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**From the Sublime Porte to Mogadishu: reading neo-
ottomanism and its trajectory in the history of
republican Turkey**

Master's Thesis

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Year of the defence: 2024

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Abstract

How can social sciences read neo-ottomanism and its trajectory in the history of republican Turkey? In order to answer this research question the present study proposes an analysis the complex and nebulous concept of neo ottomanism by applying elements of three different critical theories of social sciences to a body of secondary sources, Turkish and international, which deal three dimensions of Turkish politics and society in which neo-ottomanism, as a broad social phenomenon, is present. In the first section the analysis provides a reading of neo-ottomanism in Turkish domestic politics through Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. The second section reads neo-ottomanism in Turkish foreign policy through Holsti's role theory. The third section integrates the previous two with a reading of neo-ottomanism through the lens of ontological security. This approach to neo-ottomanism is deemed useful to achieve a panoramic but theory-based reading of a complex and nebulous phenomenon without forcing it into the cage of a single theoretical reading.

Abstrakt

Jak mohou sociální vědy číst neotomanismus a jeho trajektorii v dějinách republikánského Turecka? Za účelem zodpovězení této výzkumné otázky předkládaná studie navrhuje analýzu složitého a mlhavého konceptu neo-ottomanismu pomocí aplikace prvků tří různých kritických teorií sociálních věd na soubor sekundárních tureckých a mezinárodních pramenů, které se zabývají třemi dimenzemi turecké politiky a společnosti, v nichž je neo-ottomanismus jako široký společenský fenomén přítomen. V první části analýza poskytuje čtení neottomanismu v turecké domácí politice prostřednictvím Gramsciho teorie kulturní hegemonie. Druhá část čte neo-ottomanismus v turecké zahraniční politice prostřednictvím Holstiho teorie rolí. Třetí oddíl spojuje předchozí dva oddíly s výkladem neottomanismu optikou ontologické bezpečnosti. Tento přístup k neo-

ottomanismu považujeme za užitečný pro dosažení panoramatického, ale teoreticky podloženého čtení komplexního a mlhavého fenoménu, aniž bychom jej nutili do klece jediného teoretického výkladu.

Keywords

Turkey; neo-ottomanism; cultural hegemony; role theory; ontological security.

Klíčová slova

Turecko; neotomanismus; kulturní hegemonie; teorie rolí; ontologická bezpečnost.

Title

From the Sublime Porte to Mogadishu: reading neo-ottomanism and its trajectory in the history of republican Turkey.

Název práce

Od Vznešené Porty k Mogadišu: čtení neottomanismu a jeho trajektorie v dějinách republikánského Turecka.

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Introduction

Neo-ottoman and neo-ottomanism are words that have been increasingly utilized to refer to Turkey's politics and culture. In the recent years this adjective and this noun have been associated with the figure of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his impact on Turkey and on Turkish foreign policy. Terming Turkey, its politicians and their policies as neo-ottoman seems to be a growing trend in media accounts but also in academic literature in the West. In the majority of the cases neo-ottomanism is associated to negative phenomena such as Erdoğan's autocratization of the country, Turkey's assertiveness in the Aegean sea, its position over the Cyprus issue or its behavior inside the NATO framework, the country's growing Islamization or its cultural incompatibility with the EU and enmity towards it, hence to the blackmails and accusations over issues such as humanitarian crises and migrations.

Surely, this notion of neo-ottomanism is framed through a general western centric and Orientalizing approach to Turkey, its politics, culture and history. This constatation should not lead to downplay the importance of the cultural differences that a western sensitivity can perceive but stimulate a genuine interest towards uncovering the complexities of a nation's culture and history. Focusing on neo-ottomanism simply as a manifestation of a recrudescence of revisionism which is in the nature of the relations between East, Turkey, and the West. Although a component of revisionism is proper to some manifestations of Turkish foreign policy today, the relations between Ankara with the West are far from being definable only through this approach. At the same time, Turkey's foreign affairs are far from being limited to the relations with the West.

During the 18th century, the Ottoman empire was referred to in Europe as the Sublime Porte as the ambassadors to Istanbul, before their visits to the Ottoman government palaces, were received in front of the Imperial gate of Topkapı palace and to the same gate the official missives of European governments were addressed. Overall, the history of the Ottoman

empire and its relations with Europe in the Modern Era are traversed by wars, diplomacy and trade. The European powers often confronted at war the Ottomans, but there have been instances of alliances, and in general, prior to the decay of the empire and of the opening of Suez Canal, the relations with the Ottoman empire were of primary importance for those countries which relied on the trade routes connecting Europe and the Mediterranean to the Orient. Cultural and institutional differences were always present in the relations between European Christian kingdoms, nation-states and trading republics with the greatest multicultural empire, governed by a Muslim Sultan. Nevertheless, the need for diplomacy had always prevailed over these differences, and these never prejudiced the dignity of any part to the agreements and disputes.

It is perhaps a desire by contemporary Turkish policymakers to see their country being recognized as a peer, notwithstanding or by virtue of its cultural and institutional specificities as it was in the case of the relations between the empire and Europeans, that drives much of contemporary neo-ottomanism? Instead of trying to answer this interesting question we should recognize the limits of its formulation. First, it limits the phenomenon of neo-ottomanism to international relations and its agents to policymakers. These limitations are tied to a certain tendency in security studies and international relations to neglect the complexity behind phenomena that also come to be relevant on the stage of international affairs but, before that, have a psychological, social and cultural depth that often ends up being ignored, leaving history and politics to receive a functionalist reading that, for how agile it may seem, could also be highly misleading and myopic.

In light of such considerations, this study aims to return dignity to the complexity of the phenomenon of neo-ottomanism by approaching from zero and answering the question: how can social sciences depict neo-ottomanism and its trajectory in the history of the Turkish republic?

Methodology

Research question:

In order to answer the following research question: how can social sciences help to read the phenomenon of neo-ottomanism and its trajectory in the history of the Turkish republic? This study adopts the following methodology.

Data selection:

The entire study is based on secondary academic sources written in English which deal with phenomenon of neo-ottomanism, Turkish history, domestic politics and foreign policy. The time-frame which these studies cover is broad as it stretches from the fall of the Ottoman empire to the present. The great part of the sources and the data are cover the years from the 1980s to the present day, reflecting a scholarly interest on specific phases of neo-ottomanism in Turkey's history. The documents which constitute the secondary sources which are the data that this study utilizes are mainly academic articles, but also books, that are produced within scholarly literature on Turkish contemporary history, international relations of Turkey and sociology. For the selection of the data of the present study it was important to achieve a great representation of Turkish authors as their proximity with the phenomenon, access to sources in Turkish and familiarity with the cultural and human context confer them great relevance. Scholarly voices from outside Turkey have also been taken into great consideration as relevant for providing a representation by western scholars of the phenomenon. These latter non-Turkish voices generally focus on aspects such as Turkey in international relations and the relations between Turkey and Western institutions.

Data Analysis:

The selected data are analyzed as follows in order to achieve an answer for this study's research question. Since what this study proposes to reach is an understanding of how social sciences can read the phenomenon of neo-ottomanism and its trajectory in Turkish republican history, three social sciences theories have been chosen to be applied to three different dimensions in which the phenomenon of neo-ottomanism is enacted and to provide an interpretive reading of the phenomenon these different dimension.

Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony offers concepts and elements which help read the formation of historical blocs, or hegemonic social formations, in the context of domestic politics and how these hegemonic groups of elites interact with popular culture in order to create a cultural hegemony or a shared consensus in the broad domestic constituency on an ideology or worldview. This theory is applied to secondary sources which deal with two historical phases in Turkey's domestic politics: the neoliberal transformation of Turkey under Özal and with the twenty years of the Justice and Development Party in power. In both instances, Gramscian theory will be employed to provide a reading of historical bloc formation and transformation and of cultural hegemony's rise and evolution. Overall, the importance accorded by Gramsci to culture in domestic hegemonies is considered optimal for a study on neo-ottomanism.

Holsti's role theory has been thought as a tool to read foreign policy as an interplay between a national role conception, that is the idea which the political elites of a state share of the role that a state should occupy in international affairs, and role expectations, that are the perceptions by national political elites of how external actors view the role of their country in the international system. This interplay between ideas of self and perceptions of others ideas is considered by Holsti as productive of national role behaviors, that are foreign policies. Elements of his theory will be applied to analyze Turkish foreign policy from the

years of Özal to the present. This type of analysis is deemed to be able to result in a reading of Turkish foreign policy mutations and continuities while accounting for the saliency of relations with other states as productive of self-conceptions and behaviors.

Ontological security, being a theory which addresses topics such as the importance of discourses of self-identification, narratives of national identity, sense of biographical continuity, and knowable or routinized relations for states and individual too, is deemed useful for the purpose of this study for reading domestic cultural-hegemonic mutations in Turkey's domestic politics and change in Turkish foreign policy as being interrelated. Moreover, ontological security can provide a reading of neo-ottomanism as a discourse which can inform the relations of the Turkish civil society with the country's political power and of the state with the external environment in a struggle to overcome existential anxieties and ontological insecurities deriving from destabilized relations and unrecognized identities.

Conclusion:

As previously stated in the introduction, this study aims to conduct an operation through which social sciences humbly approach aspects of the phenomenon of neo-ottomanism in order to achieve a limited interpretation. The complexity of neo-ottomanism is such that the choice of three different but connectable critical theories of social action appears to be a decision which allows the analysis to investigate the phenomenon in different settings while respecting the irreducibility of the interpretation of the same phenomenon through a single theory. Moreover, the three theories employed are capable to communicate non-hierarchically with each other, and so the three different sections of the analysis are deemed capable of doing through similar, common and overlapping themes.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Neo-Ottomanism: Turkey through its history and imaginary

1.1: Introduction

Neo-Ottomanism is sometimes described as a dream which haunts the mind of the Turkish Republic since its establishment in 1923. This analogy, for how fictional and non-rigorous it may appear, could be apt to succinctly depict a phenomenon which is far from being limited to policymaking and instead stretches through domains such as culture (broadly defined), self-identification, and delves deep into the relations of the Turkish citizens with political power and the role of the country in foreign affairs.

The purpose of this literature review is to offer a panoramic view on the scholarly literature regarding the theme of neo-Ottomanism. Firstly, this literature review proceeds to bring together academic voices which have attempted to produce definitions of the phenomenon. After that, the review rejoins the concept of neo-ottomanism to the scholarly literature on the history of the contemporary Turkey and on Turkish foreign policy in order to provide the reader with a picture of how neo-ottomanism has gradually re-emerged as a concept defining Turkish sociopolitical life, and the country's international relations.

1.2: What is Neo-Ottomanism

Many scholars have attempted to give a face to the Ottoman dream which haunts Turkey's politics, culture, official and popular and *weltanschauungs*. The diffusion of the phenomenon is so broad, and its presence so deeply rooted, that scholarship have produced various answers to the question: what is neo-ottomanism?

It can be defined as a collective process which is characterized by a rising interest in the reevaluation of the Turkish historical heritage (Bilefsky, 2009). Others have defined it as a nostalgic project (White, 2014) or a memorial turn (Özyürek, 2007) towards an imaginary of the Ottoman past as an ancestral socio-milieu which provides meanings to Turkishness. These memories and nostalgias have been described as longings for a community which has been destroyed together with its customs, as the resistance against a historical attempt to erase the social memory of that past community and, thus, as struggle for the maintenance of a historically rooted identity (Ahıska and Kolluoğlu Kırlı, 2006; Mojzes, 2011).

White (2014) holds that the Ottoman past is remembered as being the time in which the Turkish identity and the belonging to the social system were associated with a sharing of cultural and ethical Islamic features. White (2014) follows by adding that in the present the Ottoman past and its associated values, symbols and customs are being recovered in order to offer models for everything: from the everyday social life and cultural production and consumption to domestic and foreign policies. Ergin and Karakaya (2017) describe neo-Ottomanism as offering a moral map to the new bourgeoisie which formed after the September 12 1980 coup d'état and from the neoliberal sociopolitical project which the coup rendered possible. Özyürek (2006) signals how in the 1990s neo-Ottomanism was already present enough in the political and cultural life of Turkey that the image of the republic and the empire's memory were being made to overlap by the official framing of the government.

Yavuz (2016) holds that, under the Kemalist elites, the maintenance and re-elaboration of the Ottoman past was primarily concentrated in the arts and other forms of cultural expression. According to him, only when Kemalism began its long crisis neo-Ottomanism began to re-emerge and to enter official political discourse as a theme whose

elaboration would have accompanied the construction of a new national identity and translated into a new Turkish foreign policy. The latter, Yavuz (2016) argues is predicated upon conceptions originating in neo-Ottomanism such as a communality of the Muslim cultural identity which allows Turkey to reach out again, and with a conscience of its past which is renewed, to the Muslim world as the heir of its past empire.

The majority of the scholars agree that the Turkish governments, Turkish economic elites, and the overall system of power of the country, have progressively adopted neo-ottomanism in order to offer a new social contract to a troubled domestic constituency (Yavuz, 2016; Yang Erdem, 2017; Ergin & Karakaya, 2017). In this later aspect there seems to be a continuity with the top-down project of the first proponents of neo-ottomanism. These, during the Tanzimat reforms, argued in favor of the creation of a Ottoman multicultural and multiconfessional nation in which equal rights and privileges would have been exchanged with the loyalty and identification with the ethical values of the empire against the rising nationalisms (Kayalı, 2016; Ginio, 2016; Ahmad, 2015).

As the Tanzimat reforms aimed to set the empire on a course which would align it with features of western modernity, Taglia (2015) argues that neo-ottomanism can be understood as a wide set of views which interest the relationship between an Islamic polity, modernity and the West, in order to achieve a roadmap for the modernization which would not neglect but uphold the cultural and historical values of said Islamic polity. Throughout the history of Turkey, neo-ottomanism does not emerge as specifically anti-secular or an anti-modernist movement, but as political force aimed at subverting the sociopolitical project of Kemalism (Yavuz, 2016).

Politics of identity have never ceased to cover a major role in the troubled history of the Republic of Turkey, seeing their relevance rise in parallel to the process of political and economic liberalization of the country. Hence, for the purpose of this work, it is interesting

to delve into a review of scholarly literature on the history of the republic and on the evolution of its foreign policy. In both areas of research neo-Ottomanism has received increasing attention as it progressively rose to become part of the dominant political views in Turkey.

1.3: The First Neo-Ottomanism

Ongur (2015) holds that the term neo-ottomanism began circulating during the period in which the empire was attempting to revert its decline through a project of reforms, the Tanzimat (1839-1876). According to him, neo-ottomanism was an elitist and multiculturalist project in response to the Tanzimat reforms and to the perceived dangers that different nationalisms were posing to the survival of the Ottoman empire. The earliest proponents of neo-ottomanism opposed the Tanzimat reforms for what they perceived as a blind acceptance of the European model of state organization and culture. In their views empire could instead find its unity only by means of a formulation of a new identity which should be based on common ottoman cultural traits (Yang Erdem, 2017). Çetinsaya (2003) argues that since the foundation of the Republic in 1923, neo-ottomanism in Turkey has been utilized to refer to three different positions adopted by its proponents: those who favor the rule of the ottoman dynasty and support its right to return into power; those who share an ideological longing of the ottoman past; those who argue that a return to the pax-Ottomana would be a solution for the problems that Turkey faced domestically and internationally.

1.3: Kemalism and Neo-Ottoman Resilience

The new Kemalist republican secular elites openly pursued a rupture with past and imposed a forced amnesia on of the Ottoman legacy, portraying it as decadent and preferring

to stress the central-Asian Turkic origins of the Turkish people (Yavuz, 1998; Yanik, 2016). This effort was reflected in the circulation of new narratives, such as the Turkish history thesis and the Sun Language thesis (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008) which aimed to provide the republic with the basis for an authentic, exceptional and historically grounded Turkish identity to compare and compete with the Western civilization (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008; Yanik, 2016). Moreover, throughout the 1923-1946 period, the Kemalists enforced secularization and westernization of society also through the erasure and removal of religious elements from historiography and by employing censorship of such elements in the cultural production (Aytürk, 2014). However, part of the contemporary historiography on Turkish republican history has signaled how at Turkish popular culture and customs resisted the official narratives and censorships, and continued reproducing religious and ottoman traditions to a noticeable degree (Ergin & Karakaya, 2017; Yang Erdem, 2017), as Beckett (2014) finds to be the case with respect the novels and poetry of the early Kemalist republican period.

1.4: Competitive Elections

Much of the historiography converges on considering the 1940s and especially 1946 – the year in which the Kemalist regime opened to competitive party politics under the pressure of Washington – to be a turning point for the gradual return of the ottoman past and Islam into the official political discourses (Yavuz; 1998; Çetinsaya, 2003; Danforth, 2014; Yanik, 2016). In this regard, Çetinsaya (1999) holds that the politicians of the nascent Turkish political parties readily and purposefully employed religion-related issues as means to exploit political cleavages and to offer an alternative to socialist and communist ideologies. Timur (1987) refers to the incremental process of rapprochement of the Turkish officials' discourses with the ottoman past as “backpedaling from Kemalism”. Authors also

highlight the role played in this process by the Democratic Party/ *Demokrat Parti* (DP) between the 1950 electoral success and the 1960 military coup against the Menderes government which was accused of Islamizing the Republic (Çolak, 2006; Danforth, 2014). Notwithstanding the military's repression of political activities which deviated from the pro-Western and secular Kemalist dictate, this effort could not erase the revival of religious-nationalist political discourses which regarded the Ottoman past as a model and which came to constitute the first nucleus of nationalist-conservatives in Turkish republican history (Çetinsaya, 1999).

1.5: The Hearts of The Enlightened

Throughout the 1960s the Turkish system of power was facing the growth of religious-nationalist and leftist radicalism which threatened the Kemalist primacy on pivotal political issues such as nationalism and secularism (Yavuz, 1998; Çetinsaya, 1999; 2003; Donelli, 2012; Danforth, 2014; Oprea, 2014). Some scholars argue that the tumultuous end of the 1960s and the political instability and violence of the 1970s led certain sectors of the nationalist right wing to look for a receipt to solve what they perceived as a profound identity crisis of the nation, caused by the penetration of Western leftist ideologies (Çetinsaya, 1999; Oprea, 2014; Yang Erdem, 2017). In 1970, in the context of a meeting between conservative anti-communist intellectuals, businessmen and political figures, the think-tank *Aydınlar Ocağı* (Hearts of the Enlightened) was founded. Its proposal was the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, whose formulation is attributed to the academic İbrahim Kafesoğlu. The synthesis was an attempt to achieve a nuanced conservative, nationalist and cultural-Islamist ideology (Çetinsaya, 1999) around which a right-wing bloc could coalesce in order to subdue the radical left and the religious extremists (Oprea, 2014).

The views of the Hearts of the Enlightened have been reinterpreted throughout the 1970s, a decade signed by political violence, rise of radical Islamism, two economic crises,

and the 1974 Cyprus conflict which strained relations with Washington. In this troubled context, Kafesoğlu's formula of Turkish-Islamic synthesis began to appear appetible to the right wing elites. Kafesoğlu imputed the identity crisis of Turkey to Western influence but was also intransigent on distancing from the Islamism of Erbakan and his National Salvation Party (NSP), which advocated for religion to be the foundation of the state (Çetinsaya, 1999; Hamid, 2004; Oprea, 2014). As a result, the Hearts of the Enlightened became proponent of an anti-communist nationalism which considered Islam as the pillar of Turkish culture and the answer to the identity crisis of the nation, but which was also opposed a transformation of the Republic into a theocratic regime (Çetinsaya, 1999).

1.6: The 1980 Coup: Islamic Ethics and The Spirit of Capitalism

Ogru (2009) states that with the September 12 coup the Turkish-Islamic synthesis became the official ideology of the state. Kurt (2010) argues that the Turkish-Islamic synthesis was the ground for an entente between the military, headed by general Evren, and its civilian collaborators. Hence the synthesis enabled the articulation of a sociopolitical project. Oprea (2014) stresses the importance accorded by the military regime (1980-1983) and the successive governments to their project of state-controlled cultural Islamization as an element productive of stability in the context of a neo-liberal transformation of state-economy, state-society, and society-economy relations. Kurt (2010) supports this claim and finds evidence in the dictate of the article 136 of the 1982 military-sanctioned constitution which disposes the creation of the Directorate for Religious Affairs (Diyanet) with the prerogative of "restoring national unity and solidarity." (art. 136, 1982 Const.). Turgut Özal, the architect of the neoliberal transformation of Turkey, responsible for the economic policy of the junta, prime minister from 1983 to 1987 and president from 1987 to 1991, had enthusiastically embraced the Turkish-Islamic synthesis and had blended it with his own

view of the Turkish culture as unique milieu for a marriage between spiritual Islamism and Anglo-Saxon liberalism (Laçiner, 2004). Yavuz (1998) stresses the importance an endogenous change caused by the interplay of economic reforms and Islamization: the rise of anew religious entrepreneurial class.

1.7: The First Openings of Turkish Foreign Policy

In international affairs, the coup and the repression had generated widespread rejection of Turkey in western Europe. This became an opportunity for Turkish foreign policy (TFP) to look away from Europe for the first times since 1923 (Kurt, 2010; Yanik, 2016). In light of these developments, some scholars provide different readings of the gradual opening of a new course in Turkish foreign policy (TFP) (Barchard, 1985; Ruleau, 1993; Yanik, 2016). On one hand, Aydın (2005) offers a structuralist reading which couples relative international isolation with the transition to neoliberal economy's need for markets for exports to explain TFP's opening to the Middle East. Laçiner (2004), instead, reads the new venture of TFP as being influenced by ideology. In his view, Özal considered the broad political, societal and economic transformation that Turkey was undergoing to be constitutive of a model of development, human rights and stability for the Muslim world, a model whose discourse did not neglect the ottoman past (Laçiner, 2004).

Barchard (1985) became perhaps the first non-Turkish author to employ the term of neo-Ottomanism, which he defines as an answer of Turkish domestic and foreign policymaking to the ostracization of the country by the EEC, the economy's need for export markets, and as a consequence of the adoption of the Turkish Islamic synthesis as the new state-ideology. Berchard (1985) also refers to neo-Ottomanism as an ongoing phenomenon of re-definition of the Turkey's role both domestically and internationally after the coup. The discourse of neo-Ottomanism, Berchard (1985) argues, is also a discourse of democratic and liberal achievements of the Turkish state and its diverse society, and in in this sense neo-

Ottomanism, in the Özalist version of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, is not a refusal of the West but a re-interpretation of Turkey's relationship with Western culture and political thought. Rouleau (1996) disagrees with Berchard's depiction of TFP under Özal as being somehow moderate, instead he signals that Özalism, through its neo-Ottoman features has imbued TFP of a missionary zeal.

1.8: Neo-Ottomanism and Populism: The Welfare Party

Neo-ottomanism influenced the discourses and policies of the 1995 coalition government of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) of Necmettin Erbakan with the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*) led by Tansu Çiller (Çolak, 2006). While the latter was a strong advocate of economic liberalism, the Welfare Party (WP) and Erbakan were instead connected to the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) movement and its idea of neo-Ottomanism which rejected ethnic-nationalism and re-conceived Turkish identity on the bases of regional history and Islamic culture and faith (Çolak, 2006; Ongur, 2015; Yanik, 2016). Overall, Yavuz (1998) regards the centrality of neo-ottoman discourses in Turkey as the result of the opening of new Islamic discursive spaces from the 1980's coup to the present. The latter, he argues, were productive of a neo-ottoman or Turkish-Islamic political identity which in turn shaped national interest and whose main theme is a pluralizing and populist Islamic ideology which seeks for Turkey a certain primacy in the political and economic development of the Muslim world.

1.9: The Justice and Development Party

Donelli (2012) argues that the Justice and Development Party (JDP) has learned from the experience of the 1997 postmodern coup, which deposed Erbakan, to portray itself as a

conservative party which promotes moderate Islamism, democracy and economic liberalism. Nevertheless, Yavuz (2009) holds that neo-ottomanism is central for the JDP and its leadership, who consider it a source for an alternative shared identity and the key to the future of Turkey. Yavuz (2003) links Erdoğan's rise to power to Menderes' and Özal's through the fact that the three leaders entered power in a moment of profound economic and political crisis and pursued a new course informed by the re-interpretation of a past-model. Danforth (2014) holds that what neo-Ottomanism stands for depends on how one imagines the Ottoman empire. Building on this latter view, Wastnidge (2019) refers to three main representations of the Ottoman empire under the JDP: the empire as a cradle, or as the apex, of civilization; an Islamic empire; a tolerant, "liberal" and multicultural empire.

1.10: Turkish Foreign Policy Under the Justice and Development Party

Özel Volfová (2016) holds that the neo-Ottomanism expressed by the Turkish government under the JDP is a discourse combining the cultural and geographical commonalities that Ankara shares with its neighborhood with Turkish democratic and economic achievements which make Turkey ideal for assuming leadership in international affairs. Murinson (2013), analyzing Turkish foreign policy under the JDP, argues that the JDP employs an image of the Ottoman empire as possessing a unifying character stemming from its Muslim culture to justify domestic and foreign policies as well as to cultivate an ideal of Turkey as an independent actor on the global scene and a self-confident regional power. Taşpınar (2011) holds that TFP is framed through a neo-Ottomanism which describes Turkey as a benevolent hegemon to hide the JDP's quest for power and influence. Yanik (2016) notes how the empire's supposed multiculturalist tolerance is employed as to imply, more or less tacitly, Turkey's legitimation to exercise influence both the former Ottoman

territories and in the Muslim world. Dönmez (2015) argues that there is a paternalistic conception of nationhood inherent to neo-Ottomanism in TFP. According to Dönmez (2015), Turkey invests its foreign policy with a morally informed quest for promoting Islamic solidarity in the context of the creation of an alternative paradigm to the Western-centric world order. Hence the JDP, through a neo-Ottoman TFP, employs a civilizational conception which portrays Turkey as the center of the Muslim world. Such considerations echo the ones Fuller (1993), who viewed the character of the openings of TFP under Özal and during the 1990s as a signal that the Turkish elites had ceased to perceive the country a frontier, as they did during the cold war, but as the center of a world re-emerging around them.

Çağaptay (2009) finds TFP to be animated by a robust Islamist component and reads this as a signal of the JDP's purposeful distancing of Ankara from Europe. Yavuz (2016) also refers to a phenomenon of incremental Islamization of domestic politics which is reciprocated in TFP by an Islamic irredentism. In this regard, Özkan (2014) labels the JDP's foreign policy under Davutoğlu, and especially his doctrine of Zero Problems With Neighbors, as a pan-Islamist and aimed at enhancing Turkey's regional leadership. Moreover, Donelli (2012) highlights the framing of the JDP as a leading a genuine struggle of the Turkish classes which have been oppressed by the secular Kemalist westernized elites. This populist struggle is replicated, Donelli (2012) argues, in a TFP which frames Ankara as an actor whose action is informed by moral principles and Islamic solidarity. Aykol (2011) argues that Davutoğlu's Zero Problems with neighbors is a animated by a cultural component which diversifies it from conventional diplomacy as bypasses regimes and institutions to directly put the foreign peoples in contact with TFP and its neo-Ottoman discourse.

1.11: Conclusion

Some scholars have developed an approach that is aimed as going beyond the two main approaches which see neo-ottomanism as ideology or as a foreign policy concept. Instead they argue for a new approach which, by engaging the two main approaches critically, can treat neo-ottomanism as a truly complex phenomenon (Ergin & Karakaya, 2017; Yang Erdem, 2017). These authors consider important to assess the historic trajectory of neo-ottomanism in Turkish society and culture to focus on its most recent version which is characterized, they argue, by a great interdependence between official political framing and civil society and cultural framing. An interdependence which is far from being harmonic and is rather the theater of a struggle for identity-related and cultural meanings. On this note, the present literature review observes a new venue for further research on the phenomenon of neo-ottomanism in Turkey. This new venue is constituted by a mixed-concept approach to such a complex phenomenon. Combining different concepts from the social science theories could enhance the scholarly comprehension of the different meanings which neo-ottomanism conveys.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

2.1: Ontological Security

The term and concept of ontological security was first employed and developed in psychoanalytical literature by R.D. Laing in 1960. In psychoanalytical and sociological literatures ontological security is tied to the concept of anxiety as a general psychic condition susceptible to generate a variety of behavioral responses. Psychoanalytical and philosophical theories have inquired on the original anxiety or what is defined as existential anxiety.

Lacan (2011) attributes existential anxiety to what he defines to as “primary differentiation”, that is the primigenial cognitive process through which the infant conceives its differentiation and the split between himself and the caregiver. According to Lacan, the above-mentioned differentiation coincides with the rupture of a wholeness and implies a fault between the inner world of the subject and a symbolic order that pre-exists.

To control existential anxiety-ontological insecurity to a certain degree, subjects elaborate and employ imaginations of wholeness and autonomy (Kinnvall, 2012; 2018; Kinnvall et al., 2018). Social sciences build from this philosophical and psychological apparatus to shift anxiety as an individual phenomenon towards a socio-political dimension of the concept. Various scholars have pointed out sources of social and political anxiety among which figure politics of risk, politics of belonging, and the existential effects of modernity and liberalization (Giddens, 1992; Huysmans, 2006). Anxiety, thus, receives an interpretation which regards it as a pertaining to a variety of phenomena which develop within the context of collective affective experiences “through various total processes of transmission, contagion or circulation.” (Bartholomew & Victor 2004; Hall & Ross 2015).

Kinnvall and Mitzen (2020) aim to overcome what they describe as an impasse in ontological security studies due to a strict adherence to Giddens’ theorization which has

impaired further venues for investigating the positive potential of existential anxiety and ontology for policy outputs. In their view, Giddens (1991) and a considerable part of ontological security studies disregard the complexity of anxiety and reduce it to a phenomenon which can be faced with on only two responses: fight or flight. Instead, Kinnvall and Mitzen (2020) argue for drawing from anxiety's characterizing multi-finality to derive new venues for research on a multitude of emotional and behavioral responses under the lens of ontological security. Giddens (1991) had postulated that ontological insecurity, as a sentiment of the inconceivability of the future and of existential enigmas, urges individuals and social groups to seek security in everyday practices or "routines" (Giddens, 1991) which he ultimately describes as attributing an object to anxiety in order to proceed to secure the sense of self. Kinnvall and Mitzen (2020), despite agreeing with this theorization, argue that Giddens (1991) does not provide a different path than the translation of ontological insecurity into politics of fear aimed at securing the a collective self through the maintenance of a symbolic order and securitized relational routines.

Moving to the saliency of ontological security studies for International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), there are at least three aspects of theorizing that deserve to be examined. First, a majority within the scholarship convenes that states pursue ontological security by efforts to develop and maintain a sense of biographical continuity. For being sustained, the latter relies on the development of ontological narratives (Patterson and Monroe, 1998), narratives of being of the state as a historical community with its national myths. Narratives of self are relevant in the pursuit of ontological security because, through them, states construct autobiographical justification for their present identity and continuity with a "good past" (Subotić, 2016). Scholarship converges on the importance of said narratives for states not only to raise a consensus surrounding the pursuit of certain policies, but to construct their identities at large. In this respect Berenskoetter (2014) holds

that states are biographical narratives themselves.

Kinnvall (2004) and Mitzen (2006) construct a connection with the psychoanalytical origins of the concept of ontological security by arguing that it is especially in time of profound ontological crises, which occur when events cannot be processed into the existing narrative, that the positive potential autobiographical narratives manifest its relevance within a dynamic on ontological (in)security. Unpacking the state-centric tendencies of the constructivist approaches of the early theorizations of ontological security is an objective that has been pursued by a relevant part of the scholarship. In this sense, Pratt (2017) stresses the importance of holding relations as the referent object of ontological security studies. Moreover, Pratt (2017) does not undermine the importance of the actors' autobiographical narratives, but he emphasizes that these must develop and function within a process of research of coherence of the broader social context in which the actors exist.

This view of Pratt (2017) reconnects with the saliency accorded by Giddens and much of the scholarship to social relations as routinized in which action, based on self and mutual understandings, unfolds the constitution of subjects. Such considerations are shared by Steele (2008) who views the social actions undertaken by states as serving their self-identity needs. Steele (2008) goes beyond reiterating that the states' narratives originate routinized foreign policy actions and opens to an interesting venue for ontological security studies by indicating their relevance for analyzing humanitarian forms of social action beyond the mainstream IR self-help approach to states' behaviors. According to Steele (2008), it is possible to argue that it is empathy that guides states' interventions on behalf of others.

2.2: Role Theory

In 1970 K.J. Holsti published an article in which he laid the basis for a theorization of Role Theory in International relations and the study of foreign policy. According to him the international system was characterized by less effective norms and sanctions on the behavior of actors. Moreover, and connectedly, the position of actors within the system was not clear. Hence, Holsti (1970) held that when transferring role theory to the field of foreign affairs one cannot really employ the term position but status. This latter term “denotes [...] a rough estimate of a state's ranking in the international system and which may or may not have appreciable consequences on the ways that policymakers define what they believe to be the appropriate international orientations or tasks for their nation.” (Holsti, 1970).

Overall, the author states that the foreign policy expressed by a state actor is composed by certain “patterns of attitudes, decisions, responses, functions and commitments toward other states.” (Holsti, 1970) and, for the purpose of this study he refers to this as national role performance. The latter is a product of the interplay of two dimensions, one related to the domestic environment and the other to the external environment. The first one is referred to as national role conception which “includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems [...] their "image" of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment.” (Holsti, 1970). The second one, relating to the external environment, is referred to as national role prescriptions which entail limits and possibilities of development for the national role conception and, consequently, to the national role performance. Holsti identifies as sources of national role prescriptions “the structure of the international system; system-wide values; general legal principles which ostensibly command universal support (such as the doctrine of the

sovereign equality of states); and the rules, traditions, and expectations of states as expressed in the charters of international and regional organizations, "world opinion," multilateral and bilateral treaties; and less formal or implicit commitments and "understandings." (1970). With regard to the extent of national role prescriptions' influence on national role conceptions and thus on national role performances varies, according to Holsti (1970), depending on the country, the historical circumstances and multiple ultimately unquantifiable factors.

2.3: Cultural Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci in his *Prisons Notebooks* develops the theory of Cultural Hegemony in order to explain some aspects of Marxian reflections which, in his view, were lacking reflection and development (Hoare & Nowell-Smith, 2005). Some of the questions which interested Gramsci were: how are the subaltern classes coopted by the dominant class into behaving against their own interest? And how is class conscience impaired from becoming the guiding ideology for proletarian revolutionary action? From these questions, Gramsci developed his own reflections which, alongside leading him to formulate the concept of Cultural Hegemony, have also greatly enriched post-Marxist debates and have found fortune among critical scholarship especially in the Global South.

A significant departure from rigidity of the Marxist concept of class is Gramsci's concept of historical bloc which enables his analysis to cut across categories of ownership and non-ownership to reach an ideational core which is the basis for the establishment of a historical bloc (Lears, 1985). A historical bloc, in Gramsci's view, originates from the selective and interested refashioning of the available spontaneous philosophy by a social group as it develops in the economic sphere. This operation leads a social group to adopt a more or less clear ideology which cements it in a historical bloc whose members express

both cultural and economic solidarity (Lears, 1985). This whole operation results in the formation of a historical bloc and depends greatly on the role of intellectuals and their services to the historical bloc. In this regards, Gramsci posits that the main aim of a historical bloc is hegemony, a concept that he derives from Leninism but that he reviews in under a non-positivist lens (Bates, 1975). In Gramsci's thought, Bates (1975) argues, the hegemony of a historical bloc raises successfully when the ruling class succeeds, by means of the activity of organic intellectuals, to pervade the civil society with their *weltanschauung*, thereby obtaining consent for their domination.

Gramsci describes civil society as belonging to the superstructure of society and as being the sphere of ideology and broadly conceived cultural organization (Hoare and Nowell Smith, 2005). When a historical bloc does not succeed in obtaining the objective of hegemony, the state which it occupies will thus recur to more open coercion, showing more blatantly the features of a dictatorial regime. This typology of state is described by Gramsci as "economico-corporative" (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 2005). Lears (1975) draws the attention on the relevance attributed by Gramsci by two historical phenomena which often interrelate: crisis and decadence. The first one, crisis, is conceptualized by Gramsci as "organic crisis" or "hegemonic crisis" insofar as this phenomenon interests both the structure and the superstructure, the material base of power and its ideology. Such events, Gramsci holds, are precipitated by a failure of the historical bloc and the ruling class in a large undertaking for which it had previously demanded consent and sacrifices. In this regard, Lears (1975) stresses that Gramsci does not conceive a failure in said great undertakings as paving the way to revolution. Instead, Gramsci signals that civil society can resist and become a force of restauration, since "*no social form is ever willing to confess that it has been superseded.*" (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 2005). With regard to decadence, Gramsci held that a strange connection exists between philosophical achievement and

political decadence (Lears, 1975). According to Gramsci in every period of decadence, a period in which the old world is fading and the new one has not risen yet, sees ideology and being refined through a speculation on its hegemonic features (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 2005).

Chapter 3: Analysis

3.1: Neo-Ottomanism and Cultural Hegemony

3.2: Turgut Özal: Islamism into the historic bloc

The purpose of this chapter is to link the concept of cultural hegemony as formulated by Gramsci and to apply it to a body of scholarly literature which deals with the neoliberal turn in Turkey, and specifically the policies implemented under Özal, and the governments of the JDP. The main focus of this literature is Turkish domestic politics and the application of the Gramscian concept of cultural hegemony to these phases of Turkish history is carried out with the aim of analyzing them as historical phases in which a historical bloc coalesced around an ideas which are characterizable as neo-Ottoman and the subsequent attempts to establish around such ideas a cultural hegemony.

3.3: The 1970s as a hegemonic crisis

Turkey in the 1970s was torn by political violence, rise of nationalist, religious, and left-wing extremisms, it was hit by two profound economic crises (1973 and 1978/1979) and faced international isolation and an arms embargo due to the 1974 Cyprus crisis. The Turkish social unrest and crises were interrelated to a general systemic crisis of the development model which had been sponsored by the US in the international system (Silver and Slater, 1999). Karataşlı (2015) describes the second half of the 1970s in Turkey as a hegemonic crisis on two levels: on the domestic level, the Turkish political elites were losing their ascent on civil society; on the international level, Washington was losing its influence over Ankara. In this situation, the recovery of a socio-economic stability would have to pass from the assessment of a hegemony under renewed premises.

In retrospect the personality of Turgut Özal acquires the providential traits of a man who embodied the new course of Turkey's politics. To understand how his multifaceted and flexible political identity came to meet the needs of Washington and Turkey's elites, military and capitalists, for a new outlook it is helpful to look at Kafesoğlu's representation of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as some sort of formula in which nationalism and Islamism are two eternal and equally important features of Turkish national identity which must be kept in perfect balance, with neither of them prevailing, and in which the relationship with the West is a historical variable which Turkish national identity has had to face in a mutual exchange of influences (Ogru, 2010; Kurt, 2010; Oprea, 2014).

Özal's formation, career and personal political identity were surely ambiguous enough to make him a political figure who understood the meaning of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis and who was capable of actively contribute to its enactment in that historical moment (Çetisanaya, 1999; Kurt, 2010). With regard to the ambiguousness of Özal, Karataşlı (2015) signals how he truly was an ubiquitous man of power, having worked for

the Turkish government in the field of economic planning when the model of development was the ISI one. Moreover Karataşlı (2015) points to Özal's religious and spiritual Sufi background and its influence in certain Islamist environments. Finally, scholars stress the importance of Özal's studies and his successive career at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) in the US (Çetisanaya, 1999; Kurt, 2010; Karataşlı). If the experience of his university studies left Özal profoundly impressed by the dynamism and development of both society and economy in the US, his career in the international financial institutions, during the years in which those were the cauldrons of neoliberalism, had turned Özal into a fervent believer of the principles of the doctrines of free-market and free-enterprise.

When he had returned to Turkey, Özal relentlessly promoted the neoliberal ideas for the transformation of the country among the Hearts of the Enlightened and in the Islamist groups where he with whom he was familiar (Karataşlı, 2015). It is also worth noticing that Özal's brother was part of Erbakan's National Salvation Party and that Özal himself had previously tried, without much success, a career in that radical Islamist party (Ogru; 2009; Oprea, 2014). Prior to the coup, in 1979, Özal had also laid down a document for the Demirel government which outlined the measures for a shock therapy to be inflicted upon the Turkish economy and society in order to obtain the funds of the IMF and the WB (Çetisanaya, 1999). No political party in Turkey was willing to take the political responsibility for enacting such measures which in a democratic context would equate to a political suicide (Yavuz, 1998; Çetisanaya, 1999; Ogru, 2010; Oprea, 2014; Karataşlı, 2015). Nevertheless, this political stall was removed by the military which felt strong of Washington's backing, as well as the approval of the IMF and the WB, and enacted the 1980s coup.

All political parties and labor unions were outlawed and disbanded, while Özal was left in charge of carrying out the implementation of the neoliberal measures. Karataşlı (2015)

stresses how it was not an infatuation but overlapping interests and loyalties which kept the Özal and the military together. In this sense it is relevant the Turkish business elites pressure on the military through the letter sent by Vehbi Koç, head of the then biggest conglomerate of Turkish business, to general Kenan Evren. In his letter Koç clarified that the sociopolitical project could not proceed without Özal in control of the economy (Çetisanaya, 1999; Oprea, 2014; Karataşlı, 2015). Such request was backed by Washington, the IMF and the WB (Ahmad, 1993). Even if the backing of international financial institutions, the White House and Turkish capital were surely necessary to keep him in office, Özal's neoliberal reforms show that he was conscious that the foreign and great capital backing were not enough to succeed in bringing Turkey towards a new course of stability and development.

The features of Özal's legacy are the features of an atypical, or better a specific implementation of neoliberalism (Karataşlı, 2015; Yang Erdem, 2017). In this specificity lays Özal's understanding of Turkish society and of its needs for the material and ideological basis upon which it would have been actually possible to support a sociopolitical restructuring of the country in the long term. Scholars recognize that it was not only the Istanbul and Izmir Turkish industrial and secular elites who benefited by the from the coup and its sociopolitical project, but the policies adopted under Özal' were looking forward to coopting segments of the civil society (Karataşlı, 2015; Yang Erdem, 2017) to create an effective hegemony in Turkey .

The segments of Turkish civil society which would become coopted in the new hegemonic project were parts of Turkey's society which Özal had familiarity with: the religious petty entrepreneurial bourgeoisie and the popular classes which aimed at a better standard of living (Yavuz, 1998; Karataşlı, 2015; Yanik, 2016). These two groups had been charmed by the anti-western and radical Islamist discourse of Erbakan and it NSP in the years prior to the coup (Karataşlı, 2015). Özal believed that accommodating their ambitions

for wealth accumulation and consumerism, making them beneficiaries and supporters of the free-market system would serve to constitute a solid, and vast voters basin for the new hegemonic posture of the country. Moreover, Özal understood the importance of channeling the political demands and cultural values of these segments of civil society away from radical Islamism and into a democratic platform in which economic liberalism encountered moderate Islamism (Karataşlı, 2015). Özal's Motherland Party (MP) reflected this conviction and its electoral fortune throughout the 1980 and until Özal's death is explicable through a Gramscian understanding of hegemony as being about consent.

In this sense, Özal's success lays in his ability to read Turkish civil society and the opportunity historical moment was offering to coopt a silent majority of Islamists into the sociopolitical project of the new Turkish hegemony, promising the religious entrepreneurs of Anatolia a place in the Turkish historical bloc for their loyalty and economic virtuosity. In a sense, it is possible to argue that Özal's legacy is neo-Ottoman as it recognizes the cultural and political relevance of those Turkish citizens who identify as Muslims or Islamists but do not refrain from being nationalists and from recognizing the advantages deriving from the adoption of modern western techniques, such as economic liberalism in this case. This Muslim civil society was set to become the champion of Turkish neoliberalism and nationalism: its civil society organizations blossomed and substituted themselves to the state in fields such as social services and education (Karataşlı, 2015; Yanik, 2016). The rising class of Muslim entrepreneurs, as it accumulated wealth, also progressively permeated the public discourse with its political and cultural instances through the acquisition and creation of media platforms (Kirdiş, 2023). The Islamic bourgeoisie proved able not only to play the rules of the free market, but also to eagerly participate in Turkish political and cultural life, contenting to the traditional elites the high ground in public debate, cultural production, and formation of a new political elite (Kirdiş, 2023).

Considering these evolutions in Turkish domestic politics and society, it is hard to envisage Özal's legacy as the one of a pure neoliberal transformation. Instead, as the new sociopolitical and the economic course of Turkey found in the civil society's a source of energy to implement a new hegemony It appears that Özal's legacy can be described as the opening for a hegemonic reset in which neo-ottomanism, as the revival of an Islamic Turkish nationalism with its broad ideological and cultural implications, was set to become a major political force.

3.4: The JDP and Erdogan: an assertive neo-Ottoman historical bloc

With the death of Özal, Turkey was left without the politician who, after Atatürk, had more profoundly changed the trajectory of the country. Erbakan and the Welfare Party (WP) – born after the ban on all political parties, among which the NSP, after the 1980 coup – were eventually able to exploit the political vacuum left by Özal (Yavuz, 1997; Robins, 2012), as the Islamist civil society was looking for political representation. Erbakan was deeply tied to the National Outlook movement (*Millî Görüş*). Founded by Erbakan and others in 1969, the movement grew as a religious civil society organization under the administrative practice of the Dyanet, and became a reference for radical Islamist nationalists who opposed what they perceived as a Western tutelage on Turkey and advocated for a pan-Islamist foreign policy, Sharia and religious institutions and opposition to the West (Yavuz, 1997; Donelli, 2012; Robins, 2012). The WP's success in the 1995 elections was followed by a coalition government with the TPP of Tansu Çiller. This government was ended through a military decree, the so called postmodern coup, in 1997 for its conduct was violating the constitutional boundaries between religious sphere and the state secular foundations as per the military.

As the decree also definitely banned from politics the WP, some of the youth members of the party decided to abandon Erbakan and his radical positions to embark on a more pragmatic political project: the Justice and Development Party/ *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (JDP/ *AKP*) (Cizre, 2008). Founded in 2001 by personalities such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, and Ahmet Davutoğlu who shared a common formation in the National Outlook movement, the JDP adopted a discourse and an agenda in favor of democracy, EU accession, liberalizations and human rights (Cizre, 2008; Donelli, 2012; Yanik, 2016; Murshed et al., 2020). This operation led the JDP to a landslide electoral result in 2002. This victory was welcomed by the conservative media and civil society as a revolution (Donelli, 2012), replicating the JDP's discourse which frames its role as the representative of pious and laborious masses, who embody the true Turkish soul and who been under the boot of secular Kemalist elites for decades (Donelli, 2012; Kirdiş, 2016). If in the first phase of its governments the JDP had pleased the West, pursuing EU membership and liberalizations, it is also worth mentioning that, through the same policies and reforms, the party was able to erode the state and the military control on civil society (Yılmaz & Bashirov, 2018).

After the first phase of liberalization, the government noticeably reduced under its control some key hegemonic areas (Kirdiş, 2023). These are the Dyianet, which passed from being an independent state institutions to being under the direct control of the executive and has determined its cooperation with other ministries (Ozzano and Maritato 2019), enhancing the pervasiveness of the executive action on civil society. Overall, the JDP's action through the ministries it occupies and the Dyianet is directed at creating a new national historical memory which celebrates its Islamic and Turkish connubium in the Ottoman past (Sözen, 2013). The latter is taken as a model to which Turkey must return through an Islamist reappropriation of the cultural spaces which have been occupied by Kemalism (Lüküslü,

2018).

The JDP furthered its grip on power in Turkey through the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials against the military cadres and the National Security Council (Sözen, 2020), a military controlled institution to whom all the coups of the republican era must be attributed. In 2010 the JDP, through referendum, has implanted some amendments to the constitution which have reduced the independence of the judiciary from the executive (Sözen, 2020). Throughout the years the JDP and Erdoğan have framed the centralization of power and the dismantlement of checks and balances as a process of true democratization of Turkey. In this sense, Erdoğan has described the bureaucracy as corrupted, elitist and averse to comply with the sovereign mandate conferred by the Turkish people to the JDP to transform Turkey in a more democratic and Islamist country (Donelli, 2012; Sözen, 2020). This self-depiction by the JDP as being invested with an avant-gardist mandate to serve democracy and the true interest of its citizens has proved efficient for supporting the privatization of services, industrial conglomerates and media which have ended in the hands of loyal exponents of the civil society (Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018; Kirdiş, 2023). As Atasoy (2009) puts it, the JDP has conducted a tactical marriage between neoliberal western values and its pursuit of a cultural hegemony centered in neo-Ottoman, Islamist, Turkish nationalism.

The 2010 referendums on the judiciary, the Gezi park protests' repression of 2013, and finally the failed coup of July 2016 are commonly regarded as stepping stones which have brought the JDP to become the driving force behind the phenomenon of Turkey's autocratization (Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018). Nevertheless, focusing on specific historical moments may induce to lose sight of the continuities, such as the incremental occupation of culture and education by religious conservatives and the corresponding outflow of neo-Ottoman narratives. When analyzing neo-ottomanism and cultural hegemony under the JDP

it appears to be important not to consider the government and its agencies as the only dispenser of an ideology which is imparted and immediately adopted by the population (Ergin & Karakaya, 2017; Yang Erdem, 2017). Instead, the accounts which appear more solid depict neo-Ottomanism as an element of Turkish culture which endures since the beginning of the republican history. In this sense, it is also possible to envisage neo-Ottomanism as being expressed vividly in the cultural sphere by the civil society without a straightforward compliance to the JDP's framing of the Ottoman identity and past of Turkey.

It is at the same time possible to speak of the JDP's rule over Turkey as a period in which Ankara's government has impressed a strong neo-Ottoman framing on TFP, domestic power-struggles and national identity narratives without conceding to the JDP and to Erdoğan a monopoly on the field of meanings connected to themes such as Turkish identity and the neo-Ottoman past. Rather, it appears as if the government narrative covers, and tries to direct, the neo-ottoman discourse while the latter is vastly practiced by the citizenry through culture and personal re-interpretations (Ergin & Karakaya, 2017; Yang Erdem, 2017). Authors have hence spoken of Ottomanism as the official discourse of those in power and of Ottomania as the popular culture connected with the country's identity in relation to its Ottoman past (Ergin & Karakaya, 2017). Other authors have referred to the consequences of neoliberalism and government policies on Turkish neo-Ottoman culture and ideology as productive of a form of Foucauldian governmentality (Yang Erdem, 2017).

After the failed coup of 2016 Erdoğan and his loyalists have unleashed an unprecedented repression of the opposition. Among the measures taken, the labelling of the Gülen movement as a terrorist organization and the government's crackdown on it in its domestic and foreign policy emanations has sent a strong signal to the sectors of Turkish Islamist civil society that could think of questioning the JDP's primacy (Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018; Lüküslü, 2018; Sözen, 2020; Kirdiş, 2023).

To conclude, it is possible to read the JDP's governments experiences as productive of a hegemonic synthesis of the neo-ottomanisms of Özal and Erbakan. Scholarship indicates how the members of the WP who constituted the first nucleus of the JDP were conscious of the limits that the 1997 coup had manifested. In this regard, in 1997 the military had demonstrated how an Islamist political agenda was not feasible without remaining within the boundaries of a pro-Western international positioning and a secular domestic constitutional setting. To put it shortly, the military was still capable of carrying out its role of tutelage over the political direction of the Republic of Turkey as it had done in 1960 and 1980 previously. Nevertheless, the same founders of the JDP understood that a more nuanced approach, informed by the memory of Özal, would have rendered feasible an Islamist presence in the government of the country.

Therefore, while remaining loyal to a cultural and political formation within the National Outlook movement, the JDP policymakers embarked on a first mandate in which they ardently supported the EU integration of Turkey. Through the reforms and the liberalizations that this process entailed the JDP was able to bring about an erosion of the military control on the state apparatuses, on the economy and the political activity of Islamists. The latter were progressively penetrated the Turkish public administration through a more liberalized spoils system and the productive and media sectors through the privatizations. This process of progressive capture of relevant sectors of the state and of the cultural life of the country by the same segment of Turkish civil society that had surfed the crest of the neoliberal wave of reforms and the hegemonic restructuring happened under Özal.

Nevertheless, even if the receipt employed by the JDP to obtain the blessing of Bruxelles, the Turkish armed forces and Washington was adopting a renewed Özalism, the core values and the formation shared by its political class were different from the liberal

Islamist views of Özal. To begin with, the sincere admiration Özal had of the West and its achievements was rather inexistent among the JDP policymakers, who viewed the west as an external factor intervening on the political life of Turkey to essentially crush the Islamic historical and cultural identity, erasing that uniqueness of Turkey which is connected to its Ottoman past. Moreover the democratic advocacy of the JDP must be interpreted as a genuine aim to achieve, through a moderate and acceptable framing of its policy agenda, a substantial change of the hegemonic setting of the state. In twenty years, from the 1997 memorandum which removed the government to the 2017 referendum which rendered Turkey a presidential system, the Kemalists and westernizing elites' power over the state has decisively declined.

The JDP has been capable of using democratization and liberalization as a way to empower the Islamic bourgeoisie and civil society and to free the executive of the constraints imposed on it by the Kemalist system and ultimately from the checks and balances of a democracy. This process of Islamist democratization and liberalization has led the JDP to develop an alliance with the Islamist capitalists to re-produce and embolden the message of the rise of a new Turkey fighting to free itself from corrupt elites which have betrayed the sovereignty of the people. The key to the enduring stability of the JDP in power is not just the subversion of the control of key positions but its connection to the civil society. As a political class which developed in the National Outlook movement, one of the major civil society organizations in Turkey, the members of the JDP were familiar and supportive of the Islamist aims of finally succeeding in addressing the political trajectory of the country. Having granted them political representation, economic opportunities and positions in the public administration, the JDP has received in return from the civil society votes, media backing, and loyalty in a sociopolitical project which has changed the balance of the hegemony of Turkish domestic politics and, as it will be shown, the formulation of TFP.

Chapter 4: Role Theory and The Foreign Policy of The New Turkey

4.1: Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to apply elements of role theory to TFP under the JDP in order to garner evidence of the underlying presence of neo-Ottomanism in its evolution. Role theory is a tool which is apt to provide a certain understanding of a country's conduct in the international system based on an interplay between actor and structure. The dominant worldviews and self-conceptions among the elites are taken into account as national roles conceptions. These worldviews interact with the worldviews and self-conceptions of other external actors, the interpretation of these by the referent state is taken into account by role theory as national role expectations. The latter have a strong influence on national role conceptions' translation into national role behavior, that is foreign policy initiatives. The data which are subject to be analysis with role theory come from secondary literature, specifically academic literature on the topic of TFP. This analysis aims to depict the progressive change in TFP from the 1980s openings to the present quest for legitimation on the global scale.

4.2: Foreign Policy of The New Turkey Towards and Into the New Millennium

After September 12 1980 coup Turkey faced isolation and heavy criticism by the EEC and Turkish policymakers tried to find a substitute for the loss of Europe Turkey's only region of reference since 1923 (Barchard, 1985; Laçiner, 2009). The solution to political isolation would have been found, also to please Washington which was worried for an

arsonist contagion from the Islamic revolution in Iran, in the new foreign policy which made the Middle East a region of Turkish interest and cultural-historic Turkish pertinence (Yavuz, 1998; Aydin, 2005; Laçiner, 2009).

Part of this new foreign policy course was the importance accorded by the Turkish government to the framing of Turkish identity as being culturally and historically intertwined with the Muslim identities of the Greater Middle East (Yavuz, 1998; Laçiner, 2009). This was reflected also in the participation of general Kenan Evren to the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and statements by him and Özal in which the Middle East was depicted as having a major role in the definition of the new Turkish national identity (Yavuz, 1998; Aydin, 2005).

As priorly stated, Özal aimed to present the world a Turkey which championed economic development, democracy, human rights and liberalizations while allowing its domestic constituency to practice its Islamic values. The latter were conceived as a reservoir of culture which enlightened the Turkish venture into modernity without losing its unique identity. Islam was also the *trait d'union* between the Turkish national identity of the present and the Ottoman empire, whose memory would inform the rising new Turkey in its domestic and foreign policy. Hence, TFP began being characterized by a depiction of Turkey as a model for the Middle East based on its historical and cultural role in the region, and as a cultural and geographical bridge between the West and the Muslim world (Laçiner, 2009).

The identification of the Turkish republic and of its civil society with Islam has led to a more assertive reign policy after the end of the cold war, when the disintegration of the Soviet space and the collapse of Yugoslavia opened the space for the birth of new Muslim Turkic states in Central Asia and to the resurgence of the ethno-religious question in the Balkans (Yavuz, 1997; 1998; Yanik, 2016). For Turkey's Islamists and nationalists it was a historical conjuncture loaded with identity-related meanings and tensions around TFP were

lingering (Yavuz, 1998). In fact, already in 1991 Özal's decision to support operation Desert Storm had faced staunch oppositions and caused major political and socio-economic repercussions, with members of the government and the armed forces resigning and an economic crisis due to the loss of energy supply and the collapse of what was then Turkey's major recipient for exports (Laçiner, 2009). This climate was surely exacerbated by the Nagorno-Karabagh war and the ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims by the Serbs (Yavuz, 1998; Aydin, 2005).

The Erbakan-Çiller government was the first to openly question the meaning of Turkey's decades-long loyalty to the West, the country's belonging into NATO and even the alliance *raison d'être* (Yang Erdem, 2017). This questioning was alimeted by the widespread perception in Turkey of Western disavowal of the Muslims; this perception did not lack foundation as in 1989 the European Commissioners had motivated the refusal of Turkey's entry bid into the EEC based on cultural incompatibilities (Yavuz, 1997), arguably manifesting some creeping islamophobia within EEC institutions. Such perceptions were aptly maneuvered by Erbakan to decisively address TFP towards an Islamist framing (Baskan, 2019). This determination led the Erbakan-Çiller government to achieve, among other initiatives, the foundation in 1997 of the Developing Eight (D-8), a multilateral international organization for development and cooperation whose members are: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey. The common Islamic identity of D-8 is promoted by turkey and the other members as a basis for the practice of an alternative form of globalization to the one proposed by the Western-dominated international organizations (Yavuz, 1998).

After the military had deposed the Erbakan-Çiller government through a memorandum and banned then WP from politics for allegedly Islamism a threatening the secular constitutional foundations of the republic, an act which was defended by the

European Court on Human Right (ECHR) but criticized by Human Rights Watch (HRW) (Moe, 2003). As a result, part of the former WP members merged into the first formation of the JDP. The foreign policy which was initially expressed by the JDP had a predominantly pro-European address, carrying a message of Ankara's determination to adhere to the *acquis* and to the Union's values (Cornell, 2012). Besides this, the first government of the JDP opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq and, expressed solidarity to the Palestinian cause, and finally suffered a setback with a harsh stall in the process of adhesion to the EU.

4.3: A Strategic Depth for Turkey

The second government led by the JDP adopted a different foreign policy posture which revealed the great influence which Ahmet Davutoğlu's ideas (Donelli, 2012). His views find expression in the book *Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)*, first published in 2001. In it Davutoğlu advocates for a TFP which projects influence in a broad near abroad which stretches through the former territories of the Ottoman empire (Balkans, Caucasus and Greater Middle East). According to Davutoğlu, Turkey's influence in this area should be projected and enhanced through good neighboring practices, what he defines as a doctrine of Zero Problems With Neighbors, and a diplomacy which is focused on reaching the neighbors' governments and civil societies with a discourse of common cultural and historical heritage (Murinson, 2006).

Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth concept is not merely limited to advocating for new TFP agency, but also provides an extensive heuristic ground to explain to the public the rationality underling such claim. In fact, the book seeks to reassess the international positioning of Turkey, a positioning which is not only geographical and strategic but also cultural. Together with describing Turkey as a bridge country, between Europe, Ventral Asia and the Middle East, hence reusing the Özal's definition, Davutoğlu provides a reading of the relationship

of the republic of Turkey with the West as failure (Aras, 2009; Donelli, 2012).. He criticizes the previous governments for their neglect of Turkey's dignity in their dealings with the West. Dignity, Davutoğlu argues, originates with being at ease with the country's identity and history (Donelli, 2012). What has impeded Turkey from playing a major role in international affairs has been refusing its historical and cultural positioning and has resulted in giving up TFP into the constraints of the alliance with the West rather than profiting from cultural and historical depth that the ottoman past offers (Donelli, 2012; Baskan, 2019). Moreover, Davutoğlu criticizes the entire project of westernization brought about by the Kemalists who are jointly responsible with the West for imposing on the Turkish society a system of values which is ultimately incompatible with the Islamic cultural and historical identity (Donelli, 2012; Baskan, 2019). The latter should instead be the ideational ground for an Islamic polity to imagine a an alternative world system. Islam in Davutoğlu's view becomes a uniting force for the realization of a new order in which Turkey occupies a central position through a strategic understanding and use of its cultural and historical depth (Baskan, 2019; Donelli et al., 2024;).

Having been Erdoğan's advisor, having served as foreign minister and having been Turkey's Prime Minister, Davutoğlu has directly influenced the course of TFP in the years in which it has garnered more attention for its unprevented activism not only in the Greater Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans, but also in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The history of TFP's opening to SSA can be shortly resumed as follows. In 1998 Ankara launched its Africa Action Plan which remained just a declaration of intent due to the dire economic situation in Turkey (Uchegara, 2008). This situation had changed by 2005 when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the Year of Africa. Since then, Turkey has vigorously scaled up its diplomatic presence, economic and trade exchange, cultural penetration and humanitarian activities in the continent (Uchegara, 2008; Afacan, 2013).

The Horn of Africa is the area where TFP towards SSA manifests more the importance of this new course for Ankara and the JDP (Afacan, 2013; Akca, 2019). Since 2011 Ankara has especially concentrated its efforts in Somalia. The scale and variety of the Turkish commitments is such that, for the purpose of this study, Somalia is taken as the most complete example of contemporary TFP.

4.4: Framings of Turkey's National Role Conception

A set of intertwined and blurred framings of Turkey's national role conception are discernible from the academic literature on the Somalian endeavor of TFP: Center Country; Virtuous Power; Emerging Power; Humanitarian State; Alternative Hegemon-Ankara Consensus. These will be discussed in the light of their neo-Ottoman features to assess how Today's Turkey presents itself with a TFP which is to a considerable extent neo-Ottoman

4.5: Center Country

Islamist worldviews in the JDP's TFP craft a foreign policy discourse which depicts Turkey as a global civilizational power which reflects the historical role of leader of the Muslim world during the Ottoman empire (Akca, 2019). Scholars find that the conception of TFP as the expression of a civilizational identity and mission is widely espoused by the Turkish public and that proofs of this are to be found in the great role played by Turkish civil society and Islamic Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the endeavors of TFP in Africa and Somalia specifically (Langan, 2017; Şeyşane and Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane, 2022). The conception of Turkey as center country derives from the idea of Turkey as something that goes beyond the notion of nation state whose sovereignty is strictly confined by national

borders. In fact, Turkish sovereignty is mainly understood in terms of Islamic culture. Cannon and Donelli (2024) argue that this composite Center country framing is a constant in TFP's national role conception and what has rendered it visible is the more ambitious policies feasible that the economic growth of the country has enabled.

If material capabilities and ideational forces such as Islamism and neo-ottomanism are the fuel of TFP's national role conception, the deterioration of the relationship of Turkey with the West has prompted Ankara to reframe its position in the international system (Akca, 2019). The consecutive setbacks which Turkish governments have suffered in the process of European integration have caused Ankara's frustration (Langan, 2017). Already under Özal European ostracization of Turkey had prompted the government to direct TFP towards a culturally and historically proximate space towards which the image of Turkey as a model and a partner was to be projected. The discourses and initiatives connected with those foreign policy openings have been read by Fuller (1993) as signals that the Turkish elites held a conception of the country as being positioned at the center of a world which re-emerging. Fuller used the verb "re-emerging" to signal the resonance of TFP with neo-ottomanism. This reemergence is thus to be understood as consisting of ideational forces, it is the reemergence of the conception of the commonalities holding Turkey together with a broad Islamic polity (Baskan, 2019; Cannon and Donelli, 2024).

The stall in the process of accession to the EU in 2005 has led the JDP to progressively detach from the West in its quest for international recognition. This path was the one of the Strategic Depth conceived by Davutoğlu, which led Turkey to decisively pursue regional leadership in the Greater Middle East the 2000s (Pehlivanturk, 2019). *Zero Problems With Neighbors*, in which Turkey's endeavors in the Middle East were still being claimed as the promotion of economic development and Western values, has sunk against various obstacles: deterioration of the relations with the West, the repression of the

democratic-Islamist stances which the JDP supported in the Arab uprisings and the related crisis of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Khoma and Voznyuk, 2020). Nevertheless, it must be noted that Turkey has not ceased to aim for regional leadership. With regard to this aim, TFP has abandoned Zero Problems With Neighbors to adopt different framings of its international role as a model and center country. These framings are even apt to advance a global role for Turkey in a changing international system (Cannon & Donelli, 2024).

In the case of Somalia the center country framing has been employed since the beginning through the investment of TFP as a civilizational outreach to a people which shares historical and cultural civilizational features with Turkey (Harte; 2012; Baskan, 2019; Cannon and Donelli, 2024). Moreover, the Turkish intervention in Somalia distinguishes itself, surely in its discursive framing but oftentimes even in material terms, for initiatives aimed at the resolution of the problems of Somalia without the establishment of unequal dependency relations between Ankara and Mogadishu (Keyman and Sazak, 2014). In other words, the center country framing depicts TFP as approaching the Islamic values of the Somalis and the historical experience of the Somalian lands with the Ottoman empire in order to conduct on this common civilizational aspects an operation of state-building which leads Mogadishu to develop following the Turkish model. Scholars argue that championing the demands of the SSA countries, and Somalia specifically, legitimizes Turkey's claim for a major recognition in global governance (Langan, 2017; Cannon and Donelli, 2024).

4.6: Virtuous Power, Humanitarian Actor, Emerging Donor

Turkey has often found itself under the scrutiny of the West and especially of the EU for requisites such as secularism, democratization and human rights. This, Langan (2017) argues, is the effect of what scholarship has come to define as a typical EU framing of its

foreign policy as the one of a normative power. The progressive straining of the relations between Bruxelles and Ankara has had repercussions on the formulation of TFP by under the JDP governments. In order to find an alternative legitimation to the one offered by the EU's values for its foreign policy, and to compete with those values in international affairs, TFP has framed its action in Somalia and SSA around values stemming from Islamic culture. Akpınar (2021) finds that Davutoğlu had already invested TFP with a humanitarian framing by describing the Turkish action abroad as humanitarian diplomacy where humanitarianism is declined in Islamic values and neo-ottoman multiculturalism. Erdoğan and foreign minister Çavuşoğlu have rebranded Davutoğlu's humanitarian diplomacy as humanitarian and enterprising foreign policy in order to entail a blurred range of actions which stretches from state-building to humanitarian development, employing soft and hard power capabilities. Turkey's humanitarian foreign policy activities are characterized by a discourse which also builds parallels with the JDP action in Turkey and in Somalia and SSA (Akca, 2019; Akpınar, 2021). In both scenarios, she argues, the JDP portrays the recipients of its policies as victims; while at home these victims have been oppressed by the Kemalist rule, the Africans are victims of old and new colonialists . In the latter category fall the normative Western powers, China as foreign exploitative power and the corrupt governments of the Gulf countries whose action is not enlightened by a humanitarian and Islamic view (Donelli, 2012; Altunisik, 2023).

Scholars find TFP discourse to be emphasizing commonalities of historical and cultural experiences and realities between Turkey and Somalia (Akca, 2019; Altunisik, 2023). As TFP under the JDP stresses the fact that the Ottoman empire was a multicultural and tolerant benevolent hegemony which is devoid of and opposed to the dehumanizing colonialism of Others, Turkey can employ discourses echoing the concept of South-to-South developmental cooperation (Langan, 2017; Altunisk, 2023). Through this framing it is

possible for TFP to promote Islamic values and identify Turkey with emerging powers and countries which should be allowed to develop without normative and neo-colonialist constraints (Langan, 2017; Harte, 2019). On the bases of such framings of its foreign policy, Turkey can both stress its difference from traditional and new donors, conducting its humanitarian action directly with the recipients, outside of traditional multilateral organization.

These framings of TFP contribute to qualify Ankara as a unique actor which is the proponent of new model of development at the domestic level and a model for relations between states that can be seen as occupying a third and alternative way between Washington and Beijing consensus (Donelli et al., 2024). The idealistic and moral or normative core of TFP (Parlar Dal, 2013) is apt to legitimize Turkey's engagement in distant parts of the world (Şeyşane and Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane, 2022) and especially in countries with a Muslim majority. Altunışık (2019) connects the emergence of the humanitarian discourse in TFP to the perception by Ankara and the JDP that the international system is undergoing a fundamental change. Hence, the JDP would have adopted an Islamist understanding of humanitarianism for TFP in pursuit of adaptation through the adoption of a new discourse and a new praxis of foreign policy which promote human security. Altunışık (2014) judges the humanitarian turn in TFP as contributing to a reconstruction of the identity of Turkey as country abiding to a moral responsibility towards Somalia and other Muslim countries connected to the memory of the Ottoman past. Şeyşane and Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane (2022) argue that there is a fundamental qualitative trait in the implementation of the humanitarian TFP in Somalia: the impressive role covered by Turkish CSOs. The direct involvement of the Turkish civil society in the Somalian endeavor of TFP opens to an interesting venue for reflection on the degree of resonance that TFP finds in the domestic constituency.

4.7: Role Theory and Neo-Ottomanism

Having now a picture of the evolution of TFP it is possible to attempt to represent it through the prism of role theory. The Turkish elites have since a long time had an idea of their country as an important actor in international affairs. The idea that the political elites and the foreign policy makers share about the country's identity, the status it is recognized or shall be recognized in the context of international relations, in role theory is referred to as national role conception. One major factor which has influenced the change in TFP's framings and initiatives are the consecutive setbacks which Turkey suffered in its quest for EEC and EU adhesion. These delusions and refusals have left Turkey's leaders national role conception without recognition, thus driving TFP towards the progressive opening of a path in which Turkey is both forced and desires to do without Europe.

The relationship of Ankara with the West can be represented in the language of role theory as the interaction between an actor's role conception and the role expectations it perceives from the external environment of the wider social structure. In the case of foreign policy, national role expectations are constituted by the pressures that a foreign policy elites perceives as being exerted on their national role conception by the external actors in the structure of the international system. As role theory posits roles to be results of reciprocal influencing processes between structure and actors, we can regard the West and Europe to have covered indisputably a major role in the interaction with Turkey's national role conception. It is possible to find proof of this in the normative pressure which the Western European countries have often exercised on Turkish domestic politics with regards to values and performances connected to democratization, liberalization and human rights. Moreover, the EEC and the EU representatives have not avoided stigmatizing Turkey's bid for becoming part of the EU also employing civilizational arguments of cultural incompatibility between Europe and a Muslim majority country (Kayaoğlu, 2017), arguments which have

surely reverberated not only within the Turkish government and elites but also on the national role conception of Turkish civil society.

The importance of the national role conception shared by the civil society is another aspect which must not be downplayed. This is because the same normative pressures and role expectations which have prompted the Turkish governments in the 1980s and early 2000s to adopt important and vast programs of liberalization and democratization have paradoxically contributed to the political and economic empowerment of an Islamist constituency in Turkey. This strengthening of the positions of the Islamic civil society also is also reflected in a more blatant manifestation of Turkey's national role conception in neo-ottoman terms: as a center country and a civilizational power which has a system of values around which to conceive a different structuring of international relations.

Another aspect which has changed throughout the years is the growth of Ankara's material capabilities to oppose role expectations related to the West and to express a national role performance and foreign policy which responds to a neo-ottoman national role conception. One manifestation of this is what TFP discursively frames as a humanitarian diplomacy. The latter is imbued with values proper to anti-colonialism, south to south cooperation and carries the underlying proposal of an alternative model for the development of an Islamic polity. In this model, Turkey is implicitly and explicitly described as a model and a benevolent hegemon. This performance of national role also reproduces the JDP's domestic populism with its advocacy in favor of the Turkish religious masses, oppressed victims of Kemalism. In international affairs, this discourse is reproduced by the proposal of a certain Ankara consensus (Donelli, 2018) as an approach to international relations which values humanitarian Islamic morals and opposes to the exploitation of the oppressed peoples by old and new colonialists.

This transformation of TFP and Turkey's role performance is also indicative of a

quest for more accommodating national role expectations. By leveraging the memory of the ottoman empire as a non-colonial, benevolent and moral hegemon, Turkey and the JDP choose to engage with non-Western interlocutors to bolster the country's international status and to compete with the Western discourses on international affairs. Moreover, it is worth noting that the connection between the domestic discourse of the JDP and TFP's framing also helps Ankara to project abroad the ideational and material forces of the civil society through the actions of CSOs as in the case of Somalia, thus putting in contact the views of Turkish civil society about Turkey's place in the world and about international affairs with the recipients of TFP action. Mobilizing the forces of the civil society for the purpose of foreign policy is also used by the JDP as a strategy for strengthening the popular support for the government, creating a sort of echo-chamber between official neo-ottoman narratives, civil society's neo-ottoman values and the Islamic and anti-colonial stances of developing countries. This operation pursues and achieves to a considerable degree a convergence between Turkish national role conception and the national role expectation it faces, resulting in a national role performance and TFP which enjoys a major degree of autonomy from the EU and the West and fortifies the JDP's hold on power domestically.

4.8: Ontological Security and Neo-Ottomanism

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the two previous sections of the analysis with the addition of ontological security. In the first section of the analysis Gramscian cultural hegemony has been applied to the scholarly literature on the years after the 1980, when Özal was in power, and to the consolidation of the control of the Turkish government by the JDP from 2002 to the present. In the second section of the analysis role theory has been applied to the a body of scholarly literature which covers the evolution of Turkish

foreign policy from Özal to the present.

For the purpose of this study, ontological security scholarship is useful to uncover interesting patterns which highlight the saliency of neo-ottomanism in Turkey's historical trajectory. As ontological security stresses the importance that actors attribute to a sense of biographical continuity for self-identification, and in the case of states and social groups to mature a sense of national and common identity that enables them to pursue social action with a sense of coherence and security, it is possible to assess that the fall of the Ottoman empire and the subsequent instauration of the Kemalist regime have opened the history of the republic of Turkey with a major identity crisis.

What has been referred to as a project of state enforced amnesia and social engineering brought about by Kemalist policies has contributed to a sense of disconnection between the Turkish civil society and the state. The ottoman past has been framed by the Kemalists as the source of all Turkey's structural and cultural handicaps in the country's performance. The Kemalist elites have thus pursued a forced westernization and secularization of the society. The latter, instead, never fully embraced the Kemalist project and remained attached to customs, cultural practices and values which reflected the ottoman tradition. This ensemble of beliefs and social practices was heavily informed by the role that Islamic religion covered as a unifying force in the ottoman and Turkish polity prior to the republic. Indeed, Islamic culture and traditions were regarded as the true identity of the disappeared Ottoman polity (Yanik, 2016), as the basis for the relations between the civil society and the state (Özyürek, 2006), and as the factor which shaped the uniqueness of the Ottoman empire and Turkey in the international system (Akca, 2019).

Ontological security can also be aptly applied to the crisis of the 1970s in Turkey. In formulating the Turkish-Islamic synthesis the think-tank Hearts of the Enlightened aimed to solve what they regarded to as a profound crisis of identity which Turkey was living due to

the hegemonic crisis of Kemalism. The Hearts of the Enlightened viewed Turkey as a country which was being torn apart by political violence predicted on the basis of ideological and identarian belongings. The members of the think-tank stressed that Turkey, in order to halt the growth of communist and socialist movements and to keep at radical Islamists under control, had to elaborate a new basis of national identity which would have addressed the relations of the citizens with the political power. In order to achieve this objective, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis aimed to rehabilitate ottoman cultural legacy and values, together with Islamic faith, as bases of the new Turkish identity and of a new course for conservative politics against the left wing tendencies of part of the Kemalist establishment.

As mentioned previously, ontological security theory scholars have tried to account for the relations of social actors and communities with structural and cultural historical phenomena such as modernization, westernization, multiculturalism, neoliberalism etc. In these regards, ontological security can be applied to the sociopolitical project of neoliberalism conducted in Turkey under Özal. His policies and understandings of Turkish civil society and liberalism have rendered possible the rise of a certain new Turkish identity in which the Islamic culture could perfectly function in relations to western concepts of liberalism and neoliberal economic development. On one side, Özal allowed Islamic civil society to be politically and economically dignified in the new neoliberal Turkey, opened to a reconciliation between Islamic aspects of Turkish identity and Western features of modernity. Even in his persona Özal embodied the functional relationship between a practicing Muslim, market economy and democratization. Finally, Özal's policies have also eased the relationship of the greater part of the Turkish Islamic constituency with the state through the enactment of what Vehbi Koç had called an Islam-friendly Kemalism in his letter to general Kenan Evren.

The decay of the relations between Turkey and the EEC, coupled with the country's

need to find markets for its exports, drove TFP under Özal to look to the Middle East in a quest for a new course of action and new relations. This quest was discursively framed by TFP around neo-ottoman themes such as the ecumenical nature of Turkey's Islamic culture, the historical and cultural commonalities which connect the Turkey to its Muslim neighborhood, and the positive idea-force that Turkey can exercise in the region as a model for economic and social development. It is under Özal that the discourse of TFP began to frame Turkey as a bridge country, standing at the center and between the Europe and the Muslim world. Ontological security can allow for a reading of TFP under Özal as an effort to restructure the relations of Turkey with its near-abroad through the employment of a revised Turkish national identity, or national role conception, crafted to encounter the maximum consensus possible. TFP, through the image of Turkey as a bridge, imbued Turkish identity with features which are in accordance with European values and with a neo-ottoman discourse which is apt to engage with Muslim countries at the same time contemporarily.

The political and economic space which Özal opened for the Islamic constituency of Turkey has introduced the neo-ottoman themes back into the official discourse of power and, through the first liberalizations, even in media coverage and in the commercial cultural production. Under the JDP and Erdoğan, besides a first term in office during which the Islam-friendly Kemalism formula seemed to be the address of the government's policies and overall discourse, the Turkish government entered into an enduring and worsening crisis of its foreign relations with Europe. Ontological security may be apt to read the JDP's rupture with Europe as being the product of the symbiotic relations of Erdoğan's party with the Anatolian Tigers and the Islamic civil society. The latter two constitute the electoral basin and the cultural and social milieu in which much of the JDP's political class finds its origins and its formation. Within this constituency neo-ottomanism is understood in a way that does

not consider the relationship with the West in the same optimistic manner which was proper to Özal. As it is the case for the National Outlook movement, and was the case for the WP, the JDP and much its economic and electoral base value the neo-ottoman and Islamic culture and identity of Turkey more than the maintenance of good relations with Europe at all costs.

Scholarship on ontological security has theorized that actors seek to shape their identity altogether with routinized and more or less foreseeable relations with others, these relations are not necessarily characterized by a positive quality but can even be conflictual ones (Mitzen, 2006; Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2017). Hence, ontological security can also analyze the progressive disruption of the relations between Turkey and the EU from 2005 to the present. As it was shown in the analysis of TFP mutation, Turkey has crafted a national role conception in contrast and competition with the normative power of the foreign and security policy of the EU. This new national role conception or identity heavily influences TFP towards arming itself with neo-ottoman discourse of Turkey as a civilizational, moral and central power in international relations. It is also important to recall the views expressed by Davutoğlu on the incompatibility of Western and Islamic cultural systems, manifested by the failure of the westernizing elites in the Muslim countries (Baskan, 2019). According to Davutoğlu the adoption of Western values and the same relationship with the West is a source of ontological insecurity in the Ottoman and Turkish historical experience. Looking at the military tutelage over secularism and over the western international collocation imposed by the military for decades and coups in 1960, 1980 and memorandum in 1997, it is possible to assess a political instability profoundly connected to identity politics and, thus, to ontological security issues. With the progressive re-habilitation of Islam and neo-ottoman culture and views by the state, the latter's behavior in international politics increasingly changed. But it is not the case of a phenomenon with a single driver.

As the economic, demographic and cultural clout of this Islamic constituency grew,

also did the material capabilities which Ankara could employ to serve its foreign policy. The neo-ottoman conception of the identity of Turkey which the JDP cultivated and shared had more material foundations for TFP. Hence, Turkey could project more material and ideational forces in other countries, achieve more influence and security internationally even without good relations with Europe. As ontological security scholarship theorizes, security can be achieved through relations routinized around identity-related themes, as it is the case for the relations of Turkey with both Europe and the Muslim world. Moreover, the new course of TFP under the JDP has been profoundly influenced by Davutoğlu's concepts such as Strategic Depth, Zero Problems With Neighbors and Humanitarian Diplomacy. The latter endures and has been transformed after the failure of the Arab uprisings, which the JDP expected to exploit as an occasion to restructure relations with the Greater Middle East around a Turkish model of cooperation.

Humanitarian diplomacy has projected TFP in SSA and heavily influenced its implementation. The core conceptions underlying the framing of TFP's action as humanitarian are deeply rooted in the JDP's neo-ottoman and Islamist background. From the latter descend the conceptions of Turkey as the heir of the Ottoman empire, which was the historical epitome of the Islamic state, a benevolent and moral hegemon whose history does not carry the stain of colonialism. Armed with this self-conception, Turkey has been able to achieve economic development, democratization and an internationally recognized status of rising power. In order to honor its historical responsibility to help the oppressed Muslims, Turkey, in its view, projects its soft and hard power abroad to fundamentally restructure international relations around the enhancement of human dignity, justice and solidarity against normative and exploitative powers. This discourse, which has been depicted as a South-to-South cooperation framing of neo-ottomanism is the main discourse of TFP in Somalia. With Mogadishu, Turkey has found great resonance to his foreign policy

discourse due to the size and largess of its humanitarian and developmental commitments. Resurgence to narratives of identity seems to be a pillar for achieving ontological security according to the scholars (Mizzen, 2006; Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2017).

The major role covered by Turkish civil society in the TFP endeavor towards Mogadishu can be analyzed through the lens of ontological security as a way for the JDP to achieve resurgence of its official framing of Turkish identity within its civil society and as a way for TFP to put in contact the conception of Turkish national identity shared by the CSOs with the Somali population. The alignment of the Turkish civil society with TFP on the ground of the conception of national identity formulation and agency abroad is important for the reproduction of the JDP's power domestically (Heibach and Taş, 2024). Instead, through the direct contact of its civil society with the Somali, Turkey achieves a sort of echo-chamber in which its neo-ottoman foreign policy discourse is reproduced, enhancing Turkey's role internationally.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to provide an answer to the question: how can social sciences read the multifaceted phenomenon of neo-ottomanism and track its evolution in the contemporary history of Turkey? In order to answer this question the first section of the analysis has applied the concept of cultural hegemony as elaborated in the Gramscian theory to two phases of Turkish contemporary history, focusing on Turkish domestic politics in the years of Turgut Özal and in the last two decades of the JDP governments.

The findings of this section of the analysis are that neo-ottomanism can be envisioned as politically potent force which was present in Turkey's civil society as a broad cultural phenomenon inextricably tied the identification with Islamic faith and culture of the greater part of the population. During the 1970s crisis, sectors of the conservative and nationalist right wing elites advocated for a rehabilitation of Islamic culture into a new conception of Turkish nationalism, resulting in the formulation of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis which supposed to solve what was perceived as an identity crisis. Through the application of Gramscian theory, it is possible to read the formulation of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as an attempt by the Turkish historic bloc to converge around an ideology which is rooted in the civil society, what Gramscian studies referred to as popular philosophy. This attempt would have probably resulted in a failed attempt to achieve a cultural hegemony, a situation which in Gramscian terms is definable as an economico-cooperative regime in which there is not enough reciprocation between the ideology of the historical bloc and the civil society's views. Under the Gramscian lens, Turgut Özal has been able to open a space in the historical bloc for sectors of the Islamic civil society through a specific implementation of a sociopolitical project aimed at the neoliberal transformation of the country. It is thus possible to conclude that, with the opening of the historical bloc to these sectors of the civil society,

their values and worldviews which are neo-ottoman ceased to be confined outside of the walls of Turkish political power.

Nevertheless, the civil society's consciousness of the Kemalist repression of the ottoman and Islamic culture and worldviews remained an important part of the political compass for the economic, social and political action of Turkey's Islamist civil society. This compass has guided these forces towards the new millennium. In this regard, it is possible to speak of the broad change that Turkey has undergone in two decades of rule by the JDP as the result of the progressive conquest of the historical bloc by the Islamist and neo-ottoman constituency of Turkish civil society which was materially and politically empowered by the broad neoliberal transformation of the country. Neo-ottoman ideals have thus completed a trajectory from relegation to popular culture to becoming a major component of the discourse of Turkish political power.

In the second section of the analysis, the focus has shifted towards Turkish foreign policy and the role that neo-ottomanism has covered in it since from years of **Turgut Özal** to the present endeavor in Somalia. Role theory has been employed in order to conduct the this second section of the analysis as it allows to highlight the relations between an actor and the structure as interplay which result in changing of self-identification and changing foreign policies.

In this light, the opening of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East under **Turgut Özal** can be read by role theory as the re-emergence of a national role conception that is neo ottoman, due to the domestic change that was the object of the previous section of the analysis and to a destabilization in the relations with Europe. The latter are definable as role expectations according to role theory. If Turkey had been turned exclusively westward prior to the 1980's coup, before that the Turkish role expectations became influenced by the Middle East with a consequent change in national role conception. The latter became

informed also by neo-ottoman tones which can be resumed by Özal's description of Turkey as a bridge country.

Under the JDP's leadership neo-ottomanism has gradually risen to become the cornerstone of Turkish national role conception. With Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth the Turkish foreign policy under the JDP has had a fully neo-ottoman conceptualization of the national role conception of the country. On the basis of such conceptualization Turkish foreign policy has navigated the past twenty years in which role expectations have been marked by a remarkable deterioration of the relations with Europe and the west, the destabilization of the greater Middle East and the new endeavor in Sub-Saharan Africa. With regard to the latter region, Turkish foreign policy's venture in Somalia appears significant for the size and intensity of the material and ideational commitments. In the case of Somalia, Turkish foreign policy appears to project a national role conception extensively informed by neo-ottoman ideals. These are Turkey as a humanitarian, virtuous, anti-colonial actor capable of exercising a benevolent moral hegemony reminiscent of the Ottoman empire in order to constitute around a Muslim polity a new model for international relations. This complex neo-ottoman framing of Turkish foreign policy is accompanied by an implementation which puts in direct contact the Somali population with the Turkish civil society, the latter appearing to be the hotbed of neo-ottoman ideational forces.

The third section of the analysis has focused on applying elements of ontological security theory to the findings of the previous two sections. Through the enactment of this operation it has been possible to understand neo-ottomanism as social phenomenon which is profoundly tied to the elite's and popular perceptions of insecurities with regard to the national identity and the relations of this identity with an external environment which is the international system. The fall of the Ottoman empire and the subsequent the Kemalist project of westernization can be read by ontological security as historical processes which have left

a profound mark on the cultural conscience in Turkey. Neo-ottomanism's birth as a concept happened in concomitance with the final crisis of the Ottoman empire and with the first projects of westernization and modernization. Through ontological security it is possible to read neo-ottomanism as the product of a tension to evade the existential anxiety of the twilight of a culturally Islamic polity whose identity lays in a cultural commonality and transcends the concept of the nation state. Moreover, the state enforced erasure of the memory of that Ottoman and Islamic polity during Kemalism has projected Turkey to look for a new identity as part of the West which was never fully reciprocated neither by the domestic civil society nor by Europe.

The lack of reciprocation of the government's project of Turkish nationhood was read by the supporters of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as the cause of a crisis of identity which was reflected in the political violence and instability of the 1970s. The proposal of Turkish-Islamic synthesis can be read by ontological security as an attempt to craft a new national identity by re-habilitating elements of Turkish culture, such as Islam, which were proper to the past Ottoman polity and had been neglected by Kemalism. This project was aimed at ending the identity crisis and the existential anxiety produced by it which was ravaging the Turkish republic. Thus, ontological security reads what in Gramscian term is the project of a cultural hegemony as an attempt to formulate a new identity, through the which could restructure along more secure lines the relations between the elites and the civil society.

Özal's specific neoliberal measures were accompanied by the adoption by the state of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, the interaction between the material results of the neoliberal transformation of Turkey and what this study finds to be the opening of the historical bloc to the Islamic civil society, have resulted in an increasing change in the trajectory of Turkey's politics. The political and material empowerment of the Islamic constituency, the hotbed of

neo-ottoman ideals, has found political representation in the Welfare Party before, and after in the Justice and Development Party. The JDP's political class shares a core of neo-ottoman and Islamist understandings of Turkey's identity and position in the world and have sought to see them reciprocated domestically and internationally. The JDP's conquest of the state through the processes of liberalization and democratizations, which in Gramscian terms equates to the conquest of the historical bloc by the Islamic constituency, translates in ontological security terms in the definitive adoption by the elites of neo-ottoman narratives and discourses, and for the Islamic civil society in the end of the existential anxiety caused by the threat posed against its social ascent and cultural freedom by the military tutelage.

Foreign policy is a terrain in which neo-ottomanism has been a force through which the Turkish government has attempted to restructure its relations with the International system. The openings of Turkish foreign policy under Özal can be read by ontological security as an attempt to provide for the need for International relations and thus recognition of Turkey at a time when it was isolated by Europe. As Turkey pursued this new foreign policy course, it began employing increasingly a discourse where it depicted itself as culturally and historically proximate to the Muslim world and to frame its relations with the Middle East around the memory of the Ottoman hegemony.

Under the JDP, as the relations with the West and the EU have noticeably worsened, Turkey has crafted a foreign policy discourse which is aimed at reaching out to a culturally imagined Islamic polity with whom Turkey identifies and which it aims to lead. In this regard, ontological security can account for a Turkish national identity which is crafted in contrast and in competition with Europe. In order to have a stable sense of identity an actor needs to be able to have routinized relations but not necessarily positive ones. As Turkey's identity is shaped through conflictual relations with Europe, it at the same time has sought to advance an identity which is in harmony with the Muslim world, with developing nations

which suffered a colonial past and aim to be part of the rising powers. Turkish foreign policy discourse in Somalia appears framed as to satisfy the need for recognition of Turkey as humanitarian rising power, whose morality is enlightened by the memory of the Ottoman past which guides it towards the proposal of an alternative model of international relations. In this sense, the neo-ottoman foreign policy of Turkey in Somalia is a hotbed and an echo-chamber for a neo-ottoman discourse on international relations which aims at easing the ontological insecurities of an Islamic polity mindful of the Ottoman example.

Limitations and Further Research

The first idea for the realization of this study had been to conduct a case study on Turkish foreign policy in Somalia, tracking and analyzing neo-ottoman discourse in documents by the Turkish civil society organizations which are responsible of a significant part of the humanitarian initiatives on the ground. In order to realize this idea, the author would have relied on critical discourse analysis of primary sources such as press releases and interviews.

The present study is more limited in its ambitions and more commensurate to the limited time and resources which have been at disposal for its realization. The limitations which have been encountered are intellectual, as phenomenon which is the object of this study is broad and complex, stretching its manifestation from popular culture to policymaking. It has thus appeared to adopt a more humble approach and to focus on academic sources in order to garner a more solid knowledge of the phenomenon instead of embarking on a more ambitious analysis of primary sources. This choice has also been informed by another significant limitation which is the author's lack of knowledge of the Turkish language. The latter limitation has precluded access to the analysis of primary

sources and the idea of conducting a critical discourse analysis of them.

The re-orientation of the whole project of this study towards an analysis in which social sciences theories are applied on a body of academic literature about neo-ottomanism in Turkish history, domestic politics and foreign policy responded to the need to consolidate a partial theory-based understanding of the phenomenon of neo-ottomanism in social sciences. The latter result, even if more limited in its ambitions, can be utilized as a ground for carrying out further and more ambitious research based on primary sources. In this sense, this study aims to offer theoretically grounded understandings of the phenomenon which can be useful for addressing researches which rely on more complex methods of data analysis such as critical discourse analysis and content analysis of primary sources.

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