

An empirical analysis of the change in Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government

Aylin Aydın Çakır^a and Gül Arkan Akdağ^b

^aDepartment of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey; ^bDepartment of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Katip Çelebi University, İzmir, Turkey

ABSTRACT

The existing literature on Turkish foreign policy (TFP) asserts that under the rule of the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP), Turkey's foreign policy shifted from caution and uni-dimensionality to relative activism and multi-dimensionality. This study aims to test these arguments through a systematic analysis of the international agreements ratified by the Turkish Parliament between 1984 and 2015. By looking at the number, content and signatory parties of these international agreements, it aims to empirically show the change in the activism, orientation and instruments of TFP. Using this original data set is not only used to trace the change under the AKP but also across all ruling governments that came to power between 1984 and 2015.

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Introduction

The transformation of Turkish foreign policy (TFP) under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) has opened a large debate in the literature, resulting in a vast number of studies conducted to explain the different aspects of this transformation. The literature on TFP asserts that under the AKP, Turkey's foreign policy shifted from being based on principles of caution and uni-dimensionality to being based on those of relative activism and multi-dimensionality. Although these studies provide promising information in understanding the change in TFP, they demonstrate considerable variation in data collection and conceptualization of the key concepts. This makes it difficult to test the validity of the arguments or undertake a systematic comparison.

CONTACT Aylin Aydın Çakır  aylinaydin80@gmail.com  Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Yeditepe University, Kayisdagi Cad. 26 Agustos Yerlesimi Atasehir, Istanbul, Turkey

This study has two objectives. First, it tries to explain whether and if so how TFP has changed after the AKP came to power. In order to provide a precise answer for this question, one should compare TFP under the AKP with foreign policy orientations of the former Turkish governments. Second, the current study aims to provide an empirical assessment of the change in TFP across the AKP governments. For this reason a comprehensive data set that will help to empirically trace the change in TFP from the 1980s to the 2010s is needed. Arguing that international agreements are good indicators of the signatory countries' foreign policy orientations, this study looks at the international agreements ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, TGNA) between January 1984 and June 2015. International agreements may be bilateral or multilateral of a kind. While bilateral agreements are signed between two countries, multilateral agreements are open to many countries. In order to trace the change in the orientation of TFP, the number, parties and content of the bilateral and multilateral agreements that were ratified by the Turkish Parliament are taken into consideration.

Defining foreign policy activism as intensified cooperation and measuring it through the number of bilateral and multilateral agreements ratified by the TGNA, this study aims to test whether there is a shift toward activism in TFP by the AKP governments. Defining multi-dimensionality of foreign policy as diversification in bilateral and multilateral relations both in number and in kind, this study looks at the regional origin of the signatory countries and content of the agreements. As such, it tests the significance of a shift from Europeanization to Middle Easternization and from military cooperation to cultural and economic cooperation with the countries and regions under investigation. This analysis is the first to offer a systematic policy level examination of TFP and provides a quantitative testing of the existing literature. It also presents the analysis of bilateral and multilateral agreements as a useful tool through which the changes in countries' foreign policies can be analyzed.

The paper proceeds as follows: the first part introduces the existing literature on TFP and looks specifically at the studies that have attempted to answer how much of the AKP's foreign policy orientations and actions deviate from its precedents. The second part presents the main hypotheses of the study as well as the data and methodology. The third part is the empirical section where the hypotheses are tested and results presented. The last part concludes the study by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

The change in TFP under the AKP: existing explanations

During the last decade, the transformation of Turkey's foreign policy has been extensively studied. In the literature, it has been argued that the end of the

Cold War was a turning point that changed many principles of traditional TFP. While principles of caution, protection of territorial integrity, neutrality and Westernization have been central to traditional TFP, in the 1990s, they were replaced with assertive and multilateral activism.¹ Turkey's decision to participate in the 1990 Gulf War has been presented as an important departure from Turkey's traditional policy of avoiding deep involvement in the affairs of the Middle East.² Turkey's hostile relations with Syria and Iraq, characterized by use or threat to use military power, as well as the military training and education agreement signed with Israel in 1996 are examples of this assertiveness.³ On the other hand, the formation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone, and Turkey's participation in multilateral peacekeeping operations in different countries throughout the 1990s are key examples for Turkey's multilateral activism. While the end of the Cold War resulted in significant changes in TFP orientation in the 1990s, the single rule of the AKP government in the 2000s has transformed it further. The existing literature suggests three different dimensions along which TFP under the AKP government deviates from the past.

First, political activism that started in the 1990s⁴ intensified under the rule of the AKP.⁵ Political activism refers to an increase in the total number of interactions with the outside world, resulting in greater integration in the international system. The increase in bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries also brings multi-dimensionality to the principle of activism. In the 2000s, especially for the AKP, 'no global frontier in TFP' became one of the key principles. As such, Ahmet Davutoğlu, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, suggested a global role for Turkey and claimed that Turkey would engage with countries from Chile to Indonesia, from Africa to Central Asia and from the European Union (EU) to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.⁶ Accordingly many scholars argued that under the rule of the AKP Turkey's involvement in different domains has increased, and Turkey has extended its relations from Middle East and Central Asia to Africa.⁷

Looking at TFP of the period, Kutlay finds an increase in foreign trade with Asia and the Middle East at the expense of the EU.⁸ A similar increase is also found in direct investments of Turkish companies in these regions. Meanwhile, Müftüler Baç identifies Turkey's active participation with investments made in Iraq and the deepening of economic ties through trade and foreign direct investments.⁹ Comparing the total volume of export by region between the two eras, 1990–2001 and 2002–10, Ipek points out to the rapid increase in exports to the Middle East and Africa during the latter period, after the AKP incumbency.¹⁰

Second, many scholars have stated that as part of this proactive approach towards the Middle East and Eurasia, the AKP government has made an attempt to develop friendly relations with the Arab world.¹¹ Due to this

diversification of bilateral relations, questions surfaced regarding a possible change in regional priorities and reorientation of the TFP. Turkey's revival of ties with the Muslim world has been considered as a departure from the country's traditional foreign policy that had focused on Western alliance.¹² It has been argued that especially after 2007 Turkey's foreign policy drifted away from Western orientation toward a more Eastern-oriented foreign policy.¹³ This has been identified as a 'shift of axis'.

A large number of studies examine the 're-Islamization' and 'Middle Easternization' of TFP through the discursive analysis of the AKP leaders' speeches.¹⁴ Although many scholars have acknowledged the shift in TFP's regional orientation, they have also argued that Turkey's Western orientation has not been entirely reversed during the AKP era given the intensification of relations with the United States and the EU.¹⁵ Yeşiltaş asserts that there has been a discursive transformation in Turkey's identity in the context of international relations.¹⁶ According to Yeşiltaş, Turkey's identity has changed from 'front country' allying with the West to a 'central country' allying not only with the West but also with the Muslim World. Similarly, Öniş and Yılmaz assert that Turkey's regional policies should be evaluated within two different periods.¹⁷ While they identify the years between 2002 and 2005 as the Golden Age of Europeanization, they argue that TFP has changed from Europeanization to 'loose Europeanization', or 'soft Euro-Asianism', especially after 2007. Although the first period is characterized by dense relations with the EU due to accession negotiations, after Turkey's EU membership has entered into a deadlock, there has been an increasing emphasis on the former Soviet Space (in Central Asia and Caucasus) and Middle East.

Looking at the existing studies one realizes the use of a substantial number of different terms to identify the orientation of TFP. For instance, the orientation of TFP under the AKP government has been presented as 'Middle Easternization', 'Easternization', 'Euro-Asianism', Islamization (which also includes Central Asian Countries) or as a shift toward the Arab World. The term 'Europeanization' is also used differently by different scholars. While some studies refer to the EU countries while talking about Europeanization others cover non-EU countries such as Russia. On the other hand, many studies use the term Westernization to denote the orientation of traditional TFP. Yet the context of this term appears to be problematic. While in some studies the 'West' refers to the EU and North America, in others, the term is used to refer to the EU countries or European countries that cover non-EU countries. For all these reasons, while measuring the orientation of TFP one should carefully define and state the geographical limits of TFP's orientation.

Regarding the transformation of TFP under the AKP, multi-dimensional-ity of the type of relations Turkey pursues with other countries is the third aspect presented in literature. In other words, multidimensional foreign

policy does not only refer to building relations with states from different parts of the world but also to quitting the security based mono-dimensional foreign policy and dealing with a wide range of issues from cultural considerations to economics.¹⁸ This also refers to a diversification in the kind of relations, with an increase in the use of soft power instead of hard power. In the literature, trade, foreign direct investment, cultural cooperation and involvement with international organizations are presented as the soft power instruments used by the AKP. While almost all studies mention a shift from hard power policies implemented through military cooperation toward soft power policies, they differ in focus on either the economic or the cultural dimensions of change. Sözen, for instance, stresses that it was only after the AKP's incumbency that Turkey could adapt its foreign policy to world politics that moved in the 1990s from *realpolitik*-based geopolitics to liberal-oriented geo-economics and new norms and values, such as democracy, human rights and market economy.¹⁹ Davutoğlu's highly debated 'zero problems with neighbors' policy, envisioning an increased cooperation for the resolution of the problems among Turkey and its neighbors, has formed an important part of these soft power policies.²⁰ The use of diplomatic and economic measures, rather than the implicit use of force by the AKP government in the resolution of disputes in the Middle East is another example for the use of soft power.²¹ Similarly, Ennis and Momani highlight Turkey's use of public diplomacy, media, economic incentives and mobilization of Islam as foreign policy instruments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region after the Arab Spring.²²

Among all these soft power instruments, economic tools such as trade and investment appear to be the most frequently used ones under the rule of the AKP government. Müftüler-Bac argues that especially after 2007, the AKP's policy toward Iraq has changed to activism in terms of increased economic involvement, using trade and foreign direct investment as foreign policy tools.²³ Tür demonstrates the importance of economic dimension of the relations with the Middle East by analyzing the relationship between the AKP and the Turkish business circles and their role in the increasing volume of trade between Turkey and countries in the Middle East.²⁴ Similarly, due to its growing economic interdependence with its neighbors, Kirişçi argues that Turkey can be defined as a 'trading state'.²⁵ Moreover according to Kutlay, Turkey undertakes a functionalist framework where it uses economic opportunities and interdependence for institutionalizing its relations with neighboring countries and downgrading military power in favor of economic interactions.²⁶

Hatipoğlu and Palmer reveal the intensive use of positive inducements such as foreign aid, and diplomatic relations with developing countries of the Middle East and Africa.²⁷ They argue that these relations are based on fostering cultural and educational ties as well as establishing a stronger presence

of Turkish businesses in these markets. By identifying the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı*, TİKA) as a soft power policy tool, Ipek finds an increase in both the volume and regional diversification of the agency's investments from 2004 to 2010.²⁸

Another, albeit less expressed, dimension of the soft power cited in the literature is the strengthening of cultural ties especially with the developing Eastern countries. This cultural cooperation includes a large range of issues that range from export of educational services via the opening of Turkish schools in these countries, the launch of scholarship programs by the Turkish government for foreign students from these countries,²⁹ to the exportation of cultural goods such as Turkish TV programs and Soap Operas.³⁰ Turkey's attempts at increasing its presence in international organizations and her demand for turning them into effective tools for the peaceful resolution of disputes are also cited as important dimensions of the use of soft power.³¹

In contrast to all these studies, some scholars started very recently to emphasize the hard power instruments used by the AKP government in the Middle East. The best example is the research by Özpek and Demirağ that compares Turkey's stands in Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria. Researchers mention a re-securitization of TFP with a clear shift from opposing to military interventions to calling for military intervention after the spread of the Arab Spring to Syria.³²

Although the literature identifies different dimensions of the change in TFP under the rule of the AKP, most studies concentrate only on one dimension and do not provide a systematic data that would enable to test the reliability of these dimensions in a comparative setting. This study aims at fulfilling this gap by providing a systematic data that would be used to more accurately define the major changes in TFP across years. The methodology used to collect and analyze the data in order to fulfill this purpose is explained in details in the next section.

Objective, data and method

Focusing on the transformation in TFP under the rule of the AKP, the first objective of this paper is to empirically show the change in political activism. The second objective is to explain the change in the orientation of TFP by delineating the change in the diversity of countries with which Turkey had relations, and testing the 'shift of axis' argument. In this regard, the purpose is to understand whether TFP drifted away from predominantly Western orientation toward Eastern-oriented foreign policy during the AKP rule. Focusing on foreign policy tools, the fourth objective is to explain whether the use of soft power has increased, and if so, to show which soft

power tools have been used more often. As a result, the hypotheses of this study suggest:

Hypothesis 1: Under the rule of the AKP government, the political activism in TFP increased.

Hypothesis 2: Under the rule of the AKP government, Turkey's involvement in different regions has increased.

Hypothesis 3: Under the rule of the AKP government, TFP drifted away from being predominantly a Western-oriented foreign policy toward being an Eastern-oriented foreign policy.

Hypothesis 4: Under the rule of the AKP government, the use of soft power policies increased.

Hypothesis 5: The use of economic cooperation as a soft power instrument increased under the rule of the AKP government.

Hypothesis 6: Turkey's involvement with international organizations increased under the rule of the AKP government.

So far, the change in TFP has been analyzed by using different methods. While a large number of studies have used discourse analysis,³³ others have analyzed the policy applications from the perspective of trade or foreign direct investment.³⁴ Another group of scholars tried to identify the long-term fluctuations in TFP through the analysis of the country's voting behavior in the United Nation's General Assembly from 1980 to 2010.³⁵

Arguing that international agreements are good indicators of the signatory countries' foreign policies, this study tests the given hypotheses by looking at the bilateral and multilateral agreements ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly between January 1984 and June 2015. In this regard, 1461 international agreements have been coded: 1035 of these agreements are bilateral and 426 are multilateral. Focusing on the given time period will not only help to draw a general map of TFP but will also help to empirically show the change in TFP across years and compare the foreign policy orientations of all ruling governments that were in power in the given time period.

Concerning the data, one should note that the unit of analysis is the international agreements ratified by the Parliament, not the international agreements signed by incumbent governments. As such, an agreement might be signed under the rule of one government but ratified under the rule of another. This condition is not expected to influence the reliability of the data since an incumbent governments' decision to send an agreement to the Parliament for ratification signifies its political orientations. Although one might argue that the data set excludes the agreements which are sent by an incumbent government to the TGNA but not ratified, the number of

such agreements is expected to be very low, or even non-existent since the ruling political party(ies) comprise the majority in the TGNA. As such, bilateral and multilateral agreements ratified by the TGNA appear as a reliable tool to analyze the foreign policy orientation of a given ruling government. Looking at the quantity, content and signatory parties of these agreements will help to empirically delineate the activism, multi-dimensionality, orientation and instruments of TFP.

Political activism in foreign policy refers to an increase in the total number of interactions with the outside world. In this regard, political activism is measured by looking at the number of ratified international agreements across years. An increase in the number of agreements under the rule of the AKP will support Hypothesis 1. Defining multi-dimensionality in foreign policy as diversification in international relations, this study looks at the regional origin of the signatory countries of the ratified agreements. If the data show that under the rule of the AKP government Turkey started to have increasing contact with the countries from different regions of the world, Hypothesis 2 will be supported.

In order to measure the orientation of TFP the countries with which Turkey has signed agreements are not categorized under general groups such as East and West. While coding the signatory countries of the ratified international agreements, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' classification of the countries is used. In this regard, all signatory countries are grouped under seven categories: MENA, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Europe and North America, Central Asia, Eastern and Central Europe (including Russia and the Caucasus), South East Asia and Pacific. This measure will help to test Hypothesis 3 that suggests a shift from Europeanization to Middle Easternization under the rule of the AKP.

Finally, this study aims to explain the transformation in the foreign policy instruments and understand whether the use of soft power has increased while the use of hard power has diminished. Soft power refers to the ability of getting something or shaping the preferences of others through attraction rather than using force.³⁶ As a result, while soft power is shaped by culture and ideas of a country, hard power is based on a country's military.

The content of the international agreements is a good indicator of the signatory countries' use of foreign policy instruments. In this regard, while military-, security-, defense-, weapons-, terrorism-related agreements refer to the use of hard power in foreign policy; culture, economy, environment, energy, technology, science and legal issues pertaining to agreements, refer to the use of soft power. In this regard, the content of all international agreements ratified by the TGNA is coded under these five groups: (1) security, (2) economy, (3) energy and environment, (4) legal issues and (5) culture, education and technology. Security-related agreements include issues such as military, terrorism, security and crime; economics-related agreements include issues

related to trade, investment and taxation; energy-related agreements include issues related to oil and gas trade as well as the use of nuclear power; international agreements that deal with legal issues include legal cooperation on trade and juridical cases, as well as citizenship and social security issues such as pensions. The final group of agreements includes cooperation on culture, education, tourism, sport, science and technology.

In the literature, building close relations with international organizations is presented as another instrument of soft power. In order to capture the use of this instrument in TFP, we look at the number of treaties between Turkey and international organizations or at the international conventions and pacts adopted by Turkey.

Empirical analysis and results

Looking at the number of international agreements ratified by the TGNA between 1984 and 2015, the empirical results show that activism in TFP has started to increase after the end of the Cold War. The increase of activism in TFP in the 1990s is usually explained with Turkey's desire to maintain its geo-strategic importance, ensuring regional stability and opening up to new markets.³⁷ Despite this moderate increase in the 1990s, the findings show that activism in TFP has increased dramatically after the AKP came to power in 2002 (see Figure 1).

Table 1 shows that the number of agreements ratified under the rule of the AKP is the highest. To put it more specifically, during the first, second and third AKP governments, 340, 342 and 272 international agreements were ratified, respectively. One may argue that since the ruling period of each

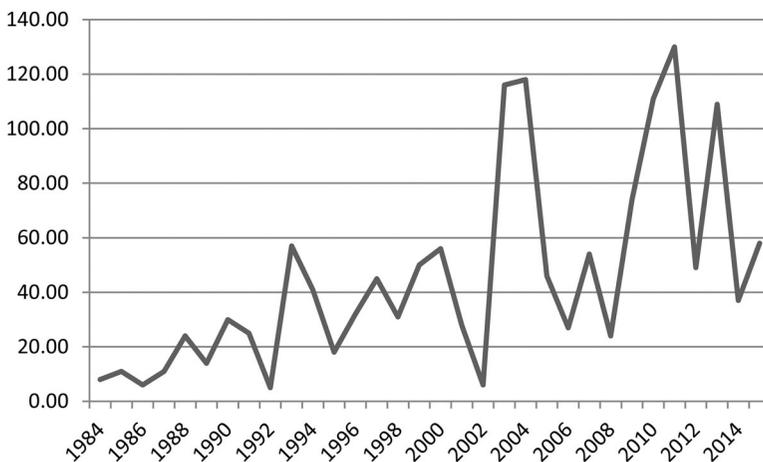


Figure 1. Number of international agreements ratified by TGNA across years.

Table 1. The number of international agreements ratified by TGNA, 1984–2015.

Ruling Government	Period	Number of Agreements	Average Number of Agreements Per Year
The First ANAP Government	January 1984–December 1987	36	9
The Second ANAP Government	December 1987–November 1991	93	23.3
The DYP–SHP Government	November 1991–October 1995	119	29.8
The ANAP–DYP Government	March 1996–June 1996	0	0
The RP–DYP Government	June 1996–June 1997	54	54
The ANAP–DSP–DTP Government	June 1997–January 1999	55	36.7
The DSP Government	January 1999–May 1999	0	0
The DSP–MHP–ANAP Government	May 1999–November 2002	143	40.9
The First AKP Government	November 2002–July 2007	340	68
The Second AKP Government	July 2007–June 2011	342	85.5
The Third AKP Government	June 2011–June 2015	272	68

Notes: Party Names: ANAP, Motherland Party; SHP, Social Democratic People's Party; DYP, True Path Party; RP, Welfare Party; DSP, Democratic Left Party; DTP, Democratic Turkey's Party; MHP, Nationalist Movement Party; and AKP, Justice and Development Party.

government may vary, presenting the number of agreements per each government may not be a valid measure of activism. For this reason, the average numbers of international agreements ratified under each ruling government are also presented. In this regard, during the second AKP government, between 2007 and 2011, activism in foreign policy was highest with 85.5 international agreements ratified per year, followed by the first and third AKP governments with each 68 agreements ratified per year. All these findings support the first hypothesis.

The activist foreign policy, especially during the second AKP government, can be explained by the domestic and global context. For instance, some argue that Turkey has emerged relatively unharmed from the global financial crisis of 2008–9 and that this increased the country's self-confidence as well as the desire to play an active role in shaping regional and global developments. Moreover, the desire to reach new markets due to the economic crisis within the EU triggered active foreign policy toward other regions.³⁸ The increasing high level of activism during the second AKP government has also been explained with the leadership of Abdullah Gül and Ahmet Davutoğlu whose strategic depth perspective affected TFP at the time.³⁹

Regarding the orientation in TFP's activism, the empirical results show that in the post-Cold War Era, Turkey developed close relations with the newly independent countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. The intensification of the bilateral relations with these states has been explained in the

literature with Turkey's belief that closer ties with the new republics would enhance Turkey's regional power, economic growth and strategic importance.⁴⁰

Yet, after the AKP came to power, the empirical results show that Turkey tried to diversify her relations by having close relations with more countries from different parts of the world. Table 2 shows that under the rule of the AKP, Turkey had high level of relations with the countries from Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, albeit still relatively low when compared with other regions. This finding is in line with the statement of the former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who underlined in 2009 that Africa and Latin America form the axis of the new panoramas formulated in Turkey's foreign policy. Yet, the results show that Turkey's increasing relations with Africa and Latin America does not apply for Turkey's relations with South Asia and Pacific. For this reason, Hypothesis 2 that suggests increased involvement in different regions under the rule of the AKP is partially supported.

Turkey's desire to open up to new markets and reduce her dependence on the European trading partners can be presented as the main reason for the intensification of relations with Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. The significant increase in Turkey's trade volume with the African countries is a good example of the close relations with the region. For instance, according to the records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while in 2003 Turkey's trade with Sub-Saharan African countries was worth \$5.47 billion; by 2014 it had increased to \$23.4 billion. Turkey's interest in becoming an influential actor among the Muslim population in Africa is another aspect that is argued to have triggered the diversification of the relations in the region. This objective is considerably seen in Turkey's developmental projects as well as humanitarian aid in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴¹ Similarly, especially during the third AKP government, the empirical results indicate that relations with Latin American countries reached its highest level. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Cuba, Mexico and Colombia in February 2015 can be presented as one of the most important factors that increased the number of the bilateral agreements with the Latin American countries.

Concerning the drift towards an Eastern-oriented foreign policy under the rule of the AKP, the empirical results presented in Table 2 show that Turkey's relations has increased significantly for the countries from MENA region. This finding is parallel with the studies which argue that Turkey's relations with the Middle East and Arab World has intensified under the rule of the AKP.⁴² Although current studies present this regional orientation as a new policy under the AKP, the empirical results show that Turkey had intense relations with MENA countries under the rule of the ANAP governments (1984–91) as well. During that period, agreements with the region constituted 33 percent of all the agreements ratified. Yet as Table 2 shows throughout the

Table 2. The regional distribution of the signatory parties to the ratified international agreements, 1984–2015.

	Middle East & North Africa	Central Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Latin America	South Asia & Pacific	Eastern & Central Europe	Western Europe & North America
The First ANAP Government <i>January 1984–December 1987</i>	0.33	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.08	0.06	0.28
The Second ANAP Government <i>December 1987–November 1991</i>	0.19	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.10	0.16	0.29
The DYP–SHP Government <i>November 1991–October 1995</i>	0.06	0.26	0.00	0.03	0.05	0.28	0.15
The RP–DYP Government <i>June 1996–June 1997</i>	0.07	0.26	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.46	0.00
The ANAP–DSP–DTP Government <i>June 1997–January 1999</i>	0.04	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.58	0.05
The DSP–MHP–ANAP Government <i>May 1999–November 2002</i>	0.05	0.10	0.00	0.01	0.04	0.40	0.19
The First AKP Government <i>November 2002–July 2007</i>	0.13	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.23	0.23
The Second AKP Government <i>July 2007–June 2011</i>	0.33	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.08	0.28	0.13
The Third AKP Government <i>June 2011–June 2015</i>	0.14	0.11	0.10	0.05	0.08	0.34	0.11

Notes: Under the ANAP–DYP government and the DSP government no international agreements were ratified by TGNA. For this reason these periods are not included in the table.

1990s, the bilateral relations between Turkey and the MENA countries significantly decreased. During this period, Turkey's involvement in the region was mostly based on using or threatening to use military force.⁴³ The threat posed by the Kurdish separatist organization, the PKK, toward Turkey's national

security can be given as the main reason behind Turkey's assertive activism in the region during the 1990s. In the 2000s, after the AKP came to power, not only Turkey's involvement in the MENA region has increased but also the style of her involvement and policy activism have changed dramatically.

Results in [Table 2](#) also indicate that the intensity of the relations were not uniform across all AKP governments. While Turkey's relations with MENA countries were highest during the second AKP government, they decreased during the third from 33 to 14 percent. More precisely, the findings show that while 2010 is the year during which the relations with MENA countries peaked, only to start decreasing to its lowest value in 2015. While before 2011 Turkey had very close relations with Iraq, Syria and Iran, afterwards her bilateral relations with these countries dramatically decreased. This situation can be explained with the spread of the Arab Spring to Syria.

The periodical shift in the AKP's policies towards the MENA countries supports the studies that explain the relations under the AKP with the change in the structure of regional politics in the Middle East. As such it has been argued that the Iraqi invasion in 2003 increased the opportunity for the AKP to take an active role in the region to balance the power resulting from the elimination of the Saddam Regime.⁴⁴ However, with the Arab Spring increasing tensions in the region, especially in Syria, the AKP's chances of independently pursuing relations significantly decreased.

Although the empirical results show a significant increase in the relations with the countries from the MENA under the rule of the AKP, this orientation can neither be presented as 'Islamization' nor as 'Asianism'. [Table 2](#) shows that Turkey's relations with the Islamic and Asian Turkic Republics have significantly decreased under the rule of the AKP. This finding contradicts the studies that suggest intense relations with the Turkic Republics of Central Asia, and former Soviet Bloc countries in Central and Eastern Europe.⁴⁵ For this reason, the empirical results suggest Middle Easternization instead of the 'Easternization', 'Islamization' or 'Asianism' of TFP during the first two AKP governments. An exception may be the third AKP government during which, as indicated in [Table 2](#), a relative increase in the relations with the countries from former Soviet zone of Central Asia, Eastern and Central Europe is accompanied by a relative decrease in the relations with MENA countries.

Not only Easternization but also Westernization in TFP is a vaguely defined concept; scholars do not agree on the list of countries that would be considered a part of the 'West'. This ambiguity in the literature makes it also difficult to test whether Turkey has indeed drifted away from the region politically. If the countries not only from Western Europe and North America but also from Central and Eastern Europe are incorporated to the notion of the 'West', the empirical results show that under the rule of the AKP, TFP does not drift away from the West. Although Turkey's

relations with the Western Europe and North America decreased after the 1990s, Turkey always had intense relations with the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. This aspect has not changed under the rule of the AKP. For this reason, when the international agreements signed with the countries from Western, Central and Eastern Europe as well as North America are taken into consideration, TFP can be defined as Western oriented under the rule of the AKP. Yet, when Central and Eastern European countries are not included in the traditional Western alliance due to their post-communist history and the categorization focuses only on Western Europe and North America, the data indicate a clear drift away from Europeanization during the 1990s. Turkey had very close relations with North America and Western Europe under the rule of the ANAP, which can be explained with Turkey's desire to become an important ally and have a say in the new international system after the Cold War. Yet despite its support of the United States in the Gulf War, Turkey was left out of the post-war alliances. The European reluctance to adopt Turkey as a full EU member decreased Turkey's allegiance to the West further. Yet, starting with the DSP–MHP–ANAP (1999–2002) coalition government, Turkey's relations with the Western European countries started to increase in the early years of the AKP government. This can be explained with Helsinki decision on Turkey's EU candidacy and reforms taken by the DSP–MHP–ANAP coalition government after the 2001 financial crisis.⁴⁶

The empirical findings presented in [Table 2](#) show that Turkey's bilateral relations with the countries and organizations from Western Europe and North America decreased from 23 to 13 and 11 percent during the second and third AKP governments. These numbers indicate that after the revitalization of the relations with Europe a relative increase in the relations during the first AKP government is seen. Yet, setbacks in the accession negotiations had a negative impact on Turkey's relations with the EU.⁴⁷ The empirical findings also reveal the deterioration of Turkish–American relations over issues such as the War in Iraq, Iran's Nuclear Program, Turkey–Israel relations and the civil war in Syria.⁴⁸ As a result, given the increase in the relations with countries in the Middle East and decrease in the relations with those in Western Europe and North America, the data support a drift from Europeanization to Middle Easternization.

The data also reveal a possible redirection in TFP during the third AKP government, especially after 2015. While relations with MENA, Western Europe and North America decreased to 14 and 11 respectively, there is an increase in the relations with the Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa which rose to 34, 11 and 10. This finding signals to a diversification in the regional distribution of relations and an attempt to create a more multidimensional foreign policy due to present conflicts in the Middle East and frozen relations with the EU. How much this should

be evaluated as a reorientation of TFP depends on the foreign policy orientation of the fourth AKP government.

Regarding the change in the instruments used in TFP, the empirical results presented in [Table 3](#) indicate that the use of hard power in TFP did not decrease during the AKP rule. In other words, since the 1980s a significant change in the number of the international agreements on security issues is not seen. Moreover, the empirical results show that soft power, in general, has always been the dominant aspect in TFP. Looking at the percentage of the international agreements whose content included one of the soft power dimensions, one can see that especially in the early 1990s the use of soft power has been high. This can be explained with Turkey's attempt to build close ties with Turkic Republics of Central Asia. After the mid-1990s the use of soft power started to decrease and the data show a significant increase in the use of soft power after AKP came to power (see [Figure 2](#)).

Yet, when the use of different soft power tools are taken into consideration separately, it is seen a significant increase in the use of certain instruments by the AKP. For instance, under the rule of the previous political parties,

Table 3. The issue-based distribution of the ratified international agreements, 1984–2015.

	Security	Economy	Energy & environment	Legal issues	Culture & education
The First ANAP Government <i>January 1984–December 1987</i>	0.17	0.11	0.08	0.25	0.17
The Second ANAP Government <i>December 1987–November 1991</i>	0.10	0.32	0.06	0.19	0.04
The DYP–SHP Government <i>November 1991–October 1995</i>	0.13	0.24	0.04	0.02	0.33
The RP–DYP Government <i>June 1996–June 1997</i>	0.04	0.50	0.04	0.04	0.22
The ANAP–DSP–DTP Government <i>June 1997–January 1999</i>	0.09	0.51	0.04	0.05	0.18
The DSP–MHP–ANAP Government <i>May 1999–November 2002</i>	0.15	0.24	0.07	0.17	0.06
The First AKP Government <i>November 2002–July 2007</i>	0.14	0.28	0.11	0.07	0.15
The Second AKP Government <i>July 2007–June 2011</i>	0.14	0.32	0.13	0.07	0.19
The Third AKP Government <i>June 2011–June 2015</i>	0.14	0.31	0.15	0.04	0.21

Note: Under the ANAP–DYP government and the DSP government no international agreements were ratified by TGNA. For this reason these periods are not included in the table.

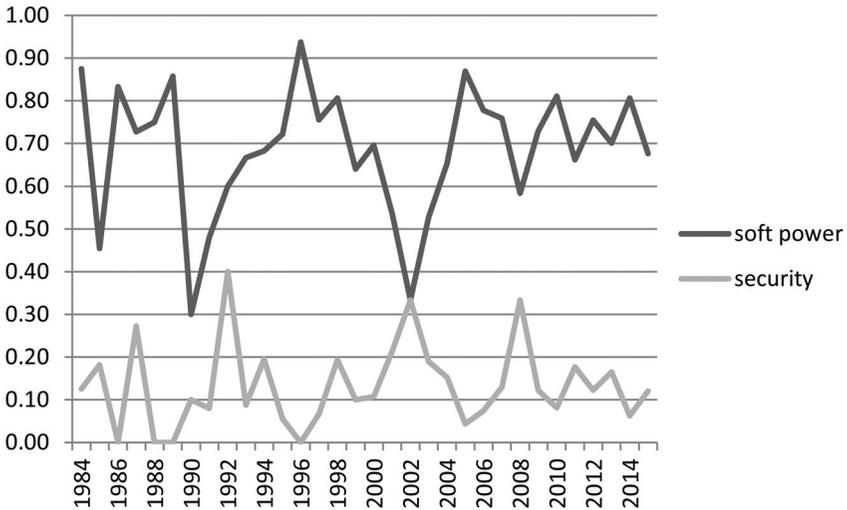


Figure 2. The percentage of Turkey's international agreements with soft power and security issues.

international agreements with environmental and energy issues constituted only about four percent of all agreements. This percentage almost tripled under the rule of the AKP. Turkey's increasing need for energy resources to boost her economic development and aim to diversify her energy supplies seem to be the key determinants of the growing share of international agreements on environmental and energy issues.⁴⁹

A similar pattern is observed in the cultural and educational dimension. Using culture and education as foreign policy instrument seems to be mostly used by the DYP–SHP and the RP–DYP coalition governments between 1991 and 1997. This can be explained by the attempt to build close ties with the newly independent Turkic Republics. The use of this soft power instrument is also relatively high during the second and third AKP governments. This finding is parallel with the Strategic Depth doctrine that has been presented by Ahmet Davutoğlu. In the Strategic Depth doctrine, which has formulated the theoretical framework of TFP under the AKP, geo-culture is presented as the most important element of power. Accordingly, emphasizing its Muslim identity the AKP government used culture as a foreign policy instrument mostly in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, the empirical findings show that under the rule of the AKP, the use of energy, environment, culture and education has steadily increased. For this reason, the data supports Hypothesis 4.

The results presented in Table 3 also show that the use of economic issues has always been the most widely used instrument in TFP. This finding supports Hypothesis 5, suggesting that under the AKP governments, economic

cooperation has been the most frequently used foreign policy instrument. Yet the frequent use of economic tools in TFP is not a new phenomenon, the findings indicate that this condition has been valid for all governments, except the first ANAP government. In this respect, the AKP's policy is not a deviation from the traditional TFP. In fact, with 28, 32, 31 percent, all AKP governments fall behind the RP–DYP and the ANAP–DSP–DTP governments whose use of economic tools constitute 50 and 51 percent of the total instruments.

Finally, in this paper Turkey's relations with international organizations is taken as another soft power instrument. In this regard the international treaties of which Turkey approved certain conventions, acts, protocols and pacts are analyzed. The empirical results presented in Table 4 show that having close relations with international organizations is not an instrument that is used only by the AKP government. For instance, the highest level of involvement with the international organizations is seen under the rule of the DSP–MHP–ANAP government. During the first AKP government, intense relations with the international organizations are also observed. Turkey's close relations with the EU until 2007 is a very good example for this. However during the second and third AKP governments there is a sharp fall in Turkey's relations with the international organizations and institutions. The setbacks in Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU can be presented as one of the main reasons in the decrease in the involvement with the international organizations after 2007.

As a result, the empirical results do not support Hypothesis 6, which suggests that Turkey's involvement with international organizations increased under the AKP government. This finding also shows that especially during the

Table 4. The percentage of ratified agreements with international organizations, 1984–2015.

The First ANAP Government <i>January 1984–December 1987</i>	0.33
The Second ANAP Government <i>December 1987–November 1991</i>	0.34
The DYP–SHP Government <i>November 1991–October 1995</i>	0.25
The RP–DYP Government <i>June 1996–June 1997</i>	0.13
The ANAP–DSP–DTP Government <i>June 1997–January 1999</i>	0.05
The DSP–MHP–ANAP Government <i>May 1999–November 2002</i>	0.41
The First AKP Government <i>November 2002–July 2007</i>	0.40
The Second AKP Government <i>July 2007–June 2011</i>	0.22
The Third AKP Government <i>June 2011–June 2015</i>	0.26

second and third AKP governments, the use of international organizations and pacts as soft power instruments started to decrease dramatically. This finding might be also presented as an empirical evidence for the arguments that suggest a drift away from the use of soft power, especially during the second and third AKP governments.⁵⁰

Using the bilateral and multilateral agreements ratified by the TGNA as a tool to understand the change in TFP under the AKP governments, most of the empirical findings are consistent with the hypotheses and existing explanations in the literature. As such, the findings show that the increased political activism of the AKP governments can be defined as a multidimensional foreign policy with an increased orientation toward Middle East, and the use of soft power as the main driving force.

Conclusion

Focusing on the transformation of TFP under the AKP governments, the aim of this study was testing the existing arguments in the literature. In order to accomplish this goal, the bilateral and multilateral agreements ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly between January 1984 and June 2015 are used as a measurement of TFP. Using this original data set has not only helped test the main arguments about the change in TFP but it also has helped trace the change in TFP across all ruling governments and years between 1984 and 2015.

This study provides important methodological contributions to both the TFP and foreign policy analysis literature in general. First, the study points out to the urgent necessity to provide a clear definition of the regions and terms used in the TFP literature. By quantifying TFP, this paper has provided clear definitions of the regarding concepts. Second, the study shows that bilateral and international agreements ratified by a country can be used as an effective tool to operationalize and measure its foreign policy principles and orientations.

The empirical findings of this paper show that under the AKP, the activism in TFP significantly increased. The level of activism has been high through all AKP governments, but the significant increase in foreign policy especially during the second AKP government shows Turkey's desire to play an active role in shaping the regional and global developments. Regarding the change in TFP's orientation, the empirical results show that trying to diversify Turkey's relations with the countries from Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America increased significantly after the AKP came to power. On the other hand, it is also observed that while Turkey's relations with the Middle East countries increased during the second AKP government, it dramatically decreased during the third. Although, a drift away from Western Europe and North America is observed beginning with the second AKP government,

this is accompanied by intensified relations with Eastern and Central Europe. Finally, trying to delineate the change in the instruments used in TFP, the empirical results show that there is a significant increase in the use of soft power in TFP by the AKP governments. Contrary to the arguments in the literature, not only economic policies, but also energy, environmental, cultural and educational policies have been predominantly used as soft power instruments. Nevertheless, as another soft power instrument in TFP the data show that Turkey's involvement with international organizations did not increase but gradually decreased during the AKP rule.

Beyond testing the main hypothesis, the findings give important clues on the driving causes of this policy change, which seems to be shaped by both economic and civilizational concerns. Furthermore, the variation in TFP across the first, second and third AKP governments highlights the importance of regional and systemic level factors in shaping a country's foreign policy outputs.

As a result, one should keep in mind that Turkey is not an exceptional country in terms of adopting a multidimensional, soft power oriented and an activist foreign policy in the 2000s. Many emerging middle powers have pursued a similar course in their foreign policies and this can be explained with certain changes at the global level. On the one hand, the multipolar system has given to the many emerging powers the opportunity to be active and influential regionally. On the other hand, while military power has become ineffective at solving some problems, economic power has become more important component of contemporary international system. The emergence of new challenges such as terrorism and climate change has further increased the level of interdependence and cooperation among countries.⁵¹ All these factors have resulted in the emergence of middle powers that are influential in their regions and use soft power as a key foreign policy tool.

Notes

1. Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 169–182
2. Larrabee and Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy*.
3. Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 169–182; Larrabee and Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy*.
4. Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 169–182; Öniş, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 47–65.
5. Meral and Paris, "Decoding Turkish Foreign Policy," 75–86; Hatipoğlu and Palmer, "Change in Turkish Foreign Policy"; Aras, "Davutoğlu Era," 404–418.
6. Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision," 77–96.
7. Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7–24; Öniş, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 47–65; Aras, "Davutoğlu Era," 404–418.
8. Kutlay, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 67–88.
9. Müftüler-Baç, "Changing Turkish Foreign Policy," 538–552.
10. Ipek, "Ideas and Change in Foreign Policy," 1–21.

11. Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7–24.
12. Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift," 103–123.
13. Öniş, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 47–65.
14. Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift," 103–123; Balcı and Miş "Turkey's Role in the Alliance of Civilizations," 387–406; Bilgin and Bilgiç, "Turkey's 'New' Foreign Policy," 173–195; Güner, "Religion and Preferences," 217–230; Sadık, "The Role of Religion," 293–317; Güney and Mandacı, "The Meta-Geography of the Middle East," 431–448; Yalvaç, "Approaches to Turkish Foreign Policy," 117–138.
15. Öniş, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 47–65.
16. Yeşiltaş, "Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy," 661–687.
17. Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7–24.
18. Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift," 103–123; Öniş, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 47–65.
19. Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift," 113.
20. Aras, "Davutoğlu Era," 404–418.
21. Müftüler-Bac, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 279–291.
22. Ennis and Momani, "Shaping the Middle East," 1127–1144.
23. Müftüler-Baç, "Changing Turkish Foreign Policy," 538–552.
24. Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East," 589–602.
25. Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy," 29–57.
26. Kutlay, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 67–88
27. Hatipoğlu and Palmer, "Change in Turkish Foreign Policy,"
28. Ipek, "Ideas and Change in Foreign Policy," 1–21.
29. Kirişçi, "Transformation of the Middle East," 33–55; Kirişçi, "Turkey's Engagement with its Neighborhood," 319–341.
30. Ennis and Momani, "Shaping the Middle East," 1130; Altunışık and Martin, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 569–587.
31. Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7–24; Meral and Paris, "Decoding Turkish Foreign Policy," 75–86; Müftüler-Bac, "Turkish Foreign Policy" 279–291; Hatipoğlu and Palmer, "Change in Turkish Foreign Policy"; Özpek and Demirağ, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 328–346.
32. Özpek and Demirağ, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 328–346.
33. Sadık, "The Role of Religion," 293–317; Güner, "Religion and Preferences," 217–230; Yeşiltaş, "Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy," 661–687; Güney and Mandacı, "The Meta-Geography of the Middle East," 431–448; Aras, "Davutoğlu Era," 404–418; Yalvaç "Approaches to Turkish Foreign Policy," 117–138.
34. Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7–24; Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East," 589–602; Kutlay, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 67–88; Ipek, "Ideas and Change in Foreign Policy," 1–21; Hatipoğlu and Palmer, "Change in Turkish Foreign Policy,"; Müftüler-Baç, "Changing Turkish Foreign Policy," 538–552; Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy," 29–57; Kirişçi, "Transformation of the Middle East," 33–55; Kirişçi, "Turkey's Engagement with its Neighborhood," 319–341.
35. Tezcür and Grigorescu, "Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy," 257–276.
36. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success*.
37. Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 169–182.
38. Öniş, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 47–65.
39. Balcı and Miş "Turkey's Role in the Alliance of Civilizations," 387–406; Aras and Görener, "Foreign Policy Orientation," 73–92.

40. Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 169–182.
41. Bilgiç and Nascimento, *Turkey's New Focus on Africa*.
42. Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7–24; Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy," 29–57; Kirişçi, "Turkey's Engagement with its Neighborhood," 319–341; Öniş, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 47–65; Kutlay, "New Turkish Foreign Policy," 67–88; Ipek, "Ideas and Change in Foreign Policy," 1–21; Aras, "Davutoğlu Era," 404–418; Müftüler-Baç, "Changing Turkish Foreign Policy," 538–552.
43. Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 169–182; Larrabee and Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy*; Makovsky, "Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy".
44. Oğuzlu, "Soft Power," 81–97; Keyman, *Turkish Foreign Policy*; Meral and Paris, "Decoding Turkish Foreign Policy," 75–86; Altunışık and Martin, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 569–587; Parlar Dal, "The Transformation of Turkey's Relations," 245–267; Müftüler-Bac, "Changing Turkish Foreign Policy," 538–552.
45. Yeşiltaş, "Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy," 661–687; Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7–24; Bilgin and Bilgiç, "Turkey's 'New' Foreign Policy," 173–195; Hatipoğlu and Palmer, "Change in Turkish Foreign Policy".
46. Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7–24.
47. Öniş, *Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey*.
48. Öniş, *Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey*; Kassimeris, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Options," 321–336; Cook, "The USA, Turkey, and the Middle East," 717–726; Eligür, "Crisis in Turkish–Israeli Relations," 429–459.
49. Ehteshami and Elik, "Turkey's Growing Relations with Iran," 643–662; Han, "Turkey's Energy Strategy," 603–617.
50. Özpek and Demirağ, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 328–346.
51. Kaarbo, Lantis, and Beasley, "The Analysis of Foreign Policy," 1–26.

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Notes on contributors

Aylin Aydın Çakır is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Yeditepe University in Turkey. Her research interests include public opinion, comparative political institutions and quantitative research methods. She published in *International Political Science Review* (2012), *Law & Society Review* (2013), *Political Research Quarterly* (2014) and *Democratization* (2015).

Gül Arıkan Akdağ is an assistant professor at the Political Science and Public Administration Department of Katip Çelebi University. Her research interests are Political Parties, Electoral Competition, Clientelism, Voting behaviour, Turkish Political Life, Ethnic Politics. Some of her recent publications are *Ethnicity and Elections in Turkey: Party Politics and the Mobilization of Swing Voters* published by Routledge in 2014 and 'Rational Political Parties and Electoral Games: AKP's Strategic Move for the Kurdish Vote in Turkey' published in *the Turkish Studies Journal* in 2015.

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