

CHAPTER 2

THE UNIVERSALIST AND PARTICULARIST THREADS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

In general, recent Turkish foreign policy tends to be seen as a single approach with a nationalist-conservative orientation. However, recent Turkish foreign policy could also be argued to be teetering between universalism and particularism. Consequently, this study focuses on a discussion or dilemma in Turkish foreign policy to enhance the understanding of the development and evolution of foreign policy and international relations in non-Western societies. This dilemma was induced by Turkish foreign policy's recent teetering between universalism and particularism, which has also affected Turkish foreign policy discourse, which constantly emphasizes Turkey's unique position between Europe and Asia and underlines the importance of geopolitics at nearly every turn. During the conservative AKP [Justice and Development Party] governments, Turkish exceptionalism with a particularist viewpoint was stigmatized as neo-Ottomanism. However, geopolitical exceptionalism is dwindling. Turkish policymakers have often used the phrase that Turkey is a unique bridge between East and West, between the Christian world and the Muslim world, and Europe and Asia, and the idea seems banal. Despite its anti-Western arguments, the AKP period did not fully adopt either a universalist or a particularist approach.

In Turkey, for example, references to the Ottoman past sometimes include an idealized picture of Turkish civilization outside of today's state borders. Following 9/11, such references became increasingly common and frequently included Turkey's claim that it was suited to mediate in Huntington's Clash of Civilizations (Nymalm and Plagemann: 2019: 31). Turkey's foreign policy also reflects its domestic teetering between nationalist secularism and political pan-Islamism. To clarify this, the present government has attempted to combine Islamic and national principles. A universalist and particularist approach appears to have been taken.

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The AKP was observed to depart from the tradition of identifying Ottoman history with tolerance and multiculturalism, emphasizing the Ottoman Empire's conquering and militaristic aspects more than in its early periods. This is also a manifestation of the discourse of strengthening the position of superior or non-lagging civilization in the face of the West. The AKP period Turkey's exceptionalism, which claims to represent the continuance of Ottoman civilization, has moved from a peaceful and pacifist perspective to an aggressive approach.

Turkey has asserted itself in regional ties once more, this time with its military might. This policy was perhaps best expressed by those close to the government in the country's new security concept, called the Erdoğan doctrine. With the new concept, Turkey would adopt a more proactive security policy, employing preventive military force outside its boundaries and acting unilaterally, even if it meant disregarding its alliance partners. The military interventions in Syria and Iraq in 2016 are probably the best manifestations of this approach being practiced. However, Ankara also expanded its military power by establishing military bases in Sudan, Djibouti, Qatar, and Somalia (Haugom, 2019, 211).

Discussions of particularism and universalism, with their hard and soft variations, influenced Turkish foreign policy in this setting. Turkey's reactions towards the region following the Arab Spring can be seen as an example of harsh universalism, whereas the alliance of civilizations initiative can be seen as an example of soft universalism. Within this scope, this study analyzes these two recent trends in Turkish foreign policy. The first section examines the theoretical implications of universalism and particularism in general. The second section focuses on particularist tendencies in Turkish foreign policy. The third section analyzes the universalist pursuits of Turkish foreign policy.

UNIVERSALISM AND PARTICULARISM IN EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

There is no single universalism or particularism. In the European tradition, three types of political universalism can be identified if an analytical differentiation on this topic is to be established. The first, also known as moral universalism, assumes that the highest moral principles, such as fairness, apply to everyone, regardless of time or place. The second assumes that all people are equal in their rational capacities, regardless of their circumstances. The third assumes that everybody has the same ideals or value judgments (Ojakangas, 2014: 13). These forms of political universalism are formulated as the universality of moral standards, human nature, and values. However, before locating these forms of universalism within the

European tradition, the concept of universality needs to be defined. Universalism implies that generalized norms, values, or concepts can be applied to all people and cultures, regardless of their context. Universal refers to something that is the same or valid for everyone. Partiality is similar to that, but with a difference.

The state of being valid for everyone and being different from others constitutes a research area in foreign policy. In international relations, theoretical arguments that claim to challenge Western and Eurocentric thought and strive to go beyond Western-centered universalist law are frequently presented. Middle powers like Turkey have started bringing issues of religion, civilization, identity, and universalist or particularist positions into international relations more frequently in the postcolonial world. Locally grounded perspectives on the disciplinary advancement of international relations remain more responsive to the cultural states of the world, despite the fact that they are less effective than the various universalist and rationalist models. Knowledge is socially created rather than timeless and universal, and its applicability is constrained.

Consequently, every analytical tradition is sustained by a methodical presentation of challenges to a specific ideology, understanding, or relationship to another. Ideologies that have emerged regarding various historical developments have an established capacity to influence national unity by linking time and space. Developing specific concepts that attempt define the social realities at a broader level is often more important than fully developed theories and propositions. In the Western-centered social sciences, these concepts, which have many examples, include “democracy” and “market economy.” Tradition and its ideological meaning are nurtured in a given discursive space, and institutional arrangements are implemented through these conceptions (Tsygankov, 2017: 574).

Some reject political universalism, which promotes the vision that some political ideals are valid for all people. This idea is based on the understanding that striving for a unified human world in which all people share some basic political values and ideal institutions is necessary. European expansionism was thus portrayed as a worldwide civilizing and modernizing mission. Hence, the resistances of other cultures are presented not as conflicts between specific identities and cultures, but as a massive conflict between universalism and particularism. It has been argued that people seen as particularists are incapable of representing the universal (Laclau, 86: 1992). In addition, it has been argued that Europe, or the West, for a significant period, represented universal civil values. This also concerns how European identity is defined regarding universal human principles such as human rights, humanism, and justice. Europe is generally based on moral

values that can be associated with the liberal, democratic legacy of moral universalism in this conceptualization. Many debates on European integration make an implicit assumption that Europe is founded on democratic values, respect for the individual, tolerance for differences, and political moderation (Delanty, 2008: 247). However, European identity perhaps means “polyphony” rather than a common cultural heritage that survived universalism or nationalism. Similarly, multiculturalism proponents tend to prefer a more specific view of culture to cultural universalism based on the melting pot. They believe that one should respect the cultures of others while maintaining one’s own culture (Parens, 1994: 169). Superpowers and large nations, however, prefer a universalist foreign policy (Wallensteen, 1984: 243).

This was also observed during the Cold War. The Cold War is a set of events that may be explained and interpreted in various ways. It was an undeniable strategic security conflict (Quinn & Cox, 2007: 510) in which a kind of power balance between the two superpowers and a world of conflicting universalisms emerged. A paradigm shift occurred again after the Cold War. The concept of a “Struggle of Cultures” has become a prominent way to describe national and international conflicts. Such developments have been expressed and fueled by dramatic, politically unfavorable decisions and wars against international law (Tiedemann, 2018: 80).

Universalist policies can be evaluated as joint efforts of major powers to regulate their relations and develop acceptable foreign policy behavior. The development of universalism among the great powers aims to develop certain behavioral patterns with international standards through organizations such as the United Nations and the League of Nations. Most universalist periods in history have been characterized by loose alliances between large nations. Particularist policies are defined as policies that emphasize the specific interest of a particular power over existing organizations or power relations. However, the search for order forces the great powers to organize universalist policies, and large-scale organizations become associated with universalism.

Regarding this, even though the UN Security Council has just five permanent members, the broad understanding of Turkish foreign policy, which is crucial, has recently assumed a particularist stance. This necessitates assessing Turkey’s foreign policy in terms of great power-small power, great power-middle power, or global power-regional power relations. The AKP’s recent foreign policy has leaned toward encouraging increased participation of non-great powers in global politics. Turkish foreign policy, which adopts a pragmatic approach in one aspect, experiences a wavering or tension between universalism and particularism.

THE PARTICULARISTIC PURSUITS OF TURKEY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The particularistic dimension of Turkish foreign policy can be considered in two significant aspects: hard particularism and soft particularism. AKP governments have forged regional alliances at the risk of disrupting relations with the West. It has increased its efforts to rechannel itself toward Muslim countries, including ideological communication and efforts to represent its Islamic identity. The comments were prompted by the claims that the AKP is pursuing Islamic universalism in its foreign policy, especially its decision to break its military alliance with Israel and develop friendships with anti-Israeli groups. In February 2006, the AKP government, which hosted a high-level Hamas delegation despite the opposition of the USA and Israel, increased its criticism of Israel's Gaza Strip operations (Tezcür and Grigorescu, 204: 258). With this understanding, Islamic particularism or exceptionalism is seen to be dominant rather than universalism.

This situation can be traced back to the arms embargo imposed by the USA in 1975 and the rapidly rising oil prices after 1973, which prompted the Turkish political elite to seek better relations with the Middle East countries. Besides Libya and the Gulf monarchies, other Middle Eastern countries are important markets for Turkish goods. Consequently, a new dynamism was witnessed in Turkey's Middle East policy during the AKP. After decades of apathy and neglect, Turkey has struggled to establish itself as a significant diplomatic player in the area. Tensions with the USA and Israel indicate a certain level of particularism in Turkish foreign policy behavior.

At the outset, Ankara established close relations with Iran and Syria. Ankara had strained relations with these countries in the 1970s and 1980s. The adoption of a more pro-Palestinian stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict also put additional pressure on its traditional ties with Israel (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008: 85). Many analysts also doubted that Turkish leadership, or the pursuit of it in the Arab world, would last. Turkish foreign policy in the region has not been able to transform the influence of Turkey into an actual foreign policy power. Conversely, Turkey's position in this region seems to be high in discourse but low in action. Following the Arab Spring, Turkish exceptionalism, or particularism, in the region seems to have failed.

This idealistic transformations in Turkish foreign policy and the security realities could change if the AKP tests the approach of "Zero Problems with Neighbors," which has been widely discussed in the country. It gave the Turkish foreign ministry a sense of urgency, as it believed that soft power should accompa-

ny the prestige of the Arab uprisings. Turkish diplomats dubbed the government's new foreign policy stance "active deepening" during the AKP's re-election in 2012. This new proactive foreign policy approach was determined to make Turkey a reference point for a region where centuries-old regimes have crumbled and political structures are undergoing profound change. Hence, Turkey's response to increasing security pressures seemed to be an effort to improve the soft power aspects of its foreign policy. Turkey implemented multilateral strategies and attempted to establish a behavior of "zero problems" with its neighbors. Although this approach appears universalist at first glance, it seems to have evolved into a particularistic approach that is close to the West.

The Arab Spring caused a major shift in Turkish foreign policy and Turkey started interfering in the internal affairs of Arab countries. Particularism emerged as a more prominent attitude than universalism. This new change in politics is often called neo-Ottomanism because the Turkish government saw the shift as an opportunity to mold the region's future in its image. Opposition parties have also slammed these initiatives in the region.

Therefore, Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors were marked by major challenges, security concerns, commercial interests, diplomacy, and various interventions (Khan, 2015: 48). Neo-Ottomanism returned to Ottoman cosmopolitanism to promote a more pluralistic sense of political belonging at the local level. Ottoman Islam was also employed as a source of flexibility and tolerance (Onar, 2009: 233).

The second line of Islamist neo-Ottomanism probably praised Ottoman pluralism, not an empire. The empire was certainly not democratic but was an example of a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multireligious state. This is why, the debate about Turkey can be read as an attempt to resurrect Ottoman universalism instead of Kemalist particularism, rather than as an attempt to assert a postcolonial particularity against European universalism.

The universality claims of the Ottomans were probably embodied in Ottoman imperialism, Islam, and cosmopolitanism. These claims were modified and reformulated as the European penetration of Ottoman rule increased, but they were never completely abandoned (Onar, 2009: 230). It was argued that Turkey could not wait forever for EU membership and that it should develop a truly versatile foreign policy using its geostrategic advantages (Murinson, 2006: 952). East versus West is a dominant discussion in Turkish Politics. This is basic on the surface, but it seems to be accurate. Similar to Europe, the late Ottoman Empire observed the development and advancement of civilization as a universal concept. In

the second half of the nineteenth century, certain civilizations began to be named as collective identities. This was an essentially modern idea, as it was based on the idea that civilizations are observable concepts that can be defined. (Dalacoura, 2017: 2067).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' role in the decision-making processes—as in Narendra Modi's India—was significantly weakened in favor of a more centralized and personalized foreign policy in the populist stance of Turkish foreign policy. Erdoğan seemed to be the only authority that determines the strategic principles, content, and direction of Turkish foreign policy. Instead of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Erdoğan makes crucial foreign policy statements, conducts important discussions, and represents Turkey at international organizations. Especially since Turkey's transition to a presidential government regime in 2017 and its supporters' legitimization based on “strong leadership” this has been the case (Kaliber and Kaliber, 2019: 9).

After the Cold War, major changes in the geopolitical context caused a reformulation of the geopolitical vision of foreign policy, as well as changes in Turkey's foreign policy. Consequently, the 1990s were a period of geopolitical quest for Turkish policymakers. Furthermore, there are competing geopolitical discourses on Turkey's position and role in the new international system. While Turgut Özal shaped and defended the economic-based liberal geopolitical discourse in the early post-Cold War period, the military and bureaucratic elites determined the military-centered defensive geopolitical discourse.

President Özal was concerned about Turkey's uncertain role in the changing world order, whereas defenders of defense geopolitics were concerned about the republic's territorial and national integrity due to new domestic and regional challenges such as the Kurdish issue and Islamism (Yeşiltaş, 2013: 666). However, there was no single and continuous foreign policy orientation during the AKP governments. Different periods, each with different strategic orientations and priorities, constituted its foreign policy. With the AKP coming to power in 2002, its pursuits was shaped by globalism, which also included full membership in the European Union. Afterward, growing skepticism about prospects for full membership led the government to employ a multifaceted foreign policy, especially towards the Middle East (Kösebalaban, 2020: 336).

One way to create an exceptional claim is to refer to Turkey's “unique” history and geography. However, metaphors also work well in constructing exceptionality, as instruments are crucial in shaping reality linguistically (or rather, what people believe to be real because they produce “new meanings”). Although the

metaphor of the “bridge” defines contemporary Turkey, Turkish political elites have also used the metaphor of the “door” (Yanık, 2011: 83). In this sense, Turkish exceptionalism has been formed in various ways and some metaphors were used to highlight Turkey as the meeting place of different continents. Geographic structures that express a combination of civilisations, and hybridization of geography, numerous references to Eurasia, and “Eurasianization,” have also helped to sustain it. History was hybridized and the Turkish elite portrayed the Ottoman Empire’s national system and multiethnic and multireligious groups as manifestation of good governance and ability to establish order. Unlike previous discursive orientations, the phrase neo-Ottomanism was not explicitly stated by foreign policy elites but rather suggested by multicultural evocations of the Ottoman Empire’s hybrid or multiethnic and multireligious nature (Yanık, 2011: 87). Moreover, due to the political-economic crises experienced, Turkey’s assertive foreign policy style is shaped. To divert attention from failures in the country’s administration, AKP governments have adopted compelling foreign policy behavior.

However, this aggressive foreign policy stance, which induced the escalation of the current crises, allowed for a tripartite governance crisis that combined authoritarian populism, economic recession, and foreign policy impasse. The Turkish economy has been negatively affected because of this unusual foreign policy activism. The cost of security provisions in Turkish foreign policy and the growing risks sometimes made matters worse (Kutlay and Öniş, 2021: 3060). Conflicts between the great powers have come to the fore again and concerns about increased rivalry and norm conflicts arose from non-Western major powers’ ambition to socialize within the liberal international order as well as an initial belief in the system’s cohesive potential. Middle powers such as Turkey are also considered players who can stabilize the current system in this turbulent period. Furthermore, many countries’ democratic decline is linked to systemic transformation in the international order.

Turkey’s inadequacy also contributed to its inability to design and implement specific policies to promote growth and development. In Turkey, AKP-style conservative globalization has induced a neoliberal policy impasse. Due to its dependence on this neoliberal path, Turkey under the AKP government used its diplomatic mechanisms to increase the international competitiveness of the manufacturing industry and support the export-oriented growth regime. However, Turkey’s commercial diplomacy has not turned into the “resource diplomacy” practiced by major trading countries such as China, Japan, or South Korea. In addition, in the absence of a proactive development policy, it failed to bring per-

manent solutions to Turkey's economic problems, especially trade diplomacy, the large trade deficit with neighboring countries, and the mediocre complexity of the manufacturing industry (Tekin and Tekin, 2015: 49). In this international political and economic setting, Turkey has had to adjust its particularist and universalist methods from time to time.

UNIVERSALISM AS A SOURCE OF ALLIANCES

Hard universalism and soft universalism tendencies can be recognized at different levels in Turkish foreign policy regarding universalism. The AK Party tends to promote universalism over civilizationism. The main feature of the AK Party's discourse on civilization is its multilayered (or multidimensional) and ambiguous but also very dynamic character. On the one hand, this discourse symbolizes Turkey's national identity, history, and values; on the other hand, it embodies Turkey's membership in the Islamic World and the Middle East. Simultaneously, it often makes references to the common values and heritage of humanity. (Ardıç, 2014: 105). Regarding this, a protectionist approach to the Palestinian cause and a critical attitude toward Israel has been demonstrated with continuous, coherent, and occasionally harsh criticism; efforts have been made to improve the living conditions and defend the humanitarian, economic, and political rights of Muslims. During the Arab Spring, there was increased discussion of Turkey as a "model country" for the region, and Ankara's efforts to advertise itself as a model to the Arab world.

While the general course of Turkish foreign policy in the Arab Spring emerged as a harsh universalism, before that, efforts towards the Alliance of Civilizations project were considered soft universalism. Consequently, this alliance endeavor constitutes a discursive layer in one dimension of Turkish foreign policy rhetoric. This notion's utilization brings flexibility and pluralism in addition to its general properties. This is because, UNAOC [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations], launched as a UN initiative in 2005 by Erdoğan and former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, was framed within this discursive layer. In other respects, the "alliance of civilizations" was being constructed discursively by the Turkish leadership as a more abstract concept. There are also connections with various dimensions of Turkey's civilizational discourse in both dimensions of the concept.

Therefore, AKP governments have also shown more interest in international justice ideals. Distinguishing between whether the establishment of justice applies all actors (cosmopolitanism) or within individual states (communitarianism), the

approaches of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism toward international justice are explained. Cosmopolitans think that global justice ideals of equal distribution should be applied globally. However, communitarianism argues that in liberal-democratic nation-states, egalitarian principles of justice are a requirement of justice (Dal, 2015: 429). Turkey's move to increased cosmopolitanism started partly due to Ankara's efforts to Europeanize and liberalize the country. Due to these efforts, a foreign policy discourse based on ethics and values has emerged as an ally. However, changes in Turkish foreign policy or changes in the discourse surrounding it indicate the end of communitarianism. Turkey's general Middle East strategy and its backing Syrian regime change reflect a mix of cosmopolitan and communitarian elements. Ankara's distancing of the Assad regime was also positioned in a cosmopolitan discourse. However, Turkey's disengagement from the conventional foreign policy tenet of noninterference in the internal affairs of third nations has not gone unnoticed (Dal, 201: 430).

In Ankara, the Arab Spring and Arab peoples' calls for democratization and international respect were seen as the moment when the Arab world could understand the Turkish experience, which peaked during the AKP. In the Middle East, this Turkish model aims to provide an alternative to the region's prevailing political choices of political authoritarianism, rentiers, and Islamism. This means "providing an alternative to the Saudi rentier model and the Iranian theocratic model, which are the less preferred models among Arabs" (Ennis and Moani, 213: 1129). The Arab region had not found a way for Islam and democracy to coexist effectively. The Algerian experience in 1991 was a vivid example of how this can go wrong and cause radicalization through a civil war. From this perspective, "Turkey provided a positive demonstration effect for regional parties and actors calling for democracy, moderate Islamist parties, and responsible economic and political actors in a globalizing international society" (Ennis and Moani, 2013: 1129). The AKP has tried to achieve its goals with soft power and a diplomatic approach since the emergence of Turkey's ambitions to re-establish its regional and international status based on geographical and historical depth and geopolitical thinking. However, this idealistic approach appears incompatible with the core of geopolitics, which is based on power politics, expansionism, and profit-making.

Problems with this approach surfaced during the Arab Spring, fueled by a widespread belief that it would be a decisive force, particularly in Syria, which Turkey sees as its backyard and gateway to the Arab region. In recent years, internal and external criticism of Turkish policy has increased, as Turkey appears to lack realism at the regional level and refuses to use decisive tools consistent

with its ideas about itself as a major regional player (Kaddorah, 2016: 16). Hence, Turkey has begun to desist from exaggerating its position in the area and globally.

Therefore, as seen in Turkey, ideology and idealism go together. Turkey's Islamists are no exception, with their fierce religious visions and projects of Muslim unity, as well as their fierce universalism. Their idealism stems from a historical sense of mission. It is also based on the understanding of Turkish-Islamic exceptionalism, with the belief that Turkey is a powerful state with an imperial and religious heritage that should strive to protect and unite Muslims globally. In a sense, they argued that if there is a country with the history, vision, and power to provide such leadership in the Islamic world, it is that country that Turkey and the Islamic world should look to. Westerners have also often praised Turkey as a model, often for reasons more related to modernization and democratization than to Islam's greatness (Başkan and Taşpınar, 2021: 155). Turkey has signed various international agreements with the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Europe, and the Balkans in recent years. At first glance, this finding appears to support the diversity of Turkish foreign policy orientations. However, an in-depth analysis of these agreements, including critical agreements on defense cooperation, bilateral trade facilitation, and visa exemptions, shows that "Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans have a higher share. Among other factors, regional proximity, identity, and economic interests" (Sönmez, 2019: 398) seem to have a significant impact on the stability of dual activism preferences (Sönmez, 2019: 398).

In Turkey, a new universalism refers to recent trends in Islamic historiography. It summarizes the new understandings of history formed by introducing the ideas of "progress" and "European civilization". For Islam, military defeats are accepted as cultural and social defeats. They aggrandized the Islamic past and censured backwardness. Furthermore, with the idea of "civilization," they tried to pursue the possibility of a new universalism by transcending certain categories such as "East" and "West." Foreign policy discourses and preferences, which are important parts of the internal power struggle for Davutoğlu and his followers, reflected its vision of a "new Turkey," at best at peace with neglected and rejected conservative Islamic values and embracing sections of Islam marginalized and humiliated by the country's Kemalist tradition.

Under this Kemalist traditionalism, Turkey was attempting to be Western, to be at the vanguard of Western civilization. The traditional values of Turkish foreign, secular Republicanism and Kemalist nationalism, were defended within a securitized international politics. However, "in the populist foreign policy dis-

course of successive AKP governments, in addition to the Islamic and Middle Eastern elements of Turkey's identity" (Kaliber and Kaliber, 2019: 7), the Ottoman legacy marginalized in the old Turkey provides a "new Turkey" model for the new Turkey. Therefore, this stress on Ottomanism—or, to some, neo-Ottomanism—opposed Kemalism and its foreign policy approach (Kaliber and Kaliber, 2019: 7).

Throughout the early 2000s, Turkey adopted a similar attitude to civilizational dialogue. Turkey became the leader of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative with Spain in 2005. As probably the "only country" that integrated Islam and democracy, secularism and modernity, Turkey was considered as a middle power that played a significant role in promoting a cultural interaction between the East and West. During this time, Turkish foreign policy elites perceived Eastern and Western civilizations as different but reconcilable beings that could coexist and Turkey sought to contribute to inter-civilizational dialogues and coexistence (Kaliber and Kaliber, 2019: 7-8). Also, the idea of employing manufacturing and industrial power to promote the local economy is enticing in a region where most people do not live in countries rich in natural resources.

At another level, Turkey also frequently emphasizes the UN's role in universalism and particularism debates. This understanding, which brought another aspect to the civilizational construction in the AKP's foreign policy enframing, represented a break from the old geopolitical understanding. The discourse of civilization, originating from the Islamic worldview against the world order, seeks to make the normative values of Islam a transformative tool in the current international order.

Obviously, Turkey changed its strategic calculations after a short period of confusion with the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011. Ankara attempted to follow a more ambitious policy in which promoting democracy against certain authoritarian regimes was favoured. Turkey's democratization mission was halted when democratic waves failed in Egypt, Libya and Syria. This policy change is a direct result of the ideological transformation that resulted from the new coalition between the AKP and nationalist groups in addition to Turkey's regional security problems. Party ideology abandoned the democratic reform agenda and shifted decisively towards a new mix between conservatism and nationalism, which no longer represented the synthesis between liberalism and Islamism. The new strategy demonstrates the significance of a nationalist agenda rather than commencing a normalization and rationalization process in foreign policy. The coalition between the AKP and the nationalist MHP [the Nationalist Action Party] reinforces this nationalist agenda. This political restructuring in Turkey significantly impacts foreign policy.

Turkey's foreign policymakers have generally declined to undertake pioneering roles in global initiatives since its foundation, such as serving as the Islamic world's spokesperson on international platforms. Thus, "the Alliance of Civilizations initiative presented not only a challenge to the traditional parameters of Turkish foreign policy but also a new perspective on Turkish foreign policy" (Balçı and Miş, 2008: 288).

The Alliance of Civilizations project probably created a fresh perspective in Turkish foreign policy. In a way, Turkey was trying to lead a global movement as a representative of the Islamic world. The novelty of this venture was at odds with Kemal Atatürk's understanding of not following an active foreign policy towards the Middle East. "Even though Turkish foreign policymakers cooperated with Muslim countries on some specific topics and even joined some Muslim-founded organizations, Atatürk's Western-oriented references remained the determining element of Turkish foreign policy" (Ayata, 2015: 99). With Turkey's active involvement in the region, Atatürk undertook the role of a mediator between autocratic regimes and Western actors. For example, Turkey became the transition's guide and backer by providing infrastructure support during the fall of power in Libya. With the dismissal of Mursi in Egypt and later in Syria, Turkey positioned itself as the defender of peoples, criticizing rulers in the name of the opposition. In a sense, Turkey offered a different viewpoint (Ayata, 2015: 99).

In previous years, academics described Turkey as a tough actor in European and Middle Eastern politics and gave it the status of a middle power in foreign policy. However, Turkey was also highlighted as a player who could accelerate the efforts and processes of transformation in the Middle East. However, a few years later, a different picture emerged. To many academics, Turkey's reactions have caused conflict, chaos, and political stagnation in Syria and Egypt. With Assad's uncompromising stance and conflicts with Egypt, Turkey became an isolated regional actor, and its influence declined. Thus, Turkey's universalist foreign policy was weakened in this regard.

In Turkey's government and political circles, there is a growing impression that Western nations in general, do not prioritize Turkish national security concerns. That is, there was a notion that Turkey was officially part of the transatlantic community but not a full member. The US withdrawal from the Middle East, US's reluctance to intervene in the region, and US support for Kurdish YPG [People's Defence Units] militias against the ISIS were cited as cases of not paying attention to Turkey's interests when making decisions. This impression was reinforced by the West's growing criticism of Erdoğan and the AKP government for authoritarianism. Turkey began to adopt a more particularist attitude.

CONCLUSION

Flexible alliances offer Turkey a new path to achieving its goal of strategic autonomy. The pursuit of a balanced foreign policy in the recent Russia–Ukraine conflict is an indication of this. Flexible alliances alone do not mean that Ankara desires to leave the Euro-Atlantic community. Due to its struggle for more independence, Turkey, which seems to be closer to Russia and some other non-Western regional or global powers, has had a more conflictual relationship with its Western allies. Moreover, bilateral relations with Russia have obvious limits. In Turkey’s international orientation, the change in foreign policy currently does not seem to signal a shift towards either reorganization or disharmony.

Since the conclusion of the Cold War, Turkey’s foreign policy vision has had a major element of self-actualization. Hence, Ankara is increasingly acting to pursue fundamental national interests, and sometimes this means a challenge to its Western allies. Consequently, Turkey has become a more powerful partner for the US and Europe. Turkey remains a challenging partner for Russia. In these partnerships, universalist and particularistic approaches and principles play a role.

This study focuses on Turkey’s particularist and universalist foreign policies. The sometimes strained relations with the Arab Spring, the Alliance of Civilizations, the EU, the USA, Israel, or Russia are among the examples of this situation. Based on several cases, this study examined how foreign policy orientations, which appeared to be rigid and unchanging during the AKP governments, actually have a variable and flexible aspect.

The transformations of Turkish foreign policy in the last twenty years have also been investigated on a limited scale in this study, starting from particularist and universalist approaches. Exceptionalist and universalist attitudes at different levels were compared throughout the study, and the recent general framework of Turkish foreign policy was discussed.

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