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Moving Away from The West or Taking Independent Positions: A Structural Analysis for The New Turkish Foreign Policy

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by

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this thesis work to my family, which has supported me to overcome my challenges between work and graduate studies. I owe special thanks to my wife, Hasibe, for her continued and unfailing support and understanding during my pursuit of Master's degree. I am genuinely thankful for having you in my life and appreciate your efforts to hold our family together and keep the things running when I was not around.

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on understanding and explaining the change of Turkish foreign policy, particularly in the last decade. Many observers have expressed a suspicion that Turkey is abandoning its Western-centric alignment and gradually shifting its axis. The thesis argues that rather than a shift, Turkey is taking an independent position. It maintains that the end of the Cold War and the change in the international structure from bipolarity to unipolarity has provided incentives for countries with some degree of material capabilities to pursue independence from the U.S. policy preferences.

This study analyses structural effects on the behavior of Turkey. Later it associates the observed change in Turkey's foreign policy as the outcomes of taking an independent position to maximize its objectives. Finally, it presents empirical research to prove the argument.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, there has been heated debate about recent changes in Turkish foreign policy (TFP). Turkish policies like the hosting of Hamas leaders in Ankara, the severing of relations with Israel, a vote in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) against sanctions on Iran, and the development of a close relationship with Sudan have all contributed to a weakening of relations with the West. Furthermore, some argue that Turkey's increased interactions with Russia and China are evidence that Turkey is detaching itself from the West.

This study aims to reveal why Turkish foreign policy has been transformed in the period 2009-2018 and what lies behind the perceived change. In the last decade in particular, many observers have expressed a suspicion that Turkey is abandoning its Western-centric alignment, gradually shifting its axis. Some argue that this change is the result of an Islamist-oriented administration's ideological commitments (Altunisik, Meliha & Tur, 2004a; Altunisik, Meliha & Tur, 2004b; Benli Altunisik, 2009; Pipes, 1993; Yanık, 2011). Others see in current Turkish foreign policy signs of neo-Ottomanism, a reawakening of Turkey's hegemonic desires. Many champions of social and institutional analysis argue that elites' increased emphasis on the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic identity of the nation have caused the change (Constantinides, 1996; Erşen, 2013; Taspinar, 2008; Walker, 2009; Yavuz, 1998).

The central argument of this thesis is that these explanations largely overlook structural changes in the region and their effects on Turkey's behavior. Since the end of the Cold War, the regional international order has been unipolar, with the United States as the sole superpower, an

actor unchecked by another equivalent peer state. This structure has provided the opportunity for Washington to pursue interventionist policies in the Middle East that have become the primary source of instability in the region. Confronted by unrelenting wars and sanctions in its close neighborhood that have been instigated by the U.S., Ankara realized that a dependent alliance with Washington is not solving its problems anymore.

This thesis also asserts that the transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP) is enabled by Turkey's growing material capabilities, which allow its government to adopt a more independent position to maximize its objectives. The observed change is a reflection of Turkey's government centralizing national interests rather than prioritizing relations with the U.S. and the West. In that context; the work reveals that Ankara has adopted a more autonomous strategy that visibly contrasts with its previous submissive attitude.

The study is organized into four parts. Chapter 1 offers a background to the argument through a historical perspective. It analyzes the evolution of Turkish foreign policy from the Republic's establishment to 2019 in order to describe the transformation from a West-centric foreign policy to the new policy, which has been subjected to so much criticism. Chapter 2 reviews the literature regarding different explanations for this foreign policy change. This part of the work points out a serious gap in the literature, in particular a lack of system-unit level explanations. Chapter 3 attempts to prove that a unipolar systemic structure incentivizes countries with adequate material capability to adopt a self-help approach. It devises and tests a mechanism to explain the behaviors of Middle Eastern states. In Chapter 4, the study endeavors to prove that Turkish foreign policy makers have adopted an independent position to maximize Turkey's objectives. In the conclusion, the work highlights some of the major findings, points out the major contribution of this study, and offers some topics for future work.

CHAPTER ONE:

BACKGROUND FOR TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH WEST

Introduction

This Chapter will explain the reasons behind Turkey's West-centric orientation and the contemporary arguments about the change in its preferences. The general purpose is to define historical foreign policy attitudes of the country against systemic pressures of international structure. Firstly, it will cover the elite's motives, which endorsed fast rapprochement with important European countries just after the independence war that took place against them. The second part will focus on Turkey's behavior during the Cold War and the subsequent existential Soviet threat that bolstered the desire of Ankara to form institutional ties with the West. The third part will account for Turkey's Middle East policies as part of the Western security organization. Later, the study will cover the period when the security threat decreased, and the eagerness to reformulate Turkish foreign policy has strengthened. The final part will aim at recalling the most significant current issues that have ignited a wide-spread debate regarding the new orientation of TFP.

The Fledgling Republic's Pillars: The Status quo, Restraint, and Westernization

The mindset of the Turkish founding fathers that gave direction to Turkey's foreign policy (TFP) was forged by two inescapable factors. Foremost, since the regression period, the Ottoman rulers' priority had been modernizing the Empire's military structure in the fashion of European

armies, which exposed soldiers to the Western institutional mindset. Therefore, the military was the pioneer in reforming the state. Second, during WWI, some ambitious Ottoman statesmen pursued policies without considering the existing gap between their objectives and the Empire's capabilities, which increased the suffering of the nation and pushed the country to the brink of total annihilation(Ulgul, 2017).

Ataturk, a former Ottoman Army general with high intelligence, had already espoused a Western mindset and believed it important that leaders be realistic when establishing policies and set goals that were within reach of the nation's resources. After the successful War of Independence, he was aware of the nation's significantly depleted resources and human capital. Therefore, as the leader of the national struggle and the newly emerged Turkish Republic, Ataturk prioritized the consolidation of gains and the modernization of the country. At his direction, the foreign policy of the new Turkish state was established on two principles: Westernization[1] and maintenance of the status quo(Ucarol, 2008).

According to Ulgul, after the War of Independence, Turkey sought to re-establish close relations with the Western powers for practical and ideological reasons. Practically, these states became neighbors due to the League of Nations' colonial mandate regimes of Great Britain and France in Iraq and Syria. Turkey was insufficiently powerful to systematically oppose these powers in its pursuit of its goal of resolving the remaining problems of the Lausanne treaty after July 1923. Thus, the leaders of the country preferred diplomacy over aggressive strategies, which facilitated the resolution of issues related to the Treaty of Lausanne and the development of close relations with the Western world. Turkey positioned itself as a defender of the status quo by prioritizing policies that respected regional borders and territorial integrity.

[1] The term "Westernization" is used to describe efforts to achieve the civilization level of the developed countries through emulating the administrative and social structures of those states.

Ideologically, the political elites considered that being part of Western civilization was the only way to modernize the country. They felt that a stable international environment and good relations with the great powers were essential to the success of the comprehensive reforms aimed at building a secular nation-state. Thus, Turkish foreign policy favored close relations with the West, seeing such relations as crucial to overcoming the fledgling state's internal and external challenges.

After WWI, when Europe began to witness revisionist nationalist leaders such as Mussolini and Hitler, Turkish partnership became more valuable to the supporters of the status quo. Great Britain and France began to feel pressure inside Europe, which incentivized them to make concessions in more peripheral issues (Ucarol, 2008). Using the change in political environment, Turkey managed to resolve border issues like Hatay with France and Mosul with Britain via diplomacy. In turn, Ankara received their support for the Montreux Convention regarding the Turkish Straits (Hale, 2013). The pursuit of development through Westernization, preference for the status quo and the peaceful approach towards the major powers in resolving controversial regional issues enabled Turkey to develop close relations with the West.

Existential Threats (WWII, USSR): Flexibility, Engagements, Alignment

During WWII, although it favored the status quo bloc, Turkey adopted "active neutrality" towards the warring states as a way to stay out of the war (Hatipoglu & Palmer, 2016). However, in the aftermath of the war, the increasing Soviet threat encouraged Ankara to prioritize a security-oriented approach, which bolstered its desire to seek closer relations with "The Allies." This trend encouraged Ankara to seek institutional integration with the U.S.-led West. (Hatipoglu & Palmer, 2016)

The USSR's clear intention to expand communism to Turkey forced Ankara to forgo a neutrality strategy and align itself with the ideologically closer West. When the Soviet regime had begun to occupy the Eastern and Central European countries, it started to put pressure on Turkey, Iran, and Greece; Ankara associated itself with the U.S., which was the only country capable of resisting the USSR(tarihbilimi.gen.tr, 2015).

Turkish security concerns peaked when the Soviet Union demanded mutual control over the Gallipoli and Bosporus straits and increased its naval activities in the Black Sea. In order to cope with the situation, Turkish officials sought support from Washington and London. Meanwhile, as the Soviet Union had become a major security threat, the U.S. formulated its new policy of "containment," in which Turkey was granted a significant role.

In this context, the 1947 Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, which were enacted to increase the ability of threatened countries to resist Soviet aggression, facilitated the establishment of military and economic ties between Turkey and the U.S. Ankara actively worked to build a more sustainable and institutional alliance with the West and was eager to become a NATO member since its foundation in 1949. However, this desire was hampered, especially by the Scandinavian states and Britain, which were concerned about the possibility of being entangled in a war outside of Europe. These states argued that the acceptance of an underdeveloped Muslim Turkey in NATO would deteriorate the unity of the Transatlantic Alliance and that the modernization of the Turkish army would require a significant amount of financial support (Yilmaz, S., 2006).

However, two crucial development changed the unfavorable strategic environment that allowed Turkey to become a member of NATO. First, during the 1950 election, the long-ruling Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP; Republican People Party or RPP) lost the elections, and the

Democrat Party took control. This incident was perceived as proof that Turkey had a functioning democracy. Second, the newly elected Democrat Party leaders swiftly decided to dispatch a regiment to support South Korea following the UN Security Council Resolution 82 in 1950. In this war, the effective fighting capacity of the Turkish forces and the decisiveness of the government increased Turkey's prestige and its standing in the international arena (Bilgin, 2009). Sending troops to Korea was an early example of a decision that indicated Turkish foreign policy was shifting toward "engagements" as a part of the Western world.

Seeing it as a timely opportunity, Turkish officials sent a request for admittance to NATO in August 1950. Because of the military advantages the location of Turkey could provide the alliance, reinforcing NATO's Southern Flank (NATO, 2018) and forcing the USSR to divert forces from Europe, the U.S. sponsored the entry of Greece and Turkey as full members of NATO. However, Britain, intimately concerned with the security of the Suez Canal, had contemplated forming an organization within which Turkey would have an important role, and London insisted on accepting Turkey's membership to NATO only if Ankara showed a willingness to participate in those British regional arrangements (Yilmaz, S., 2012). In the end, after Turkey and Britain agreed on cooperation in the Middle East, London yielded to the U.S. pressures and accepted Turkey as a member state of NATO. On 18 February 1952, Turkey finally succeeded in institutionalizing its relations with the West through membership in a permanent security alliance.

Turkey's Involvement in the Middle East

The foreign policy of the Turkish Republic remained Europe-centric until the end of WWII. However, after the Second World War, in 1947, Great Britain announced that it could no longer sustain its responsibilities undertaken in treaties and could no longer prevent Russian expansion

toward the south in the wake of the communist satellization of Eastern Europe, the communist-inspired civil war in Greece and Soviet pressures for a naval base in the Turkish Straits. London urged Washington to take over that responsibility or the danger of Soviet expansion was imminent (Ucarol, 2008).

Between 1945 and 1975, the decolonization process of the European colonial empires gave independence to 67 new states, 36 of which were in Africa. The freshly founded states became a new front for strategic competition between the U.S.-led West, and the USSR-led East. The decolonization process and the changing balance of power encouraged the Soviet Union to increase its influence and pursue policies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region with an eye to achieving several goals. First, while the USSR had consolidated its western border through the occupation of satellite countries, its southern flank remained open. Second, because the British and French were weakened by war and Italy was among the defeated states, an opportunity appeared for the Soviet bloc to fill the power vacuum in southern Mediterranean region and former colonies. Third, the USSR was contemplating expansion toward the Mediterranean region and gaining a presence in the Atlantic. Finally, spreading ideology and securing economic benefits were among Soviet objectives.

On the other hand, after the United States had taken over responsibility for the Middle East from the United Kingdom through its new strategic policy of anti-Soviet containment, Washington tried to shape both the European and Mediterranean region in a way that would prevent the expansion of the Eastern Bloc. At the time, the U.S. was contemplating the construction of a Middle East security structure associated with the NATO-led West in which newly independent Israel would be integrated. However, because such a policy ran the risk of provoking immediate

push-back from regional Arab states, Washington abandoned this strategy and focused on building regional security organizations in which Israel would not actively participate.

Pursuant to the abovementioned policy and in order to consolidate the Middle East's security and prevent Soviet expansion in the region, on 24 February 1955, Turkey and Iraq established the Bagdad Pact. The UK, Pakistan, and Iran joined the organization in the same year. Thus, a new security bloc or so-called Green Belt was formed to prevent Soviet expansion in the region. Although the Bagdad Pact and its immediate successor Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) did not perform well due to 1955 Iraqi coup that led this country to leave the pro-Western bloc, the initiative became crucial to prove the commitment of Turkish foreign policy to the Western community.

During this time, as a founding member of the pact, Turkey pursued an active policy of enlisting Arab members, which antagonized Egypt and its allies. Interestingly, Turkey voted against the Egypt-backed Algerian independence in 1956 in the U.N. General Assembly. A year later, Turkey expressed strong resentments to Syria and threatened Damascus with the use of force because Ankara perceived internal developments in that state as a Soviet plot. By 1958, Ankara joined the so-called Peripheral Pact and permitted the U.S. to use its Incirlik airbase to intervene in Lebanon.

Although Turkey became quite *active* in the Middle East region in the 1950s, it was only involved in those regional arrangements proposed by the West and defined its national interest in the context of the Cold War. In addition, Turkey was eager to prove itself useful to its allies. As a result, Turkey engaged with the region as an extension of the Western security system, without considering itself a part of the Middle East sub-region (Benli Altunisik, 2009)

After the military coup in 1960, Turkish foreign policy became more withdrawn. Despite the brief interruption during the 1974 Cyprus military intervention, Turkey's Western orientation remained unquestioned. This preferred policy orientation continued until the last years of the Cold War when Turkey become aware of new opportunities to chart a more autonomous foreign policy.

Diminishing Security Concerns: Reconceptualized Activism

In 1980, Turkey shifted from an inward-oriented economic approach to a neoliberal market structure. Turgut Ozal, the architect of the new economic system, applied a comprehensive program aimed at promoting free markets and integrating the national economy into the world system (Özdemir & Serin, 2016) This reform brought along with it a new foreign policy perspective, one which required a substantial reformulation of Turkey's relations with the periphery. The change in industrial policy from one focused on import-substitution to one focused on exports demanded the establishment of stable trade networks. Therefore, the structural change in the Turkish economy encouraged Turkey to pay closer attention to regional affairs (Karaosmanoglu,2000). However, Turkey's attempts to develop new policy approaches did not become observable until the 2000s; until then, in practice, Ankara continued to formulate its relations with neighboring countries based mainly on security concerns.

The end of the Cold War was a milestone of change in Turkish foreign policy(Danforth, 2008; Onis, 2011). During the '90s, Turkey abandoned its regional non-interference policy and became involved in the First Gulf War. Ankara deployed a substantial number of troops along the Iraqi border, opened airspace to U.S. aircraft, and provided support to the no-fly zone in northern Iraq. Moreover, Turkey nearly initiated a conflict with Syria over its support of the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan; Kurdish Workers Party) and went to war with Greece over the Kardak islets.

During the same decade, through emphasizing their cultural and historical similarities, Turkey attempted to establish politico-economic ties with post-Soviet Central Asia, where many Turkic republics emerged as independent states after the dissolution of USSR (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). Likewise, to overcome the regional economic compartmentalization caused by the Cold War, Turkey initiated the Black Sea Economic and Cooperation Council in 1992 (Kirisci, 2009) At the end of the '90s, Turkey's interest in EU membership increased.

The most important foreign policy decision-makers in the '90s; Turgut Ozal, Suleyman Demirel and Ismail Cem, believed that Turkey needed a multi-dimensional and engagement-based policy orientation. For that reason, they continuously emphasized the need to make use of Turkey's cultural and historical identities, while criticizing the established rigid approach. However, although the end of the Cold War bolstered Turkish willingness to engage with and mold the surrounding environment, the country was significantly lacking in the capabilities to extract benefits from these engagements (Hatipoglu & Palmer, 2016; Muftuler Bac, 2011; Oguzlu, 2008). As a general tendency, even though some policies of the U.S. in the region were detrimental to Turkey's national interests, Turkey's leaders engaged in activism in this period while being careful not to detach their nation from the Western security framework (Ulgul, 2017).

The Era of Transition (1999-2008)

One of the most significant security issues that effect Turkey's foreign policy is the emergence of the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan; Kurdish Worker Party). Abdullah Ocalan established PKK in 1979, as a response to socio-economic backwardness in mostly Kurdish populated areas, (where the majority of ethnic Kurds lived in villages under conditions similar to

feudalism created by landed tribal leaders) and Turkey's nationalistic ideology that centralized "equal citizenship" around Turkishness (Tezcur, 2015).

Since the nation-building period after 1923, the existence of different ethnicities was seen as a threat for long-desired homogeneous society. The possibility of Kurds to become a separate political actor had been perceived as an element that can hinder the centralized unity and even harm the territorial integrity of the state. In the 1980s to 2000s, as a continuation of this policy, the Turkish state rejected the presence of any other ethnic group and associated the problems in these regions with tribalism, reaction to secularism and modernity, and regional socio-economic backwardness. This situation has increased the perception of political exclusion for Kurdish identity (Yegen, 1996).

Primarily, Abdullah Ocalan aimed a change inside the Kurdish society and initiated armed struggle in 1979 against the powerful landlords, which he believed were the real suppressors of the Kurds (Tezcur 2015). Later, the PKK has initiated armed conflict against the Turkish state since 1983. Because the geographical areas where the PKK initially confronted the landlords was not favorable to conduct guerilla warfare against the Turkish military, it relocated its forces to the mountainous Iraqi border region, where the state authority was historically weak.

Also, border regions were suitable for PKK to receive backing from its external branch members located in the neighboring countries as well as from the adjacent states' administrations. For example, because of the water problems and territorial disputes with Turkey, the Syrian government considered the existence of PKK as leverage against its northern neighbor (Tejel, 2008). After the military coup in Turkey in 1980, Syria offered refuge to the PKK leadership as part of a balancing strategy against Turkey (Schott, 2017). Syria allowed the PKK to open political offices in many cities, which turned the PKK into the only Kurdish political movement that can

operate in the country without interruption. Moreover, the First Gulf War and the power vacuum left by Saddam provided the PKK with an opportunity to use Iraq as a sanctuary, where from it can organize attacks against Turkey.

At the end of the ‘90s, Turkey began to feel some destabilizing effects from U.S. policies, especially America’s policy in Iraq. The no-fly zone and the subsequent central government’s decreased control provided the PKK with a safe haven. That situation became the harbinger for the future dissatisfaction of Turkey against the U.S. methods in the region. For example, on 24 January 1999, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, a social democrat, requested a dialog with the U.S.to clarify some uncertain policies regarding Iraq. Ecevit expressed his concerns about the risk of regional war, stating that the U.S. policies toward Iraq were his primary concern (Aydin, Erhan, & Erdem, 2001).

In 2002, the newly elected Justice and Development Party (JDP) government followed a multi-dimensional and active foreign policy similar to that of Ozal and Cem. Turkey initiated unprecedented engagements with its neighbors as well as previously neglected regions such as Africa and Latin America. Similarly, Ankara prioritized the negotiation process for obtaining full membership in the EU and boosted relations with the Central Asian states. Turkey has enlarged the amount of provided foreign aid, increased its presence in peace-keeping operations, become more visible in international organizations, increased foreign missions by opening new embassies, and established direct air travel to many new destinations (Hatipoglu & Palmer, 2016).

One of the most prominent examples used as evidence of Turkey’s divergence from the West occurred during this period, when the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) refused to grant permission to the U.S. forces from Turkish soil against Iraq in March 2003 Second Gulf War. Although this event was a significant blow to U.S.-Turkey relations, Europeans shared an

anti-war view similar to that of Turkey, suggesting this incident is not in fact clear evidence of Turkey's departure from the West (Hatipoglu & Palmer, 2016) Still, actions such as accepting Hamas officials in Ankara in 2006, an event received by the U.S. with caution, raised eyebrows about Turkish activism in the region.

The Era of Intense Criticism (After 2009)

The real discussion about the shift in Turkish foreign policy emerged after 2009, when Turkey ceased diplomatic relations with Israel over the Mavi Marmara incident, voted in the UN against sanctioning Iran for its nuclear program, continued relations with Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir, and improved its relations with China and Russia, while decreasing its interest towards the EU.

This transformation in Turkish foreign policy started the "axis shift" arguments, which created an extensive literature about the orientation, goals, and causes of the observed change. Despite the debate, initially, Turkey continued to cooperate with the U.S. In 2009, Barack Obama made his first overseas presidential visit to Turkey, to emphasize its role as a model country that could successfully accommodate liberal markets, Islam and democracy. At the time, the U.S. viewed Turkey as a perfect model of the sorts of democratic governments that it was hoped would replace the authoritarian administrations of the Middle East after the Arab Spring (Ulgul, 2017).

However, the U.S. administration abandonment of the moderate Islam project (Hamid, Mandaville, & Mccants, 2017) , bad relations with Israel and the policy conflict in Syria worsened the relations to a historic low. The U.S. lost interest in the Syrian civil war and prioritized the fight against ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). Consequently, Washington stopped its contribution to the opposition and started to support the YPG (YPG: *Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*; People

Protection Unit), which was the Syrian branch of the PKK, as local partners in the fight against ISIS. Moreover, on 19 October 2014, the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition dropped small arms and ammunition as well as other provisions to YPG elements. In June 2015, the YPG captured the border town Tel Abyad from ISIS with the help of the U.S. led-coalition. Turkey vocally criticized this development that allowed the PKK's sister organization to control over 250 kilometers of the Turkish-Syrian border. At the end of January 2016, U.S. Presidential Special Envoy for the fight against ISIS, Brett McGurk, visited northern Syria and posed together with PYD militias, which caused an uproar in Turkey.

Subsequently, after harshly criticizing Washington, Turkey began to openly oppose the U.S. policies and objectives in the region by actively projecting force and organizing diplomatic initiatives. On 24 August 2016, Turkey launched operation "Euphrates Shield" against ISIS and PKK-related Kurdish PYD militias (Kanat, Diptas, & Hennon, 2017). On 24 April 2017, Turkish warplanes conducted raids against PKK/PYD positions in Iraq and Syria; some of these raids took place just 10 miles away from U.S. forces. On 13 December 2017, Turkey called Organization of Islamic Cooperation (ICO) members in Istanbul to condemn Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. On 29 December 2018, Ankara finalized a contract with Moscow for the acquisition of the Russian S-400 air-defense system. Turkey moved ahead with the contract despite the strident opposition of NATO and the threat of the U.S. to cancel the sale of F-35 jet fighters. On 20 January 2018, Turkey initiated "Operation Olive Branch" to curb the PYD/YPG control in Afrin city, a move that put U.S. policymakers between a rock and a hard place (Cavusoglu, 2018)

Further deviating from U.S. policy preferences, Turkey has begun to participate in diplomatic initiatives organized by Russia. Ankara refused to abide by the unilateral sanctions

imposed by the U.S. after unilateral withdrawal decision from the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). Moreover, Turkey was one of the leading states to lobby against the U.S. decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

A vigorous discussion has emerged about the Turkish foreign policy (TFP) transition which saw Turkish policy evolving from complete submission to open opposition against its traditional allies, especially since 2009. A concise review of Ankara's general foreign policy evolution hints at a persistent trend towards displaying more agency in international relations. The following chapter discusses a variety of views in the literature regarding the change in TFP.

Conclusion

This Chapter has attempted to recapture the motives behind Turkey's Western proclivity. During the first years of the fledgling republic, improving relations with the major Western states was unavoidable because of the preferred path for development and security reasons. Later, the devastating effects of WWII and the subsequent Soviet threat raised Turkey's security risk perception and bolstered its willingness to establish stronger ties with the U.S. led West.

Through the Cold War, Turkey clung to the West and acted as an extended arm of the alliance framework. Ankara defined its national interests in parallel with the West and attempted to prove itself useful to its allies.

However, when the security threats have diminished, and Turkey transformed into a new economic model that has required an outward looking for development, regardless of which spectrum they belong to, Turkish elites attempted to reformulate foreign policy approach. They developed a multi-dimensional and engagement-oriented foreign policy rhetoric but hardly realized any of its objectives.

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Turkey's behavior has changed dramatically. Ankara has diverged from the traditional policy and took a more confrontational stance. Currently, Turkey has many problems especially with the U.S., which produced myriad arguments about the cause for the transition.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will explore different explanation regarding the change in Turkish foreign policy by examine the main arguments and the core of their assumptions. It aims at discovering viable interpretations of the phenomenon and define the gap in the literature.

The literature regarding the substantial change in Turkish foreign policy preferences since the end of the Cold War has received great deal of attention, especially in the last decade. Nearly all of the studies agree that Turkey has become a more assertive actor and its activism has dramatically increased around its surroundings. There is a consensus that Turkey has exhibited a propensity to act more independently, which contributes to a belief that there has been a "shift of axis" or departure from Western orientation. Many argue that the shift stems from ideational reasons, while some stress the weight of material factors. Analyses which are focused on Turkey's domestic dynamics dominate the scholarly opinions, outnumbering systemic approaches.

The literature which explains interstate relations and changes in foreign policies usually categorizes the competing theories according to their "level of analysis." Since the descriptions about the TFP transformation are dispersed, and the arguments usually do not follow a specific approach, this study will classify them according to the Waltz's "level of analysis" approach, which entails three levels. The first level, the "systemic" (international) analysis, focuses on the place of the actors in the international system and posits that the structure exogenously determines the

behaviors of the states. He classifies as second level explanations those based on "domestic" factors of nation-states, such as culture, society, and institutions. This category includes theories which claim that states do not merely respond to the structure but consciously built it. Finally, in the individual-level classifications, he takes the personal attributes of individual statesmen as the unit of analysis (Evans, Jacobson, & Putnam, 1993; Singer, 2006; Waltz, 1969).

Domestic Level (State Structure) Analyses

For the most part, scholarly studies have chosen domestic level analyses to explain the change that has occurred in TFP. Among the proponents of this method, some scholars have affiliated the new policy preferences with the shift of social dynamics and subsequent change in political power from secular elites to conservative parties, while others contend that the change has occurred within the neo-Ottoman concept.

The champions of the social change argument claim that, since the Ozal Administration[2], ruling political leaders have continuously emphasized the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic identity of the nation. This change in the perception of history reversed the nation-building ideology of the founders, who not only rejected the Imperial background and Islam as the essential elements of society but staunchly favored Western values and structures (Altunisik & Tur, 2004; Altunisik & Tur, 2004; Benli Altunisik, 2009; Pipes, 1993; Yanık, 2011). Similarly, Muftuler and Bac believe that the change in the power balance among internal actors with unlike worldviews is vital to understanding the transformation of Turkish foreign policy (Muftuler Bac, 2011)

Fuller argues that the rising social and economic power of the conservative Anatolian business class, most of whom backed Justice and Development Party (JDP) and identified

[2] Turgut Ozal was Prime Minister between 1983-1989 and President between 1989-1993.

themselves as the progeny of the Ottoman Empire, has accelerated this tendency. He asserts that their domination over the Western-centric elites facilitated the establishment of a connection with Turkey's historical past and its religious tradition (Fuller, 2008; Kirisci, 2009; Tezcur & Grigorescu, 2014).

On the other hand, institutional explanations focus on Turkey's relations with European allies. They claim that despite Turkey's genuine desire to be a full member, EU unwillingness to accommodate a country with a different culture and identity has severely changed public opinion and created a nationalistic backlash. Obstacles to becoming a full member state of Europe forced Turkey to look for other geopolitical alternatives (Başer, 2015; Kirişci, 2012; Onis, 2011). Similarly, Taspinar considers the change to be the result of Turkey's growing self-confidence vis-à-vis the West and its disappointment with the Transatlantic bloc (Taspinar, 2011).

The proponents of neo-Ottomanism as the explanation for the change in Turkish foreign policy have produced copious arguments to explain why Turkey has distanced itself from the West. One can observe that the popularity of this concept increased in two distinctive periods. It appeared in the literature for the first time when Turkey increased its interactions with Central Asian states after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The breakdown of the USSR and Russia's relative weakness at the time created a power vacuum in the Balkans and Central Asia. Turkey's desire to develop ties based on ethnic and cultural similarities was widely interpreted as an attempt to resurrect the Ottoman Empire (Constantinides, 1996; Erşen, 2013; Taspinar, 2008; Walker, 2009; Yavuz, 1998).

Fuller describes this first version of neo-Ottomanism as a development of Turkey-centric view, in which it stays in the middle of the reemerging world "rather than at the tail-end of a

European world" with " a renewed interest in the former territories and people of the Empire."(Fuller, 1992)

The second version surfaced with Ahmet Davutoglu's[3] "Strategic Depth" concept. Although officials refrained from using the term, this new idea of neo-Ottomanism was based on a belief that the Ottoman past is not only an advantage in the conduct of foreign policy but also places responsibility on Turkey to get involved in regional problems(Benli Altunışık, 2009; Murinson, 2006). The advocates of this version argue that Turkish foreign policy is closely related to national identity, that a newly emerged adherence to an Ottoman-Islamic narrative has influenced the preferences of the state (Yavuz, 1998). In some views, recalling the Ottoman multinational legacy allows Turkey to embrace the Kurdish population and reconfigure the definition of "citizenship" as less ethnic and more multinational. This relaxed version of "citizenship" emphasizes Islam as a common denominator between Kurds and Turks, and in turn facilitates the finding of commonalities in the Middle East. Taspinar argues that if neo-Ottoman visionaries can embrace such controversial domestic issues, they may also have a serious impact on the international level (Taspinar, 2008).

For others, Neo-Ottomanism principally tries to utilize the cosmopolitanism of the Ottoman legacy to exert influence on populations from differing cultures (Meral & Paris, 2010). As such, many believe that the Justice and Development Party (JDP) endeavors to utilize multiculturalism in relations with the states around its periphery by embracing the Islamic world outside the West(Gullo, 2012). Thus, while the first version of neo-Ottomanism was based on attempts to reconcile Turkey's Eastern and Western identity as an asset, the second version

[3] Ahmet Davutoglu is a prolific scholar and prominent figure in Turkish politics. He became a political adviser to Prime Minister Abdullah Gul and Recep Tayip Erdogan in 2003. During his service he was dubbed the shadow foreign affairs minister. In 2009, he became Minister for Foreign Affairs. Between 2014 and 2016 he held the office of Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic.

emphasizes an Islamic identity, which is in harmony with democracy and the West (Benli Altunışık, 2009; Gullo, 2012).

Furthermore, some assert that the shift is caused by a hybridization of geography and history, which helped Turkish elites to formulate an indigenous self-image as an "exceptional" nation. The central geographical position in-between the civilizations and the multicultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire has empowered Turkish policymakers to position themselves not only as mediators or peace brokers, but also to define the future role of the country as a "rising power"(Yanık, 2011)

Nonetheless, many argue that the current "change" argument may not be a new phenomenon since the social and historical context proves continuity in the evolving trend. They hint that affiliating the transition of the TFP to the ideological orientation of JDP prevents considering the observable facts(Benli Altunisik, 2009; Dietrich Jung, 2011; Hatipoglu & Palmer, 2016; Ulgul, 2017). Danforth analyzes policies from the foundation years to the Erdogan period and stresses that pragmatism, not ideology, shapes Turkish preferences (Danforth, 2008).

Individual Level (Characteristics of Individual) Analyses

Proponents of analysis at the level of the individual emphasize the influence of several political leaders on Turkish foreign policy. Their arguments focus on leaders who diverged from traditional West-oriented policies and propagated a new national identity that meshed with the multiculturalism of the Ottoman past and Islam. Advocates of this approach point to the powerful influence of Turgut Ozal, Abdullah Gul, Ahmet Davutoglu and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who have Islamic backgrounds. They believe that the conservative ideology of these leaders has led to their

enacting active policies in the former Ottoman space and produced an adversarial stance with the West.

Furthermore, the new course of Turkish foreign policy has been attributed to the rise of Islamism in the country and its popularity in the region. According to the supporters of this view, since the founders of JDP (Justice and Development Party) are well known members of political Islam, which naturally has some anti-Western sentiments in its character, it should not be surprising to observe a substantial shift of axis (Çınar, 2011; Eligür, 2010; Heper, 2013; Sambur, 2009).

Recently, most of the critics are attributed to Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is ruling Turkey since 2002. Some assert that President Erdogan's complete control over the Turkish state limited the U.S. influence to decision making through previously practiced strong institutional ties. Therefore, the decrease of institutional share in the decision making resulted in more centralized state structure which prioritizes the President's worldview and domestic political imperatives (Hoffman, Makovsky, & Werz, 2018).

Stein adds that the unpopularity of Western organizations such as NATO and EU among the Turkish nationalistic population has incentivized Mr. Erdogan to use anti-Western and confrontational policies against U.S. and EU as a source of consolidating domestic support for his policies. In this view, Turkish politicians are accused of using foreign policy as an instrument for populist political gain (Stein, 2018).

International Level (State System) Analyses

Interestingly, the systemic level analysis regarding the changes in Turkish foreign policy has received little attention, leading to a significant gap in the literature. Although some scholars

attribute Turkey's changing preferences to the nation's increased material capabilities, their analyses remain limited to correlating the rise of GDP with the emerging behavioral pattern.

For instance, Kirisci argues that the growing export-oriented industries have encouraged leaders to develop stronger relations with potential markets in the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa (Kirisci, 2009). Similarly, Tezcur and Grigorescu assert that after the end of the Cold War, emboldened by its increase in GDP, Turkey adopted a more independent position and assertive foreign policy (Tezcur & Grigorescu, 2014). Some parallel views emphasize the increasing GDP as the indicator of growing Turkish national power, which grants Turkey capabilities to conduct more independent policies (Hatipoglu & Palmer, 2016).

Bac believes that the major international transition of the end of the Cold War challenged the traditional paradigm of Turkish foreign policy and revealed alternative perspectives. Also, the collapse of the USSR eased pressure on Turkey and provided an opportunity to influence surrounding places, which led to redefining the historical/cultural dimension in Turkish foreign policy. Thus, she claims, the transition in the international systemic structure provided a context for re-thinking Turkish foreign policy(Muftuler Bac, 2011).

On the other hand, Aslan eloquently delineates a generic mechanism between material capacity and ideological factors and their effects on asserting agency in International Relations (IR). He assumes that accompanied by increasing material capabilities, Turkey seeks autonomy and active agency in the system. Thus, the country's recent preferences prioritize national interest at the expense of being perceived as a faithful follower of West (Inat, Aslan, & Duran, 2017)

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the ongoing scholarly discussion about the causes of the changed Turkish foreign policy. It has deployed the level of analysis approach to categorize the standpoint of the authors meaningfully. Since the study favors a system level interpretation, doing so has provided a clear map beneficial to reveal the gap in the literature. Also, it has helped to eliminate the works that randomly aggregated arguments to extract some meaning.

CHAPTER THREE:

EFFECTS OF A UNIPOLAR SYSTEMIC STRUCTURE ON REGIONAL STATES

Introduction

This chapter will focus on explaining the systemic effects of unipolar international structure on the behavior of regional states and link the findings with the observable aspects of Turkish foreign policy. In the first section, it will provide arguments that justify the purpose of the work. The next part will twist the structural realist approaches to conceptualize a regionally relevant testable theory for the Middle East. Finally, the chapter will lay out a mechanism that describes how the effects of systemic change incentivize Turkey to take an independent position and test the assertions.

The Research Question and Justification of the Study

This study attempts to find an answer to the question "Why have Turkey's foreign policy preferences changed?" The existing literature provides an extensive account of relevant socio-political events that successfully elaborates the observed reality based on domestic dynamics. However, even though most of the studies aim at explaining the "why" question, they frequently end up either with extremely reductionist answers or with responses that describe not "why" but "how" the change has occurred.

First, the existing literature accepts the end of the Cold War as an influential factor, but almost all studies treat it as a given fact. Despite the well-known reality that Turkey could never

escape from international turbulence and geographical shifts of power, the scholarly attention to the structural changes and their effect on the country's political preferences has received inadequate consideration. While many studies take the collapse of USSR as a starting point in describing the observed Turkish activism, they quickly delve into a more popular discussion of the ideational disposition of governing elites. Thus, many scholars concentrate their attention on the ideational dissimilarities of current elites with those of previous decision makers and base their findings on these differences.

Second, the majority of proponents of unit level explanations acknowledge Turkey's desire for autonomy, influence and responsibility in the region without succeeding in explaining, or even attempting to explain, why Turkey felt this desire. First of all, the elites who are at the center of the discussion and draw most of the criticism and bear most of the responsibility for policy changes have not created a new concept or set of objectives different from their predecessors. For example, Turgut Ozal (Prime Minister, 1983-1989; President, 1989-1993), a statesman with strong ties to the Islamic community, had a powerful desire to change Turkish foreign policy and depart from the established views by searching out alternative options. He was the first politician to introduce the Ottoman cosmopolite past and Turkish dual identity as an asset, and he advocated pursuit of a more active policy in Central Asia and the Middle East. However, during his tenure, he was a steadfast advocate of acting together with the U.S.(Benli Altunışık, 2009)

Likewise, Ismail Cem, a prominent center-left Turkish foreign affairs minister who served between 1997-2002, contemplated a conceptual renewal of Turkish foreign policy based on Turkey's dual identity. He was known as a statesman who accentuated the importance of pursuing active and assertive policies (Benli Altunisik, 2009) In his book, Cem defines his policy objectives as utilizing the cultural and historical assets in the region by highlighting Turkey's multi-

civilizational identity, exploiting Turkey's potential as a role model in the region, and solving problems with Turkey's neighbors, especially in the Middle East (Cem, 2001).

The similarities of the foreign policy objectives (re-defining multicultural identity, reducing problems with neighbors, and adopting an active approach) of the ruling JDP, which represents the conservative right, and the center-leftist parties, which delegated foreign affairs to Ismail Cem, are striking. These similarities across political parties lead one to ask how the ideological affiliations of the actors can be presented as a dependable source for the perceived change in the Turkish behavior pattern, and if we can expect to see Turkish foreign policy revert to its West-centric character after the current political leadership hands over power to elites with a different worldview.

Third, there is considerable evidence that contradicts the theory that the current government's Islamic tendencies and its affiliation with political Islam is a source for the observed changes in Turkey's foreign policies. The proponents of this view believe that souring relations with Israel, open opposition to U.S. policies, increased engagement with anti-American Iran, Hamas and Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, are evidence that Turkey's foreign policy is ideologically motivated. However, ideology can hardly explain why Turkey has moved to improve relations with ideologically irrelevant Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro, Brazil, Turkey's historical enemy Russia or the Chinese Communist Party which actively excludes and suppresses the Islamic identity of the Uyghurs' of Xinjiang province. If relations with these parties are merely motivated by anti-Americanism, then how to explain Turkish-U.S. cooperation in endorsing the democratization agenda in the Middle East during the Arab Spring? The JDP, since 2002, has proven numerous times that it is, in fact, one of the most pragmatic governments the Turkish Republic has ever had.

Unit level analysis significantly fails to explain Turkey's relations with its regional rival Iran. Both countries are champions of rival religious camps that cannot compromise their spiritual values. Both countries frequently blame each other's policies for the sectarianism in the Middle East. Turkey cautioned Iran against the use of Shia Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Iraq, while Tehran blamed Ankara's support of the opposition in Syria, which mostly consisted of Syrian Muslim Brotherhood affiliates, for the strife in that country. Seeing as re-imposed sanctions had the potential to seriously limit Tehran's political and economic influence in the region, why did Turkey resist U.S. sanctions policies which aimed to isolate Iran?

Finally, one can observe that the neo-Ottomanist explanations heavily emphasize historical aspects while underestimating the importance of security and economic perspectives. Significantly, these explanations fail to consider the inadequate material capability of the current Turkish state to invigorate such an imperial structure. Although the evidence indicates that Turkey prefers soft power and trade as a proper instrument to increase influence and extract benefits from the region, these views imply hegemonic intentions, which openly disregard the material capability gap of Turkey. For example, the proponents of this approach argue that the Turkish incursion in Syria is aimed at annexing the territories once believed to be part of the nation while disregarding the role of massive security threats and the already devastating spillover effects to Turkey in inspiring the interventions.

While admitting that the contributions of existing studies have some value, in the light of the literature review, this study assumes that the explanations of the phenomenon remain parsimonious and fail to provide a comprehensive mechanism which can meaningfully delineate the current and future evolution of Turkish policy preferences. The central fallacy of the current analyses is their tendency to interpret certain events and actors, which are only the "means" to

achieve certain “ends”, as the primary source for explaining Turkish foreign policy. The existing literature is deeply involved in unit level studies, and they tend to link the observed foreign policy behavior with the “instruments” of conducting politics rather than with the “objectives” of a state, which has an inherent desire to develop economically in a very advantageous but volatile geography. Therefore, this study aims to provide an alternative explanation, a sound systemic analysis, which can define the external pressures on Turkey and correctly position the domestic explanations in an appropriate context.

The Concept of the Study

Turkey Takes an Independent Position

This work claims that the perceived change in the TFP is mainly structural. Since the end of the Cold War, the global international systemic structure has shifted from bipolar to unipolar. This new structure lacks the threat of the USSR and has incentivized Turkey to reshape its traditional alliance relations. The diminished risk perception and the actual entrapment in poorly calculated American interventionist regional policies, which have turned out to be detrimental to Turkish national interests, pushed Ankara to pursue more “independent” policies.

In contrast with the Cold War, a policy of outsourcing the nation’s security needs by closely adhering to one great power and its alliance system is now unproductive for Turkey. Indeed, the U.S. no longer being checked by another peer power, it is now U.S. policies that have become the primary destabilizer of the region. Realizing that it cannot completely rely on the U.S. to materialize its national objectives, Turkey has preferred to reduce its dependence on the U.S. and (with the help of increased material capabilities) has adopted a self-help approach.

The preference of pursuing autonomous policies has transformed Turkey from a peripheral country in an alliance system into a central state which has to conduct its own affairs actively. Therefore, in order to fill the vacuum that has occurred as a result of rejecting a predominant state's policy preferences, Turkey has become an active regional actor whose policies sometimes have contradicted those of the unipole.

The Scope and Assumptions

The thesis of the study assumes that the change in TFP is *structural*. It posits that the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar international system and the state's growing national power has incentivized Turkey to deploy a self-help approach that requires a high level of political and security activity to replace previous arrangements.

To prove the claim, this chapter will conceptualize a regionally relevant testable structural theory for the Middle East, which can be utilized to describe the behavior patterns of local states as well as Turkey. It will lay out a mechanism that describes how the effects of systemic change incentivize Turkey to take an independent position. Later, in Chapter 4, the work will focus on explaining the changing nature of Turkish foreign policy. That part of the study claims that the shift in TFP is the outcome of attempting to materialize national objectives through independent policy choice. Also, it will empirically test whether the claim of the thesis is correct.

Since it is a structural analysis, the work focuses on system-unit interactions. It also assumes that the current structure of international relations is unipolar. Therefore, the study accepts Turkish-American engagements as the most lucrative area to investigate, because the U.S. preferences represent the system itself. Moreover, nearly all bilateral interactions are linked to or

take place in the Middle East. For that reason, the analyzed incidents are limited to the Middle East and the period from 1990 to 2019.

Systemic Effects of a Unipolar International Structure on Regional States

The study values the explanatory capacity of the structural realist theories. Yet, since these theories mainly focus on major powers and are narrow in their formulations, this work creates a tweaked version of a Structural Realist approach suitable to apply at the regional level. Mainly to do so, the study reformulates some concepts to close the gap between the theory and the observable facts.

First, both "defensive" and "offensive" realists have a very narrow definition of power, one which focuses primarily on military might and economy. To avoid being restricted in measuring the actors' actual national power and their relative positions in the international system, the study redefines power and deploys the DIME[4] (Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic) method.

Second, Structural Realists always describe the nature of the international system as fundamentally anarchic. This definition may be relevant in the Balance of Power School when the structure of the international system is either multipolar ("offensive" Realists) or bipolar as in the Cold War system ("defensive" Realist). However, all measurable facts indicate that--even though it is eroding--the structure of the international system is still unipolar[5]. As the Power

[4] DIME is a method, which is extensively used by policy planners in the military, to evaluate the national power of the actors of interest.

[5] The problem of polarity after the Cold War has hardly reached a consensus. The USSR implosion unequivocally brought the bipolarity to the end. However, the debate whether the supremacy of the U.S. could create a substantial unipolar system produced different explanations. Some argued that the unipolar moment would inevitably followed by multipolarity (Kegley and Raymond 1994; Waltz 2002; Kupchan 1998; Calleo 1999). Others such as Samuel Huntington's idea of "uni-multipolarity" tried to come up with some mixed versions (Huntington, 1999). Some favored a resistant and stable unipolarity around the U.S. predominance (Mastanduno and Kapstein 1999; Walt 2009; Wohlforth 1999). Similar to Buzan et al, this study believes that the definition of polarity is strongly dependent on the

Preponderance School posits, in a system where the distribution of power lies in the hands of a single state, the nature of the international structure is expected to be hierarchic. Therefore, in order to be consistent with observable facts, this work reconciles the Balance of Power (BOP) school's anarchical definition with the Power Preponderance (PP) school's hierarchical order. In other words, the study extends structural realist theory's explanatory power into the unipolar systemic order by redefining the nature of the international system at regional level.

Third, employing DIME analysis, the work evaluates the position of the Middle Eastern states in the regional structural spectrum and aims to provide a meaningful behavioral pattern that describes how regional states act under the systemic pressure of a unipolar international order. Finally, it checks the validity of the theory.

Power Redefined

The purpose of seeking a comprehensive definition of the concept of power is to take a realistic snapshot of the current Middle East regional security system structure and evaluate the regional states' positions in this system.

The Realist's approach to defining the concept of "power" is holistic and mainly focused on military and/or economic dimensions. However, these definitions are very simplistic and have a limited ability to accurately describe reality.

The academic debate about the definition of power is extensive. Some argue that states' material capacity (military or economy) remains always of primary concern. However, others also give primacy to non-material domestic factors such as national identity, practical procedures,

concept of "great power." At the moment, despite the high prospect of China, the current major powers have various defections to become full-fledged great powers (Buzan & Waever, 2010). Also, in the Middle East context, China avoids exerting agency against the U.S. regional policy preferences while Moscow display eagerness to challenge Washington but lacks significant capability.

ideologies that help to mobilize power in a specific direction, and strong leadership. Apart from the theoretical debates, the observable facts indicate that both material capacity and non-material factors are essential to generate "power" that can serve to advance the national interests of states. Therefore, to adequately define the power of the states, which is essential for evaluating their behavior, this section will operationalize the concept of power.

While there are many accepted "*elements for national power*," this paper will neglect the static components like geography or historical complexities and will focus on the dynamic

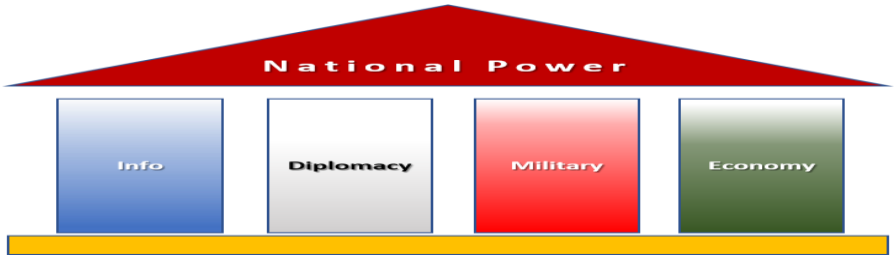

Figure 1: Elements of National Power

elements, namely Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economy (DIME)(Farlin, 2014). In this analysis, "D" (Diplomacy) is accepted as a method that nations use to convince other actors to act in favor of their national interests. It entails the ability of a state to have access in influential International Organizations (IO), aptitude for communicating with important actors of occurring conflicts, potential to initiate or actively navigate a bargain, peace talks or agreement, and the ability to create relationships with states of interest.

"I" (Information) as an instrument of national power refers to the ways a state uses information to shape the environment in which the realization of interest will take place. While the narrow definition of "information" is frequently associated with the intelligence that is essential to grasping the international environment, in the DIME method "information" refers more broadly to the strategic communication of objectives and the presentation of a nation's interests in the most persuasive manner. Thus, the informational domain describes the ability to create a favorable

environment for the national interest and reduce the opposition to the nation's policy preferences. In the regional context, information as an element of national power, the ability to present a message that will be accepted by the other states is significant. A state's ability to successfully present itself as a protector of a religion, a supporter of special minority groups, a benevolent actor toward neighbors, or an admired model country, or to convince other states that its military interventions are necessary actions, are good examples.

The "M" (Military) element of national power embodies the actual armed components or the military might of a nation. A credible threat to use a well configured hard power often provides options to policy- and decision-makers that can help them achieve national interests. Yet, due to the high cost of military action and the unpredictability of the outcomes of military conflict it is an element of the last resort.

The configuration and the source of military power have a direct effect on the behavior of the Middle Eastern states. States which perceive regional rivalries or major power threats have a motivation to configure a military with relevant capabilities. The criteria used to distinguish if a regional military power should be considered capable and modern include its ability to project power within the immediate neighborhood and the technological level of its domestic arms production. As mentioned before, in the regional perspective there are limits to the accumulation of power, and limits also apply to the development of military capacity.

Recent regional conflicts prove that modern warfare occurs in areas where air superiority is not contested. Since the U.S. and recently Russia have demonstrated the power to deny air space to any other actor, conflicts in the region are fought against proxy groups and with the coordinated consent of the major powers. Thus, nations with the capabilities to produce and use precision-guided ammunition, advanced surveillance systems, modern fire support configurations, and

armed drones gain a significant advantage—the ability to export a disagreement into a neighboring state, because of the lower cost of conducting a military operation. On the other hand, due to the widespread application of arms embargos and selective arms sales in the Middle East, states that outsource these abilities and must import military equipment frequently face obstacles in the pursuit of their national interests. For example, due to humanitarian concerns over Yemen and Saudi government officials' involvement in the murder of an opposing journalist, the U.S. banned sales of precision-guided ammunition to Saudi Arabia and stopped fueling the operations of the Saudi-led Arab Coalition, which significantly stalled its operations.

"E" (economy), the economic instrument of national power is the primary enabler of other dimensions of the DIME. Therefore, it is not only related to the issues of national economic resilience, but also with the way of organizing it as a tool of influence abroad. Many of the regional regimes lack popular support, and their hold on power is hardly legitimate. As such, while resorting to authoritarian measures helps to control the populations, inefficiency in economic development can be extremely dangerous--in many states, the ability to provide benefits to the populations replaces popular support as a source of legitimacy. Therefore, regional states assiduously take into account any possible economic losses or gains when formulating policies. This domain includes a wide range of elements like a nation's GDP, trade, foreign investment, economic assistance, financial position, and trading arrangements.

This study uses the DIME method to create a valid evaluation of the Middle Eastern states' national power in the current regional system.

Rethinking the ME Regional Order under the Dynamics of the Unipolar System

The theories of International Relations (IR) are more concerned with the global level and major powers, so they tend to neglect specific features of the regions and their actors. Since there is a lack of relevant structural theory applicable to the Middle East region, it is not surprising to observe that many scholars refrain from adopting comprehensive explanations based on system-level analyses. This study tweaks the structural approaches to devise an eloquent mechanism in accordance with the observed facts in the Middle East.

This part of the paper argues that at the *regional level* the system of international relations encompasses both *anarchical* and *hierarchical* features. It explains why the unipolar structure incentivizes some regional countries to pursue autonomy or adopt a self-help system. Finally, it presents an analysis of regional states that can prove the validity of the theory and its ability to explain the behavior of Turkey.

Realism as International Relation theory attempt to delineate the nature of the international system, define the concept of power, determine the dominant state behavior, and describe whether state preferences are exogenous or domestically driven. However, both the most preeminent Balance of Power (BOPw) and Power Preponderance (PP) theories are exclusively focused on the global level, and they look at the world from a great power point of view.

The Balance of Power (BOPw) school assumes that the nature of the international system is anarchic and that all states rely on their own capabilities to ensure national survival. Therefore, the sovereign nations in the international system are all self-help actors and the relations between the states are extremely competitive (Morgenthau, 1961). In addition, the proponents of BOPw argue that "balancing" is the dominant state behavior. While admitting that the nature of the international system is anarchic, in contrast with Morgenthau, Waltz and Mearsheimer emphasize

that it is not human nature but the international structure that is the decisive element in guiding state preferences. Accordingly, it is military capability that defines the concept of power (Mearsheimer, 2007; Waltz, 1982). On the other hand, Power Preponderance (PP) advocates argue that the nature of the international system is hierarchic; the dominant state behavior is" bandwagoning" while the size of the economy (GDP) best defines the concept of power (Organski & Kugler, 1980)

However, the visible evidence in the Middle East refutes both schools' expectations and reveals their explanatory capacities to be rudimentary to explain regional dynamics in the Post-Cold War. Since 1991, the U.S. is the unchallenged superpower in the region regarding all dimension of power (G. John Ikenberry et al., 2009; William C. Wohlforth, 1999). Yet, the regional states' behavior cannot be categorized flatly as bandwagoning or as balancing. In the region, while some countries continue to follow loyally the traditional U.S. hierarchy system (and bandwagoning), some states have recently adopted a self-help system and act autonomously or independently from the security preferences of the unipole superpower. Therefore, in the Middle Eastern regional systemic level, the nature of international relations has characteristics of both anarchy and hierarchy.

While in any international system the only fundamental security threat to a major power is another major power or an alliance of hostile states, at the regional level, Middle Eastern countries face multiple threats. They must deal with security threats stemming from global actors and regional rivals, as well as with internal instabilities which are triggered by the spillover effects of local conflicts, ethnosectarian rifts or social resentments. Besides, as much as security, economic development remains a top priority for all regional states. Failure in achieving a certain level of

economic prosperity has significant potential to weaken the stability of a state and the already dubious legitimacy of its regime.

Thus, the hierarchical nature of the region derives from the ongoing necessity to balance national and regional security risks vs. economic development. Bilgel argues that--in contrast to the great powers--the states in the Middle East have goals other than simply achieving security, goals like internal development. Therefore, most of them need to trade off their autonomy and depend on a benevolent great power to whom they outsource their security needs in order to concentrate on other essential objectives (Bilgel, 2014). Also, the lack of capabilities to cope with regional rivalries or internal threats makes weak states dependent on a security provider. Moreover, many governments have limited domestic or international legitimacy due to their inclination toward authoritarianism, non-democratic applications, and dire human rights history. Therefore, accepting the U.S. preponderance with a hierarchical bond is one of the guaranteed ways to avoid fierce American (unipole) criticism/intervention and ensure internal and external acceptability.

On the other hand, after the Soviet threat of the Cold War era dissipated, the unchecked American activism in the ME has created various stability problems. The lack of another peer power in the system which could effectively check the U.S. actions allowed America to act with impunity and unilaterally(Walt, 2009). Sometimes, apart from its intention, the U.S. can also inadvertently harm a regional nation's interests. Since the geographical distance of the U.S. from the ME region provides an extra secure buffer zone for adventurous policies and their uncalculated spillover effects, it finds leeway to act more irresponsibly. Consequently, in the Middle East, under the unipolar global order, aligning with the unrestrained U.S. has become less effective at solving a regional state's security problems.

Since 1991, many of the regional countries including Turkey have come to see American policies such as invading Iraq, supporting regime change in Iran and applying never-ending sanction regimes to regional states, as destabilizing acts. These policies have created ungoverned spaces and flocks of refugees, reduced local economic transactions and exacerbated ethnic and sectarian tensions.

Therefore, the nations with rising trajectories and sufficient material capabilities, which profit from the current status quo and have vested interest in the continuation of the regional stability, have twisted the nature of the regional structure towards anarchy by rejecting interventionist policies and pursuing more autonomous strategy (Bilgel, 2014). For example, Iran, a state directly threatened by the U.S., took up a policy of internal (hard) balancing and began to develop nuclear weapons as well as proliferating Shia proxy groups to counter the unipole in the Greater Middle East as a part of its forward defense strategy. Another example is Turkey, which was a loyal NATO ally with a complete Western-centric alignment during the Cold War, but has begun to pursue a more independent policy, including policies that sometimes are in conflict with U.S. strategies.

Analogously, in his analysis of the East Asian regional order, Sun Xuefeng asserts that the system in East Asia is a quasi-anarchical one, within which the states form hierarchical sub-systems in terms of security relations. In other words, it is a system which encompasses a hierarchical sub-system regarding security issues. He divides states into three different categories according to how they seek security. He describes the first type as the security guarantor, a state which can provide security guarantees to its client states as well as defend itself. The second category includes the client states which lack the ability to respond to main security threats and depend on the security of a guarantor state. He categorizes the third type countries as the self-help

states, which rely on their own capacity to deal with threats but are not capable of providing protection to other nations. Later he classifies the predominant security relations in a quasi-anarchical system primarily as competition (between two self-help states or between self-help states and the security guarantor) and as dependence relation (between client states and the security guarantor) (Xuefeng, 2013).

Similarly, Walt maintains that in a unipolar world order, in which security threats have diminished, the smaller partner of an alliance may prefer to take back its autonomy. However, he also presents another mechanism, which is relevant to the changing nature of Turkish foreign policy, positing that alliances are affected in multiple ways in the unipolar world order. These include the so-called twin dangers of "abandonment" (not receiving support in case of crisis or war) and "entrapment" (being compelled to participate in a conflict unwillingly). In unipolarity, because the unipole's need for smaller partners decreases, weaker states have to be concerned more about abandonment.

On the other hand, the stronger partner (in this case the U.S.) will worry less about entrapment (being pulled into a conflict) by a reckless ally. Still, free from peer power opposition, the unipole becomes more prone to fight wars. Walt argues that, in contrast with the findings, just as happened during the 2003 Second Gulf War against Iraq, the U.S. can put intensive pressure on weaker states to make them join the war on its side. Therefore, they become more vulnerable to being entrapped in unipole policies exclusively (Walt, 2009).

In conclusion, it is possible to state that the unipolar structure triggered two critical dynamics in the system. First, it has eased the risk perception, which induced Turkey to get its autonomy back. Second, being entrapped in the constant interventionist policies of the unipole,

which has significantly hindered economic development and created spillover effects that produced existential security threats, Turkey has chosen to be a more independent actor.

Up to now, this section attempted to explain the most relevant structural effects on Turkey's changed foreign policy. In the following part, the study will focus on testing the arguments mentioned above.

Behavioral Mechanism for the Regional States and Testing the Theory

Since a part of the thesis posits that the systemic change and the increased material capabilities of Turkey are the leading causes for the changed (independent) behavior, it should be valid for the other states, which share the same structural effects. Also, the theory must prove that if the material capabilities are not sufficient, the states develop more dependent relations with their security providers. Moreover, one should observe a correlation between fear of abandonment and insufficient material capability as well as between fear of entrapment and potency to cope with security threats.

This part of the study will focus on testing the claim. In order to explain the regional states' behaviors in relation to other powers in the system, there is a need to categorize all related actors hierarchically and functionally.

Classification of Relevant Actors

In this study, after a review of the literature,[6] the term "great power" is used for states that have global power projection capabilities as well as an interest in running the global order. These

[6] For example, see Detlef Nolte, "How to Compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Topics," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (Oct 1, 2010), 881-901, and Huntington, Samuel P., 1999 *The Lonely Superpower* or Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," in *Small States in International Relations*. (2006), 55-76.

states show stable power trajectories with minimal internal/developmental problems. They are capable of providing security to the aligned states at the global level. Most recently in history, the USSR and the U.S. were the two actors that deserve to be named as great powers. Today, as the single great power, the U.S. is generally described with the terms unipole, preponderant power or superpower. It is the unipole; therefore, the whole systemic structure is constituted and dominated by its preferences. States experience U.S influence in nearly all interactions within the international system. Thus, the Middle East nations' relations with the U.S. widely represent *unit-system* exchanges with the system. Similarly, this study accepts Washington-Ankara relations as a strong indicator to evaluate structural pressures on Turkey. Indeed, the test case of the thesis focuses on the Middle East region, where most of the interactions between Turkey and the U.S. occur.

On the other hand, the term "regional great power" refers to countries that are part of a particular region and have the capability to defend themselves against any coalition of other states in the region, states which are highly dominant in regional affairs and have the potential to become a superpower sometime in the future (Neumann, 1992). They are not "great powers" yet, because they have problems such as domestic instabilities or insufficient overall economic development. In addition, they can be categorized as states with region-wide (not global) power projection capabilities and actors with the ability to provide limited security guarantees to other the countries in a regional context (Nolte, 2010). These states are highly influential on the unipole's regional policies, but they are not necessarily considered seriously in calculations regarding the other parts of the globe (Buzan & Waever, 2010). In the system, they are potential peer competitors and the best available option to check the unipole's destabilizing policies. Therefore, these powers function as viable hedging or balancing options for the Middle Eastern states. They are the states that enable the anarchical system in the region and provide options for self-help seeking countries.

In the contemporary conjuncture, nations like China, Russia and to some extent the EU best fit the aforementioned description.

In the next level of the hierarchical order come the "regional powers." These states may have a formidable army, large populations or a relatively significant GDP. However, they cannot balance the major powers systematically, and they have unstable power trajectories (Bilgel, 2014). The characteristic features of these states are a necessity for sustained economic development, the existence of internal instabilities, threats to regime survival, and territorial integrity. In addition, these countries are reactive to the regional balances and they indicate willingness and capacity to assume the role of stabilizer, peacekeeper or peacemaker (Gilley & O'Neil, 2014).

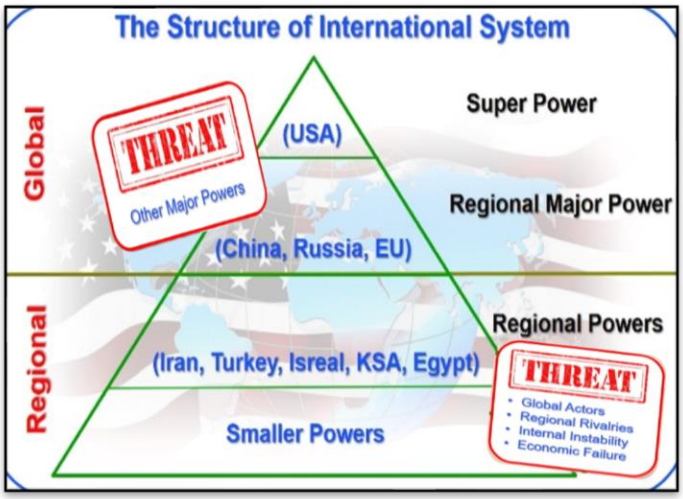

***Figure 2**. The Structure of International System.*

To be more specific and relevant with the general argument, regional powers also need to be divided into two sub-categories: (1) rising and (2) inert[7] regional powers. In this context, "rising regional powers" are the states which have the ability to efficiently deal with internal risks and capability to defend themselves against another regional rival. These states' power projection capabilities are mostly sourced and sustained domestically. They have diversified economic activities and trade relations in the region accompanied by potent leadership that can orchestrate

[7] Bilgel classifies these states as rising or declining states. However, naming some states as declining does not fit necessarily with the observation of actual situation and behavior. While the term "rising states" is an appropriate term to describe nations that can mobilize their potential to embrace new opportunities in the existing regional order, describing states as declining does not fit with reality. These states may not able to prevail the region due to the various structural or conjectural reasons but they do not necessarily decline. Therefore, in this study they will be termed "inert" states.

national power elements. These states have a stake in the existing regional balance, which has made them a prosperous and dominant actor in the region. They perceive the existing regional status quo as favoring their interests. Rising regional powers have a vested interest in maintaining the stability of the system because they have the potential to advance their national interest if it is not interrupted by an extra-regional power. Israel, Turkey, and Iran are good examples that meet these criteria.

On the other hand, inert regional powers are states which may have relatively adequate resources in comparison with the rising regional states, yet they are bereft of the capability to deal with internal and external threats effectively. Also, their military power mostly originates from arms imports with a relatively small proportion of indigenous production of modern military equipment. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Egypt, and partly the United Arab Emirates (UAE) suit classification in the "inert regional power" category.

According to a survey done in spring 2017 by Pew Research Center, among the five major Middle Eastern states (Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt) the key Middle East public see Turkey (63%) and Iran (53%) playing a larger role in the region in comparison with 10 years ago. Fewer said Saudi Arabia's role in the region had grown (41%) and even fewer expressed a belief that Egypt's prominence had increased (19%). About half of the public saw Israel playing a larger role (46%) (Fetterolf & Poushter, 2017).

The final category is smaller states. This category contains geographically small countries, failed states or administrations that lack many capabilities or resources to act effectively against other actors. Therefore, they resort to aligning themselves with another power. Countries like Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Qatar fit into this classification.

The position of the Regional States in the Structural Spectrum

The Hierarchical Structure. Figure 1 depicts the position of the regional states in two categories. The states positioned in the hierarchical order of the region are comprised of inert regional powers and small states. Their common features are (1) internal insecurity and a lack of regime legitimacy, (2) inadequate internal balancing capacity against regional rivals, and (3) non-existent or minimal power projection capabilities. Most importantly, all of these states have regime legitimacy issues and internal insecurities. They are absolute monarchies who cannot be confident of popular support, authoritarian minority regimes or states that have failed due to internal unrest. For example, the KSA and the UAE, the two most capable Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), are absolute monarchies that eliminate any political opposition. Therefore, they are afraid of popular Islamist Muslim Brotherhood movements that endanger the reigning families' rule. Likewise, Bahrain is a small island state where a 60% Shia population is ruled by a Sunni administration. Iraq, Syria, and Yemen remain at crisis points, mired in various sectarian and ethnic conflicts.

Second, these countries are incapable of dealing with regional rivalries and spillover effects of conflicts due to limited domestic resources. Small states like Jordan, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, even though they suffer relatively few domestic tensions, cannot handle regional rivalries on their own and prefer to outsource their security needs. Also, they are too small to resist the pressure of the U.S. and escape from the unipole's gravity. For example, as an economically developing country, Jordan depends on the KSA and U.S. monetary support. Since June 2018, Jordan has faced grave internal economic and political tensions, triggered by the spillover effects of the regional crises in Iraq and Syria (Younes, 2018). Sharing borders around crises points such as Israel, Palestine, and Syria, it depends on the U.S. to establish stability.

Since June 2017, the KSA and some other countries have severed diplomatic relations with Qatar and threatened that state with isolation if it fails to meet their demands to cease supporting the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). In response, Doha has developed even closer security relations with Washington. It signed $20 billion worth in contracts to buy new fighter jets from the U.S.,

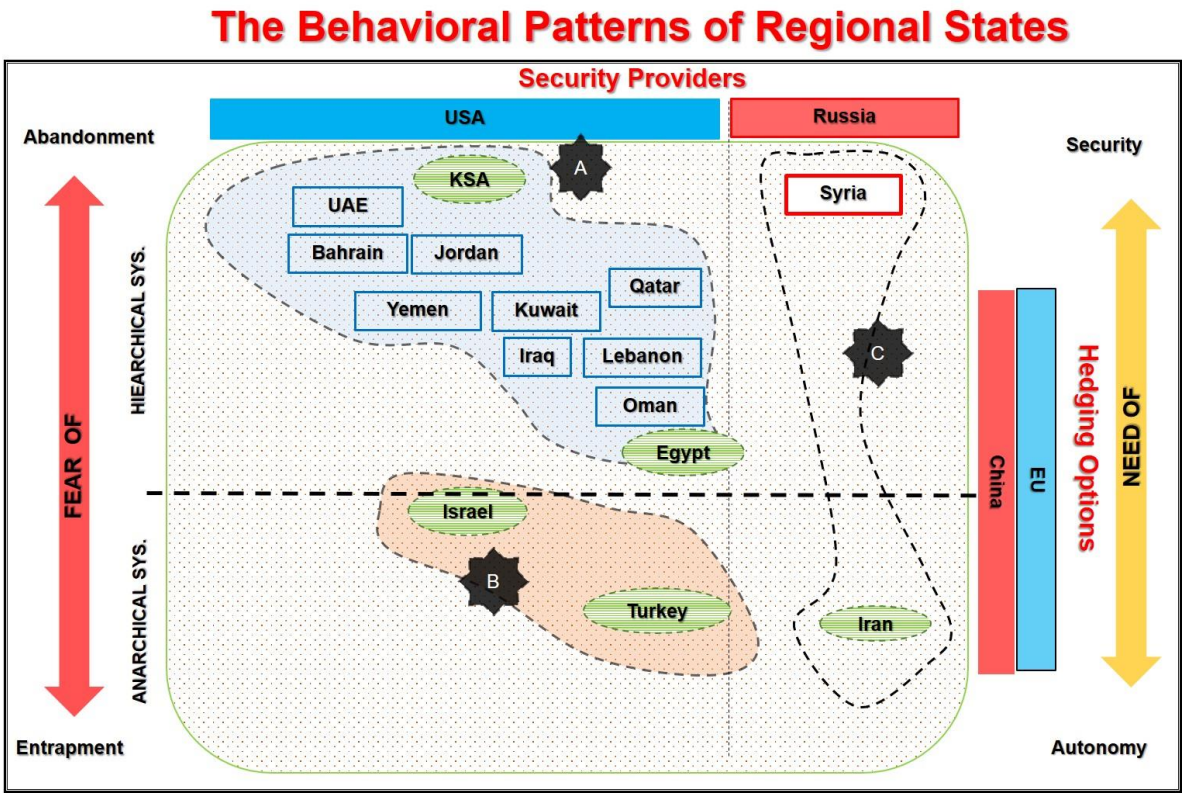

Figure 3. The Behavioral Mechanism for Regional States.

Britain, and France as a means of gaining Western support (The Economist, 2018a). In August 2018, Qatar decided to expand Udeid air base, which is the largest U.S. military facility in the region (Reuters, 2018).

Oman is a country which strongly disagrees with KSA and UAE policies. Even though it is a member state of the GCC, Sultan Qaboos bin Said does not share Riyadh and Abu Dhabi's view of Iran. Historically, Oman has had a strong relationship with Great Britain and kept its distance from the U.S. Yet, despite its lack of interest in such regional American-led initiatives as

the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA), as a member of the GCC it cannot resist the pressure of the U.S. Similarly, Kuwait does not favor the idea of an aggressive approach to countering Iranian influence, but it as a GCC member it was entrapped in the MESA initiative (The Economist, 2018b).

Some states like Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon lost their national unity due to prolonged conflicts and sectarian divides. Currently, Iraq is endeavoring to rebuild its destroyed cities and faces difficulties in dealing with the social unrest in Basra province. Also, despite the successful election on 12 May 2018, due to the polarization of the state, Iraq cannot establish a government as of the time of writing. Similarly, due to the prolonged civil war and many exogenous involvements, Syria's Assad regime has become dependent on Iranian and Russian military support. Today, in contrast with other Arab nations, it has become a client state of Russia.

Finally, the inert regional states (Egypt and the KSA) do not possess sustainable power projection capacities. The KSA generates an enormous amount of wealth and has significant military force which possesses first-class American equipment. According to the CIA World Factbook, in 2017, with a GDP of $1,798 trillion in purchasing power parity terms ($687 billion in current U.S. dollars) the Saudi economy ranked 16th largest in the world. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) estimates that KSA military expenditures for the last three years (2015-16-17) exceed 12 percent of its GDP, which equals $76.7 billion a year. When we compare this to Russia ($61.2 billion), France ($48.6 billion), and Germany ($41.7 billion) we see that it is an extraordinary level of spending (Cordesman, 2018). Although in terms of GDP and the size of its existing military force, the KSA could be classified as a rising regional power, the Yemen war proves that Riyadh does not possess capable power projection capacity in its close neighborhood.

First, the campaign in Yemen, which primarily was devoted to countering Iranian influence, has been heavily dependent on U.S. air re-fuel capability and the import of American precision ammunition. Second, nearly all of the arms that are the prerequisite of conducting the operations in modern warfare fashion are purchased from abroad. Riyadh is the world's largest armaments importer, and its domestic contribution to arms production is negligible (www.globalsecurity.org, 2018). Thus, the KSA stays in the hierarchical order with high dependence on the U.S. as a security provider.

Likewise, following the Arab Spring upheaval, Egypt has fallen in the hands of a weak and insecure authoritarian regime, which is mainly occupied with internal threats and is not capable of maintaining its traditional leadership role in the Arab world. With a population of 97.55 million people, Egypt is the region's most populous state. However, its GDP is relatively low, and it has dropped sharply from $333 billion (in 2016) to $235 billion in 2017 (World Bank, 2019). Its wealth ranks far below that of Israel, which has 8.71 million people and a GDP of $351 billion. Since 2015, in an attempt to boost economic growth, the Egyptian administration has embarked on an economic reform plan, which has become a significant problem for the majority of the low-income population (Barfi, 2018).

Egypt receives the third largest amount of American aid in the region (Israel and Iraq receive more.) In 2017, Egypt devoted 88 percent of the total $1.475 billion in aid it received from the US to the modernization of its military. Egypt is the largest arms producer in the Arab world, but most of its industry is low tech and is incapable of producing the state-of-the-art weapons that are required in modern warfare (Lee, 2018; USAID, 2018).

One of the clearest examples of Egypt's lack of efficiency and power projection capacity is the 2018 operations against the ISIS-allied Ansar Beit al-Maqdis group in the Sinai Peninsula.

The Peninsula has a long history of insurgent activity against the government, and since the start of the Libyan civil war, Cairo has had difficulties in preventing the infiltration of more sophisticated weapons into the region. The targeting of an Egyptian ship with a Kornet anti-tank missile and the downing of a civilian Metrojet Flight 9268 in October 2015 increased government determintion to eliminate terrorism(Ghafar, 2018). Subsequently, the government launched large scale anti-terror operations, as a result of which at least 172 terrorists, 100 Egyptian soldiers, and 500 civilians lost their lives in 2017. The rate of losses are much higher in comparison to international standards of any Counter Terrorism (CT) type operation.

An article in The New York Times revealed a significant event by reporting that Israel had carried out more than 100 air strikes in Sinai with the knowledge of Egyptian authorities (Kirkpatrick, 2018). According to the article, some American officials claimed that Israel's air campaign made a decisive contribution to the Egyptian anti-terror campaign, enabling the Egyptians to gain the upper hand over the militants (Frantzman, 2018). Previously, accepting military support from Israel would not have been considered even as a last resort. These developments indicate the lack of capacity of Egypt to project power even inside its territory due to a lack of advanced abilities. Therefore, the KSA and Egypt hold the position of "inert regional power," the policy preference of which is staying aligned with the unipole.

On top of everything, all of the hierarchical order states have a common anxiety, which is the possibility of "abandonment" by their sponsor states (Walt, 2009). Being unchecked by a peer power, which is a sharp divergence from Cold War times, the U.S. has become less bound to its commitments and has become a less reliable actor. Therefore, the states of hierarchical order strive to guarantee the predominant state's commitments to them by moving closer to the sponsor or hedge against possible insecurities by approaching other major powers to consolidate

commitments. The best examples in the region of a state getting closer to the unipole with the objective of avoiding abandonment are the KSA's and Qatar's large-scale arms purchases. Even though both of these states do not have adequate personnel to run their existing equipment, they continue to import additional arms. In other words, states with sufficient monetary assets try to avoid abandonment by buying the continuation of the unipole's political support in the form of military contracts.

Other states prefer to hedge the U.S. by developing ties with Russia and China. A clear example of this strategy is presented by Egypt's behavior. Being afraid of abandonment, Cairo invites another major rival into the region in order to secure the U.S.'s perpetual commitment. Today, Egypt is applying a clear hedging strategy toward U.S. policies by seeking Moscow's cooperation in the military domain (Defense Industry Daily, 2016). After the military coup against the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, Washington normalized its diplomatic relations with Cairo and released previously suspended monetary support (Lee, 2018). While the U.S. was trying to reinvigorate its military ties and conducting combined exercises (Belnap, 2018), Egypt granted air access to Russia and participated in similar exercises with Moscow (Egyptdefenceexpo, 2018).

The Anarchical Structure. The second category in Figure 1 is comprised of the states which are previously defined as rising regional powers. These countries show proficiency in dealing with internal problems and they can internally balance any regional rival. Therefore, they are more interested in peer competitors and great power interventions, which can significantly damage their interests. These states are in the ascendant because they benefit from the existing structure. The last thing they would like is an intervention that could destabilize the existing friendly environment and prevent the extraction of benefits. Also, these states are concerned with policies of the unipole that might be detrimental to their internal security, territorial integrity or

national interest. In an effort to prevent adverse outcomes and maximize regional stability, these states pursue policies that are more autonomous and sometimes at odds with the U.S.

Iran. For example, Iran, a country that is directly threatened by the unipole, tries to balance the U.S. internally (with nuclear weapons and proxy groups). As of 2019, despite reliance on outsourcing some sophisticated aerospace technology, Tehran has developed an arms program and self-sufficient domestic production of military hardware. Iran can manufacture armored personnel carriers, tanks, missiles, radars of all kinds, small ships, submarines, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and a fighter plane. This equipment includes UAVs with assault capabilities, electro-optically guided glide-bombs, and 2000 km ranged cruise missiles(Globalsecurity.org, 2016), essential elements of modern warfare.

Its special forces operatives, also known as Quds forces, have left their fingerprints on the mobilization of Shia groups which have become effective political actors in countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. For example, the Iranian intelligence and security services, which have advised and assisted the Syrian military, were the decisive component in Bashar al-Assad's success in reclaiming power in Syria. Tehran has an expeditionary force in Syria comprised of Quds Force, Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Forces, and law enforcement and intelligence services. The deployment of the IRGC to fight in a foreign country is a significant piece evidence that shows Iranian ability to project power beyond its borders (Fulton, Holliday, & Wyer, 2013)

Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has opposed the U.S. presence in the region and actively attempts to counter Washington policies by using an asymmetrical approach. Showing a particular ability at force projection powered by domestic material sources, Iran is the primary actor which balances the unipole with other major powers. Having a common anti-Western foreign policy

attitude, Tehran cooperates with Moscow to balance Washington's activities. For example, during the Syrian Civil War, Iran's pervasive pro-regime land forces created a suitable venue to extend Russian strategic air capabilities. Through cooperation with Iran, Russia has boosted its limited military presence in Syria and managed to gain the status of the security provider to the Assad regime.

With self-sufficient domestic arms production, a population of 82.4 million people and a GDP that approaches half a trillion (World Bank, 2018); Iran is a state that cannot be coerced to submit and accept the hierarchical order of the unipole.

Turkey. After overcoming a devastating economic crisis at the beginning of the 21st century, Turkey's economy has improved significantly. Table 1 displays GDP improvement of the country since the end of the bipolar world order and the ratio between the American and Turkish economies.

***Table 1**. The Increase of Turkey's GDP in Current US Dollars-World Bank, 2018.* [8]

GDP Current US Dollar (Billion)														
	1990	1993	1996	1999	2002	2005	2008	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
TR	$150,676	$180,170	$181,476	$255,884	$238,428	$501,416	$764,336	$832,524	$873,982	$950,579	$934,186	$859,797	$863,722	$851,102
USA	$5,980,000	$6,879,000	$8,100,000	$9,661,000	$10,978,000	$13,094,000	$14,719,000	$15,518,000	$16,155,000	$16,692,000	$17,428,000	$18,121,000	$18,624,000	$19,391,000
Ratio	**39.6**	38.1	44.6	37.7	**46**	26.1	**19.2**	18.6	18.4	**17.6**	18.7	21.1	21.5	**22.8**

While the U.S. was nearly 40 times a bigger economy at the beginning of the unipolarity, the ratio had fallen in half after 2008, which coincides with the Shift of Axis argument. Considering that the U.S. represents the structure of the system by itself, Turkey's self-confidence in opposing U.S. policy preferences correlates with its increased material capability.

[8] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2017&locations=US-TR&start=1960&view=chart

Organized in terms of purchase power parity (PPP), Table 2 depicts a more revealing approach to the structure (U.S.) and unit (Turkey) comparison. PPP provides an alternative aspect by removing currency differences and displays the actual material meaning of the GDP for each actor.

***Table 2**. The increase of Turkey's GDP in Power Purchase Parity -Constant 2011 Int Dollar World Bank, 2018.* [9]

GDP, PPP (Constant 2011 international Dollar in Billions)														
	1990	**1993**	**1996**	**1999**	**2002**	**2005**	**2008**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
TR	614,717	700,08	773,111	822,053	877,379	1,107,000	1,256,000	1,443,000	1,512,000	1,641,000	1,726,000	1,831,000	1,889,000	2,029,000
USA	9,252,000	9,836,000	10,911,000	12,465,000	13,336,000	14,706,000	15,321,000	15,518,000	15,863,000	16,129,000	16,544,000	17,017,000	17,270,000	17,662,000
Ratio	**15.2**	14.04	14.1	15.2	**15.2**	13.3	**12.2**	10.8	10.5	**9.8**	9.6	9.3	9.1	**8.7**

The figures show that since the beginning of the unipolar world order, Turkey has gradually decreased the discrepancy between the scales of the two economies by half. Also, one can observe that the Turkish economy has grown nearly five-fold between 1990 and 2008 according to nominal GDP (See Table 1).

According to the CIA Factbook and the World Bank, Turkey has the world's 13th largest GDP in terms of PPP, and 17th in nominal prices[10]. Therefore, with an economy of this size, Turkey is a member of the G20.

Concurrently, the Turkish defense industry, which had contributed only 20 percent of the total needs of Turkey's armed forces at the beginning of the 2000s, increased its proportion to 65 percent in 2019. At the opening ceremony of Turkish defense firm BMC's 500 million dollars' worth new factory, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that "Turkey's dependency on imported military hardware has been reduced from 80 percent to 35 percent over the last 16 years." He also

[9] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.KD?end=2017&locations=US-TR&start=1960&view=chart

[10] For 2018, IMF prediction for nominal prices ranks Turkey as the world's 19th largest economy, while CIA Factbook and World Bank estimates as 17th. There is no discrepancy about the rank in PPP terms.

praised the defense industry's success as exporters in 2018; exports had increased 17 percent over 2017 and had exceeded the goal of $2 billion (Daily Sabah, 2019).

In 2017, SIPRI named Brazil, India, and Turkey as the "emerging producers" because of their companies on the Top 100 list[11]. After affirming the 24 percent rise in the arms sales of Turkish companies in 2017, the report recognized Turkey as a country with ambitions to advance its military industry in order to fulfill the growing domestic demand for arms and due to a desire to become less reliant on foreign suppliers (SIPRI, 2018).

The Turkish desire to equip its armed forces with the product of domestic industry is linked to various embargos that Turkey has faced during past national crises. The embargo decision of the U.S. in 1974, a response to Turkish intervention in Cyprus, had a profound impact on the Turkish psyche. This embargo hindered Turkey's ability to acquire military equipment between 1975 and 1978, including jets which had already been paid for and spare parts for the Western platforms that were in its inventory. At a public event President Erdogan noted: Our strategic partners disabled the military systems they sold to us back in 1974. Turkey was punished by its own allies when it intervened against the genocide of the Turkish Cypriots. But Turkey is now capable of building its own facilities."

Also, he emphasized that this embargo cost Turkey billions of dollars and that Turkey needed to mobilize the country's industrial base in support of the defense industry in order to avoid falling into a similar situation again (Daily Sabah, 2019). A similar event occurred in 1992, when the German government, fearful of unrest among the Kurdish population in Germany, placed

[11] Turkey has two companies in the Top 100: Electronics producers ASELSAN, which claimed the rank 61 (68th in 2016) and the aircraft producing Turkish Aerospace Industries that claimed the rank 70 (77th in 2016). Brazil had only one company ranking 84th on the list.

restrictions on the usage of German made equipment in Turkey's fight against the PKK in South East Anatolia (Yilmaz, 2015).

Being located in a very volatile region, Turkey believes a modern and self-reliant military is essential for its national security. Therefore, in the last decades, Turkey has increased its domestic military production capacity by investing in the defense industry. While procuring needed military goods domestically, Turkey has also become a fast-growing exporter of military equipment (Tekingunduz, 2018). The military industry reached $6.7 billion of the economy, exports of which was $1.82 billion in 2017 and $2.04 billion in 2018. According to the Turkish Defense and Aerospace Industry Manufacturers Association, received orders in 2018 were $8 billion, and the Turkish defense industry creates job opportunities for 44,740 people in total (SaSaD, 2018). As of January 2019, the Turkish defense industry has signed significant contracts, such as 30 indigenous T129 Advanced Attack and Reconnaissance Helicopters, $1.5 billion worth warships deal with Pakistan; an order for ten helicopters from the Philippines, and an order for 12 Bayraktar TB2 operational unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) from Ukraine (Daily Sabah, 2019).

Table 3. *Export of Turkish Defense Industry (Baran, 2018).*

Export of Turkish Defense Industry						
Years	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**
Million $	1570	1855	1929	1953	1824	2040

While many NATO members decreased military spending after the Cold War (the so-called "Peace Dividend"), Table 4 shows that Turkey did not. Indeed, its military spending is closely related to the intensity of the national fight against the terrorism of the PKK. After the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan at the end of 1998, expenditure gradually dropped and began to

increase when only the Counter Terrorist (CT) operations intensified again. Also, the Syrian Civil War and the emergence of ISIS increased the burden of military expenditure.

Table 4. *Military Expenditure of Turkey in constant US dollars.*

Military expenditure of Turkey in constant (2016) US$ m., 2009-2017 © SIPRI 2018									
1990	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**
10770	11071	11645	12875	12588	12932	14478	15084	15806	17452
2000	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
16890	15483	16474	14869	13569	12846	13784	13252	13401	14340
2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**		
14050	14187	14498	14857	14942	15412	17854	19580		

Based on the SIPRI database, Turkish military expenditure's share of GDP is around 2%. However, a rare study by Yenturk (Table 5) shows that (including all resources) military spending is higher than 2%. Also, it is possible to observe how the increased national GDP has provided more financial allocation, despite the constant share in general (Yenturk, 2014).

Table 5. *Turkish Military Expenditure and Share in GDP %.*

Military Expanses of Turkey (Includes Foundations and Other Resources)										
	2006	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Total military expanses	19,416	20,349	22,727	25,879	27,610	29,742	33,815	37,562	41,104	44, 332
Share in GDP %	2.56	2.41	2.39	2.72	2.51	2.29	2.36	2.39	2.36	2.29

In addition, in order to increase efficiency, the Turkish Armed Forces has transformed its structure to smaller and flexible units, which are better suited to conduct urban warfare and CT operations. In 2009, due to the public debates regarding the conscripted soldiers' ability to fight against seasoned terrorists, the Supreme Military Council decided to increase the proportion of professional units. These moves significantly extended Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) operational capability as well as the ability of the nation to handle prolonged conflicts.

Even after the 15 July 2016 failed military coup attempt, which resulted in the purge of many military professionals, Turkey successfully conducted Operation Euphrates Shield between

August 24, 2016, and March 30, 2017, and Operation Olive Branch (January-March, 2018) in Northern Syria. These operations were an excellent opportunity to test the resilience of TAF structure and the efficiency of domestically produced modern warfare arms. Moreover, by organizing and using the Free Syrian Army, which was comprised of moderate opponents of the Syrian regime, Turkey proved that it could also project power by using local partners and groups as proxies.

In conclusion, having been in a constant struggle against terrorism and instabilities in the region, Turkey has improved its military structure and has increased self-sufficiency by producing the critical arms that are required in modern conflicts. In addition, the coup attempt organized by Fethullah Gulen supporters became a good test case for regime resilience and ability to overcome internal threats. Thus, with a growing GDP and military competence, Turkey increased its national power and thus its ability to pursue a more independent policy, a decisive factor in fostering the observed changes in Turkish foreign policy.

Israel. Israel has exceptional ties with the U.S. Despite this close relationship, occasional tensions between the two states do occur. However, when a U.S. policy becomes detrimental to Israeli interests, Tel Aviv uses its vast influence on the U.S. domestic political establishment. For example, during the Obama administration in 2015, there was a fundamental disagreement between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Barack Obama over the approach to Iran's nuclear program.

In 2015, the Israelis and the Republican Party majority leader arranged a joint session in Congress for Israeli president Netanyahu without notifying the White House. During the event, he criticized Obama administration policies, which infuriated the administration. The Obama administration perceived the incident as Israel and the opposition party working together to

interfere with presidential authority over foreign policy and undermine efforts to strike a nuclear deal with Tehran (Beauchamp, 2015). Due to its economic situation and power projection capabilities, Tel Aviv is not a dependent state. Since the U.S. has an interest in Israel's wellbeing, frequently their policy preferences converge. Although Israel greatly benefits from the U.S.'s pro-Israeli stance, it does not hesitate to act against the U.S. when it perceives a need to do so. Tel Aviv frequently uses balancing strategies when it feels that the U.S. obligations to meet international expectations regarding the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) can *entrap* Israel into making a compromise which it deems unacceptable.

With arms exports of $7.9 billion, Israel accounted for 2% of the total revenues of the Top 100 defense companies. Although it is a small state, Israel's arms sales are relatively high (Kuimova, Tian, Wezeman, & Wezeman, 2018). Israeli defense industry produces arms, which meet U.S. equivalent high-tech specification. Also, the Israeli military frequently displays its power projection capability in its close neighborhood. Currently, the Tel Aviv government has proved its willingness to use the military against Iranian formations in Syria. Its self-sufficient military and proven power projection abilities facilitate Israel's ability to diverge from U.S. policy preferences and pursue a more autonomous path. For that reason, it takes the position in the hierarchical order in the regional structural spectrum.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, the study formulated a mechanism for describing regional states' behavior in a unipolar systemic structure. The analysis showed that states with improved national power tend to act more independently vis a vis regional policy preference of the unipole. Countries that can be classified as rising regional powers adopt a self-help system that provides a certain amount

of autonomy from the unipole. These states are the source of the hybrid nature of IR regional structure in the Middle East under unipolarity.

It also revealed that in the Middle East a sound economic situation is not enough to enable pursuit of independent policies. Moreover, the analysis in this chapter accidentally discovered that a pure military built-up is not enough to take an independent position. It is the armed forces, which have power projection capabilities based on domestic military procurement, that allow autonomous actions. For example, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a military equipped with top-notch American equipment and arms. Yet, it had to be submissive to U.S. demands regarding the campaign in Yemen after the looming arms embargo.

The next chapter will link the objectives of Turkey with the debated policy changes.

CHAPTER FOUR:

TURKEY TAKES INDEPENDENT POSITION

Introduction

This chapter claims that Turkey is taking an independent position to realize its foreign policy preferences. It asserts that Ankara's increased regional engagements are the outcome of taking an independent position and they are intended to pursue national objectives.

The first section will define the national objectives of the state. Later, it will describe how the transformation of the international systemic structure and its effects on Turkey created a paradigm shift about the existing alliance relations.

Afterward, to describe the changed behavior, it will connect Turkey's need for maximizing the national objectives with the new approach of realizing them. This part of the study emphasizes Ankara's inability to defuse security threats and achieve economic development by staying allied to Washington as the primary cause that endorsed policymakers to reduce dependence on the U.S. and to adopt a self-help approach.

Finally, it will conduct an empirical analysis, which encompasses the most significant events since the beginning of the unipolarity, to diagnose whether Turkey pursues an independent approach or shifting axis.

The overall aim is to overcome the fallacies of half-way explanations that mostly describe the objective of Turkish foreign policy as "increasing its influence" in the region. Frequently, the advocates of axis shift, neo-Ottomanism or other unit-level explanations implicitly link or present

it as an "end in itself." Thus, Turkey's changed behavior patterns and increased activities in DIME are erroneously interpreted as actions with *hegemonic purposes*. Since the U.S. has already dominated the region and Turkey does not have the ability or desire to alter the power distribution, explanations of Turkey's foreign policy are based on erroneous assumptions.

Besides, while many criticize Turkey's new independent policies as distancing itself from the West, they fail to discern the internal tensions in the Transatlantic block. For example, due to geographical proximity, Europeans are also endangered by the spillover effects of the U.S. over activism. Therefore, Turkey's position regarding the invasion of Iraq or Iran's nuclear program is very close to that of the E3 (France, Germany, and Britain.) Also, criticism of American activities in Falluja or of Israeli abuses of human rights much like those voiced by Turkey are not uncommon in Europe (Danforth, 2008). Since there is no consistent Western position, it would be deceptive to describe Turkey's refusal to comply with U.S. demands as an indicator of its split with the Western bloc (Ozcan, 2008).

The Primary Objective of Turkey in the Middle East: Seeking Stability

Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, based on Kemal Ataturk's vision, the country's primary objectives have been to (1) consolidate/secure the state's international and domestic sovereignty and (2) reach the level of contemporary Western civilizations in development. In parallel with the founding fathers, Turkish elites have always valued the nation's economic development as much as security.

Efforts to build the nation by advancing social development and to achieve reconstruction of the country by increasing industrial and economic capacity continued after the establishment of

the state. During most of the Republic's history, development and welfare were central to the rhetoric and vision of the ruling élites.

Most recently, in the "2023 Vision," Turkey still heavily prioritized development projects. This plan sets as the nation's objective becoming one of the top ten economies in the world by 2023. Turkey has envisaged expanding its GDP to $2 trillion, achieving a per capita income of $25,000, attaining a balanced annual trade size of $1trillion, increasing the employment rate to over 50% of the population, reducing unemployment to 5%, and decreasing the level of government involvement in many areas (Republic of Turkey Investment Support and Promotion Agency, 2011).

To achieve a high level of export volume, Turkey plans to increase the numbers of exporters, create internationally known brands, support high-tech value-added products, and assist critical sectors such as automotive, machinery, steel, textile, electronics, and chemicals.

In order to reconstruct the nation, Turkey has made infrastructure investments which can support economic productivity such as 16 new large-scale logistic centers, 36,500 km of dual carriageway, 7,500 km of motorway, 70.00 km with bitumen hot-mix asphalt, a submarine tube for cars in Istanbul, three bridges on the Bosporus, a bridge on the Dardanelles, and railway projects to connect Turkey with the Middle East, Caucasus, and North Africa.

Moreover, Ankara has envisaged building new airports with capacity for 400 million passengers per year, a 750-plane fleet and two aviation maintenance and training centers, connecting main ports with railways, establishing transfer ports, and having at least one of the top 10 ports in the world by 2019. To exploit the advantage of its location, Turkey has planned to reach 32 million TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) handling capacity for container transport, handle 500

million tons of solid & 350 million liquid load, reach 10 million deadweight tonnage shipbuilding ability and construct 100 marinas with 50,000 yacht potential.

In addition, Turkey has a target of 30 million broadband subscribers, plans to increase the proportion of national contribution to 50% in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, raise the ICT sector's share of GDP to 8%, become one of the top 10 countries in e-transformation, and to provide all public services electronically by 2019. There are also essential objectives in securing energy, reaching 50 million tourists with $50 billion in revenue, and increasing innovation by supporting Research and Developments activities with up to 3 percent of GDP.

In the realm of defense, Turkey has undertaken the production of rifles, artillery, tanks, helicopters, and fighter aircraft domestically. Development of a domestic tank and fighter plane industry continues; the armed forces have already received delivery of the other military hardware.

A high proportion of the national objectives focus on national development. During the import-substitution era, non-involvement in the volatile Middle Eastern region was a viable option to create a conducive environment for development. Since the transition to the neoliberal market economy, within which growth and prosperity come from exports, traditional isolationist policies were no longer an appropriate strategy for national development. To maximize growth, the new "outwards looking" economic approach has compelled Turkey to develop mechanisms for global and local integration within the regions, where Turkey can potentially flourish. However, the constant regional conflicts have continuously created domestic and regional security concerns that have interrupted much needed economic integration. Therefore, sustaining “regional stability” became the intersection and the prerequisite to achieving both security and economic integration in the Middle East (Figure 3).

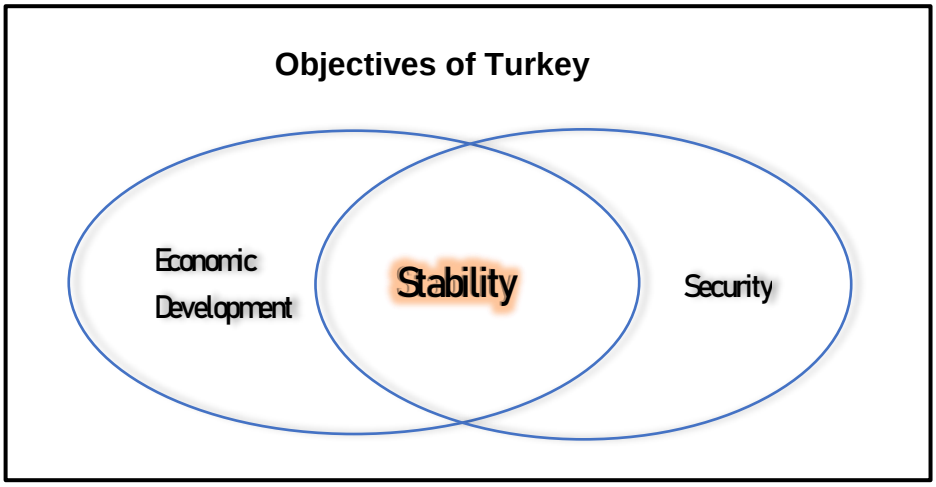

***Figure 4**. Objectives of Turkish Foreign Policy.*

During the Cold War, Turkey was the unquestioned ally of NATO and the West against the USSR and Warsaw Pact, which was the most significant threat at the time to national and European security. Ankara in that period defined its national interest in the Middle East in parallel with the West and considered its involvements as an extension of the Western security system (Benli Altunisik, 2009). With the end of the Cold War and the U.S. emergence as the world's sole superpower, the new architecture of the international system was transformed into unipolarity (G. John Ikenberry et al., 2009; William C. Wohlforth, 1999) in which liberal democracies were the winner. The new structure was meant to enforce democracy as the normative way of governance and neoliberal markets as the prevailing economic approach. Having the willingness to adopt both, Turkey was favorable to the U.S. dominated world order. However, Turkey's traditional relations with its Cold War ally have begun to change after the new effects of unipolarity become visible.

The new international structure has provided the U.S. with many advantages. No other major competitor exists that can restrain the U.S., and it can act with near impunity worldwide. After the end of the Cold War, since the stability in the Middle East was frequently disturbed by the unchecked unipole, Turkey has begun to experience difficulty in managing security risks and

obtaining stability in the region. After the international systemic structure transformed into a unipolar world, the functionality of traditional relations has eroded, which has brought along a substantial paradigm shift in the methods of maximizing regional security and stability.

The Paradigm Shift and the New Strategy for Maximizing Stability

The Paradigm Shift

In light of the evidence, this study assumes that the structure of the international system is unipolar and the U.S. is (still) the unipole (G. John Ikenberry et al., 2009; Lim, 2015; Walt, 2009; William C. Wohlforth, 1999) . Therefore, Turkey's (unit) interaction with the system (the unipole) is defined best in American-Turkish relations. After the First Gulf War in 1991, the U.S. became Turkey's new neighbor on its southern border, and their relations have been impacted mostly by the developments in the Middle East.

Since the establishment of the Republic, Turkey has always had concerns about:

(1) the actions of major powers,

(2) regional rivals,

(3) internal destabilizing factors, and

(4) economic development of the country.

With the beginning of the unipolar order, despite some change in intensities, these concerns have continued to be determinants of TFP. While the first three are security concerns, the fourth element is economy-oriented. Thus to "defuse security risks" and maintain "economic development" have been the dual main objectives that have motivated Turkey's relations.

During the bipolar Cold War era, Turkey had successfully addressed these concerns through a close alliance with the Western bloc. With the beginning of the unipolar international

structure, Turkey's security concerns were expected to diminish. After all, Ankara was on the side of the great power that won the Cold War; it was a large regional state with institutional ties to the world's strongest security alliance (NATO) that rendered it a hard target for regional rivals. Besides, despite the high cost, Turkey was able to deal with internal instabilities such as PKK terror and political volatility.

Since its main ally, the U.S., was already dominant in the region, Turkey's major power threat concerns were expected to decrease significantly. However, developments showed that even though Turkey was not the target, the spillover effects of the unrestrained unipole posed severe security threats to the country's territorial integrity and domestic stability.

In 1990-91, during the First Gulf War, Turkey supported the U.S. decision to fight with dictator Saddam Hussein of Iraq, who had invaded Kuwait. During the coalition operation Turkey amassed its troops to force Iraq to reserve a considerable amount of its military resources located near the distant border with Turkey (Lally Weymouth, 1991). After the operation, Ankara allowed coalition forces to fly from its territory to enforce the northern no-fly zone, which was formed to protect the refugees from Saddam (Haldun Çancı & Şevket Serkan Şen, 2011). Turkey was submissive to almost all policy decisions of the U.S., even to the ones that openly damaged national interests such as accepting the closure of Turkish-Iraqi oil pipelines and strictly abiding by imposed international sanctions.

By the mid-1990s, the developments in northern Iraq caused severe tensions in American–Turkish relations. In the political debates, the U.S. was accused of supporting the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the north of Iraq. Also, during the post-war era, due to diminished central government control, the PKK managed to find a safe haven in the north of Iraq and increased its cross-border assaults on Turkey. The unlimited support during the first Gulf War to

the U.S. cost 80 billion dollars in lost trade, and the increased cross border PKK attacks left 20,000 deaths (Altunisik, 2013). Besides, Turkey had to deal with half a million refugees when Saddam attempted to control the northern part of the country. Thus, Turkey has experienced that destabilized neighbors have direct effects that jeopardize national security, because of the spillover effects such as refugees, ungoverned places suitable as bases for terrorist activity, and diminished economic benefits.

In 2003, although the status quo was not in favor of Turkey, Ankara had similar concerns about the spillover effects of a potential war against the Saddam regime. Yet, the war occurred despite Ankara's refusal to grant access for the U.S. troops to enter Iraq from its soil. Just like after the Gulf War in 1991, the 2003 U.S. policies of military intervention increased concerns about Iraq's territorial integrity, which had the potential to severely affect Turkey (Kanat et al., 2017).

After the conflict, Turkish officials have become increasingly suspicious of U.S. policies because of the considerable gap between the declared intentions and emerged outcomes. For example, the arguments of the U.S. for invading Iraq in 2003 were mainly linked to terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) concerns. However, the post-invasion developments showed that there were no WMD in Iraqi and the link between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaida was artificial. Also, the human rights abuses in the Abu Ghraib prison put American credibility into question. What is more, the U.S. ensured the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as an autonomous entity in Iraq, which increased the risk perception regarding territorial integrity of Turkey.

During the occupation of Iraq, Ankara also resented Washington's policies meant to stabilize Iraq after the U.S. withdrawal. For example, in the 2010 elections, although the Sunni Iraqiya came out as the first party from the parliamentary election, the U.S. assigned Maliki, who

was the leader of the second party, to form the government (Nasr, 2013). In his book, Nasr describes him as a revenge-seeking Shia, a weak manager with authoritarian tendencies who pursued a sectarian policy to ensure a Shia rise to power with the support of Iran. After his inauguration, Maliki decided to eliminate his primary rival, Hashemi, who was the leader of the leading Sunni party. During his visit to the U.S., he measured the possible U.S. reaction and felt free to implement sectarian policies based on Shia dominance. As a result, Hashemi fled to Iraq's Kurdish region and the conflict among the sectarian and ethnic groups revived. Thus, while internal movements against Iraqi unity gained pace, foreign actors were involved in the theater.

Moreover, regardless of the ongoing struggles, U.S. policymakers contemplated an exit strategy of forming a security state under an authoritarian leader which would secure American interests and deliver a new Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) that would secure future U.S. military and political influence. The US realized, however, that things were not going as planned, as Maliki was eager to work with Iran rather than the U.S., and was reluctant to deliver a new SOFA agreement (Nasr, 2013).

Many believe that the poorly conceived U.S. exit and its support for Maliki created a power vacuum that caused the emergence of Isis. Maliki's sectarian policies have disenfranchised the Sunni Iraqis and the lack of U.S. intention to maintain a presence in the region devastated Iraq's integrity while producing further destabilizing effects for the area.

Similarly, continuous efforts of the U.S. administrations to isolate Syria and Iran have negatively impacted Turkey's efforts to integrate its economy with the lucrative Middle Eastern markets. Frequently, U.S. regional interventions have been part of an effort to foster liberal democratic values in these states. Even though Turkey was not happy with the existing regimes, it considered part of the geography that should not prevent normal relations between neighboring

states. Any pressure which might destabilize these states was considered dangerous because of possible spillover effects into Turkey. Therefore, as an ally of the U.S., besides dealing with the spillover effects of the unipole's policies, Turkey has been continuously entrapped in never-ending sanctions and political restrictions in the region.

Turkey has begun to vocalize a new security paradigm, in which "the U.S. is both an ally and a potential threat." This new concept suits the structural model described in the previous chapter. Since the unipole does not have a peer competitor, the U.S.'s need for allies has diminished. Therefore, it does not have to stick to its previous commitments. The U.S. does not constitute a direct threat to Turkey as it does to Iran, but it continues inadvertently harming Turkey's vital interests (Walt, 2009). For example, in the "Turkey Social Attitudes Research-2018," Kadir Has University found out that, at the end of 2018, 81.9 percent of Turkish population believes that the U.S. is the number one security threat to Turkey, an increase of 17.6 percent over previous year (Aydin et al., 2019).

This situation has become more evident as the U.S. has begun to choose controversial regional partners and has attempted to create new formations that Turkey regards as a risk to territorial integrity and regional stability. Since the unipole has leeway to change its partners depending on the mission (Bilgel, 2014) and its regional policies have proven to be potentially harmful to Turkey's national interests, completely aligning with the U.S. (as Turkey did during the Cold War) has lost its functionality and validity as a practical option to maximize Turkey's security needs.

Realizing that Turkey cannot wholly rely on the U.S. to defuse threats, policymakers have preferred to manage Turkey's regional security needs by reducing dependence on the U.S. and adopting a self-help approach. In other words, Turkey, which has previously delegated responsibility for security to the U.S., has taken this responsibility back. Yet, in order to compensate the security vacuum created by the rejection of the unipole as main policy describer, Turkey has needed to displace arrangements previously managed by the U.S. Therefore, depending on itself, TFP has begun to display unprecedented diplomatic activities, establishing new military and economic links, and undertaking an active approach in conflict resolution. Bilgel argues that those states which adopt an independent approach will attempt to position themselves at the midpoint of the politics in their region (Bilgel, 2014). These aims are reflected in former foreign affairs minister Ahmet Davutoglu's policy vision as (1) effective regional integration through security and economic cooperation, (2) mediation of regional conflict resolution, and (3) active participation in global affairs as well as international organizations (Davutoglu, 2011).

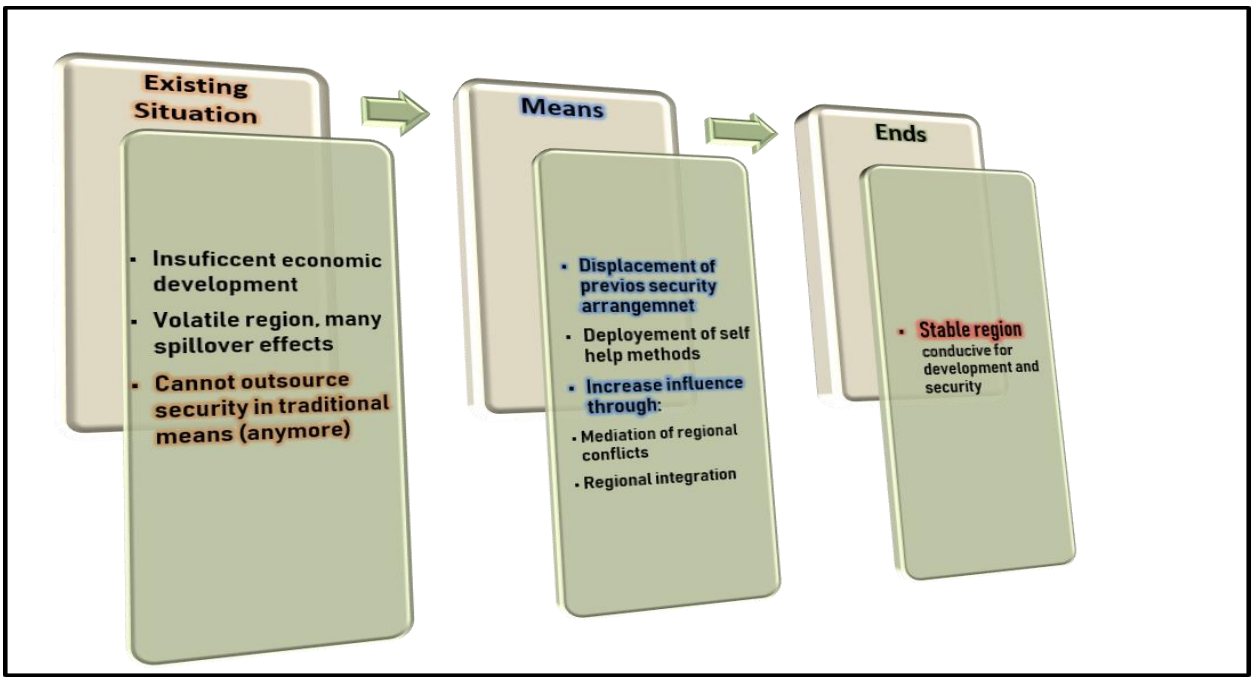

***Figure 5**. The New Conceptualization of Turkish Foreign Policy.*

From its own perspective, all these displacement attempts have been deployed to stabilize the region in order to maintain the relative advantage that the Middle East had provided to Turkey. It is important to stress that the threat is not the unipole itself, but the spillover effects of its regional policies. Therefore, Turkey does not aim to oppose the U.S. and pursue conflictual policies systematically but rather to obtain enough independence to shape some of the outcomes that destabilize the region. In that sense, by re-positioning Turkey's national interests in the center of its foreign policy, Turkey transformed itself from a small peripheral partner to an actor, which desires to exert agency in the issues that have effects on its objectives. This new stance has become the primary source of mixed relations with the U.S.

Contrary to the shift of axis argument that assumes the change of TFP is a choice of preference of East over West, or the Neo-Ottomanism theory that suggests Turkey aims to dominate the region, this study claims that Turkey has taken an independent position to achieve its objectives. This conceptualization of TFP is also consistent with the observed reality in Turkish-American relations. Ankara does not flatly oppose the U.S. but in fact enjoys cooperating with Washington. Thus, Turkey aims at maximizing stability in the region through cooperation and, if needed, through indirect confrontation.

Strategy to Achieve Objectives

Frequently, depending on how relations will affect the *(in)stability* of the region, Ankara has begun to *cooperate* or *oppose* Washington's policy preferences. This study assumes that linking *main objectives* with the *means* to achieve them can clarify the changing nature of TFP. Table 6 displays the main objectives and the way of realizing them. Basically, all of the TFP activities in the Middle East are addressed in the below-presented table.

***Table 6**. Objective and Means for Turkish Foreign Policy.*

	Objectives	Means
1	Establish/Maintain/Restore Stability	• Integrate with the region • Pursue active diplomacy to mediate regional problems • Prevent destabilizing developments • Actively participate in restoring stability in favor of national interest
2	Defuse security risks	• Active diplomacy • Military cooperation • Military Bases • Military intervention
3	Achieve economic development	• Remove obstacles to economic activities • Integrate with the regions that are potential markets • Increase attention to previously neglected areas

Establish, Maintain and Restore Stability. Turkey, as a rising country in the region, is the primary beneficiary of stability in the Middle East. Since it has adopted a self-help system to shape a more approachable region, Turkey has developed mixed relations. Even though the changed Turkish foreign policy has been labeled a general opposition to U.S. policy preferences, Ankara has continued to cooperate with Washington in many domains. Since the hypothesis of this study asserts that Turkey has adopted an "independent" approach which puts its own interests in the center of the policy actions, one must observe both cooperative and confrontational policies depending on their service to national objectives. Therefore, delineation of several controversial historical incidents that links “ends” with “means” will be beneficial to clarify the analysis.

In the beginning, it is crucial to elaborate on the different views of the U.S. and Turkey regarding the definition of stability in the region. One of the striking differences in how these two allies perceive the region regarding the regime types of the existing states becomes evident in an interview conducted by Stephan Kinzer in 2002, who asked then Turkish President Abdullah Gul about Turkish policies that cause problematic relations between US and Turkey regarding the developments in its close neighborhood. Gul stated that Turkey cannot change the geography and

its neighbors. He also emphasized that while Ankara does not necessarily like the regimes of the surrounding countries, it should not be afraid to have relations with them. Therefore, he stressed the need for constant engagements with these states (Lutsky, 2002).

On the other hand, for the U.S., stabilizing the Middle East was equal to the establishment of liberal markets, secure energy flows, protection for Israel, secure maritime routes, and advancing norms of democracy. The issue of Iraq presents a good example of how the two countries' points of view differ. The American objective was to contain and topple the Saddam regime in Iraq, which was a threat to Israel and neighboring countries. To achieve that objective, it crippled central Iraqi government control and promoted Kurdish administration of northern Iraq, policies which caused problems for Turkey in both the security (increased PKK attacks) and economic (decreased trade with Bagdad) domains.

Moreover, in an attempt to contain Iran, America sold nearly $125 billion worth of conventional arms to Middle Eastern countries, primarily Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This increased militarization was not consistent with Turkey's regional vision of stability. Indeed, for the USA and Turkey, Iran has always been a significant source of concern for regional stability. Both states see benefits from limiting Iran's expanding sphere of influence in the broader Middle East and preventing it from becoming the epicenter of the Shiite population (Cakmak & Güneysu, 2013). Although Turkey competes with Iran for influence in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and Iraq (Ozel, 2012), Turkey believes that regime change in the region should not include military intervention or cause misery for millions that instigate mass population movements. Also, pressure that can destabilize Iran might create ungoverned places, where the Iranian branch of the PKK could find safe zones to direct attacks on Turkey.

Moreover, Ankara maintains that threatening these governments and their authoritarian regimes makes them more dangerous. From the perspective of Turkish officials, Iran's nuclear program is in part a result of American threats against the establishment in Tehran. The resolutions of the problems posed by authoritarian regimes like those in Syria and Iran, therefore, should be conducted through diplomacy, trade, and political engagements.

While Ankara has as much disdain for the Iranian and Syrian regimes as does the U.S., Turkey opposed the isolation policies of the Bush and Obama administrations. In 2010, Turkey tried to prevent another U.S. attempt to isolate Iran. Together with Brazil, Turkey reached an agreement which was the first of its kind regarding the Iran nuclear issue. Turkey's arrangements with Iran and Ankara's constructive approach to the nuclear issue were received cynically by the U.S. as an Iranian attempt to buy time. Turkish-U.S. relations suffered a significant blow when Ankara voted "no" on the resolution at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that would impose another round of UN sanction on Iran (Cakmak & Güneysu, 2013). From Ankara's perspective, the attempt to isolate Iran would harm bilateral trade relations[12] (Tezcur & Grigorescu, 2014).

Recently, the Trump Administration's withdrawal from the JCPOA and re-imposition of tight unilateral sanctions, which are aimed at destabilizing the regime, have been strongly opposed by Ankara. Many Turkish officials vocally declared that Ankara would not abide by the sanctions. Besides the concerns mentioned above, especially after the Syrian Civil War, Turkey has become more anxious about any potential turmoil in Iran, which can destabilize the country and cause significant refugee and security issues for Turkey.

[12] Turkey was concerned that the upcoming isolation could prevent transborder cooperation against PKK, and foil national energy security due to export restrictions (Tezcur & Grigorescu, 2014). According to Tezcur and Grigorescu, in 2010, the percentage of Turkish exports that went to Iran was 2.67%, while 6.41% of Turkish imports came from Iran.

In Syria, relations between two allies collided even more volatilely. Turkey had difficult relations with Damascus until the end of 1998, when Hafez al-Assad agreed to end its support for the PKK and expel its leader, Abdullah Ocalan. After the conclusion of the Adana agreement in 1998, bilateral relations stabilized. However, the United States enthusiastically campaigned for the isolation of Syria and openly tried to dissuade Turkey from seeking a rapprochement with Damascus. Philip Robins maintains that Turkey was unwilling to endanger the hard-won improvement in bilateral relations and despite U.S. pressure it continued to support the Assad regime (Robins, 2007). Even after the murder of Lebanese leader Hariri, for which substantial evidence was found indicating the Syrian government's involvement, Turkey defied the USA by continuing to engage with Syria. Ankara believed that maintaining good relations with Syria might produce more leverage on the Baathist regime (Ozel, 2012).

Turkey's willingness to integrate with the Middle East created even more severe tension when Turkish-Israel relations worsened. The first problem that stood on the way of integration was the hostility of Arab nations towards Turkey's relationship with Israel. Israel-Turkish relations were established in 1949 when Ankara officially recognized the formation of the Jewish state. Ankara developed friendly economic and diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv. However, the Arabs' distaste for Israel was a major obstacle to Turkey's relations with the Arab states (Litsas, 2014).

Israeli-Turkish relations got even closer in the second half of the 1990s when both sides began to conduct military exercises to deal with their common arrogant neighbor, Syria (Erdurmaz, 2013). Also, Freedman argues that in the '90s good relations with Israel were beneficial for Ankara to counter increasing pressure from the Armenian and Greek lobbies in the U.S. (Freedman, 2010). Relations between Turkey and Israel became even warmer when the U.S. began to channel Turkish arms purchases to Tel Aviv. The amiable interactions proceeded untouched during the first period

of the JDP government; for example, during that time Turkish leaders strongly condemned the statements of Ahmadinejad, who was announcing that “Israel should be wiped off of the map” (Onis, 2011).

Ankara desires a peaceful regional order, and that depends on political stability and economic integration. According to Altunisik, for Turkey, achieving peace between Arabs and Israel was the precondition of economic integration and political stability. She maintains that “Ankara operates on the assumption that Israel's current policies are blocking this path of regional integration” (Altunisik, Meliha Benli, 2013). Accepting that one of the reasons for U.S. involvement in the Middle East was to secure Israel, Turkey has also linked the centrality of MEPP with the U.S. stance against Iran and other “rogue states” (Ulgul, 2017). For example, on 2 October 2006, after an Oval Office meeting in Washington, Prime Minister Erdogan stated: “Today Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a major factor in the rise of regional and global tensions. In order to establish peace in the Middle East and in the world, a permanent and fair solution to this problem must first be found primarily.”(Kanat et al., 2017).

Thus, in 2008 Turkey ramped up diplomatic efforts to mediate the Israel-Syria conflict. Mending relations between the Jews and the Arabs, which were a primary obstacle standing in the way of Turkey's further integration with the region, was the initial choice of Turkey. The announcement regarding the peace talks came on May 21st, 2008, when the U.S. was trying to isolate Syria. The negotiations appropriately advanced and the signing of a peace agreement was expected during Ehud Barak’s visit to Istanbul. However, the process abruptly ended when Israel broke the negotiated ceasefire and launched a full ground invasion of the Gaza Strip at the end of the year (Kanat et al., 2017).

Recognizing the difficulties of mediating such a complex issue, Turkey has chosen to distance itself from Israel. Some analysts have asserted this change is an ideological choice and have attributed it to the Islamist JDP government's anti-Semitic sentiments. However, the way relations later unfolded hints of clear political choices behind this strategy.

The first sign of this change emerged during the Davos World Economic Forum in 2009 when Mr. Erdogan vocal criticism against Israeli actions during the Gaza War widely echoed in international media. Many scholars believe that after the Davos incident, Turkey openly shifted to favoring the Palestinian cause, putting at risk long-entrenched bilateral economic, diplomatic and security relations with Israel (Oguzlu, 2010). Indeed, the cost was high, but the benefit appeared to be bigger. The "one-minute" objection of Erdogan against the double standard of the moderator, who was trying to avoid Erdogan's critics by limited his speech time went viral throughout the Middle East. Immediately after the 2009 Davos forum, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan enjoyed the popularity of a rock star among the Arab populations, who resented their own leaders' failure to take a firm stance against Israel. Iranians and Arabs could hardly believe that a Turkish leader of a secular Muslim state is acting more radically toward Tel Aviv than any of his Muslim counterparts. The incident instantly flushed away the centuries long Turkish-Arab mistrust (Steinvorth, 2009).

Previously, when Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council Election, Turkey accepted the demand of Hamas for a meeting. This incident was widely interpreted as evidence of the rise of an Islamist Turkish foreign policy. However, the nature of the meeting and messages to Hamas reveal Turkey's endeavors to integrate into the region. Turkey has expressed many times the fact that Hamas is part of the solution to the Palestinian issue and that, without Hamas involvement, prospects for peace are very thin. In one of the public meetings, Erdogan explained

how the visit had occurred. He said that they had presented two options to Hamas leaders. If they received official assignments, they would be welcomed as state officials. If not, then they would be accepted as the guests of the JDP (Sabah, 2006). During the meeting the JDP officials urged Hamas to immediately recognize Israel, cease the terrorist attacks, seek a two-state solution, and accept the previously signed agreements between the Palestinian Authority and Israel (Oguzlu, 2008). However, Turkey's close position to Hamas strained relations between the U.S. and Ankara, especially after Erdogan dubbed the Israeli operation that killed the Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin an act of "State Terrorism" (Freedman, 2010).

Next, the Gaza war and the subsequent naval blockade of the Gaza Strip led to the May 2010 Marmara flotilla incident, which changed the course of relations significantly. Turkey was against the blanket blockade that was prohibiting any goods from reaching Gaza, ostensibly to prevent the flow of arms. The flotilla intended to highlight the blockade by delivering humanitarian aid. However, it encountered aggressive intervention from Israeli commandos, which killed nine activists including one U.S.-Turkish dual citizen. Turkey reacted strongly and cut its diplomatic relations with Israel.

Although U.S. mediation succeeded in restoring Turkey-Israel relations in 2013, the stance of Turkey on the Middle East Peace Process and against Israel has not changed. By acquiring a reputation as an ardent supporter of Palestine, Turkey has achieved its objective of integration with the Arab world in the Middle East. Turkish TV serials have achieved wide popularity, many political entities have begun to emulate the JDP as a model, Turkish firms obtained a friendly business environment, and Arab columnists praise Turkey's way of acting against perceived injustices against the Muslim Palestinian population. Thus, the popularity of Turkey, an

exceptional country with a Muslim population, a democratically elected Islamic government and a discernably rising GDP, has significantly increased in the region.

Since the flotilla episode, Turkey has deliberately distanced itself from Israel and has made an effort to maintain its newly acquired status in the Middle East, regardless of U.S. concerns about hostile relations with Israel. Therefore, poor relations between Turkey and Israel have had the effect of worsening engagements between Ankara and Washington (Cook, 2011).

Since the flotilla incident Turkey has continued to positioned itself as a supporter of the Palestinian cause, furthering its integration with the Arab world and thus serving its national interests. For example, the U.S. voted against the 2010 draft UN resolution[13] that was strongly supported by Turkey that accused Israel of violating international humanitarian law and human rights law (Cakmak & Güneysu, 2013). President Erdogan also criticized the November 2012 Gaza operations of Israel as well as the U.S. for supporting Tel Aviv after the attacks. He disapproved of the "no" vote cast by the U.S. on the resolution to upgrade the status of the Palestinian Authority to "non-member observer state.". He stated: "You were the ones who wanted a two-state solution. Now, why do you stand against Palestine as a state? I cannot understand that." (Altunisik, 2013).

Similarly, after Trump's decision to move the American embassy to Jerusalem, Turkey strongly condemned the move and Tel Aviv for "committing a massacre" against the Palestinian protestors. Moreover, Turkey, as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) term president, initiated an extraordinary summit in Istanbul to protest the U.S. decision, which was in violation of the relevant UNSC resolutions (Anadolu Agency, 2017). Turkey led the biggest Muslim body to act against the move of the embassy and condemn the U.S. decision. Also, Turkey was the most

[13] Report of the International Fact-Finding Mission to Investigate Violations of International Law, Including International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, resulting from the Israeli Attacks on the Flotilla of Ships Carrying Humanitarian Assistance," Human Rights Council, UN General Assembly 15th Session, A/HRC/15/21, September 27, 2010.

active state in lobbying the UN to act against the decision and condemn the U.S. action, which is against the law "to alter the character and status" of the city before the peace process has concluded (Dwyer, 2017).

As Israel's security is one of the most vital interests of Washington, Ankara's stance, which is unfavorable to Israel, strained Turkey's relations with the unipole. Since the problem could not be solved through mediation, as part of assuming active diplomacy, despite facing criticism, Turkey prioritized its national interest. It is essential to express the fact that despite harsh rhetoric, Turkey supports Israel's right to exist, the goal of a two-state solution and a negotiation process for peace (United States Congress, House, CFA, 2010). Turkey's objection to Israel has never turned into opposing its presence in the Middle East. Indeed, Turkey rarely announces arguments that are not shared by European states. However, the high-pitch manifestation and Turkey's influence on the population of other regional nations distinguishes the dose of criticism.

Therefore, it is hard to claim that the ideological elements of the government drive Turkey's behaviors. The Turkish public is very sympathetic to Palestinian cause and Israel has been seen as an oppressor state since the beginning of the "Intifada." At the same time, Turkish views of the U.S., which hardly fulfills the image of an honest broker on the issue, are very negative (Quandt, 2011). Under these conditions, no government can change its stance toward Tel Aviv. Besides the JDP government, many other Turkish leaders and opposition parties continuously denounce Israeli activities. Many other countries, including the EU members that are the closest allies of Washington, disagree with American policy on Israel and share Turkish concerns. Having strained relations with Israel is not the objective of Turkey. After the unsuccessful attempt to normalize Israel with the regional states, it has become an instrument for the country's regional integration.

Despite the opposition because of the difference in views, Turkey has also cooperated with the U.S. on broader Middle East policies aimed at stabilizing the region. Turkey's opening in the Middle East cultivated good results in the first decade of the 21st century. During that time, it has increased its economic prestige in the region by becoming the world's 14th largest economy and its cultural impact through widely broadcast Turkish TV serials. In addition, Turkish democratic experience was unique among the nations in the area of Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA), and Ankara disseminated a liberal agenda.

Therefore, the Turkish government's effort was highly complementary to Washington's moderation and democratization endeavors. Also known as the Greater ME project, Turkey had a vital role in this effort due to its strategic and geographical location. Turkey, a secular Muslim state, was considered by the USA to be a "model" for ME countries (Dagci, 2015). For example, during her time as National Security Adviser in the Bush Administration, Condoleezza Rice wrote an article in which she noted the political/economic transformation of 22 countries through freedom, democracy, tolerance, and welfare (Dagci, 2015).

For the U.S., Turkey was a major soft power contributor, which has provided a broader legitimacy to Washington in its war against terrorism. Since 2002, Ankara has had an implicit agenda that has promoted Islam as a religion compatible with democracy. This was complementary to the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA) that aimed to “strengthen cooperation with the governments, business and civil society of the region, in order to strengthen freedom, democracy, and prosperity for all” (Dagci, 2015). Having been presented by the Bush administration in June 2004 during the G-8 meeting, the BMENA Initiative emerged as a method to fight extremism and radicalism by promoting moderation and democratization (Hale, 2013). The Bush administration promoted Turkey as a model to the Arabs and the Islamic world. As a

democratic and pro-Western Muslim country, Ankara was a useful example in refuting the fallacies that Islam and democracy are incompatible and that all Muslims are anti-Western. In this respect, Ankara was the primary supporter of Washington's efforts (Hale, 2013)

From the Turkish perspective, being endorsed as a model country by the U.S. was a significant opportunity to integrate with the region. Due to the JDP's economic and political success in Turkey, some political parties in Arab states had already begun to emulate its system. Before the Arab Spring began, Turkey's JDP had already been invited by many regional political entities to share their experience and organizational knowledge (Yesilyurt, 2017). The receptive environment for Turkey's political system was because Islamist parties were the most organized political entities with robust, large and conservative constituencies (Hamid, 2017).

Moreover, during the Bush administration, in Iraq, Turkey's efforts to integrate the Sunnis into the political process and ability to speak with all the Iraqi Arabs, as well as Ankara's constructive initiatives for mediation, gained the genuine appreciation of all parties (Ozel, 2012). In addition, in order to counter Saudi and Iranian influence, the Obama Administration contemplated Turkey playing the role of stabilizing power after the U.S. withdrawal. Ankara's vested interest in a stable Iraqi government and willingness to improve relations with every party (Shia, Sunni, and Kurds) constituted a crucial part of the post-withdrawal U.S. strategy (Altunisik, 2013).

During Obama's presidency, relations between the U.S. and Turkey evolved from a "strategic partnership" to a "model partnership." Dagci maintains that while the first denotes two states acting together against a common threat, "model partnership" describes a mutually agreed upon framework and a collective will to rehabilitate the region in which the USA and Turkey would intensify their partnership (Dagci, 2015).

The eruption in late 2010 of the Arab uprising in Tunisia and its spread to other Arab countries was a serious threat to stability. Therefore, according to the new Turkish foreign policy approach, the outcomes of the Arab uprising needed to be controlled, which furthered cooperation between Turkey and the USA in the Middle East. Both Turkey and the USA adopted a position of supporting the transformations in the region. Again, as a secular and democratic Muslim state, Turkey served as a perfect model for the post-revolutionary Arab states. Furthermore, in parallel with Washington's stance, Ankara displayed more support for popular movements than autocratic regimes (Cagrı & Sivis, 2017). The collapse of once-stable Arab authoritarian regimes and threats to the stability of the region had incentivized Turkey to adopt an active approach to re-establish or influence the outcome of the uprisings in hopes of securing a friendlier environment.

The U.S. and Turkey cooperated in Egypt, Libya, and Syria, with some nuances. Here again, there is a need to point out that Turkey's first preference has been maintaining stability in its region and that it has chosen to act only after it has become clear that restoring the previous order is impossible. At the initial stage of the conflict in Libya, Turkey was against NATO's involvement and remained in contact with the Qaddafi regime. It made a priority of securing the lives and safety of Turkish citizens while insisting that Gaddafi peacefully meet the demands of the Libyan people. Only after Turkey was convinced that Gaddafi's attitude would not change did it sever relations and became supportive of military intervention (Bagci & Erdurmaz, 2017).

In Syria, in contrast to the U.S. administration, which desired a change in regime and immediately supported the opposition, Turkey tried to convince Assad to accept a democratic solution. Erdogan continued to engage with Bashar al-Assad until he openly ignored Turkish pleas to accept reforms and stop killing Syrian citizens. After eight months of ardent diplomatic efforts, Ankara finally adopted a position parallel with Washington's when negotiations had failed to

persuade the Assad regime to accommodate the demands of the people (Ozel, 2012). In the end, the U.S. and Turkey agreed to act together against Assad. They condemned Damascus and worked to organize the opposition. However, due to the U.S. upcoming election, Washington's attention wavered, and the two countries' methods in dealing with the Syrian issue diverged (Cagrı & Sivis, 2017).

Relations between Ankara and Washington were positive when a boost in soft power was useful to the U.S. Due to the JDP's foreign policy; Turkey was very popular among the Arab population. The Turkish government's Islamic orientation provided links with grassroots religious movements in the region and Turkey was perceived by the U.S. as a useful element that helped to keep the desired transformation manageable (Hale, 2013).

Defusing security risks. Currently, the security risks faced by Turkey can be categorized as (1) the internal and cross border threat posed by PKK (*Partiye Karkeren Kurdistan*: Kurdistan Working Party) terrorism, (2) the activities of violent extremist organizations, (3) the refugee crisis, (4) the Gulenist terror movement (FETO: Gulenist Terror Organization), and (5) threats to territorial integrity. While Turkey frequently cooperated with the U.S. in coping with the challenges posed by terrorism, the two states remain at odds due to spillover effects of Washington's policies. Indeed, this fact is the primary cause of Turkey's divergent policy adaptation.

PKK terrorism, which has the potential to instigate internal instability and endanger territorial integrity through its link across the border, is the most critical security issue facing Turkey. Indeed, one of the most converging elements of cooperation in foreign policy between the U.S. and Turkey has been the fight against terrorism. Since the 1980s, Turkey has been threatened by terrorism caused by the PKK, which began its activities as a Kurdish secessionist movement.

Besides its effects on Turkey's society and economy, Turkey has suffered 40,000 dead during the fight. PKK is an organization that directly endangers Turkey's territorial integrity and its good relations with its neighbors (especially Iraq and Syria).

Moreover, the PKK's ideology is a significant threat to the social integration of Turkey, because it directly targets the traditional commonalities between Turks and Kurds. The PKK's strategy has been to launch attacks on powerful landlords/tribes and their oppressive implementations of tribalism. The PKK's promotion of leftist ideology and egalitarianism has inspired a reactionary counter-traditionalist opposition against the conservative lifestyle (Yüce 1999). Initially, PKK's ideology was based on socialism, but evolved in the last 30 years into hostility to universalist values. As it evolved, the ideology of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan abandoned most of its leftist values and embraced ethnicity-based ideals, which transformed the organization into one devoted to ethnic socialism (Komecoglu, 2012) and a separatist ideology.

Even though their relations could be volatile, Turkey and the U.S. were mostly supportive of each other. For example, after Ocalan was expelled from Syria in 1998, he subsequently ended up in Turkey with the help of American intelligence services in Afrika. For its part, Turkey has provided military support, financial tracking of suspected terrorist networks, and contributed substantial military participation to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that operates in Afghanistan.

However, U.S.-Turkish relations regarding the fight against terrorism have had ups and downs. While the U.S. was always supportive rhetorically, its action, especially against PKK bases inside Iraq, was very limited. Therefore, Turkey conducted cross-border operations into Iraqi territory. In 2007, facing the prospect of another unilateral Turkish Armed Forces cross-border military operation, the Bush Administration agreed to provide Turkey "real time" intelligence on

the Iraqi-based PKK (Hale, 2013). Ozel maintains that the Bush administration's 5 November 2007 announcement that declared “the PKK as the enemy of Iraq, Turkey and the U.S” and the subsequent decision to provide actionable intelligence was also aimed at improving Ankara's relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). In addition, Americans supported the trilateral consultation structure among Turkey, Iraq and the U.S. to deal with the PKK issue (Ozel, 2012)

While there are many examples of the U.S. and Turkish governments working together, when American actions have begun to endanger the stability of the adjacent states and jeopardizing territorial integrity, Ankara has preferred to confront Washington.

At the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, U.S.-Turkey relations remained frayed because Ankara insisted on maintaining contact with the Assad regime, while the U.S. favored intervention. After Ankara finally adopted a parallel position with Washington the two allies diverged again when Islamist movements dominated the Syrian opposition. Consequently, the initial cooperation between Turkey and the U.S. began to diminish and completely ended in 2017, after the Trump administration’s announcement that the U.S. was ending support for the groups fighting the Syrian Civil War (Itani, 2017) . Relations deteriorated further to an historical low when the U.S. decided to fight against the Islamic State (ISIS) by supporting the leftist Kurdish group PYD/YPG, the offshoot of the PKK in Syria, which caused havoc in Turkey (Harris, 2015).

Background to Turkey’s Fiercest Ever Opposition to U.S. Policy. Without knowing the significance of PKK activities and their influence on Turkish society, it is hard to understand Turkey's fierce opposition against the U.S. policies and relation with PYD/YPG in Syria. The current complex relations of Ankara with different Kurdish groups is closely related to the evolution of their ideologies and the methods they prefer to apply.

Historically, a perception of exclusion created dissatisfaction that has motivated the emergence of Kurdish political and armed movements. Over time, the methods and the objectives of this activism have changed significantly. While in the 1970s, aspirations for an "independent Kurdish nation-state" were circulated(Galip, 2015) during and after the Gulf War a concept of "gradual and structured separation" has been espoused(Kaya & Whiting, 2017). The theory of how a future independent Kurdish state should be constituted recently evolved into an unusual form in Syria with the introduction of "Democratic Confederalism," a system that was formulated by Abdullah Ocalan and has begun to be implemented by the PYD (PYD: Partîya Yekîtî ya Dêmokrat; or Democratic Union Party) in the north of Syria(Sary, 2016).

Syria contains a tiny proportion of Kurds which is disconnected from the greater Kurdish community by national borders. Their politicization has occurred through intra-Kurdish rivalries which manifest themselves in competition for influence by forming affiliations and branches in neighboring states. Therefore, for the greater Kurdish community, Syria can be characterized as an area where rivalries for influence are played out mainly between leftists (PKK sympathizers) and traditionalists (who favoring KDP) (Kaya & Whiting, 2017). Each movement has tried to form transnational connections, which were useful in mobilizing Syrian Kurds as human resources for their competing movements in Iraq and Turkey. In the1970s and1980s, hundreds of Syrian Kurds were recruited mainly by KDP as Peshmerga. It is estimated that up to 10,000 Syrian Kurds were killed as PKK militants in Turkey in the '80s and ‘90s (Tejel, 2008).

Coming into existence in 2003 as an outcome of intra-Kurdish rivalries, PYD owes its current success mostly to being an offshoot of the PKK, which has been one of the most significant actors since the beginning of the Kurdish movements in Syria. Because of water problems and territorial disputes with Turkey, the Syrian government considered the existence of the PKK an

advantage against its neighbor(Tejel, 2008). After the military coup in Turkey in 1980, Syria offered refuge to the PKK leadership as part of a balancing strategy against Turkey(Schott, 2017). The PKK was allowed to open political offices in many cities in Syria, and enjoyed the privilege of being the only Kurdish political movement permitted to openly operate in that country. Except for the PKK, the regime banned all other Kurdish movements and prosecuted their crucial personnel (Self & Ferris, 2016). During this period, the PKK was very cautious to direct all its activities toward Turkey and to not upset its host nation.

In 1998, the Turkish state openly threatened the Syrian government over its support of the PKK and forced the Syrian state to expel Ocalan. Intimidated by threats from Turkey, the Syrian regime cracked down on PKK remnants, and banned PKK activities. However, the existence of other local leftist Kurdish movements like the Yekîtî (Union) party, which began to fill the power vacuum, stimulated PKK to restore local support in Syria. In 2003, the clandestine Democratic Union Party (PYD: Partîya Yekîtî ya Dêmokrat) was established as a successor to the Syrian part of the PKK. PYD joined other Kurdish movements to confront the Syrian regime's exclusionist policies.

Just a year after the founding of the PYD, in 2004, a football match in Qamishlo escalated into a Kurdish revolt against the regime, which lasted for 13 days and resulted in 43 deaths. The event sparked vigorous opposition to the Assad regime among Syrian Kurds, politicizing the ethnic community and creating a relatively unified front for Kurdish identity. The Yekîtî party and the PYD inspired the resistance and stood out as prominent leaders of the Kurdish movement in Syria (Allsopp & Harriet, 2016).

Another historical incident that led to the consolidation of PYD power in Syria was the start of the Syrian Civil War, which began as a part of the Arab Spring in March 2011. At the

beginning of the Civil War, the Kurds were trying to figure out what their stance should be towards the conflict. Some of the Kurds, including PYD, were suspicious about the Arab opposition movement, which was dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), a group that did not favor Kurdish political activities. Thus, there was a debate about whether to act together with the Arabs or maintain distance from their activities.

Arabs had already founded the Syrian National Council (SNC) in 2011, an umbrella group comprised of Syrian opposition parties based in Istanbul. Masoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdish Region in northern Iraq, strongly backed the Syrian opposition, in alliance with Turkey. He urged his party's Syrian branch (KDP-S) members to host meetings to unite Kurds under one umbrella to fight against the Assad regime. In October 2011, with the support of the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the Kurdish National Council (KNC), comprised of Syrian Kurdish parties, was established to oppose Assad(Schott, 2017).

Meanwhile, the Syrian regime, in an attempt to exploit the lack of unity among the opposition and draw the Kurds closer, announced new edicts that met some of the traditional Kurdish demands. Consequently, pressure on the Kurds was relieved, which provided them with the opportunity to expand their activities. This move of the Syrian Assad regime managed to increase the fault lines between the Kurds and Arabs in the country (Allsopp & Harriet, 2016).

Strongly influenced by leftist ideology, PYD separated itself from the opposition to Assad and pursued a different agenda. It had already taken control of the predominantly Kurdish areas in August 2012 when government forces had withdrawn from the mostly Kurdish populated areas in order to consolidate their hold on more strategically valuable areas. PYD withdrew from the KNC and closely affiliated itself with PKK ideology. Salih Muslim, the head of the party, declared that they did not only want a regime change but a system change. Asya Abdullah, the co-president of

the PYD, offered “the third line," an agenda centered on self-defense and the primacy of non-violent solutions. She clarified this strategy by saying: "The third line is an independent and open track, which does not support either the regime or the opposition… The third line is based on the organization of society and the formation of cultural, social, economic and political institutions in order to achieve the people's self-administration…”(Sary, 2016).

In 2013, the PYD began to govern territories under its control by creating The Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM: Tevgera Civaka Demokratîk). This organization was a coalition of civic associations and political parties (Balanche, 2018) founded by cadres previously active in the PKK and later in its sister-party, the PYD (Jongerden & Knapp, 2016). In 2013, TEV-DEM announced the creation of an autonomous administration named "Rojava," which comprised three cantons, Cizire, Kobane, and Afrin. These cantons were supposed to be governed by an elected assembly that controls Rojava's executive bureau. Each canton had a Kurdish prime minister aided by two vice prime ministers, who are non-Kurdish (Balanche, 2018).

The looming threat of ISIS made the PYD even more attractive to the locals; In the absence of Syrian government forces, the PYD was the only political entity in the area with any significant military power. The People's Protection Units (YPG: Yekîneyên Parastina Gel), the armed branch of the PYD, was formed after the Qamishlo Revolt in 2004 with the backing of the PKK(globalsecurity.org, 2018). Through the YPG, PYD effectively offered protection from ISIS to the people in Northern Syria, which decisively sidelined the KNC. As a result, the PYD outmaneuvered all other Kurdish factions and unilaterally declared autonomy(Schott, 2017).

The emergence of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and its spread in Syria was a decisive factor that provided PYD to consolidate its authority. Its indiscriminate and savage attacks made ISIS an enemy of the international community as well as of the Kurds, and the PYD’s

willingness to fight against ISIS made them a legitimate member of the U.S.-led international coalition that was formed to fight against the Islamic State. In October 2015, the PYD was integrated into a new alliance consisting of Arab, Assyrian/Syrian, and a few other ethnic group forces. In December 2016, U.S. officials announced that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) consisted of 45,000 fighters including more than 13,000 Arab fighters; the group, however, was dominated by the YPG and relied on it for logistics and veteran fighters (militaryperiscope.com, 2017). The material and monetary support of the coalition expanded the PYD's influence and brought additional territories under Kurdish control.

For Ankara, the expansion of PYD rule was unacceptable because, unlike the Iraqi Kurds, who had good relations with Turkey, PYD followed the same ideology of Ocalan as the PKK. For example, KDP's system is closer to the "Middle Eastern state model where authoritarianism, a centralized state, and tribal and economic elites are interlinked with the political elite" (Kaya & Whiting, 2017). With the emergence of the PYD in Syria, the Rojava experience that is based on alienating populations from their traditional bonds and getting rid of commonalities could amplify the appeal of the PKK's ideology among Kurds and carve an assertive space that can increase polarization in the border areas.

Turkey grew even warier of the PYD because the failure of negotiations with the PKK was closely related to the Syrian Kurds' new recognition in the international arena. In 2009, official peace talks between Turkey and PKK began under the name of "democratic opening" or "peace process"(Oney & Selck, 2017). For the first time in the history of the Republic, the Turkish government was abandoning the policy of categorical denial of Kurdish rights and open to granting linguistic and cultural rights to Kurds(Gunes & Gurses, 2017). However, Kurdish elites claimed that their political demands had not been met and that all the rights offered them were merely

cosmetic. During the talks, the Kurdish battle for Kobane against ISIS, which united all Kurds and formed a very distinctive identity that had never been seen before among the Kurdish community, took place. Having exited from the emerging opportunities in Syria, the PKK broke the peace and initiated armed conflict in urban and rural areas inside Turkey and Iraq.

In order to seize the newly emergent opportunity, the PKK leadership and fighters went to Syria to organize PYD and enlarge the capacity of YPG. Hundreds of PKK militia members crossed the Iraqi border to become the core of the YPG units (Self & Ferris, 2016). After clearing the region of ISIS fighters, the PKK moved its Headquarters elements to Mount Sincar, which stretches across both Syria and Iraq and provided covered access to and transport across the border. Threatened by the organic collaboration between these organizations and PKK's attempts to consolidate its presence in Syria, Turkey declared PYD/YPG an affiliate of PKK and began to openly target them as terrorist organizations.

At the same time, the U.S. continued to accept the YPG-led SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) as local partners, claiming they were the best option to fight against ISIS, though U.S. officials accepted that Turkey had a "legitimate concern." They had announced numerous times that the PKK is a terrorist group, but had not made the same determination about the PYD/YPG (Kheel, 2018). Also, they claimed that SDF was a force made up of many local groups, with Arabs as the majority. In addition, The U.S. did not accept the Turkish proposal to use Turkish military forces and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to liberate Rakka from ISIS elements. American insistence on using the YPG as the primary forces of the U.S.-led coalition infuriated Turkey. Turkish officials frequently expressed that they would "not let a terror corridor on along its border," criticized the method of "getting rid of one terror group with another" as a wrong choice

(Yenisafak, 2016) . Moreover, Mr. Erdogan strongly stated that "Turkey will deal with the terror threat of its own accord," signaling that the self-help approach was on the way.

After the liberation from ISIS of Menbic, an Arab town west of the Euphrates River, the YPG was supposed to withdraw but refused to do so. Formerly, Turkey had announced that no YPG forces would be tolerated west of the Euphrates River. That movement increased Turkish distrust of the PYD's intentions, which were to unite the cantons and seek possibilities for a passage to the sea. Turkey immediately launched two military operations to prevent this Kurdish aspiration and hinder the PKK's further positioning in the north of Syria along its southern border. First, Turkey launched "Operation Euphrates Shield" against ISIS and the YPG and entered as a wedge between the Afrin and Kobane cantons. Secondly, by launching "Operation Olive Branch," Ankara wrested control of Afrin canton from the PYD by force and threatened to do the same in Menbic, if the U.S. failed to keep its earlier promise to leave the city.

These two operations were actively directed against elements for whom the U.S. had repeatedly expressed full support. Sometimes Turkey operated very close to the U.S. troops, increasing fears of a possible confrontation. Moreover, Turkey began to actively participate in mechanisms such as the Astana and Sochi processes that had been created together with Russia and Iran in order to ease the tension of the war. Yet, Ankara also cooperated with the U.S. and remained in close coordination with the Americans in Menbic. After Turkey increased its pressure for resolving the Menbic issue, a mechanism known as the "Menbic Road Map" was created, which entailed combined US-Turkish patrols and subsequent YPG withdrawal from the region.

Although the significance of the PYD/YPG threat to Turkey has never been appropriately emphasized in the Western media, the stakes for Turkey were high. The U.S. decision to support PYD as a partner in the region significantly tipped the balance of power in favor of the PKK/PYD,

with many future implications for Turkey. Its ability to project power and economically sustain forces across the border allowed Turkey to employ an independent approach, which conflicted with the unipole's policy preferences but was useful in restoring, or at least preventing further changes in, the regional balance of power.

Another example of Turkey's independent approach and cooperation with the U.S. is the early warning radar system established in Malatya. Although Turkey was upset with Washington because, just a year before, the U.S. had rejected the Iranian nuclear deal (the Tehran Declaration) negotiated by Turkey and Brazil and had insisted on imposing sanctions on Tehran, Ankara decided to cooperate in the interest of stability. Despite suspicions that the radar's real purpose was to detect Iranian missiles, Turkey forwent its opposition regarding the Iranian nuclear crisis and accepted the stationing of the system during the G-20 Summit in June 2010. The U.S. officials hailed it as "probably the biggest strategic decision between the US and Turkey in the past 15 or 20 years." (Altunisik, 2013).

The time of this agreement coincided with heated debates over Israel's interception of the Marmara Flotilla debates and U.S efforts to isolate Iran. Despite the absence of any perceived threat posed by Tehran, involvement in a defense system against Iran was politically awkward. However, Turkey cooperated in such an adversarial situation because the system was defensive and did not have a direct impact on regional stability (Cakmak & Güneysu, 2013).

Another reason for tension between Turkey and the U.S. is the U.S.-based "Gulen movement," which has organized several operations, including a failed military coup, against the JDP government. Washington has not met Turkey's demand to hand Fethullah Gulen over to Turkish authorities. Perceiving the organization as a serious threat to the political establishment,

Turkey has declared Fetullah Gulen's movement to be a terrorist organization and purged thousands of government employees who were related to the movement (Cagrı & Sivis, 2017).

During the sweeping crackdown in 2016, Turkish authorities arrested American citizen Andrew Brunson, an evangelist pastor at a church located in Izmir, accusing him of being a spy working for the Pennsylvania-based Gulen and of having links to the PKK (Nugent, 2018). Many believed that Brunson was a card to realize a swap with Gulen. When the evangelist community, Vice President Mike Pence and President Trump get involved in the issue, there were already myriad disputes between two countries over issues ranging from U.S. support for the YPG and the detention of a Halk Bank manager by the U.S. for allegedly circumventing the Iran sanctions to Turkey's willingness to buy the S-400 Air Defense System from Russia and possible limitation of selling the F-35 fighter jet program.

Turkey did not immediately meet U.S. demands that Brunson be freed. Subsequently, on July 26, 2018, Vice President Pence tweeted a warning that the U.S. was prepared to levy significant sanctions if the pastor was not released. On August 1, 2018 the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced sanctions against Turkey's Minister of Justice Abdulhamit Gul and Minister of Interior Suleyman Soylu, because of their allegedly leading roles in the detention of Brunson (U.S. Department of The Treasury, 2018). Moreover, the U.S. imposed tariffs on imports of Turkish aluminum and steel, creating an unprecedented currency crisis. On August 10, 2018, Mr. Trump's Tweet: "I have just authorized a doubling of Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum with respect to Turkey as their currency, the Turkish Lira, slides rapidly downward against our very strong Dollar! Aluminum will now be 20% and Steel 50%. Our relations with Turkey are not good at this time!" caused a tremendous loss of value to the Turkish lira--on August 11, 2018, the lira had lost 57% since the beginning of the year (BBC, 2018).

The currency crisis, increased inflation and the negative outlook of the Turkish economy significantly raised the cost to Turkey of resisting U.S. demands on this issue. Turkey released Brunson after a trial that sentenced him to three years in prison. However, considering the over one year of time he had spent in custody since 2016, he was released.

The Brunson incident provides a clear piece of evidence from a different perspective that supports the theory that Turkey has pursued independent politics to maximize its objectives when its national power could afford the cost; but cannot follow the independent approach, even concerning issues related to a primary internal threat, when its material capability is restrained. In the Brunson case, the potentially devastating effect of sanctions quickly forced Turkey to abide by the American demands.

Similarly, after the Trump Administration's decision to withdraw from Syria at the end of 2018, a possible attack by the Turkish military on the YPG/PYD became a central question in the U.S. After the announcement, to clarify the U.S. position and ensure that withdrawal would not affect its commitments to its allies, officials including National Security Adviser John Bolton paid visits to several regional capitals. During Bolton's Israel visit, he held a press conference with Netanyahu, where he stated that the withdrawal was conditioned on Turkey's promise not to attack YPG/PYD Kurds in Syria.

On 8 January 2019, during a speech in Parliament, Erdogan publicly lashed out: "Bolton's remarks in Israel are not acceptable. It is not possible for me to swallow this. Bolton made a serious mistake. If he thinks that way, he is in a big mistake. We will not compromise." During the televised speech to lawmakers in his party, he continued his remarks by saying that all the preparations to neutralize (the U.S. allied) YPG/PYD were complete and those who take part in

the terror corridor along Turkey's southern borders were going to receive an appropriate response. (Bianca Britton, Isil Sariyuce, Nicole Gaouette, & Kevin Liptak, 2019).

Yet, on January 13, 2019, after a tweet from Mr. Trump stating: “Starting the long overdue pullout from Syria while hitting the little remaining ISIS territorial caliphate hard, and from many directions. Will attack again from the existing nearby base if it reforms. Will devastate Turkey economically if they hit Kurds. Create a 20-mile safe zone...", Turkey immediately accepted the creation of a safe zone. While Turkey had already offered this option to protect refugees at the beginning of the Civil War, its functionality is dubious at this stage. Besides, it is evident that the creation of a safe zone is aimed at protecting YPG/PYD rather than providing comfort to Turkey's security concerns. Yet, due to the vulnerability of its economic situation, Turkey has lost its ability to pursue an independent politics and has entered a phase of reconsidering its strategy to achieve its objectives.

These incidents further indicate that Turkish foreign policy behavior is structural. In order to maximize its security, Turkey adopted an independent position, which entailed open confrontation with the unipole; however, when it lacked the material capabilities to successfully pursue an independent course, its behavior changed to a more submissive position.

Achieve Economic Development. The instability in post-Saddam Iraq greatly intensified Turkey's security concerns. Therefore, TFP has focused on stabilizing Iraq, which had become important to Turkey’s economic interests. Before the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Iraq was a significant trading partner for Turkey, but the war and the subsequent UN sanctions effectively ended those bilateral commercial relations. Likewise, Turkish elites were primarily concerned that any new tension between Iran and the United States might undermine their nation’s economic interests. Naturally, Turkey has developed a reflex that has served to avoid a similar situation.

By 2011, Turkey had improved its economic position, undertaken prestigious projects and economically turned into a pole of attraction for its smaller neighbors and surrounding region (Hale, 2013). Endeavoring to find markets for its manufacturing industry, Ankara increasingly has begun to benefit from stability and open relations with the countries in the Middle East. Therefore, policies contributive to stabilization of the region and free trade have inspired cooperation, while U.S. activities which threaten stability have invited Turkish opposition.

Turkey's GDP increased through an outward-looking export-driven economic approach which needs stable areas conducive for business. While previously Turkey has channeled its trade to traditional Western markets, expanding into neglected markets has brought much growth, investment, and new export markets in the Middle East and Eurasia (United States Congress, House, CFA, 2010). This success came as a part of removing visa requirements, embedding large business delegations into official state visits, and improving the image of Turkey.

Moreover, Turkey has intensively invested in efforts to improve relations in Africa. For example, on January 9, 2019, during the opening of the embassy in South Africa, in his speech Mr. Erdogan related that Turkeys has increased its diplomatic missions from 12 in 2002, to 41. Also, he stated that 10-15 years ago, Turkey was visible only in specific regions and areas, while the country today has the 6th most extensive diplomatic network in the world (Hurriyet, 2019).

Turkey has preferred to cooperate with the U.S. when economic gain or compensation of economic loss is available. For example, Ankara extensively cooperated with the U.S. in Central Asia, while Washington was supportive of Ankara (against Russia) in Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project, which was planned to carry Azerbaijani and Central Asian oil via Turkey to Europe. Also, in 2003, Turkey agreed to cooperate with the U.S. in the Iraq War only after the

military campaign had begun (and became irreversible) and Washington released direct monetary support that could make good Turkish losses.

Moreover, being in the center of its politics, Ankara has improved and maintained good relations with countries with whom the U.S. is in conflict. Two structural dynamics are essential to defining this behavior. First, Turkey is surrounded by states that the U.S. wants to isolate or whose political establishment the U.S. wants to transform. Second, the unipole has the power to isolate Turkey by putting stress on its banking system and weakening confidence in the Turkish economy if its conflictual stance surpasses the threshold of tolerance. Therefore, multi-dimensional economic and political relations, especially with those states that have completely rejected U.S. dominance, increases the resilience of Turkey's independent position. In addition, such places as Sudan, Venezuela, and Iran are the most lucrative markets, since the volatility of their regimes discourages many competitive Western companies from investing in them. Faced with U.S. financial coercion, Turkey has a genuine interest in improving its economic ties with those states in a similar position like Russia and Iran, which have also experienced currency crises due to economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. (Lewitt, 2018). Moreover, Turkey imports nearly all of its energy needs and seeks to balance its trade deficit with energy-exporting states. Developing political and economic relations with these states provides a sound opportunity to compensate for some part of the loss.

In conclusion, Turkey means to maximize its objectives are related to the need for balancing security requirements and economic development. In accordance with the structural pressures, when its economic condition is strong, Ankara pushes harder to maximize its security through adopting an independent approach. Yet, it forgoes autonomy and becomes more receptive to the unipole' s preferences when its objectives for development are at risk.

Proving the Argument

This part of the study is intended to address whether Turkey really tries to be independent or is instead moving away from the West. If Turkey has picked a side, then a systematic opposition toward the U.S. policy preferences would be expected. On the other hand, if Turkey has opted to be independent, instead of total replacement or rejection, both cooperation and confrontation would be observed.

Methodology

First, the empirical research chronologically collated prominent incidents in the relations between the U.S. and Turkey since the beginning of unipolar order in 1990. It added to a comprehensive list the announcements after a presidential visit or sideline meetings; agreements, minister or higher-level important messages that initiate, maintain or change any significant policy; and military and economic activities such as agreements or sanctions.

The Turkish Yearbook *Chronology of Turkish-American relations* was the principal source for the selected cases from 1990 to 2002 (Aydin et al., 2001). For the period 2002 to the end of 2017, The Almanac of *US-Turkey Relations Under the AK Party* served as the primary source (Kanat et al., 2017). Incidents that occurred during 2018 were selected by the author through scanning the press.

Secondly, through the examination of the literature, the most important categories that have the most volume and impact on Turkish-American relations have been determined. By looking from Turkey's perspective, events that have links to stability, economy, military cooperation, territorial integrity, terrorism, being a model country, relations with Israel, internal political

instabilities, and energy security have been classified and marked under categories of proper context.

Finally, after fixing the occurrence rates, the data have been visualized by using charts.

Analysis

The study asserts that Turkey pursues independence to maximize the outcomes of its objectives. Therefore, the empirical analysis needs to prove that:

(1) Turkey behaves independently rather than picking a side,

(2) The visibility of independent behavior correlates with growing national power,

(3) The presented objectives are coherent with Turkey's foreign policy behaviors.

From a structural perspective, the material capability of a state is one of the primary elements that affect its behavior. Therefore, the study accepts "2008" as a decisive point in the analysis because of the discernable increase in the elements of Turkey's national power. Also, it takes "2002" as a marking point for the beginning of JDP party rule in Turkey and compares its behavior before and after 2008.

Table 7 depicts the overall results of important events in relations between Turkey and the U.S. since the end of the Cold War. There is need to note that the time span between 1990-2018 depicts the total interactions since the beginning of the unipolarity. The 1990-2008 period is meant to point out the era of low national power, while the time between 2008 and 2018 indicates the increased capabilities. Finally, 2002-2008 depicts the era of JDP rule during the era of restricted capabilities. The purpose of the table is to provide dataset for comparing the general tendency of Turkey's behavior under different structural conditions.

Table 7. The American-Turkish Relations During the Unipolar Systemic Structure.

The American-Turkish Relations During the Unipolar Systemic Structure				
Years	**Cooperate**	**Oppose**	**Disagreement in Methods**	**TOTAL**
1990-2018	73	43	5	119
1990-2008	47	13	0	57
2002-2008	13	4	0	24
2008-2018	29	30	5	67

Table 8 provides the results for cooperative policies between two allies in different domains. The events with high occurrence rates show the importance of the subject for Turkey. On the other hand, the time spans aim to compare different periods similar to previous table.

Table 8. The American-Turkish Cooperative Policies.

Turkey's Cooperation with the U.S.												
Years	**Stabilize Region**	**Military Cooperation**	**Counter Terrorism**	**Economic Gain**	**Model Country**	**Increase Territorial Integrity**	**Decrease Territorial Integrity**	**Threatening the Political Establishment**	**Energy Politics**	**Economic Loss**	**Degrade Territorial Integrity**	**Improve Relation with Israel**
1990-2018	39	34	25	18	7	6	4	5	5	4	4	4
1990-2008	21	18	15	13	4	5	4	4	4	3	0	4
2002-2008	10	5	9	4	2	4	1	0	1	0	0	3
2008-2018	21	17	11	5	3	3	0	1	1	1	0	1

Finally, Table 9 classifies the findings of opposing policies between the U.S. and Turkey.

***Table 9**. Turkey's Opposing Policies to the U.S.*

Turkey's Opposition to the U.S.											
Years	Destabilize the Region	Degrade Territorial Integrity	Threatening the Political Establishment	Economic Loss	Military Cooperation	Oppose Israel in MEPP	Stabilize the Region	Counter Terrorism	Economic Gain	Model Country	Increase Territorial Integrity	Improve Relation with Israel
1990-2018	18	11	11	9	6	6	3	2	2	1	2	1
1990-2008	5	2	3	4	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
2008-2018	14	9	8	5	3	6	2	1	2	1	2	0
2002-2008	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1

Turkey's behavior is independent, and it correlates with its growing national power. The primary sign for being independent can be observed in the direction of the relations. If moving toward one direction is the case, then a systematic rejection of the previous side should be detected. On the other hand, if Turkey behaves independently within its national interest-centric view, the engagement should vary situationally. In addition, since an increase in material capability is a prerequisite to display some degree of independence in foreign policy; the change in behavior should concur with the change in national power.

Between 1990 and 2008, when Turkey was accepted as a Western-centric country, the level of cooperation is overwhelming, which shows an immense preference for siding with the U.S. (Figure 6).

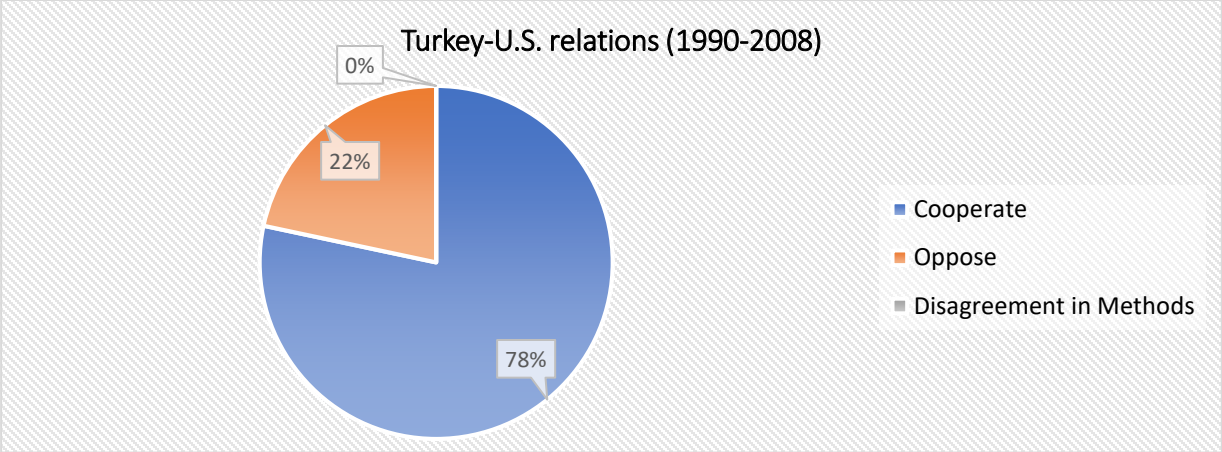

Figure 6. *Turkey-US Relations (1990-2008).*

Between 2002 and 2008, when the current JDP was still in charge, the level of cooperation and opposition changed by only *two percent* (Figure 7).

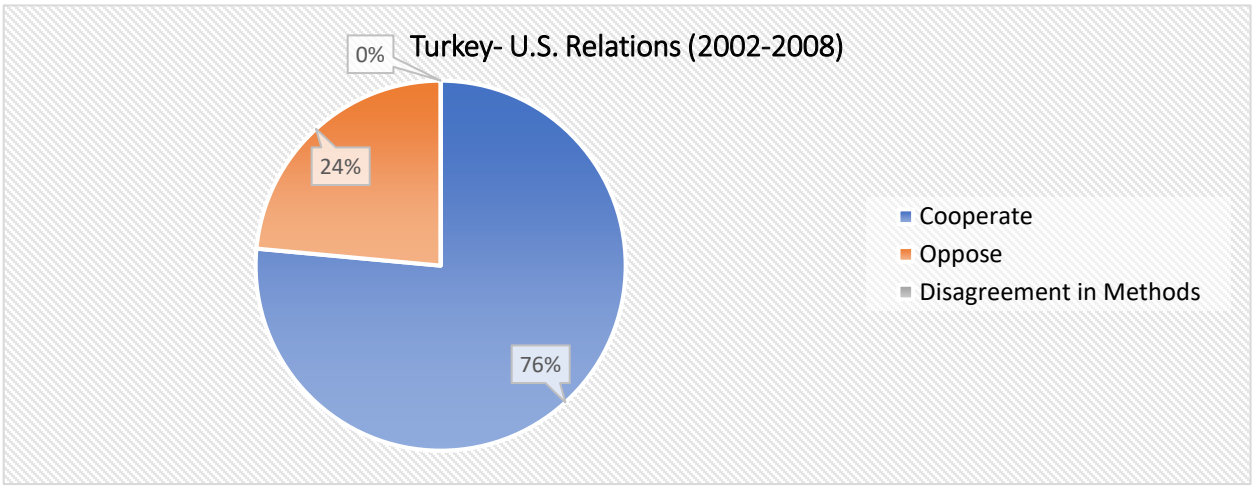

Figure 7. *Turkey-U.S. Relations (2002-2008).*

On the other hand, after 2008 the proportion of cooperation and opposition changes significantly. However, the even dispersion of cooperation and opposition complements the argument of the *first assumption*. Also, the concentration of independent policies coincides with the increase in national power, which suits the *assumption* number 3.

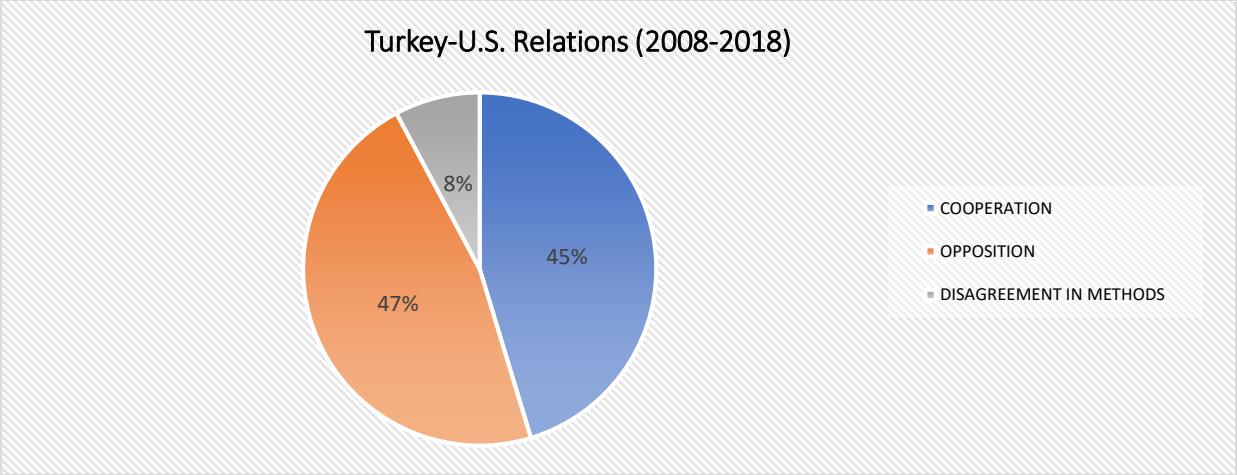

***Figure 8**. Turkey-U.S. Relations (2008-2018).*

Finally, figure 9 depicts the overall relations and the proportion of cooperative vs. opposing policies in different view.

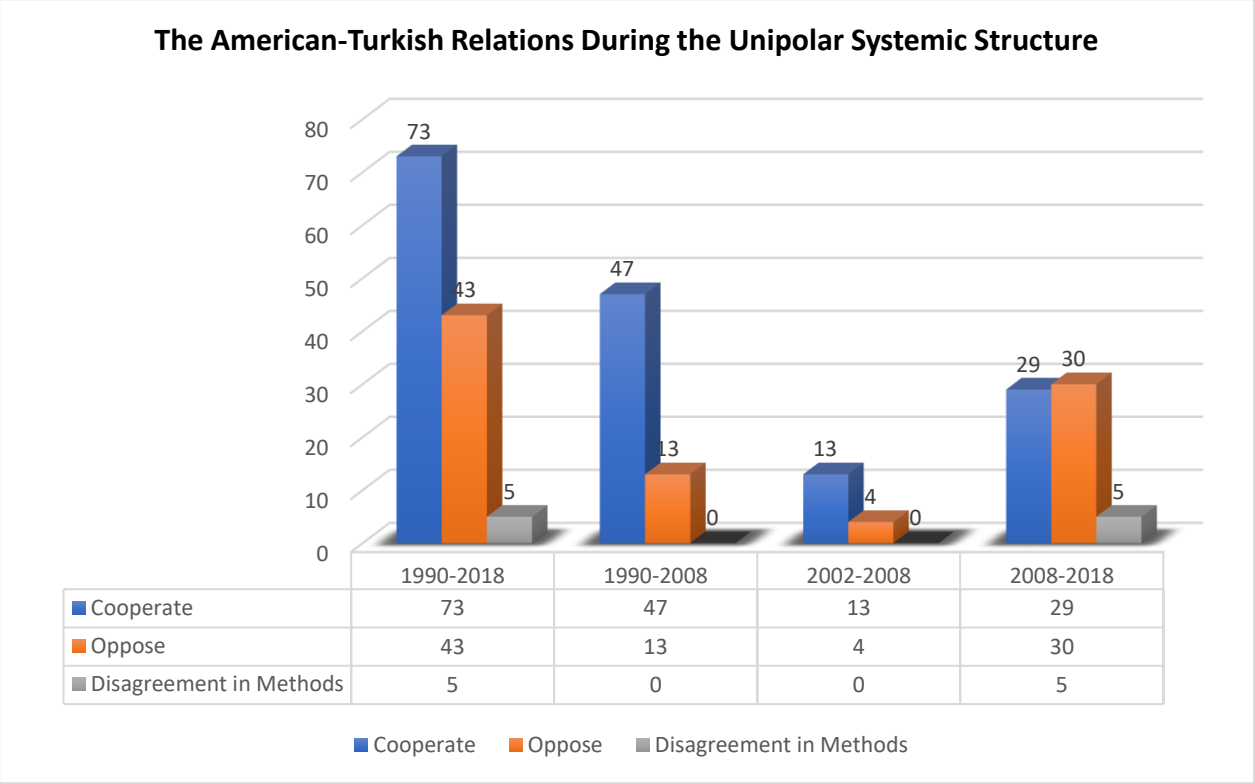

***Figure 9**. The American-Turkish Relations During the Unipolar Systemic Structure.*

Turkish Foreign Policy Behavior is Coherent with its Objectives. At the beginning of the chapter, the study defined three primary objectives as (1) stabilize the region, (2) defuse security risks, and (3) achieve economic development as the pillars for Turkish foreign policy. In Figures 10 and 11 it is possible to detect the relation of the TFP with its objectives. For example, Turkey has mostly preferred to cooperate with the U.S. to stabilize the region, defuse the security risk and for economic gain (See figure 10).

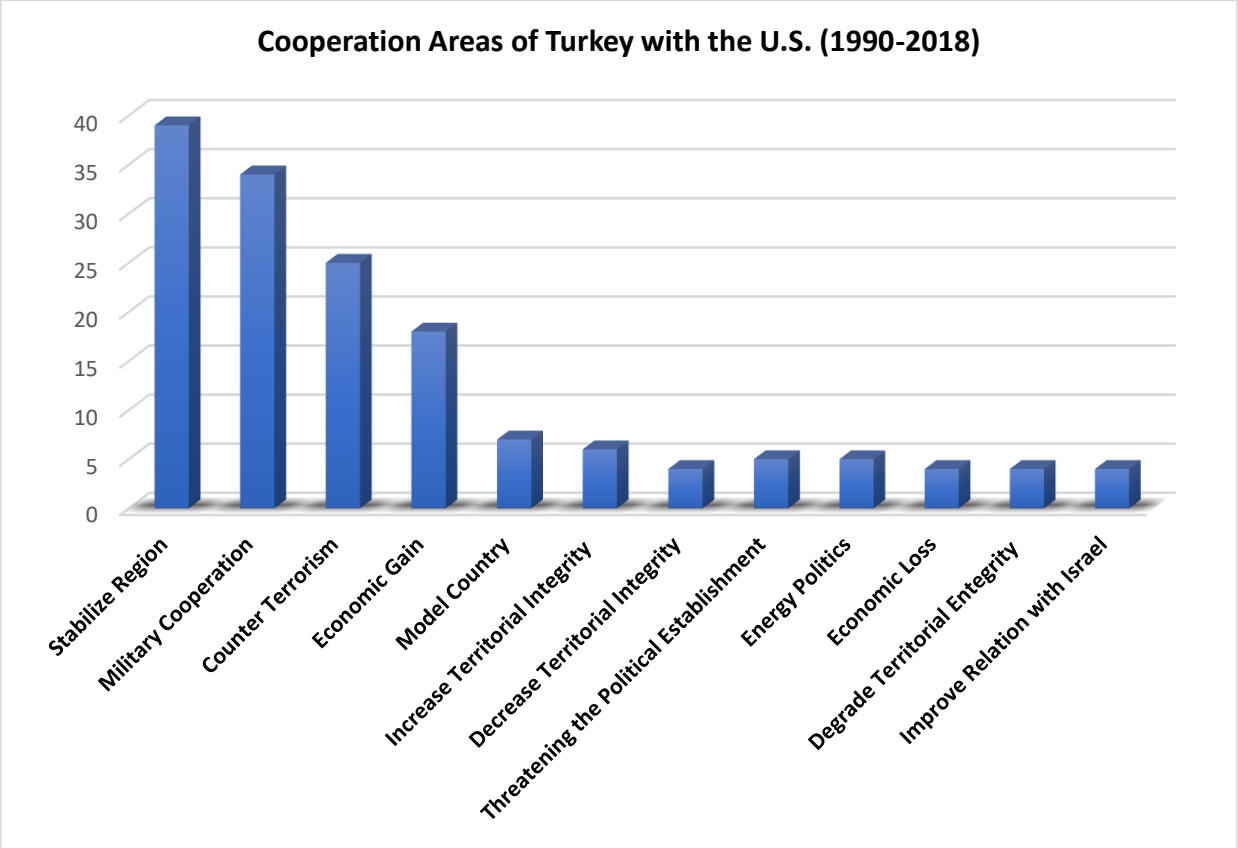

Figure 10. *Cooperation Areas of Turkey with the U.S. (1990-2018).*

On the other hand, Turkey's opposition to the U.S. has internal and external security aspects as well as economic concerns (Figure 11). From Turkey's perspective, it opposed the U.S. when it perceived that American policies destabilized the region. Next, Turkey appears to be concerned

with policies that may degrade the territorial integrity mainly due to the Kurdish issue. Interestingly, relations seem to get strained when Turkey perceives that the U.S. is threatening the political establishment over human rights issues, democratic values or acts in a supportive/passive stance against the Turkey's perceived internal threat. Finally, again it is observable that Turkey values its economy as much as its security.

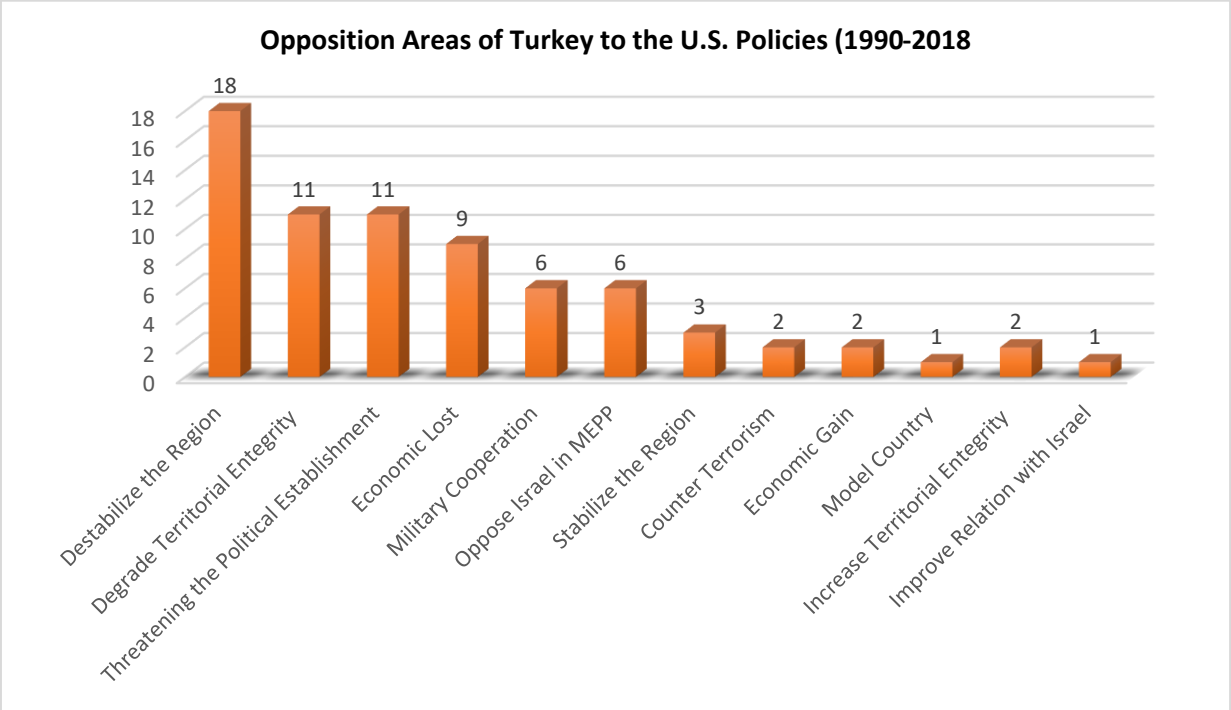

Figure 11. *Opposing areas of Turkey against the U.S. policies (1990-2018).*

In figure 12, it is possible to observe how the increased material capability has affected Turkey's stance after 2008. Although there is a need for further research to decide what the actual effects of the Syrian Civil War and subsequent emergence of ISIS are on relations between the U.S. and Turkey, the picture does not diverge from traditional trends except in the "military cooperation" and the "threatening the political establishment" columns. It is observable that the perception of the U.S. possible involvement and implicit support to the Gulen movement, which

has become a central issue in interactions between two states, has significantly strained relations. (Turkey's demand for Gulen's extradition has been repeatedly rejected.)

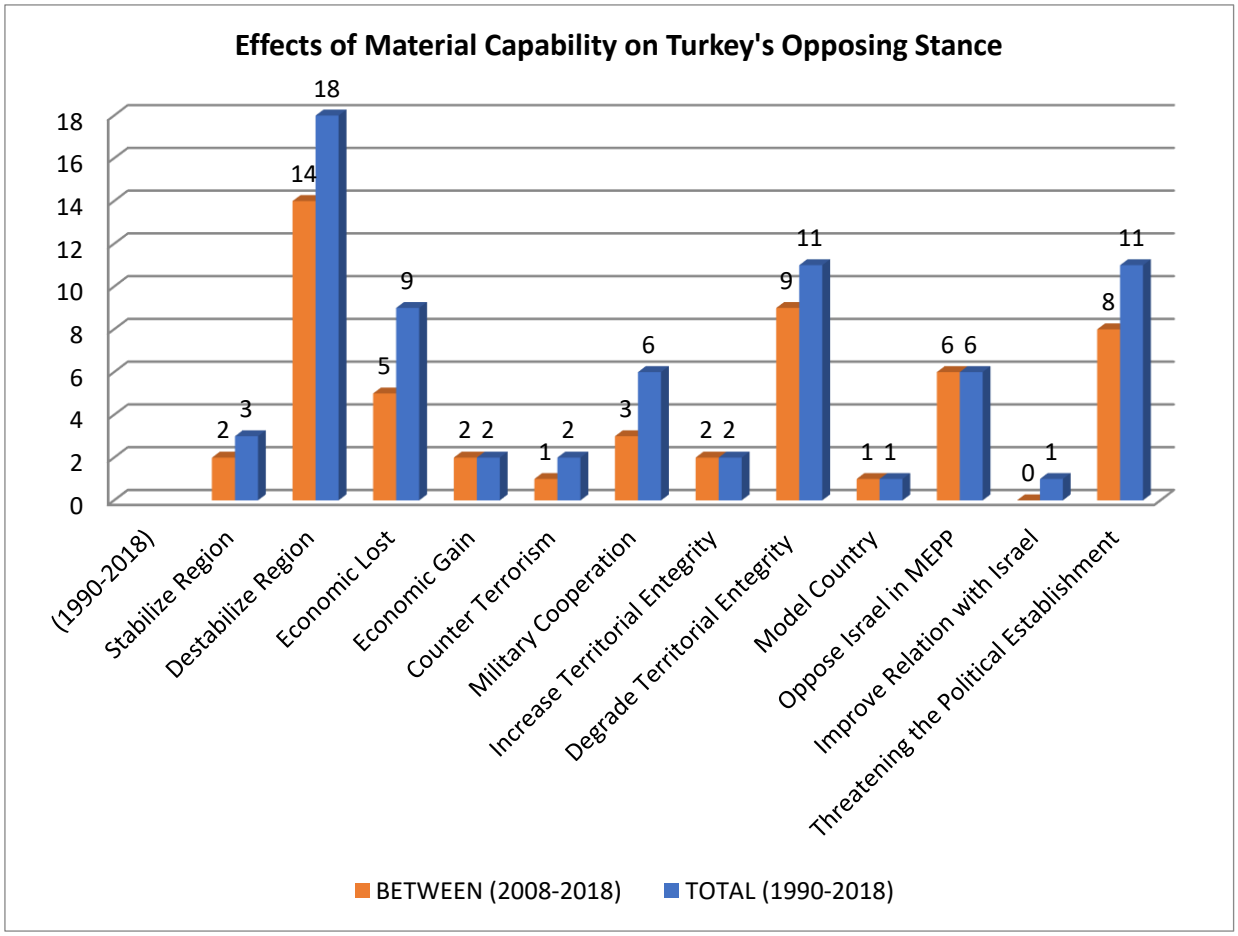

Figure 12. Effects of Material Capability on Turkey's Opposing Stance against the U.S.

Conclusion

This section of the work focuses on exploring the change in TFP by linking the national objectives, which are the end state and primary motivation for the country's action, with the instruments to realize them.

Through empirical analysis, the study proves categorically that Turkey's national objectives can be classified as "defusing security risks" and maintaining "economic development."

Also, the work shows that the level of cooperation vs. confrontation is not enough to claim that Turkey has chosen another side or shifted away from the West. Instead, it depicts an independent position. Moreover, the results of the research provide a sound correlation between the increased material capability and the independent policy preferences of Turkey, which indicates that the cause of change in TFP is structural.

The empirical research also provides a powerful prediction tool for future pathways of TFP. It shows that Turkey's national power is the primary variable for the methods of maximizing national objectives. Notably, military power projection capability and economic growth appear to be the leading factors for national decision-making. At the beginning of 2019, the national military procurements reached 65%, and Turkey began domestically to produce modern arms that provide power projection capabilities. The study predicts that from now on, the successful mobilization of the domestic military industry will depend on the allocated defense funds and potential export opportunities. Thus, the overall national economic health will be decisive in judging the degree of Turkey's regional assertiveness.

On the other hand, the U.S. National Security Policy and the subsequent National Defense Strategy (2018) maintains attention on the Middle East, but prioritizes pivot to Asia and stress realignment of resources for the forecasted major power competition. Therefore, the Middle East becomes more peripheral to the U.S. interests while attracting more assertive Russia and China. Consequently, the U.S. can adopt "restraint" as a regional grand strategy by narrowing its military objectives, focusing on global access, and actively encouraging its allies to share defense burdens, which can significantly diminish the U.S direct involvement and activist presence in the Middle East.

Since Turkey's does not direct its opposition to the presence of the U.S. but against its particular interventionist policies, the future interactions between the two allies may fold out based on the economic condition of Turkey and the degree of U.S. activism. Accordingly, if the U.S. activism remains strong and Turkey has a restrained economy, Ankara most likely will act less assertive. However, it does not mean that it will be blindly cooperative. If Turkey maintains a robust economic capability, then its objection to the U.S. policies will depend on the effects of American policies on Turkish national objectives and the tactical decisions on how to achieve them.

Table 10: Future projection of US-Turkey interactions in the Middle East

	Cold War (Major Power Threat from USSR)	1990-2008 (No existential major power threat, but spillover effects of the U.S. policies)	2008-2018 (No existential major power threat, but spillover effects of the U.S. policies)	**2018-** (Future Projection)	
	Strong US presence	Strong US Presence	Strong U.S. presence	**Strong U.S. Presence**	**Weak U.S. presence**
Economic Recession	Dependent Cooperative Non-assertive	Cooperative Non-assertive	-	Less assertive but less cooperative	Cooperative Less assertive
Strong Economic Growth	-	-	Independent Assertive	Independent Assertive	Cooperative Assertive

If the U.S. adopts restrain as its grand strategy and cease overactive policies that can produce spillover effects detrimental to Turkey, then Ankara regardless of either limited or strong economic growth will encourage cooperation with different level of assertiveness.

The study assumes that except occasional bilateral disagreements the U.S. will not directly threaten or target its ally Turkey as it does to Iran. However, Washington may deploy economic sanctions to channel Ankara in a specific direction. In this case, regardless of the cost, Turkey most likely will pursue varying degree of resistance against the U.S. on the vital issues such as territorial integrity and threats to its political independence by adopting balancing strategies that involve Russia, China or EU.

Turkey's geostrategic position provides multidirectional freedom of movement, which obstructs adversaries' attempts of isolation and becomes suitable for Ankara to implementing balancing strategies. Historically, beginning with the Crimea War in 1853, Ottomans and later the Turkish Republic frequently balanced East and West against each other. If the U.S. actions begin to pose a direct threat to Turkey, to preserve its regional role as an autonomous country, the strong nationalistic sentiments may cause stiff resistance and induce any Turkish government to adopt similar balancing strategies between the contemporary East (Russia, China) and the West (USA, EU).

CONCLUSION

Summary of the Findings

The primary purpose of the paper is to find out "why Turkish foreign policy has lost its Western-centric orientation." From among the many different explanations in the literature, this study claims that the change in TFP is structural. It posits that the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar international system and growing national power has incentivized Turkey to deploy a self-help approach that requires a high level of political and security activities to displace previous arrangements.

First, the study proves that under the unipolar systemic structure, in the Middle East, states with improved national power tend to act more independently vis a vis the policy preferences of the unipole.

Second, it defines causes of change and argues that the transition to a neoliberal market economy, within which growth and prosperity depend on exports, has increased Turkey's desire to create mechanisms for global and local integration. However, perpetual regional conflicts have continuously created domestic and regional security concerns that have interrupted this integration. In time Turkey has realized that it is the unipole that disturbs regional stability the most. Although the U.S. is an ally, it has created many spillover effects that were detrimental to Turkish national interests. In response, Turkey has begun to vocalize a new security paradigm, in which the U.S. is both an ally and a potential threat.

Third, it formulates the objectives and the new concept of TFP. It argues that with the beginning of the unipolar world order, since Turkey cannot wholly rely on the U.S. to defuse perceived threats, policymakers preferred to manage Turkey's regional security needs by reducing dependence on the U.S. and adopting a self-help approach. Yet, in order to displace previous arrangements, TFP has begun to display unusual diplomatic activities, establishing new military and economic links, and undertaking an active approach in conflict resolution.

Fourth, through empirical analysis, the study proves that growing material capabilities have allowed Turkey to take an independent position and that its increased activism against the unipole (system) is consistent with its national interests. When the rhetoric about the ideological orientation of the administration is stripped from the context, it becomes clear that Turkey prioritizes national interests rather than its strategic relationship with the U.S. Thus, the change in TFP stems from the emergence of a more independent country, rather than an axis shifting Turkey.

Contributions to the Literature

The study offers three main contributions to the existing literature. First, it has developed a snapshot of the current political spectrum of the Middle Eastern states through analyses of their national power. It has developed a mechanism that integrates unipolar systemic pressures with structural actualities (of the units and system) that provides explanatory power for regional states' potential behavior. Also, it has proved that the nature of Middle Eastern international relations is both hierarchic and anarchical.

Second, it has discovered that having a sound economy or formidable armed forces is not an adequate prerequisite to act autonomously. Indeed, it is a combination of a relatively good

economy and military that has *power projection capabilities based on domestic arms production* that enables a state to act autonomously.

Finally, the empirical research in this study is the first in its category. Although there is room to refine its results, the existing classification of the events, which is consistent with the literature, provides a good understanding of the nature of the changing behavior of Turkey. Moreover, by discovering the correlation between the objectives and observed activism, it proves that half-way explanations that claim Turkey's actions are motivated by a desire to "increase regional influence" as an end in itself do not reflect the reality. In other words, Turkey has clear objectives and means to maximize them, rather than acting out of open-ended hegemonic purposes.

Future Research

In the literature, there is a consensus that Turkish foreign policy had been formulated with an assumption of a benign environment, where neighborhood participation in defusing security risks was expected. In that sense, the Arab uprising and consequent adverse outcomes were hardly calculated. After the Arab Spring, authoritarianism was resurrected, and critical regional states realigned themselves with the U.S., which has seriously challenged Turkey's ability to maximize its objectives through an "independist" approach.

Yet, two critical structural effects need to be clarified for the future of TFP. First, the emergence of near-peer competitors erodes the unipolar system, which has the potential to diminish the regional influence of the unipole and allow better options for balancing. Second, the newly discovered substantial energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean have the potential to boost the material capabilities of the regional states and break the energy monopoly of Russia over

Europe. This may cause a sub-systemic change in the balance of power and create new regional alliance systems that may have implications for Turkey's ability to follow the autonomous path.

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