold War Era and the Great Powers," *History Studies* 4, issue. 2 (2012): 393-402.

⁷⁵⁴ Evren Altinkas, "The Iran Iraq war and its effects on Turkey," *Turkish Weekly*, 2006, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/2006/09/07/article/the-iran-iraq-war-and-its-effects-on-turkey>.

⁷⁵⁵ Hale, 173.

Turkey in post-Cold War era remained highly influenced by its hard power approach and emerged as a “post-Cold War warrior”⁷⁵⁶. Turkey during the 1990s was seen to be a country that is ready to use force and using “confrontational” tools of foreign policy⁷⁵⁷. Furthermore, Turkey maintained its worldview and foreign policy from a ‘national security’ perspective and one that is ready to use force in its bilateral relations particularly regarding Greece and Syria⁷⁵⁸. Turkey after the end of the Cold War was viewed by scholars as a “coercive power”⁷⁵⁹. The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the emergence of violent ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and Caucasus as well as the major changes in the landscape of Eastern Europe, created new opportunities and new challenges at the same time. Therefore, Turkey sought to adopt a more active foreign policy and take advantage of those new opportunities as well as tackling new regional challenges that affects its own security and sovereignty. On the other hand, it is important to understand that the intensified Kurdish problem has been a major factor that further developed the challenges Turkey had to deal with, which had a direct effect on its foreign policies. For example, Turkey needed to rethink about its regional strategic partnership and particularly with Iran, Iraq, and Syria in order to be able to deal with the Kurdish issue and the security threat of the PKK. Therefore, such new risks, challenges, and opportunities posed by the new post-Cold War era helped Turkey pursue new foreign policy strategies, while at the same time keeping security at the top of its foreign policy agenda.

⁷⁵⁶ Kemal Kiripci, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times,” *Institute fore Security Studies*, no. 92 (2006): 11.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 13.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁷⁵⁹ Ziya Onis, “Turkey and the Middle East after September 11: The Importance of the EU Dimension,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (2003): 84.

Figure 5. Kurdish inhabited areas and bordering states map⁷⁶⁰



The map above demonstrates the Kurdish inhabited areas that join together and include four main states; Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq. Those Kurdish areas have been viewed as one of the most instable areas in the region contributing and spilling over into those countries domestic politics and threat to their national security. Turkey has been the most famous out of all with its struggle and hard power military approach to the Kurdish problem and mainly the Kurdistan Workers' Party PKK. Such geographical complex that involves four different states has certainly affected Turkey's approach to its southern bordering neighbours. Turkey's efforts in dealing with such challenges were not full of positive and smooth relations and cooperation with those Arab states. There were some ups and downs and disagreements over the Kurdish autonomy and political demands. For example, Turkey's relations with Syria regarding the Kurdish problem and the PKK were full of tensions and confrontation. Since the creation and establishment of the PKK in Lebanon in

⁷⁶⁰ Ofra Bengio, "Will the Kurds Get Their Way," *Syrian Assistance.com*, October 31, 2012, accessed January 8, 2016, <http://www.syrianassistance.com/in-depth/archives/10-2012>.

1978 in Beqa Valley that was occupied by Syria, relations with Syria deteriorated as the Al-Assad government sheltered the PKK and its leader Abdullah Ocalan⁷⁶¹. Since then, the PKK militia undertook and sponsored a number of terrorist attacks on Turkish borders and in Turkey. However, in 1998 both governments signed the Adana Protocol with Syrian assurance to stop its support for the PKK⁷⁶². The Syrian government threw Abdullah Ocalan out of Syria and relations with Turkey were gradually improving. Due to the complex nature of this issue, Turkey had to engage with Syria, Iran, and Iraq to try and deal with this problem. However, this problem was not solved and remained highly within a security dimension.

On the other hand, Turkey maintained its Western alliance and was playing a new important regional role for the West and particularly the United States. Turgut Ozal was a leading figure who believed that Turkey could play a new positive role in the region and present Turkey as an important regional player. The 1990 Gulf War and Turkey's full support for the coalition against Saddam Hussein was a good example⁷⁶³. Furthermore, by the end of 1990s, the capturing of Abdullah Ocalan (the leader of the PKK) marked a new turning point in Kurdish conflict. Hamid Unver in his lecture on *Regional Security Complex Theory and Turkish Foreign Policy: NATO Missile Shield and Eurasian Energy Policy*, argued that since the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, Turkey witnessed a transformation in its approach towards the Kurdish issue,

⁷⁶¹ Soner Cagaptay, "Syria and Turkey: The PKK Dimension," *The Washington Institute.org*, April 5, 2012, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/syria-and-turkey-the-pkk-dimension>.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

⁷⁶³ Sharon Otterman, "IRAQ: U.S.-Turkey Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 21, 2003, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-us-turkey-relations/p7795>.

from a security and military based conflict to a politicized one⁷⁶⁴. On the other hand, the conflict with Greece was also changing especially after the earthquakes events both in Greece and Turkey and the solidarity and support that they both gave to each other⁷⁶⁵. These events helped pave way for a new page of communication and the gradual desecuritization of conflicts along with Turgut Ozal's successful new foreign policy approach.

What's more, the European recognition of Turkey's full membership candidacy in 1999 brought about a new positive attitude towards the European Union and Turkish commitment to prove that it is a country eligible for membership. It has been argued that the European Union has been a major deriving force in the transformation of Turkish foreign policy⁷⁶⁶. Turkey's foreign policy gradually transformed from a primarily security and military one with "hard power" image to one that is based on other forms of diplomacy building a new "soft-power" image⁷⁶⁷. Scholars also regarded such transformation as a shift from the "Americanization" of foreign policy to an "Europeanization" of foreign policy⁷⁶⁸. This also meant a change to the traditional Kemalist/military establishment and elites who have been highly influential in Turkish foreign policy making since the creation of the republic. For example, this was evident during the Kosovo war when Turkey showed a hesitant position and cautious policy towards joining NATO's strikes against the Federal Republic of

⁷⁶⁴ Hamid Unver, "Regional Security Complex Theory and Turkish Foreign Policy: NATO Missile Shield and Eurasian Energy Policy," *Woodrow Wilson Centre*, May 3, 2012, accessed January 12, 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/regional-security-complex-theory-and-turkish-foreign-policy-nato-missile-shield-eurasian>.

⁷⁶⁵ Stephen Kinzer, "Earthquakes Help Warm Greek-Turkish Relations," *New York Times*, September 13, 1999, accessed January 14, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/13/world/earthquakes-help-warm-greek-turkish-relations.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁷⁶⁶ Unver, "Regional Security Complex Theory".

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid.

Yugoslavia in 1999⁷⁶⁹, instead Turkey favoured diplomatic efforts and greater international organizational role in this conflict⁷⁷⁰.

Along with this transformation taking place, Turkey's economy was also entering a major crisis. The economic crisis of 2001 resulted in anger and frustration among citizens sparking demonstrations and riots⁷⁷¹. The military Kemalist establishment became heavily under pressure and criticism. The economic crisis marked a new era in Turkish foreign policy priorities and top agendas balancing security interests with economic concerns. Such drastic changes paved way for the newly established Justice and Development Party (AKP) to emerge strongly giving hope and aspiration for the Turkish people.

2.1.2 Turkish security approach during the AKP government

With the establishment and victory of the AKP in 2002, Turkey entered a new phase in its history. The new government promised to lead Turkey to a better place and become a leading country both politically and economically. The AKP established a new foreign policy outlook and gradually adopted a "multidimensional" foreign policy based on diplomacy and cooperation promoting its soft-power image to the world. The security-centered approach became very much challenged by the new government that aimed to change Turkey's historically known confrontational foreign policy. Such new outlook was first evident in 2003 when the Turkish parliament refused to give American

⁷⁶⁹ Sylvie Gangloff, "Turkish policy towards the conflict in Kosovo: the preeminence of national political interests," *Balkanologie* VIII, no. 1 (2004), accessed January 14, 2016, <http://balkanologie.revues.org/517>.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁷¹ Amberin Zaman in Ankara, "Violent protests grip Turkey as economy dives," *The Telegraph*, April 12, 2001, accessed January 14, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/1316000/Violent-protests-grip-Turkey-as-economy-dives.html>.

troops the advantage to use Turkish territories in its war against Iraq⁷⁷². Although this decision affected Turkish-US relations, it highlighted Turkey's willingness to make its own decisions. This was a great advantage for Turkey to prove to the Arab world and Europe that it is not a "Trojan Horse" for American interests⁷⁷³. On the other hand, this event demonstrated that Turkey was truly entering a new stage in its history where traditional military elites and old foreign policy establishment are being challenged and their influence significantly reduced since then.

The Iraq war however still brought fears among Turkish officials towards the Kurdish issue. The main concern, which still remains today, is that the PKK might have the advantage to strengthen its presence as well as the fear of an emerging Kurdish state⁷⁷⁴. Regardless of this fear, the AKP government adopted a fairly liberal approach compared to previous Turkish governments⁷⁷⁵. The new Kurdish approach transformed from merely based on security to one that included important diplomatic, social, and economic aspects as well. The new AKP approach was trying to demonstrate that conflicts and security problems should not be dealt with by force because it will never end, but by using diplomacy and cooperation, they can be effectively dealt with⁷⁷⁶. As a result of this AKP new approach, the Kurds in Turkey were granted more rights,

⁷⁷² Sharon Otterman, "IRAQ: U.S.-Turkey Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 31, 2003, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-us-turkey-relations/p7795>.

⁷⁷³ Charles Grant, "Turkey offers EU more punch," *Centre for European Reform*, September 1, 2005, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.cer.org.uk/in-the-press/turkey-offers-eu-more-punch>.

⁷⁷⁴ Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey and Iraq: The Perils (and Prospects) of Proximity," *USIP Special Report*, Special Report 141 (2005): 1-3, accessed January 16, 2016, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr141.pdf>.

⁷⁷⁵ Jake Hess, "The AKP's 'New Kurdish Strategy' Is Nothing of the Sort: An Interview with Selahattin Demirtas," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, May 2, 2012, accessed January 16, 2016, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero050212>.

⁷⁷⁶ Murat Yeşiltaş and Ali Balcı, "A dictionary of Turkish Foreign Policy in the AK Party era: A Conceptual Map," no. 7 (2013): 11-12.

despite continuing growing demands for deeper socio-economic solutions, and the Kurdish PKK problem was getting demilitarized⁷⁷⁷. For example, there was a new phase of dialogue and diplomacy as well as openness towards the Kurdish problem without mainly observing it through military lenses⁷⁷⁸. Moreover, the AKP policy towards the fight against PKK was entering a new phase and adopted a different discourse asserting the need for democracy to solve this problem⁷⁷⁹. It reached to a level that political opposition to the AKP accused the government of “legitimizing” the unlawful demands of this terrorist group⁷⁸⁰.

The new Turkish policy towards the Kurdish problem was characterized by a new cooperative approach. Another good example that represented Turkey’s new approach and commitment was its behaviour towards the Cyprus issue. The AKP government supported the decision by Turkish-Cypriots to take the Annan Plan that was announced in 2002 by the UN for unifying the island⁷⁸¹. This decision to support the unification of the island marked a significant change of Turkish behaviour towards this conflict and demonstrated a new image of Turkey to the international community.

In addition, the transformation in Turkey’s foreign policy towards Caucasia under the AKP government was another major development. The AKP government and officials mainly represented by Ahmet Davutoglu’s ideas,

⁷⁷⁷ Evren Balta Paker, “AKP’s approach to the Kurdish problem: One step forward, one step backward,” *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, 2012, accessed January 17, 2016, https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/perspectives_turkey_3_eng.pdf.

⁷⁷⁸ Selahattin Demirtas, “The Kurdish peace process, the Middle East and radical democracy,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (2015): 28-33.

⁷⁷⁹ Enver Gulseven, “Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War period: Relations with the EU, Greece and the Middle East,” (PhD thesis, Brunel University, 2010), 187.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸¹ Kyris, George, “Turkey, Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot political parties: the ephemeral catalyst of EU?,” *Turkish policy quarterly* 10, no. 2 (2011): 97-105.

represent Caucasia as a region of opportunities and important zone for influence⁷⁸². This was particularly translated into Turkey's new approach towards Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. According to Bulent Aras and Pinar Akpinar (2011), "while security, perception of threat and competition are still valid concepts in the formation of foreign policy in the Caucasus, Turkey views the region as a land of opportunity and influence"⁷⁸³. Regardless of the struggle between Turkey and Armenia to resolve their problems, Turkey was able to build multiple economic and diplomatic cooperation efforts with Georgia and Azerbaijan.

AKP's adoption of the "zero problems with neighbours" policy represented a totally opposite approach to the traditional security and military hard power policy. This was heavily evident with regards to Turkey's approach to its Middle Eastern neighbours as well. Turkey was viewed to have entered a "deseuritization" process in its relations with Syria and Iran⁷⁸⁴. This was evident in particular through the development of cooperation at different economic and political levels, including cooperation in dealing with the Kurdish problem and the PKK. Previously, Turkey has had some problems in its relations with both countries particularly in dealing with Kurdish separatism and the PKK. Turkey was against the Iranian and Syrian support and aid for Kurdish separatists in the past⁷⁸⁵. However, AKP's new outlook paved way for better

⁷⁸² Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "The Davutoglu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy," *Bilkent University / ELIAMEP*, no. 8 (2010): 4.

⁷⁸³ Bulent Aras and Pinar Akpinar, "The Relations between Turkey and the Caucasus," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* XVI, No. 3 (2011): 54.

⁷⁸⁴ Bulent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Deseuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 4 (2008): 495-515.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

relations and cooperation in dealing with different security issues including the Kurdish problem.

It was Turkey's chance to show the world that it is leading a good and friendly neighbourhood policy. This was also very beneficial for Turkey's EU membership process. Some scholars have argued that such Turkish behaviour and adoption of new approach was to promote its membership to the European Union especially since the accession negotiations of 2005⁷⁸⁶. At the same time, others characterized this change as marking a transformation from a previously "Americanized" foreign policy to a "Europeanized" foreign policy⁷⁸⁷. As a result, Turkey emerged as a new soft power that promotes regional peace and stability and one that plays an important diplomatic mediational role in solving regional and international conflicts. This was evident with Turkey's mediation efforts between the Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, between Pakistan and Afghanistan, between Syria and Israel, and between Iran and the United States⁷⁸⁸. In addition, Turkey's emergence as an important "energy hub" country came to replace its security and military based image. Turkey's location between the Caspian region on the East and the European Union on the West paved way for Turkey to play a key role as an energy hub or energy transit country linking between the oil and gas wealthy countries and Europe⁷⁸⁹. This to a large extent increased Turkey's importance to Europe and contributed to its EU accession process.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ Unver, "Regional Security Complex Theory".

⁷⁸⁸ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Resolution of Conflicts and Mediation," *mfa.gov.tr*, 2011, accessed January 17, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/resolution-of-conflicts-and-mediation.en.mfa>.

⁷⁸⁹ Emin Akhundzada, "Turkey as an Energy Hub: Opportunities and Challenges," *HAZAR*, April 23, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, [http://www.hazar.org/blogdetail/blog/turkey as an energy hub opportunities and challenge s 796.aspx](http://www.hazar.org/blogdetail/blog/turkey%20as%20an%20energy%20hub%20opportunities%20and%20challenge%20s%20796.aspx).

On the other hand, Turkey's relations with the Middle East and its Arab neighbours drastically increased and entered a new phase of political and economic cooperation. As mentioned previously in the economic section, trade relations and economic interdependency with the Middle East increased and major efforts were made to develop and maintain such relations. This was accompanied by a noticeable decline in the traditional security and military priorities of the country at the same time. The effects of security concerns and threats in shaping Turkey's behaviour and foreign policy incredibly decreased. Turkey during the AKP government also showed strong tendencies of independent foreign policy and self-confidence, which was also evident in its opening to Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia⁷⁹⁰. At the same time, Turkish-US relations were deteriorating over Turkey's policies in the Middle East that did not coincide with the American administration's interests. On the other hand, Turkey's support for Hamas and involvement in the Palestinian conflict led to increasing tensions with its traditional regional ally Israel. This was particularly evident after Israel's war on Gaza and the Flotilla crisis in 2009-2010⁷⁹¹. Turkey and particularly Erdogan became popular in the Middle East and appeared as a new "Arab hero"⁷⁹².

A key element in the decrease of security and military based foreign policy was AKP's success in challenging the domestic traditional military establishment's influence over foreign policy and their efforts in changing the

⁷⁹⁰ Ahmet Sozen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges," *Turkish studies* 11, no. 1 (2010): 119.

⁷⁹¹ Umut Uras, "Turkey commemorates victims of flotilla raid," *Al-Jazeera.com*, June 1, 2015, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/mavi-marmara-gaza-flotilla-raid-istanbul-150531220108860.html>.

⁷⁹² Khaled Diab, "Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Arab hero?," *theguardian.com*, September 22, 2011, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/sep/22/recep-tayyip-erdogan-arab-hero-turkey>.

civil-military relations⁷⁹³. The major problem with the traditional military establishment and elites is that they view international relations and foreign policy from a security based mind set. This was one of the main reasons why Turkey failed for a long time to solve many of its domestic and external conflicts as well as fixing its economic problems.

Turkey's "zero problem" policy and new regional approach was highly successful for a number of years, until the so-called "Arab Spring" erupted. Since 2011, Turkey had to face a number of regional challenges that had a direct impact on Turkey's economy and security. The long economic efforts made with some Arab governments involved in these uprisings were highly affected. Trade and export figures decreased as the conflict intensified due to the unstable environment that affected the flow of trade⁷⁹⁴. On the other hand, security threats rose once again, particularly with the development of the Syrian crisis. The increasing flow of Syrian refugees and increase of terrorist activities near Turkish borders along with further complicating the Kurdish conflict placed Turkey in an unpleasant position. Security concerns in Turkish foreign policy making were increasing since then. The Arab Spring challenged Turkey's soft power approach and this was evident when Turkey took part in the NATO operations in Libya against the Gaddafi government for example⁷⁹⁵. However, the main security threat comes from its Syrian bordering neighbour. Turkey

⁷⁹³ Dietrich Jung, "The Turkish Revolution": changing civil-military relations in Turkey," *Centre for Mellemostudier*, 2011, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://static.sdu.dk/mediafiles/D/A/0/%7BDA0B0720-64CB-4336-899E-D951382A7F9D%7DDJ1110.pdf>.

⁷⁹⁴ Ismet Ozkul, "Turkey Loses in Foreign Trade with Crisis Countries," *al-monitor.com*, 2012, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/business/2012/02/our-2011-foreign-trade-lost-out.html#ixzz3zHIIVYJb>.

⁷⁹⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO and Libya (Archived)," *nato.int*, November 9, 2015, accessed January 20, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_71652.htm#.

faces a threat of political and military conflict spill over, which influence Turkey's behaviour regarding this conflict. Tough security measures and powerful military presence on both Syrian and Iraqi borders were necessary in dealing with this crisis as well as dealing with the threatening expansion of the emerging terrorist organisation ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

Turkey was able to get NATO support to enhance Turkey's defence capabilities. Since 2013, NATO members have aided Turkey with a number of Patriot Missiles for an agreed period of time⁷⁹⁶. The United States and Germany alone have deployed two Patriot batteries since 2013⁷⁹⁷. Turkey hosts over 700 NATO troops for the patriot deployment⁷⁹⁸. This led to, what Hamid Unver (2012) regarded as, a "re-Americanization" of Turkish foreign policy and the United States gradually returning as Turkey's ally in dealing with the regional security instability and Syrian crisis⁷⁹⁹. Turkey has been conducting a number of military exercises and activities along the Syrian border since 2011⁸⁰⁰. This demonstrates a sharp rise again of security concerns on the top of Turkish foreign policy agenda, but this time it is more influenced by external forces and events instead of domestic military elites' ideology like before. Although, this thesis does not intend to engage with the very latest developments of the Arab Spring, it is necessary to highlight here the significant impact of some recent developments in the Syrian crisis specifically with the increase of ISIS activities close to Turkey's borders, the Iranian and Syrian support for the Kurdish militant

⁷⁹⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO Deployment of Patriot Missiles to Turkey," *shape.nato.int*, September 24, 2014, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.shape.nato.int/nato-deployment-of-patriot-missiles-to-turkey>.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁹ Unver, Op cit.

⁸⁰⁰ Jonathon Burch and Simon Cameron-Moore, "Turkey pressures Syria with border military exercises, sanctions, harboring army defectors," *English.alarabiya.net*, October 7, 2011, accessed January 20, 2016, <https://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/07/170698.html>.

groups, and the recent Russian military intervention. These are all significant contributing factors that have again placed Turkish security concerns and national security interests very high in its foreign policy agenda. Turkey's image as a hard power was re-emerging due to such instable regional environment. Turkey's use of military force became inevitable with its recent strikes against ISIS, Kurdish groups, and the latest shooting down of Russian air fighter jets after the alleged multiple violations of Turkish air space⁸⁰¹.

2.2 The significance of security-based explanations in understanding Turkish-Middle East policy change

This section aims to illustrate the nature of this approach and its main theoretical explanations in the literature presented by different scholars and their and analysing evidence to identify their possible strengths. In other words, the aim of this section is to give a clear idea of the security explanation before going on to assess its significance in the following sections.

There have been a number of scholars who attempted to explain Turkey's transformation towards the Middle East since 2002 onwards from a security based approach. Such approach can be traced back to the realist theoretical interpretation of international relations that highly emphasizes the role of national security in determining states' behaviour⁸⁰². Turkey being located next to highly unstable regions along with facing major challenges from the Kurdish problem makes national security a high priority all the time for Turkish policy makers. However, these needs to be further analysed and

⁸⁰¹ BBC News, "Turkey shoots down Russian warplane on Syria border," *bbc.co.uk*, November 24, 2015, accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34907983>.

⁸⁰² Robert Schuett, "Peace through transformation? Political realism and the progressivism of national security," *International Relations* 25, no. 2 (2011): 185-203.

examined in order to know the significance of using such approach in understanding Turkey's foreign policy towards its Middle East neighbours. Therefore, this section aims to illustrate some of the works in the literature that tend to focus on the role of security in understanding Turkey's regional behaviour since 2002 under the AKP government. This will be followed by a critical examination of this security-based approach and testing its plausibility in explaining Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East.

An interesting article by Stephen Larrabee (2007) titled *Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East*, argued that Turkey's new approach and role in the Middle East is a "response to structural changes in its security environments since the end of the Cold War"⁸⁰³. For example, the 2003 American invasion of Iraq is seen to be an event that drew Turkey into the Middle East affairs. According to Larrabee, Saddam Hussein for a long time has provided stability for Turkish Southern border with Iraq. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein leads to huge security problems for Turkey and primarily from Kurds. The Turkish government realized the potential of a growing Kurdish nationalism and derives for autonomy. Therefore, Turkey sought to build ties with Iran and Syria to be able to cooperate in solving such threat and complex security problem. For example, Turkey was able to sign a number of agreements with Iran including an important security agreement that recognizes the PKK as a terrorist organization⁸⁰⁴.

⁸⁰³ Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4 (2007): 103.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 107.

In addition, Syrian-Turkish relations have also entered a new phase and developed cooperation efforts on a number of different fields. Larrabee argued that the Syrian government was also concerned about the growing Kurdish nationalism and had a common goal with Turkey to work on. Turkey's improved relations with Syria were not warmly welcomed in the United States especially during the Bush administration. Larrabee stated, "Turkey's greater engagement in the Middle East is part of the gradual diversification of Turkish foreign policy since the end of the Cold War"⁸⁰⁵. He argued that Turkey's new engagement and activism in the Middle East could be seen as a "return to a more traditional pattern"⁸⁰⁶. Larrabee has mainly focused his study on Turkey's relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran, which is understandable, especially in relations to dealing with the Kurdish issue.

Similarly, Sonmez Atesoglu (2011) in his work, *Security of Turkey with Respect to the Middle East*, looks at the important role of Turkish security concerns in shaping its relations with and behaviour towards the Middle East⁸⁰⁷. The study particularly focused on Turkey's relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran, whom they share borders with, with regards to common security concerns mainly the Kurdish issue and the PKK. Atesoglu stated, "There was a shift in the alliance structure of the Middle East. In recent years Syria, Iraq, and Iran are pursuing accommodative policies towards Turkey's objective of eliminating the PKK. This has led Turkey to move away from the alliance with Israel and closer to its southern neighbours"⁸⁰⁸. The author argued that Turkish security

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid, 111.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ Sonmez Atesoglu, "Security of Turkey with Respect to the Middle East," *PERCEPTIONS* XVI, no. 2 (2011): 99-110.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid, 99.

concerns and threats posed by the PKK changed Turkey's foreign policy priority towards these states in the expense of its relation with Israel. Atesoglu added, "The cooperation of Syria, Iraq, and Iran against the PKK appears to be more beneficial to Turkey compared to sacrifices of political support and military-technology-intelligence benefits they were getting from Israel while being allies"⁸⁰⁹. Moreover, the author demonstrated the level of military capability of Turkey in relation to its three Middle Eastern neighbours arguing that Turkey is in a much better position. However, there are still some security concerns and threats that determined Turkey's behaviour with these states mainly the Kurdish issue and the PKK, and the potential security vacuum in Iraq with the departure of American troops.

A similar approach was demonstrated by one of the most influential neo-realist scholars John Mearsheimer (2012). In his lecture on *Turkish Foreign Policy: A Realist's Assessment* at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara, Mearsheimer argued that security concerns has largely been on the top priorities of most Turks simply because the neighbourhood does not give them much choice⁸¹⁰. He demonstrated Turkey's relative power components mainly geographic, human, military, and economic aspects. Mersheimer argued that within the anarchic system that we operate in with no higher authority, states develop two main goals. The first is to maximize relative power in order to ensure that neighbouring states would not potentially threaten Turkey's security and survival. He suggested that the "ideal situation" for Turkey was to

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, 100.

⁸¹⁰ John Mearsheimer, "Turkish Foreign Policy: A Realist's Assessment," *youtube.com*, October 9, 2012, accessed January 22, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geC1vNBj2Yk>.

dominate the region and become a regional hegemonic power⁸¹¹, considering that the American example being the only regional hegemony dominating the Western hemisphere in modern history. The second goal is to promote a “smart foreign policy” to be able to deal with the threat environment. For example, Turkey has to deal with the problem of the PKK in a way that does not “blow back” into Turkey’s domestic politics. For Mersheimer operating in such a hostile region and threat environment, Turkey had to develop strategies to combat these problems. However, he insists that the best way is to maximize relative power and become a regional hegemonic power, which is far from reach⁸¹².

On the other hand, Hamid Akin Unver (2012) argued that Turkish foreign policy under the rule of the AKP has shifted towards becoming more “British” meaning British school of thought⁸¹³. Unver argued that identity has become much more pronounced shaping Turkey’s foreign policy approach and patterns of cooperation and conflict⁸¹⁴. He presented three main case studies including its NATO role, being an “energy hub state”, and the recent deployment of missile defence shield in Turkey. Unver argued that Turkey’s traditional hard power has considerably decreased and replaced by soft power approach and cooperation in dealing with its neighbours. He used important terminologies in explaining Turkish foreign policy shifts since 2002. Arguing that Turkey traditionally followed an “Americanized” foreign policy based on hard power and military approach and this recently changed and Turkey employed a “Europeanized” foreign policy. In other words, Turkish foreign policy underwent

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Ibid.

⁸¹³ Unver, “Regional Security Complex Theory”.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

a transformation from the “Americanization of foreign policy” to the “Europeanization of foreign policy”⁸¹⁵. However, he stated that since the Arab Spring the development of the Syrian refugee crisis, Turkey’s soft power was challenged and showed its limitation. Therefore, Unver argued that since the Arab Spring, Turkey’s foreign policy went through a “re-Americanization” of foreign policy⁸¹⁶.

Overall, he argued in the same lecture that whenever Turkey is facing a major security threat, it returns to its traditional security-Kemalist influenced approach and vice versa. Therefore, we can see here that Unver has demonstrated that security priorities in understanding Turkish foreign policy and particularly towards the Middle East have actually ‘fluctuated’ also depending on the security issue at stake. Turkey went through a process from an Americanized hard power prior to AKP government to a Europeanized soft power during the AKP rule to re-Americanized hard power once again since the Arab Spring and still under the same AKP government. Although, Unver presents an interesting argument, I believe that Turkey’s case and particularly foreign policy is much more complex than simply depending it on only two external actors either Europe or America, despite their great influences.

Moreover, Cengiz Dinc (2011) in his article, *Turkey as a New Security Actor in the Middle East: Beyond the Slogans*, shares some ideas with Hamid Unver’s hypothesis and argue that Turkish foreign policy has moved beyond “slogans” in the sense that Turkey under the AKP government has become more “relaxed” and “flexible”⁸¹⁷. Similar to Hamid Unver’s approach, Dinc

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid.

⁸¹⁷ Cengiz Dinc, “Turkey as a New Security Actor,” *PERCEPTIONS* XVI, no. 2 (2011): 61-80.

argued that Turkey has adopted a soft power approach making it much closer to the European strategy. Turkey is viewed to be matured and is able to develop new different strategies to deal with security concerns. In addition, he stated that the domestic transformation, democratization process, and economic development have been key factors behind such foreign policy transformation⁸¹⁸. Here the author confirms that the Turkish openness and new approach to the Middle East has been shaped by different domestic reasons. It is important to understand therefore that the traditional security approach does not apply here. In other words, Turkey's new regional foreign policy approach has not been primarily shaped by its national security concerns and that there are a number of other factors that needs to be considered. The impact of changes in Turkey's security approach from hard power politics to using soft power and diplomacy has been very visible. Turkey was able to settle a number of critical issues and conflicts with some of its neighbours as well as dealing with the Kurdish issue more effectively in negotiations and other forms of diplomacy.

2.3. Testing the plausibility of security-based explanations

Having looked at some of the examples of security approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy transformation and change towards the Middle East since 2002, it is important to assess if such theoretical interpretation is valid. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to test the plausibility and possible limitation of the security approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East under the AKP government. This will be done

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

by using the Process Tracing method of theory testing through applying empirical evidence, scholarly available contrary arguments and critics, and most importantly examining interview data.

It has been evident that Turkish foreign policy underwent a number of stages in its modern history. The traditional secular military establishment has been highly influential in Turkish foreign policy making for a long time. Turkey became to be seen as a hard-power state that is ready to use force at any time to solve its security and conflict disputes with its neighbours. As mentioned above, since the end of the Cold War, the new world order and international system presented a number of opportunities for Turkey and paved way for foreign policy change and transformation. The European Union has also seen to be a leading force behind Turkey's foreign policy transformation. A "Europeanization" of Turkish foreign policy, as mentioned by Hamid Unver, meant a departure away from its hard power politics to a soft power image. It was however evident that the most important security issue that strongly remained at the top of Turkey's priorities was the Kurdish problem. The AKP government was able to adopt new strategies to deal with this security problem. A new soft power approach characterized by rhetoric diplomacy and cooperation was becoming the new Turkish foreign policy approach.

However, when trying to understand Turkey's openness to its Arab neighbours and the greater Middle East, one must ask; were security concerns for Turkey the main driving force behind its re-engagement with the Middle East? It has been clear that Turkey's transformational relations with its neighbours Syria, Iraq, and Iran to a large extent had a direct relation with Turkey's security concerns over the Kurdish issue and the PKK. However,

Turkey's openness and regional activity went far beyond those three states. Turkey was able to develop important relations with the Gulf region, Egypt, North African states and many more. These relations were based not only on political levels, but also largely on economic and cultural levels as well. A major problem that we come to see is that the security approach presented in the literature fails to explain a number of other issues not related to the Kurdish problem or other direct security threats for Turkey. For example, Ersel Aydinli, a professor of International Relations at Bilkent University and the Executive Director of Fulbright Commission, in his interview, argued that the Kurdish issue has been a key factor contributing to Turkish foreign policy for a long time and during the AKP government, but using this security based approach to understand the whole case is misleading⁸¹⁹. He stated, "even if we take this argument into consideration, the Kurdish issue does not directly deal with countries in the Gulf, Africa, and East Asia for example"⁸²⁰. Therefore, this does not cover the full picture, it can explain Turkey's relations and cooperation with only neighbours who share borders with the Kurds and are directly linked in this issue who represent an important part of the Middle East, but certainly not all of it.

Furthermore, in my interview with Serhat Erkemen, Head of Department of International Relations at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, and Middle East advisor at ORSAM (Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies), similarly argued that the Kurdish security problem has been key to Turkish relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran⁸²¹. However, he argued that the traditional military based

⁸¹⁹ Ersel Aydinli, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 18, 2014.

⁸²⁰ Ibid.

⁸²¹ Serhat Erkemen, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 21, 2014.

approach has been changed under the AKP government. A new solution process took place with the adoption of the so-called “democratic opening”⁸²². Erkemen agreed that the AKP government had to engage with Syria, Iraq, and Iran to try and minimize its security threats, but he also stated that with the development of the diplomatic and soft power approach with the Kurds, Turkey’s confidence boosted and its reliance on these states became less great⁸²³. With the increase of political instability and problems in these neighbouring countries particularly in Iraq and Syria recently, Turkey had to act more independently in dealing with this issue. Here Erkemen is suggesting that such security issue has determined Turkey’s behaviour towards these countries, but managed overtime with its successful adoption of diplomacy and negotiations to rely less on their governments. Therefore, it can be understood that security concerns were valid factors behind Turkey’s relations with those countries, but only for the first few years of AKP government.

Therefore, Securitizing Turkey’s foreign policy has been less favoured by the AKP government and was not seen as a successful method. Instead, there has been a shift towards a softer approach based on common interests, diplomacy, economic benefits, cultural similarities, and many others. Bulent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat (2008), argued that there has been a noticeable “softening” of Turkey’s approach towards its neighbours. They stated that such change has been highly driven by the domestic democratic and “desecuritization process” that was taking place in Turkey⁸²⁴. They added that this was also a product of the European Union accession process and its

⁸²² Ibid.

⁸²³ Ibid.

⁸²⁴ Aras and Polat, “From Conflict to Cooperation”.

democratic commitments⁸²⁵. They stated, “formerly securitized and dramatized issues have begun to be perceived as normal political issues”⁸²⁶.

Moreover, Enver Gulseven (2010) in his PhD thesis *Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Period: Relations with the EU, Greece and the Middle East*, argued that the AKP focused on the social and economic aspects of the Kurdish issue rather than its security aspect followed traditionally⁸²⁷. The author added that the new AKP government adopted a new strategy in dealing with the PKK. The AKP government led by Erdogan started to realize that this needs to be settled and therefore pursued more cooperative methods towards the Kurds and particularly with Northern areas of Iraq dominated by Kurds⁸²⁸. Although Gulseven has merged the Kurdish issue and the Middle East in one section under one title “The Kurdish issue and Turkey’s Middle East Policy”, he seems to have separated the two in his analysis. First, he illustrated the nature of the Kurdish issue and the way in which Turkey’s Kurdish approach has changed and particularly during the AKP period. The section following that went on to discuss Turkey’s business ties with the Middle East drifting away from the Kurdish issue. This is not in any way a weakness in his thesis’ analysis, but one that demonstrates that there is not a direct link between the Kurdish issue that involves Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria with Turkey’s policy to the rest of the Middle East, where other economic, political, and cultural aspects seem to dominate over security concerns.

Going back to interview data collected as part of this thesis, all of my interviewees from both Turkish academic experts and politicians agreed that the

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ Ibid, 495.

⁸²⁷ Enver Gulseven, “Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy”, 186.

⁸²⁸ Ibid, 188.

Kurdish issue was mainly perceived from a security dimension. However, they also similarly suggested that the AKP government managed to some extent to transform this issue into a social and democratic one. For instance, Mehmet Ozkan, a researcher and editor to the Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research (SETA) specialized in Political Science and International Relations, in his interview argued that there have been major accomplishments and Kurds gained many of their rights, such as speaking in their language, have their own schools, Kurdish TV channels, radio broadcasting, and many others⁸²⁹. However, Ozkan also stated that along with such softening of Turkish approach towards the Kurds, Turkey became less dependent on countries like Syria, Iraq, and Iran to deal with this issue. In addition, Ozkan agrees that this Kurdish question in general does not directly link to Turkey's relations with the rest of the Middle East, but believes that the opening towards the Middle East has been in large related to Turkey's new soft power and cooperative approach.

Moreover, Mesut Ozcan, chairman of the Foreign Ministry's Diplomacy Academy and Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his interview stated that the AKP government has been the most successful in dealing with the Kurdish issue⁸³⁰. According to Ozcan, there are airlines flying from Ankara and Istanbul to Erbil and other Kurdish cities. There is a Kurdish channel in Turkey, and many others, which were unthinkable 5 or 10 years ago. He stated that as an evidence for this, Turkey's trade with Iraq recently reached around 15 billion USD worth of trade, but 70% of it is with Kurdish companies⁸³¹. This shows that even in Turkish-Kurdish relations alone, other forms of cooperation have

⁸²⁹ Mehmet Ozkan, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 17, 2014.

⁸³⁰ Mesut Ozcan, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 18, 2014.

⁸³¹ Ibid.

emerged replacing the totally securitized approach. Therefore, the realist and neo-realist theoretical approach highlighting the role of security in understanding states behaviour and international relations in this particular study becomes very much less significant. In addition, Dr. Fayez Al-Shehri, President of Saudi-Turkish Parliamentary Friendship at Shoura Council of Saudi Arabia, argued that there were not direct major security threats or common security concerns between Saudi Arabia and Turkey to act up on. However, the Turkish government and the Saudi administration are certainly cooperating on “indirect” security aspects, particularly regarding counter-terrorism⁸³². He stated, “from my own experience and direct cooperation with our Turkish counterpart, most of our work has been based on developing mutual interests, regional peace and stability, and eliminating obstacles for better relationship”. Dr. Fayez illustrated that Turkish security threats and concerns were not the main themes shaping Saudi-Turkish relations. Therefore, trying to understand Turkey’s foreign policy change towards the Gulf region for example through a security approach analysis will be misleading.

Therefore, security explanations fail to explain the development in relations with Middle Eastern states and Turkish role in countries beyond Turkey’s southern and southeast borders. Syria, Iraq, and Iran are important Middle Eastern states, but when it comes to analysing Turkish-Middle East relations, many other countries are included. Furthermore, the security explanations in the literature fail to explain the economic role in shaping Turkey’s relations with Middle Eastern states for example. Since scholars and analysts have confirmed Turkey’s softening approach and de-securitization of

⁸³² Fayz Al-Shehri, interviewed by author, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 13 2014.

foreign policy along with favouring diplomacy, cooperation, and economics, security based approaches do not offer a comprehensive explanation so far that tells us about the underlying causes behind Turkey's opening up and change of relations with the Middle East. However, we cannot deny that with the increase of security threats to Turkey, its foreign policy and approach returns to its traditional image. This is particularly evident with the recent developments in the Syrian crisis where Turkey used force and showed hard power tendencies in dealing with different security issues.

Overall, it can be argued that there has been a fluctuation in the role and influence of security over foreign policy in Turkish history. Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, hard power military and security approach dominated Turkish foreign policy. However, by the end of the Cold War and particularly during the late 1990s and after, Turkey went through a transformational process of de-securitizing its foreign policy replacing it with soft power approach. Since the Arab uprisings and the development of the Syrian crisis, we see once again a rise in security threats and a Turkish return of hard power approach in dealing with them.

From empirical evidence and interview data examined in the above sections, it is clear that security explanations in understanding Turkey's foreign policy change towards the Middle East have had major weaknesses in giving a comprehensive explanation of the new Turkish-Middle East approach. Although the Kurdish issue has been part of Turkey's foreign policy priorities particularly in relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran, it only covers one aspect of Turkish-Middle East foreign policy. It is therefore, inaccurate to claim that Turkey's re-engagement with the Middle East and cooperative approach has been shaped

by security concerns and especially the Kurdish security issue. With the above analysis of empirical evidence and primary interview data, the security theoretical approach in this case study seem to fail a *Straw in the Wind Test* because it shows that it is neither sufficient nor necessary for affirming causal inference. In other words the security approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 is a weak explanation and one that does not explain much “on its own”. Just like the Islamist explanation examined in chapter 4, the security explanation tend to represent a similar low demanding standard for it to establish causation. As a result, failing this test reduces its relevance and cannot be used as a plausible explanation. However, it is important to note that failing this test does not eliminate it. As long as Turkey has to deal with certain security issues and especially the endless Kurdish problem, security explanations can give us insights to understanding specific policies directly related to security threats. We cannot eliminate it because security concerns has actually been a contributing factor in Turkey’s foreign policy towards some of its Middle Eastern neighbours in some periods. Therefore, it can be argued that the security theoretical hypothesis in this specific case study can only explain “part” of the cause behind Turkey’s foreign policy re-engagement with the Middle East. The implication of failing this test is that it slightly strengthens other competing explanations in the study. To further simplify this process of the examination, the below table summarizes the main points of the security based explanation and its value in the thesis so far.

Figure 6. Assessment of the security explanation in Process Tracing

<p>Explanation 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The increasing security threats posed by the growing instability in Turkey's Middle Eastern neighbors pushed Turkey to re-engage and develop cooperation particularly in dealing with the Kurdish problem and the PKK threat.
<p>Evidence constituting this explanation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kurdish problem has been a long term issue affecting Turkey's security and domestic stability. - Since the Iraq war in 2003, Turkey's security concerns reached its peak, especially with instable borders with Iraq. - Turkey made intensive efforts to improve its relations with its neighbors, particularly with Iraq, Iran, and Syria (the border sharing states). - Noticeable cooperation and efforts to deal with common security threats and particularly the PKK.
<p>Process of examining empirical evidence and interview data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Kurdish problem is one of Turkey's security concerns. - Turkey is also worried about spill over as a result of the growing political regional instability. - The AKP government managed to change Turkey's approach towards the Kurdish problem from a security based one to a diplomatic and soft-power approach. - The AKP successfully "de-securitized" Turkey's foreign policy and worked on changing its long known hard power military image. - If Turkey's openness towards the Middle East was caused by its security concerns, then why did Turkish foreign policy undergo a de-securitization process? - Interviewees agreed that security is one of the elements of Turkey's regional approach, but Turkey under the AKP went far beyond its bordering neighbors' and the Kurdish related areas. - Evidence suggests that the AKP, particularly since the second term, have adopted a soft-power approach and applied 'rhetoric diplomacy'. - Interviewees agree that security has been a key feature of Turkish politics and foreign policy in the past, but it has considerably decreased under the AKP rule. - Interviewees illustrated that although security is important, it is weak to suggest it as the cause behind Turkish foreign policy change.
<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less demanding standard compared to identity and economic explanations, similar to the Islamist explanation. - Evidence are weak and does not either rule this explanation in or out of the study (explains a minimal part of the case). - Since Turkey went through a de-securitization process in its foreign policy it makes it Neither Necessary nor sufficient to establish causation (<i>Not necessary as evidence suggest that Turkish foreign policy has undergone a major 'de-securitization process' prior to 2002 and was further de-securitized by the AKP government</i>)

replacing it with other soft-power elements. Not sufficient as it fails to explain Turkey's increased relations and openness to countries beyond its direct security threat zones near its borders i.e. the Gulf states and others).

- Therefore, fail a **Straw in the Wind Test**.

Implication:

- Explanation is slightly weakened, but not eliminated.
- **Slightly Strengthens** rival explanations in the study.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to critically examine the “pragmatic” and “material” side of Turkish foreign policy, mainly focusing on the role of economic and security factors in affecting Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East since 2002. A large number of scholars have chosen each of them on their own as an explanation also influenced by the neo-realist and neo-liberalist theoretical interpretations of international relations. However, the key question of this chapter is whether the economic or security explanations represent a valid cause behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East. In other words, can we solely understand such foreign policy change through economic or security perspectives? What are the strengths and weaknesses of those explanations presented in the literature? The answer to these questions requires an examination and test of their necessity and sufficiency as causes behind this change.

In the economic section, we came to understand that Turkish economic interests are highly important to the AKP government. Since the AKP took power in 2002, the Turkish economy has been at the top of the government agendas. The AKP came to power at a time of economic crisis witnessed in 2001 and this gave a great need for the coming government to recover the

economy and push for new solutions. AKP officials have regularly stressed out their economic goals and motivation to fix the economy and transform Turkey into a leading global economy. Therefore, one of the greatest achievements attributed to the AKP government was its economic success. Turkey was able to establish new zones for trade with many regions and most notably the Middle East. Turkey became a leading exporting country and an economy that reached top 20 with a government ambition to reaching top 10 by 2023, celebrating One Hundred Years anniversary of the birth of the Turkish Republic.

A number of scholars in the literature have chosen to emphasize their analysis of Turkish foreign policy transformation towards the Middle East through a solid economic approach. This type of approach has been highly beneficial to our understanding of Turkish foreign policy and most importantly the AKP government's foreign policy principles. The studies were successful in explaining the growing Turkish-Middle East trade relations and interdependence containing highly important facts and statistics. However, due to the competing theoretical nature in the literature, the economic/pragmatic approach seems to help explore only one side of the story. Throughout the study, evidence show that the economic explanations in the literature seem to overemphasize the role of economic interests in understanding the overall Turkish foreign policy transformation towards the Middle East. Such explanations fail to explain the security-based policies as a result of the Kurdish issue that has a direct link with the governments of Iran, Syria, and Iraq for example. Furthermore, the roles of key international actors like the United States and the European Union in affecting Turkey's approach towards the Middle East have also been overlooked. On the other hand, such economic

pragmatic approach has been challenged by the ideological and identity based explanations in understanding Turkish-Middle East relations for the last decade or so, which also represent another important side that contribute to our understanding of this case study. In addition, since the rise of the Arab Spring in 2011, Turkish economic trade relations and exports in troubled countries have been affected. However, the AKP government chose to support the popular uprisings in those countries calling for democratic transitions. If Turkish foreign policy chiefly relied on its economic interests in the Middle East, it would have been very logical for the Turkish government to support the Arab regimes and the stability of those countries in an attempt protect its economic interests.

Overall, in applying economic explanations to the process tracing theory-testing method, it was evident that such explanations managed to pass a *Hoop Test*. Choosing the type of test these explanations pass or fail depends on the evidence provided. Therefore, passing a *Hoop Test* means that economic explanations seem to have great relevance in explaining Turkish foreign policy and particularly towards the Middle East. However, passing this test only “affirms” relevance and does not “confirm” it. In other words, it helps explain an important part of Turkish foreign policy, but does not explain all parts. Therefore, the economic approach has been strengthened in this study so far somewhat weakening other rival explanations. It is therefore one of the key elements of understanding Turkish foreign policy that this study holds on to. This leads us to carry on in this investigation and consider other explanations presented in the literature that we have not looked at so far.

On the other hand, the security-based explanations presented in the literature to understanding this foreign policy change have only managed to

cover a minor part. The security explanations were helpful in explaining certain Turkish foreign policies and relations with states like Syria, Iraq, and Iran who share borders with Turkey and are directly involved in the Kurdish issue. The hard power security and military approach in Turkish foreign policy has been a central theme in previous governments. Since the end of the Cold War and particularly by the end of 1990s, Turkey went through a process of de-securitization as it was getting closer the European Union. However, since the AKP took power, this de-securitization process was heavily implemented. This in itself weakens the security outlook in understanding Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East. It is therefore, inaccurate to claim that Turkey's re-engagement with the Middle East on all political, economic, and cultural levels have been shaped by security concerns and especially the Kurdish security problem. Such approach fails to explain the Turkish reach to zones and countries in the Middle East beyond its bordering neighbours. Turkey was able to develop important relations with the Gulf States as well as North African states for example; countries that not share much common security concerns and threats compared to Turkey's Southern bordering neighbours. Security theoretical explanations in this case study seem to fail a *Straw in the Wind Test* because it shows that it is neither sufficient nor necessary for affirming causal inference. It can be argued that the security approach in understanding Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 is a weak explanation and one that does not explain much "on its own". Failing this test minimizes its importance and cannot be used as a plausible and comprehensive explanation. However, it is important to note that failing this test does not eliminate it. As long as Turkey has to deal with certain security issues and especially the

endless Kurdish problem, security explanations can give us insights to understanding specific policies directly related to security threats. We cannot eliminate it because security concerns have actually been a contributing factor in Turkey's foreign policy towards some parts of its Middle Eastern neighbours in some periods.

Overall, both economic and security explanations offer useful insights to our understandings of this case study. However, both have been weak in providing a complete and whole picture of Turkish-Middle East policy since 2002. Although both are not necessary and sufficient in establishing causation, it has to be noted that the economic explanation appears to be much stronger and reliable compared to the security explanation. Another similarity between the two is that we cannot eliminate them so far in the study because each seems to present an explanation to some elements of the case study. Turkey, as mentioned at the opening of this thesis, is a highly complex country operating in a highly complex region. This reminds us, as we go along in testing the different theoretical hypotheses provided in the literature, that it is very much difficult to explain Turkey's regional political, economic, and cultural openness and re-engagement through one theoretical lens or a singular approach.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Role of the European Union: A Europeanization of Foreign Policy?

Introduction

Another term usually used in the literature when analysing the de-securitization process, as discussed in the previous chapter, is also referred to as the “Europeanization” of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey has been working towards becoming a European Union member for a long time. It was able to join the European Council, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and the Development, and Security and Cooperation in Europe. Despite all these efforts, Turkey was still unable to gain full membership compared to less credible countries that were able to do so, such as Bulgaria. Recently, there has been increasing academic attention to Turkish-EU relations and particularly to the way in which this had an impact on both Turkish domestic and foreign policy inspired by some international relations theories, particularly neo-liberalism and neo-liberal institutionalism⁸³³. The aim of this chapter is to assess and evaluate the plausibility and validity of the EU explanation as the cause behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East. This will be tested through the use of process tracing theory-testing methodology in order to evaluate EU explanations’ strengths and weaknesses. The test will go through analysis of some critics to such approach in the literature, in the empirical evidence, and in the interview data collected as part of this thesis’ fieldwork.

⁸³³ Arthur A. Stein, “Neoliberal Institutionalism,” in *The Oxford handbook of international relations*, eds., Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford University Press, 2008), 201-221.

The structure of this chapter will be divided into three main sections. The first section will analyse the nature of Turkish-EU relations and its effects on Turkish domestic politics and foreign policy. This includes Turkey's relations with the EU prior and during the AKP government's rule and its membership process. The second section aims at analysing the different theoretical hypotheses and explanations presented by different scholars and analysts in this field of study who support the role of the EU in influencing Turkish foreign policy change in particular towards the Middle East. The importance of this section stems from the fact that by analysing and exploring EU explanations, it will then be much easier to test their plausibility. This is where the third and final section comes into play. The purpose of the third section is to examine and test the validity and strengths of the EU-based explanations in understanding Turkish foreign policy change and whether they represent necessary and sufficient evidence. This will include critically assessing and evaluating strengths and weaknesses of those explanations by analysing critics presented by other scholars who might not have supported and agreed with such explanations, empirical evidence, and collected interview data.

The results of this chapter will show that the EU approach is useful in explaining key domestic changes i.e. democratization, de-securitization, and change in civil-military relations. On a foreign policy level, explanations relying on the role and influence of EU on Turkish-Middle East relations are useful in explaining some aspects, but not all. For example, Turkey's new approach to the Kurdish issue and the PKK as well as its relations with its southern neighbours can be understood as part of Turkey's de-securitization with the purpose of becoming an EU member. This includes Turkey's new approach to

the issue of Cyprus and relations with Greece and Armenia. However, when it comes to explaining Turkey's openness to and involvement in countries way beyond its southern neighbours, the role of the EU becomes less significant. EU explanations in the literature fail to explain some important aspects that are fundamental to consider, such as the rise of a new elite and bourgeoisie in Turkey, the role and influence of identity politics over decision making and the way Turkey perceive its Middle Eastern neighbours, as well as the crucial role that Amet Davutoglu played in re-shaping Turkey's foreign policy and vision towards the Middle East through both his works and official positions. Although the EU has been a highly important institution for Turkey and very much influential, it would be inaccurate to try and explain such Turkish foreign policy transformation towards the Middle East simply and merely through an external actor, such as European Union.

Process tracing test results will show how the EU can be regarded as one of the important sources and factors behind Turkish foreign policy transformation and change towards the Middle East, but not the main one. Therefore, EU explanations seem to pass a *Hoop Test*. This is very much similar to the Economic approach discussed in the previous chapter demonstrating parallel value. Passing a *Hoop Test* means that EU explanations will remain under consideration and will not be eliminated due to its strengths in explaining certain Turkish foreign policy elements. This also means that the role of the EU is necessary but not sufficient for establishing causation. Passing a *Hoop Test* affirms relevance and failing would have eliminated it from this study. The implication of passing the *Hoop Test* somewhat weakens rival explanations in the study, but does not eliminate them. The *Hoop Test* is used

here because we have evidence that set a more demanding standard compared to the evidence used in the *Straw in the Wind Test* for other rival explanations, but not strong enough to pass a *Smoking Gun* or *Doubly Decisive* tests that can confirm a given hypothesis and eliminate other rival ones. This shows that there is a growing demand in the literature and this study to adopt a more comprehensive and inclusive approach that can take on board more than one cause or factor that can better explain such foreign policy change, which will be discussed further in the coming chapter.

1. The Dynamics of Turkish-EU relations: its effects on Turkish foreign policy

The purpose of this section is to analyse the nature of Turkish-EU relations both before and after 2002. This includes giving close attention to the way in which Turkey's commitments have led to making it re-organize itself as a state in both domestic and external terms. On the other hand, this includes an analysis of the way in which the European Union as an institution and its member states viewed and related to Turkey. However, no one can deny the effects both sides had on each other and influence on certain foreign policy decisions throughout history. With Turkey moving closer to its European neighbour and away from its traditional American ally, a noticeable transformation took place in Turkish domestic politics and foreign policy. This chapter aims at investigating further is the level of influence the European Union had over Turkish foreign policy making, specifically towards its neighbouring Middle East. Therefore, this part of the chapter will be divided into two main sections. The first section will explore the nature of Turkish-EU relations prior 2002, drawing attention to the historical relations and communications the two have had and their impact. The second

section will analyse these relations since the AKP government won the elections of 2002 and the developments that took place.

1.1 The nature of Turkish-EU relations prior to 2002

The history of Turkish-European relations can be traced back to the Ottoman era. The most significant elements of their relations were shaped by the Ottoman control over some territories of both East and South Europe as well as being a “trade partner” for Europeans⁸³⁴. However, in modern history after the creation of the Turkish Republic and the European Union, the first major step was evident in 1963 and known as Ankara Agreement⁸³⁵. This agreement led to the establishment of an association between Turkey and the European Economic Community (EEC). According to the Turkish foreign ministry (2011), this agreement planned for a three stage process for Turkish integration with the EU⁸³⁶. These were a “preparatory stage, a transitional stage and a final stage”⁸³⁷. This was followed by other agreements in 1970 and 1973 having the purpose of putting them into effect⁸³⁸. The most significant aspect of this agreement is its clear emphasis on the fact that this partnership regime would pave way for Turkish membership into the European Union⁸³⁹. Most interestingly, the European Commission President at that time Walter Hallstein stated, “Turkey was part of Europe”⁸⁴⁰. However, according to Ziya Onis (2001),

⁸³⁴ Justin Mccarthy, *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923* (Routledge, 2014).

⁸³⁵ Elena Katselli, “The Ankara Agreement, Turkey, and the EU,” *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2006): 705- 717.

⁸³⁶ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Turkey-EU relations,” *mfa.gov.tr*, 2011, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-the-european-union.en.mfa>.

⁸³⁷ Ibid.

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

⁸³⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁰ Amanda Akcakoca, “EU-Turkey relations 43 years on:

the European Community's behaviour towards Turkey's full membership was negative and unwelcoming particularly due to its size and dominant Islamic identity⁸⁴¹.

It was not an easy process for Turkey as there was a negative attitude towards its accession. Ziya Önis and Suhnaz Yilmaz (2005) stated, "For the EC/EU in the 1980s and the 1990s, Turkey, rather than being a 'natural insider', was an 'important outsider' with whom relations ought to be developed on an arm's length basis barring full integration"⁸⁴². The Customs Union is another important stage that took place in 1996⁸⁴³. This came after the transitional stage and was important in the sense that it paved the way for further integration between Turkey and other EU members. However, the Customs Union was not only a temporary stage it was a continuous one that ensures the smooth flow of goods across borders without restrictions. The free trade zone was and still is highly beneficial for Turkey's economy and Turkish-EU trade as a whole. Although it was a stage part of Turkey's accession process, it was mainly for economic benefits. Likewise, the EU managed to develop similar trade agreements with states that are far from Europe such as Canada and South Korea⁸⁴⁴. However, Turkey is regarded as one of the most important trade

train crash or temporary derailment?," *EPC Issue Paper*, no. 50 (2006): 8, accessed January 18, 2016, http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:1fbNqxPUzkUJ:www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/230573719_EPC%2520Issue%2520Paper%252050%2520-%2520EU-Turkey%2520relations.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk.

⁸⁴¹ Ziya Önis, "An Awkward Partnership Turkey's Relations with the European Union in Comparative-Historical Perspective," *Journal of European Integration History* 7, no. 1 (2001): 105-119.

⁸⁴² Ziya Önis and Suhnaz Yilmaz, "The Turkey-EU-US Triangle in Perspective: Transformation or Continuity?," *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 2 (2005): 267.

⁸⁴³ Delegation of the European Union to Turkey, "Customs Union," *avrupa.info.tr*, (2016), accessed January 20, 2016, <http://avrupa.info.tr/eu-trade-and-economy/customs-union.html>.

⁸⁴⁴ European Commission, "Trade," *ec.europa.eu*, 2015, accessed January 20, 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/index_en.htm.

partners for the EU. Turkey sees the growing economic partnership as an important theme that should accelerate Turkey's accession process⁸⁴⁵.

The European Union gave more interest and enthusiasm to giving membership to countries from Eastern Europe that were under the Soviet rule, such as Hungary and Poland⁸⁴⁶. These states may have been less difficult to accept due to their less complicated situations. It was not only Turkey's dominant Islamic identity issue there were other conflicts that Turkey had to deal with that were seen as problematic to the EU. For example, the problem over Cyprus and the Turkish military intervention posed major problems and affected Turkey's relations with the European countries⁸⁴⁷. Instead, Greece was much closer to Europe and became a member that stood against Turkey's membership for a long time⁸⁴⁸. With Turkey's domestic political instability and increasing militant Kurdish Nationalism as well as Political Islam, it was difficult for Turkey to catch up with the European democratic developments. Turkey was still mainly pursuing hard power security military foreign policy that was rather confrontational. This was not very much in line with what the European Union looked for in its potential members especially if they were highly likely to get drawn into military conflicts.

On the other hand, relations with the Middle East were not deep. Instead, Turkey relied more on light economic relations and trade agreements, compared to the EU, particularly during Turgut Ozal's rule. However, an

⁸⁴⁵ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey-EU relations".

⁸⁴⁶ European Union, "EU member countries," *europa.eu*, 2015, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/>.

⁸⁴⁷ Melike Basturk, "The Issue of Cyprus in the EU Accession of Turkey," *Claremont-UC Undergraduate Research Conference on the European Union*, Article 4. DOI:

10.5642/urceu.201101.04, accessed January 20, 2016,

<http://scholarship.claremont.edu/urceu/vol2011/iss1/4>.

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 16-20.

important and historic step was taken in 1999 when Turkey was given a candidate status at the Helsinki Summit⁸⁴⁹. This meant that the EU would view and relate to Turkey in a similar way to the ex-Communist countries⁸⁵⁰. This change in EU view towards Turkey was a result of the change that took place in Germany, where the government that long rejected Turkey's accession left; and the unexpected change of relations and attitude between Greece and Turkey after the 1999 earthquakes⁸⁵¹. Never the less, EU member states still insisted that Turkey was not yet ready for immediate accession negotiations⁸⁵². This was however seen as a victory for Turkey and very successful step forward towards the EU dream. Moreover, the 1999 candidacy status had major effect on Turkish foreign policy and approach towards its neighbours. Since the establishment of the Republic, Turkey used to follow a classical hard power foreign policy with a reactive mood. However, such traditional approach changed since 1999 and Turkey was gradually adopting softer elements and democratic tools in its foreign policy approach⁸⁵³.

There was a developing transformation in Europe that gradually changed views and attitude towards Turkey's membership. However, such transformation was also driven by some important factors. Apart from the ones mentioned above, Ziya Onis and Sunnaz Yilmaz (2005) argued that this change

⁸⁴⁹ Stephen Castle, "Helsinki Summit: Turkey must now be wooed to accept EU membership," *independent.co.uk*, 1999, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/helsinki-summit-turkey-must-now-be-wooed-to-accept-eu-membership-1131681.html>.

⁸⁵⁰ Akcakoca, "EU-Turkey relations 43 years on", 8.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid, 9.

⁸⁵² Ibid.

⁸⁵³ Amanda Akcakoca, "Turkish Foreign Policy-Between East and West?," *The King Baudouin Foundation and Compagnia di San Paolo*, Policy Brief, 2009, accessed January 20, 2016, http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:JvS_q4sf2FQJ:www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/686290973_Turkish%2520foreign%2520policy.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk.

of attitude also came as a result of the American influence over social democracy in Europe, Greece's democratization process after accession reflected an attempt to solve the issue with Turkey peacefully, and the influence of Turkish business communities most notably TUSIAD⁸⁵⁴. Such developments paved way for Turkey to work harder to implement the Copenhagen criteria and transform into a truly European state. This was seen in the number of reforms that took place and particularly since 2000⁸⁵⁵. Turkey was truly entering a new phase in its relations with the European Union, which brought about a sense of hope and motivation for Turks for their future accession.

Unfortunately, by the end of 2000 and beginning of 2001, Turkey had to deal with one of the most significant economic crises in its history, since the creation of the Republic⁸⁵⁶. This represented a major challenge that could lead to further instability in the country. There were a number of critical weaknesses emerging including; high inflation, large public debt, high interest rates, the Turkish lira lost nearly half of its value, and very high unemployment rates⁸⁵⁷. This crisis led to a number of public demonstrations and riots demanding to solve these problems⁸⁵⁸. The government appeared weak and people were not satisfied, which created a gap between the government and its citizens. The coalition government led by the Democratic Left Party (DSP) Bulent Ecevit failed, which led to major disagreements between politicians. Therefore, in 2002

⁸⁵⁴ Onis and Yilmaz, 269.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁶ The Economist, "Turkey's real crisis," *economist.com*, May 15, 2001, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/node/623158>.

⁸⁵⁷ Megan Chen, et al., "The Turkish Economy, Post-2001 Crisis: Why Timing, Faith, and Expectations Matte," *UChicago Undergraduate Business Journal* 31 (2014), accessed January 20, 2016, https://careeradvancement.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/ucib-journal/turkish_economy_post_2001_crisis.pdf.

⁸⁵⁸ CNN News, "Turkish crisis sparks protests," *edition.cnn.com*, April 5, 2001, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/04/05/turkey.protest/index.html>.

new general elections were held and the country was looking forward for an alternative that could save the country⁸⁵⁹.

1.2 Turkish-EU relations under the AKP government

In 2002, after the historical victory of the AKP, which was a new political party formed only one year prior to election, the new government promised to solve the country's economic and political problems with a new outlook. Since the AKP took power, Turkey entered a new phase in its history to reach new political and economic levels never imagined before. The new AKP government led by Erdogan was committed to change Turkey and develop democratic principles. Therefore, a number of political reforms took place as well as constitutional amendments. These were heavily seen as a reaction to the accession requirements. Furthermore, Turkey was seen to be entering a new "Europeanization process" both in its domestic and foreign policy. Domestically, there was a noticeable democratization transformation taking place, which led to giving more rights to minorities⁸⁶⁰. Turkey under the AKP government improved its democratic position and became much closer to the EU especially in the AKP's first term of government. According to Leila Piran in her book *Institutional Change in Turkey: The impact of European Reforms on human rights and policing* (2013), democratization and improvements in human rights records have been to a large extent affected by the European Union and added that the AKP commitment for democratization was driven by "Turkey's EU

⁸⁵⁹ Soner Cagaptay, 'The November 2002 Elections and Turkey's new Political era,' *MERIA Journal* 6, no. 4, (2002), (accessed January 21, 2016, <http://www.rubincenter.org/2002/12/cagaptay-2002-12-04/>).

⁸⁶⁰ kerem karaosmanoglu, "Reimagining Minorities in Turkey: Before and After the AKP," *Insight Turkey* 12, no. 2 (2010): 193-212.

membership bid”⁸⁶¹. Therefore, Turkey emerged as a new regional democratic model and a successful Muslim democracy that inspires the rest of the Islamic World and particularly the Middle East. This transition highly challenged the military establishment and paved way for change to the traditional and basic institutional structure. With the development of reforms issued by the AKP, Turkey entered a new era in its civil-military relations. The military establishment was highly challenged and its power reduced. The National Security Council (NSC) was facing problems and pressure, which led to an increase of civilian power over the military budget for example⁸⁶². The position of the NSC leader was changed to being non-military official, but instead a civilian nominated by the Prime Minister⁸⁶³. Erdogan stated that the Copenhagen Criteria would be changed to the name of “Ankara Criteria” adopted in Turkey regardless of EU membership⁸⁶⁴. The military establishment was restricted to military roles only and no longer was able to interfere in domestic politics and policy making compared to the past. This can be regarded as one of the main advantages that the AKP brought about in Turkey that no previous government was able to do.

On the other hand, on a foreign policy level, the first major event that took place was the 2003 American war against Iraq. As mentioned previously, the Turkish parliament rejected the American demand to use the northern borders of Turkey in its war against Iraq. Turkey’s decision to reject US military to use Turkish territories in its war was seen as a new move away from the

⁸⁶¹ Leila piran, *Institutional Change in Turkey: The impact of European Reforms on human rights and policing* (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25.

⁸⁶² Kivanc Ulusoy, “The ‘Democratic Opening’ in Turkey: A Historical/Comparative Perspective,” *Insight Turkey* 12, no. 2 (2010): 82.

⁸⁶³ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid.

traditional US alliance. The decision affected Turkish-US relations, while at the same time, showed a closer Turkish-EU outlook for some observers. Such foreign policy change was viewed as a transformation from an “Americanized” Turkish foreign policy to a “Europeanized” one⁸⁶⁵. Turkey came to be seen as an actor who wants to promote regional peace and stability. Furthermore, Turkey’s attitude towards the Cyprus conflict was another turning point in Turkish-EU relations. Turkey’s attitude towards Cyprus changed and this led to EU members viewing Turkey differently as well. Turkey was no longer seen as America’s “Trojan Horse” in Europe⁸⁶⁶. Moreover, Turkey’s approach towards the Kurdish problem also entered a new phase and the AKP government promoted negotiations and further diplomatic efforts. It was seen that Turkey was entering a new “de-securitization” process and adoption of alternative softer tools to solve conflicts. The seriousness and commitment showed by the AKP government on both domestic and foreign policy levels led to change in EU attitude towards Turkey. Therefore, the 2005 accession negotiations marked a new step forward for Turkey and increased the possibility for membership⁸⁶⁷. The AKP government was one of the most who pushed for Turkish-EU membership compared to previous Turkish governments. However, it is important to note that this was not an easy task for Turkey as some EU

⁸⁶⁵ Hamid Akin Unver, “Regional Security Complex Theory and Turkish Foreign Policy: NATO Missile Shield, Eurasian Energy Politics and the Arab Spring,” *Lecture at Woodrow Wilson Centre*, Washington DC, May 3, 2012, accessed January 20, 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/regional-security-complex-theory-and-turkish-foreign-policy-nato-missile-shield-eurasian>.

⁸⁶⁶ Mesut Ozcan, *Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the EU and the Middle East* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 76.

⁸⁶⁷ European Commission, “Negotiating Framework: Principles governing the negotiations,” *ec.europa.eu*, 2005, accessed January 21, 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/turkey/st20002_05_tr_framedoc_en.pdf.

members, such as Cyprus, Germany, and France blocked the negotiations⁸⁶⁸. Generally, Turkish-EU accession negotiations and relations witnessed ups and downs and Turkey tried to show a new image to convince Europe.

Turkish-Middle East relations also entered a new stage since the AKP victory. Turkey was able to re-engage and deepen its relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours after a long history of disengagement. It has been argued that Turkey's soft power approach towards its Southern and Eastern neighbours was influenced by the AKP commitment to move closer and adopt EU norms⁸⁶⁹. Turkey was able to open new page of relations with countries that have previously had tensions with, such as Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Turkey under the AKP was also able to go beyond that reaching to the rest of the Middle East and deepening its relations as well as political and economic cooperation. Turkey adopted the so-called "Kurdish initiative" or "democratic opening" marking Turkey's new democratic approach towards conflicts with the Kurds and the PKK and neighbouring countries⁸⁷⁰. Turkey was able to reach new agreements with the Kurdish side as well as central governments in Iraq, Syria, and Iran.

On the other hand, economically, the AKP government adopted a number of important economic reforms and was able to gradually recover the

⁸⁶⁸ Katinka Barysch, "Can Turkey combine EU accession and regional leadership?," *Centre for European Reform Policy Brief*, (2010): 4. accessed January 21, 2016, http://www.turquie-news.fr/IMG/pdf/turkey_25jan10.pdf.

⁸⁶⁹ Jean-Paul Marthoz, "The 'new' Turkish foreign policy and its implications for Norwegian peacebuilding," *Noref Working Paper*, 2010, accessed January 21, 2016, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/686290973_Turkish%20foreign%20policy.pdf.

⁸⁷⁰ Kivanc Ulusoy, "When did the 'democratic opening' start and where are we now?," *todayzaman.com*, June 14, 2011, accessed January 21, 2016, http://www.todayzaman.com/op-ed_when-did-the-democratic-opening-start-and-where-are-we-now-by-kivanc-ulusoy-247257.html.

economy⁸⁷¹. Turkey opened its gates to the Middle East and was able to develop numerous economic agreements. Turkey became an important trade partner and exporter to Middle Eastern states. The AKP did not only rely on Turkey's economic ties with the EU, instead, followed a multilevel approach to maximize its economic benefits. Therefore, Turkey was able to emerge as an important economic power both regionally and globally. Moreover, the AKP government was able to use its geo-strategic position and emerge as an "Energy hub state". Turkey being positioned between the Caspian Region and the Middle East to the East and the European Union to the West gave great opportunities⁸⁷². The Middle East and the Caspian region contain around 75% of global gas resources and oil and Europe is one of the biggest consumers of those resources⁸⁷³. Therefore, the AKP saw this opportunity to further increase Turkey's role as a country "bridging supply and demand"⁸⁷⁴. This gives Turkey significant importance to Europe by becoming a European energy hub, which increases Turkey's position in the EU.

However, Turkish-EU relations were not in its best conditions, especially with the emergence of right wing governments in Europe. For example, the French president Nikolas Sarkozy showed direct rejection for Turkey's accession⁸⁷⁵. Turkey's domestic instability and fears for a possible coup was a

⁸⁷¹ Meral Varis Kiefer, "Turkey's Economic Future and the AKP," *The Washington Institute*, policy analysis 1226, (2007), accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/turkeys-economic-future-and-the-akp>.

⁸⁷² Emin Akhundzada, "Turkey as an Energy Hub: Opportunities and Challenges," *Energy Centre for Energy and Economy*, (2014), accessed January 22, 2016, [http://www.hazar.org/blogdetail/blog/turkey as an energy hub opportunities and challenges_796.aspx](http://www.hazar.org/blogdetail/blog/turkey%20as%20an%20energy%20hub%20opportunities%20and%20challenges_796.aspx).

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁵ The Washington Institute, "Sarkozy's Policy on Turkey's EU Accession: Bad for France?," *washingtoninstitute.org*, 2007, accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/sarkozys-policy-on-turkeys-eu-accession-bad-for-france>.

major problem. Therefore, a large and wide scale arrests took place in Turkey against top military officials and others from other institutions after suspensions for an organized plan for a coup to overthrow the AKP government⁸⁷⁶. With the continuous rejectionist behaviour by EU members, Turkey's attitude towards the EU was not as positive as it used to be and particularly during the second term of AKP government. Therefore, since 2007, it is argued that Turkey adopted an independent foreign policy away from allying with particular global actors⁸⁷⁷. The AKP showed increasing confidence in its foreign policies as its political and economic power increased. In addition, the negative attitudes towards Turkish membership, particularly by France and Germany, led to increasing of EU's unpopularity among Turkish citizens⁸⁷⁸. There was a growing European agreement that Turkey is not ready to become a full member and should be maintained as a "privileged partner"⁸⁷⁹.

Turkey lost a lot of its positive outlook and motivation towards the EU. Relations with the EU decreased as anti-European sentiments grew in Turkey⁸⁸⁰. Turkey lost its inspiration and this affected both political and economic relations between the two. While relations with the EU were

⁸⁷⁶ Robert Tait, "Turkish police arrest 49 military officers over suspected coup plot," *theguardian.org*, February 22, 2010, accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/22/turkey-military-officers-arrested>.

⁸⁷⁷ Valeria Giannotta, "Turkish foreign policy evolution and goals under the AKP government," *balkananalysis.com*, 2015, accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.balkananalysis.com/turkey/2012/01/19/turkish-foreign-policy-evolution-and-goals-under-the-akp-government>.

⁸⁷⁸ Ziya Onis, "Recent Foreign Policy Attitudes in Turkey: How Reserve the Gradual Shift away from Europeanization?," *DIIS Brief*, (2008): 3, accessed January 22, 2016, http://www.diis.dk/files/media/publications/import/extra/recent_foreign_policy_attitudes_in_turkey.pdf.

⁸⁷⁹ Today's Zaman, "Belgian PM says Turkey should be a 'privileged partner' to EU," *todayzaman.com*, October 28, 2015, accessed January 22, 2016, http://www.todayzaman.com/diplomacy_belgian-pm-says-turkey-should-be-a-privileged-partner-to-eu_402754.html.

⁸⁸⁰ Ali Tekin, Aylin Guney, ed., *The Europeanization of Turkey: Polity and Politics*, (Routledge, 17 Apr 2015), 220.

decreasing, Turkey had to face another major problem in the Middle East posed by the Arab Spring. The popular uprising in the Middle East presented Turkey with great challenges particularly to its “zero problems” policy and economic relations. Although Turkey emerged as a good “democratic model” for the Middle East, it was very difficult to maintain peace and stability. Meliha Altunisik (2011) in her work *Challenges to Turkey’s Soft Power in the Middle East*, argued that Turkey’s reaction towards its Middle Eastern neighbours becomes increasingly complicated as Turkish interests became threatened⁸⁸¹. Turkey’s soft power approach and economic interdependence was highly challenged as the uprisings grew to affect more states. In addition, not only Turkey’s interests were at stake, but also it had to deal with major security threats. The Arab Spring grew to pose direct security threats for Turkey, particularly with the development of the Syrian crisis. Despite these challenges, Turkey supported democratic transformations in the region supporting the popular demands against their national governments⁸⁸². Furthermore, the Arab Spring gave an opportunity and discussions over Turkey’s potential regional role as a democratic leader and one that could be followed as a model⁸⁸³.

On the other hand, the EU’s reaction to the Arab Spring was seen to be slow and ineffective⁸⁸⁴. The EU became highly criticized for lacking a sufficient

⁸⁸¹ Meliha Altunisik, “Challenges to Turkey’s Soft Power in the Middle East,” *Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Publications*, (2011): 3, accessed January 22, 2016, http://teseiv.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Challenges_To_Turkeys_Soft_Power_In_The_Middle_East.pdf.

⁸⁸² Ziya Onis, “Turkey and the Arab Spring: Between Ethics and Self Interest,” *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 3 (2012): 46.

⁸⁸³ Mark LeVine, “Is Turkey the best model for Arab democracy?,” *Aljazeera.com*, September 19, 2011, accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/09/201191684356995273.html>.

⁸⁸⁴ Nilufer Karacasulu and Irem Askar Karakir, “EU-Turkey Relations in the Context of the Middle East after the Arab Spring,” *Insight Turkey* 16, no. 4 (2014): 201.

response and strategy to deal with this problem⁸⁸⁵. For example, in the case of Egypt, the EU was very hesitant and did not speak against the Mubarak regime at the beginning⁸⁸⁶. The EU was more in favour of a peaceful transition under supervision in the form of negotiations and dialogue⁸⁸⁷. However, with the case of Syria, the EU was more aggressive and dealt with the Assad regime directly. For example, the EU stopped the bilateral cooperation program as well as applying more restricting measures⁸⁸⁸. The EU generally appeared weak in dealing with its troubled Southern neighbourhood lacking a clear plan or strategy. The EU appeared less active and engaged compared to Turkey who came to play a leading role both in Egypt and Syria for example. However, Nilufer Karacasulu and Irem Askar Karakir (2014) were able to highlight four main distinctions between the Turkish and EU approaches to the Arab Spring. First of all, the EU is looking to build regional partnership and cooperation, while Turkey tries to play a leading regional role. Secondly, Turkey has combined both hard power and soft power in its Arab Spring approach, while the EU supports norms and values. The third factor is that their attitudes towards Egypt and Syria were not the same. The fourth is Turkey's willingness to host refugees, while the EU was more careful and wanted to limit refugees and limit illegal immigration⁸⁸⁹.

Generally, Turkish-EU relations witnessed both ups and downs. However, it is important to emphasize that the EU has been a major factor behind Turkey's democratization process and change in traditional institutional

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid, 211.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid, 212.

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid, 214.

structures. In terms of foreign policy making, the question of whether the EU was the cause behind Turkey's openness and re-engagement with the Middle East remains. This will be dealt with in greater details as we explore the literature further.

2. The EU as 'the cause' behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East

The aim of this section of the chapter is to analyse the available explanations that support the EU notion and being a cause to Turkish foreign policy change and particularly towards the Middle East. This analysis will pave way for a critical engagement with the literature and examination of their validity. The literature on Turkish-EU relations has produced a number of different explanations to EU's effects on Turkish foreign policy and Middle East approach. One of the most important themes in the literature is the so-called "Europeanization" of Turkish foreign policy. According to Juliette Tolay (2011), "Europeanization is usually understood as the process through which domestic political practices are affected by Europe"⁸⁹⁰. The author argued that one of the major problems with the term "Europeanization" in the literature is that there is no consensus among scholars to its definition⁸⁹¹. For example, scholars viewed the EU effects differently; some looked more at the social levels and the so called "Societal Europeanization"; others focused on "policy Europeanization" analysing the effects on domestic public policies; while others emphasized the "political Europeanization" in the way how the EU has transformed the broader

⁸⁹⁰ Juliette Tolay, "Turkey's critical Europeanization: for the European Union, despite the European Union," in *History, Politics and Foreign Policy in Turkey*, eds., Kilic Bugra Kanat et al. (The SETA Foundation, 2011), 197.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid.

political system in Turkey⁸⁹². Therefore, it can be seen that there is no consensus on a definition of the term as well as a wide and complex literature on the ways in which the EU has been affecting the Turkish republic. The author agreed that Europeanization is a complex process that cannot be viewed from one perspective or even easily defined (p. 197-200).

Regarding Turkish-Middle East policy and its relations to the EU, interestingly, Juliette Tolay (2011) in her same work, argued that the AKP government is actually pushing for “the European Union, despite the European Union”⁸⁹³. Tolay emphasized that it is important to realize that “Europeanization” is taking place in Turkey, while at the same time the EU accession process is slowing down⁸⁹⁴. This shows that the AKP government is eager to adopt EU principles and norms regardless of its membership. The author argued that Turkish foreign policy witnessed changes towards the Kurdish issue and others at a time when Turkey was facing challenges in its accession process⁸⁹⁵. It is argued that the Turkish government is pursuing changes that appear to be more in line with the European Union despite accession⁸⁹⁶. Tolay quoted Prime Minister Erdogan stating “ I don’t want to rely on the accession process and all these reforms should not be done for the sake of becoming a member state. These are things that Turkey really needs and things that should be done”⁸⁹⁷.

On the other hand, other scholars have instead argued that the Turkish re-engagement with the Middle East and its new policies under the AKP

⁸⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹³ Ibid, 193-210.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid, 200.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid, 201.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid.

government is an “asset” for the EU. They explained that Turkey is promoting its membership and importance to the EU through its policies in the Middle East representing an important “Eastern gate” for Europe. In a number of occasions, Davutoglu argued that Turkey’s position and regional activities both politically and economically is “an asset for the EU”⁸⁹⁸. Furthermore, he illustrated that Turkey can contribute to the European Union in a number of ways and a “EU rejection of Turkey is in fact will be a rejection to future global integration”⁸⁹⁹. Sinan Ulgen (2009) in his work *Turkey’s Route to the EU maybe via the Middle East*, argued that Turkey’s proactive policies in the Middle East and diplomatic efforts as well as mediations would attract the European Union⁹⁰⁰. Ulgen stated, “Turkish accession would not, as European federalists like to argue, lead to a weaker Europe. On the contrary, Turkey’s membership would make Europe a more influential and capable world power”⁹⁰¹. For Ulgen and other optimists, the Turkish engagement and influence in the Middle East actually increase its asset value for Europe. Furthermore, such regional activities with a soft power image do not go against EU norms. Instead, they seem to be more in line with EU’s regional objectives and approach. Moreover, in an essay by Steven Everts (2004) entitled, *An asset but not a model: Turkey, the EU, and the wider Middle East*, argued that Turkey’s Middle East approach is an asset for the EU, but not

⁸⁹⁸ Friends of Europe, “Turkey, EU and a changing world: meeting challenges together,” *friends of Europe.org*, 2015, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/media/uploads/2015/01/TurkishPM-report.pdf>.

⁸⁹⁹ IIEA, “Ahmet Davutoglu on Turkish foreign policy,” *The Institute of International and European Affairs*, March 11, 2010, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://www.iiea.com/events/turkish-foreign-policy>.

⁹⁰⁰ Sinan Ulgen, “Turkey’s Route to the EU maybe via the Middle East,” *Europe’s World.org*, February 1, 2009, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://europesworld.org/2009/02/01/turkeys-route-to-the-eu-may-be-via-the-middle-east/#.VqDV5zbkLzJ>.

⁹⁰¹ Ibid.

a democratic model for the Middle East⁹⁰². Everts argued that Turkey could play an important role in influencing EU-Middle East policy. The author added, “Turkey’s accession will increase the salience of the Middle East, and accelerate the Union’s already deepening involvement in the region”⁹⁰³. He argued that Turkey adopted EU “style” of approach using multilateral mechanisms as well as institutional integration⁹⁰⁴. He added, “Turkey has quite a lot to offer to the EU. It can contribute expertise and knowledge of the Middle East region. While Turkey has fewer Arabic speakers than one might expect the country’s network of contacts, combined with the political capital of the AKP government and the burgeoning economic ties will be assets for the EU”⁹⁰⁵.

There has been a wide range of approaches explaining EU role in Turkish foreign policy. For example, Ziya Oni (2010) argued that the EU has been important to Turkey only on “rhetoric”, but in “reality”, Turkey seems to act independently serving its regional interests⁹⁰⁶. Svante Cornell (2012) in his work *What drives Turkish Foreign Policy: Changes in Turkey*, argued that as long as Turkey is in line with EU, there will be increasing alignment between Turkish and EU foreign policies⁹⁰⁷. Another different approach in the literature was presented by Ziya Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz (2009) in their work *Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during*

⁹⁰² Steven Everts, “An asset but not a model: Turkey, the EU, and the wider Middle East,” *Centre for European reform* (2004): 2, accessed January 23, 2016, http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/essay_turk_everts-2173.pdf.

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁶ Ziya Onis, “Multiple Faces of the New Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique,” *Center for Globalization and Democratic Governance Working Paper Series*, 2010, accessed January 23, 2016, http://glodem.ku.edu.tr/10_004.pdf.

⁹⁰⁷ Cornell Svante, “What drives Turkish Foreign Policy: Changes in Turkey,” *Middle East Quarterly*, (2012): 13-24, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://www.meforum.org/>.

*the AKP era*⁹⁰⁸. They argued that Turkey has lost many of its commitments to the West and instead adopted “Soft Euro-Asianism”⁹⁰⁹. They added that Turkey’s regional foreign policy activism has increasingly been moving away from the EU⁹¹⁰.

On the other hand, other scholars and analysts have made greater emphasis on the role of the EU on affecting Turkey’s domestic politics. They seem to have seen a greater effect of the EU on Turkey domestically rather than on foreign policy level. In an interesting book by Liela Piran (2013) entitled *Institutional change in Turkey: The Impact of European Union Reforms on Human Rights and Policing*, argued that there has been significant domestic changes in Turkey during the AKP government⁹¹¹. For her, the EU has been a major source for Turkish democratization process. Piran highlighted the noticeable shift in civil-military relations in Turkey and the government efforts to giving more rights for the Kurdish minorities for example. Furthermore, Kemal Kirisci (2005) stated that with the closing up of Turkey and the EU, more democratic reforms were taking place⁹¹². He added there are both “Europhiles” and “Euroskeptics”. With closer EU efforts to Turkey’s accession, Europhiles the chance for more influence over reforms and change.

Moreover, Meltem Muftuler Bac (2005) in his article *Turkey’s Political Reforms and the Impact of the European Union*, argued that the EU has been a major source behind political transformation and democratic reforms in

⁹⁰⁸ Ziya Onis and Suhanaz Yilmaz, “Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era,” *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 7-24.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 8.

⁹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 13.

⁹¹¹ Liela Piran, *Institutional change in Turkey: The Impact of European Union Reforms on Human Rights and Policing* (United States: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁹¹² Kemal Kirisci, "Turkey and the European Union: the domestic politics of negotiating pre-accession," *Macalester International* 15, no. 1 (2005): 10.

Turkish history⁹¹³. The author further stated, “the EU has increasingly been the main motor behind the Europeanization process in Turkey as the EU membership perspective became clearer for Turkey and as it became obvious that accession negotiations with the EU could not begin unless Turkey fulfilled the political conditions for EU accession”⁹¹⁴. For Meltem, although the EU has been a major source behind democratization in Turkey, she believes that it was not the only one. In addition, EU’s effect over Turkish domestic politics has also been looked at from a different dimension. For example, in an interesting article entitled *Unpacking the Compliance Puzzle: The case of Turkey’s AKP under EU Conditionality* by Beken Saatçioğlu (2010) argued that the AKP’s commitment to adopt new democratic reforms was not motivated by EU membership, Instead, the author believes that reforms were made for two main reasons; first, to attract pro-EU Turks along with conservatives to become more popular and for electoral purposes; and second, to challenge and weaken the military secular establishment that has long been dominating Turkish politics⁹¹⁵. It is argued that the main purpose is to survive as a party with “Islamist” roots in Turkey. Saatcioglu stated, “AKP’s adoption of an EU agenda (though with a slow-down in reforms after 2005) is explained by neither a belief in the possibility of membership via democratization (credible conditionality) nor liberal identity. Rather, AKP’s compliance with the EU’s political criteria is instrumentally induced”⁹¹⁶. She argued that despite the decline in Turkish-EU

⁹¹³ Meltem Muftuler Bac, "Turkey's political reforms and the impact of the European Union," *South European Society and Politics* 10, no. 1 (2005): 16-30.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid, 17.

⁹¹⁵ Beken Saatçioğlu, “Unpacking the compliance puzzle-The case of Turkey’s AKP under EU conditionality,” *Free University Berlin KFG working papers*, no.14 (2010), accessed January 25, 2016, http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/kfgeu/kfgwp/wpseries/WorkingPaperKFG_14.pdf.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid, 1.

relations and enthusiasm for accession, the AKP government continued with its reform efforts, which suggests that there are other domestic reasons for such reforms and change than purely for accession purposes as highlighted in the literature.

In addition, other scholars have argued that Turkey's multidimensional approach and re-engagement with the Middle East has been a result of EU's rejectionist behaviour pushing Turkey to find alternatives. For example, Selcen Oner (2010) stated, "Turkey's slow integration process to the EU because of the reluctance by the EU's political elites to admit Turkey and the Cyprus issue have influenced Turkey's multidimensional approach to foreign policy"⁹¹⁷. Oner argued that the stagnation in Turkish-EU accession and relations paved way for Turkey to look for other options⁹¹⁸. However, Oner believes that the EU should stay as the primacy of Turkish foreign policy in the future and that Turkey's relations with the Middle East should not replace the EU⁹¹⁹. As mentioned above, Onis and Yilmaz (2009) argued that Turkey is moving closer towards "Euro-Asianism", compared to Europeanization, particularly when relations with the EU are weakened⁹²⁰. They stated, "The retreat to soft Euro-Asianism certainly does not signify the abandonment of the Europeanization project altogether. What it means, however, is that the EU will no longer be at the centre-stage of Turkey's external relations or foreign policy efforts"⁹²¹.

⁹¹⁷ Selcen Oner, "The Place of the EU in Multi-Dimensional Turkish Foreign Policy," in *History, Politics and Foreign Policy in Turkey*, eds., Kilic Bugra Kanat et al. (The SETA Foundation, 2011), 176.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid, 188.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid, 189.

⁹²⁰ Onis and Yilmaz "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism", 14-16.

⁹²¹ Ibid, 25.

Overall, the literature on Turkish-EU relations and impact of EU on Turkish foreign policy has been very colourful. Scholars and analysts have attempted to explain such impact from a wide range of perspectives. Some looked at it from a bottom-up and top-down affects, while others preferred to view it from either a European point of view (Turkey's preference of Middle East and the axis shift) or Turkish point of view (being part of a multidimensional approach and an asset for EU). However, this leads us to critically examine the usefulness of understanding Turkish-Middle East relations from a EU approach. The main question to consider is; to what extent has the EU can be regarded as the cause behind Turkey's proactive Middle East policy and approach?

3. To what extent are EU-based explanations plausible?

Following the review of EU explanations in understanding Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East, it is critical to try and evaluate their significance. The purpose of this section is to test those explanations in order to uncover their true value. As followed in this thesis, this will be done through applying the process tracing theory test method. The testing method will include the use of relevant critics and opposite explanations that may challenge such approach, empirical evidence available to help expand our analysis, and interview data conducted with experts in this field. The results will show that the EU notion in understanding Turkish foreign policy transformation is actually useful, but when it comes to understanding Turkish-Middle East policy particularly, it only manages to explain some aspects not all. The EU explanations have proven to be as strong as the economic explanations analysed in the previous chapter. However, both seem to explain some important elements in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East, but certainly do not explain everything. The section

below will attempt to unfold the EU approaches and critically assess their necessity and sufficiency in understanding the EU as a cause behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 under the AKP government.

First of all, the literature has clearly shown a lack of consensus on the definition of “Europeanization”. Some scholars tried to define and understand the process of Europeanization in the Turkish case from a societal perspective focusing on the social level and the notion of European identity. Others looked at it more from a policy perspective emphasizing on the development of public policies. While others chose to define it from a political perspective analysing the political transformation of the republic and the way in which the EU has managed to change the Turkish political system. What is more, this is also accompanied by a lack of consensus over the affects and influence of the EU in Turkish foreign policy and particularly towards the Middle East.

Although the de-securitization process of Turkish foreign policy has been heavily attributed to the EU, it still does not explain the Turkish openness towards states that are not directly involved in any Turkish security problems or conflicts. The de-securitization can successfully explain Turkey’s new soft power and diplomatic approach to the Kurdish problem, Cyprus issue and conflict with Greece and Armenia for examples. However, it fails to explain the improved relations with the Gulf region on the other hand. There are other explanations that would present stronger arguments regarding the Turkish-Gulf relations, such as Turkey’s economic interests and aim to build economic interdependencies. Therefore, it can be argued that the EU approach can in fact explain some foreign policy issues, but certainly not all of them.

Furthermore, another weakness in this approach stems from the fact that there have been a number of different and in some cases contradictory explanation of the way in which the EU has affected or influenced Turkish-Middle East foreign policy. Such explanations include; 1) That Turkish new approach to the Middle East and re-engagement is beneficial and can be viewed as an asset for Turkey's membership. This includes Turkey's efforts to show that it can be an important "Eastern gate" for the EU that can promote EU norms and values as well as contribute to peace and stability in the region. 2) That Turkey's regional re-engagement and new approach is a result of EU's rejectionist behaviour, which pushed Turkey to look for other sources of interests and alternatives. This was highly emphasized particularly since 2005 after the blockage by some members for Turkey's accession. 3) Other scholars seem to have focused mainly on the Turkish domestic level. Even on EU's influence on Turkish domestic politics witnessed some contradictory explanations. For example, some have been enthusiastic and argued that Turkey has successfully managed to adopt EU norms and democratization, making it also a good democratic model for the region. While others have been sceptic and argued that the AKP have used EU's criteria and democratic reforms mainly to challenge and weaken the secular and military establishment to avoid the consequence of being overthrown similar to previous Islamist parties. Therefore, such colourful and multiple theoretical analyses in the literature on EU-Turkish relations and EU's influence over Turkish politics and foreign policy can be misleading and confusing. Although having multiple theoretical hypotheses is academically healthy, it demonstrates a weakness of

consensus among scholars who focus on the role of the European Union in general and in Turkish-Middle East relations in particular.

Looking at some of the critics and explanations provided in the literature, we come to find out that the EU approach cannot wholly explain all aspects of Turkey's foreign policy change towards its neighbouring Middle East. For example, Selcen Oner (2011) in his work on *The Place of the EU in Multidimensional Turkish Foreign Policy* also emphasized other factors contributing to Turkey's new foreign policy approach. He stated, "Several domestic and external factors have been influential on increasing multi-dimensional approach in Turkish foreign policy"⁹²². Oner argued that there are some domestic economic and political factors that led to such multidimensional approach. The EU explanation does not precisely explain the rise of the new elites in Turkey and particularly the conservative business elites that was taking place since Turgut Ozal was in office. These new conservative elites have increasingly become influential in Turkish foreign policy making. Furthermore, the EU explanation fails to explain and consider the role of the Turkish economic crisis in 2001. The economic crisis pushed Turkey to expand its economic relations and look for new markets to be able to recover and survive in an increasingly competitive world economy. Therefore, it can be argued that EU explanations in understanding Turkish foreign policy change seem to have overlooked the role of some domestic factors.

On the other hand, the EU approach does not explain the roles of some key and influential policy makers i.e. Ahmet Davutoglu. As discussed in previous chapters and particularly in chapter five, Davutoglu is seen to be one

⁹²² Selcen Oner, "The Place of the EU in Multi-Dimensional Turkish Foreign Policy", 176.

of the most influential figures in Turkey for the last decade or so. He is a professor in Politics and international relations who managed to publish a large number of academic articles and books that have been very influential. One of his most important works known as the “Strategic Depth” (2001) highlighted Turkish foreign policy and potential role and influence in the Balkans, Caucasias, and the Middle East⁹²³. Davutoglu’s ideas were very influential to the AKP government. For example, Turkish new foreign policy approach adopted his ideas of “Zero-Problems with neighbours”, “Rhetoric Diplomacy”, “Balance between Security and Freedom”, “Multidimensional Approach”, and many others. These ideas all contributed to Turkey’s new foreign policy image and approach towards its neighbours. Davutoglu was appointed as Chief Advisor to PM Erdogan and worked closely with him for a number of years before he was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009. Davutoglu is widely viewed by scholars as the “architect of Turkish foreign policy”⁹²⁴. Finally, he was elected Prime Minister of Turkey in 2014. Davutoglu has been a key figure operating at the heart of the Turkish government for more than thirteen years. He is currently the leader of the Justice and Development Party and Prime Minister for the next few years to come.

In my interview with Professor Serhat Erkemen, Head of Department of International Relations at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University and Middle East advisor at ORSAM ‘Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies’, argued that we cannot ignore the role of the EU as an external actor influencing Turkey’s foreign

⁹²³ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position* (Kure publishes, 2001).

⁹²⁴ MEE, “Davutoglu: Architect of Turkish foreign policy to be new PM,” *Middle East Eye*, August 21, 2014, accessed January 25, 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/davutoglu-architect-turkish-foreign-policy-be-new-pm-2142298220>.

policy⁹²⁵. He added, “I agree that Turkey’s policy in the Middle East has been important to Turkish-EU relations. Turkey is trying to help improve its position in Europe and its accession process also in its Middle East approach, especially in the first two terms of AKP government”⁹²⁶. Professor Erkemen suggested that the EU has been influencing Turkish-Middle East relations and Turkey exploits its Middle East policies to support its EU membership. However, as mentioned in chapter 5, he also showed positive attitude and lenience towards the neo-Ottomanist explanation, which seems to show some contradictions in his answers. This could mean that he views the AKP government as one that uses Turkey’s Ottoman past to influence the Middle East, while at the same time serve its European interests and its EU membership process at the same time. Either way, his views clearly demonstrate that there is more than one factor causing Turkish foreign policy change under the AKP government.

On the other hand, Professor Mesut Ozcan, chairman of the Foreign Ministry’s Diplomacy Academy and advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, did not show a similar view and stated that his PhD thesis was about this subject (Turkish-EU-Middle East relations). He argued, “Turkey’s development of relations with the Middle East was not a reaction from its problems with the EU”⁹²⁷. He gave an example that as while Turkey negotiated its accession with the EU in 2005, it increased its relations with Syria at the same time. Ozcan insisted that Turkey was not trying to search for alternatives to the EU. He stated that 40% of Turkey’s foreign trade is with the EU, but at the same time, “the centre drive of the global economy is moving from the West to the East”.

⁹²⁵ Serhat Erkemen, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 21, 2014.

⁹²⁶ Ibid.

⁹²⁷ Mesut Ozcan, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 18, 2014.

He added, why shouldn't Turkey benefit from this economic transformation? "It is not wise for us to place all of our eggs in one basket". He added, "thanks to our development of economic relations with other regions, we managed to reduce our economic dependence with Europe from 52% to 40%"⁹²⁸. Ozcan illustrated that the openness towards the Middle East is purely to serve and enhance Turkish interests, regardless of the EU. Therefore, for Ozcan, it would be misleading to try and understand Turkish-Middle East relations through the European Union or Turkish-EU relations.

Similarly, in his interview, Prof. Birol Akgun, Chairman of the Institute of Strategic Thinking SDE, stated, "I don't believe that the EU has a direct affect, I believe that it is Turkey's search for interest and benefits instead"⁹²⁹. Akgun stressed that although there are some linking elements in Turkish foreign policy position between Europe and the Middle East, it would be much more useful to treat them separately and then find possible linkages, not the way around. He stated, "if we are to analyse the development of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East in relations to Turkey's position in the EU, we would find that despite the problems occurring regarding Turkey's membership in the EU, the flow of Turkish-Middle East relations and regional engagement persist"⁹³⁰.

Moreover, Prof. Mehmet Ozkan, Advisor and Researcher to SETA Foundation and specialized in Political Science and International Relations and an editor for "Insight Turkey" Journal, in his interview, agreed that the EU has had major effects on Turkey on many different levels. He stated, "The EU has been very important to the development of Turkish politics. It has had major

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

⁹²⁹ Birol Akgun, Interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 20, 2014.

⁹³⁰ Ibid.

effects on the development of democratization and the reforming of the role of military for example". "It has been extremely helpful"⁹³¹. Ozkan stated, "I am not sure if the EU sees Turkey's position in the Middle East as an advantage. However they should see this positive potential"⁹³². He added, "Eventually Europe will see Turkey's opening to the Middle East as an advantage to them"⁹³³. However, Ozkan believes that there are bigger factors that should be viewed as causes behind Turkey's change of foreign policy, not just towards the Middle East, but in general. He argued, "when thinking about Turkey's changing position in international politics after 1999, with the emergence of economic crisis as well, Turkey realized that there is a change in all global politics; International Economic Politics has been changing; and they came to an understanding that if you don't relocate yourself in this changing global power struggle both economically and politically, you will have no place and that's why Turkey took an initiative and decided to reorient itself according to this changing global structure"⁹³⁴.

Dr. Saban Kardas, President of ORSAM 'Middle East Strategic Research Centre' and faculty member at the department of International Relations at TOBB University of Economics and Technology in Ankara, in his interview stated, "In my paper *Re-drawing the Middle East map or building sand castles?* (2010) I argued that Turkey's 'strategic approach' is compatible with the Europeanization module"⁹³⁵. He argued, "It is not as simple as because Turkey is being rejected in the West and therefore it is moving to the East. The

⁹³¹ Mehmet Ozkan, Interviewed by Author, Ankara, Turkey, March 17, 2014.

⁹³² Ibid.

⁹³³ Ibid.

⁹³⁴ Ibid.

⁹³⁵ Saban Kardash, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, October 13, 2014.

opening to the East has its own meaning”⁹³⁶. Kardas argued that many observers of Turkish foreign policy seem to miss the meaning of Turkish transformation in the East and redefining its position in the West at the same time. He stated, “It is more of a self-motivated reason and that is where constructivism comes to play looking at the strategic identity and understanding the importance of reconnecting with the past and Middle East civilization”⁹³⁷. He added, “Turkey has its own of what I call ‘strategic autonomy’ but it is not 100% independent. Turkey lives in an interconnected world as well as in a system and is subject to different systemic influences”⁹³⁸. Here Kardas, along with interviewees mentioned above, seems to point out that many observers have overemphasized the role of the EU on Turkish foreign policy transformation. For him, the transformation in Turkish-Middle East relations is subject to several different factors and certainly not merely the EU.

In addition, Professor Yasin Aktay, the Foreign Affairs Deputy Chairman and one of the founding members of the AKP, illustrated that the AKP has been strongly pushing and still is for full EU membership⁹³⁹. He stated, “I believe this is good for Turkey’s democratization process, but this at the same time does not mean that we should ignore our Middle Eastern neighbours or other regions of the world”. He believes that Turkey wants to benefit from all sides and this will also benefit other regions at the same time. He added, “much of Turkey’s democratic development is attributed to Turkey’s EU commitments and the AKP believes that the Europe is a neighbour that share a lot in common”. However, he argued that the AKP government adopted a multilateral approach and aims

⁹³⁶ Ibid.

⁹³⁷ Ibid.

⁹³⁸ Ibid.

⁹³⁹ Yasin Aktay, interviewed by author, Ankara, Turkey, March 19, 2014.

to build good relations with other regions at the same time. Therefore, we can see the level of importance the EU has on Turkish agenda, but evidence show that the EU does not always have a “direct link” with all Turkish Middle Eastern policies and therefore cannot be the only cause.

So far, it can be argued that the role of the EU in Turkish democratization process and domestic transformation has been significant. On the other hand, the EU has also played an important role in the de-securitization of Turkish foreign policy mainly towards the Kurdish issue, Iran, Syria, and Iraq who all share border with Turkey. However, according to studies presented in the literature and other empirical data as well as interview data, we came to understand that the influence of the EU on Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East explains some aspects of this transformation. The EU approach fail to look at some important factors including domestic change and rise of a new elite, the economic crisis of 2001 and Turkey’s aim to develop regional economic cooperation and trade, the role of the “architect of Turkish foreign policy” Ahmet Davutoglu and his ideas, the political and economic global transformations and changes in the international system, and several others presented by other scholars in the literature. The EU has been a major force behind Turkey’s new approach towards the conflicts over Cyprus with Greece, conflict with Armenia, and the Kurdish problem. These were all major problems for Turkey’s EU membership and had to readjust its approach and transform its image into a soft power state. However, when it comes to the Middle East and particularly beyond Turkey’s southern bordering states, a number of other factors need to be considered to better understand Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002.

Therefore, the results show that when applying the EU approach as cause behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East to the process tracing theory-testing methodology, it seems to pass a *Hoop Test*. The validity and plausibility of the EU explanation is very much similar to the validity of the economic approach mentioned in the previous chapter. This means that the EU explanation will remain under consideration and will not be eliminated due to its strengths in explaining certain Turkish foreign policy elements. As analysed above, the EU explanation tend to highlight a few elements of Turkish foreign policy and mainly through its effects on Turkish-Middle Eastern Soft-Power approach away from its traditional hard power image. However, evidence show that EU explanation cannot on its own represent a comprehensive answer and explain all factors behind the causes of Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East.

Passing a *Hoop Test*, as mentioned in the methodology chapter of this thesis, means that the evidence used for this explanation represents a necessary but not sufficient criterion for establishing causation. It is necessary because we cannot eliminate such explanation due to its importance because without it, our analysis will certainly be incomplete, as the EU has proven to be influential to our understanding. However, it is not a sufficient explanation because it does not fully explain all aspects causing this change as it ignores a number of other factors discussed above. This hypothesis set a more demanding standard compared to *Straw in the Wind* test for example. Overall, passing a *Hoop Test* affirms relevance and failing would have eliminated it from this study. The implication of passing the *Hoop Test* is much stronger compared to *Straw in the Wind* test. Passing a *Hoop* test somewhat weakens the

plausibility of rival explanations in the study, but does not eliminate them. The *Hoop Test* is used here because we have evidence that set a more demanding standard compared to the evidence used in the *Straw in the Wind Test* for other rival explanations, but not strong enough to pass a *Smoking Gun* or *Doubly Decisive* that can confirm a given hypothesis. To further clarify this process of examination, the below table summarizes the main points of the EU explanation and its value in the thesis so far.

Figure 1. Assessment of the EU explanation in Process Tracing

Hoop Test
<p>Explanation 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East has been influenced by Turkish-EU relations and EU membership process.
<p>Evidence constituting this explanation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turkish-EU relations has been one of the most important elements of Turkish foreign policy. - The EU has influenced major changes in Turkish politics, particularly in the democratic transformation and the de-securitization project. - Evidence suggest that Turkey’s soft-power approach has much in common with EU’s regional policies = a “Europeanization of foreign policy” as opposed to an “Americanization of foreign policy”. - Turkey’s adoption of multilateral foreign policy approach and support of institutional integration in the region are found to be European originated.
<p>Process of examining empirical evidence and interview data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a noticeable disagreement over the nature of influence the EU has on Turkish foreign policy i.e. some argued that Turkey saw the opportunity to represent itself as an important “Eastern gate” to Europe, one that can contribute positively and to the stability of the region. On the other hand, others saw Turkey’s re-engagement with the Middle East as a reaction to EU’s rejectionist behaviour and Turkey finds the Middle East an alternative regional sphere of influence. - Interviewees illustrated that there is not direct link between Turkey’s openness to the Middle East and the EU. - Interviewees agree that Turkey’s autonomy has been growing away from Western powers = “strategic autonomy”. - Evidence and interview data advocate that the EU mostly influenced and effected Turkey’s ‘domestic politics’ i.e. democratic reforms and change of balance in the military-civilian relations, which in turn had an effect on the process of foreign policy making in Turkey.
Results:

- Evidence set a more demanding standard compared to Islamist and neo-Ottoman explanations, similar to identity and economic explanations.
- Strong evidence suggesting EU influence (direct and indirect).
- One of the most popular explanations in the literature.
- Necessary but not sufficient to establish causation (*Necessary as the EU has been and still is a critical part of Turkey's geographical, political, economic, and even social dimensions. One cannot draw a full picture of Turkish politics and foreign policy without considering Turkish-EU relations and its impact. However, regardless of its necessity, the EU explanation, on its own, does not seem to explain all elements of Turkish foreign policy change towards its Middle Eastern neighbors. Therefore, similarly to some other explanations, it tends to explain an important part of the picture, but not the whole picture*).
- More need for a wider approach that is also inclusive of all EU, economic, and domestic factors as demonstrated so far in this study.
- Therefore, EU explanation Passes a **Hoop Test**.

Implication:

- Affirms relevance of explanation, but does not confirm it.
- **Somewhat weakens** rival explanations in the study.

Conclusion

The European Union has been one of the most important international actors for Turkey for a long time. Since the creation of the republic by Kemal Ataturk, Turkey pursued a Western oriented foreign policy. The Turkish interest in Europe became evident since 1963 Ankara agreement that paved way for the stages of Turkish membership process. Since then, Turkey has been working closely and with Europe on a number of issues. The EU influence was evident on Turkey's new approach towards Greece and the Cyprus issue, and Armenia. Such changes came as a result of European pressure demanding Turkey to solve its conflicts with these states. Turkey was able to reach a number of important agreements with the European Community and the European Union especially on economic levels. However, Turkey still faced challenges and

struggled to gain membership due to the rejectionist behaviour of some EU member states. Regardless of this negative behaviour, Turkey still engaged positively with the EU and was trying to get closer by adopting EU norms and following the Copenhagen Criteria. Therefore, Turkey became to be seen as a new soft power state that moved away from its classical hard power image. During the AKP government, Turkey entered a new turning point in its history. The AKP was one of the most if not the most government seeking to gain EU membership. Turkey was able to adopt European democratic principles and entered a critical domestic democratization process. This led to the transformation and change in the balance of civil-military relation as well as transforming Turkish elite structures. Part of this Turkish-EU closeness, Turkey moved away from its traditional security hard power foreign policy approach and went through a de-securitization process. This was evident in Turkey's change of behaviour and approach towards the Kurdish problem and the PKK seeking peaceful and diplomatic negotiations and efforts, and attempts to solve its conflicts with Greece over the Cyprus issue as well as Armenia. An important part of this new foreign policy approach was evident in Turkey's efforts to improve relations and cooperation with its southern neighbours particularly Iran, Syria, and Iraq especially that all of the three are directly involved with the Kurdish problem. Turkey even went further into the Middle East and was able to increase its relations and role in many other countries including North African states, Egypt, and the Gulf States as well. However, the Arab Spring came to challenge this new approach to the Middle East and presented a number of obstacles especially to its "Zero Problems with Neighbours" approach. Turkey's position against some of the Arab governments involved in the uprisings and

support for the popular demands highly affected Turkey's long efforts to develop good relations with those governments. However, Turkey emerged as a Muslim majority democratic state that can play a model role for the Middle East. Although relations with some Arab states deteriorated, Turkey is still interested in the Middle East and is very much involved in different events. This was seen in Turkey's involvements and support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and other North African countries, which led to some tensions with other Arab states and mainly with the Gulf led by Saudi Arabia. With the development of the Syrian crisis, Turkey had to deal with a number of security problems including war against terrorism and ISIS, the rise of the Kurdish issue as a security problem again and the threat of the PKK, and the increasing flow of Syrian refugees. Turkey is faced with no choice but to develop its regional role and regain its positive position in the Middle East to push for more cooperation and efforts in dealing with such problems that represent a direct threat to Turkey's national security.

Looking back to the main cause behind Turkey's foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 and becoming a country highly involved in the region, the EU approach presented in the literature and discussed above, give us some useful insights. It explains the democratic transformation and change of civil-military relations during the AKP government. Furthermore, on foreign policy level, the EU was able to influence Turkey's approach to critical security problems and conflicts with its neighbours. However, it seems to play a less significant role in Turkey's openness and re-engagement with countries way beyond its bordering neighbours where other factors, such as economic interests, seeking regional influence and power, and the new influential ideas

presented by Ahmet Davutoglu, may play a greater role in explaining such developments. After analysing the EU theoretical approach and applying critics, empirical evidence, and interview data, it can be argued that the EU approach explains some important aspects of Turkish new foreign policy approach that we cannot ignore, but at the same time, does not offer a comprehensive explanation. As a result, having passed a *Hoop Test*, affirms relevance and therefore cannot be eliminated from the study, but it does not confirm it at the same time.

Having not “confirmed” any explanations or hypotheses examined in this thesis so far is challenging. This is because it demands further investigation to understand what really triggered Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East since 2002 and what the valid causes that can explain it are. However, one of the main advantages of the results of this thesis so far is that the results show that there is a need for a more inclusive and holistic approach that can explain the complex and multilateral nature of this study. Having weak and strong explanations in the literature represents a problem when having a singular theoretical approach. A singular or one-sided theoretical approach can explain and answer some specific cases of history and issues like decisions of war or peace for example. However, when it comes to dealing with a complex case like Turkey that is located in a critical geo-strategic position and is facing many issues from both of its East and Western neighbours, including domestic complex identity and ideological nature, a broader and more comprehensive approach is highly needed. However, this does not certainly mean that an inclusive approach that combine different factors or causes will definitely answer the question, instead it may lead us closer to reality and represent a

more solid conclusion for others to consider, evaluate, and certainly criticize. Therefore, the need for and validity of using a more inclusive and comprehensive theoretical approach or explanation will be discussed and evaluated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

The Manifold Nature of Turkish Foreign Policy: Casting the Net Wider

In the previous chapters, the results have shown that there have been a large number of studies and explanations regarding Turkish foreign policy transformation and change. These studies mainly offered single factor explanations or foreign policy theories. The existence of multiple explanations and, in some cases, competing ones contribute to the theoretical debate that can drive the observer away from understanding the case in a holistic manner. This suggests that there is a growing need for a more inclusive explanation that has the ability to analyse the different sources affecting Turkish foreign policy.

The aim is to analyse how the different theoretical explanations have helped explore the wide range of Turkish foreign policy sources. This includes a re-visit of the theoretical introductory section in chapter one on foreign policy analysis to understand how different foreign policy and international relations' theoretical interpretations can help understand Turkish foreign policy and its recent developments. The chapter summarises the overall research test results and argument highlighting the necessity of applying a wider approach in this field of study that analyse the role of the multiple sources in Turkish foreign policy in order to achieve a comprehensive explanation. This includes the importance of recognising the effective roles of international and domestic political, economic, and ideational sources as well as the role of influential policy makers.

The contribution of this thesis lies within its analysis bringing the wide range of theoretical explanations in the literature together, exploring and

summarizing the vast number of data in a more simplified manner, and examining the value and plausibility of the competing explanations to try and arrive at the most comprehensive explanation, all under one piece of work. Therefore, this thesis establishes a useful foundation for researchers to adopt and take forward in future studies.

The findings suggest that there are a number of existing theoretical explanations presented in the literature that offer great insights very important when answering this research question. The literature has mainly been characterised by a noticeable diversity among scholars who in their work presented different answers and in some cases even contradictory ones. For example, some chose to focus on the role of political Islam, Islamism, and neo-Ottomanism in understanding Turkey's recent foreign policy breakaway from its traditional line moving it away from the West, while others linked it directly to the Turkish-European integration process and membership to improve its potential role as a key eastern gate for the EU. On the other hand, a number of experts chosen to focus on the roles of identity politics and ideology in their work in analysing this foreign policy transformation, while others favoured to look at the pragmatic and materialist side of Turkish foreign policy using the notion national security and economic interests as the key motivating factors behind Turkey's recent change of approach to the Middle East.

The presence of such multiple arguments in the literature created a sense, at least from a personal perspective, that there is an existing debate over the sources behind Turkey's recent foreign policy transformation and change towards the Middle East under the AKP government since 2002. Therefore, it can be argued that the debate in the literature is divided into two

mainstream theoretical positions. The first theoretical position tends to rely and base its analyses on the so-called “ideational” approach mainly looking at the roles of identity politics and ideology in understanding Turkish foreign policy behaviour. This can be found within the constructivist theoretical interpretation in this field of study that tend to favour the role of ideational non-material sources of foreign policy. On the other hand, the second theoretical position primarily focuses on the “pragmatic” or “materialist” sources of foreign policy influenced by theories of realism as well as rationalism and liberalism by looking at the roles of the European Union, Turkish economic interests, and national security, as important sources shaping Turkey’s relations with its neighbouring Middle East. Therefore, it can be argued that the theoretical explanations examined in previous chapters can be located within the main theoretical interpretations from the fields of foreign policy analysis and international relations, such as rationalism, realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

This heightened theoretical debate in the literature on Turkish foreign policy is sign of a healthy academic environment. However, when it comes to having numerous answers for one specific question, it can be misleading. Therefore, having a number of different answers to pick and choose from can also lead to confusion, which is one of the problems that the researcher faced when dealing with this literature. Furthermore, a large number of works and arguments in the literature have been represented in a single factor based manner and in some cases they were critics against others’ theoretical hypotheses. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to critically analyse and examine the most important theoretical hypotheses and analyses in an attempt to arrive at the most possible plausible and comprehensive answer. So far this

has been a very difficult task due to the complex nature of the case study itself where a country like Turkey needs a much wider approach and a comprehensive analysis to understand the unique context of this state and its foreign policy dynamics. Therefore, the thesis chose to focus on six main theoretical explanations presented in the literature as key sources of Turkish foreign policy. Those explanations include: 1- Islamism and Islamist AKP ideology, 2- the role of identity politics and change of elite structures as domestic sources, 3- the concept of neo-Ottomanism and its influence over AKP's foreign policy agenda, 4- the role of economic interests and the building up of a powerful global economy, 5- the role of security concerns and national security interests, and 6- the influence of the European Union, and Turkish-European integration process as external source leading to the transformation in Turkish foreign policy.

The thesis so far has shown that when trying to understand the main sources of Turkish foreign policy since the AKP took power in 2002, one would arrive at a highly complex literature. This is a result of the multiple scholarly works that offer different and in some cases contradictory theoretical explanations in this field of study. In chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 the results showed that the validity and plausibility of those selected explanations actually vary and are fluctuating. Some were highly valuable and offer plausible arguments, but do not cover all elements of Turkish foreign policy. On the other hand, others were much weaker that failed to explain or take into account other important factors that have been proven to be important and affect the foreign policy decision-making process, but they cannot be totally disregarded or eliminated from the study due to their relevance as well. This further highlighted the

complex nature of this case and the importance of having similar study in the future that can help assess such complexities.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, some explanations were highly driven by the constructivist theoretical interpretation that highlights the role of ideology and identity in shaping states' foreign policies. For example, some suggested that this foreign policy change was a break away from its traditional Western allies and a move closer to the authoritarian regimes of the Middle East (shift of axis) mainly driven by Islamism. They focused on the roles of political Islam and the acclaimed AKP "Islamist ideology". This included the argument that Turkey under the AKP is turning away from its traditional secular and democratic nature. Other scholars saw this move closer to the Middle East as a revival of the Ottoman past and a result of neo-Ottomanism. Moreover, a number of scholars focused more on the domestic sources of foreign policy in particular the roles of identity politics and the transformations in the elite structures, including the later changes in the balance of civil-military relations and the increasing civilian role in the Turkish foreign policy decision-making process. These were proved to be highly valuable in understanding this case, especially that foreign policy decision making processes witnessed an increasing role of civilian elected officials replacing those of the military.

On the other hand, other scholars were more influenced by other notions, such as "pragmatism" and "materialism" found in the realist and rationalist theoretical interpretations. They focused on the roles of Turkish economic interests and national security concerns as factors that motivated Turkey to re-engage with the Middle East region. In terms of economic interests, it has been argued that Turkey's openness towards the Middle East was part of

Turkey's project of building a strong economic power that can contribute to the highly competitive global economy. This includes Turkey's aim of being an influential regional power and key international player. In terms of national security concerns, some scholars have emphasized Turkey's risky geographical position, being very close to a highly unstable region, as well as its long war with the PKK and struggle with the Kurdish problem, as a key reason behind Turkey's new approach towards its neighbours and particularly Syria, Iraq, and Iran. However, although the test results of these explanations show strong tendencies, they seem to only cover some parts of the picture and ignore other important parts highlighted by their contestant explanations in the literature.

Another critical contributing factor in this literature was the role of external sources in affecting Turkey's foreign policy making. Some explanations focused on the role of external actors, most notably the United States and The European Union. They emphasized the important role of such internationally powerful actors in affecting Turkey's foreign policy and especially towards the Middle East. Such studies even used new terminologies, such as the "Americanization of Turkish foreign policy" and the "Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy", highlighting the strong attachments of those external actors to Turkish foreign policy making. This includes the development of Turkish-European relations and EU membership process. The study so far has shown that although it is important to understand the role of such external actors, it would be misleading to primarily focus on them without taking into account other factors that affect Turkey's foreign policy.

Therefore, it can be argued that the literature presents some useful explanations that are reflected through foreign policy analysis theories. The outcome of these explanations and debate in the literature illustrates that Turkish foreign policy during the AKP rule since 2002 has witnessed a “departure” away from its traditional foreign policy line. However, the main problem here is that each explanation offers a different argument in explaining this “departure” and represent it as “the answer” to this puzzle, making it difficult and challenging for researchers to determine which of these to accept. However, a much more useful analysis can be found in Bill Park's work on *Modern Turkey: People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World* (2011) who presented a unique analysis. Unlike many scholars who are divided over pragmatic and ideational sources of foreign policy, Park looked at the Turkish case from a different perspective. The importance of his work lies within its analysis of the role that globalization play in the foreign policy of states and particularly that of Turkey⁹⁴⁰. Park argued that globalization has enabled the flow of key issues over many states that affect their foreign policies, issues such as terrorism, economy, Islam and others. His work is much more inclusive compared to many others in this field. His work covered a number of important themes including historical development, challenges and opportunity since the end of the cold war, Religion, identity, politics, economy, Turkic world, the European Union, Kemalism. Park's main argument is that "Turkey's evolution over the past few decades has been the story of a tussle between on the one hand the controlling and autarkic inclinations of the republican system established in 1923, and on the other the encroachment of forces unleashed by

⁹⁴⁰ Bill Park, *Modern Turkey: People, State, and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*, (Routledge, 2011).

the pressures of globalization and transnationalism⁹⁴¹. Such works highlight the importance of considering the different sources that have influenced Turkish politics and foreign policy. Therefore, the adoption of an inclusive and wider approach is very much needed in order to successfully explain Turkish foreign policy change during the last decade towards the Middle East.

According to the results of this thesis, it can be argued that there is no one single factor on its own that can fully explain Turkey's foreign policy change. Therefore, this suggests that there is a growing demand for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach that can offer a much wider analysis in an attempt to arrive at a better explanation. This requires a recognition of the different foreign policy analysis theories that enable researchers to understand the multiple sources of Turkish foreign policy, which help form a clearer picture. In other words, the Turkish case study can be regarded as a "Jigsaw Puzzle" where one would need to bring together and rearrange the different available pieces to form the final and complete picture. Therefore, the results of this thesis demonstrate that the best way to understand the sources of Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East within the last decade is by adopting an inclusive approach that takes into account the different foreign policy analysis theories, particularly those discussed in the foreign policy analysis section in chapter one.

⁹⁴² Ibid, 11.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

1. Summary of research discussion and results

The purpose of this thesis was to critically analyse the theoretical discussion and debate in the literature over explaining the sources of Turkish foreign policy change since 2002 under the AKP government particularly towards the Middle East. The aim was to assess the significance of those theoretical hypotheses and explanations that are inclined with foreign policy analysis and international relations' theories. The thesis engaged in the literature on Turkish foreign policy and answered the initial research question investigating the main sources of Turkish foreign policy. This was carried out through developing a critical assessment that helped identify which of the multiple competing explanations offered in the literature represent the most valid and comprehensive answer. The thesis offered an analysis of the literature on Turkish foreign policy, testing the plausibility of the such wide range of theoretical hypotheses offered. Central to this thesis's analysis and examination was Process Tracing methodology, which enabled the researcher to closely test and evaluate the explanatory value of the different competing explanations through specific examination tools and tests. Furthermore, the thesis was able to identify the most comprehensive explanation in the literature so far and build a foundation for researchers to build on and develop. Therefore, this thesis offers a critical assessment that researchers can benefit from and adopt in their future research in explaining certain Turkish foreign policy outcomes.

The study mainly focused on six major theoretical explanations from the literature on Turkish foreign policy that have been argued to be the main sources of Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East. They include; 1- the role of political Islam and Islamism in shaping Turkey's new approach towards the Middle East, 2- the role of Neo-Ottoman ideology and ambition to revive Turkey's regional imperial past, 3- the role of identity politics and national identity as domestic sources behind this new Turkish foreign policy, 4- the role of economic interests and regional opportunities as a critical part of Turkey's goal to becoming a global economic power, 5- the role of regional security concerns to avoid spill over and national security in dealing with the Kurdish issue and the PKK, and 6- the role of the European Union as one of the main external sources influencing Turkey's foreign policy decision making and the membership process.

The results demonstrate that the value and plausibility of the selected explanations vary. Some proved to consist of strong valuable evidence, while others had much less value and significance. Most explanations were not eliminated and remain to have some value in the literature. Only one hypothesis failed to survive the test and had to be eliminated. The test results are summarized below to make it easier for the reader to review. This will be explained in greater details in the sections below.

Figure 1. Process Tracing test results of sources behind Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East.

Explanations of causes	Test Results	Value/Plausibility	Necessity and Sufficiency for affirming causal inference	Implication for rival hypotheses
Islamism/Political Islam	Fail a <i>Straw in the Wind Test</i>	Slightly weakened, but not eliminated	Not necessary nor sufficient	Slightly strengthens them
Neo-Ottomanism	Fail a <i>Hoop Test</i>	Eliminates hypothesis	Necessary but not sufficient	Somewhat strengthens them
Identity Politics	Passes a <i>Hoop Test</i>	Affirms relevance, but does not confirm it	Necessary but not sufficient	Somewhat weakens them
Economic Interests	Passes a <i>Hoop Test</i>	Affirms relevance, but does not confirm it	Necessary but not sufficient	Somewhat weakens them
Security Concerns	Fail a <i>Straw in the Wind Test</i>	Slightly weakened, but not eliminated	Not necessary nor sufficient	Slightly strengthens them
The European Union	Passes a <i>Hoop Test</i>	Affirms relevance, but does not confirm it	Necessary but not sufficient	Somewhat weakens them

The above table summarises the Process Tracing test results for the explanations examined in this study. The process tracing tests have shown some similar results. For example, two hypotheses, particularly Islamism and Security explanations, have both failed a *Straw in the wind Test* showing a weakness and least demanding standard of evidence strengthening the relevance of other rival explanations. On the other hand, three other explanations, such as identity, economic, and EU explanations, all have successfully passed a *Hoop Test* affirming their relevance setting a more demanding standard compared to *Straw in the Wind Tests*, somewhat weakening their rival ones. This interestingly suggests that these explanations carry a highly similar value. They each tell us an important part of the story.

Therefore, this further demonstrates the importance of adopting an approach inclusive of these factors. It is important to note here that none of the explanations tested in this study were strong enough to representing both necessary and sufficient evidence for establishing causation to pass a *Doubly decisive Test*. Passing a *Doubly decisive Test* would confirm a given hypothesis and eliminates all others, which is extremely difficult to achieve in social science.

The final results of this study have demonstrated that it is necessary to understand the role of different international, domestic, and individual factors in shaping Turkish foreign policy, which other studies have looked at independently. Foreign policy analysis theories are highly influential in shaping researchers and analysts' understanding of this case. Theories including rationalism, realism, liberalism and constructivism offer important insights when analysing Turkish foreign policy. Such dominant theories help us look at the Turkish case through different lenses. However, the results of this thesis suggest that in order to better understand the sources of Turkish foreign policy change towards the Middle East, one must recognise the role of the different ideational and material, external and domestic factors demonstrated through foreign policy analysis and international relations' theories. The results show, for example, that the overwhelming majority of interviewees completely agreed that there is a need for a holistic approach and that it would be quite impossible to explain this case using single based explanations that give more attention on one source of foreign policy over another. Moreover, there was a clear consensus at the same time that other explanations represented only a partial picture.

2. Evaluation of the research: Strengths and Limitations

2.1 Strengths

The research topic of this PhD thesis came as a result of the wide variety of theoretical hypotheses in the literature. The aim was to explore this puzzle further and try to find out the most plausible explanation available so far. One of the most important strengths of this study was its use of the Process Tracing methodology, which enabled the researcher to conduct close up examination of the most prominent explanations provided in this field of study. Testing the plausibility and validity of the explanations through a critical approach. Furthermore, the thesis was able to re-organize the wide range of data in a more understandable manner under one piece of work, which can also be highly valuable for researchers for future studies. This further included a re-arrangement of the competing explanations (which were provided by different Turkish and international scholars in the literature) making them easier to observe and analyse.

Another important element in this study that contributes to its strengths is its ability to critically analyse and summarize a very large part of the literature, which can be of significant value for observers and students in this field aiming to understand the complex nature of this literature. In addition, the thesis managed to explore and highlight the growing gap and problem in the literature on Turkish foreign policy addressing the need for further similar investigations. This paves way for researchers to take this step further and follow a similar investigative approach in an attempt to arrive at a comprehensive answer. Moreover, the researcher was able to identify that the most suitable approach

to understanding this case study is by recognising the different theoretical interpretations in the field of foreign policy analysis, arguing that a more inclusive and wider approach is very much needed and necessary. The results highlighted that adopting single based explanations will further contribute to these theoretical disagreements and move away from achieving a comprehensive explanation. This is due to the complex nature of the Turkish case.

One of the important advantages in applying Process Tracing is its contribution to having an unbiased and objective research. It treats all explanations equally and does not allow much room for the researcher's own interests. In other words, Process Tracing helps the researcher to take steps in an unbiased way and draw conclusions in the best of researcher's ability without interference of own interest. Furthermore, Process Tracing in qualitative research and particularly in social sciences does not give one definitive answer that eliminates all others, but instead help give the most plausible answer with some room for other explanations' value that can be further investigated in future studies.

Another major element contributing to the originality and value of this study is the fact that the researcher was able to conduct a number fieldwork trips to Turkey, which enabled him to make closer observation and investigation as well as the ability to collect significant data from different institutions and academic databases. Through these visits, the researcher was also able to communicate with key Turkish experts and officials and organize a number of interviews, which highly contributed to the study's investigation and examination process.

2.2 Limitations

Despite the strengths and advantages provided in this thesis, there are few possible limitations worth mentioning. First of all, the application of the Process Tracing methodology in qualitative research is quite difficult and tricky some times. In this research where a large number of variables and data exist, it was very difficult to know the degree of freedom in the researchers' choices of explanations. In other words, Process Tracing does not specify the number of cases or explanations that a researcher can use at a time. For example, the Turkish foreign policy case is a very complex one with a large number of variables, data, and theoretical hypotheses to consider, which makes impossible for the researcher to cover and investigate all of them. Another limitation with using Process Tracing in qualitative research is that it is extremely difficult for the researcher to arrive at a 100% confirmation of a given theory or explanation. It is not like a mathematical calculation where researchers can totally confirm with not doubt the answer. Instead, it is dependent on the available data that the researcher could get hold of and stops the investigation when the researcher is "satisfied" with results and is able to account for the outcome.

On the other hand, another difficulty that the researcher faced was the communication process with interviewees. Due to the highly busy schedule of many interviewees, the planning of interviews was quite difficult to manage. Some officials were not able to meet after confirming a meeting appointment due some government meetings and urgent official travelling. For example, one of the most important interviews scheduled with a key Turkish official, Mevlut Cavusoglu, was cancelled in 2014 due to his new appointment to become the

Turkish Foreign Minister. It would have been a great opportunity to interview him, as it will also highly contribute to the value of research data. However, it is important to highlight that some Turkish officials were very welcoming and helpful. Most of the valuable critical discussions took place in the interviews with academics and leaders of different think tanks and institutions. Due to time limits and travel efforts and costs between the UK and Turkey, the number of interviewees was not as planned. What's more, some of the visits coincided with local and national elections time when officials and institutions are mostly busy. For example, one of my visits was during local elections in March 2014, which was a critical time in Turkish politics. It would add greater value to the research if more interviews were conducted in order to accumulate more critical viewpoints and explore if there are other different ideas to consider that might not have been looked at yet.

Furthermore, being a non-native Turkish speaker might have made the researcher miss out some opportunities in this research. Although a significant number of Turkish experts publish their work in English and many are translated, there are some publications that were highly advised to use in Turkish language. Therefore, the researcher had to use Turkish language books mainly through using them as secondary sources cited in other works in English language written by Turkish scholars and analysts. It would have added greater value to the research analysis if the researcher knew fluent Turkish language. Being fluent in the language of the country a researcher chooses to focus on can be a major advantage that can ease possible language barriers both in academic research and fieldwork.

In addition, another possible improvement that could be made in the future is on the nature of the cases selected in this research. The researcher chose to focus on the Middle East as whole and deal with the issue from mainly the Turkish side, while referring to some Middle Eastern states and events as examples, which is not a problem. However, some may view that it could have been better if the thesis had bigger sections or chapters that would focus on specific Turkish bilateral relations with one or more Middle Eastern states. Although the thesis focuses more on the Turkish side and its foreign policy change, the use of specific cases in greater details can contribute further in future studies. Such specific bilateral relations could be further examined in future research, particularly if researchers choose to investigate “certain” foreign policy decisions and relations with some specific Middle Eastern states.

3. Implications and future research

The findings of this thesis show clearly that further research with the use of wider and inclusive approaches is necessary. Process Tracing can be one good example as illustrated in this study, which allows researchers to evaluate and assess the credibility of the different theoretical hypotheses. Further research is needed to build greater understanding of the complex nature of Turkish foreign policy transformation and particularly towards the Middle East. Future studies can use more specific case studies from the Middle East and apply it to Turkish foreign policy approach. This could open doors for new findings that could offer more to this field of study. Researchers can use this research as a step forward coming from a widely complex literature to produce much stronger and valid explanations to the existing ones.

Furthermore, future research can build on this work and take it step further by analysing more recent events. For example, it would be very interesting to know how Turkish foreign policy has been affected by the latest developments in the Arab Spring and particularly regarding Syria and the Kurdish problem. Or to investigate whether or not the course of Turkish foreign policy has changed regarding the Middle East, particularly with recent regional developments and their prediction of the future Turkish foreign policy direction. This thesis' main concern was to explain the "initial" change of Turkish foreign policy since 2002 towards the Middle East, drawing particular attention to the first ten years of the AKP government.

On the other hand, there are some questions that researchers need to consider in future studies that arise from this research, such as; to what extent can a multiple factors approach really explain the whole picture? Can such puzzle be totally fixed in the first place? Or would it remain a debated topic? Can a single factor based approach explain much in political science? Is Process Tracing the best method to use in this case study? Or are there other more useful methodological tools? These are some critical questions that researchers need to take into account in their future studies that can be critically analysed.

The overall implication of this study for future research is to identify and avoid the consequences of having single factor explanations that can only offer a partial picture, which could lead to incomplete and insufficient accounts. Therefore, future studies need to apply wider and more inclusive approaches to try and create a comprehensive account of Turkish foreign policy change, and specifically towards the Middle East.

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- Ersel Aydinili, Professor of IR at Bilkent University and executive director of the Fulbright Commission. Ankara. Turkey. March 18, 2014.
- Etyen Mahcupyan, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister Davutoglu until April 2015, London, UK, March 27, 2015.
- Fayez Al-Shehri, President of Saudi-Turkish Parliamentary Friendship at Shoura Council of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh. Saudi Arabia. June 13, 2014.

- Jahid Tuz, Advisor to Member of Parliament and former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan. Ankara. Turkey. March 20, 2014.
- Mehmet Ozkan, Advisor and Researcher to SETA specialized in Political Science and International Relations and an editor at *Insight Turkey Journal*. Ankara. Turkey. March 17, 2014.
- Mesut Ozcan, Chairman of the Foreign Ministry's Diplomacy Academy and Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ankara. Turkey. March 18, 2014.
- Murat Yasiltas, Director of Security Studies at SETA foundation, a member of ORMER 'Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Sakarya University, and a faculty member in the department of International Relations at Sakarya University. Ankara. Turkey. October 14, 2014.
- Saban Kardash, President of ORSAM 'Middle East Strategic Research Centre' and faculty member at the department of International Relations at TOBB University of Economics and Technology in Ankara. Ankara. Turkey. October 13, 2014.
- Selcuk Colakoglu, Vice President at USAK the 'International Strategic Research Organization' and the director of the USAK centre for Asia-Pacific Studies. Turkey. March 17, 2014.
- Serhat Erkemen, Head of Department of International Relations at Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, and Middle East advisor at ORSAM 'Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies'. Turkey. March 21, 2014.
- Suheyl Sapan, Professor of history specialized in Ottoman and Turkish modern history at the department of history in King Saudi University. Riyadh. Saudi Arabia. June 26, 2014.
- Yahya Mahmoud Ibn Junaid, Secretary-General of King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. June 24, 2014.
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