

**Turkish Foreign Policy toward Russia:  
Kemalism, Neo-Ottomanism & the Transition Out of Empire (1923-2020)**

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## **I. Introduction**

In this research I explore the role of nationalism in the Republic of Turkey's foreign policy toward Russia from the foundation of the Republic in 1923 to the present. Analyzing the influence of Turkish nationalism, in its ever-evolving forms, on its relations with Russia is both timely and relevant for two main reasons. First, there are few scholarly analyses that focus exclusively on Turco-Russian relations, while even fewer are interested in nationalism's role in this relationship. Intensified Turco-Russian rapprochement since 2016 signals a need for this type of analysis, especially since Russia has not been a high foreign policy priority in recent decades. The Turkish foreign policy establishment has been focused on either the West or the Middle East in the last century, lacking experience with Russia. Though think-tank and journalistic sources have been covering their bilateral relations closely in recent years, more expansive bodies of work are limited (Koru 2019, 19-20). Second, closer relations between Turkey and Russia reflect broader trends in international politics and have important implications for their neighbors. Russia has become a Turkish foreign policy priority as Turkey's EU bid becomes less realistic and relations with the U.S. have soured. Some scholars note that existing scholarship about Turkish foreign policy often underestimates the role of its intangible interests, such as national pride, and discounts its national agency in relations with the West (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 23-24; Koru 2019, 20; Cizre 2001, 3). Turkish foreign policy toward Russia has been influenced by nationalistic interests in the last century to the extent allowed by geopolitical limitations.

As Turkey pursues its more nationalistic interests, Russia has become a key supporter of its material needs. Whereas the U.S. and EU require compliance with their interests in exchange for funds, Russia is willing to work with Turkey in opposition of the West. Through either rationalist or constructivist analysis could explain Turkish foreign policy behavior, I have

concluded that a constructivist account of Turkish foreign policy offers the most appropriate account of Turco-Russian relations in the last century. Examining the evolution of Turkish nationalism from Kemalism to contemporary neo-Ottomanism in the context of international events is essential to understanding the genesis of Turkey-Russia rapprochement. In this paper I aim to demonstrate that Turkey-Russia relations cannot be understood on the basis of material factors alone. Turkish nationalism's evolving character explains important aspects of its foreign policy toward Russia for which material interests cannot account.

These conclusions were reached as the result of the following analyses. I examined four time periods in Turkish history to compare its relationship with Russia in the Foundational Period (1923-1939), Early Cold War (1949-1960), Post-Cold War Period (1989-2003) and Contemporary Period (2011-2020). In each section, I examined Turkey's domestic politics, foreign policy, and relations with Russia. Turkey's nationalistic interests in territorial integrity and Turkic or Muslim populations abroad are given special attention in each period. The result is a structured comparison of nationalistic influences on Turkey-Russia relations that reveals not only the evolving nature of Turkish nationalism, but also the endurance of Turkey's intense sensitivity to territorial integrity and interest in a leadership role in the Muslim world.

## **II. Literature Review**

Rapprochement between Turkey and Russia since the early 2010s signals that relations between these two powers need to be reevaluated as their regional roles and international orientations shift. Closer relations between these two states are, on many accounts, unexpected, which makes them peculiar from both a theoretical and historical standpoint. On the Turkish side, this new relationship raises questions specifically about the role of Turkish nationalism and overall ideology in its foreign policy. Turkey and Russia have been at odds both as empires and states on

a variety of fronts, including competing territorial claims, conflicting attitudes toward communism and different religious identities. Considering the ascribed strength of nationalism in Turkey's foundational state ideology and contemporary political rhetoric, understanding the Turkish Republic's foreign policy toward the Soviet Union and Russia requires an analysis of the role of nationalist influences in the formation of Turkish foreign policy.

This review highlights the breadth of relevant scholarship about Turkish foreign policy, the role of Turkey in the international system, the development of Turkish national identity, and the interrelation between foreign policy and identity in the Turkish Republic. The first section in this review will analyze various sources that seek to explain the relationship between foreign policy and identity in the Turkish Republic. The second section will examine sources that focus on Turkish foreign policy, emphasizing the value of these sources to analysis of nationalism's influences. The third section will address newer sources about Turkish foreign policy, noting the developments in scholarship about Turkish foreign policy since 2010. In this review I aim to highlight the plurality of views about the determining factors of Turkish foreign policy while noting the shortcomings in this scholarship in terms of sources that specifically address Turkish foreign policy toward Russia.

### **Analyses of Foreign Policy & Identity**

Despite the fact that there is a limited number of sources that explicitly address the subject of Turkish foreign policy and national identity together, scholarly opinions about the relationship between these aspects of the Turkish state are varied. These books provide detailed analyses of the relationship between national identity and foreign policy in the Turkish context, using the former to, in some way, explain the latter. Differing viewpoints on this relationship present varied

opinions about the closeness of national identity and foreign policy, ranging from closely intertwined to loosely associated.

Some analyses of the relationship between identity and foreign policy insist upon the consistent influence of Turkish nationalism on foreign policy decisions. According to Bozdağlıoğlu (2003), domestic and international relations both contribute to the development of Turkish identity and cause identity crises. “Material gains,” generally associated with geopolitical interests, pursued through foreign policy are still made on the basis of Turkish nationalist interests (8-9). This analysis suggests that nationalism influences most aspects of Turkish foreign policy, claiming that many foreign policy decisions, even those with geopolitical motivations, are closely connected to nationalistic endeavors and overall state ideology.

Other viewpoints consider Turkish nationalism’s influence to extend beyond Turkey’s borders. Uzer (2011) suggests that the “Kemalist identity” is what ultimately defines Turkey as a country and its identity in foreign policy. Turkey’s foreign policy interests in the “Turkic world” are considered to be another key determinant of foreign policy, though Turkey has pursued these interests with varying degrees of intensity. Interest in the “Turkic world” is reminiscent of Pan-Turkism, a political movement that began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, seeking political unity among speakers of Turkic languages from the former Ottoman Empire and Russia to Iran, Afghanistan and China (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 96-98). According to Uzer (2011), there are three “paths” that Turkish nationalism takes in foreign policy, including official Kemalist nationalism, ethnic nationalism, and conservative nationalism. Each of the three “paths” influences Turkish foreign policy differently.

Additional analyses do not support the idea that nationalism consistently influences Turkish foreign policy. According to Kösebalaban (2011) there are four main “identity” groups

that define domestic politics and consequently influence Turkish foreign policy: secularist nationalism (Kemalism), Islamic nationalism, secularist liberalism, and Islamic liberalism. Likewise, Islamism versus secularism and liberalism versus nationalism are the two “classic fault lines” that define Turkish politics (xiv). Conflict between these four identity groups, not overarching nationalistic goals, shapes foreign policy orientation in Turkey, and each group wields varying influence based on their role in domestic politics (Kösebalaban 2011, 1). Differences among the identity groups’ foreign policy attitudes suggests that nationalist influences on Turkish foreign policy vary based on the political context and other identity-motivated interests. The concept of Turkish nationalism, therefore, is not monolithic, but rather subject to change based on political and religious influences.

### **Surveys of Foreign Policy**

Scholarship about Turkish foreign policy without a direct focus on nationalism also provides important context for the evolution of Turkish foreign policies toward Russia. Chronological accounts of the foreign policy history of Turkey and Russia are essential to understanding the historical context, strengthening overall analysis of nationalistic influences.

Gökay (2006) surveys Soviet policies toward Turkey from 1921 to 1991, making it an outlier in this research. Despite the fact that it examines Turco-Soviet relations from the Soviet perspective, the specificity of this book, focusing on their bilateral relations, warrants its inclusion because it contains accounts of relations between Turkey and Turkic minorities within the Soviet Union. Oran (2011), translated from Turkish, chronicles Turkish foreign policy from 1919 to 2006. It was written to move away from the “official history” flair of *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası* (Turkish Foreign Policy through Events), first to modernize the context of events and, second, to

expand the perspective through which events are considered (xi-xii). Hale (2013) covers late Ottoman foreign relations from 1774 to 1918 as well as Turkish foreign policy from 1918 to 2013. A significant portion of the book focuses on post-Cold War relations, including Turkey's relations with the United States, the EU, Greece and Cyprus, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Russia and the former Soviet Union. Both Oran (2011) and Hale (2013) cover the important issues of Turkey-West relations, Turkey's EU accession, Turkey-EU relations and Turkey-NATO-US relations but lack a theoretical framework with which recent shifts in Turkish relations with these entities and Russia can be examined in light of recent domestic and foreign policy developments (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 22). These books, therefore, are included as historical references.

### **Contemporary Analyses of Turkish Foreign Policy**

The aforementioned texts demonstrate limitations in terms of their approach toward Turkey-Russia relations. Turkey's increasingly strained relations with the West have pushed it towards other powers, including Russia and Iran. Newer analyses develop the discourse about ideology's role Turkish foreign policy, seeking an explanation for Turkey's changing role and behavior in the international system, which traditional theories seem unable to explain. Contemporary sources generally have a greater focus on Turkey's foreign policy toward Russia because of recent developments in their bilateral relations, which have become a topic of interest in Turkish foreign policy scholarship. The theoretical framework of recent works reflects a shift that accounts for Turkey's fallout with the EU and U.S. and unforeseen rapprochement with Russia. In addition to new theories about Turkish foreign policy, newer sources also reflect Turkey's increasing interest in pursuing its own interests through mutually-beneficial bilateral cooperation.

In the context of recent Turkey-Russia rapprochement, Turkey's behavior has raised questions about its role as a NATO member and future in the West. Canan-Sokullu (2013) suggests that the end of the Cold War opened a watershed of new foreign policy and security challenges and opportunities for Turkey. With these new "hard security" interests also came new "soft security" issues, including matters of ethnicity, culture and religious affiliation. Changes in Turkey's foreign policy have accelerated since the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Gözen Ercan (2017) offers a thematic overview of Turkish foreign policy since 1923, suggesting that it has been evolving continually since the foundation of the Republic. The vital role of mutual economic and security interests in contemporary Turkey-Russia relations, to which recent rapprochement can be attributed, is again apparent. Canan-Sokullu (2013), Gözen Ercan (2017) and other analyses of modern Turkish foreign policy tend to juxtapose Turkey's growing influence in the Middle East and Balkans and Turkey-Russia relations with Turkey's European aspirations, highlighting the country's changing goals and role in the international system.

Turkey's recent foreign policy behavior shows that it is now less motivated to achieve integration into the EU. In the context, therefore, Dursun-Özkanca (2019) claims that using the Europeanization thesis or constructivism are inadequate indicators of Turkish foreign policy (23). These assertions signal the need for updated analysis of Turkish foreign policy to understand recent developments. Contemporary Turkish foreign policy and motivations cannot be fully understood through the traditional theories of international relations, which are widely employed in Western scholarship, claiming that such analyses do not account for the intricacies of Turkish foreign policy (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 3). Dursun-Özkanca (2019) supports using the neorealist theory of inter-alliance opposition to examine contemporary Turkish foreign policy, saying that other theories overemphasize system structure at the expense of a state's agency (25). Instead of looking West,



Turkey is engaging mutual interests with regional actors, exercising its agency by testing the boundaries of its alliances and pursuing its own interests as its foreign policy evolves.

This research considers developments in scholarship about Turkish foreign policy in both analysis of recent foreign policy and retrospective analysis of Turkish foreign policy since 1923. Trends identified as sufficient explainers of contemporary foreign policy, such as the growing weight of shared interests in Turkey-Russia bilateral relations, will be examined in other historical contexts. Given that newer analyses of Turkish foreign policy focus heavily on recent decades, this research will synthesize a variety of theories in hopes of producing a framework appropriate for examining the role of nationalism in Turkish foreign policy since the foundation of the Republic in 1923.

### **III. Methods & Theory**

This research addresses the following core questions: What is the role of Turkish nationalism in foreign policy toward Russia? How does the influence of nationalism on these policies change from the 1920s to the present? What are the strongest determinants of nationalism's influence since the foundation of the Turkish Republic? What are the key geopolitical interests in the Turkey-Russia relationship? Do constructivist methods prevail over rationalist methods as the most appropriate means of analyzing Turkish foreign policy toward Russia? This research presents a review and analysis of existing literature about Turkish foreign policy and identity, Turkish foreign policy toward Russia, and Turkey-Russia relations, synthesizing these different focuses to determine the role of nationalism in Turkish foreign policy toward Russia since 1923. It also draws on recent events in Turkish-Russian relations to offer a timely analysis of the role of nationalism in contemporary Turkish foreign policy.

This research examines four periods of the history of the Turkish Republic, chosen for their value to analysis of policies toward Russia. The first period chosen spans from 1923 to 1939, marking the foundational period of the Turkish Republic and the final years of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's life. At this time, Atatürk was in control of politics, and key developments were made in terms of state ideology and identity. Turkey solidified its Turkish majority and the meaning of the Kemalist ideology, laying the foundations for Turkish nationalism, during this period. The next time period ranges from 1949 to 1960, which includes the early Cold War era and Turkey's accession to NATO. Cooperation with the U.S. and Europe increased during this time, strengthening Turkey's anti-communist stance and sparking antagonism with the Soviet Union. The third time period examined in this research spans from 1989 to 2003, starting with the fall of the Berlin Wall and ending with the United States' invasion of Iraq. Turkey's application to the EU was postponed after the collapse of the Soviet Union and independence of the former Soviet Republics because conflicts in the North and South Caucasus and the Balkans occupied international priorities. The final time period analyzed in this research starts in 2011 and continues to the present, examining developments in Turkey-Russia relations since the start of the Syrian Civil War. Steady rapprochement has been the most noteworthy development in Turkey-Russia relations in this last decade.

### **East versus West Dichotomy**

Discourse about the role of both Turkey and Russia in the international system often includes the civilizational question of East versus West. Both countries grapple with their role in the international system and aspire to belong to a civilization higher than that of the East, yet, in

their own ways, neither truly fits into the West. Turkey and Russia are both arguably located at the intersection of East and West, making their civilizational identities difficult to define.

In the Ottoman period, the West was a source of modernization and reforms that occurred mostly at the institutional level (Kösebalaban 2011, 25-26; Scruton 2007). In the early Republic, “Kemalist” Westernization served as defensive modernization and was the basis for reforms of both social structure and political institutions to keep up with the West, proving far more transformative than Ottoman-era Westernization (Kösebalaban 2011, 47-51; Scruton 2007). For the Russian Empire, Westernization was a strategy to lift Russia out of the “backwardness” in which Peter the Great considered his empire to be through the modernization of institutions (Scruton 2007). By the start of the Soviet Union, however, Westward aspirations had subsided, replaced by Lenin’s ideas of socialism guided by the “‘science’ of history” based on an antiquated interpretation of Western society (Gökay 2006, 3). The parallels in Turkey and Russia’s transitions out of empire promoted cooperation and solidarity until Stalin pursued more aggressive policies toward Turkey.

During the Cold War, Turkey chose the West over the Eastern bloc, making the USSR an adversary. In the post-Cold War system, however, it is unclear whether Turkey still desires inclusion in the West. The collapse of the Soviet Union disrupted Turkey’s rationale for alignment with the West. Moreover, Turkey views the West to be in somewhat of a decline since the Cold War, emboldening it to pursue more self-confident foreign policy (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 3-4). Looking to both the East and West could maximize the benefits of Turkey’s geography and fortify ties in multiple international blocs (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 5). Examining the role of East-versus-West discourse in Turkey, Russia, and Turkey-Russia relations helps to explain the complexity and importance of these states’ national identities and their influence on foreign policy.

### **Constructivist versus Rationalist Methods of Analysis**

Determining the extent of nationalism's influence on Turkish foreign policy begins with constructivist and rationalist analyses of the Republic's behavior. Though these methods attribute foreign policy motivations to different factors, the underlying interests driving foreign policy decisions can often be explained by both theories simultaneously. For example, pursuing a territorial interest may also advance nationalistic goals formed around the perceived significance of the land in question. Untangling the overlap of these theories, therefore, is essential to understanding how and when nationalism emerges as the dominant determinant of foreign policy. Contrarily, if rationalism prevails as the strongest account of Turkish foreign policy for a certain event, nationalism would appear to be a more marginal foreign policy determinant.

#### *Rationalist Methods*

Rationalist methods explain events chronologically, making the assumption that a sequence of related events, and any associated patterns of repeated events, can be evaluated in a reasonably objective way (Nau 2015, 15). In rationalist analysis, a state's foreign policy is driven by its structural position, including its relative power or geography (Rathbun 2011, 3). In the case of Turkey, these factors include the likes of Turkey's Black Sea shores and the Straits, its medium power status or its influence in the Balkans and South Caucasus. Though both the realist and liberal theories of international relations are included in rationalist methods of analysis, only the realist account of Turkish foreign policy will be considered in comparison to the constructivist account in this research.

Realism explains international relations through a struggle for power created by the system's anarchy. States have two types of power, latent and military (Aktürk 2006, 346). A realist account might explain that Turkey's early Cold War policies improved GDP and increased the

population size to gain latent power, while its cooperation with Western powers secured resources to increase its military power (Aktürk 2006, 346). If this were true, Turkey joined the NATO alliance to counter the Soviet Union while pursuing its self-serving interest in greater military power and funding for economic development (Kösebalaban 2011, 73; Nau 2015, 37). In the realist account of foreign policy, states seek a favorable balance of power, usually in relation to the single biggest threat to their security (Aktürk 2006, 346).

Rationalist analysis helps to understand why states make foreign policy decisions contrary to the welfare of society as a whole. For example, a state may continue fighting a war longer than necessary because leadership fears the political consequences of failure. As a result, leaders may bargain with domestic institutions, which privilege some groups over others, to realize their desired end goals (Rathbun 2011, 4). In rationalist analysis, therefore, domestic politics are where competing individual and group interests clash over the state (Rathbun 2011, 6). The results of these clashes and state foreign policy decisions create outcomes that become the chronological basis for succeeding events. Manifestations of nationalism in Turkish foreign policy, in a realist account, would be a byproduct of Turkey's overall pursuit of relative military and economic power and any associated conflicts of interests among domestic and international entities (Nau 2015, 201). Thus, rationalist analysis considers military and economic power to be primary foreign policy determinants.

### *Constructivist Methods*

Realism was the prevailing theory of international relations until relatively recently, when critical social theorists, constructivists, began to analyze the role of political, social and psychological factors in determining foreign policy (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 3). Constructivist methods emphasize ideas, including language and social discourse, over power and institutions

(Nau 2015, 15). These methods of analysis are often used to describe Turkish foreign policy, especially in relation to Turkish national identity (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 23). Constructivist methods look at the “social rather than material” aspects of international politics. Social context shapes actors’ identities and interests and causes national identity to manifest at the international level as a determinant of cooperation (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 3-4). In this framework, national values are externalized in foreign policy, and foreign relations are largely based on national self-concept. Per constructivist theory, nation-states create their own identity and self-concept, which is not definite or given, but rather “mutable” based on a given international relations context (Rathbun 2011, 5; Reyes 2014, 74). Constructivism focuses on the role of national identity and self-concept in international relations, which is useful to analysis of nationalist influences on Turkish foreign policy. Though constructivist analysis emphasizes national identity considerations, it also recognizes the evolving nature of their role in foreign policy.

Bozdağlıoğlu (2003) considers Turkey to be a unique case study for evaluating constructivist methods because of its position between East and West, North and South, Middle Eastern and Western, and Muslim and secular in the international system. His analysis employs Wendt’s constructivist theory, which views state identity as a key factor in explaining international relations, including anarchy and cooperation (4). This analysis would suggest that constructivism offers an accurate account of Turkish foreign policy behavior. While Dursun-Özkanca (2019) recognizes the frequent employment of constructivism by scholars of Turkish foreign policy, she argues that scholars using this theory fail to appreciate the extent of Turkey’s soft power influence, even when they acknowledge the role of domestic identity discourse in relation to the West and regional powers (23). Her analysis rejects constructivist theory in the study of Turkish foreign policy as inadequate for understanding recent developments. In light of recent Turkish foreign

policy behavior, Dursun-Özkanca (2019) favors the theory of inter-alliance opposition, which critiques constructivism and neorealism for failing to sufficiently consider state- and individual-level motivations for challenging the status quo of alliances (29).

### **Nationalism**

As nation-states were formed out of multiethnic empires in the post-World War I period, the principle of ‘one nation and one state’ formed the basis of modern nationalism. Shifting concepts of nations and state boundaries created a minority problem for many new nation-states, especially when state borders and nationalities’ territories overlapped (Barlas and Köksal 2014, 175). Though various theories of nationalism exist, these characteristics are foundational to the national self-concepts upon which nationalistic sentiment and ideology are built. Various conceptions of the causes and permanence of nationalism raise questions as to whether this is an inevitable phenomenon in the modern international system or merely a social construct.

#### *Ontological Security*

Nationalism promotes a desire to mitigate foreign influences through political activity among a culturally similar group, and it is a force that curtails these foreign influences while controlling members of the nation and the perceived national territory (Woodwell 2007, 16). Though the concept of a nation may be boundless, modern nations are delineated by fixed boundaries, dividing the self from the other (Anderson 1983, 16; O’Leary et al. 2001, 6). Nationalities must be conscious of themselves and convinced that the ethnic boundary separating them from foreigners should be a political one to uphold the state and its boundaries. In other words, state boundaries should also be ethnic boundaries, and the rulers of the state should share the same nationality as the nation (O’Leary et al. 2001, 6). Delineating between the foreign and

the nation reflects a desire for national self-determination, which emerges over time as different groups develop their individual national awareness and is perpetuated through norms that promote collective action (Woodwell 2007, 23). In this sense, nationalism can be viewed as an evolving perception of what is foreign and what is part of the nation, which is usually, though not indefinitely, associated with a territorial state and a corresponding state government.

The definition of “foreign” in any nation is highly contextualized, and it is often dependent on a political ideology (Woodwell 2007, 17; Kinnvall 2004, 750). Kemalism constructed its nationalism out of the multiethnic Ottoman context, identifying a core Turkish nation within a conglomerate entity. Atatürk articulated Turkish nationalism through a combination of Turkish and European elements, including the introduction of new fashions, secularization of the state, modernization of the Turkish language and adoption of the Latin alphabet (Reyes 2015, 83). Despite inspiration from European nation-states, political rhetoric portrays Turkey as a nation superior to Europe, especially in contemporary Turkish politics, due to its unique Ottoman past, which paints Europeans as an “other” in the Turkish context (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 31-32). “Turkified Islam” was the best identifier of the core Turkish nation for the new Republic, which thereby excluded the Greek and Armenian minority groups from the new nation-state (Cizre 2001, 5). Despite their shared faith, Arabs also became an “other” because they were more religious and considered “non-civilized” (Arman 2007, 136).

In the post-Sèvres Turkish context, Kurds are known for their interest in gaining autonomous territory within the Turkish Republic’s borders (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 72-73). Desire for an independent state is not only a strong basis for Kurdish nationalism, but also a legitimizing force for the consolidation of Kemalist state power in Turkey, the authority responsible for protecting the nation from external threats (Cizre 2011, 8; Reyes 2015, 73). The Kurds are not the



only Ottoman minority that has territorial interests in the Turkish Republic. Per the Treaty of Sèvres, the Armenians should also have gained autonomous territory (Akşin 2007, 157). Both the Kurds and the Armenians, therefore, are perceived as a threat to the integrity of near-“sacred” Anatolia (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 5). The condition of Cypriot Turks, considered “kinsmen” of the Turkish population, are frequently a foreign policy priority, largely because of the Greeks’ status as an “other” in the Turkish context (Uzer 2011, 141).

Though Russian nationalism is territorially-rooted, strong and today associated with Russian Orthodoxy, it had a different meaning in the Soviet Union. The Soviet context handled nationality very carefully. Whereas the Turkish context elevated Muslim identity to be a core identifier of Turks, Soviet nationality policies sought to elevate national identity above religious identity, especially in the Muslim republics of the USSR (Cornell 2011, 32). Though Russians are not a primary “other” in relation to the Turkish nation, their interaction with “others,” specifically Armenians and Greeks, has repeatedly sparked tensions in Turkey-Russia relations. The fact that nationality functioned differently in the Turkish Republic than in the Soviet Union demonstrates that political context is needed to activate the meaning of a nation’s identity (Woodwell 2007, 18). Whereas the territory of the Ottoman Empire significantly contracted when the Republic of Turkey was formed, the Soviet Union was similar in size to the Russian empire. As a result, the meaning of local nationalities was cultivated and supported through a policy called *Korenizatsiia* (nativization) to ensure political support for the Soviet government across all of the republics (Cornell 2011, 32-33). While culture, religion and ethnicity can be strong identifiers of a nation, they alone do not necessarily formulate a strong basis for nationalism without a political ideology (Woodwell 2007, 14). That in mind, national identity can be shaped into novel constructs to

interpret new historical events, and, therefore, a nation's ontological security questions can be invoked to support foreign policy decisions (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 31; Reyes 2015, 73).

Reyes (2015) presents Turkey as a case study for the concept of ontological security, which helps to understand the role of nationalism in Turkish foreign policy and vice versa. National narratives serve as one of the means of interpreting the domestic in relation to the foreign. Modern states cannot exist without a narrative or self-concept (Reyes 2015, 74). National narratives and self-concepts put nation-states within a defined territory but maintain a level of ontological security to limit uncertainty among the members of the nation, meaning concerns for the future play an important role in justifying foreign policy decisions (Reyes 2015, 75). "Immutable" anxiety about territorial integrity, linked with existential questions about the nation-state and its future, is a core concept of nationalism in the Turkish Republic (Cizre 2001, 3; Reyes 2015, 74).

To address these concerns, O'Leary et al. (2001) explain that some modern nation-states, including the Turkish Republic, engage in tactics known as "right-sizing" and "right peopling" the state, forming their foundational territories and population in correspondence with their desired nation and its perceived boundaries. These strategies have been used in the late Ottoman period, the early Turkish Republic, and continue to play a role in Turco-Kurdish relations (Cizre 2001, 14). Empires contracting into nation-states, such as the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic, often use these strategies to address the ontological security questions that arise from demographic changes and, often, territorial losses. Under these circumstances, the creation of refugee populations or expulsions of outsiders are a means of maintaining legitimacy among the people of the nation during the transition from empire to secular nation-state (O'Leary et al. 2011, 17). These themes are visible in Turkish history amid the contraction of the Ottoman Empire into

the Turkish Republic, population exchanges in the early 1920s, and the ongoing “Kurdish problem.”

### *Late Ottoman Nationalism*

Late Ottoman nationalism originates from the latter half of the nineteenth century. After the Treaty of Paris that ended the Crimean War in 1856, the Ottoman Empire was “sheltered under the umbrella of European law” against the Russian Empire. The Ottoman Empire was subsequently “Europeanized” by its increased contact with Western European powers (Akşin 2007, 31). In this context, Ottoman intellectuals explored new meanings of freedom and equality among the Ottoman population. In 1856 the Reform Decree reaffirmed earlier Tanzimat Reforms and made Muslims and non-Muslims equal before the law, which was unpopular among many, especially in the Levant region. The non-Muslim bourgeoisie of the Empire had become prosperous through cooperation with Western European powers and capitulations that gave non-Muslims legal and tax immunities, sparking tensions with Muslim Ottomans (Akşin 2007, 31-32).

Barkey (2008) suggests three identity “options” in the late Ottoman context. Ottomanism was based on the multinational and imperial empire model. Ottomanism promoted “unity of nationalities” and lands within the Empire, regardless of language or religion (Akşin 2007, 35). Islamist, pan-Islamic discourse, opposed the conservative *ulema* as well as Sultan Abdülhamid II’s version of a consolidated Islamic empire. Pan-Turkist discourse countered Islamist views and promoted a nation on the basis of Turkishness, which included shared language and cultural traits (Barkey 2008).

Challenges to the existing conservative Ottoman order paved the way for later nationalist movements, including the Young Turks, who advocated for the transition to a secular republic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Akşin 2007, 34). The Young Turks believed in

pan-Turkism, envisioning unity with the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus based on ethnicity and Islamic heritage (Cizre 2001, 5). However, pan-Turkism shifted as the Ottoman Empire deteriorated, especially after the loss of the Balkan territories. The influx of Muslim refugees from the Balkans made Islam a core part of Turkish identity (Özoğuz-Bolgi 2012). As Ottoman authority weakened, a more “Turkist” nationalism was able to take hold as the War of Independence began (Akşin 2007, 86). Late Ottoman nationalism was a “mutable” national identity activated by an evolving political context, consistent with the constructivist concept.

### *Kemalist Nationalism*

Named for modern Turkey’s founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Kemalist nationalism was shaped by territorial losses at the end of the War of Independence, which formed a new political context for Turkish identity. The National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*) of 1919-20 was the “political mandate of the Turkish nationalist movement,” simultaneously recognizing the end of the Ottoman Empire and defining the physical boundaries of the new Turkish Republic (Cizre 2001, 4). In spite of this division between past and present, the former Ottoman order was still regarded as a fundamental component of modern Turkey’s nationalism (Cizre 2001, 4-5). The issue of territorial integrity is the greatest difference between late-Ottoman and Kemalist nationalism in Turkey. Though Sultan Abdülhamid and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) had set the foundation for the primacy of the Muslim majority and identified threats to territorial integrity in the late Ottoman era, the *Misak-ı Milli* gave Anatolia “sacred character” and emphasized the Turkish nation’s right to this territory (Cizre 2001, 5; Barkey 2008). Pan-Turkism and Islam, associated with late-Ottoman nationalism, became unifying forces for a multi-ethnic empire. Kemalism turned the focus of Turkish nationalism toward a territory and government that defined the Turkish nation, reducing interest in the more transnational concept of pan-Turkism (Cizre 2001, 5).

Unlike late Ottoman nationalism, which had varied approaches to the diverse languages, religions and ethnicities of the Ottoman Empire, Islam was the “key ingredient” of Turkish identity (Kösebalaban 2011, 48). Kemalist nationalism limited the definition of Turks to people with “cultural characteristics” of Ottoman-Islamic past who spoke the Turkish language (Kösebalaban 2011, 50). Because Western nation-states were perceived to have homogeneous national identities, Kemalist nationalism did not make room for alternate identities. Instead, “modernity,” prosperity and a strong state were prioritized over diversity and social pluralism, which were seen as obstacles to Western integration (Cizre 2001, 6). Though Kemalist nationalism varied greatly from late Ottoman nationalism, it could not exist without it. Sentiments of late Ottoman nationalism linger in Turkish society and politics, even in the twenty-first century.

Despite the fact that Kemalism was the foundational ideology of the Turkish Republic, some of its core tenets have weakened in modern Turkish nationalism. In the last two decades, Turkish nationalism has shifted toward a more neo-Ottoman nationalism, especially as relations with the West have deteriorated. Whereas Kemalist nationalism prioritizes Westernization and European integration, neo-Ottomanism emphasizes Muslimhood and Ottoman heritage as Turkey’s key traits (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 22). Contemporary Turkish politics portray the country’s Ottoman history as a source of power (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 30). Neo-Ottoman rhetoric contrasts a “selfish” and “less civilized” Europe to the “grandeur” and “morality” of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey’s predecessor (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 29). The shift toward more neo-Ottoman nationalistic rhetoric is generally associated with the AKP, which dominates contemporary Turkish politics. Though neo-Ottoman nationalism focuses on an Ottoman past, it differs from late Ottoman nationalism in that it upholds the homogeneous Kemalist national identity. Just as Kemalist

nationalism could not have existed without late Ottoman nationalism, neo-Ottoman nationalism reflects the dialectic of Turkish nationalism's evolution over the past century.

#### **IV. Overview of Ottoman-Russian Relations**

Despite the friendly nature of their current relations, Turkey and Russia have often been characterized as rival states. The Ottoman and Russian empires, especially, were historic enemies with frequent conflicts, while Turkey and the Soviet Union had more nuanced, generally non-confrontational relations. To understand the significance of modern Turco-Russian relations, therefore, one must first understand the ideological, structural and institutional evolution of these two entities from empires to modern nation-states. Though neither the Ottoman nor Russian empire has existed for approximately a century, the legacies of each one has had, at some point in the last century, influence on foreign relations between Turkey and Russia. Analyzing these empires' core values, their legacies, and the ideologies born out of them, therefore is essential to understanding the trajectory of Turkey-Russia relations since the foundational period of both the Turkish Republic and the Soviet Union.

Relations between the Ottoman and Russian empires are generally characterized by territorial and civilizational rivalries, which frequently resulted in war. In the eyes of the Ottomans, the Russians' expansionist goals were a significant threat to the territorial integrity of their empire. In the 1770s, the Ottoman empire lost territory to Russia and ceded humiliating capitulations that gave Russia direct influence in Ottoman internal affairs. Likewise, secondary to territorial interests, each empire was suspicious of the other's control over religious minorities and sought to protect these groups. Ottoman and Russian interests were especially conflicting in the Balkans, South Caucasus and Black Sea region. In the 1870s, a combination of urban intelligentsia

promoting nationalist causes in the Balkan provinces, rural unrest over tax increases, drought, and famine resulted in uprisings by Christian peasants in Herzegovina that spread to other parts of the Balkans, most notably Bulgaria. Russia's intervention to assist these secessionist and nationalist uprisings caused the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877-78. Russia and newly independent Balkan states such as Serbia and Bulgaria spread nationalist sentiment among Slavic populations in the Balkans (Akşin 2007, 38). In early 1912, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro joined forces, backed by Russia, against the Ottoman Empire in the First Balkan War. They demanded reforms that would grant their Christian populations independent governance supervised by Balkan and Western powers, winning the fight against the Ottomans in about two weeks. Their decisive victory lost the Ottomans the Balkans, the first cut out of their territory (Akşin 2007, 74-75). In the same conflict, Azerbaijan's leadership had sided with Turkey, conflicting Russian imperial rule.

In World War I, the late Ottoman Empire's pan-Turkist ruling faction set its sights on then-independent Azerbaijan, a Turkic population abroad, but the Azerbaijani intelligentsia was not particularly interested in being absorbed by what it perceived to be a culturally equal, if not lesser, entity. Azerbaijan's political situation was decisively reconciled by the Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet annexation (Cornell 2011, 19). When Austria declared war on Serbia at the onset of World War I, Russia was drawn into the conflict. As a fellow Orthodox-Slavic country, Serbia was to a certain degree a Russian protectorate, despite having been part of the Ottoman Empire. Russia's entry into the war propelled Austrian and German powers on its borders to join as well (Akşin 2007, 94). By the end of World War I, however, these interferences subsided as the two empires transitioned to become nation-states.

As empires, the Ottomans and Russians exploited one another's minorities to promote their interests. When the Russian Empire became a major European power, it wanted to "liquidate" the

Ottoman Empire to achieve its imperialistic goals (Erkin 1952, 124). The Turkish Republic was keenly aware of this lasting threat from Russia, which was solidified by the establishment of the Soviet Union (Hale 2013, 47). Unlike Russian imperialism, which simply desired Ottoman territory, the Turkish perspective perceived that post-World War II Soviet imperialism wanted the entire world (Erkin 1952, 124-125). Though both the Turkish Republic and Soviet Union emerged from empires, their transitions were not a fully analogous experience. The Turkish Republic was born out of the former Ottoman Empire after the War of Independence. As the Ottoman Empire transitioned to the successor Turkish Republic, its territory contracted significantly (O'Leary et al. 2001, 14). The Soviet Union was born out of the Russian Empire, incorporating all of Russia's protectorates in Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as the briefly-independent states of the South Caucasus (Akşin 2007, 169). Unlike the Turkish Republic, in which territorial contraction was a part of national consciousness, the Soviet Union promoted the newfound size and strength of its integrated republics.

The emergence of both the Turkish Republic and Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1920s made their transitions out of empire not only parallel in time but also their economic growth and industrialization. Both new states had supplanted an old imperial order, which, for a time, motivated their cooperation. Despite the ravages of World War I, the Soviet Union emerged as a key power able to assist medium-size Turkey in pursuing its statist goals while Europe was still weak (Oran 2011, 143). Despite the threat of Soviet expansionism, the shared experience of these national liberation movements facilitated economic cooperation between the USSR and Turkey in the interwar period.



## V. Foundational Period (1923-1939)

In the late period of the Ottoman Empire, foreign policy priorities were shaped by Imperial Russian expansionism and internal ethnic disintegration. The failing Ottoman Empire's internal landscape became a source of national identity for the Republic of Turkey (Kösebalaban 2011, 25). Kemalist ideology was born out of this context. Atatürk's Kemalist ideology promoted the orientation of the state toward international relations and the modification of any customs or traditions considered a hindrance to these relations or the development of political institutions (Scruton 2007).

There are six core pillars in the Kemalist ideology including reformism, republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism and statism. Democracy was notably absent from this list, as it did not exist in the Turkish political system until 1950 (Felton 2008, 5). Reformism encapsulated the Turkish people's willingness to accept change and break with their imperial past, while secularism abolished the sultanate and the use of *sharia*, national religious schools and the Ministry of Religious endowments, banned Sufi and Dervish orders, and discouraged people from wearing a fez or veil (Felton 2008, 13). Nationalism created a sense of national identity as Turks, including the translation of the Quran to Turkish and changing the Turkish language's alphabet from Arabic to Latin script. The Republic also attempted to assimilate ethnic minorities by removing their distinctive characteristics; Kurds were a primary target of these policies. Republicanism referred to the representative government for which citizens voted, though they were voting in a single-party system (Felton 2008, 13-14). In accordance with the principle of populism, early Turkish leaders were representative of all the peoples in the country, irrespective of class, religion or ethnic origin. The Turkish nation was promoted as the product of a shared past that unified the peoples for the creation of a national culture and the realization of goals for the future (Aydin 1999, 174).

Through institutional and social reforms, modifications of the Turkish language and orientation toward the West, Atatürk fostered the strength of the Turkish national identity, severing ties with the old Ottoman order and cultural traditions (Scruton 2007). Turkey's national identity was a defining element in foreign policy and domestic politics during the foundational period.

### **Domestic Politics**

An important aspect of the creation of the Republic was the development of the Turkish nationality as a “core nation.” These efforts to create a majority Turkish nation resulted in demographic shifts, notably the forced migration of Muslims to Anatolia and Christians to Greece. Based on agreement, population exchanges were initiated to solidify the “core nation” of Turks, thereby right-peopling the Republic (O’Leary et al. 2001, 56; Kösebalaban 2011, 47-51). 900,000 Orthodox Greeks from Anatolia were exchanged for 400,00 Muslims living in Greece (Hale 2013, 40). Secularization of the Republic occurred amid these demographic changes, eradicating Islam’s sociopolitical role, making the state *secularist*, though not entirely *secular* (Kösebalaban 2011, 48). The population exchanges cost Turkey a ten-percent population loss but created an overwhelming Muslim majority, thereby demographically Islamizing the population as the state underwent secularization (Kösebalaban 2011, 49; O’Leary et al. 2001, 6). By the end of the War of Liberation, the population of Anatolia had gone from 80 to 98 percent Muslim. (Hale 2013, 41). The new Turkish national identity was supported by these demographic and ideological changes. As the boundaries of the Turkish Republic and the population of its core Turkish nation were defined, ontological security concerns also emerged. In this context of national identity development emerged a sense of the “self” versus the “other,” in both nationalism and foreign policy (Kösebalaban 2011, 47-51; Reyes 2015, 73). During this time, efforts to assert the territorial

boundaries of the Republic and primacy of the core Turkish nation were explicit manifestations of Kemalist ideology that had foreign policy implications.

### **Foreign Policy in this Period**

According to Atatürk, a country undergoing significant reforms and developments such as those occurring in the Republic should “sincerely desire peace and tranquility both at home and in the world” (Kösebalaban 2011, 54). His “active isolationist” rhetoric was the source of early Turkish foreign policy in the Republic’s foundational years. Though Atatürk did not officially visit any other countries during his presidency, Turkish foreign policy was not entirely isolationist at this time (Kösebalaban 2011, 55-56). Despite Atatürk’s adamancy about peace at home and peace abroad, the significant changes occurring in the post-World War I international system signaled that Turkey still had important interests in the foreign policy arena that could not be left unaddressed (Hale 2013, 40).

Congruent with the self-interested, nationalistic nature of Turkey’s behavior, Atatürk’s speeches during this period referenced the dichotomy of East and West that manifests in Turkish foreign policy objectives. He framed the War of Liberation as an inspiration to the “eastern peoples,” while raising important questions about Turkish foreign policy. At this point, it was unclear whether Turkey belonged in the East or the West and whether or not it was anti-imperialist or expansionist. Atatürk claimed that the War of Liberation was a defense of the cause of the oppressed, which is the cause of the peoples of the East (Oran 2011, 150-151; Aydın 1999, 176). Claiming to protect the East was somewhat contradictory, given that Turkish foreign policy was clearly looking West while claiming to protect the East. Similarly, Turkey pursued a strategy of

Westernization that promoted “full” independence of the Turkish state, a reference to Western powers’ personal stakes in post-War of Liberation concessions (Oran 2011, 150-151).

### **Territorial Integrity**

The post-World War I context helped lay the foundation of Turkish nationalism. In this period, the concepts of territorial integrity and state sovereignty were solidified, and nationalisms were derived for new nation-states (Woodwell 2007, 19). Perhaps the most salient example of this concept’s effect on Turkey is the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. The treaty ceded Eastern Thrace to Greece, called for Armenia’s borders within the Ottoman Empire to be decided by American President Wilson, called for the establishment of an autonomous Kurdistan in the east and southeast of Anatolia, and, among other things, ordered the demilitarization of the Straits and the Sea of Marmara. The Turkish delegation present in Paris was shocked that the treaty denied the Ottoman Empire of its independence and was also “not even compatible with the concept of statehood” (Akşin 2007, 156-157). Sèvres was a “traumatic blow to the Turkish psyche,” proving that Europe was willing to decide Turkey’s rights to former Ottoman territory and sentencing the Ottoman order to death (Akşin 2007, 158-159). Nevertheless, the territorial arrangement established by the *Misak-ı Milli* from 1919 to 1920 is generally regarded as the permanent standard for Turkish borders, and it became closely associated with Turkish national identity (Cizre 2001, 5). The historical “trauma” of the Treaty of Sèvres supported Turkish nationalism as the War of Independence began, and it remains a strong theme in contemporary nationalistic rhetoric (Kinnvall 2004, 755).

The War of Independence reacted to the Treaty of Sèvres and secured the future of the Turkish Republic. By 1920, civil war was raging in Anatolia, and the Turks faced revolts from the

Armenians in the east and Greeks in the West. The Turks defeated the Armenians at the end of 1920, regaining Kars, Oltu and Sarıkamış. Armenia was obliged to declare its non-recognition of the Treaty of Sèvres (Akşin 2007, 161). The Greeks were harder to defeat, holding out until late 1921. Rallying enough troops for the Greek front proved difficult amid the civil war, and Atatürk was unable to declare total war. He ordered his forces to fight for the entirety of the Turkish homeland until the Greeks retreated (Akşin 2007, 168). Turkish victories in the War of Independence won them the Treaty of Lausanne, supplanting the Treaty of Sèvres. Atatürk's revolution continued the process, pushing for the recognition of Lausanne at the expense of Sèvres (Akşin 2007, 159). The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 addressed five key issues: Turkey's boundaries, the abolition of capitulations, the allocation of Ottoman debt to countries that had become the heirs to former Ottoman lands, free passage through the Straits, and matters relating to Greece and Greek minorities. At the Montreux Convention in 1936, the Straits issue was reconsidered, and Turkey regained full and permanent control over the Straits (Akşin 2007, 185-186). The subsequent declaration of Turkey as a republic in October 1923 led to the start of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's presidency and later the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 (Akşin 2007, 190-191). Since the Treaty of Sèvres, the Republic of Turkey is particularly sensitive to any encroachment on its territorial integrity. Preserving the integrity of the borders of the Republic and upholding the *Misak-ı Milli* became lasting foreign policy priorities for Turkey.

### *Hatay & Mosul*

Though Turkey condemned any irredentist policies, it made exceptions for its interest in the Hatay and Mosul provinces. Both Hatay and Mosul were part of the *Misak-ı Milli*, but they were outside of the Turkish borders established by the Treaty of Lausanne (Kösebalaban 2011, 58). Turkey had territorial claims to Mosul from an armistice in 1918, but interest in the region

was eventually abandoned (Uzer 2011, 90). Mosul, a region in Iraq, was under British control, and Britain believed that Iraq was not “viable” without it or its anticipated oil resources. For Turkey, Mosul’s incorporation into Iraqi territory was a failure to achieve the objectives of the *Misak-ı Milli*. The region was majority-Kurdish, though the city itself was Arab and had a large Turkish-speaking minority, meaning neither Britain nor Turkey had strong claims to the territory. Likewise, an independent Kurdish state was not considered as a realistic solution in the given political context (Hale 2013, 42). Turkey’s relations with the Kurds in the 1920s, culminating with the Sheikh Said uprising, interfered with Turkey’s claim to Mosul and caused Turkey to abandon its claims (Kösebalaban 2011, 58-59; Uzer 2011, 90). Hatay, though a “personal cause” of Atatürk, was not annexed until July 1939, after his death (Oran 2011, 150-151). Prior to this annexation, Turkey had been in conflict with France and Syria over rights to the territory, which is home to ethnic Turks or populations with “pro-Turkish tendencies” (Uzer 2011, 89). The Hatay region, then part of Syria, was under French mandate as determined by the Treaty of Lausanne. As a result, Turkish leadership decided to leave the matter until the late 1930s (Uzer 2011, 92). Turkey’s annexation of Hatay in 1939 is an example of irredentism, from which inspiration about Turkish expansionism is drawn (Uzer 2011, 89-90). Though annexation of Hatay was an anomaly in modern Turkish foreign policy, it raised concerns among neighbors such as Greece and Syria.

### *The Kurdish Question*

Integrating the Kurds was generally considered the Republic’s biggest internal challenge in the foundational period. Kemalist policies’ most formidable challenges were a series of revolts by the Kurds in the southeastern provinces (Kösebalaban 2011, 56). Turkey’s pursuit of various agreements of nonaggression, friendship and neighborliness, including the Saadabad Pact with Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, focused on ensuring joint control over Kurdish tribes. By pursuing this

strategy, Turkey ensured that its top domestic challenge would not have international repercussions (Kösebalaban 2011, 57; Oran 2011, 151). After revolts from 1925 to 1937, there was not another Kurdish uprising until 1984, when Kurdish-Turkish relations became more violent (Oran 2011, 147). Turkish foreign policy was already affected by and acutely interested in containing the Kurdish threat to its territory in the foundational period.

### **Turkish Minorities Abroad**

National identity development was an important feature of Turkish foreign policy in the foundational period. The Republic wanted to protect the interests of Turkish minorities abroad while estranged ethnic minorities within its borders emigrated elsewhere (O’Leary et al. 2001, 56). Outmigration and population homogenization in Turkey were consistent with the Republic’s interest in creating a Western-style nation state (Cizre 2001, 6). To achieve this goal, Turkey worked to create a singular national identity for the Turkish nation out of the multiethnic population of the former Ottoman Empire. In the post-World War I world, Turkey and former Ottoman territories began to adopt the Western model of “one nation and one state,” creating conflicts when ethnic and state boundaries did not align (Barlas and Köksal 2014, 175). As a result, nationalist interests generally manifested in Turkey’s bilateral relations (Barlas and Köksal 2014, 176). Relations with Bulgaria and Greece during the foundational period are reflective of a fusion of these foreign policy and nationalistic objectives.

#### *Bulgaria*

The early Turkish government promoted the spread of Kemalism among the Turkish minority population in Bulgaria. Kemalist reforms emphasized distinct Turkish identity based on religion, and Turkish newspapers in Bulgaria fostered a sense of national identity by forming a

sense of national association among Turks in Bulgaria. Likewise, the Turkish government funded pro-Kemalist schools, groups and other organizations to promote Kemalism among the Turkish population (Barlas and Köksal 2014, 181). Despite tensions between ethnic Bulgarians and Turks in Bulgaria, Turkey and Bulgaria prioritized their bilateral relations over solving the minority issue. Turkey feared that Bulgarians would launch more attacks on Turkish minority groups if it pushed the minority issue too much, instead favoring normalized bilateral relations (Barlas and Köksal 2014, 186). Though Turkey had worked to maintain good relations with Bulgaria, the limits of this relationship were tested when Bulgaria violated the Greek border in 1934. Since Greece-Turkey relations were cordial at the time, Turkey favored the Greek side of the issue (Barlas and Köksal 2014, 187). As Bulgaria-Turkey relations deteriorated in the 1930s, Bulgaria was increasingly repressive of Turkish minority activities. Bulgaria's refusal to join the Balkan Pact the same year jeopardized any positive relations between Turkey and Bulgaria during this period (Barlas and Köksal 2014, 176).

### *Greece*

Relations with Greece were among Turkey's top foreign policy priorities in this period. After the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923, Greece and Turkey initiated population exchanges of one another's minority groups left over from the Ottoman Empire (Woodwell 2007, 165). Over a million Greeks had already fled Turkey in 1922, while population transfers moved about 200,000 Greeks out of Anatolia. Approximately 350,000 Turks moved to Anatolia from Greece (Woodwell 2007, 166). In the aftermath of population exchanges, there were conflicts about the status of emigrants' land. Land disputes were partially solved by a bilateral agreement in 1926, and fully resolved in 1929 after tensions nearly led to using force as a solution (Hale 2013, 43). Turkey, due in part to Western pressures, established friendly relations with Greece in 1930,



which helped it to gain membership in the League of Nations in 1932 (Oran 2011, 151). After tensions caused by the population exchanges were resolved, Turkey-Greece relations were relatively stable for almost thirty years, until the Cyprus issue renewed tensions (Woodwell 2007, 166).

### **Russia in Focus**

The Ottoman Empire and Russia went to war at least twelve times over the course of a few centuries, and the cause of these conflicts was Russia's imperialist aspirations in the Black Sea regions. The Russian Empire, it seemed, sought to destroy the Ottoman Empire to advance its own goals. Russia exploited ethnic tensions in the Ottoman Empire, engaging minorities to conduct disruptive activities (Erkin 1952, 124). With the creation of the Soviet Union, the Turks and Soviets shared a border in the South Caucasus region, meaning that their conflicting territorial interests were even closer than before. However, Russia was internally occupied and weakened in the wake of World War I, reducing its traditional threat to Turkey and promoting their friendly relations (Hale 2013, 42). Turkey signed the Turco-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Brotherhood in 1925 and the Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship with Soviet Russia in 1925 (Hale 2013, 43; Gökay 2006, 27). Turkey assumed that its territory was protected from the Soviet threat because of their positive relations (Hale 2013, 47).

The USSR provided financial support to Turkey during the War of Independence and supported its development and industrialization in the interwar years (Oran 2011, 147 and 150). Though Turco-Soviet relations were largely positive, they changed as Turkey increasingly looked to the West and Soviet politics shifted (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 6-9). The USSR planned and assisted the execution of Turkey's statist policies, and Turkey leveraged its relationship with the USSR in

the interwar period to counteract Great Britain and France as well as Italy and Germany (Oran 2011, 151). Even by the 1930s, however, Turkey was expressing its interest in the West (Erkin 1952, 184). This interest in the European sphere of influence is an early indicator of Turkey's interest in moving away from the Soviet sphere and forging a future in the West. By the late 1930s, the Soviet threat to Turkey's security had renewed (Hale 2013, 42).

### **Analysis of Nationalist Influences**

Given the primacy of Atatürk's ideology and politics during this period, much of Turkish foreign policy from 1923 to 1939 was closely tied to nationalistic interests. Nevertheless, a case can still be made for a rationalist account of its foreign policy toward Russia during this period. Rationalist analysis would highlight the importance of Turkish industrialization, territorial interests and lack of inhibition caused by the weakness of Europe after World War I. Atatürk skillfully exploited the conditions of the post-WWI world, engaging geopolitical interests in combination with inspirations from Ottoman-style policies of maintaining a balance of power among foreign entities. The postwar weakness of Europe proved to be a beneficial situation for Turkey and its foreign policy interests (Oran 2011, 143).

Constructivist analysis would highlight the nuances of Turkish national identity that influenced these foreign policy decisions. The same weak Europe that was an ideal opportunity for Turkey to pursue geopolitical interests was also an opportunity to pursue its nationalistic interests with reduced resistance from European powers (Uzer 2011, xi). After population transfers, Turkey had only minimal minority populations, making it less susceptible to foreign interferences (Hale 2013, 42). Without domestic or international restraints, Turkey had the opportunity to pursue its identity-rooted interests (Uzer 2011, xi). The "Sèvres syndrome,"

characterized by anxiety about the Republic's territorial integrity after the Sèvres Treaty partitioned the Ottoman Empire after World War I, sparked short-term interest in territories such as Hatay and Mosul as well as ongoing interest in upholding the Republic's territorial integrity (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 33). The territories in which Turkey was interested at this time are important to national identity, and, likewise, the territorial integrity of Anatolia is central to Turkish nationalism due to the fact that it was the only remaining boundary of the former Ottoman Empire (Cizre 2001, 4). Turkey was concerned about Turkish minorities abroad because of the ideological significance of the Turkish ethnicity. Despite Turkey's "active isolationist" foreign policy approach, it pursued bilateral relations with countries that were home to sizable Turkish minority populations, including Bulgaria and Greece (Kösebalaban 55, 2011; Barlas and Köksal 2014, 176). The pro-Western but also pro-independence attitude of Turkey's revolution and post-war independence attracted Soviet support in the foundational period. Keenly aware of the Western powers' conflicting interests in its post-independence territory, Turkey pursued its nationalistic interests carefully in this period (Oran 2011, 150).

In the foundational period, it seems that Turkish foreign policy decisions were made as constructivist methods of analysis would predict. National identity, afforded by Atatürk's domestic political and, therefore, ideological hegemony, was the main driver of foreign policy during this period. The regional security environment allowed Turkey to pursue its nationalistic interests, the context in which the Republic's anxiety about territorial integrity, known as the Sèvres Syndrome, and interest in Turkish minorities abroad began.

## **VI. Early Cold War Period (1949-1960)**

Following World War II, the most significant development in Turkish foreign policy toward Russia, and in the international system as a whole, was the emergence of the bipolar Cold War system (Aydin 2000, 106; Hale 2013, 78). Turkey managed to pursue the Kemalist ideal of Western orientation while avoiding complete alienation of the Soviet Union, the West's new adversary (Aydin 2000, 105). Despite the clear division between the Eastern and Western blocs during the early Cold War period, Turkey managed to pursue relations with both the West and the USSR, but clearly favored the Western bloc. Turkey had been neutral for much of World War II, but it had never been able to fully demobilize its army due to the Soviet threat. Turkey's reliance on foreign military aid from the Allies during the war contributed to its interest in joining NATO (Oran 2011, 302). In 1952, Turkey's accession to NATO, a significant foreign policy achievement, "institutionalized" its commitment to the West (Kösebalaban 2011, 74-75; Oran 2011, 293). Europe's weak condition following the war meant that the United States and the Soviet Union were the world's key powers, and this dynamic promoted the development of Turkey-U.S. as well as Turkey-U.K. relations (Kösebalaban 2011, 69). Nevertheless, Turkey did engage the Soviet Union during this period, albeit with significant caution. Turkey's Cold War anxieties, unlike those of the West, were fueled by past Ottoman-Russian antagonism and overarching "geopolitical anxieties" that were confirmed by postwar Soviet expansionist interests (Kösebalaban 2011, 74; Oran 2011, 286). Security, therefore, served as a key determinant of Turkish foreign policy during this period, and this priority contributed to the evolution of Turkish nationalism. As NATO membership and economic assistance occupied foreign policy interests, Turkish domestic politics became less secular and shifted to a multi-party system.

### **Domestic Politics**

The security environment of the post-World War II world prompted Turkey's pursuit of domestic reforms and development to facilitate stronger relations with its new Western allies. Knowing that the West preferred to work with other liberal and democratic governments, there was no rationale for Turkey to maintain a one-party political system (Kösebalaban 2011, 69; Aydın 2000, 109). Domestic criticism of the one-party regime was also mounting in response to failed economic policies during the war (Aydın 2000, 109). The CHP gave in to internal and external pressures, and the first multiparty election in the Republic was held in 1950. Since then the CHP has not been able to form a majority government without military intervention (Kösebalaban 2011, 70). Adnan Menderes was elected Prime Minister, and Celal Bayar was elected President (Hale 2013, 79). The impacts of this election were far-reaching in Turkish politics, the economy and society. So significant were the changes that occurred in Turkey after the 1950 elections that Kösebalaban (2011) asserts that, "in these elections, the [majority of] Turkish voters had expressed their desire to put an end to the CHP's top-down authoritarianism, statism and radical secularism" (70). Not all Turkish voters would have supported this change, based on their different conceptions of the role of religion in Turkish national identity. A combination of domestic economic conditions and the global security environment precipitated significant socioeconomic change in Turkey in the 1950s.

Though the security and economic dimensions of this shift to democracy were clear, the end of the CHP's primacy also initiated a rollback on secularism, a significant break from one of Kemalism's six core pillars. Many of the policy changes that contributed to desecularization in the 1950s were highly symbolic, but their value to the conservative voter base was high enough to win the Democratic Party the election (Kösebalaban 2011, 70). For example, the *ezan* (call to prayer)

was reintroduced in Arabic in June 1950 after being in Turkish since 1923, an extremely unpopular policy (Kösebalaban 2011, 70; Oran 2011, 292). Village Institutes, boarding schools to produce Kemalist teachers, and People's Houses, secular social meeting places and forums for spreading Kemalist ideology, were closed down, and religious education was made compulsory in 1950 (Kösebalaban 2011, 71). In response to the broader international environment, the head of the Religious Affairs Department declared that Islam rejected communism in August 1950, affirming Turkey's approval of the Western bloc and rejection of the Eastern bloc (Oran 2011, 293).

Beyond cultural changes, the Democratic Party's reforms in the 1950s launched a period of enormous and rapid economic development that modernized industry, infrastructure and the agricultural sector, completing transforming Turkey's economic system (Kösebalaban 2011, 71). As per capita income climbed, foreign debt soared (Oran 2011, 290-291). An impressive economic growth rate of 9% annually from 1950 to 1960 was clouded by increasing need for foreign loans, despite warnings from Western powers and a massive devaluation of the lira (Kösebalaban 2011, 72-75; Oran 2011, 290). Nevertheless, advancements in the agricultural industry allowed for exports and supplied U.S. military bases in Turkey. During the Korean War, increased demand for agricultural exports offered high world prices for Turkish agricultural products and gave Turkey an opportunity to contribute to containment efforts beyond the military sphere (Oran 2011, 290; Aydın 2011, 111). In the Cold War security environment, Menderes was able to send five thousand Turkish troops to combat in the Korean War without consulting parliament and with limited popular opposition. The Korean War was Turkey's first active combat since the War of Independence, with over 700 Turkish soldiers killed and 2,000 wounded in combat from 1950 to 1953 (Kösebalaban 74-75). Turkey's commitment to the U.S.'s policy of containment, especially in relation to the Korean War, was unofficially associated with Turkey's impending NATO

membership and its accessibility to foreign aid and credits by the U.S. (Kösebalaban 2011, 74). In that sense, Turkey's economic development served its foreign policy interests in the Cold War period, while its foreign policy supported its economic development.

### **Foreign Policy in this Period**

While the bipolar Cold War system influenced Turkish foreign policy and encouraged its rapprochement with the West, the Soviet Union's emergence as a superpower and its subsequent demands on Turkey were the factors that ultimately propelled Turkey toward alignment with the West (Aydin 2000, 106). Menderes and the Democratic Party pursued foreign policy that abandoned the foreign policy pursued from 1923 to 1945 and returned to an overall "Turkish grand strategy" that had prevailed during the late Ottoman period, relying on the West for defense against Russian expansionism (Kösebalaban 2011, 72). Turkish leadership's reaction to Soviet threats and the "regional and international geostrategic context shaped by the Cold War" defined Turkish foreign policy in this period (Kösebalaban 2011, 85).

The resulting foreign policy pursued by Turkey was the "antithesis" of its foreign policy from 1923 to 1945, when it displayed relative autonomy and pursued a more "active isolationist" approach (Oran 2011, 297; Kösebalaban 2011, 53). In addition to gaining membership in NATO, Turkey pursued more active diplomacy in the Balkans and Middle East. Turkey's main tactic for advancing interests in the Middle East was the creation of the Baghdad Pact, later known as Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The pact, in theory, was an anti-Soviet alliance that expanded the Turkish sphere of influence into the Middle East (Kösebalaban 2011, 74). Iraq, Iran and Pakistan were the original members of the pact in 1955, which was an extension of Turkey's grand strategy to "strangle" Soviet power, starting with Western alliance. Turkey intended to extend the alliance

farther into the Arab world, but the U.S. was strongly opposed (Kösebalaban 2011, 77). Iraq left the pact in 1959 because it did not support Turkey's stance on Cyprus, which had become a key issue in Turkish foreign policy. The alliance was then renamed to CENTO. Despite Turkey's Middle East aspirations, the lack of U.S. support for expanding CENTO led to the pact's ultimate failure. Turkey was heavily reliant on its alliance with the U.S. during the Cold War, meaning that its foreign policy largely depended on American approval (Kösebalaban 2011, 78-79).

### **Territorial Integrity**

#### *The Straits, Kars & Ardahan*

At the Potsdam Conference in 1945, the Soviets made a claim to the Kars and Ardahan regions of Turkey and demanded that the Montreux Convention be reviewed, sparking Turkey's "geopolitical anxieties" embroiled in its post-Sèvres national self-concept (Kösebalaban 2011, 74). In 1946, the Soviets proposed a new approach to the Straits to supplant the Montreux Convention. The USSR had five demands: that the Straits be open to all merchant vessels at all times, that the Straits be open at all times to Black Sea states' war ships, that the passage of warships of non-Black Sea states through the Straits be prohibited except in special cases, that Turkey and other Black Sea states establish a regime of the Straits as the responsibility of Turkey and other Black Sea states, that Turkey and the USSR be recognized as the countries most interested in freedom of commercial navigation of Straits and most capable of ensuring their security, and that the Black Sea states jointly defend the Straits to prevent other states from interfering with their mutual interests. Turkey was willing to accept the first three demands but rejected the last two (Oran 2011, 301). The USSR also wanted Turkey to give up Kars, Ardahan and other territories, claiming they historically belonged to Armenia and Georgia (Oran 2011, 299-300). After Stalin's death in 1953,



the Armenia Soviet Socialist Republic and Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic rescinded their claims to Kars and Ardahan, respectively (Oran 2011, 304). When the USSR's interest in Turkish territorial interests decreased, Turkish-Soviet relations improved.

### *The Kurdish Question*

Tensions between Turkey and the Kurds were relatively low in the early Cold War period. There was not a physical dimension of conflict during the late 1940s and 1950s, largely because of the extent of the Soviet threat and the priorities of the bipolar postwar system. (Cizre 2001, 11). At this time, the role of nationalism in politics was different than it was in the post-Cold War period. Contestation over the true definition of a "Turk" had not reached the intensity it would in subsequent decades. The sort of "détente" in Turkey-Kurd relations during this period can also be attributed to shared interest in economic modernization (Cizre 2001, 20). Turkey's limited interest in the Kurdish question in the 1950s indicates the intensity of the security threats posed by the bipolar global system because other concerns overshadowed the perceived threat coming from the Kurdish minority at the time. Likewise, a liberalized political climate, focused on economic development and NATO cooperation, relaxed tensions between Turkey and its Kurdish minority.

## **Turkish Minorities Abroad**

### *Cypriot Turks*

While Cyprus had been of relatively low concern to Turkey prior to the Second World War, increased international attention in the post-war period increased Turkey's interest in the issue. Prior to international interests in Cyprus, Turkey considered the island to be an "overseas" issue, located outside of the *Misak-ı Milli* (Kösebalaban 2011, 82-83). Turkish interest in Cyprus gained traction in the early 1950s, when annexation by Greece became a serious possibility. After Stalin's

death, the Soviet threat to Turkey declined, and decolonization movements worldwide helped to renew tensions between Greece and Turkey about Cyprus (Woodwell 2007, 167). In this environment, Turkey felt that an annexation by Greece would not only “endanger the Turkish community in the island,” but also have serious geopolitical consequences for Turkey in the Aegean Sea and along its southern coast (Kösebalaban 2011, 83). In early September 1959, Turkey responded to a Greek terror campaign against British military targets on Cyprus. Menderes responded to the Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu’s request for support by sending the newly-created Society for Turkish Cyprus to the island on September 5 (Kösebalaban 2011, 83). On September 6, the media reported that Atatürk’s birth home in Salonika, Greece had been bombed, causing violence to break out in Istanbul. Mobs attacked Greek women, churches, homes and businesses, leaving at least 11 dead (Kösebalaban 2011, 84). These events became known as the September 6-7 incidents (Uzer 2011, 122).

In 1960, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus and Britain signed the Treaty of Guarantee, which prevented the union of Cyprus with any other state and prevented its partition. If the terms of the agreement were to be violated, any signatory had the right to military intervention to prevent union or partition (Kösebalaban 2011, 84-85). Turkey’s vested interest in the conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots was rooted in its resentment toward Greece. Like the Hatay province, Turkey did not consider its role in Cyprus to be irredentist. Instead, Turkey claimed to have saved the Turkish Cypriot population from genocide and restored peace and democracy on the island after the Treaty of Guarantee (Uzer 2011, 105). The extent to which Turkey and other powers were involved in Cyprus prior to the treaty attracted the USSR’s attention to its strategic importance and brought the island into the Cold War. Given Cyprus’ location, the USSR felt that it could divide the southern NATO allies by encouraging the conflict between Greeks and Turks (Uzer 2011, 126).

The U.S., meanwhile, was concerned that the deadlock about Cyprus would lead to a Turkey-Greece conflict, weakening NATO and strengthening the USSR's influence in the region (Oran 2011, 363). In spite of its active Cold War foreign policy, Turkey's intense interest in the Cyprus issue was an exception to its otherwise pragmatic policies in this era (Uzer 2011, 105).

### **Russia in Focus**

In the post-World War II period, Turkey approached relations with the USSR cautiously. Unlike in the foundational period, the threat coming from the USSR in the early Cold War was perceived as a "real danger" to Turkey's security, and it is generally accepted that this threat was Turkey's main motivation to join NATO (Oran 2011, 296). The Soviets were wary of Turkey's interest in joining NATO and support of the Baghdad Pact. From the Soviet perspective, joining NATO meant that Turkey was now part of the alliance's "aggressive objectives," which the Soviets could not disregard (Oran 2011, 302).

Despite the United States' significant expansion of power in the post-war era, it was not perceived in Turkey as imperialist. In contrast, the Soviet Union's expansionism was perceived as imperialist, compounding the threat of its communist ideology (Oran 2011, 294). In comparison with the Soviet threat to countries such as Iran or Greece, its threat to Turkish territorial integrity was "overt and external" in the early 1950s (Oran 2011, 294). Already during World War II the Soviets had shown clear interest in pursuing territorial concessions from Turkey. Likewise, the USSR was "deeply suspicious" of Turkey joining NATO and procuring allies in the Middle East (Oran 2011, 302). According to a remark by Stalin following the war "it was impossible to accept a situation in which Turkey has a hand on Russia's throat" (Aydin 2000, 106). With similar intensity, the speaker of the Great National Assembly of Turkey warned the Soviets in 1945 that

“if the Russians insist on their [territorial] demand, [Turkey will] fight to the last Turk” (Aydin 2000, 107). Accordingly, the USSR was deeply suspicious of Turkey’s decision to join NATO and interest in establishing an alliance in the Middle East. The Soviets formally condemned Turkey’s NATO membership and warned that there would be consequences (Oran 2011, 302). Similarly, the USSR worked through Bulgaria in reaction to the 1953 Balkan Pact. Bulgaria released an official statement saying it was “disturbed” by the intentions of the alliance of “fascist aggressors” whose attention was now on the Balkans and Middle East, a reference to Turkey’s Baghdad Pact (Oran 2011, 306). Turkey’s decision to join the Western bloc angered the Soviets, but made Turkey much stronger against the threat of Soviet expansionism.

Anti-Soviet sentiment among Turkish politicians was more deeply rooted than among Americans because of its origins in Ottoman period and the “geopolitical anxieties” caused by Moscow’s expression of interest in eastern cities of Kars and Ardahan and the Turkish Straits (Kösebalaban 2011, 74). In the years following World War II, the USSR raised the question of the Straits and other territories at international conferences. In 1945, the USSR brought up the Straits, as well as Kars and Ardahan, at the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences, causing significant concerns among Turks about Soviet expansionism (Kösebalaban 2011, 74). The Straits were not a new topic in Turkey-USSR relations, as the Soviet pushed for greater control over them earlier at both the Lausanne Conference and Montreux Convention. The Kars and Ardahan provinces were a newer issue, and Soviet demands for control over them eroded Turkey-USSR relations. The Soviets pressured Turkey to comply with their demands, but could not use force because they did not yet have an atomic bomb. Soviet authorities assured the U.S. and U.K. that Turkey would not be attacked. After Stalin’s death, demands on the Straits and these provinces were dropped completely (Oran 2011, 302).

Despite antagonism between Turkey and Russia, largely defined by their respective inclusion in the Western and Eastern blocs, Turkey was not entirely adverse to cooperating with the Soviet Union, especially for economic purposes. After Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet foreign policy shifted significantly. The core pillars of post-Stalin Soviet policy were communism, internationalism, pacifism and anti-imperialism, and the USSR revised its foreign policy, pursuing "peaceful coexistence" with the West, including Turkey (Oran 2011, 304). Despite its staunch anti-communist stance, Turkey was willing to engage the USSR when its Western allies no longer supported its development interests and after tensions about Soviet expansionist aspirations had subsided. The intensity and breadth of Turkey's economic development project significantly increased its reliance on foreign aid during the Cold War. Government relations with the U.S. declined toward the end of the decade due to the Cyprus issue and Turkey's increasing foreign debt. In 1959, the U.S. refused to give Menderes a \$300-million-dollar loan, offering only \$10 million dollars at maximum, given the extent of Turkey's foreign debt. Prompted by the U.S.'s refusal, Ankara grew interested in engaging Moscow. Turkey looked to the Soviets for additional financial and technological assistance, but only after losing hope in American support (Kösebalaban 2011, 82; Oran 2011, 296). Turkey also increased its trade with the USSR, especially after 1957, in hopes of securing its economy and qualifying for loans from the U.S. (Oran 2011, 309). Though Turkey was staunchly anti-communist, it was willing to resort to Soviet economic and technical assistance to support its economic development.

Despite their increased cooperation, Turkey-USSR relations were strained again by the late 1950s. In 1959, Turkey agreed to let the U.S. put 15 Jupiter intermediate-range missiles with nuclear warheads on its territory. The Turkish government and military saw this as a boost of Turkish military strength, while Turkish bureaucrats opposed the deal (Kösebalaban 2011, 75).

Even though the USSR warned of the risk of a counterattack on the missiles on Turkish soil, there was still strong emphasis on good relations, good neighborliness, and more trade between the two countries (Oran 2011, 307). Khrushchev declared in 1959 that Turkey-USSR relations would be improved, despite the missile threat (Oran 2011, 308). The missiles were dismantled by the U.S. in deal with the USSR during the Cuban Missile Crisis without consulting Prime Minister İnönü in 1962 (Kösebalaban 2011, 75; Oran 2011, 307). Turkey's reliance on the U.S. not only limited some of its interests in economic and military development, but also put it directly between the U.S. and USSR amid high Cold War tensions.

### **Analysis of Nationalist Influences**

Turkey's focus on integration into NATO and the Western bloc during the Cold War means that its foreign policy from 1949 to 1960 was driven by power-motivated interests. A case can be made for both a rationalist and constructivist account of Turkish foreign policy toward Russia during this period. Rationalist analysis would emphasize that Turkey sought to counter the new Soviet superpower by joining NATO (Aydin 2000, 106). Turkey was so determined to join NATO that Menderes contributed forces to the Korean War effort without consulting parliament, causing criticism from the CHP (Kösebalaban 2011, 74). By showing its loyalty to NATO in the containment effort, Turkey secured military and economic development assistance from allies in NATO and countered its greatest adversary, the USSR (Aktürk 2006, 346). The Kurdish issue was noticeably calmer during the Cold War, due largely in part to mutual interests in economic development (Cizre 2011, 10-11). In the later 1950s, Turkey did engage the USSR for economic and technological assistance to support the significant growth of its latent and military power Turkey experienced in this period (Aktürk 2006, 346; Kösebalaban 2011, 76).

Constructivist analysis would emphasize the extent of Turkey's anxiety about Soviet territorial interests while Stalin was the Premier of the USSR. Besides a declared interest in renegotiating the Montreux Convention regarding the Straits, the USSR was interested in various territories, including Kars and Ardahan, which Armenia and Georgia considered part of their ancestral territories (Oran 2011, 300-301). After Stalin's death, tensions between Turkey and the USSR lessened, but Turkey then became preoccupied with Cyprus (Woodwell 2007, 167). Turkey had not previously considered Cyprus to be a foreign policy issue, but Western interest in the subject and the perceived possibility of Greek annexation made Cyprus a top concern (Kösebalaban 201, 74). Even in the Cold War international environment, Turkey was preoccupied with preserving its territorial integrity and protecting Turks abroad from the "others" such as the Greeks.

During the early Cold War, Turkish foreign policy appears to have been conducted as a rationalist account would expect. The main driver was the expansion of Turkey's latent and military power, characterized by its rapid economic expansion, sometimes to the detriment of the domestic economy, and its membership in NATO. In the bipolar system, Turkey's foreign policy interests were largely occupied by its role in the Western bloc, counter to the Soviet Union's Eastern bloc. Though tensions between Turkey and the USSR were higher in the early 1950s, they eased after Stalin's death in 1953, and Turkey engaged in strategic cooperation with the USSR, though primarily for the purpose of technical and financial assistance (Kösebalaban 2011, 76). Though foreign policy in this period was less driven by nationalist influences, the shift to a multi-party political system and the rollback on secularism domestically would give way to a new role for religion in Turkish national identity discourse, and, therefore, in foreign policy discourse.

## **VII. Post-Cold War Period (1989-2003)**

The collapse of the Soviet Union dramatically changed Turkey's foreign policy interests and opportunities. Without the USSR as its clear adversary, Turkey's foreign policy identity, and thereby ontological security, was significantly disrupted. The loss of the Soviet Union as an "other" amid the disintegration of a clearly-defined bipolar system signaled that Turkish foreign policy needed reorientation (Reyes 2015, 77). Turkey had lost its geostrategic value as a buffer between the USSR and the West and needed to reassert itself in the foreign policy arena. Turkey could not maintain an authoritative and isolationist nationalism in this environment, and the result of this "material and ideational" context was early neo-Ottoman nationalism. In the 1990s, Turkish foreign policy looked to its "historical cultural responsibilities in the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia" (Kösebalaban 2011, 117). The collapse of the Soviet Union, therefore, changed not only Turkey's relative power but incited a relatively significant ideological reaction. As a result of this shift, Turkey looked increasingly away from the West, instead considering its options among Turkic and other Muslim populations abroad.

### **Domestic Politics**

Domestically, the role of Islam in society and politics continued to be an important topic. Turgut Özal was elected president in 1989, bringing his "liberal Ottomanist" approach to the forefront of foreign policy and domestic politics after serving as prime minister since 1983. Liberal Ottomanism would dominate Turkish domestic politics until the rise of the AKP in 2002 (Kösebalaban 2011, 118; Özoğuz-Bolgi 2012). Özal's own identity added a layer of complication to his politics. He was religiously more conservative, his mother was Kurdish, and thus he was considered to have a legitimate voice regarding the Kurdish question. Despite his more



conservative religious affiliation, Özal liberalized the media, bringing tensions between Muslim values and secularism into public discourse (Kösebalaban 2011, 119). In his policies, Özal synthesized Western neoliberal economics with traditional values, reflecting a blend of Kemalism's Western orientation and increasing religious influence in Turkish politics (Kösebalaban 2011, 121).

Nevertheless, the post-Cold war period revealed an ideological rift in Turkish politics centered around the Kemalist pillar of Western orientation. Kemalist leadership had traditionally wielded authoritarian control over Turkey, as democracy was not a core pillar of Kemalism. This leadership style proved difficult to reconcile with the democratic standards of Europe, especially when Turkey started pursuing European Union (EU) membership in the late 1980s. Turkey first applied for EU membership in 1987, but was deferred because of the Cyprus issue as well as its domestic political situation, specifically a Kurdish insurgency and Turkey's military response, and economic weakness (Kösebalaban 2011, 131). The rejection of Turkey's EU bid raised questions domestically about Turkey's place in relation to the West. Turkey's inclusion in the Western sphere was motivated specifically by the Soviet threat. In the Cold War international system, the West was forced to confirm Turkey's European status with NATO membership. By the late 1980s, changing internal dynamics in Turkey signaled "social, political and cultural incompatibilities" that caused the EU to change its tone about Turkish Europeaness. Many argue that the EU is based on a "cultural project" of cultural compatibility and integration that is, at its foundation, based on a Christian identity. Though Turkey's economy was struggling at the time of application, the economic argument for its rejection is weak. Various poor Eastern European countries were later admitted to the EU after the collapse of the Soviet Union, suggesting that cultural differences were the main obstacle to Turkish EU membership (Bodzağlıoğlu 2003, 92-93). Though some

discourse within the EU often upheld this idea, suggesting that granting membership to a large Muslim-majority state would cause problems for the organization, Turkey's human rights record in its campaign against the PKK and its continued dispute with Greece over Cyprus were key obstacles to EU accession (Hale 2013, 173). The West's disapproval of Turkey's policies on some of its most sensitive national issues was not well received or easily forgotten, promoting Euroscepticism and support for more neo-Ottoman foreign policy within Turkey.

Within Turkey, the debate about EU membership was divided. Islamists argued that the EU was heavily centered around Western Christian culture and that Turkey should not be a part of it (Bodzağlıoğlu 2003, 94). More Western-oriented leaders, including Özal, argued for Turkey's "cultural suitability to Europe." He argued that Turkey's culture, government institutions and economy were comparable with those of European states, but acknowledged that the West generally objected to membership for a Muslim country. After the official rejection came in 1989, some of the discourse around EU membership shifted to Turkey exerting its Europeanness without being part of Europe. Rejection by the EU, combined with the changes of the post-Soviet world, forced Turkey to not only reconfigure its national identity but also its foreign policy to promote its Europeanness without inclusion in Europe (Bodzağlıoğlu 2003, 95-96). By the late 1990s, Turkish politics took on a more neo-Ottoman flair, drawing on Ottoman heritage as a sort of psychological consolation for EU rejection. Turkey did not, however, give up on EU accession, and its interest in membership continues to the present. As Turkey looked outward, some politicians drew inspiration from Atatürk's annexation of Hatay or other early-Republic interests to shape contemporary Turkish foreign policy, moving away from a strict interpretation of the *Misak-ı Milli* and instead towards the wider Turkic and Muslim world (Oran 2011, 150).

### **Foreign Policy in this Period**

Despite the significant changes caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkish foreign policy during this period was not entirely novel. Foreign policy in the post-Cold War period was similar to that of Menderes-era Turkey, with a strong commitment to cooperating with the U.S. and using the Turkey-U.S. alliance to support its interests elsewhere, such as in the Balkans and Central Asia (Kösebalaban 2011, 120). Özal intended to balance elements of East and West in Turkey's post-Cold War identity. As a result, many people considered his foreign policy to be neo-Ottoman because he was interested in building links to Turkey's "geocultural periphery" (Kösebalaban 2011, 121). Turkey and Russia facilitated the creation of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) in 1990, hoping to reduce potential polarization between Russia and other Orthodox powers and Turkey and its Western allies. The BSEC consisted of some former Soviet states and some states from the Balkans, including Armenia and Greece (Kösebalaban 2011, 123-124). As a continuation of his assertive policies, Özal expanded the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to include the Muslim-majority republics of the former Soviet Union (Kösebalaban 2011, 123). Turkey's interest in expanding regional cooperation served not only to counter the Russia-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) but also to remind the EU of its regional influence, which became more powerful in the post-Cold War world (Kösebalaban 2011, 123-124). Beside Turkey's cooperation with NATO, interest in the EU, and regional economic cooperation, it was busy managing its interests in territorial integrity and Muslim populations abroad.

## **Territorial Integrity**

### *The Kurdish Question*

Kurdish nationalism, which had been relatively quiet since the late 1930s, strengthened significantly starting in the late 1980s. After the clear foreign policies of the Cold War period dissipated in the 1990s, the revitalization of interest in Turkish identity and nationalism reignited tensions with the Kurds, whose cause then developed a more pronounced interest in territorial autonomy (Cizre 2001, 20). Turkey-Kurd antagonism developed a significant physical dimension in the post-Cold War era. As the country's internal dynamics changed, changes in Turkish national identity caused Turkey's attitude toward the Kurds to change. The Turkish political establishment reimagined Turkish identity to renew emphasis on the modern and Western traits of official nationalism. At the same time, Turkey wanted to distinguish itself from its neighbors, mixing pride in its Sunni Islamic heritage and ethnic roots with its emphasis on modernity. The result was a revival of Islamism that promoted the escalation of the Kurdish conflict starting in 1984 (Cizre 2001, 10). As Turkey intensified its fight against the Kurds and the *Partia-Kakaren Kurdistan* (PKK) in the late 1980s, it increasingly needed armor and helicopters to support its expanded military operations. Since NATO placed restrictions on Turkey's access to this materiel, Turkey looked to Russia in 1992 after German supplies were cut off due to domestic objections to Turkey's violent military campaign against the PKK. Russia sold helicopters and armored personnel carriers to Turkey to support its fight against Kurdish insurgents (Aktürk 2006, 340). Turkey's pursuit of additional military equipment outside of NATO restrictions signaled that it was willing to go against the alliance's guidelines to pursue its nationalistic interests. Russia, also a skeptic of Western liberal democracy's constraints, was able to help Turkey pursue its interests.

As the Iran-Iraq War ended in 1988, thousands of Kurds fled Iraq after the Saddam Hussein regime aggressively put down Kurdish revolts. Özal personally decided that Kurdish refugees would be allowed into Turkey, albeit without political refugee status, hoping to gain the confidence of EU member states and win the vote among Kurdish-majority cities in local elections. Nationalists feared that increased Kurdish populations within Turkey would stoke nationalistic sentiment among Kurds abroad, while the secularist media condemned the decision as a “Western plot to reenact the Treaty of Sèvres.” Around 60,000 Kurdish refugees were accepted into Turkey in 1988. In the wake of the Gulf War, the Hussein regime cracked down on another Kurdish uprising. Özal accepted another 500,000 Kurdish refugees in 1991 while supporting an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq. A long-standing ban on the use of the Kurdish language in Turkish media was also lifted that year, a step toward normalized relations. These actions prompted a strong reaction from nationalistic camps who favored the militarist approach (Kösebalaban 2011, 125). When Tansu Çiller became prime minister in 1995, the volatile domestic political scene coincided with the military’s enlarged role in politics and the end of a more balanced approach to the Kurds. Çiller pursued a hardline approach to the Kurdish issue (Kösebalaban 2011, 127-128). In 1996, Turkey nearly went to war with Syria over PKK camps and nearly went to war with Greece over Kardak islets the same year, all while fighting the PKK (Kösebalaban 2011, 130). The Kurdish question became one of Turkey’s most critical domestic and foreign policy issues in the late twentieth century, while its tactics raised concerns about human rights violations among Western allies and observers.

#### *Turkish & Muslim Populations Abroad*

When the six Muslim-majority republics of the Soviet Union declared their independence, Turkey was presented with an opportunity for cooperation with a variety of Turkic populations

abroad. Turkish foreign policy toward Azerbaijan and the Turkic-speaking Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, had “pan-Turkist undertones,” focused on a common Turkic heritage (Aktürk 2006, 341). The pan-Turkist vision was strongest from 1989 to 1993, when Turkish foreign policy was visibly influenced by its interest in the broader Turkic world (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 96). At its peak in the post-Soviet period, pan-Turkism envisioned the creation of a Turkistan led by Ankara that included Turkic populations not only in Central Asia and Azerbaijan but also in Iraq, China and Iranian Azerbaijan (Aktürk 2006, 342). Turkey was also interested in other Muslim populations abroad, especially those threatened by war. The shared Islamic heritage among Turkey, Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and the Middle East was touted as a leadership opportunity for Turkey. Some Turkish politicians considered closer ties with the Muslim world to be a viable alternative to inclusion in Europe (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 96). Though Turkey wanted to pursue its pan-Turkist interests in the post-Soviet period and become an economic hub between Central Asia and Europe, it was constrained by both financial limitations and conflicts of interest with Russia.

### *The War in Bosnia*

Echoing the tension in Turkish politics about its place in Europe, the Turkish public was equally apprehensive about the Christian West’s seemingly limited interest in the Muslim populations of Europe. Islam was the primary motivation for Turkey’s interest in not only Bosnia, but also Chechnya and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In all of these cases, the conflict was between Christian and Muslim entities (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 131). When the West didn’t act quickly in response to the plight of Bosnian Muslims in the war against Serbia, the Turkish public was shocked until the UN intervened. As the war in Bosnia continued, many Turks felt that the West was not invested enough in protecting Muslims populations, discouraging their interest in

EU integration. These concerns shaped the context for the reemergence of political Islam in Turkish politics (Kösebalaban 2011, 132)

### *Central Asia*

Turkish public opinion was acutely interested in the independence of four countries home to their “long-lost [Turkic] ‘brothers’” and Turkish foreign policy was analogously impacted by the prospect of cooperation with these countries, which was reciprocated among the Central Asian states (Fuller 1992, 36-37). Turkey was predicted to take on a “big brother” role toward the five Muslim-majority republics of the former Soviet Union (Kösebalaban 2011, 122). When Turkish President Süleyman Demirel visited the Central Asian republics in 1992, he spoke with enthusiasm about their independence from “Russian imperialism” and about the possibility of a Union of Turkish States. Turkey established a Turkic-speaking economic union with the four Turkic-speaking Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan later that year, though it achieved limited success (Aktürk 2006, 341). Turkey was considered a model for the Central Asian republics, especially following the rise of political Islam in Iran after the Iranian Revolution (Robins 1993, 593). EU leadership was worried about Iranian and Russian influence, and supported Turkey as a model because it was secular, not fundamentalist like Iran, and fused Western values with Islam. The EU assumed the Turkish model would be attractive to the Central Asian republics (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 102-103). Though Turkey was keenly interested in participating in the development of these countries in the post-Soviet period, its commitment was fading by 1993. Turkey proved unable to live up to such an aspirational role in the region, largely because it could not finance economic aid at the level necessary during this period. As a result, Turkey’s relations with Central Asia grew very slowly in the remainder of the 1990s (Robins 1993, 593). Economic constraints, along with awareness of domestic issues, decreased interest in Central Asia among the Turkish foreign policy

establishment (Fuller 1992, 40). Though Turkey was unable to fulfill its pan-Turkist aspirations in Central Asia, the republics of this region became essential partners for trade and energy.

### *Azerbaijan*

Unlike in the Central Asian republics, Azerbaijan's relationship with Russia was more complicated and, therefore, it was harder for the Azerbaijani government to cut itself off from Moscow. Azerbaijan's shared borders with Russia and Iran, as well as its contested borders with Armenia, made it a particularly high priority for Turkish foreign policy in the post-Soviet period (Robins 1992, 597). In the early 1990s, Iran was in a much better position to act as a credible intermediary between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey wanted to establish relations with Baku before Iran or others did, becoming the first state to recognize Azerbaijan's post-Soviet independence (Fuller 1992, 56-57). Though Azerbaijan is most culturally, ethnically and linguistically similar to Turkey among the former Soviet Turkic republics, it was not particularly interested in Turkish influences. Turkey-Azerbaijan relations were significantly strained when Turkey supported the pro-Turkish leader Ebulfaz Elchibey, the rival of Heydar Aliyev, even after Elchibey was replaced by Aliyev in a 1993 coup. Aliyev was insistent that Azerbaijan could not afford to cut off relations with Russia "with whom [Azerbaijan] had been living... for 2000 years." Azerbaijan preferred to pursue good relations with all interested countries to advance its own interests, economic or otherwise. In the view of Aliyev, Azerbaijan did not need Turkey as a "big brother" (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 100-101). Despite this lack of interest from the Azerbaijani side, Turkey's nationalistic interests initially attracted it to the Azerbaijani side of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey was, however, the first country to adopt a strictly neutral stance. Pressures from the opposition political parties and Turkish public eventually pushed Özal to reverse Turkey's neutrality and adopt a pro-Azerbaijan stance (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003,100).



Turkey's interests in Azerbaijan were further curbed when Russia demanded that Turkey keep "a low profile" while Russia reasserted itself in the South Caucasus, including in Azerbaijan and Armenia and in the affairs of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Olson 1996, 112). Despite the clear connections between Turkish and Azerbaijani heritage, Turkey's pan-Turkist vision was not as readily accepted as it had hoped.

### *Chechnya & Tatarstan*

In the early 1990s, Turkey showed interest in Muslim populations within the Russian Federation. Mintimir Shaimiyev, president of the autonomous republic of Tatarstan, visited Ankara in 1992. Dzhokhar Dudayev, president of Chechnya, also visited Ankara in 1993. These visits were considered offensive to "Russian sensitivities," and Moscow expected that they would not be repeated (Aktürk 2006, 343). Though Turkish foreign policy in general was interested in the Chechen cause as it fought Russia, the emerging (Islamist) Welfare Party in Turkey was particularly interested in their cause (Kösebalaban 2011, 132). Turkey's interests in Muslim populations within the Russian Federation, however, could not be reconciled with its interest in eliminating Russian support for the Kurdish cause. Russia successfully bargained with Turkey to prevent its support of the Chechen cause. The two countries recognized that their respective relations with the Kurds and Chechens were analogous, and they agreed to stay out of one another's affairs for their mutual benefit (Olson 1996, 113). After they agreed to support one another in their efforts, Russia escalated its war on Chechnya while Turkey incited a large attack on Kurds in northern Iraq (Olson 1996, 112). Russia even exploited Turkey's influence as a Muslim power to persuade Chechen President Dudayev to negotiate with the Russians (Olson 1996, 111). Russia's residual influence was strong, making it difficult for Turkey to exert itself without jeopardizing its relations with Russia or its own interest in containing the PKK. Moreover, Turkey lacked in-depth

knowledge about the former-Soviet populations and regions in which it was interested because Russian imperial and Soviet dominance had kept them out of Turkey's sphere of influence for over two hundred years. As a result, Turkey overestimated the power of pan-Turkism among Turkic populations in the former Soviet union (Olson 1996, 109). Ultimately, Turkey did not have the financial resources to fund its interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

### **Russia in Focus**

In the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, Turkey showed a sense of anxiety about the new role of Russia in the international system. Although there had been little tension between USSR and Turkey, they never "stabilized their great power/middle power relationship," indicating the possibility of confrontation or rift in the new order (Robins 1993, 596). Though the Russian Federation did not share a border with Turkey, both powers still had claims to Black Sea shores, and the newly independent states of the Caucasus and Central Asia were opportunities for both Turkey and Russia to test their foreign policy capabilities (Robins 1993, 596; Aktürk 2006, 339). Even in the early 1990s, Russia remained to be the largest and potentially most powerful state in the region, but Turkey knew that Russia was no longer a significant threat to its foreign policy interests. Likewise, Turkey did not pose any significant security threat to Russia (Aktürk 2006, 339). Turkey was wary of antagonizing Russia, even at a time of weakness, which influenced its policies in Central Asia, even causing Ankara's initial reluctance to recognize the newly-independent republics in 1991 (Robins 1993, 596). Fears about aggravating Russia in the post-Soviet period dampened Turkey's interest in unity among the Soviet successor states with Turkic populations. Nevertheless, the sudden disappearance of the Soviet threat prompted a dramatic

change in Turkey-Russia relations, causing a “radical break” from the previous 500 years, save for a period of amiability from 1923 to 1945, of their relations as “archrivals” (Aktürk 2006, 338).

Reluctance to aggravate Russia also impacted Turkey’s relations with the Kurds. Russia, recognizing that the Kurdish question was the “Achilles heel of all of Turkey’s foreign and domestic policy,” leveraged Turkey’s sensitivities about the Kurds against Turkey to prevent it from overstepping itself in Russia’s war in Chechnya (Olson 1996, 113). Chechnya was so strategically important to Russia that it was willing to bargain with Turkey for mutual silence on each other’s internal conflicts. Russia had the upper hand as the larger power, allowing it to exploit Turkish commitment to nationalistic interests, such as the Kurds, to get its way. Russia’s defeat in the first Chechen War showed its military weakness, while its conduct in the war strained its relations with the West (Olson 1996, 116). In this situation, however, Turkey’s preoccupation with its fight against Kurdish nationalism and the PKK “weakened [its] foreign policy leverage with Russia,” preventing it from pursuing its nationalistic interests in Chechnya (Olson 1996, 106).

While this deadlock prevented either country from meddling in the other’s internal affairs, Turkey and Russia heavily increased their economic cooperation in the 1990s (Olson 1996, 106). Turkey-Russia relations were also tested by Turkey’s resentment toward Greece. When Turkey’s relations with Greece were especially tense over the Kardak islets in 1996, it threatened Greek Cyprus with military action over the possibility that Russian S-300 missiles would be deployed to the island (Köseblaban 2011, 130). Tensions in the Turkey-Russia relationship made it clear that neither would be able to overstep the boundaries of the other’s interests without consequences.

Beyond their conflicting interests, Turkey and Russia began to cooperate intensely in the 1990s. The key causes of Turkish-Russian rapprochement in the 1990s were the disappearance of the Soviet threat and the proliferation of their mutual interests. Their shared interests promoted

cooperation in the early 1990s, and their relations further strengthened later in the decade (Aktürk 2006, 338). In 1992, Turkey and Russia signed the Treaty on the Principles of Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation. The principles of the treaty mirrored those of their 1925 Treaty of Friendship, which had expired in 1945 and was not considered for renewal at the time. At the time, Russia and Turkey had similar views about liberal democracy. Both of their governments were experiencing a decline of democracy, and leadership was wary of following the Western democratic model. At this juncture economic relations between Turkey and Russia radically increased, and the growth of their trade volume and mutual investments strengthened their cooperation (Aktürk 2006, 340). Since each country was a key member of the BSEC, their trade centered around the Black Sea region, where some of their other interests overlapped.

Russia's sustained interest in the South Caucasus states made Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Abkhazia separatist territory of Georgia potential flashpoints in Russia-Turkey relations (Aktürk 2006, 357). Nevertheless, their shared interest in the South Caucasus, though at times conflicting, meant that both countries were interested in stabilizing the region. By the end of the 1990s, Russia started to include Turkey in its endeavors in the South Caucasus, facilitating their rapprochement (Aktürk 2006, 345). Key issues in the South Caucasus remained unresolved, yet Turkey and Russia were increasingly interested in their common foreign policy goals. Both countries were strong opponents of the United States' economic embargo on and invasion of Iraq, albeit for different reasons (Aktürk 2006, 341). In addition to their shared skepticism about liberal democracy, Turkey and Russia perceived that they had congruent stances about terrorism and religious fundamentalism within their borders. Russia condemned the PKK's "terrorism against Turkey" in 1999, while Turkey supported Russia's efforts to reestablish order in Chechnya (Aktürk 2006, 357). Their mutual support against the PKK

and Chechnian causes, however, came only after extensive bargaining and deliberation between the two parties about their conflicting interests in these issues. As relations between Turkey and Russia fluctuated with changing foreign policy issues, their trade volume was unaffected. Likewise, their domestic politics seemed “uncorrelated, if not contradictory,” to their mutually-beneficial foreign policy decisions (Aktürk 2006, 338). Shared interests in countering American and European interests in their neighborhood ensured the continuation of Turkey-Russian interests in this period, even when some of their interests closer to home were in direct conflict.

### **Analysis of Nationalist Influences**

Preoccupied by interests in the broader Turkic world and strategic territories, Turkish foreign policy from 1989 to 2003 was conducted as a constructivist account would expect. A case can still be made, however, for a rationalist account of Turkish foreign policy toward Russia during this period. Rationalist analysis would emphasize Turkey’s interest in reviving its geopolitical importance after the collapse of the Cold War system (Kösebalaban 2011, 117). Turkey sought out its “geocultural periphery” in the Balkans and Central Asia to explore its options outside of Europe (Kösebalaban 2011, 121). During Özal’s presidency, Turkey’s foreign policy was more neo-Ottoman than in previous eras. Nevertheless, economic constraints also significantly influenced Turkey’s foreign policy aspirations in the post-Soviet period. Though Turkey was deeply interested in cooperating with the Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union, it was unable to provide the financial support these countries needed during their transition out of the Soviet system (Olson 1996, 109).

Constructivist analysis would emphasize Turkey’s post-Cold War identity crisis, which motivated it to renegotiate its national identity and interests in the broader Turkic and Muslim

world (Reyes 2015, 77). Likewise, Turkey's staunch commitment to its fight against the PKK was an essential component of its foreign policy during this period. Turkey was willing to create tensions with NATO and Russia to promote its nationalistic cause against the Kurds. Likewise, Turkey was also willing to bargain with Russia to maintain its operations against the Kurds, forcing it to abandon interests in Chechnya. Though Turkey was initially opposed to capitulating to Russia, domestic tensions about the Kurds drove it to sign a "Protocol to Prevent Terrorism," agreeing to stay out of Chechnya as long as Russia stayed out of Turkey-Kurd relations (Olson 1996, 111). Though both Turkey and Russia had vested interest in reducing the threats of terrorism and religious fundamentalism, their motivations were nationalistic (Aktürk 2006, 357). Turkey is a Muslim-majority country, but ideological secularism condemns fundamentalist Islam. It is committed to containing the Kurdish threat because of Turkish national identity's close ties to the Republic's territory. Russia, a predominantly Orthodox Christian country, was very concerned with the separatist movements, some with religious fundamentalist elements, among Muslim-majority regions, such as Chechnya in the North Caucasus, that threatened the breakup of the Russian Federation. Although Turkey wanted to protect the interests of Muslim populations abroad, it was willing to turn away from the Chechen cause to pursue its nationalist priority of a higher order, the Kurds.

After the Cold War ended, Turkish foreign policy decisions appear to have been made as a constructivist account would expect. The main interests of Turkish foreign policy were reasserting its Ottoman heritage and containing the Kurdish insurgency. Moreover, Turkey's rejection by the EU motivated it to look beyond its Western allies to exert its own form of Europeaness (Bodzağlıoğlu 2003, 92-93). Another significant change in Turkey's foreign policy at the time was its bilateral relations with Russia. The Russian Federation did not pose a significant

threat to Turkey, a significant shift in their bilateral relations, and Turkey was not a threat to Russia (Aktürk 2006, 339). As Turkey-Russia rapprochement began in the 1990s, these two Eurasian powers were an informal counter to Western interests in their geopolitical neighborhood.

Their economic cooperation mushroomed in the 1990s, and they engaged periphery countries in the BSEC (Aktürk 2006, 340). Both countries opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, though for their own reasons (Aktürk 2006, 341). In the post-Cold War world, Turkey and Russia's similar suspicions about liberal democracy and the West brought them together as they found their new roles in the international system (Aktürk 2006, 340). Though Turkey's economic situation was a significant limiting factor in its pan-Turkist endeavors, its ideological miscalculation was also detrimental. Turkey did not properly account for the intellectual currents of the Soviet Union that had inundated Central Asian intellectuals with anti-Islamic and atheist propaganda, reducing Muslim identity to a matter of cultural heritage (Olson 1996, 109; Cornell 2011, 33). Turkey's nationalistic pursuits in the post-Soviet period, combined with a growing sense of exclusion from Europe, forced Turkey to reevaluate its national identity and explore alternative foreign policy option. Turkey's more neo-Ottoman foreign policy was born out of this context.

### **VIII. Contemporary Period (2011-2020)**

Contemporary scholarship recognizes key shifts in Turkish foreign policy in the last decade. First, Turkey has been increasingly uninterested in cooperation with the West, instead pursuing its interests without inclusion of or approval by the West (Koru 2019; Dusun-Özkanca 2019; Gözen Ercan 2017). Second, both domestic and foreign politics in Turkey are reviving the narrative of Turkey's legacy as the successor state of the Ottoman Empire. As part of this narrative, Turkey has looked to the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia and broader Islamic world to exert its

influence (Koru 2019; Dursun-Özkanca 2019; Aydın-Düzgit 2018; Canan-Sokullu 2013). The third, and perhaps most significant, shift is Turkey's increasingly close relations with Russia, despite significant crises and tensions in their relationship (Koru 2019; Dursun-Özkanca 2019; Canan-Sokullu 2013). Closer relations between Turkey and Russia are a product of the previous two trends.

The former "grandeur... and morality" of the Ottoman Empire is a source of power for contemporary Turkey, creating continuity between the Ottoman past and the present and supporting the notion of a Turkey that is "very powerful" in relation to Western "others" (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 31). Whereas Western powers were weaker "others" in older narratives, their conflicting interests in relation to Turkey's contemporary aspirations have brought them to the forefront. In the early 2000s, both Turkey and Russia expressed their status as "European countries," but their relations with the West declined toward the end of the decade (Koru 2019, 8). Russia emerged as a "fellow victim of the Western-imposed world order" and a friend with whom Turkey could fight against it (Koru 2019, 6). Despite the positive aspects of their relationship, Russia is much more powerful than Turkey and far less inclined to support its international aspirations (Koru 2019, 18; Gültekin-Punsmann 2012). Putin, however, sees Erdoğan as an authority figure of the Muslim world, even among Muslims within in Russia, which balances an otherwise unequal relationship (Koru 2019, 12). As Turkey exerts its influence in the Islamic world, Russia, as a superpower excluded by the West, has become an essential partner. In that sense, Russia has supplanted the U.S. as Turkey's key source for economic and diplomatic support.



### **Domestic Politics**

Continuing the religious revival that began in the 1950s, the AKP has promoted Turkey's Islamic identity at home and abroad. Since the party came to power in 2002, observers have expressed concern about the future of Turkish democracy. The AKP claimed that its rise to power was a response to popular interest in "better governance, higher standards of democracy, respect for rights of every sort," and a path to EU integration. Despite the fact that some perceive its politics as "political Islam," the AKP refers to itself as "conservative democrat," without explicit reference to Islamism, balancing the international community and secular establishment's interests with the interest of its Islamist electorate (Özoğuz-Bolgi 2012).

While the early AKP was interested in EU membership, its politics changed after a decisive victory in 2007 (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 21-22). As Turkey's membership looked less likely in the later 2000s, the AKP shifted its foreign policy vision from Kemalist to neo-Ottomanist, changing Turkey's perspective on Europe. Europe had been a "natural direction" for the country, but it became an "other" and an "unwanted intruder" in Turkish politics. The themes of Muslimhood and the country's Ottoman history were used to emphasize the key differences between Europe and Turkey. Turkish foreign politics began to portray Europe as a "discriminatory entity" that was inferior to Turkey democratically, politically and morally (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 22). Moreover, EU criticism of Turkish democracy was countered domestically by invoking the Sèvres syndrome, referencing Europe's interference in the early Republic's history (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 25). Though these concepts were not entirely new at the time, their growing primacy in domestic politics constituted a noteworthy ideological shift.

Major shifts in Turkish domestic politics, and foreign policy, have occurred in the last ten to fifteen years, demarcating between the AKP and pre-AKP periods (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 28).

Domestic developments, some of which have responded to international events, have made Turkey a less “serious” candidate for EU membership. After a Kurdish peace process initiative failed to end the 40-year-old conflict with the PKK in 2014 and with the Syrian Civil War on its borders, EU membership prospects look increasingly bleak.

A coup attempt further supported “that the West was the enemy” and that the EU and U.S. wanted regime change in Turkey (Koru 2019, 9-10). In July 2016, a group within the military, suspected to be led by the Gülenist network, attempted to capture the government but was harshly resisted (Koru 2019, 14). Erdoğan’s government responded to the coup by centralizing powers of the executive, to which the West responded by showing decreased interest in Turkish interests (Koru 2019, 9-10). Changes to the constitution after the coup attempt included the elimination of the office of the prime minister, new presidential authority to appoint and fire ministers, a limit on parliamentary power against the executive, and allowing the president to be the formal leader of a political party (Malsin 2017).

Since the 2016 coup attempt, Erdoğan refers to a “New Turkey” with the coup as its founding event. Erdoğan has referred to this coup as the “second war of independence” for Turkey and called his ascent to power a “slow revolution.” The US and Russia are key figures in this narrative, but with vastly different roles (Koru 2019, 14). As Turkey’s relations with the West have weakened, the political power of the Sèvres syndrome has strengthened. Turkey increasingly perceives the West as a force that seeks to divide the country and limit its interests. The neo-Ottoman historical narrative, largely associated with the AKP, presents Turkey as a “very powerful” entity against Western powers, supporting decreased interest in Western affairs (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 31). As such, domestic political developments in the last decade, combined with international dynamics, have informed changes in Turkey’s foreign policy posture.

### **Foreign Policy in this Period**

Consistent with its increasing tensions with the West, Turkey has pursued greater independence in its foreign policy in the last decade. Following the Cold War, Turkey valued “international norms, laws and regulations,” but was skeptical of the use of force and had underdeveloped international intelligence capabilities. In 2010, Turkey worked with Brazil on an Iran nuclear deal that would allow peaceful energy production and limit weaponization, hoping to solve an issue others could not. Erdoğan intended to remain friendly with the West while operating as an entity of its own, but Washington reacted against the initiative. As a result, Erdoğan was embittered by the fact that he “need[ed] permission” from the West to pursue his interests. Nevertheless, this first attempt at a Turkish initiative without “Western handholding” failed (Koru 2019, 8). When the Syrian Civil War broke out in 2011, Erdoğan changed Turkey’s foreign policy direction. He challenged the current nature of Turkey that “was pro-status quo, afraid of change, lacked confidence” and was “blunted” by external powers in pursuing national interest (Koru 2019, 18). Erdoğan increasingly emphasizes “Turkey’s independence from the West,” especially as Turkish and American interests in Iraq and Syria clash (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 127). Turkey has increasingly tested the bounds of its relationship with the U.S. and EU in pursuit of its national interests.

### *Economic Interests*

Energy is a key interest in contemporary Turkish foreign policy, especially in its relations with the EU (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 99). Turkey’s geographic location gives its leverage over the EU in terms of its control over some of the energy flow into Europe. Turkey refused full membership in the EU Energy Community Treaty (ECT), opting instead to collaborate with Russia on energy projects and evade sanctions on Iran (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 98). The decision to reject

membership in the ECT was based on Turkey's interest in guaranteeing that its prospects of full EU membership "are realistic" (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 99). Though Turkey has a big role in the European energy sector, it has been frustrated by Cyprus's power in energy negotiations, afforded by its full EU membership (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 101).

In contrast, Turkey joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) with full membership. The SCO includes China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Turkey's decision to join the SCO is considered an abandonment of its EU interests, though it is not yet clear if Turkey has fully given up on EU membership (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 113-114). Cooperation with non-Western countries was expected to strain Turkey's relations with the West.

Turkey seeks diverse energy partners and aspires to be a "European energy hub," connecting the Middle East and Caspian Sea to Southeastern Europe. Likewise, Turkish energy cooperation with Russia allows Russia to bypass Ukraine, avoiding the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and Western sanctions (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 103-104). Russia and Turkey's joint Turkish Stream project, therefore, gives Turkey new leverage over the EU as its membership prospects decline. Turkey has already shown it is willing to connect "refugee treatment, visa liberalization, and financial transfers" to the energy industry and is likely to capitalize on energy transit rents (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 107). As Turkey balances its energy interests between the EU and Russia, it is still unclear whether the EU would be willing to purchase energy routed from Russia via Turkey (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 107-108). Despite the importance of Turkey's energy interests in its contemporary foreign policy, ideological interests still dictate its decisions in this sector. By joining in with Russia to challenge Europe's energy market, Turkey is exerting its autonomy against the preferences of the West.

## **Territorial Integrity**

### *The Kurdish Question & The Syrian Civil War*

The Kurdish question has increasingly driven a wedge between the U.S. and Turkey amid Syrian Civil War. An independent Kurdish state in Northern Syria is “Turkey’s biggest fear” in this context (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 127). The U.S. views Syrian Kurds of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which has had multiple victories against ISIS since 2014, as the best-organized force to fight ISIS. In contrast, Turkey considered the PYD to be a terrorist organization because it was established in 2003 by PKK affiliates (Günay 2017, 209). In the Turkish perspective, independence for Kurds in Syria could embolden the Kurdish minority within Turkey in their pursuit of autonomous territory, threatening Turkey’s territorial integrity (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 127). Due to the fact that the Kurdish question remains unresolved, any empowerment of the PYD is considered a threat to Turkey’s national security (Günay 2017, 209). Turkey has already had difficulty dealing with independence negotiations for Iraqi Kurds, whose interest in independence has been seriously considered in recent years (Dalay 2017a, 3). Moreover, the Kurdish People’s Democracy Party (HDP) won thirteen percent of the vote in 2015, above the ten-percent threshold, meaning that tensions between Turkey and its Kurdish minority were high (Günay 2017, 209). Following the 2016 coup attempt, Erdoğan cracked down on the HDP, which he considered to be an enemy commensurate with the Gülenists (Malsin 2017).

After a thaw in relations between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds, led by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) around 2008, Turkey returned to its more oppositional stance. Turkey’s default position on the Kurds is to uphold the territorial integrity of its neighbors, Syria and Iraq, though it is now supportive of the KRG. The regions along Turkey’s southern and southeastern borders are almost entirely populated by Kurds, making them closely related to Turkey’s territorial

anxieties (Dalay 2017a, 1). The outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 complicated Turkey's relations with various Kurdish factions while the conflict in Syria and destabilization in Iraq created new threats to its southeastern borders.

As Iraq fought ISIS in the early 2010s, the KRG, as well as the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria, gained new territory as they were reclaimed from ISIS forces. Though Erdoğan originally dismissed these advancements as an “internal affair” for Iraq and Syria, he proved far less tolerant of the KRG's interests when its independence referendum was introduced in 2014. Turkey became a vocal opponent of the referendum, siding with Iran and the central Iraqi government on the issue (Dalay 2017a, 3). After the referendum was introduced, Turkey ramped up its resistance to the Iraqi Kurds, advocating for the postponement of the referendum, which was delayed until 2017 (Dalay 2017a, 2). Despite its strained relations with Iraq, Turkey was more interested in upholding Iraqi territorial integrity than promoting good relations with the KRG in Erbil (Dalay 2017a, 3). Weakened governments, the rise of extremist groups, and territorial gains by the PKK and PYD within Iraq and Syria put immense pressure on Turkey to change its position toward the KRG (Dalay 2017a, 2-3).

As the Syrian Civil War continues, the KRG has become Turkey's partner, while other Kurdish groups remain its enemies. Turkey's main goal in Syria is to prevent the PYD from gaining additional influence or territory, fearing its advances could stoke Kurdish nationalism within its borders. Second, Turkey wants to ensure the removal of al-Assad from office (Günay 2017, 210). On February 2, 2020, Russian-backed Syrian pro-regime forces attacked Idlib province, killing eight Turkish servicemen and inciting a new crisis in Turkey-Russia relations. Moscow suggested that this crisis was Ankara's fault, for it had not disclosed the location of its forces and accused Turkey of turning Idlib into “an oasis for terrorists” (Erdemir and Knippen

2020). Erdoğan visited Ukraine a week later, accusing Russia of being an unreliable ally, condemned the annexation of Crimea, an issue Turkey had initially been quiet about, and pledged defense support to the Ukrainian military (Ekinci 2017, 164-165). On March 1, 2020, Turkey launched Operation Spring Shield against the Syrian Arab Army. The same day, Turkey downed two Russian-made Syrian air force jets, and Putin agreed to meet Erdogan on March 5 to discuss the Idlib crisis (Zaman 2020). Yet again, Turkey-Russia relations were in crisis but managed to normalize.

On April 15, 2020, Turkish forces struck a PKK base in a strategic territory in northern Iraq, raising concerns about a future KRG-Turkey operation to oust PKK forces from the region. Nechirvan Barzani, president of the KRG, considers the PKK's presence in the Kurdish region of Iraq to be illegal. Likewise, Turkey's presence within Iraq is considered illegal by the Iraqi federal government (Mercadier 2020). Turkey's presence has caused tensions in Ankara-Baghdad relations, and the Iraqi government accuses Turkey of "meddling" in its domestic affairs. Turkey has a bilateral oil agreement with the KRG and gave asylum to Iraqi's former Sunni vice president, Tariq al-Hamimi, after he fled charges of leading death squads against Shiites (Günay 2017, 208). Nevertheless, Baghdad did not resist when Turkey built military bases on KRG territory in recent years (Mercadier 2020). The unresolved Kurdish question not only complicates Turkey's involvement in the Syrian Civil War, but also limits the AKP's aspirations in the broader Middle East region (Günay 2017, 210). Turkey's nationalistic vendetta with the Kurds has driven its involvement in the Syrian Civil War while complicating relations with Russia, straining ties with Iraq, and creating common interest Iran (Dalay 2017b, 2).

## **Turkic and Muslim Populations Abroad**

### *Syrian Refugees*

Whereas anti-immigration rhetoric is a common trope in nationalistic rhetoric, Syrian refugees have become political pawns in an unexpected way for Turkey (Kinnvall 2004, 741-742). On one hand, Turkey feels that because it accepted so many Syrian refugees, while Europe did not, it is morally superior. Turkey sees itself as a “leader” and “defender” of the “oppressed” Muslim world against the West, echoing Atatürk’s rhetoric during his presidency (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 29; Oran 2011, 150-151). On the other hand, Syrian refugees have become a pawn in Turkey’s relations with the EU.

On March 18, 2016, Turkey signed a deal with the EU, accepting in total nearly 4 million refugees, mostly fleeing the civil war in Syria, in exchange for six billion Euros (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 83-84; Zaman 2020). Turkey’s priority interest in its agreement with the EU was the advancement of visa liberalization for Turkish citizens (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 86). The refugee deal was also hoped to be a “reenergization of the EU accession process for Turkey (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 91). Nevertheless, Turkey did not feel the EU had fulfilled its promises, including visa liberalization, and instead felt like it had been left alone to handle the refugee crisis for the EU (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 94; Zaman 2020). Turkey had upheld an “open-door policy” toward refugees since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, but its growing frustration with the EU tested its patience (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 84).

On February 27, 2020, Turkey announced that its borders were open for Syrian refugees to leave, saying it could no longer cope with the burden of so many refugees, as more were coming from Idlib. Thousands fled to Greece, many on buses organized by the Turkish government, and maps in Arabic were provided to show routes to the border. Approximately 76,000 refugees left



Turkey via the city of Edirne in Thrace. Greece did not accept the migrants, responding with tear gas when refugees tried to cross the borders. The EU called an emergency meeting March 1, where Erdoğan expressed his frustration with EU's lack of follow-through on the 2016 deal (Zaman 2020). Some have accused Erdoğan of weaponizing refugees against the EU, while others worry about the fallout of this episode (Maziad and Sotiriadis 2020; Zaman 2020). Erdoğan's willingness to contest the EU's slow follow-through confirms that he refuses to let the EU dictate his foreign policy decisions, regardless of the outcome.

### **Russia in Focus**

Compared to his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin pursued a hard-line, if not Turkophobic, policy toward Turkic populations in the Russian Federation during the early years of his presidency, while pursuing increased cooperation with Turkey itself (Aktürk 2006, 356). Russia formally recognized the Armenian genocide 2005, creating a tense point in their relations. Then, Russia started a five-day war in Georgia in August 2008. The war in Georgia was not well-received by Turkey because it showed that Russia was willing to intervene militarily in the South Caucasus, Turkey's near-abroad (Gültekin-Punsmann 2012). Russia has engaged the Marxist-Leninist PKK since Cold War, interfered with Turkish interests at the UN and killed large numbers of Muslim civilians as the main supporter of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and Turkey's opponent by proxy in the war. While all of this would normally infuriate Erdoğan, their rapprochement continues as Turkey's relations with its allies deteriorate (Koru 2019, 6). In the last decade, Turkey-Russia rapprochement has become clearer and stronger, despite the odds. Both parties have proven willing to overcome tensions in their bilateral relations to advance their broader foreign policy interests.

In September 2015, the Moscow Cathedral Mosque reopened after renovation, to which Turkey gave funds, and Putin invited Erdoğan to give a speech at the ceremony. Erdoğan sat next to Putin among other leaders of the Islamic world (Koru 2019, 11; RT 2015, 1:06:15). Erdoğan referred to Russians living in Turkey as Turks' "kin" (*soydaş*), a word typically referring to Turkic peoples abroad, and noted Russia and Turkey as representatives of Eurasia's "two ancient cultures." The equality of Russian and Turkish citizens within their countries, the Russian Orthodox and Islamic faiths, and the American and European treatment of Muslim refugees, as well as general Islamophobia, form a backdrop for their relations (Koru 2019, 12). A month after the ceremony in Moscow, Turkish forces shot down a Russian SU-24 jet, to which Russia responded with sanctions. Russian sanctions heavily impacted Turkey's economy, and Russo-Turkish relations reached a low point (Koru 2019, 20; Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 105). Turkey sent an apology to Russia in June 2016, and Erdoğan hoped to both restore economic relations and secure Russia's backing against the Kurds in Syria (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 105). After bilateral relations were restored in 2016, rapprochement accelerated (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 106). Russia has been Turkey's "helping neighbor" since the start of "New Turkey" (Koru 2019, 14). Putin was the first to call in support and sympathy after the coup attempt in 2016, confirming that tensions in their relations had subsided (Koru 2019, 14; Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 105). After tensions relaxed, Russia dropped sanctions and bilateral energy deals moved forward. In December 2016, the Astana process, high-level talks about Syria that included Iran while excluding the West, was initiated by Turkey and Russia (Koru 2019, 16). Despite key points of contention in their bilateral relations, Turkey and Russia have worked to uphold and publicize the endurance of their relationship. Turkey-Russia relations suggest that they are "cleansing their relationship of Western influences," since the West is considered a wedge between them preventing good relations (Koru 2019, 17).

In 2017, Turkey purchased an S-400 missile system from Russia, raising concerns among NATO allies. Not only would the missile system not be interoperable with NATO's systems, but its Russian origin meant that NATO's data networks could be compromised (Dusun-Özkanca 2019, 117). Greece notably also possesses missile defense systems from Russia, though in the earlier S-300 model. Turkey had brought this up to NATO allies in 2011, frustrated that Greece was not criticized for this purchase (Dusun-Özkanca 2019, 118). Moreover, Turkey noted that the PKK and PYD possessed German military equipment, which it found to be very troubling. Turkey has regularly reminded NATO allies that Greece and Cyprus both possess defense systems purchased outside of the NATO alliance. The decision to purchase the S-400 system, Turkey claims, is to "defend itself from the backdrop of the threats from ISIS, the Syrian civil war, Kurdish terrorism, and other regional threats" (Dursun-Özkanca 2019, 119).

In 2018, Erdoğan and Putin met in Ankara to celebrate the bilateral project to build the Akkuyu nuclear plant in Turkey. Russia will fund the construction, operation and management of the plant, and energy is set to be produced at the site by 2023 (Pozdeeva 2018). During the ceremony proceedings, the opening remarks stated that those present would "witness the making of history, and that the project, which has been a dream for a half century, will become reality" (RT 2018, 16:40). Erdoğan thanked the Russian delegation for their participation, and also noted Turkey's recent purchase of the S-400 missile system. He emphasized that Turkey would work together with Russia to combat terrorism and resolve the conflict in Syria (Pozdeeva 2018). At both events, Turkey showed clear resistance to Western influences on its foreign policy. Turkey cited the faults of its "others," Greece, Cyprus and the PKK, who had made similar military equipment purchases to justify its purchase of the Russian S-400 system. The strong rhetoric of the ceremony proceedings in Ankara in 2018 referenced enduring relations between Turkey and

Russia. Despite multiple crises in the early- and mid-2010s, Turkey's cooperation with Russia to build a nuclear power plant and purchase defense equipment showed that their bilateral relations have recovered and strengthened (Koru 2019, 6).

### **Analysis of Nationalist Influences**

Based on Turkey's interests in the Muslim world and resistance to Western allies, Turkish foreign policy from 2011 to present has been conducted as a constructivist account would expect. There is, however, still strong support for a rationalist account of Turkish foreign policy toward Russia during this period. A rationalist account of Turkish foreign policy toward Russia during this period would emphasize the proliferation of energy and trade interests in the Turkey-Russia relationship. Economic cooperation with Russia fulfills Turkey's economic and military power needs, allowing Turkey to pursue its interests how it wants, without being limited by Western influence. Turkey has significantly increased its trade volume with Russia, purchased Russian missiles and allowed Russian investment in its nuclear power. Moreover, Turkey-Russia economic relations have remained strong despite other strains in their relationship (Koru 2019, 6). Rationalist analysis would also consider the expansion of Turkey's influence in the Islamic world, including its "adventurism" in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Mediterranean (Maziad and Sotiriadis 2020).

A constructivist analysis of this period would emphasize that Turkey has proven willing to forego economic and security interests to pursue the interests of its national pride and resentment, much to the surprise of the West (Koru 2019, 20). While to some Turkey's foreign policy may seem "reckless," it is not untethered. Turkish foreign policy is pursuing ideological interests in what the West often perceives as a strategy for fortifying Turkey's domestic power base. Turkey's

ideology, a form of Neo-Ottomanism focused on reviving a "greater Turkey," makes its otherwise "irrational" foreign policy decisions seem more reasonable (Maziad and Sotiriadis 2020). Russia has been a key partner in Turkey's interest in challenging the Western order.

Russia is perceived by Turkey as a place where Muslims are seen as equals, whereas the West is where Muslims, and thus Turks, "are treated as suspect" (Koru 2019, 13). However, while Turkey has been a long-term supporter of Russia's international participation, Russia has been less supportive of Turkey's endeavors (Gültekin-Punsmann 2013). The more Turkey feels ideologically unsupported among Western powers, the more it looks to other opportunities as leverage against the West. Though Western orientation is a pillar of Kemalism, the reality of Turkey's relations with the West have pushed it to reconfigure its foreign policy orientation. Though Turkey's interest in power gains have been clear in the last decade, its pursuit of ideological interests at the expense of other interests suggests that nationalism has a strong influence on Turkish foreign policy during this period.

Since the start of the Syrian Civil War, Turkish foreign policy has been conducted as a constructivist account would suggest. The Syrian Civil War has changed Turkey's foreign policy, bringing many of its key nationalistic interests and its rapprochement with Russia together. The main interests of Turkish foreign policy are containing threats to its southeastern borders and exerting a greater leadership role in the Islamic world. Moreover, Turkey has started to actively resist Western influence, reminding the EU and U.S. of its important regional position. Though Russia is stronger than Turkey, Turkey has proven willing to set aside its differences to maintain Russian support on various issues. Russia does not tell Turkey how to handle its business, making it a more palatable friend than the West. Turkey's cooperation with Russia makes a clear statement

that it will not tolerate Western pressures on its foreign policy anymore, while Russia's sometimes fickle loyalty could suggest that their partnership will not endure for the longer term.

### **IX. Conclusions / Implications**

Turkish foreign policy is oriented toward its nationalistic interests, but these pursuits are frequently limited by Turkey's medium power status. Historically, the strength of great powers and the tensions between economic power needs and ideological structure have served to facilitate or limit Turkey's pursuit of nationalist interest. Most recently, increased cooperation with Russia has been Turkey's key means of balancing the fulfillment of its military and latent power needs with its pursuit of nationalistic interests.

Over the last century, Turkey has been nationalistic in its foreign policy only to the extent that geopolitics, international power politics and energy interests allow. Uzer (2011) exerts that Turkey's irredentism and interest in Turkic kinsmen abroad are evidence of the role of "culture, identity, and sentiment" in its foreign policy (4). Turkey has repeatedly "muted" these factors' influence in response to domestic and international constraints (Uzer 2011, xi-xii). Despite the constancy of interests in territorial integrity and Turks abroad set by Sèvres and Lausanne, Turkish foreign policy has evolved significantly in the last century. Bozdağlıoğlu (2003) explains that changes in the cultural context of a country at the domestic level, not just the country's international identity as some constructivist analyses suggest, are a key determinant of foreign policy evolution (160). As Turkey has cooperated with the West in the last century, negative interactions with the West have prompted changes in foreign policy and strengthened certain groups, most recently the AKP, domestically (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 165). Domestic responses to

international events have contributed to the evolution of Turkish nationalism from Kemalism to contemporary neo-Ottomanism.

Turkey has become less interested in “muting” its national identity for material interests, instead testing its economic and military security through its nationalistic endeavors. Recently Turkey has been testing the bounds of the NATO alliance through its relations with Russia and other powers, exerting more foreign policy agency while potentially jeopardizing its economy and security. Turkey’s rapprochement with Russia in the last decade challenges a rationalist account of its foreign policy because Ankara is now willing to overstep material constraints to actively pursue identity-driven interests. Turkey is exerting agency and making decisions even outside of its geopolitical and alliance-based constraints. Dursun-Özkanca (2019) suggests that previous analyses of Turkish foreign policy have underestimated the power of Turkey’s agency and identity. Contrary to these analyses, Turkey feels ignored or even opposed by the U.S. and other NATO allies and, as a result, has started to push back on its allies (37). Rapprochement with Russia is a key aspect of Turkish boundary-testing of its alliance with the West.

Russia and Turkey are often considered unlikely friends, yet their relations in the last decade mirror one another’s internal reflections about their place in relation to the West. As Turkish politics have become less secular and foreign policy more oriented toward the Islamic world, religion has also started to play a bigger role in Russian politics. Russia is keenly interested in countering Western pressures to adopt the liberal-democratic model (Hudson 2019, 178). Though Russia, unlike Turkey, is a majority-Christian country, it still differentiates itself from Euro-Christian civilization, claiming a more “traditional understanding of European heritage” (Hudson 2019, 179). Interest in its cultural heritage has coincided with growing resistance to Western cultural and political influences.

Russia's national narrative frames its history in a context of interfaith harmony, citing its long-term cooperation with Muslim minority populations from the Russian Empire to the Russian Federation, which it considers to set an example for others to follow (Hudson 2019, 194). In all of these respects, Russia considers itself to set a morally-higher standard for Christian society than the West does. Turkish political rhetoric evokes similar themes of former empire and moral superiority rooted in religious tradition. The AKP references Turkey's Ottoman past as a source of political, economic and moral superiority to Europe (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 21). In relation to Turkey's "self," the European "other" is "selfish," "pragmatic," "lacking in morality," and "less civilized" (Aydın-Düzgit 2018, 29). Europe's response to the Syrian refugee crisis is a salient example of this dynamic because Turkey perceives Europe's rejection of refugees as two-faced in relation to their high standards for human rights. Both Russia and Turkey have a sense of moral superiority constructed in relation to the Western "other," albeit for different reasons.

Both Turkey and Russia feel estranged by the West, which has led them to exert their regional power in Eurasia (Aktürk 2006, 340). A key aspect of their bilateral relations is that Russia will cooperate with Turkey in ways the West will not. When the West disapproved of Turkey's tactics in the fight against the PKK in the 1990s, Russia still sold additional military equipment to Turkey (Aktürk 2006, 340). When Turkey objected to Russia's treatment of Chechens in the mid-1990s war, Russia played "the Kurdish card." Unlike the West's criticism of Turkey's tactics, Russia was willing to negotiate a deal so that each could pursue its own interests (Olson 1997, 109-110; Hale 2013, 173). Whereas Turkey perceives the West to be insensitive to key issues in its foreign policy and national identity, including Cyprus and the Kurds, Russia is considered more cooperative (Bozdağlıoğlu 2003, 164; Hale 2013, 173). Turkey's purchase of a Russian S-400 missile defense system in 2017 shows that this pattern has continued into the contemporary period.



Moreover, while strained relations with the U.S. had emboldened PYD and PKK forces, Turkey-Russia rapprochement has supported Turkey's fight against the PYD in Syria, despite fighting against Russian proxies in the Syrian Civil War (Dalay 2017b, 1-2).

Maintaining good relations with Russia helps Turkey to build its military and economic capacity, challenging the limits of its NATO membership and reacting to its stalled EU membership process. Though contemporary Turkish foreign policy has potentially significant consequences for its economic and security interests that rely on the West, it continues cooperation with Russia in spite of these very interests. Turkey and Russia have a common interest in reasserting their historical power status, but they are less concerned about how one another goes about achieving this goal. For Turkey, relations with Russia are a convenient means of promoting its national identity interests and neo-Ottoman aspirations, even if that sometimes means coming into conflict with Russia itself.

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