

**TURKEY AT THE CROSSROADS: ANALYSIS AND
DETERMINANTS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY**

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
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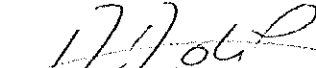
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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Mehmet Gurses, Department of Political Science, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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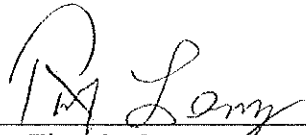
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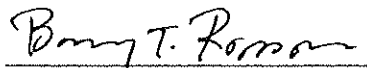
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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the shift of Turkish foreign policy from an alliance with the West to a close relationship with Muslim leaders in the 21st century. It attempts to understand the reasons why Turkish foreign policy has shifted from Atatürk's principles of noninterference and neutrality to the ambition of making Turkey a global actor. In this respect it probes and assesses the determinants of Turkish foreign policy in the last decade under the rule of Prime Minister Erdogan, Foreign Minister Davutoglu and the governing political party, the Justice and Development Party. In arguing that Turkish foreign policy has in the last decade been primarily shaped by the shift in the religious political ideology of the governing elites as well as the rise of Kurdish nationalism, the study seeks to determine the direction of Turkish foreign policy in the near term.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
AP	Justice Party
CFSP	Common Security and Foreign Policy
CHP	Republican People's Party
DP	Democrat Party
DTP	Democratic Society Party
D-8	Developing 8
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
G-7	The Group of Seven
G-20	The Group of Twenty
ICJ	International Court of Justice
MEC	Middle East Command
MEDO	Middle Eastern Defense Organization
MNP	National Order Party
MSP	National Salvation Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
UN	United Nations

INTRODUCTION

At the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan openly criticized Israel's policies toward Palestine and abruptly left the conference.¹ That same year Erdogan expressed his friendship with Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, against whom the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had issued an arrest warrant. During Al-Bashir's planned visit to Turkey, Erdogan stated, "I know that Bashir is not committing genocide in Darfur, because Bashir is a Muslim and a Muslim can never commit genocide".² In September 2010 Turkey announced plans to triple its trade with Iran in the next five years. Following the Turkish announcement, Iranian vice president Mohammad Reza Rahimi praised Turkey, "We have no better friend than Turkey in today's world... For Iran, for political security and economy, Turkey is a very important country".³ At a November 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon, Turkey lobbied for Iran not to be named as a principal nuclear threat.⁴ At an official dinner at the Summit, Turkish President Abdullah Gül expressed Turkey's lack of confidence in the European Union (EU) and while discussing issues pertaining to Cyprus

¹ Accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/world/europe/30clash.html> on November 22, 2010.

² Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=a-muslim-can-never-commit-genocide-erdogan-defends-bashir-2009-11-08> on November 22, 2010.

³ Accessed at <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=188333> on November 22, 2010.

⁴ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=erdogan-continues-row-over-sarkozy8217s-8220cat8221-definition-for-iran-2010-11-22> and http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/20/world/europe/20prexy.html?_r=1&scp=11&sq=lisbon%20summit%202010&st=cse on November 22, 2010.

commented to NATO leaders participating at the summit, “We [Turkey] no longer have any confidence in you”.⁵ In 2010 Turkish foreign minister Davutoglu achieved diplomatic victory by establishing a visa-free zone with Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The agreement allows for free trade and free movement of people. One might argue that Davutoglu has achieved a partial reconstruction of the old Ottoman Empire.⁶

It is safe to say that Turkey has undergone a dramatic shift in its foreign policy, especially during the last decade. Scholars, as well as world leaders, have been pointing to Turkey’s shift from the Cold War alliance with the West to creating close relationships with its Muslim neighbors. Turkish foreign policy has always been noted for its very consistent pattern (Aydin 2003). Its geographical location marked the territory as the ‘bridge between the East and the West’ and elevated the country to be a strategic player in today’s polarized world. Turkey is situated in southeastern Europe and southwestern Asia, bordering the Black Sea, Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea (Map 1). Its geopolitical location allowed it to play a very influential role in world politics. It controls the Turkish Straits and has significant water resources that supply the bordering countries.⁷ Given Turkey’s strategic location, since the creation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey has allied its foreign policy with the Western powers. The father of the modern Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, adhered to the principle of neutrality in foreign policy and concentrated on territorial consolidation. Preoccupied with the internal reforms during the first two decades of the Republic, Atatürk signed several non-

⁵ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=gul-sarkozy-spat-tops-the-nato-summit-2010-11-21> on November 22, 2010.

⁶ Accessed <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/23/magazine/23davutoglu-t.html?pagewanted=1&ref=world> and <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=visa-free-middle-east-to-boost-tourism-in-lebanon-and-turkey-2010-01-22> on January 22, 2011.

⁷ Accessed at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html#> on February 16, 2011.

interference treaties with close neighbors including the 1925 treaty of non-aggression and neutrality with the Soviet Union, 1934 agreement on mutual friendship and non-aggression with Yugoslavia, Romania and Greece known as the *Balkan Pact* and the 1937's *Saadabad Pact* with Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq on noninterference in one another's affairs (Fuller 2008; Hale 2006; Jung and Piccoli 2001). Yet, in the light of the rise of a new Turkish government in 2002 and of the September 11 events, Turkish foreign policy marked a significant shift from the West to the East (read Muslim world) (Aydin 2003; Jung and Piccoli 2001; Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2009). The current Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, exchanged support messages with the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The new foreign policy approach allowed Erdogan to visit almost every country in the region and to invite the Muslim leaders to Ankara. In 2009, Erdogan paid Turkey's first ministerial visit to Libya in thirteen years.⁸ In 2010, Erdogan met with the exiled Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal.⁹ Moreover, his good relationship with Hezbollah in Lebanon, criticism of Israel's policies toward Palestine, and new improved relationship with Syria project a new direction in Turkish foreign policy toward the Muslim world (Aydin 2003; 2004; Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2009).

What has caused the shift in Turkish foreign policy from an alliance with the West to a far more independent foreign policy that calls upon Turkey to be a regional actor? This study will explore the determinants of Turkish foreign policy in the 21st century under the governance of Prime Minister Erdogan and his governing political party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP). It will analyze what has caused the shift

⁸⁸ Accessed at <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-193835-100-erdogan-marks-first-prime-ministerial-visit-to-libya-after-13-years.html> on December 4, 2010.

⁹ Accessed at http://articles.cnn.com/2010-07-20/world/turkey.hamas.visit_1_hamas-visit-hamas-leader-turkish-israeli-relations?_s=PM:WORLD on December 4, 2010.

in Turkish foreign policy from Atatürk's principles of noninterference and neutrality to Erdogan's ambition of making Turkey a global actor while implementing policy of 'zero problems with its neighbors' (Fuller 2008; Hale 2006; Davutoglu 2010).

This study will argue that Turkish foreign policy in the last decade has been primarily shaped by two factors, the shift in the religious political ideology of the governing elites, and the end of the Cold War. Building on the former premise, the study will examine the rise of political Islam in Turkey. The spotlight will be placed on the current Turkish governing political party, the AKP. A parallel will be drawn in the rise of political Islam in the late 1980s and 1990s and the gradual attempt to reestablish diplomatic relations with the Muslim world. Elaborating on the second hypothesis of this thesis, the study will focus on the rise of Kurdish nationalism, a development of the post Cold War era that has determined Turkish foreign policy in the last decade.

In exploring the determinants of Turkish foreign policy it is essential to review the events at the domestic scene and their foreign policy implications. As such the first part of this study will provide a background of Turkish foreign policy by surveying four phases of Turkish politics highlighting the turning points of domestic development and their effects on foreign policy making: neutrality, alliance with the West, activism, and rapprochement to the Muslim world. The second part of this study will elaborate on the shift in Turkish foreign policy. In order to do so it will examine the determinants of Turkish foreign policy in the 21st century and will conclude with policy recommendations for Turkish foreign policy in the near term.

Return to Liberal Ideologies

It is generally assumed that there are two types of factors determining foreign policy: external and internal (Lentner 1974; Ozkececi-Taner 2001-2002; Thompson and Macridis 1967). Scholars have mainly focused on the foreign determinants. The domestic factors were perceived as a secondary attribute and not fully accredited. It was not until the post-Cold War era that the perception of scholars had shifted toward attributing domestic factors of foreign policy decision-making (Lentner 1974; Morgan and Palmer 1996). The post-Cold War period marked a change in political leadership. The international order was no longer guided through the bi-polar leadership of the U.S. and the former Soviet Union as new leaders on the international scene had emerged. All countries realized the importance of leadership, which identified and set limits of the respected domestic and foreign policy (Fuller 2008). The domestic factors of foreign policy are described as the “attributes, characteristics, conditions and processes, which help to shape foreign policy acts” (Lentner 1974: 135).

Furthermore, the end of the Cold War and the fall of Communism meant a return to liberal ideologies and liberal principles of foreign politics. As a contrast to the anarchic concept of power politics of realism, liberalism adopts an ‘inside-out’ approach. This particular approach allows each state to act in international politics according to its internal structure, i.e. national security and the balance of power (Doyle 1983). Liberalism provides an insight into the state-society relationship, where the domestic factors are described as the driving forces behind state’s behavior in world politics (Moravcisk 1997). The core assumption of the liberal theory of international relations states “that the relationship between states and the surrounding domestic and

transnational society in which they are embedded critically shapes state behavior by influencing the social purposes underlying state preferences” (Moravcsik 1997: 516). Thus, the ideas and preferences of the particular society will determine the preferences of that society in foreign policy decision making (Doyle 1983).

Building on the theory of liberalism, Turkish foreign policy decision making can be analyzed using the liberal ‘inside-out’ approach. The transformation to a market economy in the 1980s allowed Turkey to include an economic component in its foreign policy and to pursue a more independent foreign policy decision making for the first time since the birth of the Republic in 1923. Hence, in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War, the Turkish foreign policy pattern changed (Aydin 2003). The collapse of the Soviet Union forced Turkey to abolish its old policy of alignment with the U.S. and add new components to its foreign policy. Consequently, Turkey began the process of rapprochement to the Middle East once again (Fuller 2008). Turkey found itself in a region of new emerging states. As a result, the U.S. and Turkey differed in their regional agendas in the Middle East, which caused Washington to be at odds with Ankara’s foreign policy (Fuller 2008). During this period, domestic issues in Turkey emerged to be the determining factors of foreign policy and Turkey ‘reinvented’ its nationalism (Aydin 2003). Hence, it was not only the religious political ideology of the elite that ruled foreign policy but also strong Turkish nationalism. In 2003 Turkey opposed the US-led war in Iraq and distanced itself from Western foreign policy objectives (Yavuz 2009). In particular it was Turkish nationalism and the upcoming threat of Kurdish nationalism that impelled Turkey to do so (Jung and Piccoli 2001; Yavuz 2009).

The liberal theory of international relations highlights the importance of leadership. There is no doubt that the prominent leadership of Prime Minister Erdogan, Foreign Minister Davutoglu and President Gül are key factors in forming current Turkish foreign policy (Öniş 2011). The current Turkish governing political party, the AKP, has not yet been clear in its identity, which consequently is reflected in present Turkish foreign policy (Yavuz 2009). The AKP is, on one hand, approaching the Muslim world while on the other hand it advances Turkish membership in the EU. In the 1990's Turkey's first openly Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (in power 1996-1997) publicly expressed his dislike of the 'Christian' West and the EU and aimed to add an Islamic component to Turkish foreign policy. Erbakan initiated close relationships with the Muslim leaders and began a period of active Turkish participation in the region. Yet, this new approach was not welcomed by the most international community and Erbakan was soon forced to return to a foreign policy of Western-alignment. Building on these historical facts, it is safe to say that Turkish foreign policy at the end of the 20th century was characterized by a synthesis of domestic and foreign conflicts (Jung and Piccoli 2001). However, in the 21st century Turkish foreign policy changed its pattern. The religious political identity of the governing elite and Turkish nationalism determined the direction of Turkish foreign policy.

Currently, scholars and world leaders are alarmed by the shifting Turkish foreign policy. Scholars recognize numerous determinants as the cause of Ankara's foreign policy including new developments in recent years. Via qualitative research, including an examination of scholarly work, the history of the region, local newspapers, and interviews conducted with Turkish businessmen in Istanbul in December of 2010, this

study aspires to consolidate previous research and identify the most significant determinants of the current Turkish foreign policy.

UNDERSTANDING TURKISH POLITICS

1923-1945: Period of Transition to Secularism and Neutrality in Foreign Policy

Following the Ottoman defeat in World War I a new Turkish nation-state emerged. On October 29th 1923, the Turkish Republic was proclaimed and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was elected its first President. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk came into force as a result of a Young Turks' rebellion of 1908. The new Republic was a single-party regime governed by the Republican People's Party (CHP) founded by Atatürk in 1923. The rise of the new Republic signaled a series of political and cultural reforms that marked the end of the Ottoman Empire. During his fifteen years of presidency, Atatürk focused on internal reforms. As his number one priority, he set the complete abolishment of Islam (Fuller 2008; Jung and Piccoli 2001).

As a result of the Ottoman Empire's defeat in World War I and with the events of the new Republic, Turkey faced a question of its identity: should it follow the Muslim world or abolish its Muslim past and become a Westernized nation? Through the sheer face of Atatürk Turkey chose the second path. Atatürk's main goal was to create a "homogeneous secular nation-state" (Yavuz 2006: 230). In 1922 Atatürk abolished the Ottoman sultanate and Sultan Mehmet VI fled to Malta. In 1924 he followed through with his intension to eradicate the Ottoman Empire by abolishing the Caliphate (Fuller 2008; Jung and Piccoli 2001). By doing this, Atatürk sought to completely diminish

Islam and “cut out this tumour of the Middle Ages” (Kinross 1993: 385). At that time, he could not have envisioned the effects this would ultimately have not only on the Muslims in Turkey, but Muslims everywhere, which in turn resulted in hostile relations with other Muslim countries. For Atatürk and his followers, known as Kemalists, the separation of church and state was a key aspect of democracy (Kramer 2000). In a press interview Atatürk declared that the Caliphate “meant no more than administration or government,” that it was “redundant” and that the office was “an Arab institution adopted by a former Turkish Sultan, whom millions of Moslems had never acknowledged as their spiritual ruler” (Kinross 1993: 385). Furthermore, he stated that his intention was not to make Turkey “irreligious,” but not to sustain artificial religion (Kinross 1993: 385). As a result of the process, the Caliph was removed and the members of the dynasty were banned from residing within the territory of the Turkish Republic. The Ministry of Religious Affairs was closed down together with all other religious offices that were deemed a threat to the secular character of the Republic (Kinross 1993).

During the first years of the new Republic Atatürk implemented numerous reforms and policies of ‘catching up’ with the West. The Kemalists implemented ‘westernized’ reforms. Six key words represented Kemalist ideological pillars: (1) Nationalism, (2) Secularism, (3) Republicanism, (4) Populism, (5) Statism and (6) Reformism (Aydin 2004). The Kemalists sought to replace Islamic values of the Ottoman Empire with new values founded on Turkish nationalism. Atatürk proclaimed Islam as a backward religion and blamed the Islamic values for losing World War I. Secularism became the most important characteristic element of the new Republic (Zürcher 2004). Secularism deemed a necessity on the road toward modernization, covered not only the

political and governmental life, the institutional Islam, but also the social and cultural aspect (Aydin 2004).

Secularism in Turkey covered three specific areas: secularization of the State, attack on religious symbols and their replacement with symbols of European civilization, and secularization of social life in a form of repression of popular religion (Zürcher 2004). With the series of reforms implemented by Atatürk Islam was completely negated as a state religion (Lewis 2002). In 1926, prior to the Constitutional change, the Islamic law (*Shari'a*) was replaced with the adoption of the Swiss and Italian civil and penal code, which forbid forming religious associations. As a part of the change the new elite reformed the educational system by adopting secularized laws. The Kemalists closed down all religious colleges (the *madrassas*) and forbid any kind of religious education (Zürcher 2004).

The second area and large aspect of secularization were the religious symbols; the vivid signs of one's religious association. The traditional head covering for men, fez, was restricted in 1925. Then the order of 1935, in keeping with Western tradition, made Sunday the official day of rest replacing Friday (the Islamic tradition) (Zürcher 2004). Atatürk gradually amended ordinary people's lives. The Kemalist reforms aimed to transform Turkish society into a Western based society. Among the many changes, the most significant were the change of Arabic script into the Latin alphabet, adoption of the western clock, measurements, the Julian calendar, the change in the status of women, the introduction of family names, and the prohibition of the pilgrimage to Mecca (Fuller 2008; Zürcher 2004).

Taken together the Kemalist reforms gave Turkey a new face. The religious reforms were intended not to destroy Islam but to eliminate its powerful hold on the political, social and cultural spheres. Moreover, it aimed to give Islam a more modern and national form by limiting its influence in matters of belief and worship (Lewis 2002).

The foreign policy of this period is best described by the principles of neutrality and noninterference. During the first years of the new Republic the regime was preoccupied with internal reforms. Atatürk focused on restructuring the domestic scene and foreign policy was pushed into the background. Thus, exceptions to the principles of neutrality were made when it came to Turkey's unresolved territorial disputes. At the birth of the republic, Atatürk rejected the *Sèvres Treaty* of 1920 and renegotiated the new *Lausanne Treaty* of 1923. The *Lausanne Treaty* led to international recognition of the new Turkish Republic and its new borders (Fuller 2008; Hale 2000).

The foreign policy of the new republic was dominated by the territorial disputes with Iraq and Syria resulting from the *Lausanne Treaty*. In 1926 Turkey gave up the Mosul region (future oil-rich region) to Iraq, which continues to be a territory full of disputes and mistrust. The region of Alexandretta, in the province of Greater Syria, was a subject of dispute between Turkey and Syria. Both countries claimed the territory and in 1939, despite strong objections by Syria, was finally given to Turkey. The Alexandretta region remained a tension filled issue during the Cold War. It was not until 2004 that the Syrian and the Turkish government mutually recognized an official border (Fuller 2008; Hale 2000).

During the first years of the new republic, Atatürk signed several treaties of non-interference with its neighbors. In 1921 the Ankara government signed a treaty with the

Soviet Union which further extended to a treaty of non-aggression and neutrality through 1925. A similar treaty, the *Balkan Pact*, was signed in 1934 with Yugoslavia, Romania and Greece. In 1937 Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan signed the *Saadabad Pact*, a non-aggression pact. The signatories agreed to the principle of noninterference in one another's affairs and committed to future consultation on common problems (Fuller 2008; Hale 2000).

Turkish foreign policy came to a test during World War II. While it maintained its neutrality during the first years of the conflict, by the end, Turkey shifted toward a more active diplomacy. During the first weeks of World War II, Turkey had to reevaluate its relationship with Germany, the Soviet Union, and the Western Allies. Prior to the war, Turkey had signed several trade agreements with Germany and Britain. After the war erupted, Germany and the Soviets realized the potential of Turkey, and the neutrality of Turkey in this war became a common interest of both. Turkey was attractive due to the territories it controlled (such as the Straits), its economic potential, and the trade of chrome. In October 1939 Turkey signed a *Treaty of Mutual Assistance* with Britain and France. The agreement stated that the signatories would protect each other in case of a Mediterranean War; however Turkey was not obliged to adhere to the treaty in case its actions would result into an armed conflict with the Soviets. In 1940, after Italy declared war, Turkey was asked by the Allies to honor its commitment to the treaty and enter the war. The then president, Ismet İnönü, intended to keep the country out of the war as long as possible. Eventually in 1945, under pressure from the Allies, Turkey entered the war against Germany. İnönü also realized that once the war was over if Turkey had not join

the Allies, it would face complete isolation along with hostility from the Soviet Union (Jung and Piccoli 2001; Vanderlippe 2005; Weisband 1973).

To conclude, Turkish foreign policy during the first era of the Republic could be characterized by the principle of neutrality with the exception of the last year of World War II. By completely abolishing the Caliphate, Turkey culturally rejected the Muslim world and did not develop any relationship with Muslim neighbors. The main aim of domestic reforms, and of Turkish diplomacy, was the acceptance of the West; to be “recognized as a respected European power” (Hale 2000: 57). A major diplomatic achievement, in keeping with a Kemalist vision, was Turkey’s acceptance into the League of Nations in 1932 (Fuller 2008; Hale 2000).

1945-1980: Period of Multiparty Politics and Alliance with the West

The second phase of Turkish foreign policy developed parallel to the emergence of multiparty system in domestic politics. The Republican People’s Party (CHP) allowed multiparty system as early as 1946. The opposition to the ruling party came from within. Some members of the CHP created a Democrat Party (DP) which was the only official opposition to the ruling party. In the 1947’s elections the opposition party captured 63 out of 465 seats in the National Assembly and elections signaled a change to come in Turkish politics. For the first time since the establishment of the Republic, parties other than the founding party were allowed to express themselves in government (Yavuz 2003; Vanderlippe 2005).

Due to the opposition the CHP aimed to gain more supporters among the Turkish citizens. The party amended numerous religious laws. It introduced religious classes in

schools, established a small number of theological schools and allowed pilgrimage to Mecca to a limited number of Muslims. Despite CHP's efforts to gain popular support, in the 1950's first free elections, they significantly lost to DP. These elections marked a turning point in Turkish history. After twenty-seven years of rule the CHP was forced to hand power over to the DP and remain as opposition party (Lewis 2002; Yavuz 2003).

Possessing the majority of seats in the Parliament, the DP's victory was viewed as a victory of democracy. Yet, once in power, the DP started to change the role and perception of Islam in Turkey. The party promised "greater freedom for religious practices and greater respect for Islam" (Yavuz 2003: 60). With the DP in office, the social base of Turkish politics began to change. The popular support of the DP included business associations and religious movements such as the Nur (or the Nurci movement) and Naksibendi groups. The Nur and Naksibendi movements are Islamic movements both of a Sufi tradition. During the war of independence, the Naksibendis and Nurcus fought along Atatürk and played a crucial role in mobilizing the population. After the war, Atatürk lead a campaign against traditional Islamic movements. The Naksibendi and Nur order were forced to go underground. In order to survive, the Naksibendi members were employed by the Directorate of Religious Affairs and used the state-owned mosques to cover their teachings and to maintain this tradition. This way the movement managed to survive the period of Kemalist persecution and in the 1950s served as a base for organized Islamic sociopolitical movements. In the 1970s the order became a ground for emergence of Islamic political parties and new political figures; two Islamist political parties of Necmettin Erbakan were formed on the grounds of Naksibendi order. Naksibendi leader, Kotku, also served as an advisor in the 1980s to the later Prime

Minister Turgut Özal. The Nur movement distanced itself from politics and focused rather on teaching people and creating a new society. The Nur movement later split into several branches, among which was the Fethullah Gülen movement, nowadays, the most influential Islamic community in Turkey (Yavuz 2003).

With the DP's victory, these religious grassroot movements aimed to have a bigger say in the political life of the Republic. It is not correct to characterize the DP as a religious political party, on the contrary, it based its ideology in the founding Kemalist party. The DP was supported by repressed religious groups and the groups of rural population that had suffered from the policies of the previous government of the CHP. The party supporters included the emerging bourgeois class. By recognizing the bourgeois the party distinguished itself from the CHP's goals to create a classless society. Yet, the DP followed the original Kemalist policies. For the most part it was the DP's support base that called for the freedom of expression and more restrictive policies toward the secular military. As a result of DP's liberal policies toward the Islamic movements, the religious groups were integrated into the system, which proved to prevent the radicalization of these groups. In the Cold War environment, the Turkish government gradually identified the communists as the biggest threat. Therefore, Turkish nationalism allowed the Islamic movements to blend into the center-right political spectrum to protect the Republican system from the leftist threat (Lewis 2002; Vanderlippe 2005; Yavuz 2003).

Despite the DP's cautious relationship with the Islamist movements the Turkish military, designed to protect Republic's secular character, was convinced that the Kemalist agenda was in danger. Consequently, in 1960 the military carried out a coup

against the DP's government, which represented the first military intervention in modern Turkey. The coup resulted in a new constitution which established new institutions to maintain check and balances of the system and gave more power to the military. The first institution created was the Constitutional Court. The members of the Court were appointed by the president and possessed the power of judicial review over Parliament's decisions. The National Security Council was the second institution created by the constitution. The Council was to act if and when the secular character of the Republic was in danger. The Council's role became significant in the 1980s and 1990s with the emergence of Islamist political parties. The third change that the 1961 constitution brought was the transformation of the Parliament to a bicameral structure (Çelik 1999; Yavuz 2003). The second chamber, the Senate, was to "counterbalance the popular representation," thus protect the Republic from any religious voices (Yavuz 2003: 63).

The 1961 constitution brought Turkish citizens civil liberties, which they had not enjoyed under the previous constitution. The new civil rights allowed more political parties to be formed and to enter the politic and decision making process. Moreover, the government's overriding view of Islam had changed. The new government realized that Islam was an integral part of everyday life of Turkish citizens and that it was no longer possible to remove Islam from the society. Rather, they established institutions to control the role of Islam in the society, which would act in the event that Islam was being used for political gain. As a result, the new government focused on building mosques and on allowing religious education in schools. Consequently, this space for civil liberties resulted in the formation of the first Islamist political parties in the 1970s (Çelik 1999).

The 1964 Parliamentary elections included a new political party, the Justice Party (AP). The AP defeated the CHP in the elections and dominated the Turkish political scene until 1970. It allowed for a better integration of the rural societies into the state and modified the Kemalist approach to secularism. The AP treated Islam as a matter of personal preference. They argued that the state must remain secular but the individual has a choice. During the AP's term in the office the leftist threat persisted. In 1970, the AP failed to cope with the communist groups and the military intervened once again. Between 1971 and 1973, the political parties were forced to form a "national unity government" (Yavuz 2003: 65). By this act, the military supported the Islamic communities in order to fight the leftists and the communists. The following elections of 1973 and 1977 were dominated by the CHP; however they were not able to gain a majority in the Parliament. Therefore, the CHP had to form a coalition government, which led to an instability in the domestic scene as well as foreign policy (Yavuz 2003).

What was more significant was the emergence of the first Islamist political parties in the 1970's. As early as 1970 Necmettin Erbakan formed the National Order Party (MNP), which was succeeded in 1972 by the National Salvation Party (MSP). During the Turkey-Cyprus conflict, the MSP formed a coalition government with the CHP. The MSP had a short history and was closed down by the 1980 coup. They were succeeded by another Islamist party formed around Erbakan. The 1970s initiated a new era where political Islam emerged as a strong opposition to Kemalist ideology (Yavuz 2003).

Turkish foreign policy in this period had transformed from Atatürk's principle of neutrality to a close alliance with the NATO Allies. Since the beginning of the Cold War Turkey had adhered to NATO's policies. Until the 1960s, foreign policy was particularly

influenced by external factors. Due to its direct borders with the Soviet Union, Turkey became “an element of Western defense” (Fuller 2008: 33). The Cold War divide —East (the Arab World) versus the West (Turkey)— and Turkey’s alignment with the West increased Arab hostility toward Turkey, but marked an era in U.S.-Turkish relations. After World War II, Turkey was included in the U.S. economic assistance to Europe — the Marshall Plan— and received military as well as economic aid. With the advent of the Cold War, Turkish-Russian tensions culminated by a series of territorial demands from Stalin. As a result Turkey was forced to abandon Kemalist neutrality in foreign policy and form a stronger and closer association with the West, particularly the U.S. As a part of the Western approach, Turkey was the first Muslim country to both recognize Israel (1949) and to establish diplomatic relations (1950) with them. Turkey became a founding member of the Organization of European Economic Cooperation in 1948 (presently known as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) and a member of the Council of Europe in 1949. In the Korean War, Turkey sent troops to fight alongside U.S. troops. As a reward for its continuing support of the Allies Turkey became a member of NATO in 1952. Membership in NATO resulted in Turkish military obligations as well as economic dependency, which highlighted the western direction of Turkish foreign policy. In the 1950s Turkey played a role in the Middle Eastern component of the Cold War. In 1951, it openly supported the Middle East Command (MEC) and the Middle Eastern Defense Organization (MEDO) proposed by the western Allies. MEDO was a defense group proposed by the U.S. for military security in the Middle East. The organization however was never formed due to the reluctance of the Middle Eastern leaders and a refusal by Egypt’s President Nasser. In 1955 Turkey

successfully negotiated with Iran, Iraq and Pakistan on the *Baghdad Pact*. The pact was designed to serve as a protective barrier in the Middle East against aggression by the Soviet Union (Aydin 2004; Fulller 2000; 2008; Hale 2000; Jung and Piccoli 2001).

It is safe to say that the Turkish government was pushing for Western foreign policy goals. In the 1950s, Turkey was practicing a more active foreign policy. In 1955 Turkey expressed its voice against Algeria's independence from France. In 1957 Turkey threatened to invade Syria when communists came into power, and in 1958 it called upon the western Allies for military intervention in Iraq. Until the 1960s the DP's foreign policy was no different from the Republican foreign policy: first came the issue of the sovereignty of the Turkish Republic and then the western integration (Çelik 1999; Fulller 2008; Jung and Piccoli 2001).

Up until the 1960s, Turkish foreign policy was mainly dominated by foreign factors. However, beginning in the 1960s domestic factors emerged as the driving force behind foreign policy making. Thus, Turkish foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s reflected Turkey's disappointment with the West as well as a move toward a more independent diplomacy. The developments in the internal sphere of Turkish politics had a direct effect on its foreign policy. The 1961 constitution introduced new liberties and Turkish foreign policy issues were, for the first time in its history, discussed. The multi-party politics and the new constitution of 1961 allowed for more political movements to be active. Therefore, more bodies influenced foreign policy decision making. The unstable and polarized coalition government made it hard for Turkey to follow a coherent pattern of foreign policy (Çelik 1999; Fuller 2008; Jung and Piccoli 2001).

As an effect of the predominance of domestic factors, ethnic ties with Cypriot-Turks caused Turkey to be involved in the Cyprus crisis. In 1964, Ankara sought a consensus among the NATO allies to enter Cyprus. The U.S. was vehemently against this move. This was a turning point in Turkish-U.S. relations as Turkey felt betrayed by the U.S. stance. Turkish sentiment had already been negatively affected in 1961 by the removal of the Jupiter missiles. The decreasing Soviet threat to Turkey allowed the USSR to support Turkey in the 1967 Cyprus conflict, which paralleled with the deterioration of Turkish-U.S. relations, allowing relations with the Soviet Union to start to develop. In 1974 Turkey invaded Cyprus. Following this act the U.S. imposed a military embargo on Turkey, which lasted until 1978. The improving relationship with the Soviets allowed Turkey to receive Soviet economic assistance and the Soviet Union participated on numerous development projects in Turkey. As a result of its disappointment with the western Allies, Turkey attempted to reestablish diplomatic relations with the Arab countries as well. In the light of the Cyprus crisis, Turkey sought support among its Middle Eastern neighbors and offered its willingness to act against the Western powers if needed. As a part of its new foreign policy approach, Turkey refused the U.S. proposal to use Turkish land as a military base during the Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1976, Turkey recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and few years later it opened a PLO's representative office. Despite Turkish efforts, Turkish-Arab cooperation resulted only in a few symbolic gestures. Turkey was accepted as a full member to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) however there was no significant diplomatic relationship established. Toward the end of the 1970s, Turkey gradually started to develop an economic aspect in its foreign policy which was to be fully

implemented in the 1980s during Turgut Özal's era. As a part of this approach, Turkey negotiated an opening of a pipeline from Iraq to Turkey's Mediterranean Sea in 1977 (Çelik 1999; Fuller 2008; Jung and Piccoli 2001).

1980-2002: Period of Revival of Islamic Political Parties and Rapprochement to the Muslim World

The third phase of Turkish foreign policy was directly influenced by domestic factors. The Turkish political scene in the 1980s and 1990s underwent several developments. As mentioned earlier, the 1970's government was very unstable and failed to deal with serious challenges of the state. Turkey found itself facing severe economic, social and political problems. Consequently, in 1980 the military executed a coup against the government and suspended the constitution, dissolved the parliament and barred political parties. Power was given to the National Security Council. A new constitution was drafted in 1982. The military believed that Turkey found itself in deep problems due to the civil liberties afforded by the 1961 constitution. The new constitution attempted to reverse some of the old provisions. It increased the power of the president, replaced bicameral parliament with a unicameral Turkish Grand National Assembly, and passed a new election law. Under this law, politicians involved in politics prior to the 1980's coup were disqualified from engaging in politics for the next ten years and a 10 percent threshold for political parties entering the parliament was introduced. Once again, in the efforts to limit the radical left, the military allowed the religious parties to emerge and act. As a result, the 1980s signified the revival of Islamist movements and their proliferation into the political scene (Çelik 1999; Yavuz 2003).

The Motherland Party, under the leadership of Turgut Özal, dominated the 1983 elections. Özal was the only candidate not supported by the military, which signified that the elections were not manipulated by the military. Afterwards, Özal became Prime Minister and later the first civil president. He dominated the Turkish political scene for the next decade. The Özal period was one of the most stable periods in Turkish modern history. In his efforts to expand his popular support base, Özal became very religious. He was the first Prime Minister to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. The Motherland Party was very supportive of religious expression and increased state support for religious institutions. Özal's biggest achievement was the transition to a market economy in the 1980s. As a result, Turkey developed an economic aspect to its foreign policy. Özal's main goal was to create a trade relationship with the wealthy Gulf States and attract investors to Turkey. The transition to a market economy period significantly helped the Islamic and other excluded communities to advance in the society. As a result, a Turkish middle class emerged and the society transformed to be more industrial, urban and educated (Çelik 1999; Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2003).

Beginning in the 1980s, Turkey struggled with the rising Kurdish minority. Consequently, this issue became a foreign policy issue. During his term as a Prime Minister, Özal initiated several policies allowing greater freedoms for the Kurds. The Kurdish question became an integral part of Turkish politics. In line with his foreign policy objectives, Özal was very supportive of the European Union accession. He signed several European Conventions that became an integral part of national law (Çelik 1999; Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2003).

In 1987, Turkey held a referendum in which the citizens agreed to lift the ban of the pre-1980's coup politicians from entering the political scene. As a result, many political leaders returned to the political scene and new political parties emerged. As mentioned earlier, the 1980s allowed many Islamist movements to penetrate into society. Religious movements advanced as the government aimed to repress a communist threat (Yavuz 2003). The integration of religious groups into the society was made possible through accepting "soft Islam," which remained state controlled (Yavuz 2003: 214). A turning point in Turkish history, in regards to religion in politics, came in the mid-1990s. The 1994 municipal elections and 1995 national elections were dominated by Islamic political parties. The first Islamist-led government came into power in June 1996 by electing Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the Welfare Party, as Prime Minister. In the 1994 elections, the Welfare party formed a coalition with the True Path Party, which marked "a turning point in the Turkish history" (Yavuz 1997: 63). For the first time since Kemal Atatürk, Turkey had a practicing Muslim as a Prime Minister (N. Pope and H. Pope 1997; Yavuz 1997; Kramer 2000).

Overall, the ideology of the Welfare Party may be proclaimed as "Islamic liberalism" in the sense that it "does not see Islam as an alternative to politics, but it searches for ways in which to integrate Islamic identity and its symbols into the political sphere" (Yavuz 1997: 76). Deepening its Islamic agenda and breaking away from the tradition of the Kemalist republic, the party further proposed an alarming agenda. During the month of Ramadan, the Welfare Party supported the building of two mosques in Istanbul and Ankara, proposed to lift the ban on wearing headscarves in public places,

tried to bring the working hours during Ramadan in line with religious requirements, and allowed the pilgrimage to Mecca (Yavuz 1997; Kramer 2000).

The signs of weakened Kemalist principles and the possible fundamentalist agenda urged the military, the protectors of secularism, to confront the Prime Minister. The petition for the Welfare Party's abolition was delivered to the Constitutional Court in May 1997 and the party was finally banned in January 1998 (Kramer 2000). The Constitutional Court declared that the party violated articles 68 and 69 of the Constitution, which state that, "statutes and programs of political parties may not be in conflict with the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, human rights, national sovereignty, and the principles of the democratic and secular Republic" (*The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey* 1982).

Erbakan and his party members were once again banned from any political activity. Erbakan, as the leader, was restricted from politics for five years. His 'political heir' Erdogan, the Istanbul mayor, was convicted of "inciting religious hatred" (Kramer 2000: 71). Erdogan was put into prison for 10 months and banned for life from politics. Despite the party ban, Erbakan became informally involved with the newly formed Virtue Party. The Virtue Party followed the established path of the Welfare Party. Thus, the party was weakened by the events prior to its establishment. The military campaigned against the spread of Islamic fundamentalism by enforcing a dress code at universities that would remove any displays of religious affiliation, the complete control of mosques by the Diyanet, and in favor of restrictions against religious education. In addition they argued against the Islamic media (Kramer 2000; Mason 2000).

The Virtue Party had a difficult task ahead of it. Emerging from the same background as the banned Welfare Party and formed by its supporters, it did not have a strong electoral base. In the 1999's elections, after finishing third, it was forced into the opposition. Soon after, the party feared a potential shut down due to both its affiliation with the Welfare Party and its potential threat to the secular character of the Republic. The party was banned in June 2001 by the Constitutional Court on the grounds of threatening the Kemalist nature of the Republic. The followers formed another political party, the Felicity Party, and ran in the 2002 elections (Mason 2000; Lewis 2002).

Similar to the previous period, Turkish foreign policy was a reflection of domestic politics. Two important developments determined the diplomacy: the transition to a market economy and the rise of Islamist political parties. As a part of his economic agenda, Turgut Özal achieved increased foreign investment in Turkey and introduced Islamic banking. The Islamic banks were established according to *Shari'a*, under which the charging of interest is forbidden. Therefore, the concept of Islamic banking alarmed the Kemalists, who perceived it as deterioration from the western orientation. The first Islamic banks opened in Turkey were those of the Gulf States. The position of the religious movements was radically strengthened through the influence of the Islamic banks. As a result, Turkey increased trade with the Middle Eastern countries. The two largest Turkish trading partners were Iran and Iraq. During the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, Turkey adopted the old Kemalist principle of neutrality and refused to support the imposed U.S. embargo on Iran. Consequently, Turkey benefited economically as both countries became very dependent upon Turkey. In the 1991 Gulf War, Turkey abolished its neutrality principle and aligned with the U.S. led fight against Saddam Hussein. This

decision turned out to be very costly for Özal. As a part of the UN embargo on Iraq, Turkey was forced to close down its oil pipeline with Iraq and to limit its export. Furthermore, the aftermath of the Gulf War presented Turkey with a major Kurdish problem. Substantial number of Kurdish refugees fled to the eastern part of Turkey, which in turn triggered the U.S. to create a no-fly zone over the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. As a result a de facto autonomous Kurdish region was established, which represented one of Turkey's biggest fears. As a result of post-Cold War dynamics, Turkey had improved relations with the Balkan countries. During the war in the former Yugoslavia, Turkish diplomacy was expected to intervene on behalf of Bosnia-Herzegovina due to ethnic ties with the Bosnian Muslims. As a result, Ankara vocally called upon a western intervention in the conflict. However, Turkish support for the Bosnians did not result in any actions other than a few symbolic gestures (Çelik 1999; Fuller 2008; Jung and Piccoli 2001).

One of Özal's achievements in the foreign policy sphere was Turkey's application to accede to the European Union in 1987. However, not until 1999 was Turkey recognized as an official candidate country and it is still not a full member of the Union. Despite Özal's government's advancement toward EU membership, the Islamist government that formed in 1996 was publicly against the 'Christian' west. During Erbakan's government, Turkey experienced a great shift in domestic and foreign policy. An openly Islamist Erbakan called upon rapprochement with Muslim world. On his first state visit as a Prime Minister, Erbakan visited Libya, Iran and Egypt. He proposed an urge to pull Turkey out of NATO and to end diplomatic relations with Israel. During his short-lived government, he developed a closer relationship with the Muslim leaders and

the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1996, the Welfare Party sponsored a meeting of the Islamic Communities Association in Istanbul, which was attended by many Islamic leaders. Furthermore, as a part of his foreign visits, Erbakan proposed to create a Developing 8 (D-8), which would be a Muslim parallel to the Group of Seven (G-7). These efforts signaled Erbakan's opposite approach to foreign policy to the one executed by the previous government. With the emergence of an Islamist government in the late 1990s, Turkey gradually approached the Muslim world (Çelik 1999; Fuller 2008; Jung and Piccoli 2001; Yavuz 2003).

2002-Present: Dominance of the AKP and Activism in Foreign Policy

The last period of Turkish foreign policy covers the developments under the government of the AKP. The AKP was formed in 2001 just a few months before the 2002 parliamentary elections as the thirty-ninth political party in the history of modern Turkey. It was its charismatic leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who organized a group of younger Islamist politicians to leave Erbakan's pro-Islamic Virtue Party to form their own faction. When Erdogan, the one-time mayor of Istanbul, read a poem, "*Our mosques are our barracks, our domes our helmets, The minarets are our bayonets and our believers our soldiers,*" which was perceived as a threat to the secular character of the Republic, he was banned from politics (Altunisik and Tür 2005: 65). Because of the ban Erdogan could not officially lead the party. Even though the AKP was a newcomer in Turkish's political field it managed to capture 34 percent of the votes and achieve the majority stronghold in the parliament in the 2002 parliamentary elections. Due to the 10 percent threshold the second party entering the parliament was the Kemalist opposition party, the

CHP. The emergence of the AKP marked an end to coalition governments. Erdogan remained the party leader outside the Parliament. Soon after the elections, Abdullah Gül became Prime Minister. Consequently, the AKP government changed the law, which allowed Erdogan to be politically active again. In 2003 Erdogan became the Prime Minister of the fifty-ninth Turkish government and Abdullah Gül was elected the Foreign Minister (Dagi 2006; Altunisik and Tür 2005).

As many scholars point out, the 2002 elections marked a new era in Turkish politics. In the election campaign Erdogan was emphatic that, “they would neither base their politics on Islam nor use Islam for rhetorical purposes, ‘Considering the new dynamics of integration with the global system’” (Altunisik and Tür 2005: 65). Furthermore, he distanced himself from implementing *Shari’a* law, turning the Turkish Republic into an Islamic state, and instead defined the party in terms of a conservative democracy. Erdogan announced that the members, who were affiliated previously with Erbakan’s Islamic parties, changed their minds on matters of secularism, democracy, and the Islamic state. One of the AKP’s strengths and weaknesses was the fact that it did not propose any particular party program, which made it hard to define the party’s identity. The AKP was linked to Islam, which in many people raised concerns and objections toward Turkey’s secular character and raised many obstacles for the AKP. The leaders of the party identify themselves as conservative democrats (Hale 2006; Altunisik and Tür 2005; Çınar & Duran 2008). Foreign Minister Gül described AKP’s politics in 2003 as,

We are to prove that a Muslim society is capable of changing and renovating itself, attaining contemporary standards while preserving its values, traditions and identity. We acted on the premise that [the] highest contemporary standards of democracy-fundamental freedoms, gender equality, free markets, civil society, transparency, good governance, rule of law and rational use of resources-are

universal expectations. It is our belief that our people and other Muslim nations fully deserve to have these expectations met. Our societies can only benefit from the realization of these standards. And indeed, our societies have the necessary historical background and moral and spiritual strength to adapt themselves to modernity when guided with successful and determined leadership (Gül 2003 in Çınar & Duran 2008: 31).

Nevertheless, despite AKP's denial of being an Islamist party, it has been described as an Islamist party by a number of scholarly works¹⁰ (Yavuz 2003).

Although the AKP was seen as an outsider, it managed to remain in power and dominated the parliamentary elections of 2007. Proving its popularity the AKP received 47 percent of votes and captured 340 seats in the parliament in 2007, compared to 34 percent of votes in 2002. Following the victory in parliamentary elections, the party was victorious in the presidential elections as well, and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül was elected President in the third round of votes in August 2008¹¹ (Yavuz 2006).

In its political program, the AKP focuses on universal rights and freedoms, elimination of chronic problems, mobilization of the country's economy, creating synergy within society and enforcing the concept of full transparency and accountability.¹² The AKP sees the control of citizens over the State. For them, democracy is a mixture of a wide variety of different social and cultural components. The AKP's ruling is seen as a gradual and progressive transformation due to a global modernity (Akdogan 2006).

¹⁰ The term Islamist is used to define those parties that have roots in political Islam, which the AKP clearly has. Yavuz (2003) defines the term "Islamic" in the case of Turkey as "someone who seeks a prominent role for Islamic ethics and practices in the organization of everyday life" (p. 5). Further Yavuz defines Islamic party as "one whose ideology is derived from or shaped by religious ideas and which mobilizes the grassroots on the basis of shared religious identity" (p.7). For a discussion on this see Yavuz *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (2003) pp. 1-13.

¹¹ Accessed at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/2007-elections-turkey/article-163039> on January 22, 2011.

¹² Accessed at <http://eng.akparti.org.tr/english/partyprogramme.html> on December 10, 2010.

The party refers to religion as “one of the most important institutions of humanity” and adheres strongly to the concept of secularism “as a pre-requisite of democracy.”¹³ The party “refuses to take advantage of sacred religious values and ethnicity and to use them for political purpose.”¹⁴ Moreover, it considers the discrimination of religious preferences as “anti-democratic and in contradiction to human rights and freedoms.”¹⁵ It defines secularism in terms of freedom and social peace.¹⁶

It is essential to elaborate on the driving forces behind the AKP’s reelection. On the principles of plurality, the AKP was successful in the institutional reforms helping to pave the way for a more liberal Turkish democracy and decentralization of the Turkish political system (Tepe 2005). In 2010, the party worked to reform the constitution, hoping to ring greater democracy to the country. In addition, the significant change in the economy meant that Turkey had survived an economic crisis. In support of this argument Table 1 summarizes six economic indicators that illustrate AKP’s economic advancement in Turkey. During the AKP’s seven years of rule, GDP per capita doubled reaching \$8,214.90 in 2009. Inflation dropped significantly from 55% in 2000 to 6.3% in 2009.¹⁷ The party joined the Turkish political field at a time when the country was undergoing significant changes and economical downturn following the Turkish economic crisis of 2001 (Dagi 2006). With the AKP in power, Turkey became one of the world’s fastest growing countries. In 2008 Turkey was included in the G-20, which culminated in Turkey being only a regional, but global power (Cornell 2011). However, due to the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Accessed at <http://data.worldbank.org.ezproxy.fau.edu/data-catalog/world-development-indicators> on February 4th 2011.

global economic crisis, Turkey, like most of the international community, faced numerous economic challenges.¹⁸ As shown in Table 1, specifically the manufacturing exports and exports of goods and services variables, Turkey was hit hard by the crisis. Yet, the AKP's policies allowed Turkey to recover quickly. By the second quarter of 2009, the Turkish economy had started to grow. The World Bank recognized Turkey as the fifteenth largest economy (measured upon gross domestic product).¹⁹ The European Commission's *Turkey 2010 Progress Report* concluded that Turkey is "a functioning market economy" and "it should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union" (*Turkey 2010 Progress Report*).

The AKP's success can be viewed as a failure of the Kemalists, who failed to create an alternative to Islam (Yavuz 2003). The Turkish citizens saw the AKP as a changing force of the status quo and a hope for better life. The AKP, using an ultimately successful strategy, promised to make a difference and with this platform they appealed to the voting public (Dagi 2006). During almost nine years in power the AKP has transformed Turkish society. The party has always focused on social issues and ordinary citizens. Among its reforms, the AKP worked to transform and improve infrastructure, industrialization, transportation, and education. Due to its adherence to Islam, several reforms proposed by the party became battlefields between Turkey's secularists and the AKP. As a part of education reform, the party proposed the introduction of religious classes in state schools and the equal opportunity for all high school graduates to enter universities. In Turkey, graduates from religious schools, which teach the same

¹⁸ Accessed at http://www.brookings.edu/events/2009/0427_turkish_economy.aspx on February 7, 2011.

¹⁹ Accessed at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP_PPP.pdf on February 9, 2011.

curriculum as nonreligious schools, are not permitted entry to universities under the same conditions as the graduates from secular schools. However, all of the proposed reforms that secularists disliked were blocked in 2004 by the National Security Council (Yildiz 2008). Another controversial reform surrounded the regulation of the consumption of alcohol. As Muslims are forbidden, by Islamic law, to drink alcoholic beverages the issue of consumption of alcohol in public is perceived by the secular opposition as a “litmus test” for the secret “Islamist agenda” of the AKP (Yildiz 2008: 53). By tripling the sales tax on wine the AKP made alcohol consumption “an increasingly rare and expensive luxury”.²⁰ In 2004, the AKP was tested by its secularist opponents. An issue arose concerning the renewal of a 1999 regulation, which controlled the conditions and places under which the licenses to sell alcoholic beverages were granted. In 2008, another issue arose, when the AKP proposed new limits on consumption of alcohol by Turkish citizens. The report prepared by the Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Authority included the advertisement and display of alcoholic beverages²¹ (Yildiz 2008). The alcohol debate was revisited in early 2011 by the AKP’s repeated efforts to diminish alcohol consumption.²² The discussion on this issue is ongoing and no decision has been agreed upon, as yet.

The issue surrounding the wearing of headscarves, an Islamic tradition, became a largely discussed topic and a source of political tension between the AKP and the Kemalists. The conflict culminated in February 2008 when the AKP government passed a

²⁰ Accessed at <http://www.newsweek.com/2008/06/14/turkey-s-a-la-carte-liberalism.html> on January 24, 2011.

²¹ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/domestic/10164400.asp> on January 24 2011.

²² Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=alcohol-laws-taken-to-council-of-state-2011-01-19> on January 24, 2011.

law to abolish the ban restricting the wearing of headscarves on university campuses.²³ The discussion about religious symbols, focusing on headscarves, has been significant since the 1980's. The controversy involved the ban on wearing headscarves in public places, which had been enforced since 1997. Government attempts to ease the headscarf ban have been blocked by the secular Constitutional Court.²⁴ The issue was reopened in the fall of 2010 when several female students were suspended and barred from university grounds due to their wearing of headscarves.²⁵

The analysis of the AKP's success would not be complete without mentioning the Fethullah Gülen Movement. The Gülen Community is one of the branches of the NUR Islamist movement and the largest Islamist movement in today's Turkey. The Community benefited the most from the 1980 military intervention, when it emerged into the public sphere. The spiritual leader and the most influential member of the community, Fethullah Gülen, lives in exile in the U.S. The Fethullah Gülen Movement is a vigorous supporter of the AKP. Gülen himself is a strong Islamist and foremost "a Turko-Ottoman nationalist" (Yavuz 2003: 196). He spreads his religious ideology through education. The Gülen Movement has large financial resources and exerts an enormous impact on Turkish public life. There is no doubt that the Gülen Movement has had a large influence on the emergence of a large Islamist community in Turkey. One may argue that this has had a significant influence on Turkish-Middle Eastern relations (Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2003).

²³ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/h.php?news=rectors-in-dilemma-over-headscarf--controversy-in-universities-2008-02-12> on January 24, 2011.

²⁴ Accessed at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7230075.stm> on January 24, 2011.

²⁵ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=students-banned-from-university-for-headscarf-fight-2010-10-26> on January 24, 2011.

In September 2010, the AKP achieved a significant victory. Turkish citizens voted in a nationwide referendum on a package deal changing the law that had established the Constitutional Court. Among many regulations, which had been suggested by the European Union as one of the conditions for further democratization, the AKP proposed greater control by the president and the parliament (both in the hands of the AKP) over the Court. By voting ‘Yes’ in the referendum, Turkish citizens undermined the Kemalist institutions and stripped it of certain powers. The reforms proposed by the AKP were welcomed by the international community. The party was praised for advancing democracy.²⁶ In November 2010 the European Commission released its annual *Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011 Report*. The *Progress Report* on Turkey declared the constitutional reform as a “step in the right direction” toward the fulfillment of Copenhagen political criteria, eligibility requirements to join the EU (*Turkey 2010 Progress Report*).

In June 2011 Turkish citizens will vote in parliamentary elections. If the AKP is re-elected it will be facing its third term in office. If re-elected, the party has expressed its intentions to amend the Constitution.²⁷ The AKP’s leader Erdogan hopes to be elected president in the 2012 presidential elections.²⁸

Foreign policy during the AKP’s term can be characterized as an active, independent foreign policy. Scholars and world leaders have been skeptical of a Turkish foreign

²⁶ Accessed at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/sep/12/turkey-votes-referendum-amend-constitution/> and http://www.rferl.org/content/Turkey_Referendum_Triumph_Paves_Way_For_Third_AKP_Term_New_Constitution/2156683.html on September 13, 2010.

²⁷ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=polls-give-akp-green-light-for-new-constitution-2010-09-12> on September 18, 2010.

²⁸ Accessed at http://www.economist.com/blogs/newsbook/2010/09/turkeys_constitutional_referendum?page=5 on September 18, 2010.

policy shift from West to East. Yet, it is difficult to assume that Turkey has “a secret Islamist agenda”. Despite Prime Minister’s Erdogan’s identification of his political party as a conservative democratic party, its leaders are clearly Islamic. However they claim to strongly adhere to the principles of secularism. Currently it is safe to say that Turkey is practicing a very active and independent foreign policy based on a principle of “zero problems with its neighbors” (Davutoglu 2010). Turkey no longer wishes to be seen as “the bridge between Europe and the Middle East”, but more as “the gate” (Davutoglu 2010). Turkey has initiated diplomatic relations with its close neighbors and other Muslim countries. Prime Minister Erdogan has visited almost every country in the region on official visits. Yet, Erdogan’s first foreign visit was to Washington D.C. In addition, Erdogan has strongly pushed for the adoption of the EU agenda and under his administration, Turkey officially became a candidate country in 2005 (Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2003). The European Commission *Progress Report 2010* on Turkey concluded that Turkey continues “improving its ability to take on the obligations of membership” (*Turkey 2010 Progress Report*). So far, negotiations have been opened in thirteen chapters and the enhanced political dialogues between the EU and Turkey have continued at both ministerial and political director levels. As for economic dialogue, the EU-Turkey Customs Union has continued to advance. Turkey became the EU’s seventh largest trading partner, while the EU is Turkey’s largest trading partner (*Turkey 2010 Progress Report*).

Parallel to an enhanced dialogue with the EU, Turkey has been developing relations with the Middle East. Prime Minister Erdogan has good relationships with many Muslim leaders. Turkey was one of the main proponents for Iran not to be included on the list of

threats against the U.N. Moreover, Turkey vetoed the U.N. Security Council's embargo on Iran and its nuclear program.²⁹ Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad exchanged support messages with Erdogan.³⁰ In light of the events surrounding the Sudanese genocide, Erdogan invited Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to Turkey and expressed his support for the ICJ suspect.³¹ In recent years, the Turkish-Israeli relationship has deteriorated. This shift became apparent at the 2009 World Economic Forum when Prime Minister Erdogan openly criticized Israel's policies toward Palestine and abruptly left the conference³² (Öniş 2011). Furthermore, the Turkish-Israeli relationship was significantly strained by the Gaza flotilla attacks in 2010.³³ In support for Palestine the Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal was invited to Ankara.³⁴ On one of his foreign visits Erdogan visited Libya. This resulted into a Turkish-Libyan relationship, which subsequently developed into agreements in energy, transportation and foreign trade.³⁵ Erdogan was the first Prime Minister to visit Libya in thirteen years. Only recently, Turkey announced its new diplomatic agreements with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, which allows for free movement of goods and people between the countries.³⁶ It must be noted that for the first time in

²⁹ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=erdogan-continues-row-over-sarkozy8217s-8220cat8221-definition-for-iran-2010-11-22> and http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/20/world/europe/20prexy.html?_r=1&scp=11&sq=lisbon%20summit%202010&st=cse on November 22, 2010.

³⁰ Accessed at <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=188333> on November 22, 2010.

³¹ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=a-muslim-can-never-commit-genocide-erdogan-defends-bashir-2009-11-08> on November 22, 2010.

³² Accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/world/europe/30clash.html> on November 22, 2010.

³³ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=israeli-forces-attack-kill-aid-flotilla-kill-activists-2010-05-31> on September 24, 2010.

³⁴ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=davutoglu-meets-hamas-chief-in-damascus-2010-07-20> on November 22, 2010.

³⁵ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-libya-together-to-expand-to-africa-2009-11-25> on September 24, 2010.

³⁶ Accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/23/magazine/23davutoglu-t.html?pagewanted=3&ref=world> and <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=visa-free-middle-east-to-boost-tourism-in-lebanon-and-turkey-2010-01-22> on January 22, 2011.

Turkish history, Turkey has established a good diplomatic relationship with Syria, which was initiated after the 2003 war in Iraq. In the light of the current crisis in Lebanon, Turkey is acting as the main negotiator and has offered to hold meetings between the parties. This can be viewed as an attempt by Turkey to dominate the region. Regarding their policies toward Iraq, Turkey did not permit the U.S. to use its soil as a base for the Iraqi invasion in 2003 (Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2009). Moreover, Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu met with the head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, Shia leader Sayyed Ammar al-Hakim, prior to the 2010 Iraqi general elections³⁷.

With regard to other countries in the region, Turkey has continued to play a constructive role. Turkey assisted Kyrgyzstan after the April 2010 uprising and offered humanitarian aid. Ankara attempted to partially reconcile its relations with Armenia in 2008, although it still refuses to acknowledge its role in the Armenian genocide.³⁸ It intensified its efforts to bring Afghanistan and Pakistan closer and acted as a mediator between Israel and Syria prior to the Gaza conflict. Turkey's economic and political relations with Russia and China have improved as well. Furthermore, Turkey aims to intensify relations with both African and South American countries.³⁹

This short list of events points to the extensive involvement of Turkey in its region, which is a new phenomenon in Turkish foreign relations. As mentioned earlier, current Turkish foreign policy has adopted a different stance than prior to the AKP's election to the government.

³⁷ Accessed at <http://www.turkishpress.com/news.asp?id=346690> on February 9, 2011.

³⁸ Accessed at <http://www.economist.com/node/17276420> on April 2, 2011.

³⁹ Accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/tr_rapport_2010_en.pdf on February 9, 2011.

EXPLAINING TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: THE DETERMINANTS OF TURKEY'S ASSERTIVE FOREIGN POLICY IN THE LAST DECADE

It is safe to conclude that Turkish foreign policy objectives have changed in the last decade. The chronological elaboration of Turkish foreign policy pointed to the gradual importance of domestic factors on Turkish foreign policy decision making. The parallel between the developments on the domestic scene and their implications on foreign policy making was demonstrated. The religious political ideology of the governing Turkish elite proved to have the biggest impact amongst the various domestic factors on foreign policy direction. Parallel to the rise of political Islam in the 1980s and 1990s, Turkey gradually rediscovered relations with the Muslim world. Yet, does the AKP seek to transform Turkey to *Shari'a* state? This claim is rather unrealistic given the realities of global international relations. What we have witnessed in the last decade under the AKP's rule is not simply an Islamist foreign policy but an active, nationalistic, foreign policy.

Turkey has not yet severed its relations with the West. Contrary to this claim, it has advanced in its efforts to become a full member of the EU. During the AKP's first three years in office, it passed more pro-EU legal reforms than any Kemalist government (Taspinar 2011). The EU and the U.S. are extensively supporting the AKP's military and judiciary reforms, which are weakening Kemalist control. In complying with the EU's

recommendations for further democratization the AKP weakened the role of the secular military. Ironically, the once pro-EU Kemalists have now turned against the West (Taspinar 2011). Thus, the question remains whether Turkey will join the EU despite the significant French and German opposition. In addition, a different question arises: Taking into account its active foreign policy, does Turkey need the EU in the 21st century? As documented by the 2010 Transatlantic Trends Survey conducted by the German Marshall Fund, only 38 percent of Turks today see the EU membership as a positive thing, in contrast to 2004 when more than 70 percent did (Chart 1) (*Transatlantic Trends* 2010). To be fair, Turkish frustration with the EU is understandable. Undoubtedly, there is no other country that has been on the road toward accession longer than Turkey. In 1963, Turkey signed the association agreement with the European Economic Community (the predecessor of the EU). It was not until 1999 that Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate country and the accession negotiations started in 2005. The negotiations are expected to last ten or more years (Morelli 2011).

Turkey is no longer completely aligning its foreign policy by 100 percent either with the EU's Common Security and Foreign Policy (CFSP) or NATO's alliances, to the alarm of scholars and world leaders. Table 2 and Chart 2 illustrate the reduction in the number of EU declarations and Council decisions adopted by the EU, which Turkey aligned with if invited since becoming a candidate country in 2005. In 2010, Turkey aligned itself with 54 out of 73 relevant EU declarations and Council decisions if invited. Table 2 points to a 24% decline since 2007. Just for a comparison, three other EU candidate countries, Croatia, Iceland and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, agreed to align themselves with all relevant EU declarations and Council decisions if

invited, with an exception of Iceland reaching a 92% alignment (*Croatia 2010 Progress Report, Iceland 2010 Progress Report, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2010 Progress Report*). However, a 75% alignment of Turkey with the relevant EU declarations and Council decisions cannot be construed as low. Based on a comparison with other candidate countries, one may speculate whether Turkey's desire to become a full member of the EU has waned on the priority list compared to those of Croatia, Iceland and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In recent years, Turkey has established a leading position in the Middle East. President Obama's first foreign visit to the Muslim world was to Turkey, where he highlighted the extraordinary relationship the U.S and Turkey have.⁴⁰ The European Commission's *Turkey 2008 Progress Report* pointed out Turkey's achievements for regional stabilization (Özcan and Usul 2010). As a response to the eruption of mass protests in Egypt, Prime Minister Erdogan was among the first telephone calls that President Obama made.⁴¹ For many Turkey is perceived as a good example for predominantly Muslim country as Egypt.⁴² Assessing the crisis in Egypt, Erdogan took an active role and publicly advised Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak to immediately resign.⁴³ The crisis in Egypt was not the first occurrence where Turkey took the leading

⁴⁰ Accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/07/world/europe/07turkey.html> on February 7, 2011.

⁴¹ Accessed at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06turkey.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=turkey&st=cse on February 7, 2011.

⁴² Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-could-be-a-role-model-for-islamic-countries-opposition-leader-says-2011-02-02> on February 7, 2011.

⁴³ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-to-deliver-counter-letter-to-egypt-2011-02-09> on February 7, 2011.

role. Recently, Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu played an active role in the negotiation talks after the recent political problems in Lebanon.⁴⁴

As such, we may better perceive Turkey's objective to no longer be viewed as "bridge" rather than as "the gate" to the Muslim world. It is safe to say that Turkey wants it both ways: western alliance and an active role in the Muslim world. As illustrated in Chart 3, the popular opinion of Turkish citizens reflects its rapprochement with the Muslim world. Compared to 2009, the percentage of Turks who believe that Turkey should act in closest cooperation with the Middle East has doubled, reaching 20% in 2010. These results were accompanied by a 9% decline in those believing that Turkey should cooperate with the EU or act alone (*Transatlantic Trends* 2010). The statistics on public opinion on foreign policy making point to the greater connection between domestic politics and foreign policy. AKP's foreign policy decision making may be analyzed as a strategic instrument to extend and gain more support in the domestic base (Öniş 2011).

The AKP has created new Muslim leadership elite. The analysis of Turkish foreign policy would be incomplete without mentioning the importance of leadership of former Prime Minister's advisor and current Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu. Scholars have recognized Davutoglu as the architect of the change in Turkish foreign policy. Davutoglu, a former professor, has been described "a truly original neo-Ottoman thinker" (Özcan and Usul 2010:118). His book, the *Strategic Depth, Turkey's International Position*, published in 2001 of which there is no English translation, is his most well-known piece. Davutoglu describes nation's value in international politics based on its "geo-strategic

⁴⁴ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-to-join-lebanon-contact-group-2011-01-17> on January 18, 2011.

location and historical depth”, by which he describes the strategic location of Turkey (Davutoglu 2008; Walker 2010). Further he emphasizes Turkey’s strategic relations with the Balkans, the Middle East, and Central Asia. On this note he highlights “that Turkey is the natural heir to the Ottoman Empire that once unified the Muslim world and therefore has the potential to become a ‘Muslim super power’.” (Walker 2010). As such, one may argue that Davutoglu is practicing foreign policy of implication of these principles.

It has become more apparent that the road from the west to the Muslim world leads via Turkey. The AKP believes that by establishing itself as a regional leader it will be more valuable as a member of the EU. Ankara agreed on the Nabucco gas pipeline project to supply Europe with gas intended to bypass Russia.⁴⁵ While having the AKP as the driving force toward the EU accession, the religious political ideology of the leading elite of Turkey is not a sufficient determinant of current Turkish foreign policy. Some scholars have recognized Turkish economic power, the rise of the public opinion, and Turkish disappointment in the EU membership as significant determinants of this shift (Cornell 2011; Lesser 2011; Öniş 2011; Taspinar 2011). While these are valid arguments, this study seeks to recognize a more important determinant: the end of the Cold War and foremost, the rise of Kurdish nationalism. The analysis of the Kurdish problem will help to clarify the direction of Turkey toward the Middle East—its good relations with neighboring countries—and the adoption of an independent foreign policy based on Turkish nationalism.

With the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which signified the beginning of the end of the communist Soviet Union, Turkish foreign policy adopted a new pattern. The

⁴⁵ Accessed at <http://www.economist.com/node/17276420> on April 4, 2011.

previous analysis demonstrated that Turkey had slowly added a new component to its foreign policy: the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans. The end of the Cold War marked an end to the East-West international divide. Turkey was forced to abandon its forty-five year old foreign policy pattern and adopt a new one within unfamiliar parameters. As shown in the previous analysis Turkey started to move toward a more active foreign policy in the 1990s (Aydin 2004; Çelik 1999). It has been argued that “perhaps no other country outside the former Soviet bloc has seen its strategic position more radically transformed by the end of the Cold War than Turkey” (Aydin 2003: 322).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey found itself in a region of newly emerging nation states. The attempts to democratize politics within the newly independent nations in the Eurasia region signified a high risk of interstate clashes. The perpetual instability and tensions among the former Soviet nations forced Turkey to transform its foreign policy of isolationism from regional activism to active participation. As a result, Turkey added a new regional component to its western oriented foreign policy. For the first time in over a century Turkey was free to approach the people of Turkic origin living in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In the post-Cold War era one of Turkey’s long struggles, the Kurdish problem, culminated (Aydin 2004; Çelik 1999).

THE RISE OF KURDISH NATIONALISM

The Kurdish issue has been neglected for decades by NATO allies and Turkey itself. This issue is one of the more determining factors of the current assertive Turkish foreign policy. The aspiring rise of Kurdish nationalism has not been given the appropriate weight in Turkish foreign policy decision making. Thus, the rise of Kurdish nationalism, as it pertains to Turkish foreign policy decision making, will be analyzed. Currently, the Kurdish issue has had an extensive impact not only on Turkey's domestic politics, but both on its foreign policies and relations in the region. On the domestic scene, the Kurdish question was largely used by the Islamists in the 1980s to criticize the Kemalist state (Barkey and Fuller 1998). Given the transnational dimension of the Kurdish issue, it plays a huge role in Turkish foreign policy decision making.

Kurds represent the largest ethnic group in the world without their own state. The Kurdish minority lives predominantly in four countries: eastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, northern Iraq, northeastern Syria (see Map 2). Turkey possesses the largest Kurdish population, representing approximately one-fifth of the entire Turkish population. It has been very difficult to accurately measure the exact number due to Turkey's persistent negligence of this ethnic group. Turkish Kurds are primarily located in the east and southeast regions and across the western part of the country (Fuller 2008). With the creation of the Turkish Republic and the emergence of Turkish nationalism, the Kurds'

hopes for recognition and autonomy were suppressed. The Kurdish minority, which is predominantly Sunni Muslim, has yet to be recognized as a distinct ethnic group. During the presidency of Turgut Özal, in 1991, the Kurds were for the first time permitted to use Kurdish language on the streets and not be prosecuted. However, the use of the Kurdish language in broadcasting, publications and education was still restricted. For the better part of the 20th century, the Kurds engaged in a struggle for recognition, cultural autonomy, better economic conditions, and for official recognition of the Kurdish language (*Assessment of Kurds in Turkey* 2006; Barkey and Fuller 1998; Fuller 2008; Gurses 2010; Kramer 2000; McDowall 2004; Nachmani 2003; Cornell 2003).

Kurdish nationalism grew as the result of the suppression they suffered for more than half a century (Fuller 2008). Until recently, the Kurdish nationalist demands insisted on an internationally recognized independent Kurdistan (“the land of the Kurds”) (Manafy 2005: 1). Currently, they have lowered their demands of independence to that of autonomy (Bruno 2007). As a result of this struggle, a radical leftist group, the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), emerged in 1974. The PKK is internationally recognized as a terrorist group. The PKK launched its first attack in 1983 after the drafting of the new 1982 constitution, which continued the state’s policy of non-recognition of the Kurdish minority. The PKK’s uprising lasted for sixteen years, thereby forcing the government to spend a significant amount of economic and military resources to suppress the movement. The insurgency culminated in 1999 with the capture of PKK’s leader Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya, who was apprehended with the assistance of the U.S. Until now Öcalan continues to remain in prison in Turkey (Bruno 2007; Fuller 2008; Gurses 2010; Kramer 2000; McDowall 2004; Nachmani 2003; Cornell 2003). On February 28th

2011, the PKK announced that the unilateral cease-fire that had been declared in August of 2010 was evoked. The PPK stated that it will defend itself “more effectively, but refrain from attacks.”⁴⁶ This decision results from the AKP’s refusal to offer a solution to the Kurdish issue⁴⁷.

In the last decade the Kurds formulated their own political party, the Democratic Society Party (DTP). The main objective of the DTP is to recognize Kurdish identity followed by the implementation of basic human rights, including the official use of the Kurdish language and the right to educate their children in Kurdish. Until 2005, the Kurdish issue had long been ignored by the AKP (Yavuz 2009). The unwillingness of the AKP to address this issue may be ascribed to the strong Turkish nationalistic feelings. Prime Minister Erdogan responded to a question about the Kurdish nationalism in Oslo in 2005 by stating:

There isn’t a Kurdish problem in Turkey; it is a fictitious problem. We approach this issue within the framework of citizenship. We are at an equal distance to all ethnic groups that exist in Turkey. We do not make any distinction between [ethnic] groups such as Turkish, Kurds, Laz, Georgian, and Abkhaz... Do only the Turks live in Turkey?! Beside them, there are at least close to thirty distinct ethnic groups living in the country (Erdogan in Yavuz 2009: 188).

At a visit in Diyarbakir, the unofficial capital of Kurdistan, Erdogan addressed the crowd “There is no need to give a name to every problem... What will happen to the Kurdish problem?: the Kurdish problem is my problem... We will solve all problems through democracy” (Yavuz 2009: 189). With the opening of EU accession negotiations in 2005, Turkey was called upon numerous times to address the Kurdish issue as a part of the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria. The Copenhagen criteria require among other

⁴⁶ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=ppk-ends-unilateral-cess-fire-2011-02-28> on April 2, 2011.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

conditions, full implementation of human rights and the protection of ethnic minorities. Thus, the strong minority policies of the EU and the 2003 U.S.-led war in Iraq created new opportunities for the Kurds to carry out new resistance strategies. As a result, the AKP has turned its attention to the Kurdish issue and since 2005 has acted accordingly. As a result, in the 2007's parliamentary elections the Kurds voted largely for the AKP despite their own DTP party, although they elected twenty Kurdish representatives to the parliament for the first time in sixteen years. As a result, the ban on minority languages was eased and the government broadcasts now in Kurdish. However, the use of Kurdish in schools was lastly ruled out in September 2010 by Prime Minister Erdogan⁴⁸ (Fuller 2008; Gurses 2010). The significant improvement of freedom of expression rights for Kurds was welcomed by the EU (*Turkey 2010 Progress Report*; Yavuz 2009).

In the light of the upcoming parliamentary elections to be held in June 2011, the Kurds have started civil disobedience actions. Since March 23rd 2011 rallies have been held across the Kurdish region. The Kurds hope to point the AKP's attention to this issue and demand a solution. The groups have four demands from the government: (1) education in mother tongue, (2) the release of political prisoners, (3) an end to military and political operations [against Kurds], and (4) the elimination of the 10 percent [election] threshold⁴⁹. They have declared to use peaceful and democratic means of

⁴⁸ Accessed at http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/newsbriefs/setimes/newsbriefs/2010/09/26/nb-01 on February 13, 2011.

⁴⁹ The 1982 Constitution stated a 10 percent election threshold for political parties elected to the Parliament (Yavuz 2003).

demonstrations to achieve these four demands and have pledged to remain in the streets until their demands are met.⁵⁰

Turkish diplomatic relations, especially bilateral relations with Iraq, Iran, Syria, and the U.S. have been shaped by the presence of the Kurdish minority. The rise of Kurdish nationalism exposes Ankara's vulnerability and affects its external relations. As a result, one may conclude that the Kurds "have been periodically manipulated against one or another regional state" by numerous countries (Fuller 2008: 90). The unresolved Kurdish problem along with Turkish nationalism, prevents a resolution of this issue, and is thereby one of the determining factors in current Turkish foreign policy.

Hence, Turkey is practicing a foreign policy of "zero problems with its neighbors" and continues to be an active regional leader due to its struggle with the Kurdish minority. Due to the Kurdish desire for their own state, any kind of a conflict in the region would benefit their aspirations for autonomy. Therefore, Turkey seeks to avoid any possibility of a regional clash. The last major conflict—the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003—had a major impact on the Kurds. While the Kurds in Turkey look up to the self-governance of Kurds in Iraq, the Turks see it as a consequence of a major regional conflict, the collapse of the Iraqi government and the rise of an ethnic autonomy. The bilateral relations of Turkey with Syria, Iran and Iraq may be analyzed very clearly through assessing the danger of aspiring Kurdish nationalism. Up until recently Turkish relations with Syria had been poor. Turkey and Syria faced several territorial disputes and water resource problems, in relation to Turkey's control of the Euphrates River into Syria. The relations greatly deteriorated when the PKK's leader Öcalan was given refuge

⁵⁰ Accessed at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey8217s-leading-kurdish-platforms-declare-civil-disobedience-actions-2011-03-23> on April 2, 2011.

after the military took power in Turkey in 1980. It was not until the 2003 invasion in Iraq that Turkish diplomatic relations with Syria improved (Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2009).

As a consequence of the conflict, Turkey has been working closely with Syria and Iran, both of which are facing similar separatist problems (Fuller 2008; Yavuz 2009). Following the conflict, Turkey's main policy objective in Iraq is the elimination of the PKK from the Iraqi region (Davutoglu 2010). The PKK's expansion into Europe and its terrorist operations within Turkey have made it a foreign policy priority with other nations. In 2003, Turkey did not permit the U.S. to use its soil for the Iraqi invasion. One may argue that Turkey had learned from its actions in the 1991 Gulf War when it supported U.S.-led war against Iraq. The aftermath of the war resulted in huge economic losses, a massive flow of Iraqi Kurds into Turkey, and a creation of a no-fly zone. The conflict was followed by the creation of the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist movement, an aspiration of Turkish Kurds. Despite its promises, the U.S. did not compensate Turkey for its economic losses, which resulted from the closing of the pipeline with Iraq, nor did the U.S. offer Ankara assistance in dealing with the issues of rising Kurdish nationalism (Barkey and Fuller 1998; Fuller 2008; Nachmani 2003; Yavuz 2009). Thus, Washington's reluctance to pay close attention to the solution of the Kurdish problem sets Ankara at odds with U.S. foreign policy objectives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study seeks to provide an analysis of and to identify the determinants of the current Turkish foreign policy. Scholars and world leaders have been drawing attention to the shift in Turkish foreign policy from west to east under the rule of the Islamist AKP. The AKP has been associated with a “secret Islamist agenda” with the aim of transforming Turkey into a *Shari'a* state. Hence, Turkey’s rapprochement to the Middle East in the last decade has not been welcomed by the western leaders. Turkey’s alignment with EU foreign policy declarations has diminished in recent years and has been at odds with U.S. foreign policy actions in the region. Rather than referring to Turkish foreign policy as Islamist, it is more accurate to describe it as an independent and nationalistic foreign policy making.

The goal of this study is to analyze the determinants of Turkey’s shift from Atatürk’s principle of neutrality to Erdogan’s aspiring foreign policy of making Turkey a global leader. Previously referred to as “the bridge between the East and the West”, currently Turkey hopes to be recognized more as the “gate”. It is safe to say that the west’s access to the Muslim world is via Turkey. Currently, Turkey is seeking a foreign policy of “zero problems with its neighbors”, while still hoping to obtain membership in the EU. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Turkey wants it both ways: western integration and Middle Eastern leadership.

This study recognizes two overriding determinants in Turkish foreign policy. Firstly, it examined the religious political ideology of the governing elite as an internal indicator of foreign policy direction. Through an analysis of Turkish domestic political developments and their implications on foreign policy decision making in the four periods since the birth of the Turkish Republic, the study demonstrates the influence of domestic factors on foreign policy. In addition to the ideology determinant, the study proposes the end of the Cold War and primarily the rise of Kurdish nationalism as a determinant of current Turkish foreign policy. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey found itself in the region of new aspiring countries struggling for democracy. Due to the high risk of conflict, Turkey was forced to adopt a new parameter of a regional actor to its existing foreign policy of isolation. The post-Cold War era culminated in Turkey's long struggle with the Kurdish minority. The transnational dimension of the Kurdish problem became one of the most determining factors of Turkish foreign policy. Kurdish aspirations for autonomy resulted in insurgency, which is ongoing. Following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, large numbers of Iraqi Kurds fled to Turkey. The Turkish Kurds look to the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurds for inspiration. This phenomenon dictates Turkey's bilateral relations with Syria, Iran, Iraq and the U.S. Turkey's heavily nationalistic foreign policy prevents it from solving the Kurdish problem. Moreover, any kind of a conflict in the region would benefit the Kurds and their aspiration of their own autonomous state, Kurdistan. Therefore, the Kurdish problem remains a determining factor in Turkey's policy of avoiding any conflict in the region. This new independent foreign policy of nationalism brings Ankara at odds with Washington's aspirations in the region.

What direction will Turkish foreign policy take in the near future? Firstly, this study proposes that Turkey will continue to advance in its goal of EU membership. The accession negotiations opened in 2005 and are expected to last for ten or more years. Despite the decrease in popular support for the EU membership, Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Davutoglu will lead the country on its road to the Union. However, aspirations of joining the EU should not be considered as Turkey's number one foreign policy priority. Turkey will establish itself as a strong regional leader and will focus on being active in the region. The recent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Iran and lastly Libya will make Turkey's position even stronger. With the current crisis in the Middle East, many point to Turkey as an example of a Muslim country where Islam and democracy can coexist. Thus, we may see Turkey taking a leading role in the international communities' hopes of democratizing these countries. Turkey will undoubtedly become the guide on their road toward democratization.

In June 2011, Turkish citizens will vote in parliamentary elections. Recent polls, conducted in January 2011, indicate AKP's 46 percent support of the voters.⁵¹ Therefore, the AKP is expected to win the elections with only a question as to how many seats they will garner. Assuming the AKP would begin its third term in office, which no other political party has achieved since Turkey was transformed into a multi-party system, the AKP has expressed its intention of amending the constitution. Prime Minister Erdogan voiced his goal of running for the presidency in 2012. Given his current strength in the polls it is likely that he will win. As a continuation of AKP's rule Foreign Minister

⁵¹ Accessed at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/01/16/uk-turkey-poll-idUKTRE70F15P20110116> on February 15 2011.

Davutoglu is expected to remain in office as well. Many have referred to Davutoglu as the driving force behind Turkey's nationalistic foreign policy.

As for the policy recommendations, Washington must accept the new independent parameter of Turkish foreign policy, otherwise it will find itself at odds with Ankara. More importantly, they should recognize the importance of the Kurdish problem and assist Turkey in resolving this transnational issue. It is solely Turkey's best interest to acknowledge the Kurdish reality. The Turkish governing elite should proceed forward in a dialogue with Kurdish political groups and grant additional rights to the Kurdish minority. The 2011 parliamentary elections and further AKP's aspirations to amend the constitution will be crucial in solving the Kurdish problem. The AKP's decision of whether to continue Turkey's policy of non-recognition of the Kurdish minority or to formally recognize the existence of this large and distinct ethnic group in the new 2012 constitution will shape the dynamics of Turkey's domestic politics and will thereby exert a great influence on future Turkish foreign policy.

Table 1

World Development Indicators: Turkey

Year	Manufactures exports (% of merchandise exports)	Exports of goods and services (annual % growth)	GDP per capita (current \$US)	Inflation, consumer prices (annual %)	Foreign direct investment (% of GDP)	Unemployment (% of total labor force)
1962	1.2	N/A	300.2	3.0	N/A	N/A
1970	8.9	N/A	471.9	7.0	N/A	N/A
1980	26.9	N/A	1490.2	110.2	0.0	N/A
1990	67.9	3.2	2686.5	60.3	-0.01	8.0
2000	81.2	16.0	4011.0	55.0	0.3	6.5
2004	84.5	11.2	5582.4	10.6	0.2	10.3
2009	80.2	-5.3	8214.9	6.3	0.3	N/A

Source: World Bank⁵²

⁵² Accessed at <http://data.worldbank.org.ezproxy.fau.edu/data-catalog/world-development-indicators> on February 4th 2011.

Table 2

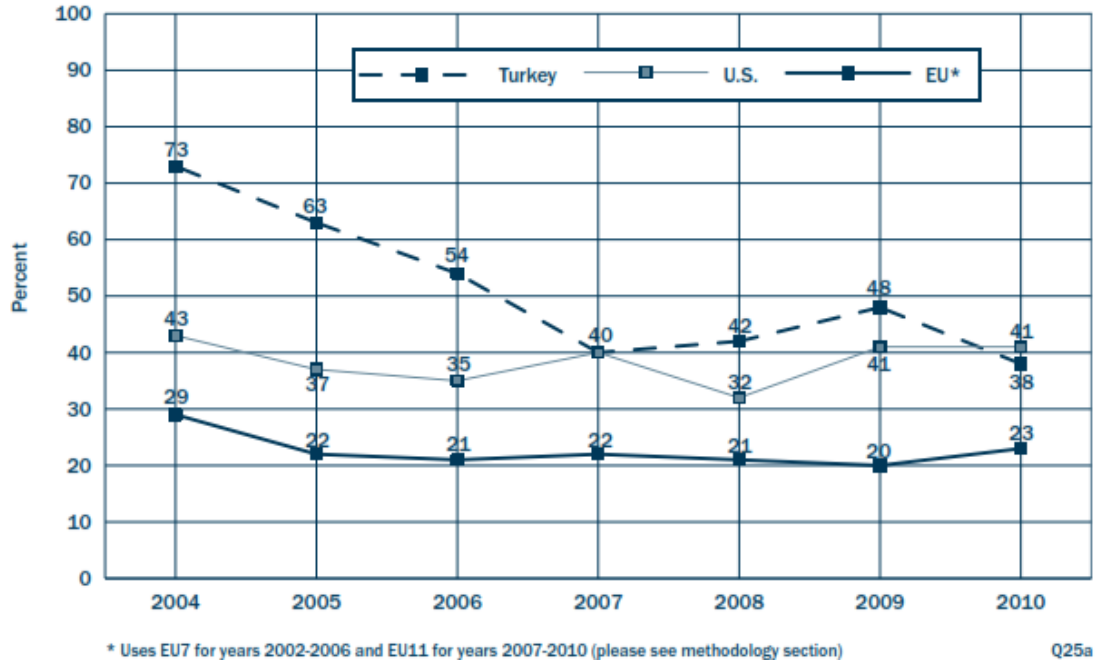
Percentage of relevant EU declarations and Council decisions adopted by the EU that Turkey aligned with since it became EU candidate country in 2005

Year	Number of relevant EU declarations and Council decisions adopted by the EU	Number of relevant EU declarations and Council decisions adopted by the EU that Turkey aligned with	Percentage of alignment
2005	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007	46	45	98%
2008	124	109	88%
2009	128	99	77%
2010	73	54	74%

Source: *Turkey Progress Reports 2005-2010*

Chart 1

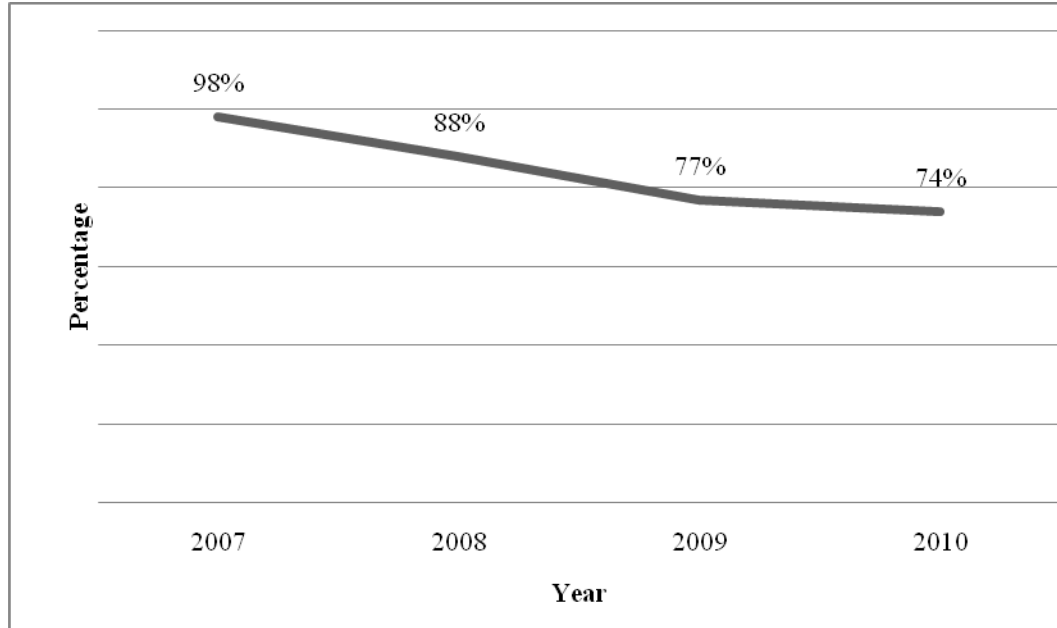
Turkey joining the EU would be a good thing



Source: *Transatlantic Trends 2010*

Chart 2

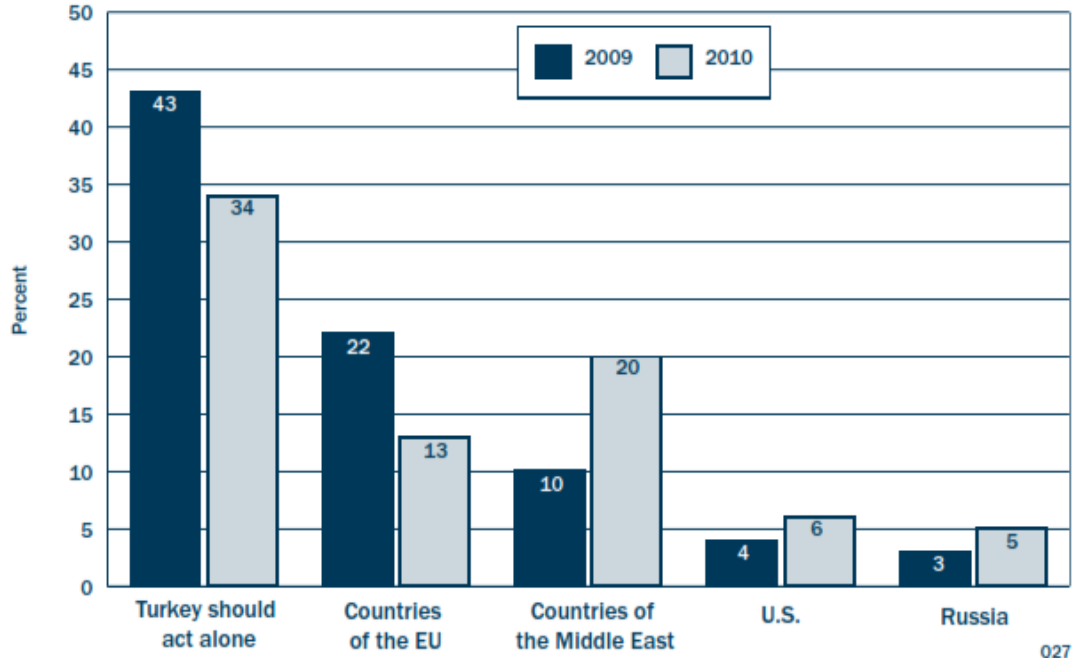
Percentage of relevant EU declarations and Council decisions adopted by the EU that Turkey aligned with since it became EU candidate country in 2005



Source: *Turkey Progress Reports 2005-2010*

Chart 3

With whom should Turkey act in closest cooperation?



Source: *Transatlantic Trends 2010* Q27

Map 1

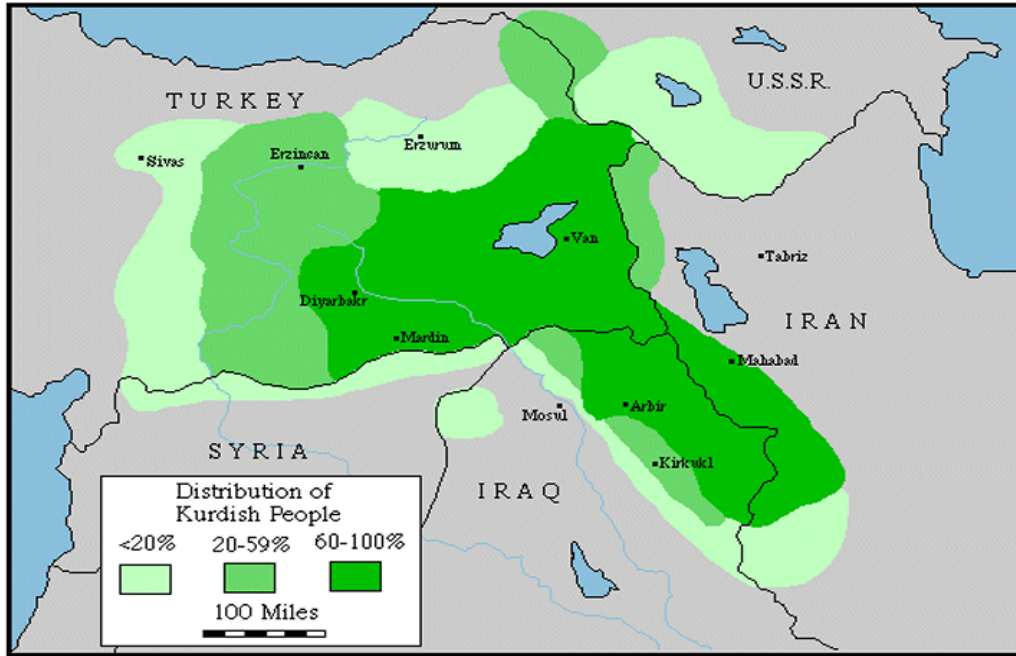
Turkey



Source: CIA: The World Factbook⁵³

⁵³ Accessed at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html#> on February 16, 2011.

Map 2
Kurdistan



Source: Global Security⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Accessed at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/images/dist-kurdish.gif> on February 16, 2011.

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