

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

MASTER THESIS

**WHAT IS BEHIND THE RISE OF NEO-OTTOMANISM
IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE LAST TWO
DECADES?**

OSAMAH MOHAMMED

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ERIK RINGMAR**

ISTANBUL, 2021

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DECADES?**

by
OSAMAH MOHAMMED

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Political Science and International Relations**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ERIK RINGMAR**

ISTANBUL, 2021

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and International Relations.

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This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname: Osamah Mohammed

Signature:

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ÖZ

SON İKİ ON YILDA TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASI'NDAKİ YENİ OSMANLILIĞIN
YÜKSELİŞİNİN ARDINDA NE VAR?

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Haziran 2021, 55 sayfa

Bu tez, Türk sosyolog Şerif Mardin'in merkez-çevre ilişkileri çerçevesini kullanarak Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin (AK Parti ya da AKP) son 20 yılda edindiği Neo-Osmanlılık dış politikasını açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Mardin'in sunduğu çerçeve ilk olarak Türk tarihinde merkez ve çevre ilişkilerini açıklamak için kullanılmıştır. Mardin'in Osmanlı merkezinin çevre halklarının talepleri doğrultusunda politika yürütmekte zorlandığına dair ortaya koyduğu argüman, tarihin farklı dönemlerini de açıklamaktadır. Bazı dönemlerde merkez-çevre ilişkileri işbirliğine dayalıyken, diğer dönemlerde çevre, merkezi farklı kültürel değerlere sahip, tamamen farklı bir yapı olarak görmüştür. Mardin (1973), bu çerçevenin sonunu 1960 darbesi ve dönemin Başbakanı Adnan Menderes'in idamını ele alarak getirmiştir. Ancak bu tez, bu tartışmayı AKP'nin yükselişine taşımayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu minvalde çevrenin siyasi amaç ve arzularının, AKP dış politikasının Neo-Osmanlılık eksenine kaymasındaki katkısı tartışılacaktır. Çoğu araştırmacı, ekonomi, parti siyaseti, Türk milliyetçiliği ve Avrupa Birliği'ne giriş süreci gibi 2000'li yılların başındaki siyasi gelişmeler üzerinden Neo-Osmanlılığın yükselişinin kaynağını açıklamaya çalışmıştır. Diğer akademisyenler ise Neo-Osmanlılığı topyekün reddetmiş, Türk dış politikasının lokomotifinin Sünni-İslamcı ideoloji olduğunu öne sürmüştür. Bu yazının hedefi, öncelikli olarak Şerif Mardin'in merkez-çevre ilişkileri teorisini kullanarak Neo-Osmanlılığı açıklamak ve AKP dönemi süresince Türkiye'nin dış politika tavırlarına

işaret ederek Neo-Osmanlıcılık terimine açık bir tanımlama getirmektir. Böylece, bu yazının ana hedefi Neo-Osmanlıcılık ve Şerif Mardin'in "çevre" konseptinin ilişkisini ortaya koymaktır. Bu doğrultuda, demokrasi, siyasi kutuplaşma ve kültürel farklılık elementleri kullanılarak merkez-çevre ilişkileri değerlendirilecek ve toplumun bu segmentlerinin birbirini nasıl etkilediği ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, İlkel çevre, Merkez-Çevre İlişkileri, Karşı Resmi Kültür, Neo-Osmanlıcılık, Türk Dış Politikası.



ABSTRACT

WHAT IS BEHIND THE RISE OF NEO-OTTOMANISM IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE LAST TWO DECADES?

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This thesis paper aims to explain the rise of Neo-Ottomanism as an adopted foreign policy under the two-decade long rule of the Justice and Development Party aka AKP by using a sociological framework (Center-Periphery relations) provided by the late Turkish scholar Serif Mardin. Originally, the framework was employed to explain the relationship between the center and the periphery in Turkish history. Mardin (1973) believes that since the 18th century, Ottoman center struggled to align its policies with the demands of the periphery, and this extends to different periods of history. In some periods a cooperative relationship between both center and periphery was witnessed, while in others, periphery saw the center as a totally different entity with different cultural values. While Mardin (1973) ends his formulation of the center-periphery relations framework by explaining the events of the 1960's coup and the execution of Menderes, this paper aims to extend the discussion to the rise of AKP to power in 2002 and explain how the periphery's political aspirations paved the way to shift foreign policy to what is known as Neo-Ottomanism under AKP's rule. Many have tried to explain the emergence of Neo-Ottomanism by going back to the domestic developments in Turkey during the 2000s such as the economical aspect, party politics, Turkish Nationalism and Europeanization. Some other fellow scholars even argue that there is no such thing as Neo-Ottomanism but rather it is a Sunni-Islamist ideology that runs Turkey's foreign policy. It is the objective of this paper to explain the concept of Neo-Ottomanism by primarily referring to Serif Mardin's Center-periphery

relations theory as the main factor in emergence of such a concept and give a clear understanding and definition of Neo-Ottomanism by pointing out Turkey's foreign policy attitude under the AKP government. Therefore, the main argument of this paper will be proving the relevancy of Neo-Ottomanism and the 'Periphery' concept of Serif Mardin. In doing so, the three elements of Democracy, Political Polarization and Cultural difference will be utilized in determining how good the relationship between the center and the periphery is and how today those segments of society influence one another.

Keywords: Center-Periphery Relations, Counter-Official Culture, Neo-Ottomanism, Justice and Development Party, Primordial Periphery, Turkish Foreign Policy.



DEDICATION

This research paper is dedicated to all the scholars whom their works guided us to research and study more and inspired us to write by always keeping an independent intellectual mind.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank God, the most gracious and the most merciful for bestowing his endless blessings on us and guiding us through the hardships we face.

Osamah Mohammed

ISTANBUL, 2021



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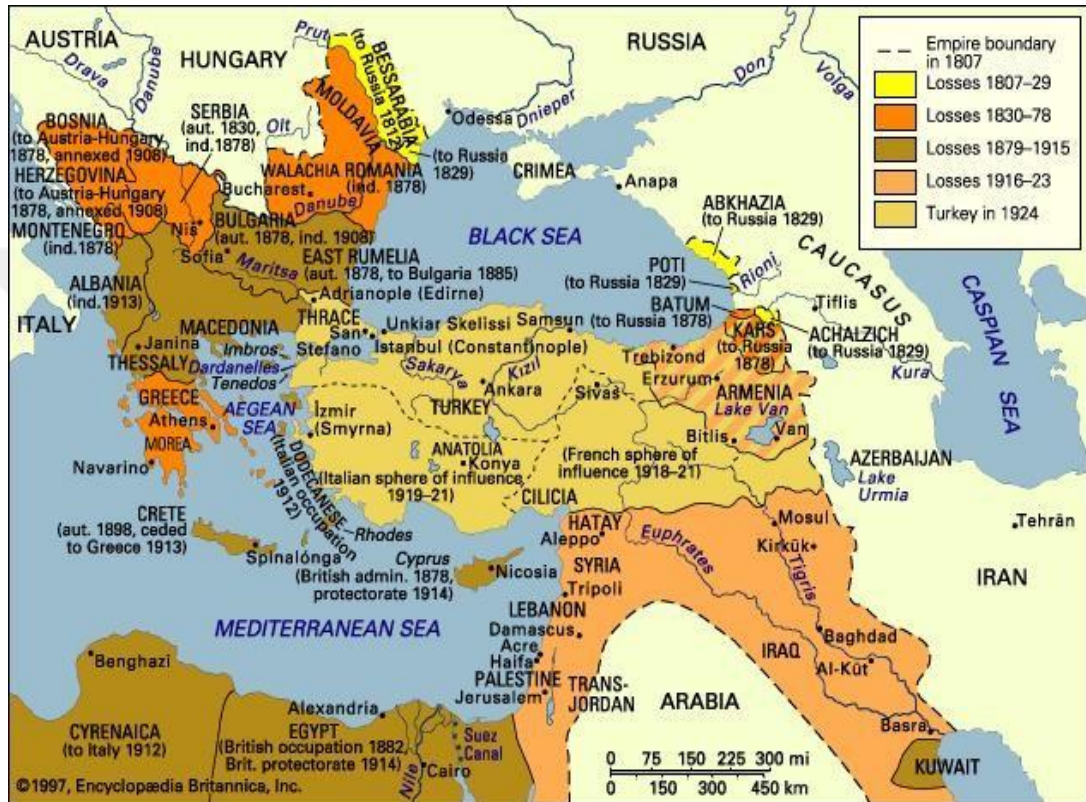
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



Picture 1.1. Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire

1.1. Exploring Neo-Ottomanism

Scholars in different academic journals and books have discussed the concept of Neo-Ottomanism. Majority of them agree on the definition of the concept or some re-define it in their works, regardless, there are many similarities between their understandings of the concept. Yet the issue starts at the time of emergence of such concept for foreign policy. While majority of the works we used in this study believe Neo-Ottomanism began with AKP coming to power, however, some others such as Sohrabi (2018)

believe the first government which adopted this sort of policy was CUP (1889-1918) during the last years of Ottoman empire.

Sohrabi (2018) states that in order to have a good understanding of what Neo-Ottomanism is and to grasp its intellectual origins, we have to revisit the father of Pan-Turkism, Yusuf Akcura (1876-1935) and his triple discussion of Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism. According to Sohrabi (2018) Akcura's political compass could be shortened to three arrows; 1- Abandoning the current failed state ideology of Ottomanism which started in Tanzimat era (1839-1876) 2- Improvising and magnifying Turkish nationalism and Pan-Turkism 3- Seeing Islam as a supporting pillar of Turkish nationalism. Islam should not be abandoned but taken advantage of as an additional bond to strengthen Turkism.

The writings of Akcura that was retrieved by Sohrabi (2018) were written in 1904, 4 years before the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) forces Sultan Abdulhemid II to reinstate the constitution which starts second constitutional era and opens the political rivalry between the Liberal Union and the CUP. The Liberal Union (1911-1919) which was a political party founded by some members of Young Turks and Committee of Progress and Union, was headed by the Ottoman Damat Mehmet Ferid Pasha (1853-1923) and asked for decentralized and federalized empire, while CUP promoted centralized and unified Turkish-dominated Ottoman empire.

CUP took power in a coup in 1913 and brought Turkey closer to Germany which resulted in Turkey's participation in World War 1. Sohrabi (2018) believes that during the World War 1, CUP followed a Neo-Ottoman policy in addressing a part of the periphery while giving a nationalistic notion to the other part.

Considering the timelines, it seems irrelevant to label CUP policies during those years as Neo-Ottoman. Since Liberal Union (1911-1919) was considered more Ottoman as it consisted of members from various ethnicities especially Albanians compared to Turkish-dominated CUP (Gawrych, 2006).

Since the republic of Turkey starts with the revolution of Mustafa Kemal and his radical reforms, we cannot see any other foreign policies before that period as Neo-

Ottoman since what existed pre-Turkish republic was the Ottoman empire and describing different foreign policies of the center, such as CUP's, as Neo-Ottomanism is out of context.

It is undeniable that Neo-Ottomanism is somehow linked to a nostalgic and emotional past, but the question whether what defines Neo-Ottomanism is rather problematic. According to Yavuz (2020) Neo-Ottomanism in the hands of political elites and the conservative masses is rooted in a historical sentiment and it is absolutely linked to emotion.

Yavuz (2020) in many places in his book entitled "*Nostalgia for the Empire: The Politics of Neo-Ottomanism*" emphasizes a lot on labeling Neo-Ottomanism as an emotion rather than a thought or ideology. In another chapter, he believes that it is not critical thinking that attracts masses to feel related to the Ottoman past but rather "emotional bonding".

For Yavuz (2020) even in an individual level, Neo-Ottomanism is awakened through emotional events or memories. The events of 1995's Bosnian genocide is for example; what awakened Yavuz to feel related to the Bosnian Muslims whom once shared their home in the Ottoman empire.

Yavuz does not hide that before the genocide what made him feel related to the Bosnians, is their secular Muslim tendencies for him being a secular republican Turk. Simply, an emotional reaction is what he considers a bonding point in which he feels nostalgic towards the Ottoman past.

As Yavuz describes his 'traumatic' experience in the preface of his book while watching the news and following the events, it is somehow enough to realize what he writes about Neo-Ottomanism is inadequate research concerning what truly defines Neo-Ottomanism.

Considering Yavuz being a part of the modern-counter-official culture facet of the Turkish society as he confesses, it is justifiable for him to feel nostalgic and emotional towards Ottomanism through such emotional events, yet for the primordial facet of the Turkish society, the Ottoman past is more than an emotional feeling. Rather, a critical thinking of a Kemalist-engineered political and social system that has sidelined and

somehow suppressed notions that belonged to the primordial periphery such as Islam, Tradition and Ottoman past.

While Yavuz (2020) describes Neo-Ottomanism as a mass-fueled nostalgic memory that is based on feelings and emotion, many others see President Erdogan as the machine behind such emotion.

Cagaptay (2017) imagines Istanbul pre-1950s as a secular based capital in which it is clear of conservative notions, until thousands of families from Anatolia moved there, among them President Erdogan's family in which he describes it as people with "Strong attachments to their faith".

What Cagaptay describes; is the primordial facet of the society. The facet that counter-official culture part of the society despises.

The facet which consists more or less of the lower middle class and country side of the society whom share tendencies to traditionalism, conservatism and an Ottoman past. As AKP also has always described itself as the representative of the conservative mass, rather than the Islamist.

Scholars like Yavuz and Cagaptay, and many more "modern"-seculars also see such terms of Neo-Ottomanism or The New Sultan as threats rather as understandings of the facets of the society. Them being an active part of the counter-official culture facet.

As stated above, majority of the scholars connect the emergence of Neo-Ottomanism in foreign policy with the rise of AKP to power in 2002. Nonetheless, they point out different factors and mechanisms in answering the question of what could be behind the rise of Neo-Ottomanism. As we go further in the literature review, we will point out major works that attempt to answer this question.

1.2. Neo-Ottomanism and The Turkish Foreign Policy

Neo-Ottomanism is a dramatic turn from the traditional Turkish foreign policy which focuses on neighboring countries and former Ottoman-ruled lands. Moreover, the starting point of this concept's emergence goes back to Turkish foreign policy under Turgut Özal's government in which his policies have been described as the initial steps towards Neo-Ottomanism (Murinson, 2009).

There have been different explanations concerning the rise and emergence of this policy. Sohrabi (2018) believes that what is known as Neo-Ottomanism is mostly related to the adapted policy of Committee of Union and Progress during their exercise of power in the last years of Ottoman Empire (CUP, 1908). Nevertheless, he defines today's Neo-Ottomanism as a fraction of Pan-Turkism ideology and an extension of Turkish nationalism.

Meanwhile, Saracoglu and Demirkol (2015) discuss the topic in depth and outline AKP's foreign policy as an attempt to create a new national identity that replaces current Kemalist notion of nationalism by focusing on former Ottoman lands and considering them as its vicinity.

The AKP's magic stick in fixing Turkey's economy throughout the years has been but a demand from the periphery to steer the country's trade towards its under-explored neighboring countries and therefore leading to the birth of Neo-Ottomanism.

Alessandri (2010) states that Turkey's need for a better economy and the constant look for formerly unexplored neighbors paved the way for acquiring Neo-Ottomanism as a foreign policy.

Noi A. (2012) states that Turkey has had led a dependent foreign policy due to many obstacles such as the existence of Soviet Russia in the past, passing the stages of following a Washington-centric foreign policy and finally replaced by Davutoglu's "Strategic Depth", which could be considered as the initial steps of an independent Turkish foreign policy.

The former foreign affairs minister (2009-2014) and PM Davutoglu (2014-2016) clearly rejected such terms to be used to describe Turkey's foreign policy under his party's rule, yet he did not deny that Ottoman heritage can be used as a 'symbolic capital' for the country.¹

¹ "I am not a neo-Ottoman, Davutoğlu says". Today's Zaman. Turkey. 25 November 2009. Archived from the original on 25 October 2013. Retrieved 4 May 2021.

As Davutoglu believes that the Ottoman heritage and past is a crucial capital for the country, there are some theories that may somehow indicate the importance of using such heritage in the advantage of the country such as the Raum theory.

1.2.1. Theory of Raum

According to Cahnman (1944) Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) a German geographer and ethnologist, famous for his first use of the term Raum or Lebensraum which translates to 'Living space or region'.

Ratzel's idea of Raum (space) would grow out of his organic state conception. His early concept of lebensraum was not political or economic but spiritual and somehow racial nationalist expansion.

The Raum is a historically-driving force, pushing peoples with great Kultur (Culture) to naturally expand beyond their meant space. Space, for Ratzel, was a vague concept, theoretically unbounded.

Raum was basically defined as where the German people live, and how the other weaker states neighboring Germany could serve to support German people economically, and in conclusion the German culture could fertilize other cultures of the neighboring nations due to it being superior.

However, as aggressive as it may seem it should be noted that Ratzel's concept of raum was not overtly aggressive rather he theorized region simply as the natural expansion of strong states into areas controlled by weaker states.

These explanations and more, use different approaches and mechanisms in elaborating on the root and the rise of Neo-Ottomanism. While some of them do not take historicity² into account as a constructive approach in building up their arguments, some others lack sociological explanations as a domestic factor such as the social cleavages. Furthermore, most of the literature lacks a clear definition of what Neo-

² Historicity is the idea or fact that things have historical origins and develop through history: concepts, practices, and values.

Ottomanism is, this paper takes Neo-Ottomanism as a notion of the Turkish periphery that pre-dates AKP and Turgut Ozal's policies.

Serif Mardin (1927-2017), a notable Turkish sociologist believes that Turkish political history can be explained by using a framework that he formulated while reading Edward Shils' (1910-1995) *The Logic of Personal Knowledge: Essays Presented to Michael Polanyi*. The Center-Periphery relations is a framework that explains the relationship between society and the ruling class or authority. According to Mardin (1973) Every society has a center. He goes back to as far as the 18th century Ottoman empire and focuses on the cultural and sentiment differences between both the center and the periphery. He explains the dynamics which widen the gap between the palace (center) and the people (periphery) throughout the 1960s Turkey. Mardin believes that the history of Turkish politics is basically a struggle between the center and the periphery, as he states;

“The confrontation between the center and the periphery is the most important social divide behind Turkish politics, which seems to have survived more than a century of modernization.”

In analyzing the text of Mardin ‘*Center-Periphery Relations: A key to Turkish Politics?*’ (Ibid) we can determine three different points in which the periphery and the center's political aspirations align. Firstly, since 1923, Turkey lives in a democratic political system in which the periphery chooses the center through democratic elections. Contradictorily, in Ottoman empire, the center engineered the society and the periphery from top down by imposing regulations as it is witnessed in Ottoman empire's Tanzimat period (1839-1876)³ and Kemalist era (1923-1945).⁴

Secondly, the cultural differences of the center and the periphery created divergent mentalities and needs. Mardin explains this in the beginning of his article as he mentions how the Persian culture influenced the palace (center) and the basic source

³ Tanzimat was a series of reform edicts meant to modernize the ottoman society and centralize power after decades of decentralized rule.

⁴ Although the new Turkish republic acquired a westernized democratic political system, yet the Kemalist era witnessed an authoritarian single-party rule.

for intellectualism for the periphery was the religious *Madrasas*. According to Kramers (1966) the rulers (the center) adopted languages such as Arabic and Persian sooner, meanwhile the periphery was contributing to the local culture and alien to any of these languages. What the center aspired to be and do was imposed on the periphery with certain regulations. Yet, this could take place in democracies that are ran by an authoritarian president or party, such as Kemalist era (1923-1945) reform laws indicate. Therefore, cultural difference can very much occur in democracies as well. Lastly, political polarization is one of the elements to determine how firm the center and periphery's relations are and in Turkish history we can witness many events in which political polarization reached the peak.

As Altintas (2003) states, in modern history of Turkey, political polarization dates back to the emergence of Democratic party (DP) which took a populist approach by proposing the importance of socio-economic status than cultural revolutionaries (Kemalists' reforms). Lack of political polarization between the periphery and the center in foreign policy priorities as political aspirations, should indicate the periphery's satisfaction of the center's rule.

In a democracy, transferring the periphery's values and notions to the center is quite possible unlike pre-democratic era such as in Ottoman empire. Mardin (1973) explains that the forces shaping the Western countries seem to be very different from the forces shaping the Ottoman countries before modernization was established. Due to its feudal precedent, the centralization process of creating a modern state included a series of confrontations that led to compromise with so-called peripheral forces: feudal aristocrats, cities, the bourgeoisie, and later industrial work. The result of these compromises is that Leviathan and the nation-state are relatively clear structures.

Each time a compromise was made or even a unilateral victory was achieved, it resulted in the integration of some peripheral forces at the center. As a result, the feudal hierarchy or workers were included in politics while also gaining some recognition of their autonomous status.

These continuous confrontations and mergers have produced important consequences, including conflicts between the state and the church, between state builders and

localists, and between owners and non-owners of the means of production. These cross-domain divisions introduced various political identities and provided great flexibility for modern Western European politics. (Mardin, 1973)

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire before the nineteenth century seem to miss these characteristics of multiple confrontation and integration. Even after the modernization of the empire, such confrontations were not really adequate for a smooth integration of the periphery to the center. Yet with the establishment of the Turkish republic and the start of the democratic process in 1945, such integration seems to have been achieved with the works done by the Democrat party led by Adnan Menderes. (Ibid)

By revising and measuring these three elements of Democracy, Political polarization and Cultural difference we can determine how good the relations between Turkey's center and the periphery have been in the last two decades under the AKP's rule. The Turkish periphery's approval of the AKP center may stem from different policy implications of the center that are reflections of the periphery both in domestic and foreign policy. AKP's emphasize on specific peripheral codes⁵ such as Neo-Ottomanism, Nationalism or Statism strengthens the bond between the center and periphery.

This study will be interpretive qualitative research and its main sources will be Official documents, official statements, political events and recorded interviews which will give me a glance on the Turkish parties' stance on the issues related to Neo-Ottomanism, books and academic journals to determine the theories around the topic and utilizing them to formulate my argument. I will not be able to use quantitative method as my study is interpretive and due to lack of time and part of furthering this study, I could have used surveys to determine how Neo-Ottoman a Turkish citizen is despite their political affiliation by pointing out affirmed and non-biased questions concerning their country's intervention in affairs of a former Ottoman-ruled country.

⁵ According to Mardin (1973) Peripheral codes can be constructed and improvised through different means that are utilized by the center. For Instance, in early 20th century a unifying Islamic dimension had been added to the peripheral code. Thus, Islamic unification become a characteristic ideology of the periphery.

The outcome of such survey could have been used as a crucial factor in determining Neo-Ottomanism as a notion of the Turkish periphery.

In doing so, the type of this paper's analysis would be historical and on a national level. What is being discussed in this paper basically how domestic politics or domestic factors determine the foreign policy of a state such as Turkey. Theoretically, I have taken a Constructive approach in explaining how domestic factors such as political system, domestic institutions, head of state and the center (Power)'s culture determines the foreign policy.

Even in considering a Realist approach, it is adequate to see how neo-realists started to take those constructive notions of a state into consideration when debating state's foreign policies. Scholars such as James Fearon of University of Chicago's Political Science Department believe indicate that domestic factors determine foreign policy. As he states;

"Domestic politics can enter into the interpretation of foreign policy in two ways; Domestic politics can (a) lead the country to pursue a suboptimal foreign policy, or (b) when differences in political institutions, cultures, economic structures, or state leadership goals unrelated to relative power are causally linked to the common explanation of other foreign policy choices."

The sources should enable me to address the relevancy of the three elements and point out how AKP's Neo-Ottoman slogans and statements awakened the primordial facet⁶ of the Turkish periphery. Secondly, the amount of political polarization in Turkey today in terms of foreign policy priorities and lastly the cultural similarity between the Turkish periphery and the center will be addressed. As I go further in this study, I expect to have a clearer definition of Neo-Ottomanism by exploring the different definitions in the literature review and furthermore explore the current literature in explaining what is behind the rise of Neo-Ottomanism?

⁶ Mardin (1973) believes that the consequences of 1960 coup led to a clear distinction in the Turkish periphery. A primordial periphery translates as the periphery with primordial allegiances to religion and traditional or official culture. While the opposing periphery is described as a Kemalist-engineered periphery that is counter-official culture and has allegiances to notions such as Nationalism, Statism and Secularism.

It is claimed in different writings that Neo-Ottomanism is a political ideology that in its broadest sense, promotes greater political engagement of the republic of Turkey with regions that were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. It is quite noticeable that Turkey's foreign policy shifted dramatically towards the mentioned regions under AKP's rule in the last two decades. Such a change looks rather political, yet it has sociological indications as well. Some scholars, whom we will visit in depth in the literature review, believe Turkey's shift in foreign policy can be explained better by concepts such as Pan-Turkism, Turkish Nationalism and Islamism.

The common belief indicates that Head of AKP is somehow an extension to a wider project that was started by Turgut Ozal former Prime Minister (1983–1989) and President (1989-1993)'s policies of Pan-Turkism. Although what Turgut Ozal's vision covered in terms of domestic and foreign policy may differ from the politics of President Erdogan, yet the idea of a more unified Turkey under notions such as Islam and Ottoman past and stronger relations with the Turkic nations seem relevant to President Erdogan's vision.

Meanwhile, President Erdogan's policies of nationalism (is) are more or less read as emphasizing on the common bonds of Turkish nationalism and Islamism of the Turkish periphery, that somehow gives the birth to Neo-Ottomanism.

Nevertheless, Neo-Ottomanism has been used to describe Turkish foreign policy under Justice and Development Party (AKP) in different timelines and occasions. Most of these cases are in terms of foreign policy. Below are some examples of Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP rule;

1.3. Neo-Ottomanism in Foreign Policy

1.3.1. Iraq and Turkey

The Iraq War was a protracted armed conflict that began in 2003 with the invasion of Iraq by a United States-led coalition that overthrew the government of Saddam Hussein. US's closest military base at that time was Incirlik base in Adana, south of Turkey in which Turkey rejected US's demand for using the base and making a front

line to North of Iraq in the invasion. The matter of approval was in the hands of the prime minister who was Recep Tayyip Erdogan in his first term, he sent the matter to Turkish Parliament to vote on it and by majority (which was occupied by AKP) it got rejected. According to Ozdemir (2020) there were many factors that blocked AKP's will in involvement in the Iraq war and above all; the parliament's rejection of the bill.⁷

Despite President Erdogan's recent complains towards his party for not voting for the bill at the time, the act of not to aid US's invasion of Iraq could be considered the first step for an independent Turkish foreign policy in which Turkey does not want to be full ally to US's policy in the Middle East.

Soon after the US troops started withdrawing from the logistics base, and Turkey resisted US pressure to allow attacks on Iraq from its soil, forbidding American warplanes to use its air bases and the 4th Infantry Division to set up camps just north of the Iraqi border.⁸

After winning the elections of 2007 and 2011 AKP soon stabilized Turkey's economy and political atmosphere, leading an independent foreign policy in the region.

Its strengthening relations with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as economical as it seemed, it has noticeable hegemonic indications as well. The AKP government's decision in 2012 to import crude oil directly from the KRG despite the objection of the central government in Baghdad, should be seen against this broader strategic approach that Turkey is supposedly following, yet the decision represents a significant reversal of previous Turkish policy, which had sought to prevent the KRG from obtaining direct control over the energy resources in the region.⁹

Fearing that this would strengthen the KRG's motive for the creation of an independent state in Northern Iraq. Turkey is well aware that KRG's huge economic dependence

⁷ The bill would open the Turkish airspace for U.S. forces to conduct bombing campaigns. It would have allowed upwards of 62,000 U.S. troops to be present on Turkish soil while opening up avenues for Turkish intervention by allowing up to 40,000 Turkish soldiers to operate in Northern Iraq (Kesgin and Kaarbo, 2010).

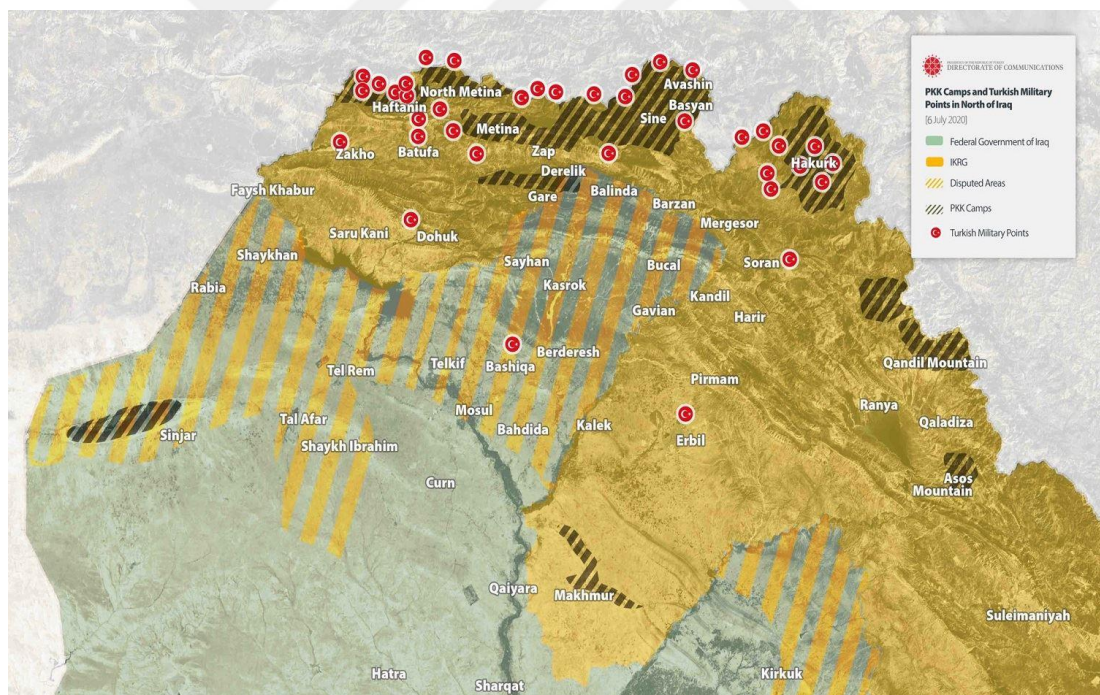
⁸ Kesgin, Baris, and Kaarbo, Juliet (2010). When and How Parliaments Influence Foreign Policy: The Case of Turkey's Iraq Decision, *International Studies Perspectives* 11 (1): 19–36.

⁹ Ibid

on Turkey would limit KRG's capability in putting the relations with Turkey in turmoil with any independence endeavor since around %80 of KRG's economy depends on Turkish goods and trade. ¹⁰

According to Park (2012) The Kurdistan region considerably accounts for half of Turkey's trade with Iraq. Becoming Turkey's second largest economic partner after Germany. With Thousands of Turkish citizens are working in KRG and have established businesses in the Kurdish region.

Beside the trade, Turkey and KRG share a common despise of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which has had turned into. Accordingly, increasing number of Turkish military bases and headquarters in the region that come close to more than 40 bases and headquarters. Such military presence somehow justifies the hegemonic presence of Turkey in the region.



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Picture 1.2 Turkish Military Points in Northern Iraq

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Turkish presidency's Directorate of Communications, July 6 2020.

1.3.2. Arab Spring and Syrian Case

The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East in late 2010. In early March 2011, protests against Bashar al-Asaad began in Syria and they were violently suppressed which led to an armed conflict between the different fractions of Syrian opposition and Assad Regime. Turkey, which had a relatively friendly relationship with Syria over the decade prior to the start of the civil unrest in Syria in the spring of 2011, condemned the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad over the violent crackdown on protests in 2011 and later that year joined several other countries demanding his resignation. In the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, Turkey trained defectors of the Syrian Army on its territory, and in July 2011, a group of them announced the birth of the Free Syrian Army, under the supervision of Turkish intelligence (Fearon, 1998).

After being considered as a close friend of Turkey, Bashar started becoming harshly criticized in official statements in a shift of Turkish foreign policy towards Syria after the beginning of the civil war.

After many military operations and deals, Turkey failed on achieving its policy on removing Assad in power and on 20th of January 2017, the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, Mehmet Şimşek, said "we cannot say that Assad must go anymore, a deal without Assad is not realistic".

Although Turkey's interference in Syria's affairs may seem Neo-Ottoman, it somehow clings to the humanitarian idea. According to Oguzlu (2012) Turkey's approach to the crisis in Syria has become more liberal, more assertive, normative and more humanitarian. The most crucial cause of this transformation appears to have been the continued influx of Syrian people to Turkey from the tragedy that the civil war produced it. The admission of large numbers of Syrians in was a risky step on Turkey's part, as Assad considered these refugees as insurgents, although their numbers are limited to this day. Meanwhile there would be an additional risk if the Syrian Kurds living on the border with Turkey did the same and it concluded in putting Turkey's Kurdish problem under more pressure.

As for Syria, Turkey's main concern at the very beginning of the events was to make sure that Syria's internal crisis would not affect Turkey-Syria relations negatively. On the one hand, appearing too supportive of Assad might have cost Turkey a critical role to play in post-Assad era, whereas on the other hand siding with the 'Arab Spring' and the Rise of the 2.0 Version of Turkey's 'zpwn' Policy, the opposition pushing Assad for further reforms might have backfired were Assad to gain the upper hand in return.

Turkey's growing engagement in the Middle East had also been informed by the inability of Arab countries, most notably Egypt, Syria and Iraq, to play leadership roles during these crises.

At the height of the democratic wave, the countries that have already become functioning democracies are likely to become "sources of inspiration." advantage over other major players in the region such as Egypt and Iran. it seems that the regional influence of Iran, as well as the attractiveness of the so-called of the Iranian model, are likely to experience a negative turn as democracies come to power in Sunni-dominated countries.

1.3.3 Turkey and Palestinian Case

Turkey has a long history of supporting the rights of Palestinians, yet it has established strong diplomatic ties with Israel since AKP's take on power. There have always been economic and military trade between both countries. The relations seemed to be in a good shape to the extent that Turkey mediated the first official talks between Israel and Pakistan, an effort seen as part of Turkey's quest for a regional mediator role. The continuing Israeli-Turkish partnership on multiple levels showed that President Erdogan, while not sympathetic to Israel, was pragmatic. Efforts by President Erdogan and the AKP during this period to engage American Jewish organizations in Washington to pressure Congress on his behalf further clarified this point.

According to Katz (2007) Israel's relations with AKP government were "perfect" as described by Israeli foreign ministry in the early 2006 and everything was going well until the 2008-2009 Israel-Gaza conflict, after which things changed for both sides.

Turkish government's condemnations of conflict strained the relations between both countries, and it got worse at The World Economic Forum in Davos, where President Erdogan publicly accused Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres of killing innocents and children in Gaza and criticized the forum moderator for not being equal in giving speech times. President Erdogan left the stage after his harsh remarks and in coming back to Turkey, welcomed by hundreds of people praising him for his 'heroic' act against Israel and the 'West' (Ayturk, 2011).

Relations between both countries got worse when nine activists were killed and many more wounded by Israeli troops and seven Israeli soldiers were injured on the Mavi Marmara, part of the "Gaza Freedom Flotilla" which was a convoy of six ships carrying 663 people from 37 nations, including pro-Palestinian activists. Following the raid, which took place in the Mediterranean Sea in international waters, tension between the two countries mounted. One of the ships taking part was flying a Turkish flag. Turkey recalled its ambassador from Israel and summoned the Israeli ambassador to demand an explanation. The Turkish Foreign Ministry stated that the incident could lead to irreparable consequences in bilateral relations.

In further actions, the Turkish Foreign Ministry called on the international community and the United Nations to take the necessary initiatives to stop Israel's military operation in Gaza in late 2012, which it described as another example of Israel's hostile policies. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused the United Nations on 19 November of failing to act over the deadly Israeli air bombardments of Gaza, calling Israel a "terrorist state" that "massacres innocent children".¹²

At the U.N. General Assembly in September 2011, U.S. President Barack Obama asked President Erdogan to resolve the crisis with Israel, and In December 2015 Turkey and Israel began talks to restore diplomatic ties. However, disagreements on normalizing relations between both sides still persist to the today (Haaretz, 2015).

¹² İlker Aytürk, "The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish–Israeli Relations Since 2002," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2011, pp. 675–687

1.3.4 Turkey and The Balkans

Turkey's influence over the neighboring countries does not stop in Middle East, but rather it steps out to the Balkans as well. To an extent according to Somun (2021) The Balkans could be a starting point where the critics of the new Turkish Foreign Policy started labeling it Neo-Ottoman and 'Ottoman imperialist'.

Somun (2021) believes that what drives the new Turkish foreign policy is pragmatism while his academic rivals such as Tanaskovic use Turkey's former foreign minister Davutoglu speeches in 2009, Sarajevo and former President Gul's visit in 2010 to Sarajevo and Mostar as Neo-Ottoman motives in mobilizing the Muslim Bosnians against Bosnian Serbs and an initiative of Turkish hegemony on the region.

Both Somun and Tanaskovic take different views on some speeches made by the former PM Davutoglu back in Sarajevo in October 2009 in a speech said "Sarajevo is ours" and "Istanbul is yours." "The Ottoman century in the Balkans is a success story that should be updated." Tanaskovic and other analysts analyze it as proof of neo-Ottomanism initiative by Turkey through Davutoglu. While Somun believes that it should be translated as a friendship gesture considering Davutoglu used similar gestures in other countries and in the same speech, he mentions it does not mean that we should return to the Ottoman past but rather he mainly hinted at the common Ottoman heritage.

In another speech in June 2009, again former PM stresses the Ottoman heritage in the Balkans at the 28th Annual Conference on US-Turkish Relations Organized by ATC-DEIK. He states:

"The largest city in Bosnia is not Sarajevo, but Istanbul. We have more Abkhazians living in Turkey than Abkhazia, more Chechens living in Turkey than Chechnya, and more Georgians living in Turkey than in Georgia. This is because the Republic of Turkey, as a nation-state, originates from the legacy of a long imperial tradition, not imperialist but imperial."

In some other part of his speech; he goes further to describe the unity of these countries inside Turkey as he states;

*"I see that there are soldiers from Kosovo, Bosnia, Yemen and Mora. I mean they are all different countries now, but a century ago someone from Kosovo joined the Ottoman army to defend Azerbaijan. A Kosovo Albanian and an Azeri have nothing in common today, but inside Turkey, an Azeri, an Albanian, a Bosnian and an Anatolian Turk like me, live together."*¹³

While Somun takes these speeches as Pragmatic foreign policy and other like Tanaskovic see it as a hostile Neo-Ottoman foreign policy, I prefer Taspinar (2008)'s analysis on these matters where he states that this neo-Ottoman paradigm that does not pursue a neo-imperialist policy, is actually aimed at revitalizing the Ottoman heritage, instead of imperial nostalgia. neo-Ottomanism essentially consists of magnifying the 'soft power' of the Ottoman Empire. Making Turkey a bridge between East and West, a Muslim nation, a secular state, a democratic political system and a capitalist economic force.

1.3.5 Turkey, Caucas and The Turkic World

Soon after the end of the Soviet Union and the emergence of three independent states in the South Caucasus, Turkey began to show a genuine interest in the region. The issue of energy, which has been a key issue in Turkish policy from the beginning, should remain a top priority for Turkey due to the country's economic growth. Ankara seeks a balanced relationship with the three South Caucasian states of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, but for various reasons, Turkey's policy in the South Caucasus is still defined by its relationship with Azerbaijan, which is also a co-operative country. Ankara's best ally and economic partner.

The Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States (Turkic Council) was founded in 2009 as an intergovernmental organization with the primary objective of promoting

¹³ Insight Turkey, SUMMER 2011, Vol. 13, No. 3, AK PARTY'S ELECTORAL HEGEMONY THE MAKING OF A "NEW MIDDLE EAST" TURKEY'S RETURN TO THE BALKANS (SUMMER 2011), pp. 33-41

comprehensive cooperation between Turkic-speaking countries. The four founding members are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. During the 7th Baku Summit in October 2019, Uzbekistan joined the Council as a full member. Hungary obtained observer status in the Council of Turkey during its sixth summit in CholponAta, Kyrgyz Republic, in September 2018. See Turkkon.org about section.

In their 2017 South-South Action activities release entitled (HOW A REGIONAL ORGANIZATION USES SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION TO PROMOTE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT); They describe their objectives as the following;

"As a regional intergovernmental organization and responsible international actor with an inclusive and comprehensive approach, the Turkish Council attaches great importance to South-South Cooperation to promote cooperation among its Member States and throughout the region. Our Member States - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey - bravely use the South-South spirit in their individual development cooperation efforts, with the idea of leaving no one behind. In doing so, we place the development of human and institutional capacities, the exchange of experiences and the exchange of best practices in a large number of areas that we operate at the center of our work mechanism."

There are clear disparities in bilateral relations between Turkey and each of these South Caucasus republics. Each of these three countries has striking differences. More importantly, each side represents Turkey's diverse interests. Thus, each side occupies its own place in Ankara's foreign policy.

Azerbaijan holds a unique place in Turkey's foreign policy, not only in the Caucasus and the Turkic speaking region but also beyond. This closeness is not only due to the shared cultural and linguistic affinities but also to the strong political and strategic interests that exist between these two countries. Their bilateral relations are often characterized as "two states, one nation." With the end of the Soviet Empire, Turkey sought to recreate a solidarity based on "Turkishness," connecting all Turkic-speaking nations. (Balci, 2014)

1.3.6. Other Cases

The case of Egypt is one of the apparent cases that made Turkey express its concerns over toppling Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Mohammed Morsi in 2013, and ever since Turkey's relations with Sisi-led Egypt remains strained. Since AKP took power, Turkey's relations with Islamic fractions, especially Muslim Brotherhood has been pampered worldwide, as they took power temporarily under Nahda party in Tunisia after Arab Spring and in different parts in the Arab world (Bloomberg, 2011).

Beside those cases, Turkey has condemned and felt responsible for Muslim minorities around the world and through its foreign policy expressed its concerns and protective policy towards them. Since 2017, the Rohingya genocide started in Myanmar, Turkey continuously condemned it and aided the Muslim minority there through charity organizations.

This thesis explores the history of the center-periphery relations framework and takes Neo-Ottomanism as a peripheral code of the primordial facet of the Turkish periphery, meanwhile explores the literature review on Neo-Ottomanism as a foreign policy that was initiated with the rise of AKP to power.

Meanwhile According to (Hoffman, 2019) Turkey's interventions are shaped in all their diversity by three continuities. First, they start from what Ankara calls geopolitical or security imperatives. Just as the emergence of a Syrian-Kurdish state along its southern border and the activities of the PKK in northern Iraq are described as an existential threat, the 1974 coup in Cyprus was an inevitable *casus bello*.

Despite political polarization, there is strong cross-party support for the current interventions in Syria and Iraq. Second, despite recent talk of a more ambitious and potentially even global role, most Turkish interventions remain regional for now. Related, third, is that even if a more realist Turkish security interest is claimed to be at stake, most interventions are partly justified by a pan-Turkist 'duty of care' for what are regarded as ethnic clients under pressure.

There are three current developments that could change this landscape. The first is mainly about establishing new bases far away. in Qatar, Somalia and, more recently, Sudan. These show the ambition to develop maritime energy in the region. In particular, activities in Qatar and Sudan have led former allies of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to increasingly see Turkey as a threat rather than an ally.

It follows a dispute with Egypt over the ouster of President Mohamad Morsi, leaving Qatar the sole significant Arab ally. Establish a presence in geopolitically sensitive places in the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa, far from the immediate vicinity of Turkey and therefore with no direct security impact on territorial integrity country, which means active regional geopolitical competition. In addition to the Middle East, Turkey has also become more present and noisier in Southeast Asia. The two regions identify themselves as predominantly Muslim communities absorbing Turkish interests, whether economic or otherwise.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS BEHIND THE RISE OF NEO-OTTOMANISM?

2.1. Nationalism and National Identity

Nationalism is considered by scholars as a crucial element of the emergence and rise of Neo-Ottomanism in foreign policy. Saracoglu and Demirkol (2015) believe that nationalism is one of the most important factors that shaped the Neo-ottomanism policy of AKP. Nationalism being the most reliable factor to adjust the periphery's perception towards new policies, they argue that AKP's Neo-Ottomanism policy is crucial for their concept of national identity.

According to Saracoglu and Demirkol (2015) AKP's viewpoint of its neighborhood countries is as if they are in its vicinity and not as separate nation-states rather as former Ottoman territories which are crucial for building a new national identity. They believe AKP is attempting to reshape the concept of national identity of the periphery by basically replacing the secular principle with an ottoman one accompanied by the pride of Turkish nationalism. Thus, Neo-Ottomanism being a part of a nationalist project in the end, rather than a foreign policy one.

They view Neo-Ottomanism's manifestation in the foreign policy as a mean to achieve a greater goal of constructing a new identity in which can replace Kemalism. For Saracoglu and Demirkol (2015) AKP's nationalist project and its Neo-Ottomanist manifestations in foreign policy seem to be leading to a major and deepening crisis as the presence of Kemalism is still strong in Turkey's periphery. This outlines AKP's paradox in dealing with Kemalism. According to Duran (2013) acknowledging Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's significance as a national symbol is compulsory. Thus, AKP's paradox in undoing/reconstructing Kemalism becomes more evident. President Erdogan's emphasis on using such terms as 'Gazi' Mustafa Kemal hints this paradox.

Considering Turkish nationalism as an inseparable part of Turkey's periphery's identity does not necessarily mean that at some point it evolves into something as Neo-Ottomanism. Neo-Ottomanism rather works as a suppressed notion of the periphery that has been overshadowed by Kemalist's Turkish nationalism doctrine.

Turkism, later revived as Pan-Turkism, is a form of late Turkish nationalism. It originated in the early 20th century when it turned out that Ottomanism and pan-Islamism could not prevent the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

According to Hristove (2019), Pan-Turkism is primarily attributed to the conceptualization of ideas and the definition of the concept of a strong and independent Turkish nation. Before the fall of the Ottoman Empire, there was no Turkish national identity. This was due to the fact that the religious foundations of the Ottoman state ruled out any option through which to express one's Turkish identity and sense of belonging to the Turkish nation. The writer and politician Ziya Gokalp made a significant contribution to strengthening the ideology of Panturianism. He has lectured on his political and philosophical views in "Fundamentals of Turkism", "History of Turkish Civilization", "Islamization" and other works.

In these works, Ziya Gokalp concretizes the idea of integrating all the Turkic-speaking peoples into a new Ottoman Empire under the leadership of the future Greater Turkey. Essentially, pan-Turkism envisions the conception of a new Turkish ideal aimed at restoring the self-confidence of the Turkish people. Although pan-Turkism has failed in its attempts to offer an effective alternative to save the empire, some of its messages form the basis for the construction of the new political and ideological philosophy, including those related to Kemalism and neo-Ottomanism. (Hristov, 2019)

2.2. Islamism Discourse and Neo-Ottomanism

Scholars have tried to define this change in foreign policy with other concepts such as Islamism by pointing out President Erdogan's interest in Palestinian case and the consequences of Gaza flotilla raid (2010), his way of dealing with Arab Spring, the support for Egypt's Morsi and many more cases.

Aras and Toktas (2010) prefer a totally different narrative, by merging AKP's both foreign and domestic policy, they believe that the change of Islamism discourses developed overtime and exceeded to a point that gave birth to Neo-Ottomanism. The problem starts with Turkish party politics. Duran (2013) explores current trends in Islamism in Turkey and points out an impoverishment of the Islamist discourses due to Kemalism's securitization and control over religion. He argues that a new phase of Islamism has been taking place in Turkey since 2002 with the start of AKP's reign.

For them, the sum of ideological and political changes that AKP brought with itself, including Neo-Ottomanism, is a new phenomenon that was born with AKP's development of its Islamist discourses. Among all those explanations on the nature and origin of AKP's Ottoman geopolitical heritage and its Neo-Ottoman foreign policy, I believe some of them lack many other striking factors that led to the birth of Neo-Ottomanism. Besides those, most of them could not go back to the core of the policy and relate the periphery's view on the foreign policy.

Along with Saracoglu and Demirkol (2015), Yavuz and Kayali (2016) also assert that Neo-Ottomanism is about constructing a new national identity and converting it into foreign policy by using historical, cultural, and religious ties to former Ottoman territories. According to Duran (2013) The increasing Islamic references in President Erdogan's speeches represents an attempt for the normalization of Islamism in a new Turkey that AKP claims to construct.

As for Yavuz (2020) Neo-Ottomanism in terms of politics is strictly connected to the Islamist discourse. In most of his writings, he links Neo-Ottomanism with Islamists when it comes to shaping the foreign policy. Yet when it comes to nostalgic memories and the allegiances to the Ottoman past, he does not deny the totality's allegiance of the society to Neo-Ottomanism.

Yavuz (2020) portrays political Neo-Ottomanism as a mere means for the Islamist elite in Turkey, shutting an eye on the Ottomanist aspirations of non-Islamist seculars such as Meral Aksener of the IYI Party and MHP's Bahçeli.

New Ottomanism indicated a multi-dimensional foreign policy, without having to choose in between East and the West. In fact, since the end of the Cold War, Turkey had proposed itself as a soft power meaning a bridge between East and West, precisely as a Muslim nation, a secular state, a democratic political system and as a capitalistic economic force (Taşpınar, 2008).

The AKP has deepened the above thesis on Turkish foreign policy and defended the uniqueness of the Turkish historical experience From the Ottomans to the Republic: Archiving Kemalist content amid historical spiritual experiences and the time between two civilizations, East and West. (Ege, 2013)

The debate on constructing a new national identity seems irrelevant to our study here, yet the idea of Neo-Ottomanism being the outcome of an Islamist discourse is rather problematic. Since Neo-Ottomanism is not solely derived from the conservative part of the periphery, rather it could be seen as an independent notion of the periphery that exceeds the ideologies.

According to Mardin (1973) Considering the outcome of 1960's military coup and the execution of Menderes, the Turkish periphery is divided into two different facets. One that is derived from the Kemalist center and works as a counter-official culture periphery, while the second which holds primordial allegiances to cultural values and religion stays suppressed. Neo-Ottomanism being a peripheral code to the primordial periphery not necessarily links it to specific ideologies or political views. We will discuss this matter further in the theoretical background chapter of this study.

2.3. Economy

AKP's rise to power in 2002 brought about a series of economic and social reforms which flourished the economy and put a stop to military coups.

According to Taspinar (2012) The party is responsible for a series reform from 2002 to 2011 which include increasing accessibility to healthcare and housing, increased funding for students, improved infrastructure in poorer districts, and improved rights for religious and ethnic minorities. AKP is also widely recognized for overcoming the

2001 economic crisis by following International Monetary Fund guidelines. As well as successfully managing the 2008 financial crisis.

From 2002 to 2011 the Turkish economy grew on average by 7.5 percent annually. The average income in Turkey rose from \$2,800 U.S. in 2001 to around \$10,000 U.S. in 2011, higher than some of the new EU member states.¹⁴ As evident from the stated statistics, Turkey's economy flourished under the AKP governance.

Alessandri (2010) argues that Turkey's need for a better economy and its constant military coups are results from the economic drought Turkey faced during the years that pushed military to interfere in politics and seek solutions for the betterment of the economy and according to Alessandri's research, the constant looks for underexploited neighbors of Turkey, shaped the foreign policy we have as Neo-Ottomanism.

Additionally, Alessandri (2010) believes what pushed The AKP government to Neo-Ottomanism were actually the new demands from a larger number of actors, including a group of new economic stakeholders calling for a foreign policy of cooperation and dialogue with the neighboring countries of Turkey. Turkish businessmen, traders and entrepreneurs saw Turkey's neighborhood as an underexploited market, rather than a field to play power politics.

As a result of these demands from these groups, Turkey's establishment started shifting from confrontation and avoidance to engagement at the turn of the millennium. This change in approach was also favored by the Turkish military's inability to control dynamics happening in the country and more importantly, developing relations with the EU.

2.4. Turkey and the EU

Gunay (2013) is one of those scholars who strongly believe that economic advantages Turkey would obtain by integrating into the EU and the negative responses and hopelessness of the traders and politicians turned Turkey into looking at Middle East

¹⁴ Taşpınar, Ömer (2012) Turkey: The New Model? Brookings Institution (Report).

for economic opportunities. She clearly states that the Europeanization of Turkey increased consistency and therefore state capacity to steer Turkey's political and economic relations towards the Middle East and its former Ottoman lands.

According to Rumelili (2011) Turkish foreign policy is exploring ways to increase its influence in European Regional international society. Although the effectiveness and sustainability of Turkey's pro-active engagement policy in the Middle East remain questionable in that sense, the associated foreign policy initiatives present possibilities for Turkey in a post-enlargement status. What Rumelili (2011) suggests is that if the EU's enlargement policy comes to a stop, the political weight of Europe in its neighboring regions will considerably disappear. This in fact has already begun to create new opportunities for regional actors, such as Turkey, to expand their regional impact and pursue policies such as Neo-Ottomanism.

Meanwhile, Oguzlu (2010) sides with the idea that Turkey's EU integration attempts is what somehow drives Turkey to take a defensive approach towards the neighboring countries. As he states;

"The crisis in Turkey must be managed or resolved so that the process of liberal democratization in Turkey can continue persisted domestically. Under the rule of the AKP government, Turkey has recently become a commercial country rather than a military one. Otherwise, a defensive, reactive, military-oriented and introverted diplomatic and security understanding that prioritizes the protection of Turkey's traditional, secular, homogeneous, and nation-state identity will help make the Turkish military's guardianship and legal change. In this regard, Neo-Ottomanism is defensive."

I believe the improved economy can better be explained by party politics and AKP's deterministic and economic mind rather than Neo-Ottomanism. While the EU and Turkey's relations may hint the need for Turkey to pursue Neo-Ottomanism, yet as Duran (2013) argues; AKP mostly claimed ownership of the EU accession process to confront the Kemalist regime. Duran (2013) believes that three factors worked as confrontation to the AKP's overall agenda.

Confrontation to the National Outlook movement that the majority of its members are from, secondly the Kemalist ideology that shaped Turkey during Kemalist era (1923-1950), and finally the confrontation of the current Middle East system structure post Arab Spring. The AKP repositioned itself at the political system's center and succeeded in centralizing political power by aligning its future with the country's prospects. Furthermore, the party significantly replaced the Kemalist foreign policy through its new foreign policy perspective.

2.5. Strategic Depth and the Arab World

As we discussed with the political articles above, even in social journals when it comes to heritage, some scholars believe if there was such a concept as Neo-Ottomanism heritage it was due to economic and political steer changes. Luke (2018) makes the argument and states, strategic players in South Eastern Europe are changing the diplomatic landscape and policy and with it, heritage is caught in the crossfire. The research presented here demonstrates the disconnect between heritage, diplomacy, development, and transnational and international relations(networks).

Furthermore, as she deepens into the relation between heritage or ottoman heritage and Neo-Ottomanism, Gunay (2011) argues that Davutolgu's leadership (2014-2016) as foreign minister proposed Turkey's "Strategic Depth" and "Zero problems with neighbors" policy and it developed and became equated with "Neo-Ottomanism". However, Davutoglu clearly rejected such terms to be used to describe Turkey's foreign policy under his party's rule, yet he didn't deny that Ottoman heritage can be used as a 'symbolic capital' for the country. Therefore, this process motivated Turkey to emphasize on key opportunities, especially energy pathways and security courses that positioned Turkey as a strategic partner linking Europe and Asia.

Davutoglu's Strategic Depth is considered a crucial point in Turkey's foreign policy shift and as a pathway to Neo-Ottomanism. As Cagaptay (2017) describes it; Ahmet Davutoglu was one of the most important actors to reinforce AKP's aspirations to attract the Muslim states towards the new Turkish foreign policy.

By going back to these articles and papers one by one and developing the ideas behind the emergence of Neo-Ottomanism, we come to a point to feel and see Neo-

Ottomanism as a policy that AKP was not born with but rather adapted it through time as the party considered it a necessity to strengthen and increase its political and economic ties.

Noi (2012) claims that Turkey's soft power have taken Turkish foreign policy much closer to the MENA region. As she refers to Davutoglu's "zero-problems with neighbors", she states that Turkish foreign policy was directed and shaped by the following factors for six decades: The Soviet threat, Turkey's lack of any crucial economic ties to its east and south, and world dominance by the United States of America.

According to the chronology of the foreign policy strategies, Turkey's former Washington-centric foreign policy was abandoned by the "strategic depth" blueprint of Davutoglu.

Moreover, Noi (2012) further emphasizes on the details of creation and consequences of Neo-Ottomanism as a foreign policy, she argues that Davutoglu's "strategic depth" transcends the Ottoman Empire's territorial reach and extends Turkish ties and interests into Asia, Africa, and the West. Such policy sees democratization and modernization as key instruments to liberate and empower the people of these regions and focuses on the importance of the Turkish role and leadership in the Arab world. With this new foreign policy view, Turkey began to demonstrate new interests and concerns for the region and its peoples.

Indeed, it develops an effort to establish a kind of common market or sort of Schengen area comprising Turkey and most of the ME such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan through increasing economic trades, free economic areas, and mutual removal of visa requirements.¹⁵

¹⁵ What is known as the Shamgen idea of a regional visa was first floated by President Erdogan and has been welcomed by Iran, Syria, and Iraq and after abolition of visas among those countries, delegates from these four countries came together to discuss the establishment of a common market. It resulted in a conference titled "Enhancing 'Shamgen' Banking: Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan" held on 28 – 29 March 2011 in Istanbul to promote and increase cooperation in banking and finance as the first concrete step taken for the idea.

Noi (2012) expands her idea and believes that Arab Spring played a crucial role and worked as an opportunity for Turkey to develop its foreign policy. Before 2012, Turkey had already turned towards developing its relations with its neighbors. To an extent, some scholars suggested that by that time Turkey had shifted its axis of foreign policy from West to East. Turkey's ability to pursue an active foreign policy and its will to be responsible and resolve the region's serious problems have increased Turkey's prestige in the Middle East and this helped the country to be in a significantly closer interaction with these countries.

While there are many similarities between the definitions of Strategic Depth and Neo-Ottomanism, despite that, the existence of Neo-Ottomanism is observed way before Strategic Depth. Davutoglu's Strategic Depth could be seen as a strengthening point of Neo-Ottomanism, especially his softness towards the Kurdish issue and According to Seker (2009) it was thanks to Davutoglu for ice-breaking the cold relationship between Turkey and the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

In the end, it is Davutoglu who is related with Strategic Depth and President Erdogan that is associated with Neo-Ottomanism. Even though Davutoglu's term ended in 2016, yet we still witness cases of Turkey implementing such foreign policy after him to today.

The changes of the center's foreign policy cannot determine the end of Neo-Ottomanism, but rather a temporary acquired policy for a specific crisis in the region. Neo-Ottomanism as a foreign policy that was initiated by AKP government is different than the Neo-Ottomanism that is considered as a peripheral code of the primordial facet of the Turkish periphery. Therefore, ending such foreign policy does not equal to the end of the peripheral code.

As we move to the theoretical part of the study, we will employ the constructive concept of historicity as our approach in explaining Serif Mardin's *Center-Periphery relations* framework, later on we will make use of the framework to explain the center-periphery relations in the last two decades under the AKP rule. In conclusion, we point out Neo-Ottomanism as a peripheral code of the Turkish periphery that has reflected

in Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government to an extent it becomes a tool for constructing a new national identity as some scholars claim.



CHAPTER III

THE CENTER-PERIPHERY RELATIONS

As we move on to the methodology of this interpretive study, we will need to prove Neo-Ottomanism being a notion of the Turkish periphery despite its ideological affiliations such as Islamism. In order to do so, we will revisit the political statements, interviews and articles that indicate Neo-Ottomanism in political parties which not necessarily hold an Islamic discourse but are rather liberal and nationalist. In proving so, we shall move to the theoretical part of the study where we determine if Turkey's periphery's political aspirations in the last two decades reflected those of the center.

According to Mardin (1973) The confrontation between center and periphery in Turkish history can be considered as the most important social cleavage in explaining Turkish politics. Since the political history of Turkey has mostly been interaction between both the periphery and the center, the center's goal in implementing the desired policies by regulations on the periphery (Kemalist era 1923-1950) and the periphery's reaction in the first multi-party elections (Democratic Party 1946-1961). Mardin (1973) believes if the center acts more understandingly towards the periphery and follows their cultural, social and political needs, we should not see any events of estrangement between the center and periphery.

As Mardin (1973) describes Sultan Abdelhamid II's (1876-1909) policies in continuing the integration of the periphery by forcing the remaining nomads to settle down. Meanwhile, the Sultan was attempting to bring a sense of unity between the Muslim Ottoman periphery and the center's policies.

Mardin describes the policies of Sultan Abdelhamid II (1876-1909) as those which align with the periphery's, he also mentions a transition of the periphery's political aspirations in the end of the first world war.

Following the Ottoman withdrawal from World War I, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's (1881-1938) nationalist forces were surrounded by armed groups supposedly working for the government of the Sultan, which was opposed by Mustafa Kemal.

Mardin (1973) argues that these armed groups' aims normally tend to be protection of the Sultan and crash the rebel against him, yet they also seem to have represented the forces of the periphery reacting against what they considered to be a continuation of Young Turk's policy of centralization. Therefore, between 1920 and 1923, the Kemalists' fear that Anatolia would be split on primordial group lines forced them to establish their own center, one that replaces the Sultan's in Istanbul. This remained as a fundamental issue of Kemalist Policy to the end of its one-party rule in 1950.

After establishment of the Turkish Republic led by Atatürk's Republican People's Party (CHP est. 1923) and the start of Kemalist era (1923-1950), the secular modernizing regulations widened the gap between the periphery and the center more. According to Mardin (1973) CHP stood fast for the preservation of Kemalist ideals. Thus, for the bureaucrats, CHP was the best and only party they could cooperate with. By the 1940s and with the emergence of the Democrat Party (1946-1961), there were now good reasons to state that the Republican People's Party represented the "bureaucratic" center, whereas the Democrat Party represented the "democratic" periphery of Turkey.

Democrat Party could work on the cultural and political aspirations of the periphery, return the rural values to the center. As Mardin (1973) describes it, the Democrat Party's appeal to Islam as the culture of the periphery requires greater significance especially when the discovery of the Turkish sociologist, Behice Boran came about in the 1940's. Boran realized that as villagers' contact with towns became more frequent, the villager began increasingly to see his village ways as inferior to those of the towns. The campaigns of the Democrat Party intervened at just the right time to provide many transitional rural areas with the belief that they were not inferior but rather preservers of the common culture. In the process, the Democrat Party re-legitimized Islam and traditional rural values. It is of no surprise then, the peripheral populations began to view the Democrat Party as the hero protecting their rights (Leder, 1979).

The Democrat Party comes to power in 1950 with landslide victory against the Republican party (Nohlen and Hartmann, 2001) with Adnan Menderes (1899-1961) as Prime minister (1950-1960). During these 10 years of the Democrat Party's rule, as Zurcher (1993) states, the Democrat Party started relaxing restrictions on expressions of religious feeling and making concessions to the suppressed feelings of the Muslim population (The periphery). Along with opening dozens of religious sites that were closed down in the Kemalist era (1923-1950), the prayer calls in Arabic were made legal again.¹⁶

In the aftermath of the military coup in 1960, Mardin (1973) believes that two facets of the peripheral code seem to have emerged. They include, the periphery as made up of primordial groups that hold primordial allegiances, and the engineered periphery as the center of a counter-official culture. Meaning, the policies of the modernizers (as well as incidental developments) worked to highlight the second facet of the peripheral identity. Since this identity emerged in almost all of provincial Turkey, it was able to submerge, if not overcome entirely, the second facet of the peripheral code that goes back to primordial allegiances.

As mentioned by Ege (2013) also, the separation between the public and private domains applies to both rural and urban contexts. All of this reflects the Easterners' dichotomy between matter and spirituality. Within this framework, the Islamism of rural culture must be restrained, almost hidden, while the Western way of life is freely expressed, as part of urban culture. Soon, however, in the 1970s, the Muslim identity was transferred to the urban peripheries, with the associated immigration phenomenon.

In the end of his formulated *center-periphery relations* framework, Mardin (1973) leaves us with describing the Turkish periphery as two facets that go against each other. Contrary to Mardin, I believe that the primordial facet of the periphery was not only submerged but revived and organized by the AKP. According to what Mardin (1973) described in his writing, Islam is the most known notion of the primordial facet

¹⁶ The Kemalist era (1923-1950) witnessed many reforms in different sectors of the society by imposing restrictions and regulations. A massive amount of those reforms circled around religion, such as the Turkification of Islamic Athan and the ban on headscarf. The periphery saw these reforms as offence on their identity, as Mardin (1973) describes religion as a crucial part of the periphery's identity.

of the periphery. Yet, I believe with the rise of AKP to power, the notion of Ottomanism better described as Neo-Ottomanism was developed and helped the AKP-ruled center in pursuing this foreign policy approach. Based on the analysis made by Mardin (1973) above, it indicates that whenever one of these facets strongly reflected in the center, the other facet is somehow marginalized, leading to political polarization and consequently to an estrangement point between the center and the periphery.

As we dive more into the theoretical part of the study, we will discuss Neo-Ottomanism as a peripheral code and its reflection in AKP policies as much as in statements of other opposition parties.

3.1. Neo-Ottomanism as a Peripheral Code

The story of founding the AKP is but an interesting one. It all starts with the 1997 Military Memorandum (aka 28 February Memorandum) and the events later on. According to *Today's Zaman* (2009) which described the events in the following order, The National Security Council (MGK) holds a meeting in 28th of February 1997 to discuss the issues of secularism and political Islam in the society and the government. The council made several decisions and forced Necmettin Erbakan (1996-1997) Prime Minister at the time to sign the following decisions: Shutting down dozens of religious schools opened during his time as PM, abolishment of civilian religious groups such as Tarikats.

A year later, Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party was closed by the Constitutional Court of Turkey for violating the constitution's separation of religion and state clause. Erbakan (1996-1997) was banned from politics for five years, and former MP members and mayors of the Welfare Party (1983-1998) joined the successor Virtue Party.

Soon afterwards, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Istanbul Mayor) at the time from the Virtue Party, was given a prison sentence after he read poem at a public function when he was present as a mayor. The poem was considered to have nationalist and Islamist tendencies. He was banned from politics for five years as well.

Now this historic moment for Erdogan's speech indicates Erdogan's first message to the primordial periphery. Once again reviving that facet of the periphery that was once silenced by military coup of 1960 and now under the same threat of the military and attempts to eradicate those characteristics of the primordial periphery with new regulations and De-legitimizing the 'party that represents that facet of the periphery'. President Erdogan's speech and recitation of the poem can be taken as the awakening call to the periphery, while at the same time hinting that this forgotten primordial periphery has such will power to transform the political atmosphere that Turkey faces in the 1990s.

According to BBC (2002) President Erdogan's recitation of the poem included verses added by the Istanbul mayor and translated as "The mosques are our barracks, the domes are our helmets, the minarets are our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers....".

It is worth noticing that not the Turkish foreign policy alone is not the reason that drives opponents of AKP to call it Neo-Ottomanist inside the country or even internationally, but rather the personality of President Erdogan and labeling him as the Sultan (Due to Turkish military intervention in Syria and Libya, and even recently in the Arab media) indicating a Neo-Ottoman ideology being prevalent in the AKP foreign policy. (Cagaptay, 2017)

President Erdogan was later sentenced to four months in prison for what the military called "inciting religious hatred", but not after long he came back. According to Kumbaracibasi (2009) The co-founder of AKP, Abdullah Gul, later annulled Erdogan's political ban. After winning a by-election in Siirt in 2003, Erdogan replaced Gul as Prime Minister, with Gul instead becoming the AKP's candidate for the presidency of Turkey. President Erdogan led the AKP to two more election victories in 2007 and 2011, before being elected President in 2014, and re-elected in 2018.

Now, the formation of AKP and its rise to power is not only the return of the primordial periphery which President Erdogan awakened in 1997, but a developed understanding of Erdogan's discourse in Turkish politics. President Erdogan and his colleagues understood well that since they live in a Kemalist-engineered political system and closely monitored by the military, they ought to fit in the system by addressing Kemalist issues at the same time.

According to Al-Monitor (2014) despite being formed by conservative leaders, the AKP portrayed itself as a pro-Western and pro-American party in the Turkish political spectrum that advocated a liberal market economy including Turkish membership in the European Union. The party was an observer in the center-right European People's Party between 2005 and 2013 and a member of the Eurosceptic Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE) from 2013 to 2018.

During AKP's reign, it is believed that President Erdogan worked on developing the Neo-Ottomanism as a code of the primordial allegiance of the periphery. According to Saracoglu and Demirkol (2015) AKP's shift to Neo-Ottomanism is crucial for constructing a new national identity.

They believe AKP is attempting to reshape the concept of national identity of the periphery by essentially replacing the secular principle to an ottoman one attached with the pride of Turkish nationalism. Thus, indicating that ultimately Neo-Ottomanism is a part of a nationalist project rather than a foreign policy one. They view Neo-Ottomanism's manifestation in the foreign policy as a means to achieve the greater goal of constructing a new identity which can replace Kemalists' secular code of the periphery.

AKP soon stabilized Turkey's economy and political atmosphere, winning the elections of 2007 and 2011 boosted AKP's confidence in leading a totally independent foreign policy and taking Turkey as an independent player into the regional power politics. According to the literature review, pursuing such foreign policy by AKP ends during the Syrian civil war, following by the first spark of the peripheral revolt against the center, such as the case of Gezi Park Protests which we will cover later as a part of the political polarization in Turkey. Furthermore, we will review the main political events between the years of 2002 to 2013 that can be considered as AKP's Neo-Ottomanist foreign policy.

Through these cases and many more, we come to a conclusion of saying Turkish foreign policy is a reflection of what is known as Neo-Ottomanism, while Neo-Ottomanism has developed as a crucial peripheral code, its influence should extend beyond foreign policy and even parties beside AKP, such as MHP and IYI Party. They

seem to have come to realize that it is a necessity to recognize it as a peripheral code of the periphery.

3.2. Influence on Domestic Politics

The Nationalist Movement Party (aka MHP) leader, Devlet Bahçeli has known to give ultra-nationalist statements concerning Turkey's foreign policy towards neighboring countries. According to Davies and Jackson (2008) Since the 1990s, under the leadership of Devlet Bahçeli, The MHP has gradually moderated its policies. Shifting from ethnic to cultural nationalism/conservatism and expressing the unitary nature of the Turkish state. Notably, it has moved from strict, Kemalist-style secularism to a more pro-Islamic (Ottomanistic) one.

In a meeting under the name (Meeting with Kerkuk Lovers) which was held in October 2017 (few weeks after KRG's Independence referendum¹⁷), the chairman of MHP Devlet Bahçeli made some remarks that somehow show his turn into Neo-Ottomanism and support for Turkey's upcoming military operations. As he emphasized on having 5 thousand nationalist volunteers being ready for Kerkuk, he described the other Northern Iraq cities as 82nd, 83rd and 84th provinces of Turkey (Sozcu, 2017). As he also previously stated that, if Necessary, Northern Iraq's referendum should be considered as an act of war against Turkey (BBC Turkce, 2017).

Meral Aksener, one of the main opposition leaders against AKP and President Erdogan, has not held herself back from using Neo-Ottoman remarks considering Northern Iraq as well. In a tweet she posted in her official account on Twitter she states: "May the brotherhood that extends from the red flag to the sky flag be eternal, Turks' city Kerkuk may always be there." (Twitter, 2020).

While CHP resists the change and influence, sticking to its Kemalist ideals. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the head of CHP During an online meeting organized by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IBB) with public figures from religious backgrounds, told

¹⁷ An independence referendum for Kurdistan Region of Iraq was held on 25 September 2017 in four Northern provinces of Iraq including disputed areas controlled by Kurdish Peshmerga such as Kerkuk. The results showed 92.73 percent of votes cast for independence.

his audience that “you call yourself conservative, but you are wrong. The real conservative party is the CHP (Kemalism)¹⁸, because it resists change.”

The AK Party defines itself as a socially conservative democratic party, yet the party is considered to have carried out the most reforms in history of Turkey through its unorthodox and progressive policies (Oruc, 2021).

As we come closer to the end of the research, we will furthermore discuss the political polarization in Turkey, Cultural Difference and Alternative explanations.

3.3. Political Polarization

Elaborated in Mardin’s (1973) Center-Periphery relations framework, a suppressed periphery and a counter-culture center will always end up in a revolt of the periphery. Therefore, the changes and reforms of the center come years later on. Mardin (1973) gives an example of a revolt in 1730’s Istanbul, the event is known as Patrona revolt¹⁹. According to Faroqhi (1997) although Patrona Halil has had led few revolts before, but the last one was what resulted in replacing Sultan Ahmed III with Mahmud I and ended the peaceful era of Ottoman rule aka the Tulip period.

Patrona along with his mostly Albanian 7,000 followers were executed and started a new period in Ottoman history, a period where Ottoman empire started orienting towards Europe, and therefore after a century, the start of Tanzimat reforms.

Mardin (1973) believes such estrangement of the periphery from the center has occurred in post-Ottoman Kemalist era in 1930, which is known as the Menemen incident. According to Kadioglu (1996) the Menemen Incident refers to a chain of events which occurred in 1930 in Menemen, a small town near İzmir. When Dervish Mehmet Efendi, a notable member of the Naqshbandi order, rallied an armed crowd

¹⁸ Kemalism is a form of conservative nationalism that endorses and secures the established principles of the Turkish state. Such as strict appliance of laicism (Secularism) to organize state policies toward religion.

¹⁹ Patrona revolt was a mob rising revolt led by Patrona Halil, an Albanian in the Janissaries army of Ottoman empire.

against the policies of the secular government (center) and calling for the restoration of the Caliphate.

These alienating events always seem to represent two sentiments, one is exhibiting the periphery's deepest political aspiration and secondly opposing the main notion of the center that culturally explains the gap between the periphery and the center.

Talking in recent terms, I believe what could be considered as the estrangement point between AKP's center and Turkish periphery is the events of Gezi Park Protests. The protests initially began to contest the urban development plan for Istanbul's Gezi Park. It was followed by a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest across Turkey. People were protesting a wide range of concerns at the core of which were issues of freedom of the press, expression, and assembly, as well as emphasizing on Turkey's secular identity that is threatened by the "Islamist Government" of AKP.

Police forces suppressed the protests with tear gas and water cannons. The clash between protestors and the police resulted in 11 deaths and over 8,000 injuries, and more than 3,000 protestors were arrested. Police brutality and the overall absence of government dialogue with the protestors was criticized by some foreign governments and international organizations (Amnesty, 2013).

Declared by The Gulf News (2013) the protests were the most challenging events for President Erdogan's ten-year term and the most significant nationwide disquiet in decades of the country's history. Gezi Park protests seem to have given a hint to President Erdogan in clinging to a more unifying code that both primordial and counter-official culture periphery have in common, which is Nationalism.

Based on this explanation, AKP's alliance with Bahçeli's MHP seem a plausible decision of the party. In the end, Neo-Ottomanism as notion of the primordial periphery is more likely to be associated with Islamism, while Nationalism unifies both facets of the periphery.

Furthermore, as we move on to the last chapter of this study, we will discuss the cultural alliance between the periphery and the center in the last two decades. AKP

and President Erdogan as a reviving factor for the primordial periphery and the constructor of the new national identity stays to be interconnected to the Turkish periphery and represent the majority till today, but what is more crucial is AKP's transformation of a suppressed periphery's political ambitions and manifesting them in the center through cultural values and notions.

3.4. Cultural Difference

According to Mardin (1973) The 18th century Ottoman periphery's access to what inspired the culture was restricted, while the center was heavily influenced by the culture of the earlier such as Iranian. Due to restrictions, the center adopted languages such as Arabic and Persian sooner than the periphery and implemented it in the of Ottoman institutions, therefore becoming a part of the official culture.

All this while the periphery only benefited from the religious educational institutions. Not surprisingly, the periphery developed its own extremely varied counter-culture, while it was well aware of its secondary cultural status. An awareness as Mardin (1973) describes it as best illustrated by its clumsy imitation of the elite culture that represented alignment with the center.

When it comes to the Kemalist era, Mardin (1973) argues that the religious institution was on the border line between the center and the periphery as a mediator during modernization, and because of the secularizing policies of the center, it was mostly identified with the periphery.

In the last two decades, AKP has worked through different institutions to be able to stay connected to the primordial facet of the periphery and most importantly through the Vakifs. In a report by the new administration led by the new Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu (2019), the CHP candidate that won 2019 Municipalities election, this is acknowledged. According to the report, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has paid a total of 64 million 27 thousand 585 TL rent to 29 immovable properties used as dormitory buildings and foundation representation within the scope of joint service projects since 2014. 19 of these immovables were dormitory buildings. 7 of the dormitories were used by Ensar Foundation, 5 by Aziz Mahmut Hudayi Foundation, 4

by TURGEV, 1 by Asitane Culture and Art Education Foundation, 1 by Istanbul Darülfünun Theology Foundation and 1 by TUGVA. Soon after taking the office, Imamoglu canceled protocol and lease agreements by stating that the period of service to associations, foundations and communities is over (Birgun, 2021).

It is important to mention that these institutions, even though stay identified with the AKP's center, are crucial medium for the periphery. In the end, these institutions offer services that satisfy the periphery and realize their needs on the center's budget.

While what President Erdogan awakened as a peripheral code and a "cultural value transferred to the center from the periphery" seem to have already become a custom in domestic politics, yet it does not necessarily mean that President Erdogan has to stick to such foreign policy in order to extend his stay in power. In contrary, political polarization between the center and periphery seem to have already peaked during AKP's time back in 2013 with Gezi Park protests, and it is safe to assume that AKP's preservation of the periphery's primordial allegiances is what extended AKP's stay in power.

It was no coincidence that Mustafa Kemal personally stepped into the process of westernizing the country through Kemalist reforms, as he realized a new national identity for the Turks is a necessity of the stage (Mardin, 1973). President Erdogan's direct interaction with the periphery symbolizes the new identity he has constructed for the periphery, one that is Neo-Ottoman in a period, and nationalist in another.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Neo-Ottomanism was not analyzed only as foreign policy, but also as a new type of leadership that draws on history and build on traditions of a strong leader for the country that the Turkish culture is anchored in. History is brought to the forefront when a charismatic leader wants to play a regional role, and the sensitivities by leading Western countries are easy to sense in the media coverage that confuses the pride of the country's past by leaders with an expansionist vision. That is what Western newspapers' imagination stems from such as in articles of DW²⁰, Time²¹ and Foreign Affairs.²²

Being a contentious term used in academy, and way negatively in western-led news corporations formulated in producing political news and opinionated articles. To an extent, I assume this has had an effect even on the AK Party itself, rejecting such terms to describe their foreign policy, yet cherishing it inside the country and recognizing the periphery's need.

Even academically, it has not always been easy to determine what defines Neo-Ottomanism as we have mentioned various academic journals and books in the literature review of this study. Indicating different definitions disregarding the term's origins and historicity, or even take a sociological approach in defining it.

One can compare the regional role of Turkey with the Russian strive to secure a grip over its Lebensraum. Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan value the past of their

²⁰ Welle D. (n.d.). Recep Tayyip Erdogan: The sultan of 21st-century Turkey | DW | 08.07.2018. DW.COM. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from <https://www.dw.com/en/recep-tayyip-erdogan-the-sultan-of-21st-century-turkey/a-44569548>

²¹ Why Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Love Affair with the Ottoman Empire Should Worry The World. (n.d.). Time. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from <https://time.com/5885650/erdogans-ottoman-worry-world/>

²² Aydintasbas, A. (2021, May 19). Turkey Will Not Return to the Western Fold. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2021-05-19/turkey-will-not-return-western-fold>

countries more than the achievements of the Western modernity, and the analysis of Neo-Ottomanism should be framed within a wider tendency regionally and globally to exercise influence beyond the borders of the nation state.

In the Middle East even countries like the United Arab Emirates are expanding their role and assuming unprecedented power over regional affairs.²³

One scenario is that countries will develop complex relationships that combine tension on one level and cooperation on the other, such as the relationship between Turkey and Egypt and, more recently, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. The future of viewing the former historic periphery as a potential catchment area will persist as long as instability continues in the region.

Security concerns are likely to cause the historic periphery to seek help when needed, and the maps of the alliance will continue to change for the foreseeable future. Insurrections may interrupt some calculations, but politics remains the continuation of the war by other means, and the economy will likely affect the willingness of the parties to seek a confrontation or détente.

This study's aim was to recognize Neo-Ottomanism as a notion of the primordial facet of the Turkish periphery today by using the noble sociologist Serif Mardin's (1973) Center-Periphery relations framework. Mardin (1973) believed that the framework can be used as a key to understand Turkish politics more comprehensively.

He starts with the 17th century Ottoman empire towards the Turkish republic's 1960s. Explaining the relations between the center and the periphery, Mardin (1973) indicates many points in history in which the center and the periphery's notions and values differed to an extent it created political polarization. In the end of his writing, Mardin (1973) leaves us with stating that the consequences of the 1960's coup left the Turkish periphery into two facets, one that works as a counter-official culture to the primordial culture of the periphery, and the second one as the primordial facet which is best

²³ Steinberg, G. (2021). Regional Power United Arab Emirates. Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik (SWP). Retrieved September 25, 2021, from <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/regional-power-united-arab-emirates>

described by its primordial allegiances. Mardin (1973) even goes further to state that the primordial facet was nearly overcome by the first facet.

Taking the historicity notion of constructive approach to further the framework's the study, we revisited Mardin (1973)'s *Center-Periphery relations: A key To Turkish Politics?* journal and used it to explain the events of 1997's military memorandum and the rise of Erodgan and AKP to power as the awakening period of the primordial facet of Turkish periphery. Recognizing their past failures, AKP understood that to win the center, they have to recognize the existence of the counter-official culture facet of the periphery also, as the engineers of the center and the system.

During the last two decades of its rule, AKP worked vigorously to stay engaged with the primordial facet of the periphery, transferring their values and recognizing their existence in the center. Somehow manifesting their political aspirations in its foreign policy such as Neo-Ottomanism as well.

While AKP's revival of the primordial periphery notably contributed to the Turkish democracy, ending the once-per decade military coup custom. It also damaged the center's relations with the counter-official culture periphery, creating a political polarization that exploded in the events of Gezi Park Protests in 2013. Some scholars believe that this is where the AKP's pursue of Neo-Ottomanism ends as we further discussed in the alternative explanations part of this study.

Contrary to the idea, this study defines Neo-Ottomanism as a peripheral code of the primordial periphery rather than a temporary pursued foreign policy that is only associated with the AKP. In fact, the charges of 'Neo-Ottomanism' may have made President Erdogan more popular in the eyes of a lot of Turkish people, who want to make peace with their historical roots, including their Ottoman heritage (Oruc, 2021).

In the methodology part of this study, we showed that parties with different political compasses have recognized this peripheral code and have used it to connect to the primordial facet of the periphery.

The AKP-ruled center post political polarization (2013) seems to be more conciliatory with the counter-official culture periphery by emphasizing more on both periphery's values such as Nationalism and Islam. To an extent, scholars like Saracoglu and Demirkol (2015) believe AKP is attempting to reshape the concept of national identity of the periphery by basically replacing the secular principle to an ottoman one attached with the pride of Turkish nationalism.

While Neo-Ottomanism as a foreign policy may diminish with President Erdogan's absence in power, yet it is very likely to stay as a peripheral code to the Turkish periphery. To conclude, this study's contribution to political relevancy would indicate that the future Turkish political sphere seems to be filled with new parties representing the primordial facet of the periphery while internalizing President Erdogan's progressive national identity such as Gelecek and Deva party.

4.1 From Neo-Ottomanism to Counterinsurgency

Noi (2012) assumes that the phase of Neo-Ottomanism has ended during the Syrian civil war as it resulted in the breakdown of Turkish-Syrian, Turkish-Iranian relations. She believes The Arab Spring resulted in the overthrow of some regimes and it has affected Turkey's foreign policy and brought into question the necessity of the "zero problems" approach of Davutoglu.

Turkey's interests and relations with its neighbors are likely to be affected negatively, since the actions of Turkey against the Assad regime have also weakened ties between Turkey and Iran. Iran fears losing Syria as its only Arab ally, which also provides Iran direct access to Hezbollah and Lebanon. Turkey being an obstacle on the way while trying to maintain the balance in its foreign policy is still problematic.

Turkey wishes to see Iran being a great power peer on the region that belongs to the Eastern bloc which balances Western bloc's interference in the region. Therefore, Iran's influence and agenda in the region does not excite Turkey as it sees it as a threat on Turkey's projects and agenda in the region also. Some may argue the relations between Turkey and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) which started with

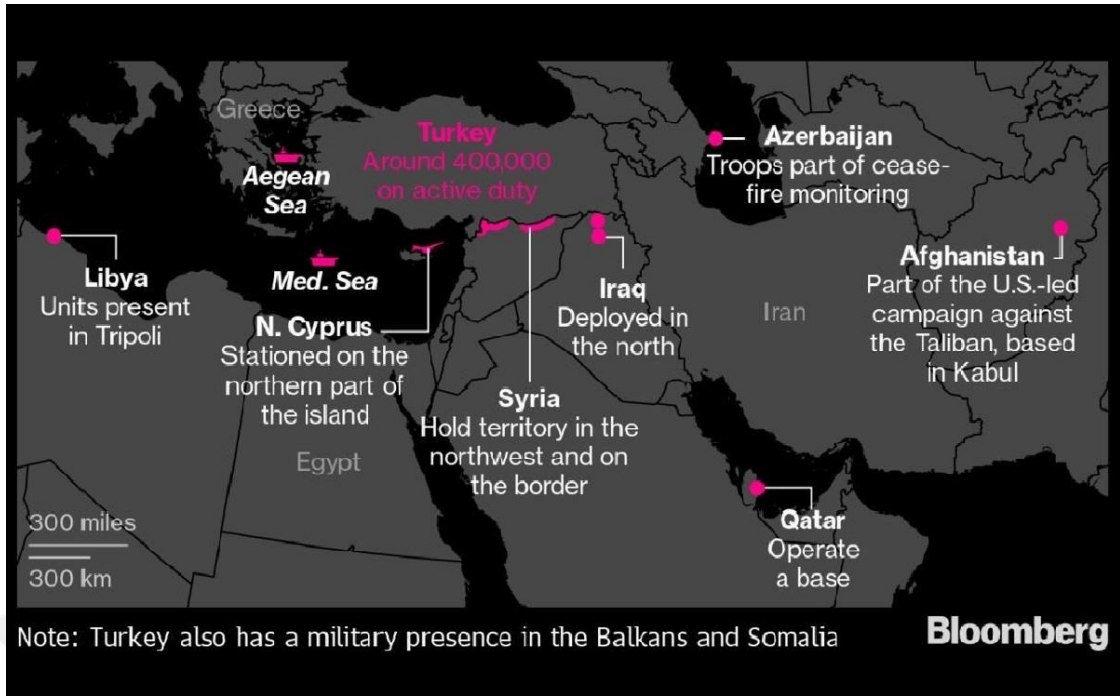
strengthening economic relations between the two is not a solid one, yet it was one of the political cards of Turkey in balancing Iran's influence in Iraq.

According to Larrabee (2010) the constantly changing dynamics in Turkey's neighborhood—especially the Syrian civil war and the growing tensions in relations with Iran and the Maliki government in Iraq—have enriched Turkey's interest in advancing its cooperation with the KRG. Both sides have come to see mutual interests in improved relations, especially in important economic issues such as oil. The economies of the two entities are closely linked and increasingly interdependent, especially from KRG side. Some 1,200 Turkish companies are currently operating in Iraqi Kurdistan (mostly in construction but also in oil exploration).

Some other scholars agree with Noi (2012) and believe that the Syrian civil war changed what was known as Neo-Ottomanism to counterinsurgency policy. In an article Antonopoulos (2018) states that although the migration of Turkic fighters and their families to Syria was miniscule in compared to the flooding of jihadists from Europe, North Africa and elsewhere in the Middle East, it does represent a belief of President Erdogan's foreign policy shift from Neo-Ottomanism to counterinsurgency. Focusing more on the neighboring countries where insurgent groups such as PKK and PYD shelters are located.

In short, the response to the factors that have displaced Turkish politics to the Neo-Ottomanism is complex. Beyond ideology, there are regional and international conditions and many pragmatic / practical considerations. Turkey remains a country of unique geostrategic importance and a complex history.

The question for the future is not whether Neo-Ottomanism will persist or not, but what mix of past, present and future will develop out of current challenges, alliances and conflicting interests.



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Picture 4.1 Turkish Military Presence in the Region

²⁴ Hacaoglu, S. (2021). Mapping the Turkish Military’s Expanding Footprint: QuickTake. Retrieved 25 September 2021, from <https://www.bloombergquint.com/quicktakes/mapping-the-turkish-military-s-expanding-footprint-quicktake>

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