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The First Century of Turkish Foreign Policy

Türk Dış Politikasının İlk Yüzyılı

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ÖZ

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Anadolu yarımadasındaki ardılı olarak bundan yüzyıl önce kurulan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, genel ilkeleri kurucu önder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk tarafından belirlenen Türk dış politikasını takip ederek uluslararası sistemde orta büyüklükte bir devlet olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir. Atatürk döneminde genel olarak statükoculuk ve Batıcılık ilkelerine göre şekillenen rasyonel ve gerçekçi bir yaklaşım benimseyen Türk dış politikası, zaman içinde yaşanan konjoktürel değişimlere göre bazı değişikliklere uğramıştır. Atatürk'ün ölümünden sonra 2000'li yıllara gelinceye kadar genel olarak anti-revizyonist, statükocu ve gerçekçi bir dış politika çizgisi izleyen Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin 2002'de tek başına iktidara gelmesiyle birlikte yeni bir yaklaşım benimsemeye başlamıştır. Stratejik Derinlik olarak ifade edilen bu yeni yaklaşım, Türk dış politikasını geleneksel çizginin dışına çıkararak pro-aktif ve çok yönlü bir dış politika anlayışı getirmiştir. Bu nedenle idealist ve maceracı olmakla nitelendirilen bu yaklaşım, Türkiye'nin Batı ekseninden çıktığı ve Yeni-Osmanlılık hedefleri olduğu gerekçesiyle eleştirilere uğramıştır. Benimsenen yeni dış politika yaklaşımı belirli bir dönem Türkiye'nin komşularıyla sorunlarını çözmesine ve uluslararası politikada etkinliğini artırırken yaşanan küresel ve bölgesel gelişmeler zaman içinde Türkiye'nin dış politikada yalnızlaşmasına neden olmuştur. Bu çalışmada kuruluşundan itibaren Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin dış politikasında yaşanan değişimler dönemlere ayrılarak incelenmiştir. Bu dönemlerde meydana gelen önemli gelişmeler karşısında Türkiye'nin izlediği politikalar ortaya konularak analiz edilmeye çalışılmıştır.

ABSTRACT

The Republic of Turkey, which was founded a century ago, as the successor of the Ottoman Empire in the Anatolian peninsula, continues its existence as a medium-sized state in the international system by following the Turkish foreign policy, the general principles of which were determined by the founding leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Turkish foreign policy, which generally adopted a rational and realistic approach shaped according to the principles of status quo and Westernism during the Atatürk period, has undergone some changes according to the cyclical changes over time. The Republic of Turkey, which generally followed an anti-revisionist, status quo, and realistic foreign policy line until the 2000s after Atatürk's death, began to adopt a new approach when the Justice and Development Party came to power alone in 2002. This new approach, referred to as Strategic Depth, has taken Turkish foreign policy beyond the traditional line and introduced a proactive and versatile foreign policy approach. Turkey has moved away from the Western axis and it has Neo-Ottomanism goals. The new foreign policy approach helped Turkey solve its problems with its neighbors and increased its effectiveness in international politics for a certain period. However, global and regional developments caused Turkey to become isolated in foreign policy over time. In this study, the changes in the foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey since its establishment were examined by dividing it into periods. The policies followed by Turkey against the important developments that took place in these periods were tried to be put forward and analyzed.

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Introduction

The Republic of Turkey, which was established as the successor of the Ottoman Empire, was established as a part of the modern international system by transforming the Imperial remnant it inherited over the last century into a nation-state form specific to the Turkish identity. Founded on the Anatolian peninsula, adjacent to highly problematic regions such as the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus, the Republic of Turkey has followed a foreign policy based on certain principles and observing certain priorities to maintain its existence in this difficult geography. Although Turkish foreign policymakers deviated from these priorities and basic principles in some crisis periods, it was generally observed that the determined principles were followed.

The Kemalist Revolution in Turkey was one of the great socio-political revolutions that occurred throughout the modern period of human history. Among all the world-changing revolutions, including the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Marxist-Leninist revolutions, it is the only one that established an ideology of peace, sovereignty, and national development that went beyond military revisionism. The most important reason for this is that it was able to get back only a part of its resources after the War of Independence against the imperialist states of the period such as England, France, and Greece. So much so that in 200 years, the territory of 22 million km², where its successor, the Ottoman Empire, reached its greatest limits in 1699, shrank to 789 thousand km². In other words, when the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, it had sovereignty over approximately less than 10% of the territory of its predecessor, the Ottoman state (Bahadıroğlu, 2018). Moreover, its dominance over three continents was limited only to the Anatolian peninsula and a very small part of the European continent. Furthermore, it has experienced a significant loss of power in terms of both energy and economics as a result of its loss of influence in key areas such as the Middle East and North Africa, which are rich in fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas, which came to the fore in the 19th and 20th centuries. This circumstance compelled the newly constituted Turkish state to pursue a more balanced foreign policy based on its new power potential rather than its previous capacity. Turkey, as a newly constituted nation-state at the turn of the twentieth century, had no goal of territorial conquest and was cognizant that a realistic foreign policy was required to safeguard what it could save at the end of the War of Independence. The fundamental preoccupation of the new Turkish state's decision-makers is now to safeguard the state's independence and sovereignty with limited resources.

This circumstance compelled the newly constituted Turkish state to pursue a more balanced foreign policy based on its new power potential rather than its previous capacity. Turkey, as a newly constituted nation-state at the turn of the twentieth century, had no goal of territorial conquest and was cognizant that a realistic foreign policy was required to safeguard what it could save at the end of the War of Independence. The fundamental preoccupation of the new Turkish state's decision-makers is now to safeguard the state's independence and sovereignty with limited resources. At this moment, the founding leadership built the new state's bureaucratic organization in a Western secular model. Furthermore, the reforms attempted to acknowledge the newly constituted state as a sovereign entity in its interactions with the rest of the world, to trade based on comparative advantage, and to enjoy all the advantages of civility and peace. At this period, Atatürk's motto "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" symbolizes his rejection of the pursuit of power and honor over security. If the Montreux Straits Convention, the accession of Hatay to Turkey, and the military intervention in Cyprus are excluded, the new state can be said to have stayed loyal to non-revisionist (status quo-protecting) principles since its establishment.

In this process, Turkish foreign policymakers preferred to follow down-to-earth, relatively realistic, and rational policies instead of pursuing adventurous policies, despite the crises and transformations in the international system. However, with the influence of cyclical changes in the international system and globalization in the 2000s, certain significant changes in Turkish foreign policy began to occur, which differed from the principles in the founding codes

Basic Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Founding Period

Although the Republic of Turkey is a nation-state founded in 1923, the historical, geopolitical, sociological, and ethnic legacy left by the Ottoman Empire, which ruled these lands for more than 600 years, has always been among the most important agenda items of Turkish foreign policy.

However, when Mustafa Kemal and the founding leadership founded the new Turkish state in 1923, the priority of peace and national development became key to the new Turkish state's ideology. Although Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the founding staff were trained in the Ottoman state, this staff primarily distanced itself from all types of aggressive and revisionist approaches by removing the state from the Ottoman state's holy war motivation (jihad). Thus, the new state founded on the Ottoman legacy “abandoned all expansionist ambitions, for example, all Pan-Turkist, Pan-Ottoman or Pan-Islamist ideologies, and consciously limited its actions and desires to the national territory of Turkey defined by agreements.” This approach aims to preserve the last remaining lands of the Turks, who have been declining and experiencing territorial losses since the Treaty of Karlowitz (Karlofça) in 1699. In other words, rather than reclaiming lost territory, the newly founded Republic of Turkey pursued a strategy of defending its existing lands, which were decided by international treaties and were recognized by the entire world, and embracing its sovereignty over these lands.

“Atatürk transformed the ideological norms of Turkish foreign policy through a socio-political program that restructured society. Fully aware of the influence of internal forces on foreign policy behavior, he stated in 1927: What particularly concerns foreign policy and on which it is based is the internal organization of the state. Therefore, foreign policy must be compatible with domestic policy” (Weisband, 1973, p. 9). Therefore, the radical shift in foreign policy ideological norms occurred as part of a process that involved a nearly complete restructuring of society's values and institutions. As a result, the foreign policy understanding in question, whose foundations were laid during the Atatürk period, permeated state codes in general and carried Turkey until the 2000s. It is conceivable to claim that Turkish foreign policy, developed under the leadership of Atatürk in the establishing years of the Republic, is built on the following pillars

Accepting the Status Quo

The foreign policy line adopted during the Turkish War of Independence, which continued between 1919 and 1922, was primarily compatible with the main goal of establishing an independent Turkish State within national borders. This attitude, which rejects adventurous and expansionist tendencies but does not compromise on independence, constituted the focal point of Turkish foreign policy in the following periods (Turkish Foreign Policy in the Era of Atatürk, 2022). The main argument of the diplomatic struggle carried out after the great military success against the great powers of the period after the War of Independence was that the new Turkish state would establish peace from now on. At this point, this goal, which finds its meaning in the motto “Peace at Home, Peace in the World” coined by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Republic of Turkey's founding leader, remains the fundamental guiding principle of Turkish foreign policy today (Barlas, 1998, p. 8-12).

The new Turkish state, established in a sensitive region, saw very well from the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires that were previously established in this region, how dangerous the consequences of moving the stones in the region could be. For this reason, the newly founded state considered it important for its national interests to protect and maintain the existing order in the region. This principle can be said to have two connotations for the new Turkish state, which was founded on the remnant of the empire

- a) Maintaining existing boundaries, not wanting to change them
- b) Not following a policy of irredentism (Oran, 2009, p. 46)

Essentially, the foreign policy, which was embodied with the slogan “Peace at Home, Peace in the World”, was put forward in a period when the new order was established, and it generally contains the following messages.

- 1) “There are problems in the country both economically (statism), ideologically (one party), and politically (the feeling of one nation created by the suppression of the Kurdish uprisings).
- 2) We have established a westernizing order, this should not be a matter of discussion anymore
- 3) We have no demands abroad after independence
- 4) We are satisfied with our life within the borders of our own country, we have no desire to intervene outside our borders,
- 5) We wish to live without conflict if others do not have any demands regarding our borders” (Oran, 2009, p. 47).

When the new state was established, its priorities differed and it had to develop a foreign policy strategy that supported the status quo. During the War of Independence, almost all the resources of the state were used to finance the war, and it is reasonable to argue that the state could not look outside unless it was endangered. Furthermore, because this was the new state's building phase, it was believed important to prioritize internal regime consolidation to keep the nation-state alive and to incorporate it into the contemporary international system through Western reforms. In addition, Turkey has calculated that pursuing an irredentist policy that aims to bind the Turkish and Muslim minorities living within the borders of the USSR and generally in other neighboring states around it may end up to its detriment by disrupting the delicate balances in its region. For this reason, its primary aim was to strengthen the nation-state by preserving its existing territories, rather than adding new territories to itself or uniting with its Turkish compatriots.

Indeed, after the definitive national borders were set with the National Pact and recognized by the Treaty of Lausanne, the Republic of Turkey has no intention of increasing its borders. Adopting such an approach during the new nation-state's foundation era could have been a political gambit that jeopardized the Republic's existence, which was already frail

Westernism

It is possible to say that normative standards regarding peace, sovereignty, and national development, beyond expansionism, became operational in Turkish foreign policy through the two methods Atatürk used to create a Turkish nation-state. These are Secularization and Westernization. Through the pedagogy of secularization and Westernization, Atatürk demonstrated how to unite the nation with the state. However, according to Atatürk's interpretation of Westernism, the West is not a geographical location. In this sense, the West is equivalent to capitalism in terms of infrastructure; in terms of the superstructure, it is a type of civilization built on the triumph of human reason over faith (Oran, 2009, p. 47). In this context, Westernization and Westernism are generally considered synonymous with the terms modernization. “Turkey fought its War of Independence not against Western civilization, but

against Western powers. With the establishment of the Republic, the West became a goal to be reached, a party to be cooperated with, and Westernism became a part of the official ideology of the Republic” (Bal, 2006, p. 667). For this reason, the principle of Westernization, which envisaged the foreign policy of the Ataturk period to reach the level of contemporary civilization, was inextricably linked with other principles.

“If we include Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, the westernization adventure, which is a process of approximately 200 years, is the cornerstone of Turkish foreign policy during Atatürk and the periods after him. As stated above, Atatürk's basic idea was to establish a modern Western state” (Tarhan, 2013, p. 27). Atatürk, who graduated from the Military Academy, the most open institution of the Ottoman Empire to the West, and the founding staff believed that Westernization was necessary for Turkey to take its place in the modern world. Although the phenomenon of Westernization existed during the Ottoman Empire and various Westernist policies were carried out by Ottoman political figures, implementing Ataturk's “Westernization Project” was difficult because the society that the Republic inherited from the empire was almost undeveloped. The common belief in Westernization and therefore Atatürk's abilities played the most important role in the success of Turkish Westernization (Altunışık and Tür, 2005, p. XV).

In Turkey, which won the War of Independence against Western states, nationalist feelings gained a sense of psychological confidence, but this situation did not turn into anti-Western sentiment, especially by the founding staff and bureaucracy of the state. On the contrary, during the Ataturk period, Turkey's foreign policy towards the West was to establish relations with the West in every field and to find a place for itself in the Western world. Because a Western-style democratic management system was desired with the proclamation of the Republic, the institutions of the state were attempted to be organized as in Western countries, and, most importantly, the legal system was adapted to the country by borrowing from Western countries. For example, Administrative Law was adopted from France, the Civil Code, Code of Obligations, Enforcement and Bankruptcy Law, Code of Civil Procedure from Switzerland, the Code of Criminal Procedure, Commercial Code from Germany, and the Criminal Code from Italy were put into practice.

Even though Atatürk did not trust the Western states with which he fought for many years, he realized that the adoption of a legal system, diplomacy, and science under the leadership of the West was necessary for the establishment of modern Turkey. As a result, Ataturk, who attempted to construct a modern Western nation in the country, employed foreign policy to make this dream a reality. Foreign policy was also centered on Westernization and behaving by Western civilization's standards, as several revolutions were undertaken to Westernize Turkish society and state and bring them up to Western standards. For this reason, it is possible to say that the country decisively turned its face from the East to the West, especially during the Atatürk period, to make the newly established Republic an equal and respected member of the Western world (Çalış, 2001, p. 7).

Essentially, the dream of Turkey as a modern nation is Atatürk's most fundamental point in the establishment of the Republic. This modernization was felt as revolutionary in almost every field, socially, politically, and economically. As can be understood from here, the aim was to establish a state that claimed to be completely Western with domestic reforms, while in foreign policy, it became a member of many international organizations founded by Western states, and in international developments, it was often on the side of the West and acted with the West (Gözen, 2009, p. 71). Although Western values were based on science and reason, Ataturk never pursued a pro-Western foreign policy or one that put the interests of the West ahead of Turkey's. He believed that a balance of power policy should be followed among

Western states to protect Turkey's vital interests. Despite the criticism of Western powers, especially in the 1930s, Ataturk also developed a partnership with Germany and the Soviets.

Realism

“One of the most important factors guiding the foreign policy of Turkey, which has been extremely sensitive about independence and territorial integrity since its establishment, has been security concerns. Turkish Foreign Policy, directed by Ataturk himself during the period of national struggle, was based on protecting its territorial integrity and gaining independence. Now, Turkish foreign policy has shifted from one of global claims to one of modesty, with the only goal of protecting the nation-state's borders and ensuring its continued existence (Berber, 2008, p. 240-242).

Foreign policymakers in Turkey, which was in a sensitive position during the Republic's founding years, sought to protect the state's independence and sovereignty while determining policies that took into account the national and international realities of that period. In the 1920s and 1930s, the country was surrounded by the powerful states of the period, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and the USSR, due to the mandate system and international agreements. This situation has caused Turkey to prefer a realistic and adventurous foreign policy.

Although the new state could have joined the revisionist states such as Italy and Germany, which were dissatisfied with the international order when it was established, Ataturk and the political elites refused to drag the country into adventure by pursuing a realistic foreign policy. It is plausible to argue that Turkish foreign policymakers had realistic expectations regarding determining the national borders of the new Republic of Turkey during this period (Gönlübol and Sar, 2013).

Many key challenges confronting the newly founded Republic during this period, like as the Mosul Problem, the Turkish-Greek Problems, the Status of the Straits, and the Hatay Problem, were settled through diplomatic channels and the rules of international law, with no conflict or war. It may be claimed that Turkey's pragmatic diplomacy, implemented in light of the circumstances of the time, as well as the importance it placed on peace, played a significant part in resolving difficulties peacefully throughout this period. Because, thanks to the balanced and rational policy followed in the field of foreign policy during this period when Turkey was perhaps at its weakest in military and economic terms, Turkey's geopolitical and strategic integrity was ensured by establishing full sovereignty over the Turkish Straits. Furthermore, within the borders of the National Pact, Hatay joined Turkey without firing a single bullet. Furthermore, although the War of Independence was fought against Greece, progress was made in the 1920s that could not be repeated in the years that followed, and thus the period of collaboration and goodwill that expanded throughout the Balkans began. Even though the Mosul Problem was handled in favor of Britain, which was powerful in the League of Nations at the time, Turkey maintained a non-unilateral and belligerent stance. On the contrary, Turkey's adherence to international law and the rule of law was proved. In this regard, this peaceful foreign policy followed within the framework of respect for international law gained the appreciation of the whole world, and the Republic of Turkey became the only country invited to membership in the League of Nations without its application in 1932.

Rationality

During the establishment period, foreign policy in Turkey was built on extremely rational principles, on foundations that were far from all kinds of prejudices and ideological dogma, and based on a scientific and rational line. For this reason, in general, in this period, importance was given to obtaining mutual benefits according to changing conditions, rather

than historical enmity or friendship with the countries with which relations were established. In this respect, during the Atatürk period, friendship was established with countries from different regions with different social and political systems.

During this period, Atatürk kept Turkey's foreign policy as objective as possible, avoiding strategies that could pull the country into new adventures. In other words, Turkish foreign policymakers pursue a reasonable and grounded foreign policy that takes into account the country's power and capacity. Otherwise, Turkey may be considered a member of the revisionist bloc, particularly Germany, Italy, and Japan, which began in the 1930s and paved the way for World War II.

On the other hand, during the establishment period, Turkey followed policies aimed at ensuring and maintaining balances within the existing order, and it can be said that this policy was quite rational for the period in question.

Traditional Turkish Foreign Policy Until the 2000s

Following the establishment of the Republic, Turkish foreign policy was defined following the basic principles described above, and until the early 2000s, there was generally room to act in compliance with the strategies determined in line with these principles. However, Turkish foreign policy during this period was never uniform and linear. In other words, Turkish foreign policy changed according to the economic changes or problems with other countries, as long as it adhered to the basic principles.

Turkish Foreign Policy Between 1923–1938: Atatürk Era

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who saved Anatolia from European imperialist countries and Greece, was the driving force behind the Turkish War of Independence, which lasted from 1919 to 1922. As a result, Atatürk was determined to rise from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over three continents for more than 600 years. This determination paved the way for modern Turkey to emerge on the world stage as a new state in the form of a Republic, after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923. Essentially, the Treaty of Lausanne is an agreement made by the Turkish liberation struggle, which started as a reaction to the Ottoman Empire's forced acceptance of the Treaty of Sevres, and by the Turkish people who emerged successfully from this struggle, on equal terms with the winners of the First World War. Although its articles are still discussed today, the Treaty of Lausanne is a fundamental treaty that assures the present Republic of Turkey's economic, political, and territorial independence, as well as its legal recognition around the world (Oran, 2009, p. 222).

To underline the new Turkey's foreign policy aims, it is critical that Atatürk demonstrated to the Turkish delegation at the Lausanne Conference the determination to reject anything but full independence. In addition, during this period, one of Turkey's main characteristics was its strategy of abiding by international law, adhering to multilateral diplomacy, and not entering into alliances. Turkey focused its foreign policy engagement, especially in the 1930s, on solving bilateral problems through multilateral diplomacy. As a result, independence was the main goal of Atatürk's foreign policy and the most important means of diplomacy (Gülmez, 2019, p. 37).

It can be said that during the establishment period, Turkey faced two basic choices in terms of foreign policy due to the developments in its environment and the structure of the international system. These are;

- 1) Playing on the balance of power
- 2) Joining alliances (Oran, 2009, p. 253).

It can be said that during this period, Turkey preferred the policy of playing on the balance of power as much as it could. At this point, there are three groups of states that Turkey should pay attention to. These are;

- 1) **England and France:** “After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, which had the greatest weight in the international system of the time, efforts were made to maintain good relations with these states by solving the existing problems with them, which had a significant impact on the countries of this state, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. At this point, “it can be said that Ankara's agreement to leave the control of the Straits to an international commission during the Lausanne negotiations played an important role.” (Ateş, 2015, p. 55). Although Turkey had established extremely close and friendly relations with the Soviet Union during this period, it pursued a policy of siding with England on the Straits issue so that its relations with the Western world would not be affected by ideological differences.
- 2) **Germany and Italy:** Germany, the loser of World War I, and Italy, which could not make any concrete gains although it was on the winning side of the war, were the two countries that were disturbed by the order of this period, and both countries belonged to the bloc that wanted a revision of the existing order. During this period, Atatürk never considered rapprochement and certainly not an alliance with these two revisionist states. Moreover, the slogan “Mare Nostrum” (Our Sea) of Mussolini, the fascist leader of Italy who controlled the 12 islands, and his open threats regarding Antalya caused Turkey to move further away from Germany (Barlas, 2004, p. 233-239).
- 3) **Soviet Union:** The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which was established to replace the Russian Tsarism, which withdrew from the war after the Bolshevik Revolution during World War I, differed from other European states because it had an ideologically socialist regime. Despite the Ottoman Empire's struggles with Russia over the last 200 years, there was no threat from the Soviet Union when the Republic was founded. On the contrary, the USSR made very important contributions to the planning that was greatly needed by the statist policy in this period. Türkiye used this position of the USSR to balance both blocs.

In the general line of Turkish foreign policy at the time of Atatürk, emphasis was placed on establishing good relations with the United Kingdom, which was considered the superpower of the time, and with the Western world, which was generally excluded from the revisionist states, and on solving problems with these countries by peaceful means. So much so that, after Lausanne, the disagreements with the United Kingdom and other Western states regarding the transfer of the capital to Ankara and the Mosul issue, or even the rumors that the British started the Sheikh Said Rebellion, did not disrupt relations. Therefore, the interests of England and Turkey in the 1920s brought these two states closer together (Ateş, 2015, p. 56).

It can be said that during Atatürk's time, both the priority of solving domestic problems and the lack of a serious threat to Turkey from the international environment made foreign policy in Turkey secondary until the mid-1930s (Oran, 2009, p. 254). In this period, the priority of the newly established nation-state was, on the one hand, to try to establish and consolidate the newly established Republic, and on the other hand, to carry out a realistic and rational foreign policy. During its founding period, Turkey avoided all kinds of adventures and irredentist approaches in foreign policy and did not enter into any conflict with any country unless threatened. Since Ankara did not enter into any particular alliance during this period, there was neither friend nor foe in Ankara's eyes in foreign policy; it is based on the understanding that only the interests of states were not decisive at this time.

During this time, the Young Republic continued the new regulations and reform movements that brought about radical changes in the social lives of the people, while also

seeking international recognition and ways to get along with all of the countries with which it had relations. The major issues left over from the Treaty of Lausanne, including the Mosul and Straits Problem with England, the Debt Problem with France, and the war compensation and Population Exchange Problems with Greece, were all settled peacefully through diplomatic channels.

After the problems were resolved, Turkey's distrust of the West disappeared at the beginning of the 1930s and it abandoned its policy of not joining organizations. During this period, while Turkey maintained its friendship with the Soviet Union, it also made an effort to get closer to the West; as a first step, it became a member of the League of Nations in 1932 by informing the Soviet Union (Soysal, 1989, pp. 447-453, 582).

One of the most important features of the foreign policy of the Atatürk period was pragmatism. Although Turkey pursued a foreign policy aimed at preserving the status quo during Atatürk's time, developments in the international system (Germany's and Italy's expansionist policies) caused the status quo to change in Turkey's favor several times during the 1930s.

Accordingly, in April 1936, Turkey sent a note to all state parties to the Lausanne Straits Convention asking for the renewal of the treaty. This request led to the adoption of the Montreux Straits Convention in July 1936. Turkey-based its request for amendment on the principle of "change of conditions," which is one of the basic principles of international law (*rebus sic stantibus*), and asserted full sovereignty over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits by legal means (Ateş, 2015, p. 57). In general, Turkey argued that the safe environment during the Treaty of Lausanne, regarding the principle of *rebus sic stantibus*, had disappeared and Europe had become seriously insecure.

To put it clearly, the expansionist policies of Germany and Italy in the period leading up to the Second World War changed the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923, causing a development in Turkey's favor. However, since Turkey persistently avoided unilateral actions, instead of doing it as a *fait accompli*, it resolved this change more legitimately by using multilateral diplomacy and obtaining the approval of other countries by international law. For this reason, it is possible to say that the Montreux Straits Convention is considered one of the greatest political achievements of the Atatürk period in international politics.

The Atatürk period, which generally coincided with the interwar period, provided Turkish foreign policy with a great autonomy that perhaps could not be experienced in subsequent periods, due to the advantages provided by the international environment. On the one hand, this situation allowed Turkey to solve its problems with the Western states (United Kingdom, France, Greece) remaining from the Treaty of Lausanne through peaceful means, and on the other hand, it enabled Turkey to be recognized by the international community. Thanks to its characteristics as a medium-sized state, Turkey has gained a wide scope of action in foreign policy by making the most of the advantages of the international environment. In doing so, it paid attention to the balances in the international system and did not come into conflict with any state, especially Western states and neighbors. Moreover, it pursued a rational foreign policy that was commensurate with the assets and opportunities it had and played the game according to the rules by adhering to international law and the rules of the international system as much as possible, as in the Montreux Strait Convention. For this reason, Turkey established itself in the international system and won the recognition of the international community with the foreign policy it pursued during this period. In this context, Turkey acted with the determination to make the necessary preparations to live in peace and, if necessary, to be ready for war for peace.

Turkish Foreign Policy Between 1939–1945: World War II Period and Active Neutrality

“Turkish foreign policy during the period of İsmet İnönü, who was elected to the Presidency after Atatürk's death, did not differ fundamentally from the Turkish foreign policy of the Atatürk period. During the İnönü period, similar to the Atatürk period, before and during the war, Turkey established or tried to establish unprejudiced relations with every country in line with its interests (Sarıçoban, 2020, p. 1757). “Again, the principles of providing military equipment, becoming self-sufficient, relying on one's power, and accordingly being ready for war to preserve and ensure peace, and showing one's determination to fight, which were among the foreign policy principles of the Atatürk period, were constantly followed by Turkish foreign policy in the Second World War.” has become a principle” (Yılmaz, 1998, p. 14).

The economic crisis called the Great Depression spread all over the world starting in 1929 and caused major problems in capitalist countries, which brought about serious political changes around the world and brought about revisionist and expansionist tendencies, especially by bringing Fascist parties to power in countries such as Italy and Germany. When evaluated from Turkey's perspective, especially the *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea) discourse used by Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini in his discourses referring to the Mediterranean and his subsequent occupation of Abyssinia and Albania, the establishment of the German-Soviet alliance, Germany's expansionist policies towards the Balkans. Developments such as these caused Turkey to get closer to the United Kingdom and France bloc before World War II.

During this period, Turkey not only developed political and economic relations with the United Kingdom and France but also paid great attention to preserving its existing relations with Germany. In this regard, Turkish government officials described Germany as a “friendly country” at every opportunity and never made threatening actions or statements towards Germany before and during the war (Özden, 2019, pp. 68-69). One of the most important reasons why Turkey did not take threatening actions and statements against Germany was undoubtedly due to the economic and commercial relations between the two countries. So much so that, while sending agricultural products and chrome ore to Germany in 1939, Turkey was purchasing armaments, machine components, and intermediate commodities from Germany. The closure of factories in Turkey as goods could not be supplied from Germany while the war was ongoing encouraged Turkish government officials to find new customers in Germany (Vanderlippe, 2001, p. 64).

Under these conditions, while Turkey tried not to disrupt its economic and political relations with revisionist countries both before and during World War II, it was also planning for the worst-case scenario, in which the United Kingdom and France would remain close to the US axis in the following periods if these countries attacked. Turkey tried to balance and thus secure itself. However, Turkey did not declare itself as a neutral state either before or during the war. In this context, Turkey became a “non-belligerent” country in the sense of international law. This non-war was clearly in favor of the Allies, whose core was England. (Oran, 2009, p. 393).

Even though Turkey interpreted its position as neutral, Turkey's geopolitical location made it impossible for it to pursue a neutral policy in the traditional sense. In this situation, Numan Menemencioglu, who was Foreign Minister for a long time during and after the war, introduced the concept of “effective neutrality” to the forefront. In line with this concept, the strategic goal of our foreign policy, which is based on the principle of not participating in the war no matter what happens during the war years, is “to ensure that the country stays away from war” (Koçak, 1986: 398). Different tactics were applied to achieve this strategic goal, but the

basic tactic has never changed. Turkey followed a “balance” policy throughout the war years (Sarıçoban, 2020, p. 1757).

Turkey's position in the Second World War is the story of the efforts made by both the Allies and the Axis powers to bring Turkey into the war on their side and the pressure they exerted on Turkey, due to the importance of its strategic location. Turkey maintained its non-war position until the last days of the war. Turkey's biggest fear during this period was the concern of being simultaneously invaded by both the USSR from the North and Germany from the Balkans, referred to as the Poland Syndrome in the international relations literature (Özçelik, 2010, p. 259).

Turkey was very weak in every respect, especially in terms of the position of its armed forces vis-a-vis rivals, which it had to neglect during its development efforts in the period 1923-39. In this period, Türkiye managed to survive by exploiting this weakness. Rothstein explains this situation as follows:

One reason for this is that small powers tend to rely on the hope that they can be protected by their insignificance. They hope that if they can appear sufficiently disjointed and fragmented and convincingly indicate that they are powerless to influence the matter, the storm will pass them by (Rothstein, 1968, s. 26).

Turkey gained strength from its two major weaknesses: if a country of great geostrategic importance like itself entered the war, it could be occupied by the other side; The war could not be waged because the Turkish army was too weak to defend the country. Turkey has constantly used these justifications to purchase war vehicles and equipment for its army. In addition, the United Kingdom was confused about Turkey's entry into the war. For example, while Lord Halifax, the then foreign minister, found Turkey's decision not to enter the war justified, the British general staff stated that if Turkey entered the war and was attacked by the Germans, the force required to save Turkey would force Britain (Hale 2003, p. 84).

Although Turkey did not enter into active conflict in World War II, it had to implement war economy conditions throughout the War. “Despite all the economic difficulties and political pressures, the country remained out of the war. Underlying the success of the team that kept Turkey out of war and carried out foreign policy lies Mustafa Kemal's peaceful, far-from-adventurous policy line. Protecting Turkey's territorial integrity has been possible by carrying out a balanced policy among the great powers” (Ateş, 2015, p. 58-59).

Throughout the war, Turkey was successful in implementing the strategy of not entering the war (active neutrality), which was determined to be the best strategy, by remaining in the best position possible to overcome the contradictions posed by both the Allies and the Axis powers. Turkey managed to stay out of the war by emphasizing military and economic weakness at that time. However, this strategy of Turkey caused Turkey to become isolated in international politics after World War II and left it in a difficult situation, especially against the Soviet Union, until it came under the umbrella of NATO. In other words, Turkey saw the cost of not entering the war by being left alone after the war.

Turkish Foreign Policy Between 1945-1962: Democratic Party Era and Efforts to Enter the Western Bloc

One of the important turning points of Turkish foreign policy is undoubtedly the period after World War II. During this time, the globe was ideologically divided into capitalist and socialist blocs, and the Cold War evolved as a bipolar world model. Since Turkey did not actively participate in World War II or was not invaded by the Axis powers, it remained a lonely state without any allies in the post-war international system. This state of loneliness ended when Turkey joined the Western Bloc approximately 7 years after the war ended, though it was

difficult due to the Soviet Union's demands from Turkey and Turkey's desire to position itself economically and politically within the Western Bloc and use it as a model.

The USSR, one of the victors of World War II, saw both the courage of the victory and Turkey's weakness and loneliness in the international system and made some requests that would disrupt Turkey's territorial integrity and bring its sovereignty over the straits into question. According to the Soviets, "Turkey cannot defend the Straits alone. Russia should be given sea and land bases to defend the Straits. The Montreux Straits Convention should be rearranged to give Russia more say. Changes should be made in Turkey's eastern border in favor of Russia. As can be understood from the note in question, Russia, which did not renew the 1925 Friendship Treaty, was demanding bases from the Straits, just as it wanted Kars and Ardahan from Turkey" (Hale, 2003, p.112). Turkey responded to these demands of the USSR through the foreign minister of the period, Selim Sarper. Accordingly, "Turkey immediately rejected the Russian note, stating firmly that the Moscow Treaty dated March 16, 1921, which determined the Turkish-Russian border, could not be renegotiated and that Russia could not be given a base in the Straits or land in Eastern Anatolia" (Uzman, 2018, p. 122).

It was a surprise for Turkey that the USSR made such demands. Although Turkey did not make any demands that would threaten the USSR both before and during the war, such a threat from the USSR that would disrupt the territorial integrity of the country caused serious concern in the Turkish government. The activities of the USSR were not limited to these. It also took some military steps to put pressure on Türkiye. For example, the USSR moved its military forces in Bulgaria to the south and placed them in their positions near the Turkish border. Then, moved army forces, which occupied Iran, towards the Turkish-Iraqi border and made a military buildup there. Turkey, which was uneasy after Russia concentrated its military units in Bulgaria and the Caucasus, did not discharge its soldiers as a precaution and had to continue its mobilization situation" (Hale, 2003, p. 112). In other words, after entering the Cold War period, Turkey constantly felt the Soviet threat in its North. Since it calculated that it could not fight this threat alone, tried to balance it by entering the Western Bloc.

Although Turkey saw itself as belonging to the Western Bloc during this period, it was not seen as a democratic country due to the single-party rule between 1923 and 1946. For this reason, Turkey switched to a multi-party system with the elections held in 1946. Essentially, although there were two attempts to switch to a multi-party system during the Ataturk period, these attempts were unsuccessful. However, after World War II, due to a serious threat from the USSR and criticism from Western countries that Turkey was not a democratic country, Turkey quickly transitioned to a multi-party system.

Within the framework of the Truman Doctrine, which is considered the beginning of the Cold War, Turkey signed an aid agreement with the USA on July 12, 1947. The economic dimension of this doctrine is determined by the Marshall Plan. After this date, Türkiye tried to become a member of other organizations within the Western Bloc. While it was invited to become a member of the Council of Europe, which symbolizes the cultural dimension of Europe, on August 8, 1949, it would be the first Muslim state to recognize Israel in 1949. Following this, Turkey sent troops to the Korean War, which broke out in June 1950, in line with the decision taken by the UN, to enter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the collective defense organization of the Western Bloc. Shortly after this, it became a member of NATO in 1952, together with Greece, with the additional protocol signed on October 17, 1951. In this way, it was able to establish a balance against the USSR, while being in the Western Bloc on the one hand. The main priority of Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War was to establish military, economic, and political relations with the Western world (Aydm, 2000).

As a result of the elections held in May 1950, when the Democratic Party led by Adnan Menderes came to power alone, some shifts began to be seen from the classical foreign policy line followed from the foundation of the Republic until that date, and Turkey lost its relative autonomy in foreign policy and began to see its national interests together with the interests of the Western Bloc. After entering NATO, it formed the southeastern wing together with Greece within the scope of the Containment Policy of the USA. In addition, while it attracted the attention of the Arab countries in the region, especially with the Baghdad Pact, it to some extent undertook the role of the gendarmerie of the USA in the Middle East. During this period, Turkey was seen as a Western-oriented country, rather than as a reliable partner among Muslim countries.

Although Turkey followed a policy of not interfering in their internal affairs and generally not being interested in their internal affairs until World War II in its relations with the Middle Eastern countries that had an Ottoman legacy (Robins, 2007, p. 290-294), the relations between the Middle Eastern countries and Turkey were influenced by the alliance with the West during the Cold War period and the communist communists in the region. It was shaped by the fear of spread (Evered, 2005, pp. 469-472). However, especially after entering the NATO alliance in 1952, Turkey entered into closer cooperation with Western countries as they were their allies in the region. However, this has never been easy due to the bad memories of the past during the Ottoman period and the coldness and suspicion that arose after 1948 when Turkey became the first Muslim country to recognize Israel's independence. For example, Turkey sided with the USA in all developments in the Middle East in 1957 and clearly showed this. With the coup against King Faisal in Iraq in 1958, Turkey's Middle East policy was shaken and it wanted to send troops to Iraq upon the news of the coup. Similarly, the Lebanon-Jordan incidents facilitated the US intervention by opening the Incirlik base to the USA. With an agreement signed between Turkey and the USA in 1959, it tried to secure its position within the Western Bloc by maximizing its relations at the level of the Eisenhower Doctrine (Kapucu, 2021, p. 225).

Another development that stood out in this period and continues to have a place in Turkish foreign policy until today is the Cyprus problem (Adamson, 2001: p.283-286). When ethnic conflicts between the Turkish and Greek people in Cyprus began in the mid-1950s, this situation resonated in Turkey's domestic politics and has been perceived as a national cause (milli dava) since then. During this period, when the EOKA terrorist organization emerged and started a series of attacks against the Turkish Cypriots, the Turkish Resistance Organization was established with the support provided by Turkey and organized the Turkish Cypriots to fight militarily and politically. At the beginning of the conflict, both the Turkish government and Turkish Cypriots were in favor of the continuation of British rule, which was considered an equally fair administration, while the Greek Cypriots and the Greek government insisted on the imposition of ENOSIS, which means the unification of the island with Greece. Thereupon, Turkey changed its policy of preserving the status quo and started to support the policy of dividing the island according to population (Taksim) (Kalaitzaki, 2005, pp. 105-111).

Generally speaking, during the Democrat Party period, while Turkish foreign policy remained completely loyal to the traditional principle of Westernism adopted since the establishment of the Republic, it started to follow the Bloc policy, making a serious deviation from the status quo and balance policy, and began to lose its autonomy in foreign policy. "While relations with the United States were progressing positively during the Menderes period, Turkish foreign policy did not observe the balances both between East and West and within the West itself. In both respects, it has limited itself by showing allegiance and dependence only to the USA and by not following the international developments in between" (Oran, 2009, p. 498). In addition, it was observed that the Democratic Party did not attach much importance to the

factors that prioritize prudence and legitimacy, which were followed in previous periods. During this period, Turkey pursued an active but risky foreign policy with the comfort of joining NATO and the confidence of being in the Western Bloc.

Turkish Foreign Policy Between 1962 and 1990: The Cold War Era and the Search for a Multifaceted Foreign Policy

The Cuban Crisis, which occurred in October 1962 and lasted for 13 days, was a very important development in world political history as it was the period when the USA and the USSR came closest to nuclear war during the Cold War. Although there was a period of relative softening between the two poles after this crisis, it is possible to say that the crisis had very important reflections on Turkish foreign policy. Turkey, which followed a very strict Bloc policy during this period, perceived itself as one of the first countries that could be sacrificed by its ally, the USA when its national interests were at stake. Moreover, when things improved with the USSR, he felt that he did not have much strategic importance in the eyes of the USA.

When the 1960s began, Turkey met with the first military coup on May 27, 1960, and the Army took over the government, ending the rule of the Democratic Party and at the same time suspending the Constitution. However, the military administration did not seek a radical change in Turkish foreign policy. The military administration has been in favor of developing relations with Turkey's Western alliance, as well as the Middle East and non-aligned movements. However, the 1960 coup had more serious effects on foreign policy due to its effects on domestic politics (Aydın, 2000). With the new constitution adopted in 1961, new political movements, both nationalist and religious, re-emerged. Before the 1960 coup, there were no nationalist and religious parties in Turkish politics. At this point, it is possible to state that "Turkish foreign policy has become a prisoner of chronic internal instability and economic crisis, making it very difficult to realize or implement effective planning" (Hale, 2003, p. 119-123).

The Cuban Crisis, which started with the US placing nuclear-tipped missiles in Turkey and Italy and the USSR in Cuba between 16-29 October 1962, and brought the two superpowers face to face, is considered to be the time when the world was closest to the danger of nuclear war. At the beginning of this crisis, Turkey allowed the USA to place Jupiter missiles, which can be fitted with medium-range nuclear warheads, in Turkey, with an agreement signed with the US administration during the Democratic Party period in 1959. Even though these missiles were out of date before they were installed, the Turkish government wanted to use the deployment of these missiles as an opportunity to show the strength of the alliance established with the USA. However, after the crisis, the Jupiter missiles in Turkey and the USSR missiles in Cuba were mutually removed.

The importance of this crisis for Turkish foreign policy was that it realized that it was not meaningful to equate its national interests with the national interests of the USA (İzmir, 2017, p.118). During and after this crisis, Turkey realized that the USA would not care about Turkey's security concerns when necessary. Frankly, until this crisis, Turkey was acting with the mistaken belief that it was indispensable in the fight against the Soviet Union. However, the Cuban Crisis clearly showed that Turkey could be a dispensable partner for the USA. It meant that the USA could ignore Turkey's security concerns if necessary in crises. In addition, an important issue for Turkey was the realization that the presence of nuclear weapons on its territory could pose a greater threat than their absence.

The event, which took place approximately 2 years after the Cuban Crisis and went down in Turkish political history as the Johnson Letter, showed Turkish foreign policy-makers that NATO and the Western Bloc cannot be trusted under all circumstances and conditions. Following the increase in attacks by Greeks against Turks in Cyprus and the pressure of the

Turkish public for a national cause, the Turkish government decided to intervene militarily by the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee. Article 4 of the treaty gave each guarantor state the right to take unilateral action where cooperative action was not possible. However, before Turkey's military intervention plan in Cyprus was implemented, then US President Lyndon B. Johnson sent a famous letter to the Turkish government, referred to as the "Johnson Letter", openly threatening Turkey and stating that Turkey's military action against Cyprus was a threat to Turkey's NATO allies. He stated that they would not be able to protect the Soviets if they intervened in the incident. Moreover, an even more interesting development noted that if the Turkish action resulted in Soviet intervention, American weapons could not be used in military operations against Cyprus. In this letter, the USA briefly said, "Do not enter Cyprus, if you do, you will suffer the consequences" (Işık, 2020). While this approach had a shocking effect on the Turkish government, it revealed the great differences in the views of Turkey and the USA regarding the nature and basic principles of NATO. The Johnson Letter elicited a strong response from the Turkish public, and all events concerning the Cyprus issue will allow administrations to meet the society's desire for independent and individualized foreign policy. Because Turkey has begun to realize the consequences of a US-centered foreign policy agenda (Ateş, 2015, p. 63-64).

In this process, Turkey began to feel alone in the international system and decided to adopt a multifaceted foreign policy that envisaged improving relations with the Middle East, the communist bloc, and the non-aligned movement to break its isolation in the international system. In this process, NATO replaced the mass response doctrine with the flexible response doctrine in the event of a Soviet attack. This change in strategy was seen as a clear signal to Turkey that the necessary steps should be taken to adapt its foreign policy to the newly formed security environment. In this context, "Turkish foreign policy, considering its national interests, had to move from a "unilateral" foreign policy, which generally remained within NATO and was mostly directed towards the USA, to a "multilateral" foreign policy that "normalized" its relations with other states, especially neighboring states" (Özdemir, 1990, p. 232).

In 1974, the Cyprus Peace Operation, which was considered a turning point in Turkish foreign policy, took place and became one of the biggest problems Turkey experienced in the international system. The Colonels' Junta, which seized power in Greece through a military coup in 1967 before the military intervention in Cyprus, has increased its influence over both the Greek National Guard in Cyprus and EOKA-B, the terrorist organization on the island, over time. This situation was caused by the ruling archbishop in Cyprus, Mikhail Hristodulu Muskos, better known as III. It disturbed Makarios very much. Cyprus, which followed a policy close to the Soviet Union during this period, did not want to remain within the Non-Aligned Movement and become a part of NATO. This approach was not approved by either the USA or the junta administration in Greece. For this reason, the junta administration, which described Makarios as the "Castro of the Eastern Mediterranean", wanted to overthrow Makarios by carrying out three assassinations. (Firat, 2004, p. 739) However, the junta members, who could not overthrow Makarios in this way and through political means, made a coup through the EOKA-B organization on July 15, 1974, overthrowing Makarios and replacing him with Nikos Sampson.

With this coup, the rights of the Turkish community in Cyprus came under serious threat. Thereupon, the Prime Minister of the time, Bülent Ecevit, went to England as the guarantor state and offered a joint military intervention in Cyprus as a guarantor. However, when the negotiations failed to yield results, Turkey re-established order in Cyprus by organizing the Peace Operation in Cyprus, the first on 20-22 July 1974, and the second on 14-18 August, with the motto "Let Ayşe Go on Holiday". While Turkey's first operation was considered relatively "legitimate", the second operation was considered an "occupation" by

both the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc. The reasons for this situation came to the fore, such as Turkey's second operation before the end of the peace talks and the fact that it ended the foundations of the Republic of Cyprus, which is a member of the UN. Essentially, it would not be wrong to say that the Greek Cypriot side and Greece came to a more advantageous position regarding Cyprus, especially after the second operation (Sönmezoglu, 2006, p. 312-314).

After Turkey's Peace Operation against Cyprus, the US administration began to impose an arms embargo on Turkey and at the same time significantly reduced its military aid. However, this embargo did not have the desired effect on Türkiye. For this reason, it was abolished by US President Jimmy Carter in September 1978. However, this arms embargo caused the United States' position in Turkish foreign policy to be seriously questioned and increased distrust in the United States, and a multifaceted foreign policy approach began to be frequently mentioned.

During this period, while Turkish foreign policy made efforts to open up to Islamic and Third World countries, Turkey maintained diplomatic and commercial relations with Middle Eastern countries. However, relations did not progress very positively due to the Cyprus Problem. In addition, due to the Oil Crisis that occurred during this period, oil prices increased significantly and the costs of the embargo imposed by the USA began to cause great damage to the Turkish economy. In addition to these problems, the left-right conflicts in Turkey throughout the 1970s dragged the country into a major political crisis. As a result of all these developments, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) seized power with a military coup on September 12, 1980, and civilian rule could not be established until 1983.

The center-right Motherland Party (ANAP) led by Turgut Özal won the first general elections held after the 1980 coup 1983. It is seen that Turgut Özal had a dominant position in Turkish foreign policy during this period. Turgut Özal was a pro-American politician with strong religious tendencies and was the most important factor in the foreign policy-making process between 1983 and 1991 when he was in office. While Turkish state officials acted as a monolithic front that 'spoke with one voice, had one opinion, and one goal' until the Özal period, conflicts between state institutions first came to light during the Özal period and caused discomfort both during Özal's prime ministry and presidency (Heper and Çınar, 1996, p. 488-492). So much so that, during the Özal period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was disabled, and traditional policies were ignored. Turgut Özal, who said economy first, established his foreign policy model with an economic focus and approached foreign policy like a businessman. From the establishment of the Republic until the Özal period, Turkish foreign policy was carried out within the general lines determined by the bureaucrats. However, Özal moved foreign policy from foreign affairs to the prime minister's residence and carried it out with a team of advisors (Gürbey, 1995, p. 57).

The Özal period ended the traditional cautious and status quo foreign policy approach. Turkey will try to adopt a more aggressive, enterprising, and risk-taking attitude in the field of foreign policy. Despite the objections, it can be said that Turkey has significantly lost its "independence" in foreign policy with its role as the US gendarmerie in the Middle East, where Özal is also personally involved (Ateş, 2015, p. 75). However, during the Özal period, steps were taken to enter the European Union, an application for full membership to the European Communities, as it was known at the time, was made in 1987, and a period of softening was entered in relations with Greece. Turgut Özal evaluated the policies implemented before his time in foreign policy as "cowardice" and determined his foreign policy structure in the post-1990 period as gaining an important place for Turkey, through the USA, in the balances that would occur in the Middle East after the First Gulf War. In this way, Turkey calculated that gaining the support of the USA, the only hegemonic power, would gain respect in the eyes of

European states, and as a result, it would be easy to enter the European Union (Ateş, 2015, p. 75). However, it turned out that Turkey “put 45 and get only 3” for the Gulf crisis, whereas Turgut Özal said, “We will put one and get three”. State Minister Kemal Derviş reported that Turkey was one of the countries that suffered the most losses due to the Gulf Crisis that started in 1990, and the damage reached 40-45 billion dollars. Kemal Derviş, while answering the written question of Virtue Party Ankara Deputy Zeki Çelik, announced the grant and loan amounts Turkey received due to the embargo applied to Iraq. According to the information given by Kemal Derviş, within the framework of the Gulf Crisis, a total of 3 billion 645 million dollars of aid was provided to Turkey, of which 2 billion 754 million dollars were grants and 891 million dollars were loans (Hürriyet Gazetesi, 2002).

Turkish Foreign Policy between 1990–2002: The Post-Cold War Era

The withdrawal of the Soviet Union from the world stage led to the creation of a new sphere of influence for Turkey in the region from the Balkans to the Caucasus and the interior of Central Asia. On the one hand, this situation caused Turkey's weight in the region to increase in the post-Cold War period, and on the other hand, it caused its importance to decrease (Oran, 1996, p. 359).

The most important reason for Turkey's increasing importance is undoubtedly that in the power vacuum that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey used its strategic position and historical ties to create a center of attraction, especially in the countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia. In addition, the weak republics that emerged after the Soviet Union and neighboring states such as Bulgaria are no longer a problem for Turkey. In addition, its neighbors in the Middle East, Iran, and Iraq, could not achieve stability for a long time because they were at war with each other, and the USSR lost its influence in Syria as its influence disappeared. In addition to all these developments, the need for Turkey to contain Iran and Iraq, which were seen as two potential threats to the USA after the Gulf War, within the scope of the double containment policy, increased the decreasing importance of Turkey in the eyes of the USA in this period. On the other hand, Turkey, which formed the southeastern wing of NATO along with Greece to surround the USSR during the Cold War, had a reduced security requirement for the USA and Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which caused Turkey's importance to decrease.

In addition, the excessive expectations pumped in the post-Cold War period, especially in the early 1990s, were that Turkey would become a great state, that it would be the leader of the Turkic states, etc. The discourses have increased considerably. During this period, then-President Süleyman Demirel's “Turkish world from the Adriatic to the China Sea” discourse aroused concerns on the Russian side that Turkey would intervene in its region. In addition, during this period, the issue of how the energy resources in the Caspian basin and the Caucasus would be marketed caused tension between Turkey and Russia (Balta and Özkan, 2016, p. 26).

Turkey, which wanted to increase its influence and influence in both the Balkans and the Caucasus region throughout the 1990s, did not remain a spectator to the events taking place in these regions. For example, during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, it indirectly intervened in the events by supporting Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo. In this process, he gained respect by taking the side of the righteous and the oppressed and conveyed to the countries of the region and the international public the idea that the solutions to be reached in the Balkans could not be achieved by excluding himself.

On the other hand, after the collapse of the Soviets, the Turkish public's increasing perception of discovering Turkish cousins increased interest in the Caucasus and the Middle East. During this period, Turkey approached the new Turkish Republics that gained their independence with two basic arguments. These are;

- 1) Having independent, secular, democratic regimes
- 2) Transforming into liberal market economies

During this period, Turkey tried to help these countries, which had been governed by communism for many years, adapt to democracy and the international capitalist system by setting an example. In this context, he tried to convey his knowledge, experience, and support in areas such as making a new constitution, establishing a national army, national language, national currency, and national parliament formed by free elections, and establishing the state bureaucracy (Oran, 1996, p. 364-365). However, the news that Turkey was involved in the unsuccessful coup attempt in Azerbaijan in 1995 (Aydın, 2016) caused the Turkish Republic to change its perception of Turkey, which they saw as a big brother. This situation has caused them to act cautiously and hesitantly in their relations with Turkey for many years. This negative impact caused the Russian Federation to become more active in the region and to take these countries to its side in the following years.

Another prominent development in terms of Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s was the development of the European Union and Greece. So much so that, in their EU adventure, which they started almost at the same time, Greece gained an advantageous position with its membership in the EC and became an important game changer by using its veto power. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the period explained Turkey's application for associate membership to the EEC in 1959, right after Greece, by saying, "Even if Greece throws itself into an empty pool, you will not leave it alone, you will jump in without hesitation" (Güreşçi, 2006, p. 75). Today, it is better understood how right Fatin Rüştü Zorlu was in this policy. In the 1980s, Greek governments tried to put Turkey in a difficult situation in all these developments by adopting the strategy of internationalizing their disputes with Turkey, so much so that the two countries, which came to the brink of armed conflict during the Kardak Crisis, which started on December 25, 1995, and continued until January 31, 1996, declared "No flags, No ships" on both sides after the intervention of the USA. An agreement was reached on the formula "No troops" (Berberakis, 2021). Essentially, after the Kardak Crisis, there was a significant change in Greece's attitude towards Turkey. Realist policies against the threat perception against Turkey were costing Greece dearly (Couloumbis, 2003, p. 36).

The mid-1990s witnessed changes of government in the core EU members. Particularly in Germany, the electoral success of the Social Democrats-Green Party coalition has led to a significant change in the German government's discourse towards third countries. At a time when discussions of European identity and Turkey's Europeanness were making headlines, the political vision of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Europe supported by social democratic circles dominated. For this reason, social democratic governments, which did not want to be seen as a "Christian Club", supported the vision of Europe as the meeting point of various cultures, thus paving the way for Turkey to be given candidate status at the Helsinki Summit in 1999. After the Helsinki Summit decisions regarding Turkey's candidacy brought a new breath to Turkey's EU goals. To manage the EU harmonization process, the Accession Partnership Document was published at the Turkey-EU Association Council meeting held in April 2000.

Ankara, which has a concrete membership perspective, has pioneered a remarkable reform process on many issues. In this context, the Turkish government of the period took democratization steps that had not been seen before in Turkish political history, such as the abolition of the death penalty in times of peace, religious property rights of non-Muslim minorities, the normalization of languages other than Turkish, and the normalization of civil-military relations. The Constitutional amendments made in October 2001 were a turning point in both Turkish politics and Turkey's EU harmonization process.

The Justice and Development Party (AK Parti), which came to power alone by winning the parliamentary elections held on 3 November 2002, declared their commitment to Turkey's EU membership during the election campaign and the party is a keen supporter of EU harmonization reforms, which are envisaged as the catalyst for Turkey's modernization and democratization has proven itself. After coming to power, the AK Party took all the necessary steps toward EU membership and started negotiations with the EU on October 3, 2005, by carrying out the legal regulations on this subject.

Generally speaking, the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s changed the current paradigm in Turkish foreign policy and brought different alternatives to Turkey other than the West. During this period, Türkiye became more active than before and expanded its maneuvering area; meanwhile, it has naturally lost its former stability in the bipolar world. Looking at this new situation and immediately jumping to the conclusion that Turkish foreign policy has abandoned status quoism and Westernism is extremely wrong given the facts. During this period, Turkey took many important steps towards EU membership and implemented many legal regulations after obtaining candidate status. For this reason, in a period when the old status quo was destroyed and a new one was established, Turkish foreign policy began to seek its place in the new status quo, without giving up its basic principles, as both its historical continuity and geopolitical position continued the same.

Turkish Foreign Policy After 2000

As Turkey enters the new millennium, developments at home and abroad have brought about new changes in Turkish foreign policy. The most important development that took place in domestic politics during this period was the dissolution of the coalition government in domestic politics after the Constitutional crisis in February 2001 in Turkey and the subsequent early general election on November 3, 2002. Of course, the political crisis experienced in this process triggered the economic crisis in the country, and the Turkish economy committed to carrying out the determined structural reforms by borrowing from the IMF. The most important development that took place abroad was undoubtedly the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in the USA on September 11, 2001. Following this incident, the US government launched a global war against the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, which it held responsible for the incident, and launched a manhunt for Osama Bin Laden, whom it considered responsible for these terrorist attacks. In this context, it would take approximately 20 years to overthrow the Taliban administration, which it thought was hiding Laden. In addition, during this process, Saddam Hussein's regime was ended by entering Iraq using the presence of chemical weapons as an excuse. These developments, on the one hand, caused the hegemonic power of the USA to be questioned and caused serious changes in the structure of international politics.

In this conjuncture, the Justice and Development Party (JDP-AK Party) which surprisingly came to power alone as a result of the general elections held on November 3, 2002, left its mark on Turkish political life. After coming to power, the AK Party continues to draw an unconventional profile with the steps it takes and the policies it implements in both domestic and foreign policy and transforms Turkish foreign policy.

Turkish Foreign Policy between 2002–2017: Strategic Depth

AK Party, which was founded on August 14, 2001, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who comes from the Islamic tradition, used a discourse stating that he took off his National Vision shirt to show that he had distanced himself from the Islamic tradition before entering the elections held on November 3, 2002. With this discourse, he defined secularism as 'the separation of religion and state affairs by excluding the aspect of social engineering', and declared that it differed from the traditional National Vision tradition in this respect (Öztürk, 2017, p. 344). This discourse moved the party from the line of political Islam

to the center-right and turned it into a mass party that would remain in power alone for many years.

The JDP, which essentially defines itself as a conservative-liberal mass party, became one of the two parties that entered the parliament together with the Republican People's Party (RPP- CHP), which surpassed the electoral threshold by receiving 34.28 percent of the votes in the general elections it entered before it had fully completed its organization throughout Turkey. With this vote rate, the JDP Party became the sole government by gaining a 2/3 majority in the parliament. Since the last period of the Ottoman Empire, the masses who were excluded from politics began to be included in politics under the Democratic Party government, this continued during the Motherland Party government and strengthened its power with the JDP Party government (Öztürk, 2017, p. 343). Liberal thought was born in the political arena in the 1950s during the DP period, completed its development during the Özal period, and gave its color to liberal economic and liberal political developments during the AK Party period (Çınar, 2011, p. 2). At this point, the active foreign policy and conservative-liberal tendency, acting with the Western alliance, followed by Menderes, Demirel, and Özal, were also continued by the AK Party government. (Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 367). In its discourse, the AK Party stayed away from concepts such as 'Islamic state' and 'Islamic ideology' and thus managed to receive votes from a large segment of the society.

To put it clearly, the AK Party's coming to power as a newly established party by gaining a 2/3 majority in the Parliament and its emergence as the first party in all the general and local elections it participated in the following periods, brought about unorthodox policies in both domestic and foreign policy. In the early periods after coming to power, the visible face of foreign policy in the AK Party was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül. However, the language and theoretical background of this policy was developed by Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu, the author of the book *Strategic Depth*, who served as foreign policy chief advisor to the foreign minister and the prime minister, as well as the minister of foreign affairs and the prime minister. It is possible to say that Ahmet Davutoğlu determined Turkish Foreign Policy for a long time. He was even described as the “secret foreign minister” before being foreign minister (Doğan, 2021, p. 24).

In his book *Strategic Depth*, Davutoğlu emphasizes that world politics has undergone a systemic transformation after the end of the Cold War and that, in this context, Turkey should re-evaluate its strategic position and strengthen its international position. At this point, it aims to ensure Turkey's regional integration with neighboring countries that share a long common history. Davutoğlu emphasizes the development of Turkey's foreign policy capabilities by bringing a new perspective to its history and geography to underline Turkey's true potential in global relations. Although this new approach is defined by many academics as Neo-Ottomanism and a shift from traditional Turkish foreign policy (Taşpınar, 2008, p. 14-15), this approach does not coincide with reality. In other words, “Davutoğlu's strategic depth vision aims to “place Turkey at the center of many geopolitical spheres of influence” by taking advantage of the country's historical and geopolitical importance” (Murinson, 2006, p. 947).

The AK Party's foreign policy, formulated within the framework of the *Strategic Depth* theory in the post-2002 period, states that Turkey needs to pursue a more effective foreign policy in its immediate surroundings for both geographical and historical reasons (Davutoğlu, 2001, p. 144-145), it also aims to reduce problems with neighbors to zero and He envisaged Ankara acting with a rhythmic and multi-track diplomacy approach to solving regional problems. This approach, unlike the classical Turkish foreign policy that sees foreign policy as solely Western-oriented, has begun to adopt an understanding that accepts Western principles (human rights and respect for law), democratization, and EU norms in general, but is not confined to the West and does not see the world as consisting of the West.

Essentially, this approach aims to transform Turkey into a regional and ultimately global power with its multi-regional and multi-faceted foreign policy (Davutoğlu, 2001, p. 501-57). Davutoğlu's policies represent, to some extent, the liberation of Turkish foreign policy from the security-oriented policies inherited from both the Ottoman period and the early Republic period. On the other hand, Davutoğlu rejects Turkey's "bridge country" role in his book and states that this understanding assigns a passive role to Turkey, but the historical transformation of the international system and Turkey's unique geopolitical position among more than one region have made Turkey a center country candidate (Davutoğlu, 2008, pp. 78-79).

In this context, Davutoğlu put forward three basic methodological principles of the Turkish foreign policy pursued by the AK Party. These are;

- 1) **Vision Orientation:** In the post-2002 period, Turkey, in a sense, began to question itself and its immediate surroundings, redefining it historically, socially, and strategically, and rediscovering itself and its immediate surroundings. As a result of this questioning, contrary to approaches such as "Turks have no friends other than Turks" and "Turkey is surrounded by seas on three sides and enemies on four sides", which have been valid almost since the foundation of the republic, Davutoğlu stated that Turkey's new vision is dialogue, mutual respect, stability, and peace, and states that it should be based on multiculturalism through prosperity (Şöhret, 2013, p. 104). This principle is a normative perspective stating that Turkey should take an active and proactive role in the processes of the emergence of these crises and especially in their solution, as opposed to the "wait and see" policy of traditional Turkish foreign policy towards both regional and global scale crises. Compared to previous foreign policy approaches, it has been defined as the basic "principle" on which Turkey's "new" foreign policy is built" (Davutoğlu, 2009, p. 6). This principle refers to a foreign policy based on a visionary perspective based on long-term values rather than short-term interests.
- 2) **Systemic Framework:** During the AK Party period, Turkey has to improve its relations not only with Western countries such as the USA and the EU but also with countries such as Iran, Russia, and Egypt. However, these are not alternatives to each other. Davutoğlu expresses this principle as follows: "Our vision is the same in Central Asia or the Balkans as it is in the Middle East. There is no difference between our approach to Africa and our approach to Asia. With this understanding, we are improving our relations even with our problematic neighbors: Iraq, Syria, Greece, and Russia. Just as perfect harmony is achieved when colors and lines are placed in the right places in a painter's paintings, and just as Sultanahmet or Taj Mahal are called classical works of art because they are in such perfect symmetry. Similarly, our foreign policy should be perfect, just like these works, and someone looking at our foreign policy from the outside should be able to feel that there is a single mind and a single approach behind this policy" (Davutoğlu, 2009, p. 6-7). Since Turkey has been governed by a single-party government since 2002, it is possible to see this consistency and symmetry in its foreign policy. The principle in question envisages a foreign policy vision based on values, not country or region, by adopting an approach within the framework of certain human and ethical values. In other words, it means responding consistently and in the same way, rather than reacting differently to similar events occurring in different parts of the world. Another dimension of this principle is not reacting positively to an event in foreign policy one day and turning away the next day (Şöhret, 2013, p. 105).
- 3) **Soft Power:** This principle underlines that Turkey is increasingly following the footsteps of the EU in regional and international politics and turning to a soft power approach rather than a hard power approach. Joseph Nye defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than pressure or coercion" (Nye,

2004, p. 5). “As used in international relations, the concept is defined as “persuading the other person to get what you want”, while in Turkey's foreign policy perspective, it is used as “persuading” other countries by following fair, smart and convincing policies. So, if you want to sincerely persuade the other person, not deceive them, how do you do this? “You can only do this by pursuing fair, smart, and credible policies. So you have to use power wisely. We can also call this “smart use of power”. What are the subtle power elements of a country? These are a country's culture, art, cinema, architecture, music, education system, competitive environment, freedoms, democracy, human quality and social capital, historical accumulation, cultural richness, science and technology infrastructure, innovation capacity, rather than the number of soldiers or economic sanction power. It is the sum of diplomatic skills and the ability to explain oneself. A country that brings these elements together becomes a center of attraction. It becomes a country that is followed, talked about, and “whose story is listened to” (Kalm, 2010). Strategic depth requires both hard power and soft power, as well as the ability to expand the sphere of influence. This means that security and modernity (defined by democracy, economy, and cultural identity) co-exist as salient sources of foreign policy-making.

“With his Strategic Depth approach, Davutoğlu predicts that the historical and geographical richness Turkey inherited from the Ottoman Empire will make Turkey a global actor in the 21st century. For this reason, it underlines the need to determine a set of new foreign policy principles in the new century, taking advantage of Turkey's geopolitical and historical strategic depth.” (Kara, 2019, p. 148). These are;

- a) **Balance between freedom and security:** Since the AK Party came to power, the government's primary goal has been to increase civil liberties without harming national security after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Because Turkey's struggle for democratization is also the most important source from which its foreign policy moves are fed. “A Turkey that has not been able to establish the balance of freedom and security, has been known for military interventions, has not been able to guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms, has not been able to make its citizens equal before the law, cannot be expected to be a center of attraction (soft power) with its army or economy alone. Because to convince your opponents, you must first have a clean democracy report card” (Kalm, 2021).
- b) **Zero problems with neighbors:** Contrary to the approach that sees the countries around Turkey as potential enemies, this approach, which can be summarized as minimizing the problems with neighboring countries, has been the most discussed foreign policy principle of the AKP period. This principle expresses an understanding built on the idea of “becoming a country that gets rid of the psychology of 'Turkey is constantly surrounded by enemies' and the defensive reflex that develops accordingly, and improves its relations with all its neighbors” (Şöhret, 2013, p. 111). In other words, the ultimate goal of this strategy is to gain the trust of neighbors, take a mediating role in regional problems, and intervene in the solution of problems. For this purpose, it is essential that Turkey's old threat perceptions and inherited foreign policy practices are eliminated and a new understanding prevails.
- c) **Diplomatic discourse:** In parallel with Turkey's increasing economic and political power in its region, it aims to contribute to the solution of problems occurring in neighboring states and other parts of the world through political dialogue using diplomatic channels. In this context, Davutoğlu, Turkey's wait-and-see policy, as in previous years, does not coincide with the conditions of the day. For this reason, Turkey has to take precautions before conflicts arise, especially in its region, and develop alternative policies accordingly. It is possible to say that this principle points to a pro-

active foreign policy approach rather than a reactive foreign policy approach. This principle states that Turkey should take preventive steps to maintain international peace and security through diplomatic discourse. “There is no straight-line diplomacy. This principle, which finds itself in the discourse “There is diplomacy on the surface, that surface is the whole world” (Davutoğlu, 2010), corresponds to foreign policy-making on a global scale.

- d) Multi-dimensional and multi-channel policies:** Multidimensional policy refers to a foreign policy-making process in which states can live together, including not only security-related issues but also economic, political, social, and cultural values. Accordingly, during the AK Party rule, an approach was developed that stated that relations with the actors in the region, including the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and even Africa, should be improved rather than a Western-centered foreign policy that only prioritizes the West. However, at this point, it is accepted that Turkey's relations with global actors such as NATO, the USA, and the EU are not an alternative to its relations with other regions and rising powers such as Russia and China, but on the contrary, they are complementary to each other. On the other hand, multi-channel policies emphasize moving beyond a state-centered approach in policy making and moving towards pluralism. With multifaceted policies, Turkish business groups/actors, for example, new institutions such as TOBB, TUSKON, DEIK, or TIKA, have begun to play an increasing role in Turkey's developing commercial relations.
- e) Rhythmic diplomacy:** This new diplomacy is built on the assumption of an international environment whose agenda is constantly changing, unlike the static environment of the Cold War period, and is considered a foreign policy tool that will adapt to dynamic conditions from the “static diplomacy approach” (Şöhret, 2013, p. 11). Turkish foreign policymakers have tried to increase Turkey's representation in international organizations by pursuing soft power strategies and applying consistent foreign policy principles based on vision. To achieve this rhythmicity and mobility in foreign policy, proactive diplomacy must be followed. According to this principle, efforts should be made to intervene in potential problem areas and bring the parties to a common point as soon as possible, without waiting for problems to arise.

To adapt to the increasing impact and changing dynamics of globalization in the 21st century, Turkey acts with a very broad foreign policy approach that combines constructivist and realist elements in international politics. This new understanding lies behind the ups and downs in Turkish foreign policy in the last 10 years. However, new Turkish policymakers are trying to establish a balance between real politics and what can be called “ideal politics” (Kalin, 2011, p. 9).

Neo-Ottomanism and Axis Shift Debates in Turkish Foreign Policy

Turkish foreign policy, which was built on being a part of the North-Atlantic Alliance during the Cold War, chose to become a member of the EU as its sole goal, and other than that, it put regional cooperation with its close neighbors on the back burner for a long time. For this reason, regions such as the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, and North Africa, which remained under Ottoman rule for many years, have remained away from the focus of Turkish foreign policy since the establishment of the Republic. However, it has become clear in the post-Cold War period that one-dimensional foreign policy is not a rational policy. For this reason, since the first half of the 1990s, Turkish foreign policymakers have wanted to come to the fore as a regional power in regions seen as former Ottoman geography, with discourses such as from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China.

Turkey, which rediscovered its immediate surroundings with the AK Party coming to power in 2002, wanted to increase its influence in these places inherited from the Ottoman

Empire, in parallel with its foreign policy line, as predicted by the Strategic Depth approach. Three factors help define the AK Party's Neo-Ottomanist tendencies.

- 1) "Turkey's desire to come to terms with its Ottoman and Islamic legacy at home and abroad
- 2) Neo-Ottomanism does not call for Turkish imperialism in the Middle East and the Balkans
- 3) Turkey does not try to establish an Islamic legal system in modern Turkey. Instead, Neo-Ottomanism prefers a more moderate version of secularism at home and a more activist policy in foreign relations." (Taşpınar, 2008, p. 15-16)

In this Neo-Ottoman paradigm, Ankara exercises more "soft power" (political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural influence) in former Ottoman territories as well as other regions where Turkey has strategic and national interests. This broad vision for Turkish foreign policy requires embracing the Ottoman "great power" legacy and redefining Turkey's strategic and national identity. This approach was criticized by both the secular circles in the country and the Western world and was described as Neo-Ottomanism. Those who oppose this approach claim that it aims to reconnect Turkey to the former Ottoman lands, especially through a policy of zero problems with neighbors. They strongly criticize this approach, which they describe as Neo-Ottomanism, as the idea of reflecting Turkey's power over the traditional Ottoman sphere of influence. Accordingly, these critics state that Turkey has experienced an axis shift with the Neo-Ottomanism approach and that this situation is harmful to Turkey and the Western alliance. (Taşpınar, 2008, p. 15-16)

However, AK Party foreign policymakers did not accept Neo-Ottomanism discourses because they might carry imperialist implications. Moreover, they emphasized that Turkey is not a state in the Ottoman format and has no such intention or desire. "Davutoğlu emphasized that Turkey's new policies are based not on the Ottoman legacy, but on the principle of zero problems with neighbors, and asked that this not be perceived as Neo-Ottomanism. He also pointed out that Turkey's rapprochement with neighboring states by solving their problems in the 2000s and its efforts to revive its old historical and political relations with its immediate surroundings are essentially a result of historical and political factors, as Turkey is a successor state to the Ottoman Empire (Baran, 2013, p. 117).

On the other hand, the question of whether there was a change in the direction of Turkish foreign policy during the AK Party period is one of the most popular questions in academic studies after 2005. Accordingly, there are generally three different categories in this context. These are;

- 1) **Those who argue that Turkish foreign policy has shifted to the Middle East due to the Islamist profile of the AK Party:** Those in this category state that the priority in Turkish foreign policy has shifted from the West to the Middle East and the Islamic world, and argue that there has been a major break in Turkey's geopolitical imagination with the AK Party. (Yeşiltaş, 2013, p. 681). Unlike the political elites of the AK Party before it, "AK Party actors do not see Turkey as a bridge between the West and Islam, a front zone of the West, or a country divided between different civilization projects, and are central to Turkey's representation of Islamic civilization." (Baran, 2008, p. 7-14) emphasizes its role.
- 2) **Those who argue that it has shifted to the Russia and China axis due to the power shift in the global order and the AK Party's transformation of Turkey into an authoritarian government over time:** China has started to take a serious place in commercial relations throughout the world, especially since the 2010s, and Turkey's It

highlights developments such as Russia's increasing rapprochement even after it annexed Crimea, Erdogan's declaration of his will to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Ankara's renewed interest in Central Asian countries. They also state that after the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, Turkey began to shift towards the Russia-China axis due to the growing security crisis with Western allies (Kirişçi, 2018, p. 4).

- 3) **Those who argue that the focus on the West has not changed, but that the West has ceased to be a monopoly and that Turkish foreign policy has become plural in terms of regional interest:** Turkey can act outside the transatlantic agenda, especially in relations with the Middle East, and pursues a more autonomous foreign policy, but in the final analysis, the foreign policy followed by Ankara is that the USA is hegemonic. They state that it is a part of the international capitalist system (Kardaş, 2013, p. 653). Similarly, when we look at factors such as free trade agreements, new flight routes, and visa liberalization agreements in the 2002-2009 period, they argue that there is a diversification in Turkish foreign policy, but there is no axis shift (Babacan, 2011, p. 143). In other words, while Turkey maintains its US and Western-centered foreign policy, its foreign policy partners have increased. He emphasizes that during the AK Party period, there was a pluralization (a global perspective) by underlining foreign policy initiatives not only towards the Middle East but also towards Africa and Latin America (Duran, 2009, p. 396). Apart from these three categories, there is also a fourth category that argues that there is no shift and that the traditional Western-oriented foreign policy continues (Başer, 2015, p. 291-309).

Discussions about the axis shift point to the change in the general orientation of Turkish foreign policy during the AK Party governments. The first development that triggered these discussions was Turkey's attitude towards the incident that took place on March 1, 2003 and was referred to as the Memorandum Crisis. During this period, the bill proposing to allow the use of Turkish territory to conduct military operations in the northern part of Iraq to change the regime of Saddam Hussein was rejected. In the Memorandum vote held in the Turkish Grand National Assembly for permission to use Turkish territory for the US army, which has completed all its preparations to enter Iraq, 250 of the 533 deputies who participated in the vote voted against it, 264 voted in favor, and 19 abstained. However, the motion was not accepted because the voting participants did not reach the absolute majority, that is, 267 yes votes, as stipulated in Article 96 of the constitution. It can be said that this development created a complete disappointment in the US administration and brought the USA and Turkey, and Western states in general, face to face in all problems concerning Turkey in the following period. Apart from this, other developments triggered the discussions on the Axis debate. One of these was undoubtedly the 2009 World Economic Forum, when Erdoğan, who was Prime Minister at the time, left the meeting after his "One Minute" argument with the then Israeli President Shimon Peres. Following this development, while Erdoğan became a popular leader in the eyes of the people in the Islamic world, Turkey's relations with Israel also deteriorated.

Turkish Foreign Policy between 2017-2023: A Return from Valuable Loneliness to Realistic Policies

The AK Party's pro-active foreign policy agenda and implementation of new foreign policy principles were disrupted by the popular uprisings that broke out in the Middle East and North Africa region in 2010 and 2011, and it became clear that the foreign policy followed within the framework of the Strategic Depth approach did not coincide with the realities of Turkey and the region. The Arab Spring started in Tunisia in December 2010 due to the increasing political and economic dissatisfaction of people in the Middle East and North Africa against the authoritarian governments of their countries. The popular uprisings in the Middle

East and North Africa region called the “Arab Spring”, have significantly affected Turkish foreign policy. Large masses of people, who have been under the pressure of authoritarian governments for many years, rebelled and started a kind of rebellion against these authoritarian governments, and this rebellion created a domino effect in the region and spread to countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria, causing great chaos and conflict in the region. As a result, the civil war that started in Syria caused millions of people to leave their countries, and the majority of them to migrate to Turkey. The popular uprisings in question and the process that followed have brought Turkey into increasingly conflictual relations with its neighbors, regional countries, and Western “allies”.

One of the biggest breaks in Turkey's foreign policy was the Egyptian coup in July 2013 against the Mohammed Morsi administration, with which Turkey has close relations. “Turkey has not been able to transform its justified reaction to the Egyptian coup into a pragmatic policy over time. However, in this process, not only the West but also Russia and China were able to establish very close relations with the Sisi administration based on mutual interests.” (Kösebalaban, 2020) Following these developments, the AK Party determined a new motto for foreign policy in 2013; “Precious loneliness.” The person who put forward this slogan was İbrahim Kalın, who is today the undersecretary of the National Intelligence Agency (MİT) and who was Prime Minister Erdoğan's chief foreign policy advisor at that time. In a way, this new approach symbolizes the failure of the zero problems with neighbors’ policy that Turkey followed after 2002. Kalın explained this new approach by saying, “Türkiye is not alone in regional and global politics. But while the world remains silent against coups and massacres, we will not hesitate to stand by the truth alone. If it is necessary to call it loneliness, it is a valuable loneliness. He explained: “This is not about being alone, but about taking an honorable stance” (Alperen, 2013). The fact that world, especially Western countries, did not speak out against the military coup that took place in Egypt and made statements supporting the coup plotter Abdülfettah El Sisi, while only Turkey and a few countries condemned the coup and cut off diplomatic relations with Egypt, revealing the difference in Turkey's foreign policy. Türkiye was criticized for approaching this coup with overly emotional and idealistic principles. On the other hand, İbrahim Kalın explains this situation as follows: “An interest that does not have principles, morality, conscience, loyalty, and values does not have a national character. Those who think that soulless realism is the strategic axis of foreign policy must also know how those countries lose friends in the medium and long term and how they cannot develop long-term, genuine, and permanent relations with any country or nation. He criticized those who criticize Turkey by saying, “An unprincipled and worthless foreign policy isolates you both among the people, the public conscience, and the international system” (Alperen, 2013).

Uncertainties and political transformation in the Middle East and North Africa region have pushed Turkish policymakers to review Turkey's foreign policy priorities. It is possible to say that in this new period, a valuable discourse of loneliness has become the main discourse of addressing Turkey's isolation in the region. Especially in the last 10 years, due to the cyclical changes experienced at the global level and the crises occurring regionally, Turkey has quickly turned away from its idealist foreign policy line and returned to a more rational and realistic foreign policy line. Because it was seen that this idealistic foreign policy followed by Turkey brought more harm than profit for Turkey and it started to become isolated in international politics.

Turkey has experienced the regional turmoil that resulted from the Arab Spring turning into winter, as civil wars in its neighbors and the strengthening of terrorist organizations (DAESH and PKK). There have been frequent tensions with the USA due to its support for the terrorist organization PKK/YPG. Relations with Russia, which became tense due to the downing of a Russian plane for violating Turkish airspace in November 2015, have been tried

to be repaired by the Yıldırım government since 2016. So much so that the statement made by Binali Yıldırım in 2016 after taking over the prime ministry from Ahmet Davutoğlu, saying “We will increase the number of our friends and reduce the number of our enemies” (TRT Haber, 2016), in a sense, is Turkey's move away from its idealist foreign policy line, which is now identified with strategic depth, and to protect its national interests. It was seen as a sign of the transition to a rational-based, realistic foreign policy line.

However, after the coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016, the negative and reluctant reactions of other Western states, especially NATO allies, once again showed that the AK Party was alone in foreign policy. Moreover, it has come face to face with other Western countries, especially the USA, in its fight against organizations such as DAESH and PKK, which emerged to fill the power vacuum in Syria. Despite the objections of the Western allies, Turkey has liberated the Jarablus and Al-Bab regions from ISIS with the Euphrates Shield Operation since August 2016; With Operation Olive Branch, which was launched on January 20, 2018, Afrin district center was cleared of YPG/PKK on a symbolic date of March 18. With the Peace Spring Operation against PYD/YPG in the east of the Euphrates River, an average of 30 km in the south direction between Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ayn has been secured. Joint patrols were carried out with Russia in the region from the east of the Euphrates to the Iraqi border, especially in the centers of Ayn al-Arab and Hasakah. At this point, Turkey has not been able to take the Manbij and Tel Rifat regions, which should be cleared and given to the terrorist organization YPG / YPJ, by the agreements made with both the US administration and the Russian Federation. On the other hand, it created a safe zone by creating a 30 km line along almost the entire border line in Northern Syria.

“The military coup attempt that occurred on July 15, 2016, put the Turkish government in “survival mode” and moved national security concerns to the top of Ankara's political agenda (Haugom, 2019, p.213). As a result, the declared State of Emergency and the subsequent process of liquidating the coup elements from the Turkish Armed Forces and other state institutions were quite painful. Especially after the July 15 coup attempt, the perception of the survival problem emphasized in domestic politics led to the increased use of military methods in foreign policy. Whenever there is a crisis in foreign policy, this situation also becomes a security problem in domestic politics and is used to create public opinion in favor of pursuing a foreign policy independent of the West (Şöhret, 2022, p. 70-72).

In this process, in proportion to the threat perceived in Syria, Turkey experienced a serious crisis with the USA and NATO alliance when it received the Russian-made S-400 Air Systems, although it requested the Patriot Air Defense system from the US administration, but did not receive a positive response, and CAATSA Sanctions were applied to Turkey and it was removed from the F-35 Aircraft program. While the US government remained silent about Greece, a NATO ally, purchasing and deploying the S-300 Missile system in previous years, it strongly opposed Turkey's purchase of the S-400. According to the USA, S-400 computers will read and record all data coming from NATO partner systems, and likewise, thanks to this system, Russia's S-400 radars will be able to easily obtain sensitive information about the F-35 in the intense F-35 traffic in Turkish airspace. He stated that he would save Turkey from the F-35 program because it would harm NATO's security concept. It can be said that Turkey's exclusion from the F-35 program, even though it paid the money and fulfilled all its obligations regarding the project, caused the biggest crack in US-Turkey relations after 1947. At this point, it is quite interesting that Turkey, as a NATO ally, has been unable to obtain the Air Defense System from the USA, which it has primarily needed since Barack Obama's presidency. Former US President Donald Trump expressed this situation as follows: “The Obama administration did not sell them Patriot missiles. Türkiye tried hard to buy these missiles, but they did not sell them. Thereupon, Türkiye bought the missiles from Russia. Thereupon, they turned to Turkey

and said, 'Okay, we will sell you the Patriots', but; at that time, Turkey had already signed an agreement with Russia and made a serious payment because they were not allowed to buy from here. Turkey is a NATO member and they ordered more than 100 F-35s, with plans for more” (Institute for Strategic Thinking, 2019). The recent S-400 crisis between the USA and Turkey and the resulting F-35 new-generation fighter jet crisis once again showed the necessity of Turkey being fully independent in the defense industry. “Due to Turkey's geopolitical location, it faced a more chaotic and unpredictable world after the Cold War. For this reason, to cope with the problems in this new period, it has become necessary for Turkey to follow a more flexible and autonomous foreign policy” (Kardaş, 2013, p. 637).

Essentially, these and similar negative approaches towards Turkey did not only come from the US administration but also other NATO ally countries, both openly and secretly, in Turkey's defense of itself against terrorist attacks from Syria and in its fight against terrorism against the PKK within the country, even though Turkey paid the money. As a result, arms embargoes were implemented (Koyuncu, 2019). This situation has motivated Turkey to meet its defense needs from domestic and national resources, and Turkey increased the localization rate in the defense industry from 20% to 80% during the AK Party governments (Türkten et al., 2023). In this context, in addition to UAVs and UCAVs, the 5th Generation Fighter Unmanned Aircraft System project called Bayraktar Kızılelma will replace the F-35 systems that were not given to Turkey, with its aggressive maneuvers and advanced artificial intelligence, a large proportion of which are produced with local and national resources. It is planned to be added to the inventory of TAF. It is stated that the aircraft can conduct air-air combat like manned warplanes and has a low radar cross-section. Kızılelma, whose take-off weight is targeted to be 6 tons, will be able to use domestic ammunition produced by Turkey and have a planned payload capacity of 1500 kilograms. Bayraktar Kızılelma, which is planned to remain in the air for 5 hours, will also have high situational awareness with the AESA radar to be integrated. The first flight test of Bayraktar Kızılelma is planned to be held in 2023. In addition, Turkey has managed to produce the new generation short-runway TCG Anatolian warship, which it also produced with its means. (Şöhret, 2022, p. 92-96)

At this point, although Turkey has increased its localization rate in the field of defense industry, it is still dependent on foreign sources for some high-tech products. In addition, due to political and economic problems with global powers such as the USA and the EU, it is subject to embargoes, including the suspension of critical technologies in domestic weapon systems. Investments in the defense industry have given Turkey some control over weapons production, maintenance, and supply.

Among the important developments in Turkish foreign policy in the post-2017 period, the tensions with Greece and the European Union undoubtedly had an important place. So much so that Turkey reacted in the same way to NAVTEX announcements to block Greek seismic research ships, which reacted to Turkey's oil and natural gas exploration in the region declared as its continental shelf. This situation, which caused increased tension in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean for a long period, caused serious problems with Turkey-Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, as well as with the EU, which was involved in these developments. In this regard, the EU, which became a tool for the negative propaganda of Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus against Turkey, perceived Turkey as the aggressor and the party that escalated the tension.

Following the escalation of these developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean, the Memorandum of Understanding named “Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of National Accord of the State of Libya on the Limitation of Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean” was signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Turkey and Libya on 27 November 2019. The UN has

approved the international agreement signed between Turkey and Libya by Article 102 of the United Nations Charter. Thus, Türkiye has achieved one of the most important diplomatic successes in recent times. Because of this agreement, Turkey has disrupted the EastMed project, which aims to transport the gas in the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe, which Greece, Israel, the Greek Cypriot administration, and other riparian countries were trying to establish, thus disabling Turkey (Bulut and Bulut, 2021, p. 38, 48).

Relations with Russia, with which Turkey has recently maintained its relations in foreign policy without any problems, continued to develop in the post-2017 period. In fact, from Russia's perspective, "Turkey, the unreliable NATO member of the Cold War years and the rival of the 1990s has in a sense become a partner that Moscow does not dare to sacrifice today." For Turkey, Russia, which was once seen as the major threat in the north, has begun to be seen as a strategic partner. Turkey-Russia relations, which have become closer with social contacts such as suitcase trade, tourism, education, and mixed marriages, have come a long way in terms of level and content. "Although Turkey's recently developed "zero problem" approach may not yield the desired results in relations with countries such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Armenia, it can be said that it has yielded very satisfactory results in relations with Russia" (Özbay, 2013, p. 32). It would not be wrong to say that in the post-2017 period, Turkey tried to establish a balance with Russia in response to the problems it experienced with Western countries. Although Turkey and Russia do not agree on every issue, they can act together on many issues. For example, in the ongoing conflicts in Libya, Russia supported the coup leader Khalifa Haftar, while Turkey supported the National Accord Government. Similarly, in Syria, Russia supports the Assad regime and stands against Turkey. However, the two countries can continue the Astana process to resolve the Syrian crisis by including Iran.

The Russia-Ukraine War, which broke out in February 2022, was an important turning point for Turkish foreign policy, as it was for the rest of the world. Although Turkey made many diplomatic moves to stop the war both before and during the war, it failed to stop the war. However, at this point, it has managed to gain the appreciation and trust of the warring parties. So much so that Turkey has become the only country that can meet with both Russia and Ukraine at the same time and play the role of mediator in making agreements such as the prisoner exchange agreement or the grain corridor agreement between the parties. Although the diplomatic negotiations carried out by the Turkish foreign ministry were effective in creating this situation, it is seen that President Erdoğan's relations with Russian President Putin and Ukrainian President Zelensky played an important role. On the other hand, while all NATO and EU countries imposed more than 3,000 sanctions against Russia after the Ukraine War, Turkey's failure to participate in these sanctions has been seriously criticized (Esen, 2022). On the other hand, as a rising regional power, Turkey played an outstanding role in diplomacy during the Ukraine war, setting an example for other regional powers. Describing the grain corridor as a bridge to peace, Ankara is doing two things at the same time. He points to problems with alternatives to the grain corridor to show that Russia must have a seat at the table in Western capitals. It is also warned that Russia is looking for an alternative route via the Caspian Sea (Duran, 2023) The role Turkey played in the grain deal process was appreciated all over the world, especially in the USA and the EU (BBC, 2022)

It is possible to say that the relations between Turkey and the EU have had ups and downs and a generally negative course, especially in recent times. Especially after the July 15 Coup attempt, the EU's criticism of Turkey's state of emergency practices, many EU member states granting asylum to those who participated in the coup attempt, and the negative and accusatory discourses against the Turkish government, both in the media and at the government level, were watched with astonishment in Turkey. In addition, for the elections held in Turkey in 2017, the fact that Turkish politicians and Ministers were not allowed to conduct election

campaigns in EU countries was an important problem. The fact that Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya, the Minister of Family and Social Policies at the time, was not allowed to go to the Turkish Consulate General in Rotterdam in the Netherlands and was subsequently declared *persona non grata* and deported seriously damaged relations (Euronews, 2017). In addition, Turkey announced that it suspended the Agreement in July 2019 due to the EU's failure to fulfill its commitments regarding the Readmission Agreement and Visa Liberalization signed between the EU and Turkey. The recent rise of far-right parties in EU countries and their anti-Turkey and anti-Islam discourses make Turkey's EU membership even more difficult. In response to this negative situation, President Erdoğan said, “In this period when the European Union is making moves to break away from Turkey to break away from Turkey, we will make our evaluation against these developments and after these evaluations, we can part ways with the European Union if necessary” (NTV, 2023) and revealed Turkey's attitude.

During the AK Party rule, Turkey contributed to the activation of a wider range of foreign policy actors by diversifying traditional foreign policy issues. Recent revolutionary developments in the “domestic” and “national” defense industry have contributed greatly to increasing Turkey's self-confidence, independence, and deterrence in this process. Turkey has gained self-confidence in the fight against terrorism and emerged as a deterrent and initiative-taking power in its region. Türkiye started to export new-generation weapons to other countries. Turkish UAVs were successfully used in Libya, Karabakh, and Ukraine. Ultimately, increased military capacity led to the adoption of a new security strategy and an autonomous status in foreign policy orientation. One of the most important factors affecting Turkish foreign policy during the AK Party's rule was the political stability provided by the party. Turkey suffered greatly during the short-lived coalition governments of the 1990s. Domestic political stability has enabled Turkey to take effective steps in foreign policy. After the abolition of bureaucratic tutelage, elected politicians began to play a more active role in the design and execution of foreign policy. In this process, Erdoğan played a decisive role in carrying out a high-profile and proactive foreign policy, first as prime minister and then as president. One of the most important indicators of Erdogan's leadership is the mediation efforts between Ukraine and Russia. Erdogan persuaded the warring parties to reach an agreement allowing the grain to be exported to the world market. Recently, Turkey's role in international politics has increased as it has been able to negotiate directly with the Russian administration about trying to persuade the two sides to a ceasefire and end the war, and trying to get Russia to return to the grain corridor agreement (Ataman, 2022).

Conclusion

Turkey, a medium-sized state with power and capacity in the international system, emerged on the stage of history as the successor state of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over three continents for approximately 600 years when it was founded 100 years ago. The Republic of Turkey, which had a structure in the form of a nation-state, unlike the empire, under the leadership of its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, first tried to have its existence accepted in the international system during the founding years of the Republic. In this context, the Treaty of Lausanne, signed on July 24, 1923, on the one hand, drew the borders of Turkey, and on the other hand, ensured the recognition of the newly established state in the international system.

After the newly established state was declared a Republic on October 29, 1923, approximately 3 months after the Treaty of Lausanne, what kind of government it would have and, more importantly, what kind of foreign policy it would follow, became a matter of curiosity for the international community. In this context, since Atatürk and the founding staff came from the late Ottoman bureaucracy and military staff, they saw very well the mistakes made during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, they primarily aimed to ensure the internal integrity of the newly established state and adopted a down-to-earth, realistic foreign policy

that did not lead to adventure. In this context, they based Turkish foreign policy on the principles of Status Quo and Westernism. While these principles essentially reveal that Turkey will not pursue a revisionist and expansionist foreign policy, it has revealed that it has chosen the Western world, which seems to be the peak of contemporary civilization, as its target.

The founding President of the Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, between 1923 and 1938, built Turkish foreign policy rationally and realistically, on the Westernist and Status Quo principles stated above. It can be said that this foreign policy approach, which has guided Turkish foreign policy for approximately 75 years, dominated the genetic codes of the state until the 2000s. Atatürk, who primarily aimed to transform Turkish society into a Western state with his reforms, reshaped the state in the form of a nation-state, which is expressed as the spirit or fashion of the time. It can be said that Atatürk tried to strengthen Turkey both economically and politically during the founding years of the Republic, and pursued a more independent foreign policy compared to the periods after him. During his time, Atatürk gave priority to solving the problems remaining from the Treaty of Lausanne, and in this context, problems such as the Mosul Problem with England, the problem of debts from France and the Ottoman Empire, and the population exchange with Greece and the patriarchy problem were solved. The foreign policy of the period, which was identified with the motto of Peace at Home, Peace in the World during the Atatürk period, gained the appreciation of the international community, and Turkey was invited to become a member of the League of Nations, the first universal organization, due to its contributions to world peace.

These basic principles and orientations of the foreign policy of the Atatürk period also form the basis and shed light on the foreign policy that Turkey implements today. Today, Turkey foresees the establishment of peace, stability, and security in the widest possible scope, starting from its surroundings, and wishes for all countries to form integral parts of a common welfare area in line with mutual interests and win-win understanding. Turkey, which has taken a more active stance in this direction in recent years due to both the changes in the international environment and the positive developments in its power resources, is taking firm steps in line with the goal and vision drawn by Atatürk.

Although the Turkish foreign policy followed during the Atatürk period did not include revisionist and adventurous aims, Atatürk managed to take the management of the Straits, which is of vital importance for Turkey, under his sovereignty with the Montreux Straits Convention, by using the revisionist discourses and actions of Italy and Germany in the conjuncture of the 1930s. While this situation was a huge geo-strategic gain for Turkey, Turkey did not enter into any conflict while achieving this gain, it only used the *rebus sic stantibus* principle existing in international law and thus gained international legitimacy.

The basis of the successes achieved in foreign policy during Atatürk's time lies in the fact that Atatürk and the founding staff were able to focus on the future of the country without being stuck in its Imperial past. By determining its future vision and goals, the newly established state was able to determine the interests of the country calmly and prudently and take the necessary steps for the interests of the state with courage. In addition, for the state to be successful both internally and externally, it has been able to provide an external environment that will allow comprehensive reforms and revolutions to take root within the country and to use its energy and resources in this direction. In this respect, the foreign policy of the Atatürk period has become a model for many countries, thanks to these features and the success it has achieved in practice.

Although there was no change in the general line of Turkish foreign policy after Atatürk's death, a fully independent foreign policy could not be followed as in the Atatürk period, due to the effects of World War II. Because Turkey's geopolitical position was important

for both the UK-France and Germany-Italy blocs, the countries in both blocs tried to persuade Turkey to join the war on their side. However, Turkey, under the Presidency of İsmet İnönü, tried to keep its relations with both blocs as good as possible, but did its best to avoid going to war and was successful in this. Although Turkey followed the “policy of active neutrality” during World War II, this neutrality was closer to the British-French Bloc with the prediction that it would win the war.

Turkey, seeking a place for itself in the new international system that emerged after World War II, had to pay the price of not actively participating in the war in post-war loneliness. For this reason, after the war, it did not take part in the Western Bloc at first and then tried to find a place for itself in the bipolar structure that emerged in the world. Frankly, although Türkiye did not actively participate in the war, its economy suffered great damage. In addition to the economic difficulties, the USSR, its northern neighbor, which emerged on the world stage as a superpower during this period, claimed rights over Kars and Ardahan, as well as demanded a military base in the Turkish Straits, which caused the Turkish government to worry and pushed it to seek an alliance against the Soviets. In this context, Turkey wanted to find a place for itself in the capitalist Western Bloc that emerged under the leadership of the USA, the other superpower that emerged after the war. In fact, due to its weakness and low capacity in this period, Turkey was forced to do this to balance itself against the USSR. However, it has never been easy for Turkey to be accepted within the Western Bloc. Because Turkey has been governed by a single-party system by CHP, the founding party, since the proclamation of the Republic, and this is not seen as a democratic administration by Western countries, Turkey switched to a multi-party system for the first time with the elections held in 1946. Although these elections were not fair and equal according to international standards, Turkey managed to transition to a multi-party system.

As a result of the elections held in 1950, the Democratic Party, founded by deputies from the CHP, managed to come to power on its own and then quickly tried to integrate Turkish foreign policy into the Western Bloc. In this context, Turkey first sent troops to Korea by the decision taken by the UN Security Council and lost around 750 martyrs in the Korean War. After that, it became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the collective defense organization of the Western Bloc, together with Greece, in 1952, within the scope of the Containment Policy implemented by the USA to prevent the expansion of the USSR during the Cold War. With this membership, Turkey balanced the distrust it felt from the USSR by entering this defense organization and gained a place for itself within the Western Bloc. However, after NATO membership, Turkish foreign policy almost completely lost its autonomy and began to follow a foreign policy that was dependent on the Western Bloc and even prioritized the interests of the West over its national interests.

The Cuban Crisis, which broke out in 1962 when the Cold War reached its peak, made it clear that Turkey's Pro-West policy was wrong. Because the Jupiter missiles carrying medium-range nuclear warheads placed in Turkey before the Cuban Crisis were dismantled without asking Turkey. This situation has been an important development as it shows that one cannot always rely on the West, especially in defense and security issues. Similarly, after the incident that went down in political history as the Johnson Letter, which took place approximately 2 years after this incident, the US administration openly threatened Turkey and stated that Turkey could not intervene in Cyprus with the weapons given by the US and that if it intervened, the Soviet Union would have to intervene in the incident. He clearly stated that he would not protect Turkey in this situation. This incident caused a rupture in Turkish foreign policy, and it was seen that a pro-US or one-sided foreign policy would not coincide with Turkey's national interests. Approximately 10 years after this incident, on July 20, 1974, the arms embargo against Turkey following the Peace Operation organized by Turkey against the

coup by the Greek junta in Cyprus, in a way, revealed Turkey's foreign dependency on the defense industry. At this point, Turkish governments also saw how vital domestic and national defense systems could be and laid the foundations of the Turkish defense industry, which will show itself better in the 2000s. After this incident, companies such as ASELSAN (1975), TUSAŞ-TAİ (1973), HAVELSAN (1982), and ROKETSAN (1988) were established, which constitute the backbone of the Turkish Defense Industry today, and attempts were made to reduce foreign dependency in this field. Greece left NATO's military wing to protest the situation after the Cyprus Peace Operation. On the other hand, as a result of the US pressure on the military administration in Turkey, Turkey lifted the veto on Greece's return to the military wing of NATO. This essentially means that in the following years, Turkey will use its last trump card to balance Greece against Greece after becoming an EU member. In other words, if the military administration in Turkey had not allowed Greece to enter NATO's military wing. This situation could have been used to prevent the damage it caused to Turkey regarding the EU. Although the USA does not openly support one side of the Cyprus issue, its aim in this process is to prevent the tension between Turkey and Greece from harming NATO.

In the 1980s, while Turkey was added to the global capitalist system with the decisions of January 24, 1980, the economy also transitioned to the Export Oriented Economy Model. Following this, with the military coup that took place on September 12, 1980, Turkey remained isolated from the world for a while. After the coup, relations with the European Communities, as they were called at that time, were frozen until 1987.

In the 1990s, the collapse of the USSR caused a great power vacuum in Turkey's immediate surroundings, especially Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Middle East, and this led to the emergence of new opportunities for Turkey. The Turkish World discourse, from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China, which came to the agenda in this period, became the basic discourse of Turkish foreign policymakers. However, although this discourse was a very visionary project and discourse for that period, it could not be evaluated due to Turkey's ineffectiveness and lack of capacity. Undoubtedly, in this situation, Turkey could not focus on the process due to the economic and political crises experienced in domestic politics.

In Turkey, which entered the 2000s with economic and political crises, the process that started with the Constitution booklet throwing crisis in February 2001 resulted in early general elections on November 3, 2002. Following the elections, the AK Party, which was founded approximately 18 months ago, came to power on its own. AK Party, which uses a liberal-conservative discourse and emerged as the first party despite losing votes in all elections since 2002, has left its mark on Turkish political life with the policies it pursues in both domestic and foreign policy.

During the AK Party period, between 2002 and 2015, a foreign policy was followed that was outside the traditional Westernist and Status Quo Turkish foreign policy line, which was criticized for being overly idealistic, in parallel with the Strategic Depth understanding created by Ahmet Davutoğlu. During this period, Turkey developed bilateral and multilateral relations with the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans, which remained in the Ottoman sphere of influence during the Ottoman Empire, and tried to create an attraction on these regions by using soft power elements. In addition, within the scope of the principle of zero problems with neighbors, it tried to solve the existing problems with its close neighbors, including Armenia, and was generally successful in this policy until 2011. However, the Arab Spring that started in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 and the subsequent popular uprisings caused breaks in the idealist foreign policy line followed by Turkey based on humanitarian principles. Turkey, which had difficulty coping with the increasing number of refugees, especially after the civil war that started in Syria, could not receive the support it expected from the international community. While Turkey's open-door policy towards refugees increased the number of

refugees to approximately 4 million, the other hand, education and health expenses for refugees put the AK Party governments in a difficult situation. Refugees going to Europe via Turkey also affected Turkey's relations with the EU. During periods when relations deteriorated, Turkey was accused by the politicians of the EU countries of using immigrants as a foreign policy tool (Temir, 2023, p. 37).

The last 15 years of Turkish foreign policy have been very active, and dizzying events have occurred. Of course, the most important of these events is the coup attempt that took place on July 15, 2016. After this incident, Turkey's failure to receive the necessary support from Western countries, especially the USA, and even their discomfort with the failure of the coup process caused disappointment in Turkey. After the coup attempt, the deterioration of bilateral relations and the loss of trust, especially with the USA, since the March 1, 2003 Memorandum, left its mark on the following process. Bilateral relations, which have come to the brink of a diplomatic and political crisis, especially with the recent Pastor Bronson Crisis, have caused both intervention in the Turkish judiciary and great damage to Turkey's reputation, as well as a significant decline in the Turkish lira in economic terms. In addition, Turkey was included within the scope of CAATSA sanctions because it did not want to sell Patriot Missile Defense Systems and other military equipment to Turkey, but Turkey met its military needs from the Russian Federation, and the S-400 Air Defense systems were incompatible with NATO systems and would render NATO's defense systems dysfunctional. Therefore, Turkey was removed from the new generation F-35 Fighter program. All these developments are very important in terms of revealing a type of relationship within NATO that the USA sees as its ally. At this point, it would of course be appropriate to ask the following question. What would happen if Türkiye were not an ally of the USA and a member of NATO?

One of the countries with which Turkey has had recent problems has undoubtedly been Greece. A new problem has been added to the existing problems between Greece and Turkey, such as the Cyprus Problem, the Continental Shelf, the Armament of the Islands, and the FIR Line after the hydrocarbon resources were discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece, which is disturbed by Turkey's search for resources in this region, is trying to prevent it despite the right of exploration given to Turkey by international law. Greece constantly makes decisions against Turkey in the EU, both on this issue and in other problem areas and on illegal immigration, and uses accusatory rhetoric against Turkey

After the AK Party came to power, it almost went beyond the traditional Turkish Foreign Policy and followed a libertarian approach to the Cyprus issue. In this context, the Annan Plan, which came to the agenda in the early 2000s and proposed a single-state solution, was supported by the AK Party governments. It is possible to say that the change in the domestic politics of the TRNC and the ongoing positive developments for the membership process between the EU and Turkey had an impact on this process.

Left parties began to emerge in TRNC as an alternative to Turkish Cypriot nationalism. These parties embraced the idea of a common homeland shared with the Greek Cypriots and defended the ideology of "Cypriotism". In this context, they questioned the presence of Turkey and the Turkish soldiers on the island. Internal economic problems caused leftist groups to find a base on the island. Here, CTP-BG came to the fore under the leadership of Mehmet Ali Talat. Turkey's presence in the TRNC is essential for the right-wing nationalist parties on the island (Çolak, 2013, p. 7-10). The plan, which was revised four times and presented to the parties by the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan within the framework of his goodwill mission, includes different regulations in terms of basic issues. If we examine the plan for the Turkish side, it has been relatively positive compared to what it was before it was revised, but it is still not clear that it is an ideal solution. The plan does not recognize the sovereignty of the TRNC,

and after the acceptance of the plan, it does not grant sovereignty to the Turkish constituent power. It is not based on the previously observed principle of bi-zonality.

As seen in the plan, the Turkish Cypriot people are losing their existing rights and privileges, and dichotomy is being eliminated. Thus, the structure created by the Zurich, London, and Nicosia Agreements and the existence of two communities are rejected. The property regulation in the plan and approaches to EU norms, the significant number of Greek population to be settled in the region to be left to the Turkish Cypriot State within the specified periods, and how issues such as land concessions are arranged, not only eliminate the bi-zonality but also force a significant part of the Turkish Cypriots to migrate. As Rauf Denktaş stated, the Annan Plan will turn Turkish Cypriots into a “protected minority” on the island, just like our compatriots in Greece (Denktaş, 2007, p. 12). Following the rejection of the Annan Plan by the Greek Cypriots with a rate of 65%, its unconditional acceptance as a member of the EU, and the problems experienced with the Greek Cypriot administration of Southern Cyprus and the deterioration of relations with the EU, Turkish foreign policy was redefined in the intervening period of approximately 20 years. It has reached the point of the bi-communal, two-state solution advocated by Denktaş.

After Turkey applied to the European Economic Community, then known as the European Economic Community, in 1959 for full membership, both within the scope of the principle of Westernism, which is one of the principles of the Republic's foreign policy and within the scope of the vision of the European Union, which was determined by the founding leader Atatürk as a modern civilization, it failed to become a member in the intervening time. In addition to the EU's prejudiced and ambivalent attitude towards Turkey, Turkey's shortcomings and flaws are responsible for this situation. However, despite all this, the inclusion of countries that are economically and politically behind Turkey as members shows a double standard towards Turkey. Turkey also has deficiencies, especially in terms of democracy, and is subject to criticism regarding human rights and freedom of expression. Such deficiencies are expressed in both EU progress reports and European Council reports.

While the Russia-Ukraine war, which has been going on around Turkey lately, once again reveals Turkey's strategic importance, Turkey can pursue a pro-active foreign policy due to both its bilateral relations with Russia and its increasing importance in international politics. It contributes to the solution of many international problems with its mediation role on many issues. In this context, for example, it has gained the appreciation of the whole world due to the grain corridor agreement established with the initiative of Turkey and the UN. On the other hand, although Turkey uses both soft power policies and diplomatic channels to solve problems, it has not hesitated to use hard power elements to realize its national interests by international law in cases where these are not sufficient. So much so that Turkey has recently sent soldiers and military aid to Libya upon the invitation of the UN-recognized legitimate Government of National Accord to disrupt the steps aimed at restricting its sovereignty and jurisdiction in the Mediterranean and to defend Turkey's rights. Similarly, in 2020, it provided Azerbaijan, with which it has close allied relations with the “one state, two nations” discourse, to Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been occupied by Armenia since 1994, by providing state-of-the-art UAVs andUCAVs to liberate it from the occupation in 44 days. On the other hand, to end the threats from its Southern Neighbor Syria, it organized 4 cross-border military operations, despite the USA and Russia, and created a 30 km deep safe zone on the border.

While we are living in the second decade of the 21st century, Turkey's foreign policy, which is celebrating its hundredth anniversary, generally showed a status quo and Western-oriented tendency until the 2000s and has started to follow a multifaceted policy since the 2000s. Changing international conditions and the proactive policies followed by the AK Party have a great impact on the formation of this situation. The AK Party governments and Erdogan's

leadership initiated the development of an Ankara-centered, that is, independent foreign policy orientation. Having given up its traditional ideological understanding, Turkey seems to have tried to highlight its national interests on many issues, taking the risk of angering its “allies” during the AK Party period. In this process, Turkey is trying to follow a rational, pragmatic, interest-oriented, and sectoral foreign policy, establishing direct dialogue with all countries in the world and acting according to its interests, instead of the traditional status quo and Western-centered foreign policy. While trying to maintain its relations with its traditional allies, Turkey has begun to redefine its foreign policy goals and relations with its allies. In this process, Turkey abandoned its hierarchical relationship with the West and started relations based on equality. In other words, Turkey has started to sit at the table with all actors as equal partners and redefined its relations based on the principle of equal partnership (Ataman, 2022).

This change lies behind the recent tensions and axis change discussions that Turkey has experienced with its Western allies in foreign policy. When Turkey begins to follow policies independent of the West, it is punished and marginalized by its so-called allies. The biggest obstacle between Turkey and Western countries on this issue is undoubtedly that Western allies evaluate Turkey according to their conditions. As a result, Turkey is located in a region where constant wars and conflicts occur, where crises constantly break out around it, and this situation inevitably causes Turkey to follow more security-oriented policies. The biggest problem for Turkish foreign policy in the coming period will be whether it has the economic and military capacity to support its increasing weight in the international system. If Turkey achieves this, it will become a state that can realize its national interests, pursue an independent foreign policy, have a say in the international system, and set the agenda.

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