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Turkish Foreign Policy:

Rhetoric and Action since 2009

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Declaration:

"I undertake that all material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other persons(s). I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been duly acknowledged in the work which I present for examination".

Signed: Muhammed Bera Alan 

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Abstract:

Turkish Foreign Policy has been a point of contentious debate among scholars, pundits and analysts for the past decade. Turkey's dramatic—and often contradictory-- foreign policy rhetoric has been a cause for concern for its neighbours and the West. This dissertation will examine Turkey's foreign policy direction from 2009 onwards and will explore continuity and change from previous eras. Turkey has often been labelled as following an Islamist and Neo-Ottoman foreign policy; as such, this paper will critique and analyse these themes. There is a vehement overemphasis on the rhetoric of the JDP, and many have taken it at a face value to reduce Turkish Foreign Policy to ideological motivation. Perceptions play an important role in Turkish Foreign Policy, and it is an insurmountable feat to divorce the Turkish establishment from the themes mentioned above, nevertheless it is important to understand rhetoric as a tool of domestic politics, and international clout.

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List of Abbreviations:

NATO the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

JDP Justice and Development Party (AKP)

MFA Ministry of Foreign Affairs

SETA Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (Society, Economy, and Populations Research Institute)

Introduction

Turkish Foreign policy has come under recent fire in the last decade for taking a drastically active approach to foreign policy. Turkey had been a very predictable foreign policy actor since the fall of the Soviet Union, and as a staunch NATO ally, it was known for its loyalty to the NATO status quo. Turkey's independent foreign policy initiatives since 2009 have since diverged.

This dissertation will note Turkey's foreign policy progression from 2009 onwards with the Justice & Development Party's (JDP) drastic change in both policy and rhetoric especially regarding Turkey's stance towards its neighbours in the Middle East. This dissertation will also compare Turkey's current policy rhetoric and actions to Turkey's de facto foreign policy "norms" that can be traced back to the early days of the Republic under the patronage of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Thus, the following question surrounding Turkish foreign policy will be addressed:

1. Is the link between Turkish Foreign Policy since 2009 to Islamism and Neo-Ottomanism a valid criticism?

In order to address the question above, the dissertation is divided into two sections.

The first section will first trace Turkish Foreign Policy from 2009 to 2019, leading up to Turkey's arms deal with Russia and tension within NATO. In doing so, this section will address the two main themes surrounding Turkish Foreign Policy. The first theme is Islamism, due to the accusations of the JDP harbouring an Islamist agenda, which are exacerbated by Turkey's support for the Arab Spring and involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. The second theme is the notion of neo-Ottomanism, in which Turkey allegedly seeks to restore the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. This accusation has also been exacerbated by neo-Ottoman rhetoric within the JDP, and the JDP's interactions with international media. Both these themes go hand in hand; as such, they will be treated as two sides of the same coin. Section two will also briefly address the notions that Turkish Foreign Policy since 2009 is contradictory to Kemalist foreign policy norms. Both themes are vehemently denied and

contradictorily often touted by JDP and government officials. The aim of this section will be to analyse how often rhetoric, both domestic and international, is translated to actual foreign policy.

The second section will be a discussion of narratives surrounding Turkish foreign policy; in order to do so, this section will evaluate the explanations that surround Turkish Foreign Policy. Seeing as this paper should have already discussed the different narratives and explanations for Turkey's foreign policy direction, this section will then argue that Turkish Foreign policy is not ideologically motivated—rather, Turkish Foreign policy is opportunistic, pragmatic and is defensively seeking to maximise power in the region. The theories of Kenneth Waltz on defensive realism will be used to put this argument into perspective, and the case study of Turkey's involvement in Syria will be a prime example for Turkey's opportunistic realism.

As for the methodology, the research of this paper is primarily based on international academic journals, government-supported journals such as SETA, and independent think-tanks publishing in English and based in Turkey. The research will also look at neo-classical realist texts, primarily by Kenneth Waltz. Newspaper articles and major news outlets will also be analysed to provide better examples of the themes around Turkish Foreign Policy.

Foreign Policy since 2009

Kemalist Foreign Policy

In order to put Turkey's current foreign policy direction into perspective, it is important to look at the legacy left behind by Ataturk. Turkey's foreign policy during Ataturk's tenure was strictly nationalist and isolationist.(MFA, 2013) Ataturk's pragmatism and caution is often understood within the context of Turkey's early conception as a state that had just won a war of independence, representing a society undergoing a socio-cultural transformation coupled with a devastated economy.(Saban and Bagci, 2014)

Kemalist foreign policy stressed full economic independence from outside influence; it is important to note that political memory of Turkish statesmen and politicians of the early republic were haunted by the humiliating capitulations demanded by the Treaty of Sevres and the struggle they faced in the War of Independence in the early 1920s.(MFA, 2013) Kemalism in the constraints of the dissertation should be understood as the ideology of the founder fathers of the Turkish republic, and not to be confused with its current manifestation at the hands of the CHP. The Ottoman Empire lost all their lands in the East and had already lost a significant portion of their Balkan possessions. By the end of the war, Turkey was invaded from all sides and shrunk to less than half of its size today, with just a portion of central Anatolia. The early Turkish Republic faced many challenges and was not ready to pursue an active foreign policy, and this is popularly expressed by the famous Kemalist dictum “Peace at Home, Peace in the World”. (MFA, 2013) This doctrine was essential to “Turkey's survival as a small developing nation at the strategic and exposed location astride the straits.” (Gol, 1992) Ataturk had realized the limitations of his newly founded republic and adjusted his aspirations accordingly.

Kemalist foreign policy was mostly consistent throughout the history of the republic; as mentioned above, it was characterized by its dedication to survival. (Saban and Bagci,2014) This dedication placed Turkish Foreign Policy on neutral footing; even at times of great polarization elsewhere in the world, Turkey remained on a realistically neutral path. During the Second World War, both sides assiduously tried to convince Ismet Inonu, then Prime Minister, to join the war. Besides Nazis pressures, the Allies also kept a persistent effort to sway Turkey, but the “Inonu government maintained a policy of armed neutrality, notwithstanding allied pressures for Turkish entry into the war.” (Gol, 1992) The armed neutrality adopted by Inonu proved effective, as Turkey exited WWII unscathed, and it was not until the end of the War that Turkey aligned itself with the United States and the allies. This alignment can be understood as a pragmatic decision to protect Turkey against increasing Soviet encroachment. Turkey joined the Truman Doctrine and was admitted to

the Marshall Aid program a year later, securing Turkey as an ally of the United States against the Soviet Union. Turkey was later labelled the “forward bastion of the West, [where] she began to champion the cold war.” (Saban and Bagci,2014)

These developments were contradictory to the Kemalist foreign policy initiatives of Ataturk. The neutrality boasted in the early stages of the republic had ceased to exist when Turkey clearly aligned itself with the United States and NATO. Turkey had swayed from its path of neutrality in the late 40s; perhaps the culmination of Turkey’s foreign policy stance was at the Bandung Conference of 1945, where Turkey was painted “as an emissary of the West.(Saban and Bagci,2014) At Bandung, the Turkish Foreign Minister “rejected neutralism as a third force in world politics… in accordance with NATO policy, suggested that it would help the advancement of Soviet Communism”. (MFA, 2013)

At the time, many criticized the Democratic Party government of Adnan Menderes, who was elected following the democratization in 1950, for taking a western path and turning its back on the Kemalist values of neutrality and peace. Turkey was also involved in the Middle East, and as a part of its policy with NATO, Turkey followed suit with American imperialism in the region. Menderes pursued a policy very similar to what Turkish foreign policy looked like in 2011; Menderes deployed troops in the Syrian border following the coup by Hafez Al-Assad and threatened to intervene; furthermore, he allowed the United States to use Incirlik airbase to airlift equipment and soldiers into Lebanon and even threatened to invade Iraq after the coup of 1958. (Saban and Bagci,2014) It comes to question how much of what Menderes said was just political manoeuvring to secure loans from the United States. Previously, Turkey had requested multiple loans and aid from the United States in its attempt to prove that it could be a trusted ally in the region. (Gol, 1992)

Highlighting the end of neutrality by Menderes is significant because of the similarities that can be drawn to the JDP government, especially from the period between 2003 and 2007. Menderes faced a coup d’état in May of 1960 and was accused of violating the constitution and embezzling money from the Turkish state; it is important to relate that the JDP was

accused of essentially the same actions. The irony behind all of this is the claim by the military Junta of having an exclusive hold over what Kemalist pragmatism should look like. The domestic politics behind the coup of 1960 is an entirely different issue, and it would be taking away from the purpose of this paper. The foreign policy understanding of Menderes was not contradictory to Kemalist values or Ataturk's vision. Menderes was pursuing a western aligned path to foreign policy, which dictated increased cooperation with the West in accordance to what the political climate and region demanded at the time Turkey was at a crossroads at the end of WWII, and just as Inonu had aligned himself with the United States and NATO, Menderes did the same. The Turkish Foreign policy establishment is deeply invested in Ataturk's understanding of international relations mentioned above of "Peace at home, Peace abroad." (Saban and Bagci,2014) Menderes was interested in securing loans and aid from the United States, and as much as he was criticized for it, it was during his tenure that the Turkish military modernized extensively with the aid received from the United States.

JDP's first two terms from 2003 till 2009 can be understood as continuation of what Ismet Inonu had envisioned when he signed the Marshall Plan and joined NATO. Menderes would follow what Inonu had started and continue the path towards cooperation and alliance with the West. It would not be enough to equate Ataturk's scepticism of the West in the early years to an all-encompassing understanding of Kemalist foreign policy because Ataturk did not live during the cold War and had not seen the reality of the Soviet threat. Ataturk was much more preoccupied with other more pressing concerns such as trying to establish the Turkish state and defining Turkish national identity. (Saban and Bagci,2014) Foreign policy for Ataturk was the consolidation of Turkish borders and sovereignty Ataturk did not live long enough to see how polarized global politics had become by 1939, and thus his early foreign policy goals cannot be understood from an ahistorical lens. Nicholas Danforth argues a similar point regarding Ataturk's disengagement from the Middle East; according to Danforth, both Ataturk's dis-disengagement and JDP's re-engagement were products of pragmatic and

strategic manoeuvring that reflected the context both domestically and within the region. (Saban, Bagci,2014)

JDP kept a steady foreign policy that did not bring anything new to the table until 2009.(Olson and Ince, 1977) The so-called breakaway from the norms happened in 2009, and Turkey was said to have had a "shift in Axis" towards the East.(Altunisik and Martin, 2011) This is a linear ahistorical reading of Foreign policy; the JDP was not the first party to engage with the Middle East more actively. The 1990s, and even before that with Turgut Ozal, saw Turkey's efforts to get involved in the Middle East. Turgut Ozal was dedicated to improving trade and investment with the Middle East. (Olson and Ince, 1977) Perhaps the peak of Turkish reorientation was when the Welfare party of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan came to power. Erbakan drafted a union which saw a coalition of 8 Muslim states in an economic union to replace the European Union prospects for Turkey. (Davutoglu, 2001) As Meliha B. Altunişik & Lenore G. Martin argues, Turkish policy's reorientation and interaction with Middle East "it is hard to substantiate an international reorientation in Turkish foreign policy. (Altunisik and Martin, 2011) There is still a considerable degree of convergence between Turkey and its Western allies in their general vision of the Middle East as well as specific policies."(Onis, 2011)

Davutoglu's Foreign Policy

It is an undoubted fact that Turkish Foreign Policy has transformed multiple times since the end of the Cold War. This section will take 2009 as a starting point and will occasionally reference events leading up to 2009. This era would start in 2007 with the AKP's re-election, and subsequent changes in rhetoric and action. In 2009, Ahmet Davutouglu a professor of International Relations became the Minister of Foreign Affairs. (Davutoglu, 2001) Prior to 2009, Davutoglu was the chief foreign policy advisor to President Erdogan since 2003. Davutoglu brought with himself his book *Strategic Depth* which is considered by many to be the architect behind Turkey's foreign policy direction. It is popular consensus that "it was

Davutoğlu who largely changed the rhetoric and practice of Turkish foreign policy" (Aras, 2011)

Davutoglu had a vision for Turkey, which he outlined in his book Strategic Depth. Davutoglu's foreign policy vision is based on a "novel geographical imagination" which places Turkey in a privileged position by virtue of its geographical location. (Kucukcan and Kucukkeles, 2012) Turkey, Davutoglu argues, cannot be explained geographically or culturally by associating it with a single region. (Davutoglu, 2001) Instead he argues that its "diverse regional composition lends it the capability of manoeuvring in several regions simultaneously; in this sense, it controls an area of influence in its immediate environments." (Davutoglu, 2001) The main thesis of the ideology rests in "that strategic depth is predicated on geographical and historical depth…Turkey as a result of its historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire, possesses great geographical depth. (Aras, 2009) "This depth puts Turkey in a position of power and responsibility that requires Turkey to take an active engagement policy with former Ottoman states. (Davutoglu, 2001)

As Davutoglu saw Turkey as carrying a great potential to engage with different regions and cultures by virtue of its geographical position. (Murinson, 2006) Davutoglu also saw Turkey as a mediator between these regions and countries that Turkey can interact with. He developed the zero-problem policy which called for minimizing problems with neighbouring regions. (Murinson, 2006) The zero-problem policy was an initiative that emphasized Turkey's position as the successor of the Ottoman Empire. He argues this puts Turkey in an advantageous position to engage and cooperate with the Ottoman Empire's backyard, the Middle East and the Balkans. Bulent Aras also argues that Turkey's domestic reform and growing economic capabilities since the rise of the JDP has enabled Turkey to take a more pro-active stance in the region to promote peace amongst its neighbours. (Aras, 2009)

The zero-problem policy was as evidenced by Turkey's current situation since the last decade was a stark failure in translating foreign policy rhetoric into action. Since Davutoglu's tenure Turkey has had constant problems with neigbhours to the point where Turkey saw a

military incursion into northern Syria. The case of Davutoglu's failure can be understood as a prime example of how far removed academia can become from the reality and practice of politics.

The literature suggests that the best way to look at Turkish foreign policy and its transformation is through dual-comparative lens that considers changes and continuity. They argue that there is a degree of continuity and a degree of change. Meliha B. Altunişik & Lenore G. Martin look at it from Charles Hermann's definition of foreign policy changes, and it is valuable tool in order to identify at what levels change can be seen. There are "four elevated categories for change in terms of outcomes", and they are respectively: (Altunisik and Martin, 2011)

> *"(1) "adjustment change, "referring to a change in the level of effort, (2)"program change," pointing to changes in methods or means although the basic purposes remain unchanged, (3) "problem/goal change," where the purposes themselves change and (4)"international orientation change," represents the redirection of foreign policy orientation, a basic shift in roles and activities." .(Altunisik and Martin, 2011)*

Turkey's new foreign policy orientation brought forth ramifications as early as January of 2009. Hitherto enjoying good relations with Israel, Prime Minister Erdogan offered a vocal critique of the Israeli government. During the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland Erdogan stormed out of the meeting after publicly calling out then Israeli President, Shimon Peres, for killing civilians in Gaza. Ziya Onis argues that Davos was "clearly not a one-shot affair."(Onis, 2011) Davos started a trend in Turkey of taking a progressively activist stand in regional politics. By 2010, with Turkish state media's vehement criticism and the Mavi Marmara, the Turkish-Israeli bilateral relations "were reduced to the lowest point in history." The significance of this is Turkish foreign policy being vocal enough to outright oppose the status quo it has belonged to for two decades. (Onis, 2011)

Another prominent incident that is seen as a catalyst is Turkey's involvement in Iran's nuclear program incident with the West. Previously being passive to most developments Turkey showed an "unusual degree of pro-activism" and going as far as to try and lead the negotiations. (Onis, 2011) Turkey was acting unusually independently, and even contradicting fellow NATO members; especially the U.S., Turkey actively rejected the proposed sanctions in the United Nation Security Council in June of 2010. (Onis, 2011)

Turkey's confidence in being able to take these hard-line stances against the previous status quo is rooted in two important developments. Ziya Onis firstly argues that the global financial crisis created an atmosphere which was "in favour of the broadening of the global governance structure." (Onis, 2011) This saw the G-8 being replaced by the G-20 "as the key organizational nexus in the future of global finance and global economic governance." (Onis, 2011)Turkey was among the G-20 countries and "now had the opportunity to be an active participant in the process of shaping the new rules and institutions of the post-crisis global economy, as opposed to its previous role as a peripheral partner and the passive complier of the rules imposed from above by the powerful core countries of the north." (Onis, 2011)

Secondly, the JDP is often credited with solving the banking crisis of 2001 where the economy in Turkey had inflated to the point where the price of a loaf of bread was in the millions.(Wastnidge, 2019) By 2010 Turkish economy was in a much more stable position with regulated banking and financial systems, and thus it was able "avoid the typical financial and balance of payments crisis which it had frequently experienced in the past."(Wastnidge, 2019) This meant Turkey was no longer in need of direct IMF assistance. An IMF-free path in the economic sphere saw Turkey in a paramount position of freedom to navigate a strikingly independent foreign policy.(Onis, 2011) Svante E. Cornell, writing for the Middle East quarterly also cites Turkey's domestic change as a precursor for confidence, considering that since the early 90s "Turkey's gross domestic product has quadrupled, exports have grown by a factor of five, foreign direct investment by a factor of 25, and the

value of traded stocks by a factor of 40."(Cornell, 2012) He argues that "it is only natural that Turkey's newly found economic clout would translate into more self-confidence on the international scene."(Cornell, 2012) Bolstered by economic stability and strong support at home, Erdogan and the JDP turned Turkey from a bystander into a key regional actor.((Wastnidge, 2019)

Perceptions around the world

The previous section ended with a discussion of the ramifications of Turkey's active and assertive foreign policy. International relations and foreign policy are usually perceived differently around the world, and this is certainly the case for Turkey. According to SETA, Turkey's new foreign policy direction has been overwhelmingly positive in rhetoric and action. (Aras, 2009) Davutoglu himself saw his foreign policy vision as a bastion of "security stability and prosperity in a wide range of territories." (Aras, 2009)

Domestically, Davutoglu's ideas were received considerably well and brought a sense of pride for many Turkish voters who perceived Turkey as much more independent and powerful.(Altunisik and Martin, 2011) Recognizing the limitations of this dissertation, Turkish foreign policy can be summarized into three perceptions or explanations, and within these perceptions there are sub-themes. These explanations all carry a certain epistemological agenda and weight, as characterized by the perceived verities that they present as a fulcrum for their explanation.

The 'security based' and 'identity/ideology based' explanations are the most popular ones, and as Mustafa Kutlay argues the often overlooked third explanation is the political economy explanation. ((Kutlay, 2011)Security based explanations are often used by pro-Turkey academicians but are not limited to that, Nicholas Danforth for example argues that Turkey's involvement with the Middle East is Ankara's political pragmatism with its

neighbours.(Danforth, 2018) The security-based explanation entails a neo-realist understanding of international relations, but it is not defined by its neo-realist assumptions. The multipolar world created by the fall of the Soviet Union has led to a power vacuum which requires Turkey to take a pro-active and multi-dimensional approach to security in the region. In the security-based explanation Turkey is seen as a state that is on fence between Europe, not quite accepted by the European and Western nations but also not able to identify close with the Middle East either.

Turkey is also beset with a local Kurdish separatist terrorist movement referred to as the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê). The PKK was a Kurdish reaction to decades of Turkish domestic policies since Ataturk that ostracized the Kurdish population. The PKK is however not limited to the borders of Turkey; the PKK has seen freedom of movement and support from Kurds in Iraq, Iran and Syria. The PKK has also received considerable support from European Union nations that are supposedly Turkish allies in NATO; summarily receiving state media sponsorship and asylum in Germany amongst other European nations. (MFA 2011) The PKK has land claims on areas that would see Turkey's land mass in the East becoming negligibly small. Given the Turkish Foreign Policy establishments ideological loyalty to Kemalist fears of the early 20th century, Turks saw their country divided and shared amongst the invaders less than a century ago. (Aras, 2009) Furthermore, the territorial concerns of Turkish policy makers remains an influential one especially at a time when Turkey has neighbours such as Armenia, Greece and Syria with outstanding claims on Turkey's territorial integrity. (MFA 2011)

The "identity/ideology based" explanations are based on an examination of the JDP's rhetoric both domestic and internationally. These explanations assert that Turkish Foreign policy action and rhetoric are both grounded by the ruling party's ideological predispositions and influenced heavily by the domestic political atmosphere. (Kutlay, 2011) These explanations have significant explanatory power in terms of their arguments, but they are a

static and often reductive explanation of Turkish Foreign Policy. They are reductive because they often equate everything that comes out of Turkey to Muslim solidarity or Neo-Ottoman aspirations. (Kutlay, 2011) They are also static because they fail to acknowledge Turkey's fast paced multi-lateral diplomacy with both neighbours, and international actors like Russia or the US. As mentioned earlier, two themes surrounding Turkish policy namely Neo-Ottomanism and Islamism are taken as explanatory tools for Turkey's foreign policy direction.

The third perspective provided by Mustafa Kutlay as mentioned above is the political economy explanation. Kutlay argues that both the security based, and identity/ideology-based explanations are lacking the necessary political economical outlook which makes them inadequate in a world where foreign relations are driven by economic interests. (Kutlay, 2011) For Kutlay the "changing economic dynamics in Turkey and the transformation of Turkish financial and industrial capital" are essential to understanding Turkey's foreign policy activism, and he goes forward to provide three specific mechanisms that underpin Turkish foreign policy activism. (Kutlay, 2011)

The first of the three mechanism he identifies is "material interest", in Kutlay's research he shows the increasing established material interests between Turkish firms and neighbouring countries. There exists a significant "interaction and mutual interdependence between Turkish businessmen and their counterparts." (Kutlay, 2011) In this perspective Kutlay puts forward two major economic developments, he argues that not only has Turkey's FDI increased in the Middle East and Asian countries by significant number ("…from $18.7 billion to $131billion…trade with Gulf Cooperation Council members also tripled in the same period"), Turkey has also seen improved visibility in FDI and become a major investor abroad. ("between 2002 and 2009, Turkey's outward direct investment stock reached at $11.2 billion.") (Kutlay, 2011)

Kutlay's second mechanism ties in with the material interests of the private sector in Turkey; accordingly to Kutlay because of the dynamic nature of world politics, dialogue between parties in this case nation-states, cannot be "restricted to the traditional security-biased bureaucratic and military channels and spills-over into other functional corporation areas." (Kutlay, 2011) He cites functionalist theories as a base point for his argument, as they have argued that "the increasing intensity of commercial relations between Anatolian businessmen and Middle Eastern markets has created spill-over effects and facilitated the establishing of new dialogue and cooperation mechanisms." (Kutlay, 2011) Kutlay also brings attention to the case of Syria, where he thinks economic interests of Anatolian businessman have lobbied the government into consistently pursuing further cooperation and interaction with Syria, and he also ties this in with the fact that these businessmen, industrialists and exporters opened up multiple channels of dialogue. (Kutlay, 2011) Effectively increasing the "number of interpersonal networks and helps institutionalizing the spill-over effects. " (Kutlay, 2011)

Kutlay's third and last mechanism which he explains Turkey's political activism is through the concept of perceptions. He argues that one of Turkey's biggest problem that has hindered it's interactions with its neighbours is perceptions. Usually negative ever since the conception of the republic, however Kutlay argues that material interests and multiple channels of dialogue have changed how Turkey has been perceived by its neighbours. (Kutlay, 2011) Perception carries important weight in bilateral relations, and Turkey is an infamous case for negative portrayals. The themes that were mentioned above of Islamism and Neo-Ottomanism are the main identifiers for ideology/identity-based explanations of Turkish foreign policy.

These themes are based on an ideological understanding of domestic politics in Turkey, and by that extension Turkish foreign policy. The base point for this argument starts with an assumption that foreign policy in Turkey is inextricably linked and influenced by domestic

politics. This means that Turkish foreign policy is driven by the domestic political climate and public opinion. These themes are often used as criticisms to JDP and Turkey's foreign policy; they usually entail labels and reductive analysis to present Turkish foreign policy as regressive, aggressive and often a threat to peace and security.

Writing for the Middle East Quarterly in 2012 Svante E.Cornell a Swedish scholar focusing on peace and security in the South Caucasus, and Turkey, argues that ideology is significant driving force for Turkish foreign policy. (Cornell, 2012) E. Cornell compares Turkey's rejection of the Islamist label to it's actual rhetoric. (Cornell, 2012) He mentions statements key Turkish figures such as President Abdullah Gul in a 2010 interview where he clearly states that Turkey has no intention of turning it's back on the West now that it has become a "source of inspiration" for promotion of democracy, human rights and the free market in a region "largely governed by authoratian regimes."(Middle East). E. Cornell, however, regresses in his argument very quickly as he first starts to make worrying assumptions about the origins of the JDP by linking them to an "orthodox Naqshbandiya order" which he argues was a "hotbed of Islamist reaction to westernizing reforms since the mid-nineteenth century, thus predating the creation of the republic." (Cornell, 2012)

He gives an ahistorical analysis on the Sufi order known as the Naqshibandiya order by failing to recognize that Ataturk shut down and practically abolished all Tariqahs close to a century ago. (Cornell, 2012) The Naqshbandiya order was exiled to Cyprus and later spread to the West, and has taken a very different form. The assumption he draws claiming that the JDP comes from a Sufi order that is opposed to the West is factually incorrect; a simple research into the Naqshbandiya order since their exile shows that they are largely apolitical and thrive in the West. They have major educational centres in London, New York and Washington. Comparing a mid-nineteenth century Sufi order at the peak of the Tanzimat reforms and predating the republic itself to it's current state is groundless. E. Cornell later discusses Davutoglu's doctoral thesis published in the late 1990s, Cornell claims that the

Davutoglu's ideas are "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 its values and political system on the rest of the world." (Cornell, 2012) E.Cornell overemphasises the influence Davutoglu's philosophical ideas in the 90's as an academician to his policies in 2009 as policy maker. He also misinterprets Davutoglu's argument that Kemalist disengagement from the Islamic world was a mistake; the articulation that the JDP's policy of re-engaging with the Islamic world and the Middle East is solely rooted in its desire to pursue an Islamist agenda. (Cornell, 2012)

The Islamist prompt is tricky to navigate in the case of the JDP. The JDP and Erdogan have explicitly rejected the terms Islamist and moderate Muslim. The Islamist label carries with it negative connotations, and the very use of the word is orientalist in nature. The label implies that Islamists are anti-democracy, anti-secularism and a natural enemy of the West. Conjectures about Islamism and the role of Islam in the Middle East come from an orientalist understanding. The understanding is that if a leader in the Middle East harbours Islamic ideas and supports Islamic groups within the country and abroad they cannot be secular and democratic. Islam is seen as inherently incompatible with modern governance. The term Islamist is also perceived differently in Turkey, Islamist in Turkey would mean someone who takes his religion seriously, also understood as a practicing Muslim as Turkish secularists would describe.(Akyol, 2011) Islamist in the current political atmosphere in the Middle East is more closely identified with someone who wants to impose Islamic law by establishing an Islamic state. (Akyol, 2011) For example, in the west the ruling party in Germany is called the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, and it is obvious the party targets a largely Christian conservative base. Applying this example to perceptions of Turkey it can be concluded that Angela Merkel is motivated by Christianity and she is going to call a crusade to take back Jerusalem once and for all. These are ridiculous claims and have no place. The Christian Democratic Union of Germany is a right leaning liberal-conservative political party, and the JDP is a right leaning conservative political party.

On the other hand, the quite opposite is argued by Birol Baskan; coming from a strictly ideological analysis method Birol argues that Turkish foreign policy is heavily motivated by Islamism. (Birol, 2019) In his lengthy essay for the Cairo Review he posits his argument by explaining Turkey's involvement in the Arab spring as a matter of Islamism. He frequently refers to the Ottoman era term, *ittihad-i Islam* which is a concept coined by pan-islamists during the late Ottoman era. According to Birol, the JDP "has interpreted regional and world developments." (Birol, 2019) through the prism of *ittihad-i Islam,* and as such has felt responsible to interfere in the affairs of Sunni Muslims in the Middle East. (Birol, 2019)

The accusations surrounding Turkish Foreign policy being Islamist are limited to circumstantial evidence and are often taken out of context. The circumstantial evidence writers like E.Cornell and Birol Baskan above, vehemently like to cite the JDP's Islamist background. This it is just sloppy reasoning to conflate correlation and causation together. The JDP Islamist beginnings is not evidence for its current policies being Islamist. There is a stark difference between the ideological base of the party, and its foreign policy. These kinds of arguments are used to paint the JDP as Islamist when they take a position that is unfavourable to the interests of the European Union or the United States. Birol seems to be convinced that the JDP seeking to develop stronger relations with the Muslim world is enough proof that the JDP motivated by Islamism is trying to establish an Islamic State in Turkey. (Birol, 2019)

Birol also seems to subscribe to a regressive understanding of Muslims in politics; he cites that the AKP was pursuing a "subtle Islamist foreign policy."(Murinson, 2006) that was kept hidden because of the previous experience of Islamist in 1997. He goes unto say that JDP leaders under the influence of Islamism will "aim to realize this political idea, no matter how utopic (or dystopic depending on where you stand) it might seem." of unifying Muslims under an Islamic State in Turkey. (Birol, 2019) Another issue critics of the JDP capitalize on is the Arab spring, and Birol is no different as he is assiduous that Turkey's support to the

Arab spring was ideologically motivated by Islamism, and an understanding of Sunni Muslim unity that all JDP voters seem to share. (Birol, 2019) He cherry picks Davutoglu's speech at the Al-Jazeera forum in Doha, Qatar in 2011, and argues that Davutoglu's opposition to colonialism and its successor authoritarianism was a disguise for Davutoglu's "Islamist ambitions" in uniting the Middle East under Sunni Islam. (Davutoglu, 2001) Birol subscribes to a linear understanding of geopolitics as he thinks Turkey was solely motivated by ideology because "There was no compelling economic or geopolitical reason behind such a wholehearted embrace except that the AKP leadership thought that the Arab Spring was paving the way for ittihad-i Islam." (Birol, 2019) Another reasoning provided by critics like Birol is that because JDP officials are practicing Muslims they must have an Islamist agenda that intrinsic. (Hartmann, 2013) This is reductive reasoning that takes agency away from political parties that have Muslim politicians. By arguing that Muslims are unable to pursue a foreign policy that is pragmatic reduces them to a lesser state. The polemic is more so directed at Muslims, and "Islamists" rather than Erdogan or the JDP. The assumption is that there is something inherently wrong in Muslims ruling in accordance to their religion This is very similar to what the European colonial powers argued when they colonized the Middle East; they are Muslims and Eastern ergo they cannot rule themselves rationally without the constraints of their culture and religion.

The second theme is neo-Ottomanism, and as mentioned above Islamism and Neo-Ottomanism often go hand in hand. Neo-Ottomanism is also understood as a form of Islamic nationalism, and it is understood as an externally imposed label. Daniel Andreas Hartman, argues that Neo-Ottomanism is not a concrete experience that is indicative of "quasi-imperial intentions" or the revival of an Ottoman Imperial legacy, and instead Neo-Ottoman should be understood as a transformation narrative that is rooted in Turkey's historical and political landscape since the 1980s. (Hartmann, 2013) Hartman argues that Turkey has always been in a period of transition since 1923, and the period that is known as the Third Turkish Republic starting in 1983 was a period where Turkey's relationship with its own history and

self-perception changed drastically. (Hartmann, 2013) He argues that the label and narrative goes beyond that of the modern era (2003), and that the JDP has only continued the narratives started by Turgut Ozal. (Hartmann, 2013) The JDP however, does profit from the narrative as Turkish politics has seen significant diversification. Hartman argues further that neo-Ottomanism was a natural transformation that is rooted in Turkey's reconciliation with it's Ottoman past, and he references the aggressive demonization of the Ottomans during the early years of the Turkish republic. Kemalists had invented a perception of history that best suited their needs in 1923, and now this history was being reinvented as Turks saw the Ottoman Empire not as a backward Empire that they moved past but a glorious past that they can emulate. (Hartmann, 2013) Through this understanding Hartman goes on to further argue that the neo-Ottoman transformation of Turkey is not a "radical break with the past or a complete revision of the Turkish nation." (Hartmann, 2013) There is a significant continuity of transformation that dates back to the Tanzimat era, that have been carried over from the Ottoman Empire, and just as the Tanzimat reforms were the precursors for change in the Turkish Republic, the transformation in Turkey at the end of the Cold War "must be understood as an adaptive social and political project that is encouraged by internal reformatory impulses and external factors." (Hartmann, 2013)

There is a stark difference between domestic politics and foreign policy in Turkey, and this is evident by Turkey's foreign policy since the Arab spring. Neo-Ottomanism is understood and interpreted differently in Turkey, and as Edward Wastnidge would argue Neo-Ottomanism in domestic politics serves a legitimizing rhetoric. There are a multitude of different interpretations that depend on how one would interpret the Ottoman Empire, broadly speaking they are:

> *"(1) the image of the Ottoman Empire as the cradle or apex of civilization; (2) the image of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic Empire; and (3) the image of the Ottoman Empire as a liberal, multicultural empire. In line with the image of the Ottoman Empire*

as the 'cradle' or 'apex' of civilization, Turkey, as heir to the Empire, is positioned as the guardian and proprietor of its cultural legacy, a legacy it is responsible for cultivating within the region, and sharing with the world." (Danforth, 2013)

These interpretations have been used to both legitimatize and delegitimize JDP's domestic and foreign policy. This leaves Neo-Ottomanism as a very malleable concept which allows often contradicting arguments to be construed in order to echo an "Ottoman past". The concept is so malleable that critics have used the label to describe Erdogan's relations with Bashar Al-Assad both before and after the Arab Spring. (Danforth, 2013) Turkey was initially engaging with Syria because of imperial ambitions and was later supporting the Syrian opposition against the very regime they were "trying to improve relations" with because of neo-Ottomanism. Wastnidge also points to the JDP's use of the Ottoman label as a way to legitimize their economical endeavours, understanding the Ottoman Empire as a multi-cultural Empire that serves as a point of departure to engage with nearby states as there is a shared history and heritage. (Danforth, 2013) JDP saw Turkey at the head of this shared history and heritage that would lead to increased cooperation through the historical and cultural signifiers left behind by the Ottoman Empire. (Altunisik and Martin, 2011)

Danforth, as mentioned above, argues that Neo-Ottomanism and Islamism are both overemphasized in literature. He is in line with Hartman's reasoning that neo-Ottomanism is a journalistic phenomenon that is not rooted in anything but circumstantial evidence such as rhetoric. Danforth argues that Turkey's reengagement with the Islamic world and the Middle East is not motivated by Islamism or Neo-Ottomanism. (Danforth, 2013) He points to JDP's willingness to sacrifice Turkey's relationship with the United States in a bid to establish better relations with the Middle East. (Hartmann, 2013) The argument is that the JDP has been bolstering anti-Americanism because of its anti-imperial Islamist leanings, but many fail to look at the global and regional changes of the 1990s that pushed Turkey's relationship to

this state. According to Danforth anti-Americanism is a result of America's aggrieve engagement with the Middle East and it's negligence towards the PKK. Turkey was alienated in its struggle against the PKK since the 1990s, and many would be NATO allies refused to collaborate with Turkey when it came to extradition while at the same time Syria expelled the PKK leader Abduallah Ocalan in 1998. (Hartmann, 2013)

The rapprochement with Iran is also discussed by juxtaposing Iran's relationship with Turkey compared to that of the United States. As Iran steadily moved away from "its commitment to "exporting the revolution" and from much of the revolutionary rhetoric that so alarmed neighbouring states in the past. (Altunisik and Martin, 2011) At the same time America would continue to act unilaterally in the region alienating both Iran and Turkey, and as America's relationship deteriorated these isolated states became more willing to cooperate with each other. Danforth also points to the JDP's involvement with different foreign governments, which adds weight to the pragmatic argument. President Gul confirmed Turkey's zero problem policy that would later collapse by visiting Armenia, Georgia and Greece. Turkey has routinely tried to improve relations with it's Christian neighbours just as well. In addition to this Turkey's involvement with the Assad regime prior to the Arab spring is also telling for Turkey's pragmatic foreign policy nature. The ideological explanation falls short in explaining why Erdogan an "Islamist" would pursue friendly relations with Bashar al Assad's regime which has a history of vehemently opposing Islamist movements in Syria. Turkey's involvement with the Middle East, disengagement with the U.S. and NATO has demonstrated that Turkey is committed to balancing its strategic relationships in the region and abroad. (Danforth, 2013)Ideology in Turkey is important but it does not go past rhetoric in domestic politics, Danforth ends with fortifying that Turkey is committed to a pragmatic survival in the region and that "no Turkish government will pursue ties with any Middle Eastern state to the point of precipitating an irreconcilable breach with America or Israel." (Danforth, 2013)

Soner Cagaptay, another prominent Turkey analyst, argues along the same lines as Danforth but instead he argues that the AKP is more Islamist than Neo-Ottoman. He interprets the same events such as Turkey's support for Iran's nuclear ambitions as an indicator Islamist pragmatism. (Cagaptay, 2017) He also argues that if the JDP was really neo-Ottoman they would keep an "equal distance" between Jews and Muslims in the case of Israel and Palestine. (Cagaptay, 2013) As history shows this has not been the case as Turkey has routinely favoured Palestine, and Muslims. Cagaptay argues that the JDP's "foreign policy is asymmetrically focused on Arab Islamists in particular and the Muslim Middle East more generally. (Cagaptay, 2013) It is pro-Hamas, pro-Syria, pro-Hezbollah, pro-Qatar, pro-Saudi. The AKP views the world as composed of religious blocks, and this disposition colours its views of the Middle East and the world." This has enabled Turkey to pursue a balanced relationship that can both encompass the Middle East and Turkey's Western ambitions. (Akyol, 2011) Mustafa Akyol also chimes in an article he wrote for the Foreign Affairs magazine, where he dismisses Neo-Ottomanism and argues that instead Turkey "Like any major power, Turkey bases its foreign policy on calculations of hard national interests, and coats it in value-laden rhetoric that reflects popular sentiments." (Akyol, 2011)

Discussion and Conclusion

Turkish Foreign Policy as evidenced by the discussion surrounding the different explanations and themes is certainly hard to pinpoint let alone label accurately. There are many different lenses by which one can view the dynamic yet contradictory foreign policy that is coming out of Ankara. Ideological explanations fall short because they are reductive and often confuse correlation with causation. These explanations overemphasize the importance of rhetoric in domestic politics, and on the other hand these explanations are usually grounding in a simplistic view of Islam and Muslims. In the past Western pundits and journalists alike just like their counterparts in Turkey have taken a reductive view of Islam in politics. There are

underlying assumptions of Islam when Muslims come to power, and these assumptions are often self-limiting for would be analysts who try to prescribe explanations. The JDP has been under constant scrutiny for pursuing a rhetoric that is Islamists and to some extent Neo-Ottoman, and this dissertation explored both these notions. It would be of great disservice to prescribe and limit Turkish Foreign policy to be motivated by rhetoric.

The fact is that the JDP has proven that it is able to pursue a multi-layered foreign policy that is highly responsive to regional and global shifts. The foreign policy pursued by the JDP has had breaks from the Kemalist legacy in certain aspects, but it is not a complete break away as many have suggested. The JDP's activism and "Eastern Path" is a realization of the regional realities Turkey has now been forced to face after decades of disengagement. Previously Turkish leaders saw territorial integrity and security as an internal affair and felt virtually no need to engage with the Middle East. Times have changed and engagement with the Middle East for Turkey has become necessary, and the Syrian War has proven how essential it was for Turkey to be active in the region. There are also important perceptions within Turkey that need to be addressed; many have shifted the blame to Turkey. Turkey has failed to meet the standards set out by the EU and has failed to maintain a cooperative relationship with the US and NATO. This perception does not sell in Turkey; the opposite is evident as Turkey has been routinely pushed to the periphery by the European Union. It's been close half a century since Turkey has been trying to enter the European Union. The EU has routinely asked for more and more while giving virtually nothing in terms of political concessions. The peak of this was perhaps was the willingness of EU nations to cooperate with Turkey on the PKK; and as Germany shelters well known terrorists, they continue to give Turkey diatribes on human rights.

Defensive Realism

Kenneth Waltz theory of neorealism also known as structural realism states that power is the most important factor in international relations. Waltz divides structural realism into

subdivisions: offensive realism and defensive realism.(Lowell, 2017) Waltz theory holds that the “nature of the international structure is defined by its ordering principle, anarchy, and by the distribution of capabilities.” Anarchy is the ordering principle and it is decentralized globally. In this view, as states are the main actors, offensive realism states seek power and influence to achieve “security through domination and hegemony.” While defensive realism is seeking the same ends, argues that the anarchical order evident in international structure “encourages states to maintain moderate and reserved policies to attain security.” (Lowell, 2017) In the international structure states ultimately seek to maximise security, as Waltz argues “In anarchy, security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states safely seek such other goals as tranquillity, profit, and power” (Lowell, 2017)

Turkish Foreign Policy can be interpreted through Waltz theory of defensive realism, and it adds much needed depth to the analysis. Instead of obscuring Turkey’s position as a regional power subtlety motivated by ideology, it points to the realities Turkey is facing by virtue of historical and geographical position as a cultural, economical and political bridge between Europe. Markos Troulis argues that alongside Davutoglu Turkey has “simultaneous access to different peripheries, as well as its subsequent multidimensional role, have led the country to be named “a pivotal state.” (Troulis, 2015) Troulispoints to a NATO document called the MC-161 drafted during the Cold War but still wholly relevant with regional alliances and great power meddling in the Middle East. This document entails that “there are 16 crucial, unstable, and dangerous regions in the world; 13 of them can be found in the greater periphery of Turkey.” (Troulis, 2015) Found itself face to face with these pressing geopolitical realities the stakes are high for Turkish policy makers. (Troulis, 2015)

The geopolitical realities of Turkey’s position make it a perfect candidate for a Mearsheimerian tragedy. The tragedy outlined by John Mearsheimer refers to the vicious cycle of security dilemmas and anti-hegemonic coalitions dominating international politics. In Mearsheimer’s tragedy states are forced to become revisionist powers whether they chose

to or not, and they are simply forced to by virtue of the structure of anarchy in the international system to compete for power. Troulisargues that the end of the Cold War saw Turkey breaking expectations and becoming a pivotal ally for the US. Turkey is currently in a position of power as its main direct threats in the region have become irrelevant; Markos argues that Greece's failed economy, (Troulis, 2015) Russia ceasing to become a direct threat and Syria's destruction with the civil war has increased Turkey's relative power in the region. (Aras, 2009) In the neorealist sense Turkey is in a capable position to seek maximisation of its power and interests. However, at the same time these developments and Iran's involvement has contributed to instability for Turkey. Turkey is at a crossroads for regional hegemony, and its main competitors are Iran and Saudi Arabia. Coupled with Turkey's deterioration of relations with global powers has left Turkey in a "dangerous synthesis of an unstable regional environment and a limitation of the great powers' interest in the Middle East." (Troulis, 2015)

In a defensive realist understanding of Turkey's precarious position in global and regional politics, Turkey must actively seek to maximise its power in the region through cooperation. JDP's foreign policy has been criticized for its aggressive and often contradictory stance, but amidst all the chaos Turkey has become a regional power. Turkey's ability to take drastically different positions on both ends of the political spectrum has proven Turkey as a versatile dynamic regional actor.

Syria

Turkey's involvement with Syria before the Arab spring and after the uprisings is an excellent example that both showcases ideological inconsistencies and willingness to pursue an opportunistic position. The common consensus is that Turkish Foreign policy in Syria has failed miserably, and many equate this failure to a policy failure rather than looking at the contextual dynamics at play. There are stark inconsistencies in ideology when the example

of Syria is considered. The case of Syria is a stark reminder for how different Turkish Foreign policy looks in action compared to rhetoric both domestically and abroad.

Prior to the Arab spring Turkey held good relations with the Al-Assad regime, and President Erdogan had a personally close relationship with Bashar Al-Assad. Erdogan personally visited Syria 8 times before the Arab uprisings, but in an almost sudden turn of events Turkey took a diametrically opposite stance and join the UK and the US in calling for Bashar Al-Assad's resignation. By June of 2012 Turkey was actively aiding and training opposition forces against the Assad regime and supporting a policy that saw no compromise. Davutoglu went on record saying that "Turkey agrees Assad must go; how is the question."(Sandikli and Semin, 2014)

Since then up until Turkey's actual physical insertion into Syria, Erdogan and Davutoglu were perhaps the most vocal leaders about Syria. They were assiduously pushing for the removal of Assad and Turkey provided a haven for opposition fighters. Trying to explain why Turkey would switch from being friendly with Assad to a sudden drastic shift proves a challenge. (Sandikli and Semin, 2014) The Islamist argument is that Turkey saw the Islamist opposition as a way to establish a government in Syria that would be pro-Turkey and conservative. At the height of the Syrian Crisis; Obama warned that he had drawn a red-line against chemical weapons. (Eckels, 2017) Obama issued public statements and private warnings to both Iran and Russia that if the Assad regime used Chemical weapons there would be direct military consequences. The red-line was an ostensibly empty threat as the US did nothing after the massacre of Eastern Ghouta and Moudamiyat Al Cham nearby Damascus. (Eckels, 2017) The British house of commons refused support for air strikes in Syria, and Obama afraid of the Congress backed down. Turkey was left in a limbo as they had been given the confirmation that the US, UK and French coalition would be intervening in Syria.(Eckels, 2017) Turkey took a lot of risk, and political flak for committing to regime

change in Syria. The failure in the UK and the US, however, did not discourage Turkey as they kept up the same stance and support for the opposition. (Eckels, 2017)

The situation changed dramatically in 2016 when Turkey started Operation Euphrates shield. Turkish army crossed over to Syria and attacked ISIS and YPG positions in Northern Syria. The offensive saw Turkish forces gain considerable lands in the north of Syria, but Turkey was exclusively fighting ISIS and the SDF. (Sandikli and Semin, 2014) Turkey had previously called for Assad's resignation and removal by the opposition had a stark change of policy and focused solely on the Kurds and ISIS. The rhetoric that lead up to 2016 proved to be only and only rhetoric. While Turkey was fighting ISIS and YPG less than 100 KM away the regime took Aleppo from the opposition. Turkey allowed the regime to virtually collapse the Syrian opposition in 2016 by standing by idly when they were within full capability to engage the regime. (Sandikli and Semin, 2014) This was a moment of realization for many opposition leaders and Islamists observing Syria that Turkey was not pro or anti Assad; Turkey was strictly following national interest. Turkey had entered Syria to prevent the YPG's pockets from the East and the West to merge creating a hostile border to Turkey that would prove paramount for the PKK in Turkey. (Sandikli and Semin, 2014)

Turkey's involvement in Syria is full of contradictions, and political manoeuvring that is vehemently compromising of an ideology that many pundits claim that Turkey is following. For example, in 2003, the same Turkey that refused America the use of Incirlik airbase and logistic support to invade Iraq was practically lobbying in Washington to remove Al-Assad. During the first year of Russia's involvement in Syria, Turkey was still arguing for the removal of Assad, and had a major spat with Russia when they downed two Sukhoi Su-24 aircraft near the border. (Danforth, 2018) Ironically enough by the time Operation Euphrates launched Turkey was pursuing bilateral diplomacy with Russia to come to an agreement about Syria. (Eckels, 2017)

Moreover, most recent developments have proven again that Turkey has no ideological claims in Syria. The Syrian regime started an offensive in April codenamed “Dawn of Idlib”, and the offensive was directed at the rebel groups in North Western Syria.(Rhodes, 2018) There were multiple ceasefires and Turkey was supposed to be guarantor of a demilitarized zone it had negotiated with Russia in 2018.(Cagaptay, 2017) Turkey was also supposedly allied with the rebel groups in the area but even when threatened directly by the Syrian Army Turkey refused to take a hard line stance, and instead sat down with Russia. Turkey was criticized heavily for “betraying” the rebels and selling out the opposition, but the reality of the situation was evident that Turkey was not willing to risk conflict with Russia over ideological pursuits. (Cagaptay, 2017)

Conclusion

Discussions on foreign policy inevitable revolves around rhetoric and action, and Turkey is no exception. Turkish foreign policy is not determined by the rhetoric of leaders, and a brief look into the history of Turkey’s alignment illustrates that Turkey has consistently favoured caution and pragmatism. The tradition of pragmatism passed down from Ataturk is still the driving force in Turkey’s foreign relations, and the main cause for concern the West should be keeping track of is the alienation of Turkey. Turkey has kept a fairly balanced relationship with the EU, NATO and the US amidst the rejection and antagonism it has been subjected to. The European Union has repeatedly rejected and kept Turkey at an arm’s length, and it should come to no surprise that Turkey has turned East after years of antagonism Turkey has also been kept in the periphery in NATO to the point where a NATO ally, the US supports a terrorist organization that threatens Turkeys territorial integrity and security.

The pragmatist tradition of Turkish foreign policy will prevail in the face of adversity as it has since 1923. Turkish Foreign Policy as dictated by the likes of Ataturk and Inonunu has had clear dedications to sovereignty. The JDP is no exception when it follows the traditions set forward by Ataturk and his circle. Turkey has not been involved in any major conflict or

threatened the territorial integrity and sovereignty of another nation since the founding of the Republic save for the humanitarian intervention in Cyprus by incumbent deputy prime minister Necmettin Erbakan. Rather than just focusing on the changes in rhetoric and framing by the JDP it is important that the degree of continuity and loyalty to tradition be recognized. Turkey as a result of its history with invasions has embedded in its foreign policy the importance of the nation-state and everything that comes along with it. Turkey has a longstanding tradition of non-intervention and respect for the sovereignty of its neighbours. Turkey has not aspired to promote its ideology abroad unlike the United States and Iran in the region and has vehemently kept a realist stance towards the maintenance and protection of its borders.

The rhetoric of the JDP should not be taken at a face value and understood for what it is. The JDP is a political party that wants to maintain the status quo, and Erdogan's rhetoric should be understood an electoral manoeuvring and international clout for soft power. (Danforth, 2013) The JDP has used rhetoric extensively to curb opposition domestically and to garner significant soft power abroad. (Danforth, 2013) The overemphasizing of rhetoric in Turkish foreign policy has done naught but further sour relations, and it is evident that the assumptions that stem from Western states is rooted in a colonial understanding of Turkey and Muslims as unable to pursue rational goals.

The takeaway from the example of Syria is that Turkey has pursued short-term opportunistic policies and is able to switch and adapt their stance on the regional dynamics at the time. Turkey was willing to sacrifice the opposition forces and Aleppo if it meant they could freely operate against the YPG in Northern Syria. (Cagaptay, 2017) Turkey was also again able to compromise and abandon the opposition if it meant they could broker a deal with Russia for the S400 missile defence systems. Turkey was even willing to compromise its relationship with their long-standing ally NATO for short term goals such as the S400 missiles. (Cagaptay, 2017) All the discussion about Islamism, and Neo-Ottomanism stay in rhetoric

and only rhetoric as Turkey time and time again seems to favour national interest and security over any ideology that claims to dominate the Turkish political landscape. Perhaps this is one of the strongest indicators for Turkey's continuity in foreign policy since the Ataturk era, and the age-old realist understanding that national interest trumps all ideologies.

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