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Autumn 2012

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# Introduction

Cengiz ERİŞEN\*

The goal for this special issue on political psychology is twofold. The first is the need to consider different perspectives in foreign policy analysis. Neither a single theoretical understanding of foreign relations between states nor a deterministic state-level analysis is capable of truly depicting relations among states. Today, these scholarly tools are considered to be rudimentary at best, and this special issue seeks to expand our knowledge in this field by drawing attention to possible contributions from newer approaches. Second, foreign policy analysis has various determinants. To find answers to this complex net of relations, where at the end a decision has to be taken and an event occurs, one needs to employ analytical methods that offer sensible inferences of the outcome. Insights from political psychology are of particular use in this endeavour.

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\* Cengiz Erişen is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at TOBB University of Economics and Technology. His research interests include political psychology, comparative political behavior, public opinion, quantitative research methods, and foreign policy analysis. His current research examines the role of emotions in Turkish political behavior.

## Levels of Analysis and Political Psychology

One should begin by noting that levels of analysis is a useful conceptual innovation widely used in international relations and politics. The traditional old-school approach considers the state the single entity that can make foreign policy decisions and lead foreign actions. On the other hand, one could also consider the individual level of analysis, the domestic level of analysis, and finally the global/system level of analysis. This special issue primarily focuses on the individual and the domestic levels of analysis through the lenses of political psychology.

Considering these two levels of analyses in this special issue, one can see that political psychology offers the best tools and the most distinct ways of approaching a foreign policy phenomenon. As one of the major sub-disciplines of political science, political psychology is the result of the behaviouralist school that flourished back in the 1960s in political science

in particular and the social sciences in general. Predominantly behaviouralist and process oriented in nature, political psychology employs various research methods (among the most prominent ones are experimental design, survey research, and content analysis) to explore distinct topics of interest at different levels of analysis. Taking the individual as the centre of events and decisions, political psychology extends to public opinion at large by exploring the multifaceted relations among actors.

In analysing foreign policy, we first need to understand individuals and their attitudes, judgments, decisions, and behaviour. We need to explore what comes to their mind and how they think about a given problem. Individual decision makers should be studied starting from their personal qualities (e.g., traits, images, experiences, prejudices, motivations, and beliefs) and the context in which they operate (e.g., the people in their close circles, group decision-making platforms, and bureaucracy). In particular leaders, as the key decision makers in foreign policy, are important for many reasons. Scholars thus need to account for how leaders could influence foreign policy making by studying their individual qualities. This line of thinking has evolved into a strong leadership analysis literature that is mainly dominated by Operational Code (OpCode) and Leadership Traits Analysis (LTA). This literature has also benefited from research carried out by

Turkish contributors. These scholars have mainly applied the leadership analysis models to the Turkish leaders and improved the generalizability and the inferences of the models.

Trying to understand a decision maker as a single entity is critical but probably not sufficient when trying to make greater claims about understanding foreign policy decisions. Group processes and contextual effects should also be accounted for. In this analysis, the effects of groupthink and the context in which the leaders function and reach decisions are important. It is with these considerations that groupthink literature focuses on this level and explores the context in which leaders and decision-makers reach judgments.

A step further from the group level takes us to the level of public opinion. Citizens collectively make public opinion. As a state becomes more democratic, the role of public opinion in foreign affairs becomes more important. Since politicians are held accountable for their decisions, a democratic citizenry will question the motivation and the thought process for an unsuccessful foreign policy decision. Although the public attitude is not a social reaction at all times, we can certainly see that the public takes sides and supports or opposes leaders. By analysing public opinion, one can find answers to many questions, from voting choices to attitudinal determinants on major political issues (e.g., support for

EU membership or support for particular foreign policy decisions).

At the gist of these topics, psychological reactions remains. Individuals as part of the public define themselves through identity, religion, and other group-level factors, and are affected by emotional and cognitive influences around them. In defining public opinion, one needs to consider not only the basic effects of economic indicators on voting but also more complex and theoretically valid psychological short-term influences. In addition, in defining interstate relations, one could rely on psychological constructs that depict and model the nature of relations between the actors.

Given the important contribution of political psychology to the general understanding of politics and foreign policy in particular, this special issue has five articles on this discussion that exemplify thought-provoking scholarly research drawn from the Turkish context. Each article begins with a clear research question, employs a method in exploring its goals, and discusses its findings and implications. Through a variety of empirical approaches, this volume presents a distinct look at foreign policy analysis.

## Overview of the Articles in this Special Issue

Below, I briefly discuss each article in the order they are printed according to

their level of analysis in answering their research questions.

First, Elif Erişen provides the theoretical setting for the special issue by discussing political psychology research and the methodological tools used in the discipline. At the beginning, Dr. Erişen defines the individual focused analysis in political psychology. Next, she draws attention to the multi-disciplinary and multi-method nature of the discipline. The goal in this theoretical set up is to present an overview of the trends in the discipline and the current interests related to international relations in general. In this discussion, research methods employed to provide answers on research questions are nicely explained to provide basic information for the reader. Given the difficulties of studying individual qualities, each method's contributions and drawbacks are nicely teased out. Considering the weakness, and at times the absence, of research method training in undergraduate and graduate education in Turkey, the methods discussion provides an initial review of the research tools not just for political psychology but also for any sub-discipline of political science. Finally, Dr. Erişen discusses the contributions of political psychology to the study of international relations. She briefly states the major scholarly works that have greatly contributed to the study of international relations and foreign policy analysis.

Second, Barış Kesgin provides a substantive example of the discipline



through a successful overview of the leadership level of analysis in understanding certain foreign policy decisions. Barış tests these expectations by applying the LTA to Tansu Çiller and her foreign policy decisions. By using the LTA, Dr. Kesgin analyses Çiller's foreign policy decisions, and compares her profile to post-Cold War Turkish leaders. His article presents a nice and clear example of how to use LTA in understanding a leader's decision and behaviour. This is also a valuable contribution to the LTA method by providing a study of non-Western leaders.

Third, Tereza Capelos and Stavroula Chrona provide an empirical example of analysing a state through its domestic politics. Foreign policy analysis involves understanding a state through certain domestic determinants, and this study demonstrates this by using an example from Turkish politics. Drawing a convenience sample of mainly Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) supporters, Dr. Capelos and Chrona study the effects of religiosity and national identity, two major concepts in Turkish politics, on a number of important political attitudes. They find that for CHP supporters, while religious attachments promote tradition and customs, national attachments evoke state-oriented notions of citizenship. Critical to this finding is that the religious attachments to Islam influence CHP supporters' political attitudes as well as national attachments. Considering the

goal of disentangling the determinants of political attitudes at the individual level this study yields interesting questions for future research.

Fourth, Gizem Arıkan takes a step further in determining the level of support towards the EU by using social identity theory. Presenting a wide evaluation of public opinion through the use of aggregate survey data analysis, Dr. Arıkan nicely shows that support for EU membership in Turkey relies on individual level determinants such as identity, group-based interests, and perceived threats. Stemming from the social identity theory, the study empirically analyses Turkish public opinion on the issue based on nationally representative data. The principal finding in this study is that while material expectations and rational calculations bolster pro-EU attitudes, the strength of national identity and perceived cultural threat to the nation lower support for the EU. What is important in this study is that more than the rational calculations, perceived group benefits and symbolic concerns influence one's level of support for the EU. Given that EU membership has been a longstanding debate in the Turkish public and political arena, understanding the determinants of public opinion is relevant to capture how domestic indicators could influence foreign policies.

Fifth, Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner takes us to the state level of analysis

while employing an individual level phenomenon, image theory. Primarily a psychological construct, image theory use a number of tools to understand how decision makers perceive each other. Image theory models how elite decision makers (on behalf of their state) perceive themselves (the Self) and other states (the Other). The article takes recent developments in Turkish-Israeli relations and tackles this unexplored topic via image theory. The main finding in this study is that while Turkey considers Israel an inconvenient or untrustworthy partner, Israel increasingly perceives Turkey as a frenemy (a partner who is simultaneously a rival). What perhaps remains for the future is to start to change the current images formed in the minds of decision makers.

While these five articles comprise the core of the special issue, the final two articles are slightly related to the political psychology focus in this special issue. First, Yaşar Sarı explores Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy between 1991 and 2010 by focusing on leadership quality and domestic factors. To him, a state's foreign policy behaviour depends on certain domestic conditions in addition to the leader's ability to control the domestic affairs. Second, Rashed Uz Zaman takes a historical perspective and argues that political culture is the main reason for the recent growth in extremist politics in Bangladesh. To the author, the principal cause for the current difficulties in

domestic politics stems from an identity conflict engendered by several factors in the history of the country.

## Conclusion

This special issue aims to increase interest in further research using a political psychology point of view in foreign policy and international relations. We need to consider different perspectives to advance our understanding of foreign policy phenomena. If scholars get stuck in deterministic or normative standpoints, their ability to advance scientific inquiry in the discipline would be limited. Especially with regards to the lack of models and research hypotheses in examining foreign policy, we need to use the scholarly tools that generate tested and generalizable information.

Finally, I would like to thank a number of individuals who have made this special issue possible. First, I would like to thank the editors of *Perceptions* for asking me to be the guest editor of a special issue. Their invitation has generated what seems to be a successful and interesting first step in opening up new directions in the study of foreign policy and international relations through political psychology. Second, I would like to thank all the authors, including those who wrote the book reviews. Without their hard work, this entire project would not have been possible. Third, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their extremely

valuable comments and suggestions for the authors, which not only improved the quality of the articles but also ultimately created a useful special issue.

I hope this special issue will set a humble example to increase people's willingness to consider distinct levels

of analysis (particularly the individual level) within political science not only on foreign policy analysis but also on different areas of research. I hope this special issue will be motivating for academics as well as policymakers and will lead to further academic research in the discipline.

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# An Introduction to Political Psychology for International Relations Scholars

Elif ERİŞEN\*

## Abstract

*As an increasingly popular interdisciplinary and multi-method approach to studying individual-level political phenomena, political psychology has made important strides in explaining the processes behind political attitudes and behaviour, decision making, and the interaction between the individual and the group. Hence, it is in a unique position to improve the explanatory power of international relations research that deals with the individual, such as in the study of leadership, foreign policy decision making, foreign policy analysis, and public opinion. After discussing the defining characteristics of political psychology, the research trends in the field, and its research methods, the article reviews the existing and potential contributions of political psychology to the study of international relations. Next, the article points to new areas for research in international relations that would particularly benefit from the theories and the methods already in use in political psychology.*

## Key Words

Political psychology, foreign policy analysis, theory, leadership, public opinion, decision-making.

## What is Political Psychology?

Political psychology is neither just psychology nor just political science;<sup>1</sup> instead, it is “at the most general level an application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics”.<sup>2</sup> Hence, it brings together political scientists, psychologists, sociologists, psychiatrists, and communication researchers. What binds them together is their interest in explaining political phenomena at the individual level of analysis and with an emphasis on the process. Political psychology originated in the study of leadership and mass political behaviour, and was later broadened to the study of intergroup relations, decision making, mass communication effects, political movements, and political mobilisation.

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On the international relations front, studies on foreign policy analysis and decision making, international conflict, and conflict resolution greatly benefitted from a psychological perspective in explaining their respective political phenomenon. Dating back to the study of personality and leadership in the 1930s, political psychology established itself as a self-conscious discipline during the behaviourist revolution of the 1960s, lived through the cognitive revolution of the 1980s, and has recently witnessed the emergence of emotions and affect as major explanatory variables of political attitudes, decisions, and behaviour. Recently, new technologies in neuro-imaging, new data made available by genetics research, and the recent studies on the physiology of human behaviour are likely to bring an epidemiological perspective into political psychology.

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**Current political psychologists want to understand the black-box of the human mind, what goes on in between the stimulus and the response.**

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Regardless of intellectual trends, political psychology has always had some distinct characteristics that have set it apart from other sub-disciplines in political science. These same characteristics also make it a desirable supplier of theory

and methods to studies of international relations. First of all, political psychology searches for explanations, descriptions, and predictions at the individual level of analysis.<sup>3</sup> The bias favouring individual-level explanations over higher level explanations of political phenomena makes political psychology particularly useful for studying subjects in international relations that revolve around an individual or her interactions with a group. Studies on political leaders and their foreign policy decisions, foreign policy decision-making dynamics, and conflict resolution all require an in-depth understanding of how the involved individuals' attitudes are formed, and how they make decisions and act on those decisions.

The focus on the individual, in turn, affects the research questions asked, the methods used, and the type of inference sought by researchers,<sup>4</sup> which leads to another defining characteristic of political psychology: its preoccupation with the explanation of the processes behind political attitudes, decisions, and behaviour. Unlike the behaviourists, current political psychologists want to understand the black-box of the human mind, what goes on in between the stimulus and the response. In order to do that they first incorporate contextual variables into their studies, which in turn gives more explanatory power to their studies. Individual histories and the

political conditions at the time can play a significant role in how the processes of the mind work to give the output of a given response. This perspective is in contrast to the dominant theories of realism or structural realism that consider power and its distribution the prime explanatory variables and regard individuals as redundant in the outcome of international events.<sup>5</sup> Although realists adopt a rational choice perspective, their analyses are not at the level of the individual.<sup>6</sup> It is, however, the individual acting alone or in a group who makes foreign policy decisions. Hence, the dominant theories' predictive power comes at the expense of the richness of process-oriented explanations of international events.

The latter is best provided by political psychology. In fact, its strength in process explanation has made the research attractive to many political psychologists with substantive interest in topics such as terrorism, conflict resolution, crisis management, ethnic conflict, racism, stereotyping, social movements, and mass media.

Another defining characteristic of political psychology is the multi-disciplinary and multi-method nature of the inquiry.<sup>7</sup> Political psychologists

working on topics relevant to international relations have adopted theories from psychopathology, and social and cognitive psychology. In fact, there are as many political psychologies as there are subfields in political science, each with its own dominant method of inquiry. This theoretical and methodological pluralism strengthens the external validity of the findings, indicating that these findings are not the artefacts of laboratory settings or specific historical occurrences.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it may help political scientists construct

the much needed home-grown theories through discovering cognitive, emotional, attitudinal, and behavioural patterns in politics.<sup>9</sup>

In brief, the individual level of analysis, the focus on process-oriented explanations and its multi-disciplinary and multi-method approach define political psychology. Before delving deeper into the added value of these qualities and of the perspective in general for international relations research, the article reviews developments in the field and the research methods used to better introduce the international relations scholar to the field, and to help researchers see the potential applications in their area of study.

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The dominant theories' predictive power comes at the expense of the richness of process-oriented explanations of international events.

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## Trends in Political Psychology Research

Personality, a constellation of stable individual characteristics that are assumed to transcend contextual effects, dominated the political psychology field as the main explanatory variable in research in the 1940s and 1950s. The study of the personality of major political figures at the time relied largely on Sigmund Freud's work and as a result psychoanalysis was the dominant method in the analysis of political leaders. Harold Lasswell's *Psychopathology and Politics*, the analysis of Woodrow Wilson by George and George, the study of Martin Luther by Erik Erikson, and the invention of the authoritarian personality by Adorno *et al.* are all prime examples of work that focused on the individual's personality as a stable force that determined political decisions.<sup>10</sup> Although the approach's scientific credentials were weak mainly due to its reliance on psychoanalysis, it has had a lasting impact on political psychology through the study of leadership and psycho-biography. On the mass political behaviour front, however, researchers have made use not of psychoanalysis but of behaviourist learning theories to explain political attitudes, paving the way for the first scientific studies in the field. According to behaviourist learning theories, the learning of long-lasting habits guides

future behaviour. Relying on this insight, the field of political socialisation argues that children learn basic political attitudes from their parents and their immediate social context, which later dominate their adulthood political attitudes. Mass communication can only reinforce these attitudes and not create them. Hence, according to Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, voters are under pressure from their demographic group to vote in a certain way.<sup>11</sup> The idea that behaviour is governed by incentives, however, has had a much more substantial impact on the study of mass political behaviour. The seminal book *The American Voter* published in 1960 argues that voters vote in a certain direction due to short-term forces such as candidate traits.<sup>12</sup> The focus on short-term forces and the methodology of this work have set the baseline for much of the studies in American politics in the following decades.

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**Political psychology research has progressed a great deal in its use of the scientific methodology since its initial reliance on psychoanalysis.**

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Gestalt movement that assumed that people have needs for understanding and perceiving order and an innate tendency to simplify an otherwise disorderly

perceptual world, i.e. seek cognitive consistency, has given birth to the field of social cognition.<sup>13</sup> Later, the cognitive revolution in psychology that was taking place in the 1980s led social cognition researchers to use computer analogies to explain cognitive processing. This, in turn, has facilitated the emergence of research demonstrating the strengths and limitations of cognitive processing in political reasoning. Particularly, the very human tendency to use decisional short cuts, “heuristics”, and the resulting biases in decision making have been investigated both at the elite<sup>14</sup> and mass levels.<sup>15</sup> In the mean time, the elite manipulation of public opinion through how an issue is framed and what predispositions are primed have become important explanatory variables in the study of political communication.<sup>16</sup> Hence, research that demonstrates the cognitive capacity and the processes of the human mind has contributed to the accumulation of knowledge that has increasingly contradicted the classical assumptions about the rational individual.<sup>17</sup> Relatively recently, the cognitive emphasis on social cognition has been altered and the role of emotions and affect has been incorporated in explanations of how political information is processed.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the enlightenment view that portrays cognition and emotion as contradictory forces, research in political psychology

shows the facilitating role of emotions in decision making as an integral element of the human mind, an element that works with cognition. This in turn has led to greater interest in the physiology of emotions, one factor that contributed to the current epidemiological trend in political psychology. We are now better equipped to understand individual decisions, attitudes, and behaviour thanks to the new neuro-scientific and physiological data increasingly made more available to social scientists through the use of new tools in brain imaging and biology, particularly in genetics.<sup>19</sup> Although mostly not causal as it stands, research on the physiological underpinnings of political phenomena is promising. It has the potential to alter many theories reviewed here about individual political psychology and create a truly interdisciplinary new perspective.

Last, it should be noted that despite the emergence and prominence of different perspectives in political psychology at different points in time, almost all the above-mentioned approaches are represented in current research in the field. Because each theory is more appropriate for explaining some political phenomena than others, and due to the breadth of the subject matter, political psychology remains one of the most lively and dynamic lines of inquiry in the study of politics.



## Research Methods in Political Psychology

Scientific information in political psychology, as is the case with other disciplines, can only be obtained through the use of the scientific method. Political psychology research has progressed a great deal in its use of the scientific methodology since its initial reliance on psychoanalysis. The methods used in political psychology vary based on the kind of explanations that researchers seek, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches. However, because political psychology research has shown particular interest in explaining the processes involved in individual-level political phenomenon, dissecting the components of the political phenomenon and showing how these components interact in progress, laboratory experiments feature prominently in the field, followed by large-scale surveys and survey experiments.

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If the study's aim is to draw conclusions about political elites, because it is extremely hard to recruit political elites as experimental subjects, the study results may remain rather limited in generalisability.

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Laboratory experiments allow for causal explanations, a highly regarded

prize in science, and provide high internal validity due to the highly controlled conditions of the laboratory setting. For instance, if the researcher is interested in deciphering the processes behind stereotyping and prejudice, or the affective spillovers in decision making, the sterile conditions of the laboratory where the treatments such as the appearance of a political candidate or the valence of messages are strictly controlled are highly desirable. One thing that researchers should pay attention to in an experimental design is the match between the subject pool and the inference group.<sup>20</sup> Laboratory experiments' subjects are often drawn from undergraduate courses, and at best they are an adult body that roughly represents the nation. If the study is about mass political behaviour, this does not preclude generalising the findings to the public; and sometimes political psychologists are less interested in generalisation and more interested in the explanation of a process. However, if the study's aim is to draw conclusions about political elites, because it is extremely hard to recruit political elites as experimental subjects, the study results may remain rather limited in generalisability. This is particularly important for studies in foreign policy decision making as the causal links in decision making established by laboratory experiments with ordinary citizens may change at the elite level. Another limitation of

experiments is their ability to produce information on only a couple of variables at a time, making it less desirable as a method for understanding mass political attitudes on a variety of topics. The latter is best achieved by survey methodology.

Unlike experiments, large-scale surveys have high external validity. As a result, the survey methodology is widely used to understand the public's political attitudes and behaviour. From the early studies<sup>21</sup> onwards, political surveys have become almost synonymous with public opinion studies, and have produced much of what we know about the relationships between contextual, demographic, and short-term forces and political attitudes, particularly in the US context. In the meantime, as research on the mechanisms of survey response have progressed, it has become evident that asking political questions that seem so simple to the lay person requires a technique that minimises the response instability over time and the framing and response effects. For instance, framing effects, i.e. a change in the responses due to the wording, order, and the number of available responses, question format and labelling, pose a major threat to the internal validity of survey research.<sup>22</sup> Hence, the choice of a survey design very much depends on the researcher's stand on this trade off between the ability to generalise the findings to real world situations and the ability to isolate causal relationships. The latter cannot be demonstrated using

cross-sectional surveys. However, in the study of international relations, public opinion on foreign policy decisions, and the attitudes toward existing foreign policies, can best be investigated by survey research. The large number of variables involved, the laboratory settings' limitations, and the fact that public opinion research is primarily interested in mapping where the public stands on an issue all make the survey methodology a good fit for studying public opinion on foreign policy. An alternative method, the survey experiment, unites the strengths of surveys and experiments and helps researchers establish generalisable causal relationships. As a result, survey experiments are becoming more popular in political psychology, helping us answer questions about how the public thinks about political issues as well as what they think about them.<sup>23</sup> In the case of foreign policy public opinion research, survey experiments may help researchers solve the causality problem involving the leader and mass interaction on attitudes by showing how individual citizens form their foreign policy views.

Qualitative methods that are particularly relevant for political psychology include content analysis of documents and media sources, interviews, focus groups, and case studies. Among these content analysis stands as a popular approach in the study of the public policy proclivities of important political figures. More often than not,

content analysis in political psychology has been used to make inferences about the psychological state of politicians from the oral or written material attributed to them. The approach is an indispensable one in the study of political leaders and other elites as it is nearly impossible to have them participate in a quantitative research study. If the unit of analysis is the political leader, transcribed material presents the researcher with the opportunity to derive many variables of interest from the text and then apply statistical techniques to test the research hypotheses. Although the systematic and objective study of the text in content analysis is the method's scientific strength, the method's findings are valid to the extent that the text really belongs to the political leader studied. Moreover, the sampling of the texts or oral material should be done as randomly as possible, which requires utmost attention to the compilation of the relevant material to sample from. Otherwise, generalising the findings to the political persona of the leader would not be possible. Another limitation of the method is the absence of a controlled comparison, making the method vulnerable to inferential biases and errors. Less scientifically rigorous yet important in collecting preliminary data

are open-ended interviews. This method, too, helps researchers gain insight about important political figures who cannot be studied using other methods. However, one should be aware of the fact that because there is no systematic measurement of predetermined variables, the evidence generated does not lend itself to scientific hypothesis testing. Less scientifically rigorous studies of political leaders such as psychobiographies benefit from such interviews in addition to the analyses of transcribed material attributed to the leader. Focus group studies are an improvement over open-ended interviews in deciphering the political attitudes, decisions, and behaviour of ordinary citizens and political elites alike, although it may still be hard to recruit important political leaders for such studies. Focus group studies allow researchers to at least control the topics or questions to be discussed in a group setting where the participants are also allowed to interact. This provides a more natural setting than in a one-to-one interview. Moreover, it can easily be combined with a self-administered survey or a process-tracing method to see initial attitudes and how they change. However, the interval validity of the findings is still low due to a lack of

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Content analysis in political psychology has been used to make inferences about the psychological state of politicians.

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control of the predetermined variables and their consistent measurements. Other limitations of this method are the possibility of group dynamics and social desirability effects altering the responses and damaging the external validity of the findings. Focus groups, however, can be a great complement to quantitative studies to improve the richness of data and the explanatory power of research.

Case studies are more popular in political science and less so in psychology. In this method, different cases are compared along their most similar and most different dimensions to determine the significant contextual differences affecting the dependent variable of interest. For instance, Jervis used the cases of the First World War, the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Falklands War to investigate the relationship between the psychology of risk-taking and deterrence.<sup>24</sup> Jervis found that deterrence backfires because it creates a sense of insecurity on the part of the opponent. In political psychology, case studies abound in the study of conflict resolution and war and peace. However, because of the lack of controlled comparison cases, this method falls prey to the same inferential problems that affect content analysis. Comparison of a couple of cases does not create the conditions to establish causality, either. This should be left to the experiment. A careful choice of cases both in line and against the researcher's initial intuition

is necessary for a genuine understanding of the conditions leading to political outcomes such as war and peace. Such insight can also help quantitative researchers understand what aspect of a problem they should focus and what variables to include in their study.

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### Case studies are more popular in political science and less so in psychology.

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As the discussion here details, each method has its advantages and disadvantages. It is up to the researcher to decide which one to choose based on the subject matter and the nature of the hypotheses tested. No matter what the choice is, however, researchers should bear in mind that it is the scientific rigor of their chosen method that will determine whether the information their study produces is scientific or not. Hence, although there are multiple methods and there may well be valid reasons to choose one method over the other, there is a hierarchy among social science methods in terms of the methods' ability to produce scientific information. This does not mean that researchers should use only the most scientifically rigorous method. In fact, a multi-method approach would be the strongest one in terms of improving the scientific quality of the findings. Combining

separate methods with different strengths in terms of generalisability, establishing causality or correlation, and providing in-depth information will help researchers ensure that the findings are not artefacts of the method used. As in all science, political psychologists working in the international relations field should take every possible precaution against the inclination to impose one's own expectations or theories onto the evidence. The use of the scientific method is perhaps the only proven way to counter this very human tendency.

## Existing and Potential Contributions of Political Psychology to the Study of International Relations

As discussed above, because of its data-driven nature, political psychology contributes to the scientific quality of international relations studies. Its contributions, however, are more far reaching than just that. Although it focuses on the individual, political psychology can shed light on studies in international relations at various levels of analysis. At the individual level of analysis international relations is studied from the vantage point of foreign policy decision making, which in turn focuses on the leader as well as the close group of people that the leader interacts with to arrive at foreign policy decisions.

Here, both insights from psychology on the decision maker's perceptions of the greater decision-making context and the foreign policy situation, and the insights from political psychology on the decision-making processes that take place within the group of the leader, advisors and bureaucrats can advance our understanding of the human agency in international relations. At the level of the state, public opinion research enriches our understanding of the domestic constraints on foreign policy decisions. Studies on executive influence attempt to pin down the interaction between the leadership and the masses in the formation of foreign policy decisions and the influence of public opinion on foreign policy making. At the level of the international system, macro theories of international relations use assumptions about decision-making processes that would be greatly refined by what decision-making research and its application to politics have taught us about decision-making errors and biases. At the transnational level, studies on the membership in social movements and terrorist organisations that cross borders can benefit from political psychological research. In brief, at all levels of analysis, political psychology can contribute to the study of international relations by advancing our understanding of the individual and social cognitive and emotional mechanisms.

In doing so, it can contribute to international relations theorising. As Goldgeier and Tetlock suggest, almost all strands of theorising in international relations can benefit from psychology in explaining what is not easily accounted for by the dominant rational model of decision making in the field.<sup>25</sup> Anomalies and boundary conditions can best be addressed by understanding the individual's role in the political outcome. All macro-level theories often implicitly and at times explicitly make assumptions about human psychology or map individual-level empirical assumptions onto states as in the assumptions of power maximisation, utility maximisation, or constructions of normative worlds. International relations scholar made assumptions about human agency while leaving the connection between these assumptions and the psychological mechanisms through which they translate into action largely unaddressed. Further theorising on the latter can refine significantly the predictions of the macro international relations theories. For instance, Jervis writes about the cognitive constraints on rational decision making within a realist framework and provides us with an error-and-bias portrait of the foreign policy maker.<sup>26</sup> Because from a cognitive point of view all causal inference and policy lessons are the product of mental construction, cognitive psychological analysis of world politics is particularly compatible with constructivism.<sup>27</sup>

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In addition, there are quite a few strands of international relations literature that directly benefit from political psychology. As explained above the study of foreign policy attitudes through public opinion research is one area that has a basis in the study of mass political behaviour from a psychological perspective. The use of cognitive errors, misperceptions, and biases approach as well as the initial perception of threat explanation of foreign policy decisions by scholars such as Philip Tetlock or Robert Jervis have further integrated psychology and international relations.<sup>28</sup> Again on the foreign policy decision-making literature, in-group pressures toward cohesiveness and conformity is considered one reason behind defective foreign policy decisions.<sup>29</sup> Studies of risk-taking in political psychology, particularly those using the prospect theory, constitute another body of literature that has a direct bearing on foreign policy analysis, and require more attention here.

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, two Nobel laureates, have developed

the prospect theory to explain decision making under conditions of risk.<sup>30</sup> The theory has two phases: an editing phase and an evaluation phase. Contrary to the assumptions in the rational choice model of dominance, invariance, and transitivity, in the editing phase decisions can be substantially affected by the order and the manner in which the situation or the choice is presented. These effects are referred to as framing effects, as the presentation may leave out certain options or include some others to alter the final decision. In a classic study, Kahneman and Tversky asked their experimental subjects to make a choice between two health programmes on the outbreak of an Asian disease.<sup>31</sup> When the choices were presented in terms of the number of lives saved by the different programmes, a majority of subjects chose the risk-averse (certain) option, whereas when the choices were presented in terms of the number of deaths, a majority of subjects chose the risky (probabilistic) option. Hence, whether the question is framed as lives saved or lives lost altered the final decision.

The second phase of the prospect theory, the evaluation phase, has in turn two functions: the value function and the weighting function. The value function represents the evaluation of outcomes in terms of gains and losses relative to a status quo reference point. Also, the value curve is concave for gains and convex for losses, meaning people

are risk-seeking for losses, and risk-averse for gains. Moreover, the value curve is much steeper for losses than for gains, meaning that losses loom larger than gains. The weighting function, on the other hand, tells us that people give too much subjective weight to low probability events, whereas medium and high probability events are not given sufficient weight in decision making. Hence, low probability makes people risk-taking in gains, and risk-averse in losses, a reversal of the value curve effect. These insights on decision making under conditions of risk have been applied to a variety of international relations situations to explain foreign policy making, such as the Roosevelt's behaviour in the Munich crisis, the U-2 crisis, the Suez crisis, and the Iranian hostage rescue mission.<sup>32</sup> However, the prospect theory has not received as great an attention as the significance of its predictions in the literature. One reason for this is the difficulty in determining the reference point, hence the loss or the gain frame that the decision maker operates in. Despite this, prospect theory is still a source of research opportunity for scholars interested in the behaviour of foreign policy decision makers.

Another line of scholarship at the intersection of political psychology and international relations has focused on the political leader as the prime actor influencing the outcome of political events. Operational code analysis has



its roots in the classic work “A Study of Bolshevism” by Nathan Leites.<sup>33</sup> Leites analysed Politburo members’ cognitive heuristics and the characterological traits that influenced Soviet decision making, combining social cognition with the study of personality. He developed the operational code construct, the cognitive aspects of which were later conceptualised as a typology of political belief systems by Alexander George and Ole Holsti.<sup>34</sup> George argued that individuals’ beliefs are consistent in the sense that they are constrained by master beliefs such as philosophical beliefs about the nature of politics and conflict, and instrumental beliefs about how to advance one’s interests. Holsti further developed new typologies for operational codes grounded in cognitive schemas and scripts. A related theory, image theory, is designed to capture the perception of international relationships. It is a theory of strategic decision making where ideas about other international actors are organised into group schemas, or images, with cognitions and beliefs regarding the other’s motives, leadership, and primary characteristics. Image studies include a detailed account of the cognitive perceptions of the other party, the relationship, and the resulting images, and the strategic responses associated with the perceptions. Images, or stereotypes of other nations, justify a nation’s reaction to or treatment of another nation.<sup>35</sup>

Leadership trait analysis is another line of inquiry that helps us understand how political leaders would act in international relations. It is preoccupied with the decision maker’s personal characteristics such as beliefs, motives, decision-making style, and social style in explaining foreign policy behaviour. Margaret Hermann considered both the need for power and the need for achievement as motives.<sup>36</sup> Decision-making style includes openness to new information, cognitive complexity, ambiguity tolerance, and risk propensity. In her research Hermann found two types of leaders: those who are participatory and seek change and those who are secretive and dislike change. These leadership styles in turn are believed to determine how leaders manage information, handle conflict, and lead their countries. One limitation of the leadership trait analysis is that leaders are analysed from a distance, mostly by content analyses of their speeches and writings. However, given the difficulty of reaching most political elites, it greatly contributes to what we know about foreign policy decision makers.

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**Decision-making style includes openness to new information, cognitive complexity, ambiguity tolerance, and risk propensity.**

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Political psychology contributes to studies that emphasise group perception



and interaction as well. For instance, conflict analysis and resolution is a growing field of practice that has benefitted from a social-psychological approach. According to this specific take on conflict resolution, international conflict is considered a process driven by collective needs and fears, an inter-societal process, and a multifaceted one of mutual influence. Moreover, it can be a self-perpetuating process. Perceptual-cognitive processes may promote conflict or perpetuate it, hence negotiation and in its absence mediation, or interactive conflict resolution should all be carried out bearing in mind the perceptual and cognitive processes involved.<sup>37</sup>

## Public Opinion Research

Both public opinion research on foreign policy and comparative public opinion research have relevance for the international relations scholar. Regarding the former, researchers have focused on the extent to which politicians shape the foreign policy attitudes of the mass public as well as the influence the public has on the foreign policy rhetoric and decisions of political leaders. Although public opinion has not been a major area of research for international relations scholars, it is a major component of political psychology literature. As such, it has advanced tools to inform the scientists and political elites alike regarding the foreign policy attitudes

of the domestic mass public and of the publics abroad. As countries democratise the decision makers pay more attention to public opinion. Information on public opinion indicators from other countries might also be an important factor to be accounted for in crafting policies toward other nations.

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Public opinion analysis aims to disentangle the complex individual influences that ultimately form one's political attitudes and judgments.

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Public opinion research does not only describe the state of the mass public's attitudes, but also investigates its determinants and consequences. Public opinion research provides an overall understanding of how political attitudes are formed and changed. In line with the process-minded political psychology research, public opinion analysis aims to disentangle the complex individual influences that ultimately form one's political attitudes and judgments. Understanding public opinion requires an empirical analysis of certain variables through well-founded theories. From the influence of ideology and nationalism to the theories of identity and group-level behaviour public opinion research is multifaceted. Hence, the literature can help us understand the precursors

of change in the public that have implications for foreign affairs. The Arab Spring and several seemingly bottom-up governmental changes that are taking place in the Middle East require political psychological research, in particular public opinion research, to understand their determinants in the masses.

Comparative public opinion research can prove particularly useful for understanding the masses' influence on governmental decisions in the EU enlargement process or in other intergovernmental processes that require direct public approval. Understanding EU member countries' stands on the Turkish candidacy to the EU requires understanding the determinants of public attitudes in those countries toward enlargement generally and Turkey's accession process. Such attitudes are both shaped by the political elites and they themselves shape the rhetoric and decisions of political elites. Research that helps explain this loop of influence and that combines data from public opinion research and data on governmental decisions and policies toward accession countries will further shed light on Turkey's prospects for EU membership.

## Conclusions and Future Directions

Political psychology has contributed and will contribute further to the study

of international relations. A reliance on macro theories in international relations that adopt individual-level assumptions from rational choice theory but consider the individual irrelevant in the outcome of international events point to a unit of analysis problem in international relations theory. This in turn makes it hard for international relations scholars to explain the boundary conditions or anomalies in predictions. Insights from political psychology at the individual or group level of analysis will help improve the explanatory power of international relations studies by providing more information about the processes involved. Moreover, time is long due for a reassessment of the macro theories in light of increasing political psychology evidence that is contrary to the rational choice model. Political psychology also contributes to data-driven research on international relations and improves the scientific rigor of research methods in international relations.

In addition to the existing lines of inquiry at the intersection of international relations and political psychology reviewed here, there are emerging research opportunities for scholars interested in topics made more salient by recent international developments. Political upheavals, civic disobedience, and group actions including terrorism are all political phenomena that require psychological explanations. Because of the prominence of individual action and

communication in such phenomena international relations scholars have to turn to social psychology and political communication to gain an in-depth understanding of the conditions, motives, and human tendencies to theorise international change through individual and group action. Emotion, an increasingly popular explanatory variable in political science thanks to the contribution of political psychology, may be particularly instrumental in this endeavour.

Emotions have been shown to result in different yet automatic responses in individuals. Discrete emotions do colour perception and guide individual action in milliseconds, well under the time span that consciousness can intervene. As such emotions may serve as strong forces that mobilise people, make them automatically engage in a form of behaviour, or avoid it altogether. Research on discrete emotions has shown that emotions govern whether people rely on political habits or pay attention to new information. The latter often happens when they are anxious. It also affects risk-taking. While anxiety makes people more cautious, another negative emotion, anger, reduces risk-perception and may make people support military action they would otherwise not support.<sup>38</sup> These forces are likely in play in the recent political changes in the Middle East and in other areas where ordinary citizens are mobilised for

extreme forms of political participation and action.

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Political psychology contributes to data-driven research on international relations and improves the scientific rigor of research methods in international relations.

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Another promising research area concerns the study of the political leader. An increasingly epidemiological look of some political psychology research gives us reason to be hopeful about the emergence of a new perspective in the study of leadership that takes into account the physiological state of the leader in predicting foreign policy and other decisions. McDermott argues that illness, age, and addiction provides specific, predictable, and recognisable shifts in attention, time perspective, cognitive capacity, judgment, and emotion.<sup>39</sup> This in turn predictably affects the decisions of impaired leaders. Hence, leadership traits cannot be construed as stable but are rather dependent upon the physical conditions of the leader. Research incorporating the personality perspective with the new data on the behavioural implications of human physiology may reinvigorate the study of leadership, the very topic that gave birth to political psychology and later waned in popularity.

In brief, there is much for international relations scholars to research from a political psychology perspective, particularly in the context of Turkey. Turkey presents the international relations scholar with ample opportunity and data, if sought, to study strategic interaction and particularly decision making. The prospect theory is underutilised in explaining foreign policy behaviour, and can serve as a fountain of several hypotheses on foreign policy making in Turkey and in its neighbours. More political psychology research on the foreign attitudes toward

Turkey, as well as on Turkish attitudes toward other countries and the European Union is needed to understand the ebb and flow of positive and negative feelings and cognitions over time. As the contributions in this special issue also show, political psychology is a promising field for international relations scholars interested in Turkey and beyond. It will become even more relevant and popular as the roles the individual and the group play in international change become more important and visible in the post Cold War world.

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# Tansu Çiller's Leadership Traits and Foreign Policy

Barış KESGİN\*

## Abstract

*In the post-Cold War era, from 1993 to 1996, Tansu Çiller led Turkey through volatile political and economic crises. Moreover, she had a strong interest in foreign affairs and her leadership attracted attention from abroad as she was a female prime minister of a predominantly Muslim nation. Much like the general lack of interest in psychological factors in Turkish foreign policy, there is little research on personality and its impact on Turkey's foreign affairs. In this paper, Çiller's leadership is systematically studied by utilising one of the most prominent methods of leadership assessment: leadership traits analysis. This paper first profiles Tansu Çiller as prime minister and then compares her to other Turkish leaders in the post-Cold War era. Its findings suggest that Çiller's high in-group bias and high distrust mark her leadership and foreign policy behaviour. The paper highlights the significance of personalities in foreign policy making and calls for systematic accounts of this effect on Turkey's foreign policy.*

## Key Words

Profiling political leaders, at-a-distance assessment, leadership traits analysis, Tansu Çiller, prime ministers and Turkish foreign policy.

## Introduction

Henry Kissinger once said that “As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personalities make.”<sup>1</sup> Kissinger's argument is well reflected in the scholarly study of foreign policy; in this line of research, the individual constitutes the heart of international politics.<sup>2</sup> For those who follow in the tradition of Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, political leaders' individual features influence state behaviour.<sup>3</sup> As such, personality characteristics (such as beliefs, motives, decision-making style, and interpersonal style) affect personal orientation to behaviour, which in turn shapes one's general orientation to foreign affairs.<sup>4</sup> In other words then, individuals- or groups of individuals- are the sources of all state actions.<sup>5</sup>

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The study of individuals in the field of foreign policy analysis has benefited from and is closely connected with literature and research in psychology.<sup>6</sup> This line of inquiry, and particularly the study of the individual in world affairs, has significantly expanded since Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin. Nonetheless, existing studies of political leadership heavily focus on Western democracies and systematic studies of non-Western leaders are relatively scarce. Likewise, there are but a handful of assessments of the role leaders play in Turkish politics, and more specifically in the making of Turkish foreign policy. Leaders in every political system come to office with their unique approach to foreign (as well as domestic) policy; Turkish leaders are by no means exceptions. This paper looks at Turkey's Tansu Çiller for various reasons. First, it aims to contribute not only to the study of Turkish foreign policy by introducing a method for systematically profiling Turkish leaders but also to the broader field of political leadership and foreign policy analysis by expanding the application of existing methods. In addition, Çiller is the only woman to have led Turkey and also one of very few (along with Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto and Bangladesh's Khaleda Zia) to have led a predominantly Muslim country. Therefore, understanding Çiller's leadership is important.<sup>7</sup>

Most significantly, Çiller was the head of the Turkish government at

critical junctures of foreign policy issues. Indeed, Turkey's self-described "iron lady"<sup>8</sup> led the country in the aftermath of the Cold War, at a time when it- much like other countries- was re-defining its role in a new world. As Grove recently argued, "[e]specially in a world of great uncertainty and ambiguity, as opposed to rigid Cold War environment, individual leaders make a difference."<sup>9</sup> Çiller's term as prime minister coincided with this transition in the international system. Other foreign policy issues such as Turkey's bid for European Union membership and its relations with Greece also dominated Çiller's reign. How did Çiller's personality affect Turkey's foreign policy during her term in office as prime minister? Can we systematically assess Çiller's leadership traits with respect to foreign policy matters?

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**Çiller was the head of the Turkish government at critical junctures of foreign policy issues.**

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This paper starts with the assumption that leaders matter in politics, and more specifically in foreign policy making. After a brief review of the relevant techniques for assessing political leadership, it highlights Turkish prime ministers' significance in the making of the country's foreign policy. Then, former Prime Minister Tansu Çiller is profiled and a discussion about how

her leadership characteristics influenced Turkish foreign policy follows. According to the findings here, compared to other Turkish prime ministers since the 1990s, Çiller lacked self-confidence, had a high distrust of others, and a high in-group bias. These traits, in turn, became evident in Çiller's rather radical proposals (for instance, at the height of tensions with Greece to send troops to a contested islet in the Mediterranean, or to bomb "likely" terrorist camps in Iran) to deal with various issues. The paper concludes with a call for more examination of how individual actors can influence political outcomes and the psychological factors in Turkey's foreign policy-making process.

## At-A-Distance Assessment of Political Leaders

The study of political leaders requires unique methods since leaders are not available or willing to be interviewed for psychological analysis. However, one can infer leaders' personality traits or beliefs from their public speeches and/or other spontaneous utterances.<sup>10</sup> "At-a-distance" techniques are especially designed to overcome this problem of access. These methods help profile political leaders based on their publicly available verbal records (speeches, interviews, letters, etc.). These methods require meticulously designed procedures of coding and operationalisation of selected

personality measures.<sup>11</sup> In essence, these techniques are adaptations of conventional psychological personality measurements.<sup>12</sup>

"At-a-distance" methods of political leadership assessment have been computerised since the introduction of ProfilerPlus, developed by Michael Young and his associates at Social Science Automation. Since its debut in 2001, this program has been widely used in the personality assessment of various political leaders. Programs such as ProfilerPlus are important not only for significantly reducing the time spent for analysis but also for developing systematic and objective results. Automated content analysis is also advantageous as it allows for a wealth of materials to be examined. Thanks to the Internet, more open source texts are accessible for such analyses. This is crucial in that it allows researchers to address a major gap in the literature: that despite calls for expanding the study of political leaders beyond Western countries, the bulk of the current literature remains rather focused on Western leaders.<sup>13</sup> While there are many documents (interviews, speeches, etc.) available for studies of non-Western political leadership, this call has been only partially met.<sup>14</sup>

## *Leadership Traits Analysis*

According to Young and Schafer, Leadership Traits Analysis is one of the

most significant research programmes about leaders' cognition.<sup>15</sup> As a method of political leadership assessment, Leadership Traits Analysis (LTA) has led to multiple, fruitful lines of research and has been applied to many leaders around the world.<sup>16</sup> This technique claims that leaders' choices of certain words reflect their personalities. As the pioneer of this method Margaret Hermann explains, "[i]n effect, the trait analysis is quantitative in nature and employs frequency counts. At issue is what percentage of the time in responding to interviewers' questions when leaders could exhibit particular words and phrases are they, indeed, used."<sup>17</sup> Each trait is calculated according to a coding scheme developed by Hermann, and the scores for each

range from zero to one. As such, LTA involves a careful content analysis of leaders' discourse and its quantification into seven traits. These are (1) the belief that one can influence or control what happens, (2) the need for power and influence, (3) conceptual complexity (the ability to differentiate things and people in one's environment), (4) self-confidence, (5) the tendency to focus on problem solving and accomplishing something versus maintenance of the group and dealing with others' ideas and sensitivities, (6) general distrust or suspiciousness of others, and (7) the intensity with which a person holds an in-group bias (see Table 1 for a summary).

**Table 1: Leadership Traits Analysis: Trait Conceptualisation and Coding Scheme**

Trait	Description	Coding
Belief in Ability to Control Events	Perception of the world as an environment leader can influence. Leader's own state is perceived as an influential actor in the international system.	Percentage of verbs used that reflect action or planning for action of the leader or relevant group.
Conceptual Complexity	Capability of discerning different dimensions of the environment when describing actors, places, ideas, and situations.	Percentage of words related to high complexity (i.e., "approximately," "possibility," "trend") vs. low complexity (i.e., "absolutely," "certainly," "irreversible").
Distrust of Others	Doubt about and wariness of others.	Percentage of nouns that indicate misgivings or suspicions that others intend harm toward speaker or speaker's group.
In-Group Bias	Perception of one's group as holding a central role, accompanied with strong feelings of national identity and honour.	Percentage of references to the group that are favourable (i.e., "successful," "prosperous," "great"), show strength (i.e., "powerful," "capable") or a need to maintain group identity (i.e., "decide our own policies," "defend our borders").
Need for Power	A concern with gaining, keeping and restoring power over others.	Percentage of verbs that reflect actions of attack, advise, influence the behaviour of others, concern with reputation.
Self-Confidence	Personal image of self-importance in terms of the ability to deal with the environment.	Percentage of personal pronouns used such as "my," "myself," "I," "me," and "mine," which show speaker perceives self as the instigator of an activity, an authority figure, or a recipient of a positive reward.
Task Focus	Relative focus on problem solving versus maintenance of relationship to others. Higher score indicates greater problem solving focus.	Percentage of words related to instrumental activities (i.e., "accomplishment," "plan," "proposal") versus concern for other's feelings and desires (i.e., "collaboration," "amnesty," "appreciation").

Source: Stephen Dyson, "Personality and Foreign Policy: Tony Blair's Iraq Decisions", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (July 2006), p. 292.

A leader’s profile is assessed via a comparison of his or her traits’ scores to those of a meaningful group of other leaders- that is, the norming group. When a leader’s scores are a standard deviation below the norming group’s mean, then he or she profiles *low* in that trait. Accordingly, when a score is one standard deviation above the norming group’s, then the leader has a *high* score for the trait in question. When a leader’s score is close to the norming group’s mean, the leader is *moderate* in that particular trait. A leader’s ranking in comparison to this group (high or low) then suggests how he or she will react to constraints, are motivated towards the world, and their openness to information, etc. These, in turn, inform a leader’s leadership style. For instance, leaders have different

styles of decision-making because they “relate to those around them- whether constituents, advisers, or other leaders- and how they structure interactions and the norms, rules, and principles they use to guide such interactions” in different manners.<sup>18</sup> Table 2 illustrates an example: how a leader ranks according to his or her scores in Belief in Ability to Control Events and Need for Power help determine the leader’s responsiveness to constraints. Openness to contextual information is determined according to a leader’s Conceptual Complexity and Self-Confidence scores; In-Group Bias and Distrust of Others together indicate motivation toward world; and finally, the Task Focus trait signals a leader’s motivation for seeking office.

**Table 2: Leader’s Reaction to Constraints**

Need for power	Belief in One’s Own Ability to Control Events	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Low</i>	<b>Respect constraints</b> ; work within such parameters toward goals; compromise and consensus building important.	<b>Challenge constraints</b> but less successful in doing so because too direct and open in use of power; less able to read how to manipulate people and setting behind the scenes to have desired influence.
<i>High</i>	<b>Challenge constraints</b> but more comfortable doing so in an indirect fashion-behind the scenes; good at being “power behind the throne” where they can pull strings but are less accountable for result.	<b>Challenge constraints</b> ; are skilful in both direct and indirect influence; know what they want and take charge to see that it happens.

Source: Margaret G. Hermann, “Assessing Leadership Style: Trait Analysis”, in Jerrold M. Post (ed.), *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003, pp.188.

In addition to Hermann's research, recently Stephen Dyson has significantly contributed to leadership traits analysis. For instance, Dyson compared Tony Blair's traits scores (the prime minister of the UK from 1997–2007) with all the other British prime ministers since 1945. According to Dyson's analysis, Tony Blair has a high Belief in Ability to Control Events, a low Conceptual Complexity, and a high Need for Power compared to the other 12 British prime ministers in the post-1945 era.<sup>19</sup> First, Blair's significantly higher Belief in Ability to Control Events score suggests that Blair strongly believes in his ability to control events in the political environment, and that he perceives Britain as an influential actor in world politics. Second, a low Conceptual Complexity score signals a worldview of binary categories such as good vs. evil and us vs. them. Blair's Conceptual Complexity score, which is one standard deviation below other British prime ministers, indicates that he would have a decisive decision-making style where other significant factors outside his black-and-white view are not evaluated properly or may go unnoticed. Lastly, Dyson shows that Blair is high in the Need for Power trait and hence would be actively involved in policy formulation and would work with small groups of hand-picked individuals. In addition, a combined high Belief in Ability to Control Events and high Need for Power score suggests that Blair

would likely challenge constraints in the international system. This leadership traits analysis of Blair shows how his preferences and behaviour dictated Britain's choice in Iraq. As the Iraq war unfolded, Blair "demonstrated a proactive policy orientation, internal locus of control in terms of shaping events, a binary information processing and framing style, and a preference to work through tightly held processes in policy making."<sup>20</sup> In his later work, Dyson explores the leadership in the United States administration- specifically, the leadership of the former Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld.<sup>21</sup>

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**Scholars of Turkish politics and foreign policy have rarely chosen to study leaders' personalities and trace their potential effects on foreign (as well as domestic) policy.**

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Further recent work in LTA has shed light on the decision-making during the Iraq war. For instance, Shannon and Keller show that, against some constructivist and realist propositions about how international norms were violated due to global social pressures or self-interest and the anarchic nature of world politics, leaders' beliefs and their decision-making styles have significant impacts on why and how leaders may defy international norms.<sup>22</sup> Shannon

and Keller look at leadership traits of the members of the George W. Bush administration and their positions regarding the 2003 Iraq war.<sup>23</sup> Bringing insights from political leadership literature, Shannon and Keller's analysis shows that particular leadership traits (such as high Belief in Ability to Control Events, Need for Power, Distrust of Others, and In-Group Bias) can predict a leader's propensity to respect or challenge international norms. These studies illustrate the significance of LTA as a method to explain foreign policy behaviour and link this behaviour with the personalities of decision-makers.

LTA has been criticised for its inability to capture the leader's personality and for providing rather a snapshot at a certain moment.<sup>24</sup> Hermann, in response, makes it clear that personality can be contextually dependent and this can be determined by studying diverse material.<sup>25</sup> Notwithstanding such criticisms, it is widely accepted that many leader profiles that were assessed using the LTA technique have corresponded with the image of those leaders in the eyes of other leaders, advisers, and journalists.<sup>26</sup> These studies show that a leader's general profile can be assessed with a certain word count and a variety of issues covered from different times. Nonetheless, other studies, and particularly Mahdasian, also discuss how the LTA scores would become less stable when they are calculated over smaller

time frames or across different issues.<sup>27</sup> Finally, as mentioned earlier, a challenge still ahead of the LTA is to expand this method of analysis in profiling leaders in other countries and testing to what extent it is valid cross cultures as much of the published work in LTA remains within the Western context.<sup>28</sup>

## Turkey's Foreign Policy and Prime Ministers

Political leaders of Turkey have always controlled significant political power since Atatürk, the founder of modern day Turkey.<sup>29</sup> In fact, Turkish politics has always been "a stage for leader-based politics."<sup>30</sup> Specifically, prime ministers have been important actors in Turkish foreign policy making.<sup>31</sup> For example, during his one-year in office then Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan attempted to put an interesting (and widely controversial) twist to Turkish foreign policy as he had explored new alternatives for Turkey in the Muslim world. Erbakan's foreign policy adventures very much reflected his view of the world and his personality.

Despite such examples as Erbakan, scholars of Turkish politics and foreign policy have rarely chosen to study leaders' personalities and trace their potential effects on foreign (as well as domestic) policy. Until recently, there were only two exceptions to this trend.

The first, published in 2002, is the Heper and Sayarı volume, a very informative collection of essays on Turkish leaders and their contributions (or lack thereof) to Turkey's democratisation.<sup>32</sup> Although it has rather limited engagement with foreign policy issues, this book provides valuable information about leader personalities as each chapter has a section on their personalities. A second edited book, by Ali Faik Demir, focuses exclusively on foreign policy and leadership, and it is (most likely) the only such study in Turkish foreign policy literature.<sup>33</sup> However,

as of late 2011, there has been no research that has covered all the major political actors (e.g. prime ministers in the past two decades) in Turkey and assessed their personalities

in a systematic manner. Recently, there has been a new interest developed in leadership and Turkish foreign policy.<sup>34</sup> In addition, on a broader scale than a specific interest in personality, some research now looks at the role of psychological factors in Turkish foreign policy making.<sup>35</sup>

In order to understand any prime minister's role in Turkish foreign policy making, it is necessary first to assess the bureaucratic organisation and cultural practices in which the prime

minister works. Historically speaking, Turkish foreign policy making has included other actors along with the prime minister: the civilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs bureaucracy, the Turkish military, the president, as well as the parliament.<sup>36</sup> Çiller's role in the foreign policy-making establishment as the chief executive was arguably constrained by these institutional and historical factors in Turkey.<sup>37</sup> For instance, Çiller was the head of a coalition cabinet and hence dealt with coalition-based decision-making processes.<sup>38</sup> In addition, one

would anticipate that Çiller was also limited by international constraints such as Turkey's dependence on the United States in economic and security matters as well. On the other hand, one would

expect Çiller to be actively involved in foreign policy matters given her personal background and also previous experience in government.

### *Tansu Çiller*

Tansu Çiller, the daughter of a bureaucrat, was born and raised in Istanbul. Çiller studied at English-language schools from her early school years and after, earning a degree in economics from Robert College (present



day Bosphorus University). Çiller then completed her doctoral studies at the University of Connecticut in the United States where she and husband Özer Çiller lived for a number of years. The Çillers returned to Turkey in 1974 and Tansu Çiller taught at Bosphorus University's Department of Economics until she became actively involved in politics. Çiller was a technocrat and served as minister of state responsible for the economy from 1991 to 1993. Upon Demirel's election to the presidency, Çiller assumed the post of party chairperson in the True Path Party (centre-right) in June 1993. Shortly after, she became the prime minister when her own party and Social Democratic People's Party (centre-left) agreed to keep the coalition government in office.

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Çiller stayed in government with brief interruptions as other coalition cabinets alternated in power and served as deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs during the 1990s- more specifically, in the Erbakan government. Çiller's reputation gradually eroded due to various scandals and electoral defeats,

and she finally retired from politics after the November 2002 elections. Çiller's tenure in politics lasted a little longer than a decade; nevertheless, as Turkey's first female party chairperson and prime minister, Çiller made her mark on Turkey's political history and its foreign policy in the 1990s. Scholars of Turkey have yet to assess Tansu Çiller<sup>39</sup> despite her importance in Turkey's recent political history.

## Data and Method

This paper takes public domain texts as its data: as such, transcripts of *all* interviews with Çiller and *any* other spontaneous statements Çiller made are included in the analysis that follows. Only the words directly spoken by the leader, Tansu Çiller, are analysed here; that is, no comments paraphrased by others are included. Furthermore, only the content relevant to foreign policy issues is selected. Çiller's words are drawn from LexisNexis Academic, Factiva, and the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), and the Internet when transcripts were readily available on the Internet. The data include translations (from Turkish utterances into English) as well as Çiller's own words originally uttered in English. From July 1993 to February 1996, the analysis here uses 27,402 words of Tansu Çiller, pertaining only to foreign policy.<sup>40</sup> The data span the entire period Çiller was in office as

Turkey's prime minister. Hence, these interviews discuss various issues at various different times during her tenure in government and as such represent Çiller's general foreign policy approach.

ProfilPlus (Version 5.8.4, Social Science Automation) was used to analyse these texts, and to assess leadership traits scores for Çiller. Analysing text with this program guarantees uniformity in the treatment of text; the words are the data.<sup>41</sup>

## Çiller's Leadership Traits and Foreign Policy

Cizre claims that Çiller's own description of her personality characteristics emphasised "such man-like attributes as courage, endurance, determination, and militarism."<sup>42</sup> Arguably, with such an image, one can claim that Çiller did not greatly challenge customs in gender relations in Turkish society. On the contrary, as Cizre notes, Çiller never hesitated to use her gender to gain political advantage. For instance, Çiller's self-made titles were *Ana* (Mother) and *Bacı* (Sister), the most traditional images of woman in Turkey.<sup>43</sup> Çiller's "stylish Chanel suits" often were matched with a light veil she could wear when necessary in conservative settings.<sup>44</sup>

Çiller's record in office suggests that she was "motivated for power, egoistical interests, aggression, clientalism, and

political intrigues."<sup>45</sup> In addition, Çiller developed a "reputation for being confrontational and difficult to work with."<sup>46</sup> For instance, Mehmet Dülger, then a prominent member of Çiller's True Path Party, told the *Chicago Tribune* that Çiller had always had a problem of selecting the right team and getting along with team members.<sup>47</sup> According to her former press secretary, Çiller "doesn't handle people very well. She is not friendly or open. It's the result of both inexperience and insensitivity."<sup>48</sup> Quoting Çiller's aides and colleagues, Cizre portrays Çiller as an authoritarian leader, who lacked self-confidence and was not a good team player.<sup>49</sup> While these are broad observations about Çiller's personality, here the analyses specifically focus on Prime Minister Çiller's leadership traits in foreign policy and their repercussions on Turkish foreign policy.

Along with Turkish prime ministers' average scores, Table 3 displays Çiller's scores in all seven LTA traits. According to these results, Çiller has a close to average score in her Belief to Control Events and does not differ much from the rest of Turkish prime ministers in the post-Cold war era. In terms of Conceptual Complexity, Çiller is lower than the average Turkish leader. This suggests that Çiller was more likely than other Turkish leaders to interpret objects, ideas, events, or things in simple dichotomous good-bad, black-white,

either-or terms. Accordingly, Çiller would have had “difficulty in perceiving ambiguity in the environment” and would have responded “rather inflexibly to stimuli.”<sup>50</sup> Çiller has an almost average Need for Power; Prime Minister Çiller did not have significantly more (or less) concern for establishing, maintaining, or restoring power, control or influence over other persons or groups. Likewise, Çiller does not deviate much from an average Turkish prime minister with respect to her motivations in seeking office; according to the leadership traits technique, she would be expected to have either a task (solving problems) or a relationship focus depending on the context. In these four traits, Çiller does not seem to differ from the norming group, that is Turkey’s prime ministers in the post-Cold war era. However, in three traits Çiller deviates significantly from the average scores of Turkish prime ministers. Now, the discussion shifts to

Çiller’s unique leadership style and its impacts on Turkey’s foreign policy under her authority.

To start with, Çiller has the lowest self-confidence score among all of Turkey’s prime ministers in the post-Cold War era. Despite some claims to the contrary,<sup>51</sup> Cizre’s account of Çiller’s self-confidence is confirmed in Çiller’s leadership traits analysis. Arguably, in an example from domestic politics, her low self-confidence was the primary reason for Çiller’s giving in to the military during her tenure as prime minister. Prime Minister Çiller “lavishly praise[d]” the military and never challenged its role in politics; in fact, she was most comfortable delegating the PKK issue to the Turkish military.<sup>52</sup> In foreign affairs, Çiller’s low self-confidence may have been overshadowed by her other traits, namely distrust of others and in-group bias where Çiller displays high scores.

**Table 3: Çiller's LTA Profile\***

	Çiller's average profile	Average profile of Turkey's prime ministers since 1991
Belief in Ability to Control Events	.348	Mean = .351 Low < .319 High > .383
Conceptual Complexity	.538	Mean = .564 Low < .527 High > .601
Distrust of Others	.143	Mean = .138 Low < .097 High > .179
In-Group Bias	.170	Mean = .142 Low < .114 High > .170
Need for Power	.278	Mean = .287 Low < .243 High > .331
Self-Confidence	.305	Mean = .400 Low < .320 High > .480
Task Focus	.610	Mean = .637 Low < .572 High > .702

Source: Barış Kesgin, *Political Leadership and Foreign Policy in Post-Cold War Israel and Turkey*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 2011.

\*The average Turkish prime minister profile includes scores for Süleyman Demirel, Tansu Çiller, Mesut Yılmaz, Necmettin Erbakan, Bülent Ecevit, Abdullah Gül, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (in chronological order) from November 1991 to 31 December 2009.

According to the results shown in Table 3, Çiller has lower than average scores in all but Distrust of Others<sup>53</sup> and In-Group Bias traits. In the rankings of these both traits in the norming group, Tansu Çiller is second only to

Necmettin Erbakan. This is indeed very telling of Çiller's foreign policy. For Çiller, Turkey's location forced it to be prudent and cautious of others: "We of course, as a nation in this part of the world, are watching what the neighbours

are doing. We watched that in Iraq, we watched that in Europe, we watched that elsewhere and there is no reason why we should not be concerned as to what is happening on our borders and in our neighbourhood.”<sup>54</sup> Then, according to Çiller, Turkey was the central state in the world and its culture and status were of the utmost significance:

We are very proud of our democratic heritage. We have all the institutions of democracy, the parliament, the free press, all the other institutions. And we are proud of what we have set forth as an example for the other 52 Muslim countries, and it's a model, either the Iranian model or the Turkish model, we have two models now. Turkey is the only stable country in the Middle East which has access to 200 million Turkish-speaking people that have disintegrated from the former Soviet Union- the Azerbaijanis, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. We are the country, as you know, with the support of the United States administration who will be providing the energy needs of Europe via the pipeline, petroleum pipeline and natural gas pipeline of Azerbaijan, of Turkmenistan, of Kazakhstan, passing through Turkey to Jehan [*sic*] to the Mediterranean to Europe. It is not a country that can be neglected with the water reserves.<sup>55</sup>

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Çiller's discourse and policy preferences reflected her desire for a strong move- which was only reconciled with other participants' calm in the decision-making processes.

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According to the Leadership Traits Analysis, it is predicted that leaders

with high scores in both Distrust of Others and In-group Bias will focus on eliminating potential threats and problems. These leaders perceive the world to be centred around adversaries, and they intend to spread their power. Moreover, such leaders are expected to take risks, because they think it is a moral imperative to challenge those adversaries. As her leadership traits profile suggests, Çiller's "militarism" may very well be an outcome of her high Distrust of Others and In-group Bias scores.<sup>56</sup> One can trace the impact of these two traits in the examples of Kardak crisis with Greece and Çiller's approach to the fight against the PKK.

First, during the Kardak crisis in late 1995, Çiller's discourse and policy preferences reflected her desire for a strong move- which was only reconciled with other participants' calm in the decision-making processes. In reaction to the news that there was a Greek flag on the Kardak islets and that Greek soldiers had "occupied" them, Çiller quickly declared that "that flag will come down, those soldiers will go back to Greece." This reflected Çiller's discourse as observed by others: "[Çiller] liked pounding her hand on the table when talking. She used a language of force: *we act; we break; we demolish.*"<sup>57</sup> During the Kardak crisis Çiller said "This is our legacy: We do not give away territory. We do not concede even an inch of territory or a pebble. We can sacrifice lives, but not pebbles..."<sup>58</sup> In

fact, as Turkish policymakers formulated their response to these events, Çiller is said to have suggested even tougher policies than those of the Turkish military. Had Turkey preferred the military action as proposed by Çiller, it was quite likely that Greece and Turkey would have been at war. Two weeks after the Mediterranean calmed down, Çiller signalled that Turkey's response would be firm should Greece retaliate again and that the Turkish position was simply indisputable:

If they bring soldiers to Kardak and hoist a flag once again, the same thing will happen. We are saying: *Do not create a de facto situation by opening up the place for settlement. We will not allow this. We would regard this as a genuine provocation and a cause for war. [...]* In our view, all these issues are very clear. If we are being told: There are things that you are not aware of and this is why we claim that we have rights, then they should come and show us the relevant documents. [...] *We are aware of what was given to Greece through agreements. There is no question about those areas*<sup>59</sup> [emphasis added].

Likewise, another issue where one can observe Çiller's hawkish policies was the fight against the PKK during her tenure as prime minister. Responding to questions about a Turkish cross-border operation against the PKK in northern Iraq, Çiller said that "the terrorists have settled down there and to attack back to my country to kill the innocent people. So we had to do something about it to stop it. We will withdraw in the shortest possible time, and we are- we have

already started doing that. But I have to specify that if that kind of thing happens again, we will have to do the same thing again."<sup>60</sup> Similar to the Kardak example, it is reported that Çiller once proposed to attack possible PKK targets in Iran. This was, however, overruled by then President Demirel.<sup>61</sup> Such examples are abound: earlier in her tenure, reacting to the tension in the Caucasus Çiller did not hesitate to declare, "If one inch of Nakhichevan soil is touched and there is any attempt to change its status then I will call on parliament to authorize war and to send in troops. We are currently reviewing all the possibilities. The Turkish army is drawing up preliminary plans for every scenario, and it is waiting the government's decision."<sup>62</sup>

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**In essence, Çiller was responsive to and attentive of the international constraints Turkey faced at the time and could not risk Turkey's relations with the United States.**

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Çiller, according to her LTA profile, respects constraints and is not likely to challenge them. Then, Çiller is open to contextual information, since her Conceptual Complexity score is higher than her Self-Confidence score. When compared to the average score of a Turkish prime minister, Çiller's low

Conceptual Complexity was evident in her electoral speeches: occasionally Çiller said that “we [True Path Party] either win or win.”<sup>63</sup> Finally, Çiller’s Task Focus score is below the mean but is higher than the low mark. Overall, Çiller has a collegial leadership style. According to Hermann, collegial leaders “focus their attention on reconciling differences and building consensus and on gaining prestige through empowering others and sharing accountability.”<sup>64</sup> This, however, does not fit well with Çiller’s image as has been accounted so far. The LTA can offer an explanation: the interpretation of Çiller’s Task Focus score would make a difference. Compared to the world leader average score, all Turkish prime ministers have a rather higher score in Task Focus.<sup>65</sup> If Çiller too were considered to have a higher score relative to an average world leader, then she would be problem focused rather than relationship focused. Given this LTA assessment, Çiller would be expected to have an opportunistic leadership style. This in fact appears to explain Çiller’s leadership: opportunistic leaders “focus on assessing what is possible in light of one’s goals and considering what important constituencies will allow.” In essence, Çiller was responsive to and attentive of the international constraints Turkey faced at the time and could not risk Turkey’s relations with the United States.

## Conclusion

“Who leads matters.”<sup>66</sup> In addition to domestic and international constraints, decision-making processes are bound by leaders’ constraints. Psychological approaches to international relations offer scholars the tools to delineate the individual (as well as group) level limitations on decision-making. Building on current research in political leadership studies, this study shows that at-a-distance assessments of political leaders provide the means to conduct research on world leaders in a systematic manner. Furthermore, their conclusions go well beyond subjective appraisals of political leaders.

Since this area of research is a relatively young scholarly vocation and remains heavily oriented towards Western leaders, there are plenty of opportunities in exploring non-Western leaders. The study of Turkish leaders and of its foreign policy with an emphasis on leadership can benefit from and contribute to this literature. The leadership traits profile of Tansu Çiller here illustrates the utility of a systematic assessment of personality in understanding Turkish foreign policy.

The arguments put forward in this paper and its findings advance our understanding of Turkish foreign policy. First, this paper shows that personality-oriented studies can significantly contribute to the study of Turkish

foreign policy. Çiller as Turkey's prime minister shaped its foreign policy in tumultuous times, and her personality clearly emerged throughout her tenure—for instance, as discussed here, during the Kardak crisis. Çiller's reactions and policy at the time can be interpreted through her leadership traits and style. Compared to all the prime ministers of Turkey since 1991, Çiller exhibited three distinct traits as a leader: low self-confidence, high distrust of others, and high in-group bias. This paper has argued that Çiller's low self-confidence (the lowest self-confidence among all of Turkey's prime ministers in the post-Cold War era) might have had its roots in the domestic political environment (the influence of the military and the economic and political instability of the 1990s). In foreign affairs, more specifically, Çiller's high distrust of other and high in-group bias (both the second highest among the Turkish leadership) significantly impacted her choices and actions. As it was discussed with multiple other examples along with the cases of the fight against PKK and the Kardak crisis, these traits primarily led Çiller to take an approach that focused on eliminating potential threats and problems. Inarguably, there is much to explore

in Çiller's tenure as prime minister; this study is an initial attempt. Çiller's management of Turkey's relations with the European Union (more specifically, the decision-making processes that led to the signing of the Customs Union agreement) would be the best case study to look further into Çiller's leadership and decision-making.<sup>67</sup>

Second, this paper contributes to the study of Turkish foreign policy by introducing a well-established method of assessing political leadership. Using such methods (operational code analysis, image theory, etc.), scholars of Turkish foreign affairs as well as policymakers can reach methodologically sound and theoretically informed understanding of factors influential to Turkey's foreign policy. Moreover, this paper contributes to the broader literature on the methodology that it employs: Çiller's leadership traits correspond well with her foreign policy preferences and behaviour. As such, in addition to some extant literature, this paper illustrates that the Leadership Traits Analysis as a method is applicable to non-Western leadership. In this study, this literature expands to a new territory in Turkey.



## Endnotes

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- cover portraying her in armor as a Turkish version of Joan of Arc”. Another account of Tansu Çiller published in *The New Republic* (7 July 1997) also illustrates this: Çiller “would not be averse to being called “Anatürk”.
- 52 Cizre, “Tansu Çiller”, p. 203. It is noteworthy that the military’s role in the 1990s also increased due to political and economic instability. This, however, does not take away from the fact that Çiller did not object to the military’s role in domestic (for instance, the PKK) or foreign (for example, relations with Israel) policy matters. Otherwise, this argument does not apply to Çiller’s later fight with the military during the Refah-Yol coalition. Then, Çiller was the deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs. The analysis here depends solely on Çiller the prime minister.
- 53 Çiller’s Distrust of Others score is not significantly higher than the average score; yet, if Erbakan (with a score more than two standard deviations higher than the mean) is an outlier in this trait, then Çiller’s distrust of others becomes more significant.
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# Islamist and Nationalistic Attachments as Determinants of Political Preferences in Turkey

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## Abstract

*In this article we examine the mechanism by which the political opinions of Turkish citizens can be explained on the basis of attachments to Islam and the Turkish nation. Using insights from political psychology we review the dynamic role of these considerations as determinants of political judgements. We explore studies that question the appropriateness of a unidimensional scale of Islamism vs. Secularism in explaining citizens' political placements, and we argue that the two ideologies can influence concurrently the way citizens think about politics. We use data from our survey of 107 Turkish citizens conducted in 2009 to examine whether attachments to Islam and the*

*nation function as co-determinants of public attitudes. We focus on the political orientations of supporters of the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP). We expect that Kemalist nationalism but not Islamist attachments dominate the considerations of these voters in line with their party's positions. We uncover significant evidence of Islamist considerations in their evaluation of political issues indicating that Islamist and nationalistic considerations co-shape citizens' attitudes.*

## Key Words

Political ideology, political behaviour, attitudinal orientation, Kemalist Secular Nationalism, Islamism, Religiosity.

## Introduction

Historically, Islamism and Kemalist secular nationalism have been the main competitors in the socio-political mosaic of Turkey. Until recently, studies of Turkish politics used the dichotomy of Islamism versus secularism to understand public opinion.<sup>1</sup> In their 2006 study, Çarkoğlu and Toprak empirically

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demonstrate that the boundaries between Islamism and secularism have become more fluid in recent years.<sup>2</sup> About a quarter of the participants in their study found it difficult to place themselves in either side of the Islamism vs. secularism scale, and instead opted for the middle ground.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that for a large proportion of the population the cleavage between Islamism and secularism is no longer meaningful.<sup>4</sup> If the boundaries of the two ideologies have become blurred, perhaps the public adopts in their consideration of political issues elements of each ideology that are in agreement with their own values and principles.

Our study extends this debate by examining the degree to which citizens use the main components of these ideologies in their everyday political preferences. We focus on attachment to Islam as the main principle of Islamism, and attachment to the nation as the main principle of Kemalism, and measure their impact on four sets of political attitudes: confidence towards political institutions, religiosity and faith, Turkish identity and citizenship, and modernisation. Is the influence of attachments to Islam and the nation polarising, or are citizens driven towards a reconciliatory type of political attitudes? We argue that Turkish citizens do not experience attachment to Islam and nationalism as antithetical; instead both considerations co-shape their issue preferences and political behaviours.<sup>5</sup>

Historically, several studies have identified the conflictual relationship between secularisation and the struggle for the preservation of Islamic authenticity that led to the polarisation of public opinion in Turkey.<sup>6</sup> Recently, Çarkoğlu has shown that the change in the ideological base of parties taking place in Turkey has an impact on public opinion.<sup>7</sup> Taniyici also provides evidence that the directional change of the ideological rhetoric as articulated by the pro-Islamist elite has led to the transformation of its main principles promoted by its party advocates.<sup>8</sup> This has had a direct effect on the electoral basis of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) as examined by Taniyici. In addition, Başlevent examines the effects of this change on the political behaviour of AKP party supporters: the positive positioning of the AKP towards EU membership coincided with an increase in the electoral support of the party, bringing to the electoral base new supporters belonging to the liberal segments of society.<sup>9</sup>

The above studies set the discussion on these new developments in Turkish politics, and point to potential avenues for the exploration of interesting new trends in aggregate public opinion. But because the focus of these studies remains at the aggregate level, they cannot shed light on the determinants of citizens' considerations as they make



their political choices. In our study, we address this gap by adopting a political psychology approach. Studies in political psychology often show that examining what drives the political preferences of individuals can uncover relationships between ideological inclinations that political science models often consider antithetical.<sup>10</sup> Instead of just looking at the outcome of political preferences, a political psychology approach takes into account the antecedents, motives, considerations, values, and emotions that citizens employ when thinking and making decisions about politics. Political psychology studies focus on the determinants of political judgments, and seek to identify the cognitive and affective map by which citizens make political choices. In our article we examine the role of citizens' attitudes towards Islam and the nation, in order to understand how Turkish citizens reach their judgements on significant issues. Our aim is not to quantify aggregate public opinion, but to understand how citizens arrive at their opinions by internalising the two political ideologies that dominate the Turkish political arena. This individual-level approach is complementary to aggregate studies that

focus on electoral outcomes, and together they allow for a more substantive study of public opinion in Turkey.

Our study complements research that examines the transformation of the political agenda of the main political parties in Turkey, originally documented by Çarkoğlu.<sup>11</sup> Our focus, however, is not at the party or elite level, but on the determinants of citizens' attitudes, and in particular the preferences of supporters of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP). Our analysis explores whether the emergence

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The "sacrifice" of the domination of religion is the price that Turkey has had to pay in order to move towards a modern nation-state according to the Western pattern.

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and development of the AKP's agenda has had an effect on CHP supporters, since this party is the main social and political opponent of the AKP. Although the agendas of the

two political parties have fundamental differences, we are interested in their shared influences on individual political attitudes.<sup>12</sup> We measure the extent to which attachments to the nation are complemented by attachments to Islam as they shape considerations for CHP supporters. If Islamism and Kemalist secularism populate opposite ends of the ideological continuum in Turkey, we should not see the influence of Islamist considerations on the opinions of voters that are traditionally driven



by nationalist considerations. If, on the other hand, attachments to the nation share a space with attachments to Islam in citizens' opinions, this is preliminary evidence of the interaction of the two ideologies in citizens' judgments. This is the puzzle that our article addresses and explains.

The contribution of our work is three-fold. First, we engage with scholars that examine the dynamic development of public opinion in Turkey by offering evidence at the individual level. Our political psychology approach focuses on individual opinions to show how they internalise components of the dominant ideological orientations. Rather than looking at aggregate trends and predicting electoral behaviour, we are interested in identifying the determinants of citizens' opinions. Second, we address the debate on the tension between Islamism and Kemalist secularism by offering new evidence of the presence of Islamist considerations in the issue preferences of CHP voters. We argue that attachments to Islam and the nation are intertwined, rather than polarising, pillars of Turkish public opinion, and urge for further investigation of their complex relationship. Lastly, this study expands current public opinion models developed in the West to study societies that function within a different framework and historical background, tradition and political context.

## The Turkish Paradigm of the Clash of Kemalist Nationalism and Islamism

To understand the complex contextual framework which affects citizens' ideological and issue preferences, and consequently the nature of the dynamic relationship between Kemalist nationalism and Islamism in Turkey, here we provide a brief overview of the debates around the issues of religiosity, attitudes towards the state, and modernisation, which we examine in detail in our empirical section.

### *Kemalist Nationalism, Secularisation, and Islamism*

The socio-political evolution that is taking place in Turkey today is deeply rooted in the two ideological principles of Kemalist *secularism* and *nationalism*.<sup>13</sup> The Kemalist ideology with these two pillars aimed at the creation of a new republican state by promoting the homogenisation of society.<sup>14</sup> The influence of Islam on politics, economics, education and culture was seen as the most important barrier towards modernisation.<sup>15</sup> For nationalists, religion is a private issue and the politicisation of religion is undesirable. The "sacrifice" of the domination of religion is the price that Turkey has had to pay in order to move towards a

modern nation-state according to the Western pattern.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, national identity is predominantly *Turkish*, while the Turkish state is the agent that has to be obeyed.

Islamism grew in opposition to the nationalist view of modernisation promoted by Kemalism, and it saw modernisation as a threat against authenticity and traditional values and principles. Islamists developed a sense of obedience towards the state to the extent that it promotes and respects the Islamic values and principles.<sup>17</sup> For Islamists, national identity is primarily *Islamic* and is related to the values and principles of the Turkish nation.<sup>18</sup> According to this belief, religion can appear in both the public and private spheres of the nation-state.

These differences have been the basis for the argument that Islamism and secularisation are at opposite ends of the same continuum. How do Turkish citizens negotiate this relationship? Do they internalise this conflict, adopting only one or the other ideology? After the AKP's electoral win in 2002, the CHP has been using the threat against the Kemalist basis of the republic as a way to delegitimise parties with explicit or implicit connections with the Islamic movement.<sup>19</sup> But the 2010 AKP win in the referendum regarding constitutional reforms opened the path for significant transformations on the role of the

military, social and economic rights as well as several judicial reforms. Can we identify any effects of the directional change that took place in recent years in the narratives of the political advocates of Islamism and secular Kemalism on citizens' political attitudes? To answer this, we need to look into how attachments to Islam and the nation, the characteristic elements of Islamism and Kemalism secular nationalism respectively, have been internalised by Turkish citizens in the current political climate.

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**When it comes to issues involving religion, the discourse of the dominant political parties was traditionally oppositional.**

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A number of studies have examined the development of political Islam and the nature and role of the AKP in Turkish politics.<sup>20</sup> However, there is a lack of studies examining the impact of the transformation of political Islam on CHP supporters. We argue that if the transformation of the AKP has had an effect on the societal basis of Turkish society, this effect might also be evident in the political preferences of the supporters of the CHP regarding major debates such as support for political institutions, religiosity, national identity and modernisation.

### *The Determinants of Institutional Support, Religiosity, National Identity, and Modernisation*

When citizens evaluate political institutions and organisations, they often identify them as entities that represent the boundaries of particular ideologies. We therefore expect that Islamist and nationalistic attachments should be clearly differentiated when it comes to attitudes towards state-based and international institutions. Nationalistic attachments should generate a critical stance towards an AKP-led state, in line with Kemalist principles, and confidence in the military and the courts as the traditional protectors of the Kemalist inheritance. Islamist attachments should predict favourable attitudes towards the state as well as towards the parliament where the AKP holds the majority of the seats, and also high confidence towards religious leaders.

There are however other areas of Turkish politics where the influences of nationalistic and Islamist attachments might not be as clearly marked: *religiosity*, where attachments to Islam traditionally dominated the debate but have recently become less rigid; *Turkish identity*, where the role of nationalistic attachments traditionally defined political perceptions but have been more relaxed; and *modernisation* where both

elements have been shown to recently share influence in determining public attitudes.

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**Unlike the traditional Islamic parties, the AKP has not pursued Islamic policies with the aim to transform the state and society under the rule of religion.**

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When it comes to issues involving religion, the discourse of the dominant political parties was traditionally oppositional. The CHP and its Kemalist state proponents have promoted the complete control of religion by the state and the subsequent marginalisation of religion in the private sphere. The AKP's agenda combines religion with the secular values of Turkey. Namely, it has supported secularism in line with democratic values and freedom rights, with religion working as a social value. Unlike the traditional Islamic parties, the AKP has not pursued Islamic policies with the aim to transform the state and society under the rule of religion. It has, however, promoted Islamic ethics and ways of life in terms of religious values and principles.<sup>21</sup> For all citizens, religious considerations should be positively associated with Islamist attachments, so that high levels of Islamist attachment would predict high levels of religiosity. However, when we examine the

*religiosity of CHP supporters*, a group that has traditionally been influenced by the Kemalist nationalist agenda that was oppositional to religion, we would expect nationalistic attachments to have a negative effect on the endorsement of the influence of religion in public life. This is in line with the CHP's agenda that promotes the marginalisation of religion into the private sphere under the complete control of the state. We expect to find that secular principles are associated with high levels of nationalistic attachments which oppose the domination of religion in public life.

Turning to issues of Turkish identity, we expect attachments to the nation to dominate citizens' orientations, particularly to supporters of the CHP. The CHP retains the party's strong historical orientation towards nationalism and secularism while also following the Kemalist inheritance of a state-controlled economy.<sup>22</sup> The Kemalist version of nationalism has always been hostile to the politicisation of any other identity besides the state and the nation.<sup>23</sup> For the AKP, national identity is Islamic *and* modern;<sup>24</sup> traditional values and principles go hand in hand with the universalist perspective combined with the local. This rationalism does not ignore the religious understanding of life. The "new Turkish citizen" is subject to this mixture of Islamic authenticity and liberal transformation. As Erdoğan stated, the AKP supports a system that

incorporates local and traditional values and principles as well as the universal trends of conservatism.<sup>25</sup> For that matter, if the AKP's agenda is successful in reaching the Turkish public, there should be evidence of the influence of Islamist attachments on the attitudes towards Turkish identity even among CHP voters.

When we consider issues such as the preservation of "Turkishness" a discussion of tolerance of *ethnic diversity and minority rights* is inevitable. Kemalism has historically stood against any form of compromise with minority populations; therefore, nationalistic attachments should highlight negative attitudes towards minorities. Islamism on the other hand promotes support of cultural rights of minorities on the basis of their shared Islamic identity. Islamist attachments therefore should be associated with a tolerance towards minorities.

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The "new Turkish citizen" is subject to this mixture of Islamic authenticity and liberal transformation.

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How citizens perceive Turkey's future is expected to be influenced by both Islamist and nationalistic considerations. As we saw earlier, Kemalist nationalism was the advocate of modernisation in the early days of the republic, promoting

the transformation of the country into a modern and secular nation state. “Turkishness” and the affiliation with the Turkish nation-state were viewed as the mandatory characteristics of modern citizenry.<sup>26</sup> Today the AKP and its conservative liberal democratic rhetoric is a proponent of Turkey’s modernisation and Europeanisation project.<sup>27</sup> Clear testaments of the influence of AKP to notions of modernisation and progress

are its principle aims to lead the country towards the EU accession with a movement of “Muslim democrats” in which Islam provides a cultural background.<sup>28</sup> So when it comes to attitudes towards *internationalisation and modernisation*, we expect attachment to Islam and the nation to share influence at the individual level among CHP supporters. Our expectations are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Issue Orientations of Kemalist Nationalism and Islamism**

	<b>Kemalist nationalism</b>	<b>Islamism</b>
<b>Confidence towards institutions</b>	Confidence towards the judicial system (courts) and military. (positive influence)	Confidence towards the parliament, police and religious leaders. (positive influence)
<b>Religiosity</b>	Low importance of religion in public life. Religion is a private matter, which lies away from the political spectrum. (negative influence)	High importance of religion. Religion has a social value that cannot be overwhelmed by modernisation processes. (positive influence)
<b>Turkish identity</b>	Emphasis on the secular state (positive influence)	Emphasis on traditional values and principles. (positive influence)
<b>Ethnic diversity and minority rights</b>	Against any form of compromising with minority demands. Defend Turkish national unity. (negative influence)	Support towards Islamic-defined unity of the nation. Support cultural rights of Muslim minorities. (positive influence)
<b>Attitudes towards the state</b>	Respect towards the secular basis of state and Kemalist principles. (negative influence)	Respect towards the current government and the state. (positive influence)
<b>Modernisation</b>	Agreement in line with the Kemalist inheritance. (positive influence)	Conservative modernisation in line with the Turkish and Islamic values and traditions. (positive influence)

To summarise, here we examined the conditions under which Islamist and nationalistic attachments share the Turkish political and societal space and apply parallel influence on citizens' considerations. Existing public opinion and political behaviour studies in Turkey mainly provide an analysis of the social and political cleavages that formulate the volatile and fragmented basis of the Turkish electoral body focusing particularly on their impact on voting behaviour and party preferences. The main dimensions examined in the literature are the centre-periphery cleavage, the left-right dichotomy, and Islamism against Kemalist secularism.<sup>29</sup> Other studies have looked at the effects of religiosity, the early formation of political inclinations, as well as identity, education, and economic considerations.<sup>30</sup> These investigations are important as they set the stage for understanding how citizens reach their judgments, providing the basic explanatory models of voting behaviour and party preference. Our study asks whether attachments to the nation and Islam should be considered as antithetical forces or as co-determinants of voters' political preferences.

## Research Methodology and Data Collection

Existing public opinion surveys do not contain measures that would allow us to test our hypotheses, and aggregate

polling data do not allow for individual-level analyses.<sup>31</sup> To overcome these shortcomings, we collected survey data in August 2009 using self-administered questionnaires which contained measures of attachment to the nation and to Islam and political preferences on several indicators of religiosity, national identity and modernisation. The survey recorded the opinions of 107 Turkish citizens living in Ankara.<sup>32</sup>

### *Survey Location and Sample Characteristics*

Based on its electoral returns, the Ankara province appears to be an AKP stronghold.<sup>33</sup> Since 2002, the electoral returns for the AKP in the country's capital have been significantly increasing, and are higher than the electoral returns of the CHP. In contrast, other major cities have a lower percentage of AKP voters and a higher percentage of CHP voters. We administered our survey in Ankara, expecting that the strong electoral position of the AKP would generate high levels of polarisation among CHP and AKP supporters, putting to test the influences of Islamist attachments on their orientations. A second scenario is also plausible: that the high support that the AKP receives in this province might make the influence of the AKP's ideological orientations such as attachment to Islam more evident in the political preferences of CHP

supporters. In our study, about 73% of our participants are CHP voters and the main analyses that follow are conducted only on these participants.

Turkey's population is heterogeneous in terms of the determinants of political orientations such as in ideological levels, religiosity strength and traditionalism.<sup>34</sup> We used a large number of initial contacts and tried to ensure that the participants for our study came from different socio-political backgrounds. Because we are interested in identifying the considerations of voters as they reach their political preferences, rather than putting forth arguments about the political orientations of the average Turkish citizen, or providing estimates of public opinion trends, it is not problematic for our study that the sample is not representative of the population. In essence, we are interested in tracing the *process* of decision making, rather than making claims about population averages. We do recognise, however, that generalising our results should be done with caution, keeping into account the characteristics of our sample (middle class, higher educated, mostly male participants, living in Ankara).<sup>35</sup>

### *Questionnaire and Measures*

The survey contained measures of our two predictor variables, attachment to Islam and the nation. We measured Islamist attachments by the extent

to which participants felt part of the Islamic world and attachment to the nation by the extent to which they felt part of the Turkish nation.<sup>36</sup> These two variables captured the main characteristics of Islamism and Kemalist secular nationalism. To identify CHP supporters, we asked which party participants voted for in the last elections. About 67 participants reported voting for CHP and they are the ones we label CHP supporters in the analyses that follow.

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Participants were asked whether people should be tolerant of those who choose to live according to their own moral standards even if they are different from their own.

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Our survey also contained measures of our dependent variables: confidence towards political actors and institutions, political attitudes on religiosity and faith, national identity, tolerance, respect for minorities, citizenship, and modernisation, which allowed us to test our expectation of the impact of Islamist considerations on a large number of significant political preferences. All employed measures used scales from 0 to 10 to allow for easy comparisons across variables. We asked questions regarding confidence towards different

political actors and organisations in order to determine whether attachments to the nation and Islam favour particular political groups. Here we expected clear differentiations on the basis of political ideology. Specifically we asked participants to indicate how much confidence they had towards religious leaders, the courts, labour unions, political parties, the parliament, police, the armed forces, the EU and the UN. To measure religiosity we asked participants whether they were religious, how important Allah was in their lives, and how important religion was for the country. To measure attitudes towards the state, respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of the country in having strong defence forces and maintaining a stable economy. To measure orientations towards ethnic diversity, we asked whether ethnic diversity enriches life. To measure attitudes towards the rights of minorities we asked whether participants would support granting cultural rights to minority populations. We also examined tolerance towards different groups in society. Participants were asked whether people should be tolerant of those who choose to live according to their own moral standards even if they are different from their own. We also measured opinions towards the perceptions of national identity by asking participants whether certain characteristics should be a requirement for the attainment of Turkish citizenship: having ancestors

from Turkey, being born in Turkey, having adopted Turkey's customs, and being a law-abiding citizen. Attitudes towards modernisation were measured by questions asking whether tradition and modern values should coexist, whether modern values are more important than tradition, and whether modern values should respect tradition. Finally, participants were asked whether they agreed with the statement that people should adjust their behaviour to the changing world.<sup>37</sup>

### *Analyses and Findings*

First, we examined levels of political confidence to get an understanding of how Islamist and national attachments can reflect attitudes towards political institutions. In examining the average confidence ratings of CHP supporters towards political institutions we noticed significant variability, reflecting the affiliations of CHP voters with particular political groups and institutions. As we see in Table 2, levels of confidence towards religious leaders, the parliament, political parties, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) were lower than 3 points on a 0 to 10 scale. On the other hand, the armed forces, the courts, and labour unions received higher scores of confidence from 5 to 6 points on the same scale.



**Table 2: Average Scores on Political Attitudes of CHP Supporters**

	CHP supporters mean (st. deviation)
Confidence: Religious leaders	1.9 (2.1)
Confidence: Parliament	2.3 (2.19)
Confidence: Political parties	2.3 (2.2)
Confidence: EU	2.5 (2.2)
Confidence: UN	2.8 (2.4)
Confidence: Labour unions	4.8 (2.3)
Confidence: Courts	5.4 (2.4)
Confidence: Armed forces	5.9 (2.6)
Importance: Allah in life	6.3 (2.8)
Importance: Religion in Turkey	7.7 (1.8)
Citizenship: Having Turkish ancestors	4.3 (3.3)
Citizenship: Being born on Turkish soil	4.3 (3.1)
Citizenship: Adopt customs	6.3 (2.6)
Citizenship: Abide laws	7.6 (2.4)
Agreement: State is sacred and must be loved and obeyed unconditionally	3.6 (3.1)
Importance: Being a world citizen	7.3 (2.5)
Importance: Giving people more to say in government decisions	8.9 (1.4)
Importance: Protecting freedom of speech	9.3 (1.2)
Importance: Having strong defence forces	7.1 (2.3)
Importance: Having strong economy	9.4 (.9)
Agreement: Ethnic diversity enriches life	8.6 (1.7)
Agreement: Giving cultural rights to minorities	8.6 (1.5)
Agreement: Tolerating different moral standards	9.1 (1.4)
Agreement: Newer lifestyles contribute to the breakdown of society	4.7 (3.0)
Agreement: Modern values are more important than tradition	5.6 (2.5)
Agreement: People should adjust their behaviour to the changing world	6.3 (2.7)
Agreement: Modern values should respect traditions	6.7 (2.8)
Agreement: Modern values should coexist with tradition	8.6 (1.9)

Note: Values are means, standard errors in parenthesis. All variables are measured on 0-10 scales, with 0 indicating lack of confidence, lack of importance, or lack of agreement, and 10 indicating very high confidence, a great deal of importance, or very strong agreement.

Because of the differentiation in the levels of confidence towards these political institutions, we examined the effects of attachments to the nation and Islam on attitudes towards each institution separately by running several regression analyses presented in Table 3. An interesting pattern becomes evident when we examine the significance of the regression coefficients: attachments to the nation predict confidence towards some institutions and attachments to Islam towards others, indicating that it is not just the nationalist orientations that shape CHP supporters' levels of confidence. Islamist considerations also come to mind under specific circumstances and colour the judgments of CHP voters. Characteristically, we see that a unit increase in attachments to the nation among CHP supporters causes a .16 point increase in confidence towards the parliament, but a .47 point decline in confidence towards political parties. A unit increase in attachments to the nation also causes a .40 point decline in confidence towards the EU and a .34 point decline towards the UN. These numbers indicate that among CHP voters, attachments to the nation act mainly as moderators rather than stimulators of political confidence. The negative effects of nationalistic attachments on confidence towards the

EU and the UN are more than double in size compared to their positive effect on confidence towards the parliament.

At the same time we noticed the compensating impact of Islamist attachments on these evaluations. A unit increase in Islamist attachments among CHP voters causes a .13 point increase in confidence towards the EU and .18 point increase in confidence towards the UN. As attachments to Islam become more pronounced for these voters, confidence towards these international institutions is restored to a modest extent. The above effects show the shared but oppositional impact of the two ideologies on evaluations of political institutions. Islamist attachments appear also to affect CHP voters' confidence on their own. A unit increase in Islamist attachments leads to a .14 point decline in confidence towards labour unions, and a .15 point decline in confidence towards the courts showing that when Islamist considerations become salient in the minds of CHP voters, they work against the overall favourable evaluations of these institutions. Interestingly however, this moderating impact of Islamic considerations by .15 points is less powerful than the moderating impact of nationalistic considerations by .40 or more points that we saw earlier.

**Table 3: Confidence in Institutions**

		<b>CHP supporters</b>	
<b>Confidence in the parliament</b>	Constant	.06	(1.54)
	Attachment to Islam	.19	(.07)
	Attachment to the nation	.16 **	(.17)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.09	
	N	67	
<b>Confidence in political parties</b>	Constant	6.04 ***	(1.57)
	Attachment to Islam	.11	(.07)
	Attachment to the nation	-.47 **	(.17)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.10	
	N	67	
<b>Confidence in labour unions</b>	Constant	5.50 ***	(1.64)
	Attachment to Islam	-.14 <sup>+</sup>	(.07)
	Attachment to the nation	-.02	(.18)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.02	
	N	67	
<b>Confidence in courts</b>	Constant	5.38 **	(1.72)
	Attachment to Islam	-.015 <sup>+</sup>	(.08)
	Attachment to the nation	.07	(.19)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.03	
	N	67	
<b>Confidence in the EU</b>	Constant	5.57 ***	(1.5)
	Attachment to Islam	.13 <sup>+</sup>	(.07)
	Attachment to the nation	-.40 *	(.17)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.09	
	N	67	
<b>Confidence in the UN</b>	Constant	5.17 **	(1.7)
	Attachment to Islam	.18 *	(.08)
	Attachment to the nation	-.34 <sup>+</sup>	(.18)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.09	
	N	67	

Notes: <sup>+</sup> p<.1, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001. Variables recoded in 0-10 scales. Parameter estimates are unstandardised regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis.

Next, we examined areas where our theoretical discussion predicts that the influences of nationalistic and Islamist elements would not be clearly separated. First we examined *religiosity*. Here we expected that Islamist attachments would dominate the debate even among CHP voters. Nationalist attachments should be associated with the marginalisation of religion into the private sphere of life. We asked CHP voters to indicate the role of religion in their lives and the intensity of their religiosity. In Table 2 we saw that CHP voters scored an average of 6.3 on a scale of 0-10 when asked how important Allah was in their lives. They also scored 7.7 on a similar scale when asked how important religion was for their country. In addition, when asked whether they get comfort and strength from religion, about 35% answered positively, and 25% identified themselves as a religious person. This shows that religion is an

important issue, and attitudes towards religion should be studied further.

We proceeded to examine the degree to which attachments to the nation and Islam influence attitudes towards religion, and in particular perceptions of the importance of Allah in citizens' lives. Our results from the regression analysis in Table 4 show the pronounced effect of Islamist attachments and the non-significant role of attachments to the nation. This was in line with our expectations: religiosity is an area where the Islamist ideology has ownership. A unit increase in Islamist attachments on a 0 to 10 scale increases perceptions of the importance of Allah in citizens' lives by about .35 points among CHP voters. This indicates that when it comes to issues of religion, attachment to Islam has no party boundaries as it influences the opinions even of the supporters of the party that traditionally places secondary emphasis on religious considerations.

**Table 4: Attitudes Towards Religion**

		CHP supporters	
<b>Allah important in life</b>	Constant	5.04 *	(1.89)
	Attachment to Islam	.35 ***	(.09)
	Attachment to the nation	-.02	(.21)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.18	
	N	67	

Notes: \* p<.1, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001. Variables recoded in 0-10 scales. Parameter estimates are unstandardised regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis.

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Elements of Turkish identity that have been promoted by Islamic voices, such as the preservation of Islamist values and principles, could be seen as relevant even by CHP voters.

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The next area we tested involved perceptions of Turkish national identity. Here our expectation was that attachments to the nation should define support for national identity, particularly since we focus on CHP voters. However, elements of Turkish identity that have been promoted by Islamic voices, such as the preservation of Islamist values and principles, could be seen as relevant even by CHP voters. In other words, we expected a shared impact of the two ideologies, each focusing on different elements of the multifaceted concept of Turkish identity and citizenship. First, we asked CHP voters to identify the importance of having Turkish ancestors, being born on Turkish soil, adopting customs, and abiding by the laws of the state. The means reported in Table 2 show the preference of CHP voters for a law-oriented specification of citizenship with scores of 7.6 on a 0 to 10 scale for abiding by the laws. Being born on Turkish soil and having Turkish ancestors received modest evaluations of 4.3 points while adopting customs scored somewhat higher with 6.3 points.

We now turn to Table 5 which presents the regression results that identify the effects of attachments to Islam and the nation on these four components of Turkish citizenship. As we expected, attachments to Islam and the nation influence Turkish identity attitudes, but each affects different components of this complex consideration. Islamist attachments are significant predictors for seeing Turkish ancestry as important, being born in Turkey, and adopting customs. A unit increase in Islamist attachments leads to about a .20 point increase in these attitudes. On the other hand, attachments to the nation are a significant predictor of the opinion that following the law is what makes a good Turkish citizen. A unit increase in attachments to the nation, on a 0 to 10 scale, leads to a .55 point increase in this opinion. To recap, both considerations influence different aspects of thinking about what constitutes the identity of the nation. While attachments to Islam promote perceptions of citizenship that highlight tradition, ancestry and customs, attachments to the nation prime more state-oriented notions of citizenship. Notably, when significant, the size of the effect of nationalistic attachments is more than double of that of Islamic attachments, pointing to the dominant role of nationalistic considerations in the way CHP voters make up their minds about Turkish citizenship.

**Table 5: Elements of National Identity**

		CHP supporters	
<b>Citizenship: having ancestors</b>	Constant	2.62	(2.36)
	Attachment to Islam	.23 *	(.11)
	Attachment to the nation	.08	(.26)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.04	
	N	67	
<b>Citizenship: born on soil</b>	Constant	5.47 *	(2.25)
	Attachment to Islam	.20 +	(.10)
	Attachment to the nation	-.23	(.25)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.04	
	N	67	
<b>Citizenship: adopt customs</b>	Constant	3.95 *	(1.87)
	Attachment to Islam	.18 *	(.09)
	Attachment to the nation	.18	(.20)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.05	
	N	67	
<b>Citizenship: abide by laws</b>	Constant	2.32	(1.62)
	Attachment to Islam	.10	(.07)
	Attachment to the nation	.55 **	(.18)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.16	
	N	67	

Notes: + p<.1, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001. Variables recoded in 0-10 scales. Parameter estimates are unstandardised regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis.

Related to the idea of what constitutes a “true” Turkish citizen are attitudes towards the state, government and political participation. As we saw in Table 2, CHP voters have strong preferences towards protecting free speech and giving people more say in government decisions, scoring on average around 9 points on 0-10 scales. Here the opinions of CHP supporters appear to be homogeneous, as indicated by the high means and low standard deviations of these items. CHP voters also consider it important to be a world citizen, scoring on average 7.3 points on a 0-10 scale. On the other hand, they do not place much emphasis on obedience towards the state. To the statement “the state is sacred; it must be loved and obeyed unconditionally” the mean response was only 3.6 points on a 0-10 scale.

Table 6 presents the regression coefficients of national and Islamist attachments for each analysis. Here the effects of attachments to the nation and Islam depend on the attitude under consideration, and we can identify the shared influence of the two ideologies on these complex orientations of CHP supporters. First, we notice that here the opinions of CHP supporters were homogeneous; as in the case of giving people more say in governmental decisions, and protecting freedom of speech, any variability in responses is negatively predicted by Islamist attachments. A unit increase in Islamist attachments causes a .12 and .09 point

decline in these attitudes, showing that tension can exist in the ideological orientations of CHP supporters. When attachments to Islam penetrate political preferences, they play a moderating role on otherwise strongly held political opinions.

Islamist attachments are also statistically significant determinants of self-perceptions of being a world citizen. A unit increase in Islamist attachments causes a .15 point change. This finding is in line with the universalist approach followed by the AKP, but what is interesting here is that its influence holds even among CHP voters. We see that where opinions among CHP supporters are not strongly held, as with obedience towards the state, it is national attachments that appear to be a significant and positive predictor. A one unit increase in national attachments predicts a .61 point increase in obedience towards the state. The effect of nationalism again is in size three times larger compared to the effect of Islamic attachments, when the regression coefficients are significant. Nationalistic attachments are dominant and salient considerations in matters of obedience towards the state. The importance of giving people more say in government affairs and protecting freedom of speech is moderated by Islamic considerations, but only weakly. On these questions, the average responses of CHP voters show high favourability, evident in the high mean scores of these questions in Table 2.

**Table 6: Attitudes Towards the State, the Government and Political Participation**

		<b>CHP supporters</b>	
<b>Obeying the state</b>	Constant	-1.79	(2.23)
	Attachment to Islam	-.02	(.10)
	Attachment to the nation	.61 **	(.24)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.09	
	N	67	
<b>Giving people more say in government decisions</b>	Constant	9.95 ***	(.95)
	Attachment to Islam	-.12 **	(.04)
	Attachment to the nation	-.06	(.10)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>		.09
	N	67	
<b>Protecting freedom of speech</b>	Constant	10.02 ***	(.87)
	Attachment to Islam	-.09 *	(.04)
	Attachment to the nation	-.04	(.09)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>		.05
	N	67	
<b>See myself as world citizen</b>	Constant	3.80 *	(1.79)
	Attachment to Islam	.15 +	(.08)
	Attachment to the nation	.32	(.20)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.06	
	N	67	

Notes: + p<.1, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001. Variables recoded in 0-10 scales. Parameter estimates are unstandardised regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis.



A similar observation can be made regarding issues of national politics, where we see that different considerations are determined by Islamist and national attachments. We asked participants to rate the importance of making sure that Turkey has strong defence forces and maintains a stable economy as a matter of top priority for the country for the next 10 years. Both questions were on 0-10 scales where 0 was not at all important and 10 was very important. As we saw in Table 2, the economy was considered as very important, with a score of 9.4 points out of 10, while on the issue of strong defence, CHP supporters on average gave a score of 7.1 points.

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We see the positive effect of nationalistic attachments as evidence of the influence of the Islamist considerations of recognition and tolerance towards minorities on the political ideology of CHP voters.

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Table 7 shows the results of the OLS regression analyses of attachments to Islam and the nation on the economy and defence. Attachments to Islam are a significant negative predictor of attitudes towards economic growth. A unit increase in Islamist attachments causes a .07 point decline in the importance of the economy. This is a modest negative

effect and points to one more area where opinions among CHP voters showed homogeneity, and are moderated by Islamist considerations. This might be because since 2002 the economy has flourished under the watch of the AKP government, and thus Islamist considerations make the importance of the economy somewhat less salient in voters' minds. Where opinions of CHP supporters had more variability, as in the case of the importance of defence forces, attachments to the nation and Islam had antithetical impact. A unit increase in Islamist attachments predicted a .13 point increase in the importance of strong defence forces while a unit change in attachments to the nation had a negative effect of .59 points. Again we notice that when significant, the effect of nationalistic attachments is much stronger than the effect of Islamic considerations. This is not a surprise since nationalistic attachments are more salient considerations for CHP voters than attachments to Islam. We see the mild positive effect of Islamist attachments as evidence that CHP supporters recognise the significance of defence forces in securing the country's position in the neighbourhood but also in the European and global arena. The strong negative effect of attachments to the nation when it comes to defence forces might be due to memories of the past military coups and their negative implications for the public life and broader societal stability.

**Table 7: Important Political Issues**

		CHP supporters
<b>Strong defence forces</b>	Constant	11.89 *** (1.57)
	Attachment to Islam	.13 (.07)
	Attachment to the nation	-.59 *** (.17)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.16
	N	67
<b>Maintaining a stable economy</b>	Constant	8.89 *** (.67)
	Attachment to Islam	-.07 * (.03)
	Attachment to the nation	.09 (.07)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.07
	N	67

Notes: +  $p < .1$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Variables recoded in 0-10 scales. Parameter estimates are unstandardised regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis.

A related set of attitudes involve citizens' orientations towards other groups in society. In Table 2 we saw the average responses of CHP voters on issues of ethnic diversity, minorities, and tolerance. We asked whether ethnic diversity enriches life, and whether CHP voters approved of granting cultural rights to minorities and tolerating different moral standards. The average responses among CHP supporters showed high agreement with scores of 9.1 and 8.6 on the 0-10 scale. In Table 8 we examine the ideological origins of these attitudes with a set of OLS regressions and found that attachment to the nation is the main determinant while Islamist considerations are non-significant. A

unit increase in attachments to the nation increases agreement in allocating cultural rights to minorities by .40 points, and appreciation of ethnic diversity by .31 points. Promoting tolerance for different moral standards also increases but at a slower rate of .24 points. These effect sizes follow the same trend of the impact of nationalistic considerations on political attitudes, they are however somewhat milder than the effects of nationalism we noticed in the previous tables. These results also might seem surprising given the traditionally hard Kemalist line towards minorities. We see the positive effect of nationalistic attachments as evidence of the influence of the Islamist considerations of recognition

and tolerance towards minorities on the political ideology of CHP voters. Earlier in our theoretical discussion, we talked about the potential impact of one ideology on the other over the recent decades. Although we were not able to

test hypotheses regarding the over-time development and cross-influence of the two ideologies, we see this as a sign of the bridging of the tension between the nationalistic and Islamist approaches towards minorities.

**Table 8: Attitudes Towards Ethnic Diversity, Integration and Tolerance**

		CHP supporters
<b>Ethnic diversity enriches life</b>	Constant	5.78 *** (1.19)
	Attachment to Islam	.00 (.05)
	Attachment to the nation	.31 * (.13)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.05
	N	67
<b>Cultural rights to minorities</b>	Constant	5.30 *** (1.00)
	Attachment to Islam	-.07 (.05)
	Attachment to the nation	.40 *** (.11)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.16
	N	67
<b>Tolerance for different moral standards</b>	Constant	6.94 *** (.97)
	Attachment to Islam	-.00 (.04)
	Attachment to the nation	.24 * (.11)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.05
	N	67

Notes: + p<.1, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001. Variables recoded in 0-10 scales. Parameter estimates are unstandardised regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis.

Finally, we examined attitudes towards *modernisation*. As we noted earlier, a political debate that has been favourably addressed by Islamist and nationalistic agendas is the active engagement with Turkey's modernisation. We expect that attachments to the nation and Islam both contribute to the support of modernisation, modern values and lifestyles. In Table 2 we saw that CHP voters do not support the statement that "lifestyles contribute to the breakdown of society". Average response on this question was just 4.7 points on a 0 to 10 scale. Agreement was high with the moderate statement that modern values should coexist with tradition (8.6 points) while agreement with more polarising statements such as "modern values should respect tradition" and "modern values are more important than tradition" received weaker support of around 6 points. These responses show that CHP supporters are in favour of moderate options when it comes to modernisation.

To identify the origins of their considerations we regressed attachments to Islam and the nation on opinions towards modernisation. The findings in Table 9 show that Islamist attachments have a positive influence on CHP

supporters, while attachments to the nation have a negative influence, and generate reservations towards change. More analytically, a unit increase in Islamist attachments contributes a .15 point increase in the opinion that modern values should coexist with tradition. The effect of Islamist attachments doubles to .27 points when predicting a preference for modernisation over tradition among CHP voters. This is evidence of the influence of the AKP's modernisation agenda in the considerations of voters of the opposition party. Turning to the effect of nationalistic attachments, we see an even stronger negative impact of .35 points, indicating disapproval in emphasising modern values over tradition. This reservation is also expressed in the statement that "newer lifestyles contribute to the breakdown of society" where nationalism is a strong positive predictor with .58 points. Again we notice the difference in the salience of the effects of Islamic and nationalistic attachments. And although the effects of nationalism are stronger than those of Islamic attachments, we cannot say that modernisation considerations are monopolised by attachments to the nation. Both ideological considerations contribute to political preferences,

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Although the effects of nationalism are stronger than those of Islamic attachments, we cannot say that modernisation considerations are monopolised by attachments to the nation.

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one positively with mild effects and one negatively with stronger effects, interacting and calibrating political opinions. This is one more example

of the interrelationship of the two ideologies, rather than the monopoly of one or the other in determining political preferences.

**Table 9: Attitudes Towards Modernisation**

		CHP supporters	
<b>Emphasize modern values more than tradition</b>	Constant	7.66 ***	(1.71)
	Attachment to Islam	.27 **	(.08)
	Attachment to the nation	-.35	(.19)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.19	
	N	67	
<b>Modern values coexist with tradition</b>	Constant	7.74 ***	(1.34)
	Attachment to Islam	.15 *	(.06)
	Attachment to the nation	.03	(.15)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.06	
	N	67	
<b>Newer lifestyles contribute to breakdown of society</b>	Constant	-.56	(2.12)
	Attachment to Islam	.03	(.96)
	Attachment to the nation	.58 *	(.23)
	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	.06	
	N	67	

Notes: † p<.1, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001. Variables recoded in 0-10 scales. Parameter estimates are unstandardised regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis.

## Conclusions and Discussion

In our study we measured the impact of Islamist and national attachments on a series of political attitudes related to traditional values as we captured them

in our survey in 2009. Our work follows from studies conducted in 2006 which for the first time identified evidence of ideological fluidity in Turkish public opinion in regards to Islamist and nationalistic attachments. We caution

the reader that our sample is not representative of the Turkish population and we particularly oversampled CHP supporters living in Ankara. However, we think the significance of our findings lies in the identification of the processes by which citizens reach their judgements, rather than the representativeness of the judgements themselves for the whole population.

Our analyses study the effects of attachments to the nation and Islam on CHP voters' confidence towards political institutions. We find evidence that the old conflicts between Islamism and Kemalism still play an important role in Turkey. Some polarisation is present, manifested particularly in the "selective" confidence ratings we identified towards specific political institutions and actors. We also found that nationalistic attachments do not monopolise the considerations of CHP supporters when it comes to assigning confidence. For example, Islamist attachments were significant determinants of confidence towards the parliament among CHP supporters.

We also examined considerations regarding religiosity, national identity, tolerance, and modernisation. Again what is interesting is that we do not find attachments to the nation to be the sole determinant of the political opinions of CHP supporters. Instead, we see the influence of attachments to Islam as being a significant predictor of several political

orientations, occupying significant space in the political considerations of CHP voters, either by moderating the effects of attachment to the nation, or at times defining these citizens' preferences. Characteristically, we find that Islamist attachments have significant influence on attitudes towards religion, elements of national identity such as having Turkish ancestors and adopting Turkish customs, and attitudes towards modernisation such as emphasising modern values more than traditions. This is evidence of the shared influence of the two ideologies in shaping the opinions of those who vote for the CHP party.

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**We expect that attachments to the nation and Islam both contribute to the support of modernisation, modern values and lifestyles.**

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These pronounced effects of Islamist attachments on the opinions of CHP supporters demonstrate that in Turkey the two traditionally oppositional forces of Islamist and national attachments find the ground to exist at the individual level. We cannot assume the domination of one ideological space over the other; rather it becomes apparent that the common citizen perceives and internalises each of the two ideologies concurrently. Our study sheds light on this dynamic relationship by applying

a systematic political psychological approach. By tracing the considerations that come to mind when citizens decide on political issues, we come closer to identifying how citizens internalise the ideological and political tensions in Turkey. To probe even deeper into the interconnectedness of the two political orientations, data collection can take the form of a qualitative study using in-depth interviews or focus groups of the target population. This will allow for more detailed and information-rich accounts of how citizens experience cognitively and affectively the tensions and interactions of the two ideologies.

An additional extension of this work would be to examine changes over time in the ideological placement of the supporters of the conservative liberal democracy of the AKP and the social democracy of the CHP. As argued by Başlevent and his colleagues, the ideological orientations of AKP supporters and political Islam have been changing in line with the party's liberal transformation towards a conservative democratic agenda.<sup>38</sup> We can hypothesise a similar process is taking place among CHP voters, preliminary evidence of which is evident in our study. This cannot be tested with the data available

here. It can be explored with longitudinal data measuring the political opinions of CHP voters, and modelling the effects of attachments to the nation and Islam over time as determinants of citizens' political preferences.

Our study provides a preliminary take in understanding these complex dynamics and explaining citizens' political attitudes, and it opens further avenues of research in Turkish public opinion. The next step is to apply our model using nationally representative samples of voters and also extending the analysis to examine the attitudes of AKP supporters. While the governing party has changed its formal position towards the EU and

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We cannot assume the domination of one ideological space over the other; rather it becomes apparent that the common citizen perceives and internalises each of the two ideologies concurrently.

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the country's foreign relations, it would be interesting to study more extensively the expectations and determinants of the opinions of its voters. It is our hope that this research will stimulate scholars of Turkish public opinion to probe further for answers to these questions by investigating both quantitatively and qualitatively the structure of political responses at the individual level using tools that highlight the psychological mechanisms of political decision making.

## Endnotes

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- 4 Ibid. Interestingly they point out that “After being told that that the terms ‘Islamists’ and ‘Secularists’ were often used in Turkey and that ‘0’ means ‘secular’ and ‘10’ means ‘Islamist’ on a scale of 0-10, 20.3% of the respondents defined themselves as ‘secular’, 48.5% as ‘Islamist’ and 23.4% placed themselves in the centre of these two extremes. However as shown by the answers given to some of our questions, the wing that we can describe as ‘secular’ consists of almost 30% of the people, which enables us distinguish between the secularists and the Islamists” (pp. 32- 33).
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- 31 For example the World Values Survey asks questions about politics and society in a general way, without a clear focus on Turkish society, at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/> [last visited 18 July 2012].
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- 34 We should note that residents of urban centres on the coast are distinct from the population living in the eastern parts of the country and our results should be considered under this light. A cross-sectional survey however would not guarantee a representative sample. Given the poor response rate figures of representative public opinion surveys at about 25-35%, it is questionable whether a truly “national” sample would be acquired even with such efforts implementing random sampling.
- 35 It was not our intention to have a random representative sample, and as such it is not balanced in terms of gender, age, and education. About 63% of our participants are male; 44% are between 30-40 years old, and 43% are between 20 and 30 years. In addition, 51% have completed university level education, 81% are employed, 68% identify as middle class and 42% has monthly income of 750 to 1,500 Turkish Lira.
- 36 Participants used 11-point scales from -5 to 5 (where -5 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree) to indicate agreement with the statement “I see myself as part of the Islamic world” and “I see myself as part of the Turkish nation”. For the analyses that follow all items have been recoded on 0 to 10 scales for comparability.
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# Attitudes Towards the European Union in Turkey: The Role of Perceived Threats and Benefits

Gizem ARIKAN\*

## Abstract

*Public opinion towards the European Union in Turkey is a relatively understudied area. Although previous studies have identified some important factors that influence individual support for the European Union, such as material expectations and democratic attitudes, the role of other factors, such as the perceived political benefits and threats, have not been addressed. The purpose of this paper is to test group-centricism arguments, which suggest that identity, group-based interests, and perceived threats are important determinants of attitudes. An analysis of data from the latest available Eurobarometer Survey shows that symbolic politics and perceived benefits play an important role in shaping individual attitudes towards the EU in Turkey. While subjective material and political expectations increase pro-EU attitudes, the strength of national identity and perceived material and cultural threats to the nation are crucial in decreasing support for the EU.*

## Key Words

Attitudes towards the European Union, Euroscepticism, perceived threat, utilitarianism, national identity, social identity theory, symbolic politics.

## Introduction

Public opinion towards the European Union (EU) in Turkey is a relatively understudied area, with studies that utilise quantitative methods to explore the sources of attitudes towards the EU particularly lacking. As a result, we know very little about the factors that affect Turkish citizens' attitudes towards European integration.<sup>1</sup> While existing studies have identified a number of important factors that influence individual attitudes towards EU membership, they have not addressed some other important elements that affect attitudes, such as the perceived threats from integration.

This paper attempts to fill this gap by focusing on some of the key but unaddressed factors that affect attitudes towards the EU, such as

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perceived material and cultural threats and benefits, using survey data from Eurobarometer. Although the importance of threat perception is well known, it is a relatively under-explored factor in EU public opinion studies. While Lauren McLaren<sup>2</sup> addresses the importance of perceived cultural threats in generating rejection of the EU in a number of member states, this has not yet been applied to a candidate country context. Similarly, Ebru Canan-Sokullu<sup>3</sup> has shown that the perceived cultural threat is an important determinant of Turcoscepticism among the mass public in member states. Thus, by exploring the role of perceived threats and benefits and comparing their explanatory power with other alternative explanations, this paper contributes to the literature on Turkish citizens' attitudes towards the EU.

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Attitudes towards the EU are mostly motivated by perceived group benefits and symbolic concerns. The implications of these findings are discussed in the conclusion.

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The next sections discuss the two major theories on factors that affect individual attitudes.<sup>4</sup> I first discuss the self-interest arguments and explain how and why these arguments fall short in explaining attitudes towards the EU in

the Turkish context. Next, I examine the group-centricism arguments, and argue that both perceived benefits and threats to society are important in predicting attitudes towards the EU. More specifically, I claim that perceived material and political benefits enhance pro-EU attitudes while perceived material and cultural threats lead to a negative assessment of the EU. Hypotheses derived from these discussions are then tested using survey data from the latest available Eurobarometer survey. Results show that rather than being determined by rational calculations of costs and benefits to the self, attitudes towards the EU are mostly motivated by perceived group benefits and symbolic concerns. The implications of these findings are discussed in the conclusion.

## Attitudes Towards the European Union: The Role of Self- Interest

One of the most frequently debated factors influencing political attitudes is individual self-interest.<sup>5</sup> It is argued that in forming opinions on political matters, citizens consider what is in it for them.<sup>6</sup> For example, working-class citizens may support social welfare policies because they are the primary beneficiaries of these policies,<sup>7</sup> or working women may be more favourable towards antidiscrimination laws that bolster women's rights.<sup>8</sup> To test the effect of material self-interest

on individual attitudes, researchers usually consider demographic and socioeconomic variables, such as age, income, or education, as indicators of individual self-interest.<sup>9</sup>

This rational cost-benefit approach is also relevant for understanding attitudes towards the EU. Commonly referred to as the utilitarian approach, this perspective holds that citizens in different socioeconomic positions expect different gains or losses from European integration. Their attitudes towards integration will therefore be shaped by whether they believe they are likely or not to make material gains from an integration policy.<sup>10</sup> For example, those who possess higher-level skills, such as white-collar employees and high-income citizens, are likely to gain more from integration since their skills make them more competitive in a liberal European market. Thus they tend to be more supportive of the EU compared with low-skilled workers or those with less education.<sup>11</sup>

Evidence from various existing studies is generally supportive of the utilitarian perspective for both member states and candidate countries<sup>12</sup> but not for Turkey.<sup>13</sup> This could be because utilitarian explanations assume that objective conditions also coincide with *perceived* gains from integration. However, it could be that rather than their objective material position in the society, people's *belief* that they will

benefit from integration may be the decisive determinant of EU-related attitudes.<sup>14</sup> This perspective finds support with comparative analyses of data from various EU member states<sup>15</sup> as well as analyses of public opinion towards the EU in Turkey. For example, Ali Çarkoğlu's analysis of public opinion data from a national survey conducted in 2002 shows that those who believe that their personal life will be positively affected if Turkey becomes a member of the EU are much more likely to support Turkey's EU membership.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the utilitarian approach assumes that the material gains from EU membership are clear and that individuals possess adequate information about their prospective gains and losses from the EU.<sup>17</sup> Yet, as previous research has shown, Turkish citizens' knowledge of issues concerning EU membership is very limited,<sup>18</sup> suggesting that they may not be adequately informed about the personal costs and benefits of EU accession. Turkey's lengthy and complicated accession process, in addition to the Turkish media's representation of Europe as being openly and consistently hostile to Turkey's candidacy,<sup>19</sup> possibly limit the flow of information about material benefits, while also bringing symbolic concerns and threat perceptions to the fore during the attitude formation process. Therefore, while self-interest variables have explanatory power concerning pro-

integration attitudes in other states, I do not expect this to be the case for Turkey due to these circumstantial factors.<sup>20</sup> In the next section, I discuss group-centricism and symbolic politics theories in order to demonstrate why they are crucial in understanding attitudes towards the EU in Turkey.

## Attitudes Towards the European Union: Group-Centricism and Symbolic Politics

While perceived material benefits may be influential in shaping attitudes, individuals do not make decisions or form opinions based solely on utilitarian calculations. Symbolic politics or group-interest theories are the most important alternative explanations that have been developed in place of self-interest explanations. In most cases, they offer more explanatory power regarding political attitudes than self-interest variables.<sup>21</sup> In the Turkish context, where most of the accession debate revolves around national identity, we can expect variables that measure group interests to have especially high explanatory power. Two main theories concerning the role of group membership are considered below. First the *realistic interest approach* focuses on the short- or long-term tangible gains and losses and the protection of group interests in

the formation of individual attitudes.<sup>22</sup> The gains or losses and group interests may be objective or subjective, as well as direct or indirect. Public opinion studies usually find that individual attitudes are more affected by societal interest than private personal interest. For example, in the USA and other major Western democracies, sociotropic rather than pocketbook economic considerations are found to affect evaluations of presidents or prime ministers as well as voting behaviour.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, personal economic circumstances play little role in the formation of immigration attitudes in the USA, whereas sociotropic economic evaluations have a greater impact.<sup>24</sup>

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**That individual attitudes are more affected by societal interest than private personal interest.**

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*Perceived* material benefits to the nation from further integration are also found to have an impact on support for the EU in member states.<sup>25</sup> This is the case for Turkey where subjective sociotropic expectations or perceived economic benefits to the nation have a strong effect on support for EU membership.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, in line with this theory and previous evidence, perceived gains to society, economic as well as political, can be expected to lead to more positive assessments of the EU. While we expect most citizens to associate the EU with



material benefits to the nation, they may also associate the EU with potential positive benefits to the country in terms of democracy and peace because the EU demands greater democratisation and respect for human rights.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, we can hypothesize that *the perceived material as well as political benefits of EU accession should lead to greater support for the EU in Turkey.*

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Another way through which group membership influences opinion formation is through symbolic concerns surrounding group status, as considered by *social identity theory*.<sup>28</sup> This perspective suggests that group identity is the source of individual self-esteem. Therefore, people are motivated to achieve a positive identity by differentiating their group positively from others.<sup>29</sup> Identity politics plays a crucial role in attitudes concerning the EU. Many people see the nation as the appropriate point of reference for identity.<sup>30</sup> In particular, those with strong national identities tend to see the EU as undermining the integrity of the nation state and therefore reject further integration.<sup>31</sup> In some multivariate models, national identity emerges as

a key explanatory variable concerning rejection of Turkey's EU membership,<sup>32</sup> though not in others.<sup>33</sup> Yet, given the rise in nationalist sentiments in the discussion of Turkey's relations with the EU, especially in the post-Brussels summit period,<sup>34</sup> we can hypothesise that *stronger national attachments are an important factor generating opposition to the EU in Turkey.*

One consequence of the group-centrism that influences political attitudes is the *perceived threat* from out-groups. Both the realistic interest and social identity approaches mention the importance of perceived threats from out-groups in shaping individual attitudes towards political issues. While the realistic interest theory developed by Lawrence Bobo<sup>35</sup> argues that *real* competition between groups for material resources must exist, the mere *perception* that an out-group threatens an in-group's resources may be enough to produce a material threat.<sup>36</sup> Another type of perceived threat is the symbolic or cultural threat. According to social identity theory, individuals may perceive a threat due to symbolic concerns, such as a threat to their identity or values from out-groups.<sup>37</sup> Perceived threats have previously been found to have a large influence on attitudes towards other ethnic groups, towards immigration policy and immigrants, as well as on racial policies in the USA. While perceived



material and symbolic threats are both strong predictors of anti-immigration attitudes, the latter is a much stronger predictor.<sup>38</sup> Just as immigrants or different ethnic groups raise threat perceptions, issues concerning integration may also heighten perceived threats as people may fear a threat to their country's economic well-being, its national security or to the cultural integrity of the nation. Lauren McLaren finds both types of threats lead to opposition towards further integration in EU member states.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, we can hypothesise that in recent years when the EU has increasingly been demonstrated as being a "Christian club",<sup>40</sup> *perceived material and symbolic threats are expected to negatively affect pro-EU attitudes in Turkey, with the latter having a greater effect than the former.*

## Attitudes towards the EU in Turkey: Evidence from the 2009 Eurobarometer Survey

As outlined above, based on existing theories and past findings, sociotropic and personal material factors, as well as perceived political benefits, are expected to promote pro-EU attitudes, while perceived threats and strength of national identity should lead to more negative attitudes towards the EU. Meanwhile, objective personal conditions are expected to have weaker effects on EU attitudes. To test these hypotheses,

I used data from the latest available Eurobarometer dataset (Eurobarometer 2009-2, 71.3).

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**Perceived material and symbolic threats are expected to negatively affect pro-EU attitudes in Turkey, with the latter having a greater effect than the former.**

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Previous studies have usually operationalised support for the EU as support for Turkey's EU membership in a referendum setting. Standard Eurobarometer questions asked the respondents "If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of Turkey's membership of the European Union, would you personally vote for or against it?" Since recent Eurobarometer surveys have stopped asking this type of question in preference to using different wording to gauge EU support, this study uses data from other questions that measure attitudes towards the EU. In what follows, these items are usually referred to as "pro-EU attitudes" or "attitudes towards the EU".

Table 1 shows the level of public support for the EU. According to the survey, 48 % of Turkish respondents believe that EU membership would be a good thing for Turkey. Although this is much lower than the figures in the

early 2000s,<sup>41</sup> those who oppose Turkey's membership still do not constitute the majority: only about 26 % of respondents believe that EU membership would be a bad thing, while 17 % believe it would be neither good nor bad for Turkey to become an EU member. Even when these two categories are combined, the percentage of those who are supportive of Turkey's EU membership remains greater than the percentage against membership. In addition, about 57 % of respondents believe that Turkey would benefit from being an EU member, as opposed to 31 % who believe that EU membership would not benefit Turkey.

Therefore, despite declining support for EU membership, no major opposition to Turkey's membership has emerged over the years.

Moreover, the Turkish public still seems to have a relatively positive image of EU. The EU has a "fairly positive" or "very positive" image for roughly 45 % of the respondents, while 20 % feel "neutral" about the European Union. About 28 % of the sample, on the other hand, has a negative image of the EU. Overall, the Turkish public could be said to be pro-EU, or at least not actively opposed to it.

**Table 1: Pro-EU Attitudes**

<i>1a. Generally speaking, do you think that Turkey's membership of the European Union would be...?</i>		
	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<i>A good thing</i>	48.06	48.06
<i>Neither good nor bad</i>	17.31	65.37
<i>A bad thing</i>	26.17	91.54
<i>Don't know</i>	8.46	100.00
<i>1b. Taking everything into account, would you say that Turkey would benefit or not from being a member of the European Union?</i>		
	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<i>Would benefit</i>	56.92	56.92
<i>Would not benefit</i>	31.34	88.26
<i>Don't know</i>	11.74	100.00

*1c. In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?*

	%	Cumulative %
<i>Very positive</i>	14.63	14.63
<i>Fairly positive</i>	31.04	45.67
<i>Neutral</i>	20.50	66.17
<i>Fairly negative</i>	15.62	81.79
<i>Very negative</i>	12.44	94.23
<i>Don't know</i>	5.77	100.00

Next, I explore the subjective expectations and perceived threats from the EU. Unfortunately, the Eurobarometer surveys do not have questions that directly tap into the respondents' perceptions of the benefits and threats from EU membership. The most appropriate item is a question that asks respondents what the European Union personally means for them. The respondents are then presented with a list of items (see Table 2) and are asked to choose as many items as they would like. Although these are not ideal questions, they can still act as proxies for the perceived benefits and threats of the EU.

The breakdown of responses to the meaning of the EU to Turkish citizens is presented in Table 2. Economic benefits are among the most mentioned items: for nearly one third of respondents the EU means "economic prosperity". Almost a quarter of the sample mention "freedom of movement", while "social protection" is the third most popular answer with about 20 % of respondents selecting this item. In line with previous findings, it is not surprising to find that Turkish citizens strongly associate the EU with positive sociotropic and personal material benefits.

**Table 2: The Meaning of the European Union to Respondents\***

<i>What does the European Union mean to you personally?</i>	
	<b>Percentage mentioning</b>
<i>Economic prosperity</i>	32.24
<i>Travel, study, and work anywhere in the EU</i>	24.58
<i>Social protection</i>	19.9
<i>Democracy</i>	17.11
<i>Peace</i>	15.22
<i>Loss of cultural identity</i>	15.12
<i>Cultural diversity</i>	14.13
<i>Unemployment</i>	13.73
<i>Stronger say in the world</i>	13.53
<i>Euro</i>	6.37
<i>Waste of money</i>	4.98
<i>Bureaucracy</i>	3.68
<i>More crime</i>	3.28
<i>Not enough control at external borders</i>	2.09

\*Since respondents could choose more than one answer, the percentages do not add up to 100.

The fourth and the fifth most popular choices concern the respondents' subjective political expectations of the Union. The EU means "democracy" and "peace" to 17 and 15 % of the respondents respectively. The next two most popular items concern symbolic attitudes. About 15 % associate the EU with a "loss of cultural identity", which could be a proxy for the symbolic threats posed by EU membership. Fourteen % of the respondents also chose "cultural diversity". However, whether this item has positive or negative connotations for them is not very clear. "Unemployment",

which could be termed a perceived material threat, was listed by 13 % of respondents, as was "stronger say in the world", which could be thought of as a type of political benefit. "The Euro", "waste of money", "bureaucracy", and "more crime" are among the least mentioned items, with less than 5 % of respondents choosing each of them. Overall, the perceived material benefits of the EU to Turkey, such as economic prosperity (i.e. social protection and economic prosperity), and to the self (e.g. freedom of movement), are Turkish respondents' most important

expectations of the EU, while political benefits such as peace and democracy come second. Unfortunately, there were not many items in the list that could unambiguously tap into respondents' perceived material and cultural threats. Of these, loss of cultural identity and unemployment form the third most mentioned set of items. This finding suggests that the Turkish people do not generally see such threats as a priority, whereas positive expectations of the EU are mentioned more. Therefore, in addition to the lack of a strong majority opposing the EU, the Union is associated more with its perceived positive potential benefits rather than its perceived material or cultural threats to the Turkish nation.

I now consider whether there is a relationship between the meaning of the EU for Turkish respondents and their attitudes towards the EU. Table 3 presents selected responses to the meaning of the EU question that taps into pro-EU attitudes.<sup>42</sup> The table shows that the meaning of the EU and

attitudes towards the EU are closely related, especially for those respondents who associate it with material benefits. Specifically, 73 % of those who associate the EU with economic prosperity also believe that Turkey's EU membership would be a good thing, and 83 % of them also believe that Turkey would benefit from EU membership. Similarly, about 73 % of those who associate social protection with the EU also believe that EU membership would be a good

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**Perceptions of personal and social material benefits from the EU are strongly related to positive attitudes towards the EU and EU membership for Turkey.**

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thing for Turkey, while 87 % of them also believe that Turkey would benefit from being an EU member. Although the figures for freedom of movement within EU borders are

less impressive, still more than half of those who associate the EU with free travel within the EU believe that EU membership is a good thing, and about 74 % of them agree that Turkey would benefit from being an EU member. That is, perceptions of personal and social material benefits from the EU are strongly related to positive attitudes towards the EU and EU membership for Turkey.

Table 3: Cross-Tabulation of Meaning of EU and Pro-EU Attitudes

		<i>Those who mention:</i>								
		<i>Economic prosperity</i>	<i>Travel, study work</i>	<i>Social protection</i>	<i>Democracy</i>	<i>Peace</i>	<i>Loss of cultural identity</i>	<i>Cultural diversity</i>	<i>Unemployment</i>	<i>Stronger say in the world</i>
<b><i>Those who believe membership is:</i></b>										
<i>A good thing</i>		73.70%	56.60%	72.68%	72.46%	73.33%	24.11%	50.00%	37.80%	57.48%
<i>Neither good nor bad</i>		11.36%	23.83%	15.46%	13.17%	16.00%	23.40%	20.59%	27.56%	20.47%
<i>A bad thing</i>		14.94	19.57%	11.86%	14.37%	10.67%	52.48%	29.41%	34.65%	22.05%
<b>TOTAL</b>		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b><i>Those who believe Turkey:</i></b>										
<i>Would benefit from membership</i>		83.72%	74.34%	87.30%	78.31%	81.25%	39.86%	65.00%	50.41%	70.97%
<i>Would not benefit from membership</i>		16.28%	25.66%	12.70%	21.69%	18.75%	60.14%	35.07%	49.59%	29.03%
<b>TOTAL</b>		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Political expectations are also closely connected to pro-EU attitudes. Of the respondents for whom the EU means “democracy” and “peace”, 70 % are supportive of Turkey’s EU membership and nearly 80 % believe that Turkey would benefit from being an EU member. On the other hand, those who associate the EU with “loss of cultural identity” and “unemployment” have less positive attitudes. Among those who mention loss of cultural identity, more than half have negative attitudes towards the EU, while 37 % of the respondents who equate the EU with unemployment view Turkey’s membership as a good thing, and 35 % as a bad thing. These respondents are also divided in terms of their attitudes on whether Turkey would benefit from membership or not: while 50 % believe that Turkey would benefit from EU membership, 49 % think the opposite is the case.

Two other items, “cultural diversity” and “stronger say in the world”, are also associated with positive attitudes towards the EU, albeit to a lesser extent. Respectively, 50 and 57 % of those mentioning the two items believe in Turkey’s EU membership, while 65 and 71 % respectively believe that Turkey would benefit from becoming an EU member state.

Overall, although the data presented in Table 3 indicate that the subjective expectations of the EU, as well as perceived threats from it, are strongly related, this

analysis is still far from answering other important questions that are required to provide a comprehensive picture of the factors that affect individual attitudes towards the EU: what is the role of self-interest in affecting attitudes towards the EU? Are perceived benefits and threats still important sources of EU attitudes even when other factors are accounted for? What is the relative power of each hypothesised variable in determining pro-EU attitudes?

To be able to answer these additional questions I ran a multivariate regression.<sup>43</sup> The dependent variable was an additive index of the three items that measure pro-EU attitudes (see Table 1). Once the “don’t know” and missing responses were excluded, the responses to each item were coded as 0 and 1. These three items were then summed and rescaled to vary between 0 and 1 in order to facilitate interpretation. The independent variables included the following subjective expectations and threats from the EU (see Table 2): three material benefit items (economic prosperity, freedom of movement, social protection); three political benefit items (democracy, peace, stronger say in the world); one material threat item (unemployment); one symbolic threat item (loss of identity); and cultural diversity, which actually has positive connotations but could also be perceived as a type of threat by some respondents. In addition, the following control

variables were also included: strength of Turkish national identity, left-right ideological orientation, and social status, as well as a number of items relating to immediate material self-interest, namely age, gender (a dummy variable for male), occupational status (dummy variables for manual, white collar, self-employed, and unemployed), and level of education (dummy variables for high and low education level). Because there were no questions on respondents' income level, in order to measure economic well-being, I constructed a "socioeconomic

situation" variable that was an additive index formed from the household items that each respondent listed as being in his or her home.<sup>44</sup> Finally, I also controlled for place of residence: two dummy variables were constructed for "rural area or village", and "small or middle-sized town", while "large city" formed the baseline category. All items, with the exception of age, were rescaled to vary between 0 and 1 to make it possible to assess their relative effects on the dependent variable.

**Table 4: Attitudes Towards the European Union - OLS Regression Results**

	Coefficient	Std. Error	P> t
Constant	.554	.061	0.000
<i>Perceived material benefits</i>			
Economic prosperity	.185	.025	0.000
Travel, study, and work anywhere in the EU	.132	.025	0.000
Social protection	.169	.027	0.000
<i>Perceived political benefits</i>			
Democracy	.122	.029	0.000
Peace	.174	.030	0.000
Stronger say in the world	.0193	.031	0.538
<i>Perceived material threats</i>			
Unemployment	-.094	.033	0.004
<i>Perceived symbolic threats</i>			
Loss of cultural identity	-.171	.032	0.000
Cultural diversity	-.082	.031	0.008



***Social Identity***

Strength of Turkish national identity	-.113	.051	0.026
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<b>Ideology</b>	.037	.044	0.395
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***Self-interest Indicators***

Manual worker	-.039	.034	0.256
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White collar	.031	.057	0.590
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Self-employed	-.075	.036	0.039
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Unemployed	-.080	.037	0.030
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High education	-.073	.042	0.084
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Low education	-.009	.027	0.711
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Socio-economic well-being	-.126	.048	0.008
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Social status (self-assessed)	.098	.059	0.099
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***Demographic Variables***

Age	-.001	.001	0.395
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Male	.037	.026	0.344
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Lives in rural area or village	-.003	.027	0.930
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Lives in small or medium-sized town	.026	.030	0.378
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Number of observations = 814

F (23, 790) = 14.81

Prob > F = 0.0000

R-squared = .3013

Adjusted R-Squared = .2809

The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4.<sup>45</sup> As expected, subjective expectations and the perceived threats from the EU had the strongest effects on citizens' attitudes towards the EU, with almost all items having large and statistically significant coefficients. The coefficient of the economic prosperity variable was 0.18, which shows that associating the EU with economic prosperity increases pro-EU attitudes by 0.18 points, which is about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the range of the dependent variable. This is the highest coefficient in the analysis, but the effects of other material benefit items were also very strong, as indicated by their high and statistically significant coefficients. For example, the coefficient of the social protection variable was 0.16, which shows that, holding all other variables constant, an individual who associates the EU with social protection is more likely to support the EU by 0.16 percentage points. Similarly, the coefficient for freedom of movement is 0.13, which was also a substantial and statistically significant effect. Thus, as hypothesised, perceived material benefits to self and the nation tend to increase individual support of Turkish respondents for the EU.

Expected political benefits are also significant determinants of support for the EU in Turkey. Those who associate the EU with peace and democracy are more pro-EU, as shown by the relevant positive and statistically significant

coefficients. Associating the EU with democracy related to a 0.12 percentage point increase in pro-EU attitudes, while the coefficient of the peace variable was almost as strong as that of the economic prosperity variable, showing the importance of expected political benefits aside from material expectations. On the other hand, the coefficient for having a stronger say in the world was weak (0.019) and statistically insignificant as shown by the high p value. These results thus seem to be compatible with the findings of Ali Çarkoğlu<sup>46</sup> that the association of the EU with democratic values increases support for the EU.

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### The effects of material threats on pro-EU attitudes are relatively weaker compared to symbolic threats.

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On the other hand, and as expected, perceived threats were associated with more negative attitudes towards the EU. Those who associated the EU with a loss of cultural identity were, on average, 0.17 points less likely to support the EU, which is about 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the range of the dependent variable, making it an effect that is almost as strong as the effect of peace variable but in the opposite direction. Associating the EU with cultural diversity led to a decrease in pro-EU attitudes by 0.08 points. Although Table 2 suggested that those who

associate the EU with cultural diversity are slightly more likely to be supportive of the EU, the results of the multivariate analysis show that, when all other factors are accounted for, cultural diversity is in fact associated with lower support. Associating the EU with unemployment, an indicator of perceived material threat, leads to a 0.09 point decrease in pro-EU attitudes. These results also show, in line with some of the findings in the comparative political behaviour literature, that the effects of material threats on pro-EU attitudes are relatively weaker compared to symbolic threats.

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**For Turkish respondents, a higher education level and socioeconomic well-being were associated with significantly lower support for the EU**

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Aside from perceived threats, another item that tapped into symbolic attitudes, strength of national identity, also had a strong and statistically significant influence on pro-EU attitudes. Holding other variables constant, those respondents with the strongest sense of national identity were 0.11 points less likely to support the EU. Thus, in line with some of the previous research in other countries, this study shows that national identity is a strong deterrent to support for the EU in Turkey as well.

The other control variables, as well as the self-interest items, did not have statistically significant effects on EU support. In particular, the coefficient of the ideology variable had no statistically significant effect, indicating that ideology does not have a decisive influence on EU attitudes in Turkey. This finding supports the argument of Ziya Öniş that traditional left-right cleavages neither explain Turkish politics in general, nor politics concerning Europeanisation in particular.<sup>47</sup>

As anticipated, the self-interest indicators did not have consistent effects on EU support in Turkey. Starting with occupational status, manual and white-collar workers did not differ significantly in their support for the EU. On the other hand, being self-employed or unemployed is expected to decrease support for the EU. For Turkish respondents, a higher education level and socioeconomic well-being were associated with significantly lower support for the EU, which is the opposite finding to that from other EU candidate countries.<sup>48</sup> Overall, the effects of self-interest variables were less consistent than the effects of symbolic and subjective variables, which were in line with previous research findings.

None of the demographic control variables, such as age, gender, and place of residence, were statistically significant predictors of attitudes towards the EU. That is, while the hypotheses derived from the symbolic politics and group

benefits approaches were supported by the data, no clear pattern concerning self-interest variables emerged in the present study.

## Conclusion

Based on political psychology literature, this paper provides empirical evidence for the argument that symbolic politics and group interests are significant factors in determining individual attitudes towards the EU in Turkey. The paper also shows that group interests and identity politics are not the only significant determinants of attitudes towards the EU, but that their effects are stronger relative to other factors such as individual self-interest. Another contribution of this paper to the literature is in establishing that the perceived political benefits of the EU in the form of democracy and peace are significant contributors to EU support in Turkey.

Previous empirical studies, in line with existing models for other European member and candidate countries, focused on sociotropic and individual material expectations as important factors in determining support for the EU. The findings discussed in this paper, however, also distinguish some

peculiar characteristics of Turkish public opinion. The analyses suggest that the Turkish public appears to have focused its attention on symbolic politics, national identity and group interests, most probably due both to Turkey's arduous and extended EU negotiations and the nature of the Turkish political debate on accession. In other words, this study has revealed that symbolic politics plays a particularly significant role in determining how the Turkish public evaluates the EU.

These findings are not particularly surprising. Previous research has highlighted the uninformed nature of the Turkish public in matters concerning the EU, which suggests that people may not really be aware of the potential costs and benefits to their personal well-being from Turkey's EU membership. In addition, both the ruling AKP's weakening commitment to the EU project and Turkey's domestic media's representation of the open hostility of several EU member states towards Turkey in the last few years<sup>49</sup> have possibly raised the importance of symbolic politics.

Despite this negative picture, there is also room for optimism. The Turkish public still overwhelmingly associates the EU with positive material and

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**Symbolic politics and group interests are significant factors in determining individual attitudes towards the EU in Turkey.**

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political benefits that enhance popular support for the Union. In addition, the fact that the factors currently associated with decreased support for the EU are mostly symbolic concerns, rather than deep-rooted cleavages or ideological orientations, suggests that support for the EU may be easier to manipulate than might be thought at first. This perhaps is the most significant implication of the current findings. However, this potentially malleable feature of EU support in Turkey may also be a double-edged sword. The apparently significant role of symbolic politics in forming EU attitudes also makes them susceptible to political manipulation, thus making it easier for Turkish political actors to utilise EU-related issues from a more

symbolic perspective rather than for the promotion of well-structured EU policies. At the same time, however, it is also possible that if Turkish political actors need to bolster public support for the EU they may have an easier job than their counterparts in other European countries. While an emphasis on concerns that heighten threat perceptions and discourses that erode individual belief in the EU's capacity to contribute to democracy and economic well-being in Turkey could contribute to more negative evaluations of the EU,<sup>50</sup> it is also possible that mass media campaigns and more positive political elite discourses could increase support for the Union by emphasising the potential benefits to Turkey.

## Endnotes

- 1 Major works that utilise survey data to explore the sources of individual attitudes towards the EU in Turkey are Ali Çarkoğlu, “Who Wants Full Membership? Characteristics of Turkish Public Support for EU Membership”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2003), pp. 171-194; Ali Çarkoğlu, “Societal Perceptions of Turkey’s EU Membership: Causes and Consequences of Support for EU Membership”, in Mehmet Uğur and Nergis Canefe (eds.), *Turkey and European Integration: Accession Prospects and Issues*, London and New York, Routledge, 2004, pp. 19-46; Çiğdem Kentmen, “Determinants of Support for EU Membership in Turkey”, *European Union Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (December 2008), pp. 487-510; Ali Çarkoğlu and Çiğdem Kentmen, “Diagnosing Trends and Determinants in Public Support for Turkey’s EU Membership”, *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (September 2011), pp. 365-379; Özgehan Şenyuva, “Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri ve Kamuoyu”, in Oğuz Esen and Filiz Başkan (eds.), *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye İlişkileri: Beklentiler ve Kaygılar*, Ankara, Eflatun Yayınevi, 2009, pp. 33-60.
- 2 Lauren McLaren, “Public Support for the European Union: Cost/ Benefit Analysis or Perceived Cultural Threat?”, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (May 2002), pp. 551- 566; Lauren M. McLaren, *Identity, Interests and Attitudes to European Integration*, Hampshire and New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006, pp. 38-41.
- 3 Ebru Canan-Sokullu, “Turcoscepticism and Threat Perception: European Public and Elite Opinion on Turkey’s Protracted EU Membership”, *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 2011), pp. 483-497.
- 4 Donald Kinder, “Opinion and Action in the Realm of Politics”, in Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske, and Gardner Lindzey (eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1998, pp. 778-867.
- 5 Self-interest is usually defined narrowly as the pursuit of immediate material benefits in an individual’s own personal life (or that of his or her immediate family). In addition, it is also essential to exclude material gains that benefit the group, such as sociotropic benefits (e.g. gains to the national economy, etc) as well as non-material gains to the individual (e.g. social prestige), from the definition of self-interest. See, Kinder, “Opinion and Action in the Realm of Politics”; David O. Sears and Carolyn L. Funk, “The Role of Self-Interest in Social and Political Attitudes”, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 24, No.1 (1991), pp. 1-91.
- 6 Kinder, “Opinion and Action in the Realm of Politics”, p. 800.
- 7 Ibid., p. 801.
- 8 Sears and Funk, “The Role of Self-Interest in Social and Political Attitudes”, p. 18.
- 9 While most studies find these objective self-interest variables to be of minimal influence, it is wrong to view self-interest as being completely irrelevant in public opinion formation.

- Self-interest does make a difference, especially under certain circumstances: for example, when the material benefit or harm of the proposed policies is substantial, imminent and well publicized. See, Kinder, “Opinion and Action in the Realm of Politics”, p. 802.
- 10 Chris Anderson and M. Shwan Reichert, “Economic Benefits and Support for Membership in the EU: A Cross-National Analysis”, *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 15, Issue 3 (September 1995), pp. 231-250; Matthew Gabel and Harvey D. Palmer, “Understanding Variation in Public Support for European Integration”, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (January 1995), pp. 3-19.
  - 11 Ibid.
  - 12 Occupational category, level of education, or class-based gains are usually statistically significant predictors of EU support in both member and candidate countries. For evidence concerning the utilitarian hypothesis for candidate countries, see Matthew J. Gabel, “Public Support for European Integration: An Empirical Test of Five Theories”, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (May 1998), pp. 333–354; see, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, “Does Identity or Economic Rationality Drive Public Opinion on European Integration”, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (July 2004), pp. 415 - 420; for empirical evidence supporting the utilitarian perspective for EU member states, see, Orla Doyle and Jan Fidrmuc, “Who is in Favour of Enlargement? Determinants of Support for EU Membership in the Candidate Countries’ Referanda”, *The Institute for International Integration Studies Discussion Paper Series*, No. 045 (November 2004), Trinity College, Dublin; Piret Ehin, “Determinants of Public Support for EU Membership: Data from the Baltic Countries”, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (August 2001), pp. 31-56.
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  - 14 McLaren, *Identity, Interests and Attitudes to European Integration*.
  - 15 Matthew J. Gabel and Guy Whitten, “Economic Conditions, Economic Perceptions, and Public Support for European Integration”, *Political Behavior*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (March 1997), pp. 81–96.
  - 16 Çarkoğlu, “Who Wants Full Membership?”.
  - 17 McLaren, *Identity, Interests and Attitudes to European Integration*.
  - 18 Adel Abusara, “Public Opinion in Turkey on EU Accession –An (Un)desirable Marriage?”, *Western Balkans Security Observer*, Vol. 17 (April-June 2010), pp. 77-87. Also see Şenyuva, “Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri ve Kamuoyu”.

- 19 Ruairi Patterson, "Rising Nationalism and the EU Accession Process", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No.1 (Spring 2008), pp. 131-138; Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 2009), pp. 7-24.
- 20 In fact, the effect of self-interest variables is usually context-dependent. Sears and Funk, "The Role of Self-Interest in Social and Political Attitudes".
- 21 Leonie Huddy, "Group Identity and Social Cohesion", in David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 511-558.
- 22 Lawrence Bobo, "Whites' Opposition to Busing: Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict?", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (December 1983), pp. 1196-1210; Robert Alan LeVine and Donald Thomas Campbell, *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes, and Group Behavior*, New York, Wiley, 1972.
- 23 Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1981; Donald R. Kinder, "Presidents, Prosperity, and Public Opinion", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Spring 1981), pp. 1-21; Michael Lewis-Beck, *Economics and Elections: The Major Western Democracies*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1988.
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- 26 Kentmen, "Determinants of Support for EU Membership in Turkey".
- 27 In fact, democratic attitudes are positively related to support for EU membership. Çarkoğlu, "Who Wants Full Membership?".
- 28 Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981; Henry Tajfel and John Turner, "An Integretive Theory of Intergroup Conflict", in William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Monterey, CA, Brooks Cole, 1979, pp. 33- 48.
- 29 Of course, just being a member of a group- such as being female or a citizen of a certain country- is not enough for social identity to have an effect on political attitudes. It is rather the *subjective* identification with one's group(s) or one's sense of belonging that is critical to understanding the political ramifications of group membership since not all group members feel a sense of attachment to their in-group. Leonie Huddy, "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory", *Political Psychology*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 2001), pp. 127-156.
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- 32 Kentmen, “Determinants of Support for EU Membership in Turkey”.
- 33 Çarkoğlu, “Who Wants Full Membership?”.
- 34 Öniş and Yılmaz, “Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism”, pp. 13-14.
- 35 Bobo, “Whites’ Opposition to Busing”.
- 36 Lincoln Quillian, “Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (August 1995), pp. 586–611. In addition, it is a perceived threat to the *group* that tends to produce the most hostile reactions, not a threat to the individual. Thus, it is primarily the threat to in-group interests that produces hostility toward other ethnic or racial groups.
- 37 David R. Kinder and Donald O. Sears, “Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism versus Racial Threats to the Good Life”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (March 1981), pp. 414- 431.
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- 39 McLaren, *Identity, Interests and Attitudes to European Integration*.
- 40 Abusara, “Public Opinion in Turkey on EU”.
- 41 Çarkoğlu and Kentmen, “Diagnosing Trends and Determinants in Public Support for Turkey’s EU Membership”.
- 42 For ease of presentation, respondents who answered “don’t know” to both questions were excluded from the analysis, and “neither good nor bad” answers to the EU membership question are not presented.
- 43 Michael Lewis-Beck, *Applied Regression: An Introduction*, California, Sage Publications, 1980.
- 44 The six items included in the socioeconomic well-being index were TV, DVD player, CD music player, computer, internet connection at home, and a car.
- 45 Note that the number of observations declines due to a deletion of missing items.
- 46 Çarkoğlu, “Who Wants Full Membership?”.

- 47 Ziya Öniş, “Conservative Globalists versus Defensive Nationalists: Political Parties and Paradoxes of Europeanisation in Turkey”, in Susannah Verney and Kostas Ifantis (eds.), *Turkey’s Road to European Union Membership: National Identity and Political Change*, London and New York, Routledge, 2009, pp. 35- 48.
- 48 Gabel, “Public Support for European Integration”; Hooghe and Marks, “Does Identity or Economic Rationality Drive Public Opinion?”; Ehin, “Determinants of Public Support for EU Membership”.
- 49 Patterson, “Rising Nationalism and the EU Accession Process”, p. 136.
- 50 Işıl Cerem Cenker, “Turkey’s Changing Perceptions of the EU: From Partnership to Patronship”, in Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Yannis A. Stivachtis (eds.), *Turkey – European Union Relations: Dilemmas, Opportunities, and Constraints*, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2008.



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# From *Allies* to *Frenemies* and *Inconvenient Partners*: Image Theory and Turkish-Israeli Relations

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## Abstract

*By way of utilising and also extending image theory, one of the earliest and longest-lasting research areas in foreign policy analysis, this article discusses the change in the perception of the Other that is currently taking place in both Turkey and Israel. It argues that whereas Israel sees Turkey increasingly as a frenemy, Turkey considers Israel an inconvenient/untrustworthy partner. Israel's image of Turkey as a frenemy represents a perceived relationship in which Turkey has similar power traits, an inferior culture, and that Turkey presents a threat to Israel's power and security in the Middle East. Turkey's image of Israel as an inconvenient/untrustworthy partner represents a perceived relationship in which Israel has similar power and inferior cultural traits, and that Israel is a partner that cannot be trusted. Indeed, the strategic interactions between the two countries, especially since the first significant signs of problems emerged in the mid-2000s, illustrate the level and extent of these changes*

*taking place, which have important policy implications for both Turkey and Israel.*

## Key Words

Turkish foreign policy, Turkish-Israeli relations, image theory, frenemy, the flotilla incident, decision-making.

## Introduction

For decades, Turkey remained the only Muslim country to have recognised Israel, following the country's recognition of the State of Israel in March 1949, less than a year after its proclamation. Diplomatic missions between the two countries were opened in 1950 at the legation level. Although Turkish-Israeli relations did not have a meaningful content until the 1990s, the relations between the two countries became rather strained when the Israeli tactics used in the 1982 Lebanese War created public outrage in Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

The improvements in Turkish-Israeli relations that began following the end

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of Cold War led Turkey to upgrade its relations with Israel to full ambassadorial states after the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991.<sup>2</sup> The real intensification of relations started after the signing of the Oslo Agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in 1993, with Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin visiting Israel in November of the same year, an unprecedented visit to Israel at that level.<sup>3</sup> More prominently, the Turkish military initiated and signed the first military training agreement between Turkey and Israel in 1996, which led to significant expansion and deepening of strategic alliance, as well as economic cooperation, that marked Turkish-Israeli relations in the second half of the 1990s.

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Criticisms about close Turkish-Israeli relations increased following the Israeli attack on the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002, which caused massive civilian casualties. In the midst of a major public outcry in Turkey, then Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit described the Israeli attacks on the Jenin refugee camp as “genocide” and accused the Israeli government of committing “acts against humanity.” Turkish-Israeli relations ebbed and

flowed from November 2002, when the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey, until December 2008, when Israel started a three-week offensive in the Gaza Strip. Relations between the two countries further deteriorated after the “Davos incident” in March 2009 and the “low-chair crisis” in January 2010. However, it was the “*Mavi Marmara* (or “the Flotilla”) incident” of May 2010 that brought the two parties to a major crisis point. It is safe to suggest that the Turkish-Israeli relationship has not recovered since this incident. In fact, tensions between the two countries have once again been increasing since mid-September 2011 following the publication of the United Nations Palmer Report and the Israeli-Greek Cypriot deal on oil and natural gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean.

But what explains the dramatic shift in the relations between these two important and powerful non-Arab states in the Middle East? Is the changing nature of Turkish-Israeli relations a consequence of geopolitical factors? Or should one also consider the role of important perceptual and ideational factors? If neither Turkey nor Israel considers the other side as a strategic partner any more, especially so soon after the golden years of their relationship in the 1990s, what is the new image they have of each other?

Based on preliminary research, this article suggests that a change in the

image of the Other is currently underway in both Israel and Turkey vis-à-vis each other. As the strategic interactions between the two countries and the speeches by leaders in both Turkey and Israel since the first significant signs of problems in 2008 have demonstrated, Israel increasingly sees Turkey as a *frenemy*, a partner who is simultaneously a rival, and Turkey considers Israel an *inconvenient/untrustworthy partner*.

This article first examines the literature on the origins and evolution of one of the earliest and longest-lasting research areas in foreign policy decision-making analysis: image theory. Scholars have long pointed out that cognitive concepts and constructs such as images are helpful in explaining foreign policy decision making and state action in international relations. In this section, we evaluate the contributions of this particular research area by focusing on its strengths and weaknesses. I further argue that despite their success in foreign policy analysis, scholars of image theory have yet to successfully explain how images of the Self and the Other alter and how these changes influence relations between two countries. The following part re-focuses our attention on Turkish-Israeli relations in recent years, with an emphasis on a number of crises, and analyses how the images each side has had of the other has been changing over time. In this section, we draw hypotheses from the scholarship on image theory and propose what we

believe to be the current images the two countries have of each other. Finally, we summarise our findings and discuss policy implications in the concluding section.

## Foreign Policy Decision Making and Image Theory

In order to answer the above-mentioned questions about the drastic change in Turkish-Israeli relations, a foreign policy decision-making approach is necessary because individuals' (and in this case Turkish and Israeli foreign policy decision makers') interpretations of the world, their view of the Self and the Other, and the ways their preferences become aggregated in the decision-making process can shape what governments and institutions do in the foreign policy arena. As Snyder and his colleagues observed in 1954, "people matter in international affairs"<sup>4</sup> and decision makers can affect the way that foreign policy problems are framed, the options that are selected, the choices that are made, and what gets implemented. They can also play an important role in changing the strategic culture or national roles of their state by altering public opinion or using public opinion to justify and rationalise their foreign policy actions.<sup>5</sup>

Since the 1970s, many foreign policy analysts have especially focused on belief

systems or schemas<sup>6</sup> and images.<sup>7</sup> Belief systems or schemas are the “mental constructs that represent different clumps of knowledge about various facets of the environment for interpreting information.”<sup>8</sup> They simplify and structure the external environment so as to make sense of the world and the situation at hand. The term image refers to “the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe.”<sup>9</sup>

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Robert Abelson has observed that schemas and images of the world influence how an individual is going to act in the decision-making process.<sup>10</sup> Such schemas and images become, in Abelson’s terms, the “possessions” of individuals and define who they are politically and what they value. These “possessions,” in return, influence what a person’s goals are likely to be in a particular situation by defining what will be salient to them; what people feel compelled to act upon; and how decisions can differ depending

on the lenses through which leaders view the world. In this sense, it is misleading to assume that leaders experiencing the same political event have similar goals and will choose similar responses unless their definitions of the situation and beliefs are somewhat equivalent. In fact, Michael Brecher has said that decision makers do not respond directly to an objectively constituted environment, but rather think and act upon their image of the Other and/or representation of that environment.<sup>11</sup>

Individuals are beset with limitations when monitoring and analysing highly complex physical and especially social environments.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, they are constantly bombarded with so much information that it is difficult to absorb and process. On the other hand, crucial information may be missing or uncertain. What is more important is that individuals hold on to their values and beliefs. As a result, decision makers often have to go beyond the information given in order to interpret the world and make necessary judgments. Beliefs, schemas, images, analogies, metaphors, lessons from the past, and expertise provide them with short cuts for deciphering and classifying information to make it manageable.<sup>13</sup> In effect, the numerous international and domestic factors that decision makers must consider in the decision-making process are channelled through these perceptual filters in

becoming part of “the” interpretation of what is happening.

In Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), belief systems and images become especially important when and how decision makers recognise that there is a problem that needs to be addressed, and how this problem is defined, represented, and/or framed. Framing is a selective representation of what may be going on in a given situation. This “cognitive agenda-setting” tames informational complexity by identifying the key dynamics and processes driving a (foreign policy) problem based on cognitive structures such as images and other types of heuristics.<sup>14</sup> For example, when problems are critical to decision makers holding onto positions of power and influence, such perceptual biases may lead them to see threats where there are none and to become more dogmatic and rigid in their policy preferences. In this regard, the perception of the Other and belief systems become important in the interpretation and framing of a foreign policy problem. In fact, these factors may serve “as a ‘filter’, ‘prison’, ‘blind spot’, and rhetorical ‘weapon’”.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, decision makers tend to fit incoming information into their existing theories and images, thereby influencing their interpretation of a problem.

One of the earliest research areas in foreign policy decision-making studies revolved around the systematic analysis

of *images*. This research employed a cognitive approach to study general images held by political elites, especially images of the Self and Other. In the 1950s and 1960s, “within the broader scope of the belief-system-perception-decision-making relationship there [was] a heightened concern for the problem of stereotyped national images as a significant factor in the dynamics of the international system.”<sup>16</sup> Since then, it has been established that “perceptions have their greatest policy impact when they are not isolated beliefs but are part of an integrated gestalt, or combined image, of another country.”<sup>17</sup>

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The term *image* refers to “the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe.”<sup>18</sup> The earliest studies suggested that images can be partial or general and decision makers may or may not state these images consciously in their speeches.<sup>19</sup> Scholars have examined the origins and consequences of the images that states hold of each other, particularly in the context of international conflict.<sup>20</sup>



Nations are divided into two: the “good” and the “bad”, and “perceived hostility or friendliness and the perceived strength or weakness of a unit were central features of a subject’s image of that unit.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, whether the Other is a friend or an enemy influences one’s perception of threat and how to respond to this perceived threat. If, for example, the Other is an enemy, chances are that one would feel threatened; if it is an ally, one would, on the contrary, feel safeguarded. If there is a way to order countries along a continuum from absolute ally to absolute enemy, there might be a linear relationship between one’s perception of a foreign country’s position on this continuum and the perceived harmfulness to one’s country of an action taken by that country. The higher a country’s ranking is in the continuum towards enemy, for instance, the more its action is likely to be perceived as threatening. Simply put, for many scholars of image theory, national images and how leaders define the situation have important implications for foreign policy decisions.

In one of the earliest studies of national images, Ole Holsti examined the image of the enemy in an attempt to explain the hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union. Holsti focused on important decision makers within the US administration with a specific focus on former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. According

to Holsti, the hostile Other image of the enemy, held by Dulles at the time, was crucially important in explaining the US’s behaviour toward the Soviet Union because he was the “primary, if not the sole architect of American policy *vis-à-vis* the Soviet bloc.”<sup>22</sup> Dulles continually “resisted new information inconsistent with his image of the Soviet Union by engaging in a variety of psychological processes, discrediting the information, searching for other consistent information, reinterpreting the information, differentiating between different aspects of the information, engaging in wishful thinking, and refusing to think about it.”<sup>23</sup> This study, in effect, confirmed the argument that “international conflict frequently is not between states, but rather between distorted images of states.”<sup>24</sup>

Later studies expanded on this work in two ways. First, a study by Ralph White (1966) found that in a conflict situation, “mirror images” become important because each party holds a diametrically opposite view of the Other: while they have a positive and benign image of their own, the Other usually has a negative and malicious image. Second, scholars have found that decision makers at times become closed to new information, making it difficult to modify an established view.<sup>25</sup> Beer and his colleagues, for example, have observed that decision makers often have firmly established images they apply to

others in the international arena, which lead them to see these others as allies or enemies. As they suggest, these “images mediate perception, interpretation, and behaviour; they are used as analogs, allowing extrapolation from past experiences to current and anticipated reality.”<sup>26</sup>

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Richard K. Herrmann and Michael P. Fischerkeller provided well-placed criticism of the efforts to study images in International Relations’s (IR) and FPA’s heavy focus “on a single analytical construct..., the enemy image and the associated spiral model of interaction.”<sup>27</sup> Instead, Herrmann and Fischerkeller proposed a broader theory of ideal images that included five different kinds of strategic perception, which, according to them, had more powerful analytical and explanatory leverage in explaining state action. Their theory, an “interactionist perspective”, was based on a combination of cognitive-psychological approaches to FPA coupled with IR theory.

In their attempt to formulate the five ideal types of national images, Herrmann and Fischerkeller focused on three

important factors in one’s creation of the image of the Other: (1) the perceived threat and/or opportunity represented by that actor, (2) the perceived relative capability of the actor, and (3) the perceived culture of that actor. The first two components- the perceived threat/opportunity and relative capability of the Other- are directly related to Boulding’s and Holsti’s examination of both enemy/friend and strong/weak categories and are aligned with the established literature on image theory. The third component is a new component that draws from sociology and psychology. In addition to the enemy image, Herrmann and Fischerkeller appended four images- degenerate, colony, imperialist, and ally- “to add greater analytical diversity to cognitive perspectives.”<sup>28</sup> Another study by Herrmann and his colleagues added yet another image- barbarian- and further argued for a formal theory of international images based on the perception of structural relations between two states.<sup>29</sup> They argued that images are “a constellation of features that cluster together in meaningful ways” and are dictated by the interaction of the above-mentioned three factors.

As Table 1 below shows, the *enemy* image is limited to a perception of a threatening Other that is similar in capability and not very different in terms of cultural sophistication. The *degenerate* image represents the image of the Other that is similar in terms of capability but

is suffering from cultural decay. The degenerate can be exploited. The *colony* image represents a view of the Other that is weaker in terms of capability and culture and provides an opportunity for exploitation. The *imperialist* image is the opposite of the colony image in that it represents an image of the Other that is superior in capacity and

presents an intense threat. The *ally* image corresponds to a perceived relationship in which the Other has similar cultural and power traits and that there can be a mutually beneficial relationship between the Self and the Other. Finally, in the *barbarian* image, the Other is perceived to present a threat and that it has inferior culture and superior capability.

**Table 1: Stereotypical Images of Target Actors by Description of Target's Motivation, Capability, and Decision-Making Process (Adapted from Herrmann and Fischerkeller, 1995).**

<i>Image</i>	<i>Subject's description of target's motivation</i>	<i>Subject's description of target's capability</i>	<i>Subject's description of target's decision-making process (culture)</i>
<b>Enemy</b>	Motives are judged to be evil and unlimited; they can include a variety of imperial interests in economic, ideological, and communal domination	If aggressor is met with strong opposition, it will be exposed as a paper tiger; this domestic weakness overrides empirical evidence of substantial capability	Leaders are bound by a common cause and are able to plot and execute complex sinister plans
<b>Ally</b>	Ready to pursue mutually beneficial economic relations and to cooperate in peaceful joint efforts to protect and improve the global environment; motivated by altruism as much as by self-interest	Military is defensive in orientation and pursues governmental policies willingly; a large patriotic public is willing to make sacrifices to protect the nation's freedom and government's institutions; popularity of the government enhances its capability	System is well managed and organised but tremendously complicated and sometimes slow-moving because of the many services it delivers to an advanced and complex economy and society
<b>Degenerate</b>	Leaders are more concerned with preserving what they have than with a vision for the future and have accepted their fall from greatness, only wanting to make it less painful	Country is less strong than it might be; its available power instruments are discounted due to its unwillingness to actively defend itself or enter into confrontations	Decision making is confused and perhaps anarchic; country lacks focused leadership, organisation, and discipline
<b>Imperialist</b>	Great cynicism about the altruistic ideology of the great power, including a strong perception of hypocrisy; imperial power is seen as interested in maintaining colony as a source of raw materials, a locus for investments, and a market for its manufactured products and culture; exploitation of one's country is the imperial power's goal	Any event that can be viewed as detrimental to the country's well-being is considered another component of the conspiracy controlled by the imperial power; the presence of a "hidden-hand" potential is granted through the willingness of a section of the native elite to enter into collaborative relationship with the imperial power in return for internal support	Imperial power's embassy staff and imperial agents under other cover are perceived to seek to exercise ultimate decision-making control; since contacts between imperial and native bureaucracies are less formalised and routinised, awareness of imperial power decisional diversity is slight
<b>Colony</b>	Good forces: paternal leader; progressive modernised; nationalist; leader driven by interest of the people  Bad forces: radical fanatic demagogue; xenophobic racist extremist; evil dictator; puppet of great-power enemy	Good forces: well-meaning children who need tutelage; can use equipment with supervision, but lack discipline and skill needed to operate and maintain infrastructure, technology, and weapons; hopelessly disorganised and ascriptive in organisation; children in need of leadership Bad forces: untalented children who have the advantage of external support and advice; terrorists whose actions reveal their moral weakness; immature agitators who are arrogant and closed minded and who confuse slogans and dogmas for intelligence; conspirators who are cunning and clever at deception and terror; agents whose real reasons for success come from ties to foreign masters	Good forces: try hard but simply cannot manage national affairs in an efficient way Bad forces: well organised into highly disciplined units that follow a strict top-down process of decision making

There are some hypothesised relationships between these ideal-typical images and strategic choices as Table 2 below illustrates. Certainly, these images are the ideal types, and thus they represent less complex images of the Other. In reality, when the prevailing imagery of the Other is more complex,

there will be more complex strategies associated with foreign policy choices. Still though, these ideal types and the hypothesised strategic choices are important in determining what foreign policy choices are *likely* to be considered if the complex imagery resembles to one of the ideal-types of images.

**Table 2: Hypothesised Relationships between these Ideal-Typical Images and Strategic Choices**  
(Adapted from: Herrmann and Fischerkeller, 1995)

<i>Image</i>	<i>Foreign policy strategy that follows from strategic judgments</i>	<i>Main goals of the strategy</i>
<b>Enemy</b>	Containment	Deter; protect and shield; build major alliance system, protect geopolitical assets from target; protect credibility as a major power/attractive ally
<b>Ally</b>	Institutional cooperation	Enhance combined capability and mutual confidence in common action; enhance third-party contribution to common cause; reduce third-party threats that pre-occupy target's capability; reduce number of power instruments and enhance positive resource contribution
<b>Degenerate</b>	Revisionism	Rollback and deter; build major alliance system; protect geopolitical assets and attract new alliances
<b>Imperialist</b>	Independent fortress	Reduce target control; deter target intervention or compel its exit; gain support against target; reduce target's role in region; reduce target's access to resources
<b>Colony</b>	Intervention	Ensure existence of cooperative client regime in target

Some of these theoretical claims were tested in three different experiments. These experimental studies focused on (1) the definition of the sub-components of each image, (2) spelling out the

relationship among the components, and (3) establishing the relationship between these images, emotional and affective feelings, and policy choice.<sup>30</sup> Their findings strongly supported the

claims that (1) four of the six images-ally, enemy, colony and imperial- have persistent sub-parts as shown in Table 1; (2) there is a “strong association between affect and image”; and (3) “images of other actors ... *shape* perceived interests in at least two ways. First, an image of an enemy can create instrumental needs such as allies and colonies... Second, and perhaps more important, core values do not directly lead to a policy choice but must be put into a context [emphasis added].”<sup>31</sup>

More recent studies have consistently found that images affect strategic decisions in systematic ways. For example, Herrmann and Keller show in their 2004 study that although attitudes toward trade and global commerce have become an important new ideational fault-line (or perceptual factor) in international relations with implications on foreign policy choices, “American elites’ perception that a country harbors hostile intentions and/or is nondemocratic (particularly if both elements are present) generally leads to an increased willingness to use force and to contain the target state, along with a decreased preference for engagement strategies.”<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, the results from an investigation of Lebanese images of

the United States lend support to image theory predictions regarding the specific patterns of international relations perceptions that lead to specific international images.<sup>33</sup> Alexander and her colleagues found that Lebanese participants in the experiment tended to perceive the United States as primarily having relatively superior power, inferior cultural status, and incompatible goals, and the strongest image they had of the United States was the barbarian image. Moreover, when these scholars held two of the structural perceptions- high power and goal incompatibility- constant and examined the relationship between status perceptions and endorsement of the barbarian image, they found that perceptions of lower cultural status of the United States were associated with stronger endorsement of the barbarian image.

Most recently, while attempting to assess the internal validity of image theory in explaining foreign policy behaviour, Rhezeda Bilali also extended the image theory by examining the role of emotions and the strength of in-group identifications in informing an individual’s understanding of international images.<sup>34</sup> In her examination of the interrelationships in the theory components within the

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context of Turkish-US relations, Bilali found that while hostility is strongly associated with both the imperialist and the barbarian image, trust is the only emotion associated with the ally image. Another important finding is that different types of in-group identifications such as national versus religious identification corresponded to different images of the Other. Bilali demonstrated that for whom national identity is the main identity-marker, the United States represented an imperial power, whereas for whom religious identity was more important, the United States is viewed as a barbarian. The results from the above-mentioned studies offer important empirical support for the notion that a constellation of interrelated perceptions, or images, are central for generating specific foreign policy behaviour towards the Other.

## Turkish-Israeli Relations

As mentioned earlier, the tepid relationship between Turkey and Israel following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 began to improve in the 1990s, and intensified significantly between 1996 and 2002. Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognise the State of Israel, less than a year after its proclamation, and for decades remained the only Muslim state to have diplomatic relations with it. However, the Turkish public and political leaders across the

political spectrum always supported the Palestinian cause, which meant that the two countries did not really have any meaningful relationship. The minimal relationship between Turkey and Israel hit its lowest level in 1982 during the Cold War when Israeli tactics used in the 1982 Lebanese War and the Israeli massacres in two Palestinian refugee camps on the Lebanese-Israeli border created public outrage in Turkey.<sup>35</sup>

It was only after the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference that Turkey upgraded relations with Israel to full ambassadorial status. The 1991 Gulf War and Turkey's alliance with the US-led coalition against Iraq amplified Turkey's view of Israel as an *ally* and a *strategic partner*. Israel gained new meaning in the eyes of the Turkish security establishment in a period when many European countries questioned the value of Turkey's military and strategic alliance in the post-Cold War environment. The real intensification of relations started after the signing of the Oslo Agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in 1993. Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin visited Israel in November of the same year, an unprecedented visit at that level. Turkey and Israel signed three agreements over the next year, dealing with security cooperation, combating terrorism, and on agricultural projects in Central Asia.<sup>36</sup> More importantly, the Turkish military initiated and signed the first military training agreement between

Turkey and Israel in February 1996. The agreement called for joint training of Turkish and Israeli aircraft pilots, intelligence sharing to a “certain degree”, and permitted Israeli air force jets to fly in Turkish air space.

The Turkish-Israeli strategic partnership of the 1990s was considered to be a relationship of “status quo powers” who were concerned with maintaining the existing geopolitical conditions in the region and found similarities in each other’s political culture.<sup>37</sup> For the Turks and the Israelis, both Turkey and Israel represented the only two democracies in a region filled with authoritarian and dictatorial political systems, both had Western orientation and did not necessarily trust their Arab neighbours, and finally, both had extra special relationships with the United States. The Turkish leadership also wanted to send a signal to the Europeans that Turkey was not “obsessed with Europe”, and that Turkey was ready and able to ally itself with other countries as a reliable political and military partner. Israel viewed its alliance with Turkey as a powerful deterrent against Arab countries- Syria in particular- in the region.<sup>38</sup> The strategic partnership being created primarily by the Turkish military was also seen as an approach to keep the Islamist Welfare Party in check.<sup>39</sup> In fact, the military had chosen to make Israel a central issue to showcase its differences with the Islamists and to challenge their authority

after the Welfare Party came to office in July 1996.

Despite significant expansion and the deepening of Turkish-Israeli relations in the 1990s, Israel’s attack on the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002 created a visible crack in relations between the two countries. The bombings that inflicted massive civilian casualties among the Palestinians created a public outcry in Turkey and led Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit to go as far to describe the Israeli attacks on the Jenin refugee camp as “genocide.”

Turkish-Israeli relations ebbed and flowed from November 2002, when the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey, until December 2008, when Israel started a three-week offensive in the Gaza Strip. The start of the Iraqi War in 2003 and increasing anti-American feelings in Turkey were also important in fuelling criticism against Israel as the Israeli leadership voiced their support for the Iraqi War as one of the main regional allies of the United States. Nonetheless, governments in both countries maintained their cooperation. For example, while Israel did react rather moderately when the Turkish government launched a number of foreign policy initiatives in the Middle East, including an invitation to Hamas leadership to pay an official visit to Turkey following the latter’s victories in the local elections of 2005 and in the parliamentary legislative elections in



2006, the Turkish government reacted very cautiously to Israel's attack on Hizbullah in 2006.<sup>40</sup>

Importantly, in addition to maintaining their security relations, the Israeli government accepted Turkey's proposal to mediate in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations. Prime Minister Erdoğan, after a visit to Damascus in April 2008, announced Turkey's mediating role in the initiation of proximity talks between Syria and Israel over the issue of the Golan Heights. Indirect talks between Syria and Israel began in May 2008 under the supervision of Turkish diplomats in Ankara. There were five rounds of talks between then and December 2008.<sup>41</sup>

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A major blow to Turkish-Israeli relations came when Israel started a three-week offensive in the Gaza Strip in December 2008. The Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip came as a surprise to the Turkish leadership because only days before the start of the operations, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was in Ankara, speaking with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu,

and promising a peaceful approach to the Palestinian-Israeli problem. The offensive operation not only enraged but also humiliated the Turkish leadership, as they felt that they had been betrayed by the Israelis and that their efforts to help create peace between Israel and its neighbours were observably in vain. During a meeting of his ruling Justice and Development Party following the attacks, Prime Minister Erdoğan recalled that the Israeli Prime Minister had voiced firm determination for continuing direct talks between Israel and Syria, and said that “[the] operation, launched despite all of these facts, was also disrespectful to Turkey”.<sup>42</sup> Noting the importance of confidence in international relations, Ali Babacan, the foreign minister at the time, suggested that the fact that Turkey was not consulted about the operation in a timely manner shook Turkey's confidence in Israel and that Turkey decided to halt its efforts to mediate between Israel and Syria.<sup>43</sup>

The “Davos incident” in January 2009 further deteriorated relations between Israel and Turkey. This incident, which took place at a panel discussion on the Israeli military operation into the Gaza Strip at the World Economic Forum in Davos, was “the peak of a month of strong rhetoric from Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan against Israel.”<sup>44</sup> At the panel, Erdoğan blamed Israel for the Gaza violence, and Israeli President Shimon Peres defended his

country's policy for security reasons. The discussion came to a breaking point, however, when the moderator first refused to allow Prime Minister Erdoğan to reply and then tried to repeatedly stop him after the Prime Minister began his emotionally charged response to President Shimon Peres, in which Erdoğan did not hesitate to blame the Israeli leadership for "knowing well how to kill." After repeated interventions by the moderator, Prime Minister Erdoğan walked off the stage complaining that he was given much less time to speak than the Israeli president and accusing the panel moderator of not allowing him to speak.

If relations between Turkey and Israel reached a historic low point following the "Davos incident," it was the "*Mavi Marmara* (or "the Flotilla") incident" on 31 May 2010 that brought the two parties to a major crisis point.<sup>45</sup> A six-ship flotilla organised by the pro-Palestinian Free Gaza Movement and the pro-Hamas Turkish Humanitarian Relief Fund to deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and to break Israel's blockade of the territory was intercepted by Israeli special forces in international waters. While the special forces took control of five of the ships without much resistance or use of violence, a confrontation on board the Turkish vessel *Mavi Marmara* resulted in the killing of eight Turks and one Turkish-American citizen. In addition, more than 20 passengers were

injured. Israel considered its actions to be legitimate self-defence. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu suggested that "Had the blockade been breached, this flotilla would have been followed by dozens, by hundreds of ships. The amount of weapons that can be transported aboard a ship is totally different from what we saw get through the tunnels (beneath the Gaza-Egypt border). Hundreds of missiles and rockets, and an innumerable number of weapons can be smuggled aboard a ship."<sup>46</sup>

Turkey, on the other hand, considered the Israeli actions to be unjustifiable and in contravention of international law. The Turkish leadership called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, on which it held a non-permanent seat at the time, on the very same day of the incident. During the Security Council session, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu called Israel's actions "banditry and piracy... murder conducted by a state... and barbarism" and charged that "Israel has once again clearly demonstrated that it does not value human lives and peaceful initiatives through targeting innocent civilians."<sup>47</sup> Prime Minister Erdoğan described Israel's actions as a "bloody massacre." In his speech to his party's parliamentary group, which was broadcasted live by 25 foreign networks while simultaneously translated into Arabic and English, Erdoğan once again

condemned the Israeli attacks, accused Israel of state terrorism and demanded the lifting of the Gaza blockade, and recalled the Turkish ambassador from Tel Aviv. He reiterated his earlier warning to Israel: “Turkey’s hostility is as strong as its friendship is valuable. Losing Turkey’s friendship is in itself a big price to pay.”<sup>48</sup>

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On 13 June, mainly in response to international calls for an investigation of the incident, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the establishment of a special, independent public commission to inquire into the events of 31 May. However, Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu instantaneously declared that any report by this commission was unacceptable because “the crime was committed in international waters, not in Israel’s territorial waters.”<sup>49</sup> In a way to show Turkey’s distrust toward an Israeli-established commission, Davutoğlu demanded an international inquiry under the supervision of the United Nations with the participation of Turkey and Israel. The Turkish leadership also demanded a formal apology from Israel

for the killing of nine civilians, as well as for compensation for the relatives of the victims. Prime Minister Erdoğan added that such an apology would be a condition to continued Turkish mediation efforts in any future peace talks between Israel and Syria. In an interview with *Al Jazeera*, the Prime Minister responded to a question about the “flotilla incident” by suggesting that it was Turkey’s “grandeur and patience” that prevented it from going to war with Israel.<sup>50</sup>

Although another major crisis was avoided, Turkish-Israeli relations were periodically tension-ridden until the publication of the oft-postponed Palmer Report. The report, which was first leaked before being made public in September 2011, called the commandos’ action on the Turkish ship excessive and unreasonable, condemned the loss of life as unacceptable, and found Israel’s treatment of passengers on the ship abusive. However, the report critically concluded that Israel’s naval blockade of the Gaza Strip was legitimate and that it had to be enforced consistently to be effective. The Israeli leadership immediately interpreted the document to be legitimising the Israeli right of self-defence. On the other hand, the Turkish leadership declared it “null and void,” expelled the Israeli ambassador and senior Israeli diplomats in response to Israel’s refusal to apologise

for the incident, suspended military agreements with Israel, and promised to take measures to ensure freedom of navigation in the eastern Mediterranean, including providing Turkish warships to escort new flotillas to Gaza. The Turkish leadership also announced (but has, to this day, yet to execute) that it would challenge Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip at the International Court of Justice at The Hague.<sup>51</sup> Expressing that Turkey always represented an understanding of peace and not conflict, justice and not oppression, Davutoğlu stated "therefore, we have displayed our reaction to the inhumane attacks in Gaza, just as we raised our voices against the massacres in Bosnia and Kosovo."<sup>52</sup>

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**Images, once formed, are hard to change, and when they do change, the change does not always happen in a predictable way.**

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Since mid-September 2011 a new problem, this time over gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean, has emerged between the two countries. Partly as a way to block the Greek Cypriots from having the precedent of an exclusive economic zone in which they could drill for gas to the detriment of the Turkish Cypriots, partly as a response to the Israeli interception of *Mavi Marmara* in 2010 and the ensuing tension between

the two countries, and partly as a measure to avoid Israel's becoming a natural gas exporter, Turkey has vigorously objected to Israel's desire to drill in its exclusive economic zone in the Mediterranean Sea. Israel, on the other hand, signed a cooperation agreement with the Greek Cypriot leaders and started drilling for oil and gas despite Turkey's opposition.

## Image Theory and Turkish-Israeli Relations

What do the above-mentioned events between Turkey and Israel, especially those since December of 2008, signify? To what extent is the Turkish-Israeli link that was once considered to be an important strategic partnership in the Middle East irremediably broken? And finally, what are the theoretical and policy implications of these changes on the image theory and the future of Turkish-Israeli relations, respectively?

The two quick and straightforward conclusion one can give from the review of the literature on image theory and the events between Turkey and Israel in the past four years suggest are that, first, the ideal image types provide less help than they did before in examining Turkish and Israeli foreign policies vis-à-vis each other, and second, Turkish and Israeli foreign policy actions vis-a-vis each other clearly illustrate that neither Turkey nor Israel sees the other side as an ally, or a strategic partner, anymore.

The scholarship on image theory has shown that images, once formed, are hard to change, and when they do change, the change does not always happen in a predictable way. In one of the most important studies Charles Osgood suggested that the enemy image of the Other can change when the interactive relationship between the parties promotes gradual reciprocal reduction in tension (GRIT).<sup>53</sup> According to Osgood, the side that initiates a reduction in tension remains uncertain as to the other side's intentions.

Therefore, it protects its basic security but takes an initial de-escalatory move in a peripheral area.

Expecting the other side to be suspicious,

the first side may make several moves of this type in hopes of inducing reciprocation. When mistrust is high and neither party is willing to make multiple positive initiatives, GRIT is likely to fail. However, when successful or when repeated actions of a party is inconsistent with the expectations that a pre-existing image generates, policy makers start to re-think the existing image. A change in the image of the Other may also be caused by changes in the domestic setting

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A change in the image of the Other may also be caused by changes in the domestic setting of a country.

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of a country. In return, the change brings with it a realigning of national interests and priorities, as well as foreign policy goals and objectives.

I contend that although the ally image of the Other has yet to be replaced completely by another image in either Turkey or Israel, something which needs to be studied more empirically in the future, a significant shift in the image of the Other is currently underway in both countries. As discussed in detail above,

the scholarship on image theory has established that there are three important factors in one's image of the Other: (1) the perceived threat

and/or opportunity represented by that actor, (2) the perceived relative capability of the actor, and (3) the perceived culture of that actor. Based on these three factors and Turkish-Israeli interactions especially since 2008, I tentatively suggest that whereas the Israeli image of Turkey is increasingly that of a *frenemy*,<sup>54</sup> a partner who is simultaneously a rival and a friend in the region, Turkey considers Israel more and more as an *inconvenient/untrustworthy partner*.

**Table 3: Israel and Turkey: From Allies to *Frenemies* and Inconvenient Partners**  
(Adapted from: Herrmann et al., 1997)

<i>Foreign policy challenge</i>				
THREAT				
		CULTURE		
		Superior	Similar	Inferior
	Superior	(1)	(2) Imperialist	(3) Barbarian
CAPABILITY	Similar	(4)	(5) Enemy	(6) <i>Frenemy</i>
	Inferior	(7)	(8)	(9)
MUTUAL GAIN				
		CULTURE		
		Superior	Similar	Inferior
	Superior	(10)	(11)	(12)
CAPABILITY	Similar	(13)	(14) Ally	(15) <i>Inconvenient/untrustworthy partner</i>
	Inferior	(16)	(17)	(18)
OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLOIT				
		CULTURE		
		Superior	Similar	Inferior
	Superior	(19)	(20)	(21)
CAPABILITY	Similar	(22)	(23) Degenerate	(24)
	Inferior	(25)	(26)	(27) Colony

As illustrated in table 3, I argue that Israel's image of Turkey as a *frenemy* represents a perceived relationship in which Turkey has similar power traits and inferior culture. Moreover, the Israeli perception is that Turkey presents a threat to Israel's security in the Middle East. For example, in a speech dedicated mostly to the Iranian threat and the current civil unrest in Arab states, Major General Amir Eshel, head of the Israeli Defence Force's Plans and Policy Directorate, also

mentioned Turkey as a point of concern: "We do not see [Turkey] as radical... but where it is heading is a big question."<sup>55</sup> During a presentation at Herzliya, Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Rafi Barak also noted Turkey's ambitions towards becoming a regional superpower and suggested that "we [in the Israeli government] are looking at this closely." Moreover, for the first time in its history, Turkey's position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict became

one-sided, demanding that Israel take steps to ease the blockade of Gaza or risk unspecified “consequences.”

Despite questions about Turkey’s warmer relations with the Arab Middle East and its increasing foreign policy assertiveness Israel still favours at least friendly relations with Turkey, especially in a volatile time in the region. The international community’s pressure on Iran has not yielded any positive results regarding the issue of Iranian nuclearisation, and violent revolutionary unrest has created an environment with the future unclear and Islamist groups such as Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood gaining from instability. Some Israeli officials have warned against further deterioration in Israeli-Turkish relations such as, for example, when Turkey excluded Israel from a joint military exercise due to Israel’s offensive against Hamas in Gaza in December 2009.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the Israeli leadership welcomes Turkey’s mediation in resolving its problems with certain Arab countries and organisations. For example, most recently in October 2011 Turkey was directly and indirectly involved in brokering a deal between Israel and Hamas in which the Israeli soldier Gilat Shalit, who had been held captive by Hamas for five years, was freed in exchange for more than a thousand Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

Turkey’s image of Israel as an *inconvenient/untrustworthy partner* represents a perceived relationship in which Israel

has similar power and inferior cultural traits. Israel, irrespective of its small size, has a very powerful military. Moreover, despite the “policy of opaqueness” pursued by the Israeli state, Israel is known to have nuclear weapons capability. The rise of right-wing parties in Israel and an increasing hawkishness on the Israeli-Palestinian issue also seem to be a key factor in Turkey’s changing perception of Israel.<sup>57</sup> In his September 2011 visit to Egypt as part of his North Africa tour, Erdoğan stated in reference to Israel that “states, just like individuals, have to pay the price for murders and for acts of terrorism they have committed so that we can live in a more just world,”<sup>58</sup> and reiterated Turkey’s rejection of the legality of the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. It is also telling that a Turkish television drama, *The Valley of the Wolves*, was clearly able to depict Israeli intelligence agents and diplomats as murderous and cruel in one of its most-watched episodes. Unlike before, Israel seems no longer part of the secularist-Islamist competition in Turkish politics today.<sup>59</sup>

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**It is very likely that both countries will try to “contain” each other by using different foreign policy instruments.**

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Nevertheless, the principles of “zero-problem foreign policy” and “pro-active and pre-emptive peace diplomacy” es-

poused and promoted by the Turkish leadership favours Turkey and Israel continuing to have a mutually beneficial relationship. In other words, despite the bitter rhetoric used against Israel as illustrated above, the Israeli image that is becoming predominant in Turkey is filtered through lenses that are influenced heavily by a desire to create a peaceful and stable regional order, with Turkey having regional power status, based on principles of cooperative security, economic interdependence and good-neighbourly relations, the main pillars of the “strategic depth” doctrine in Turkish foreign policy.

## Conclusion

There are several implications of these changing images of the foreign policies of both Turkey and Israel. First and foremost, Turkish-Israeli relations are headed for a tumultuous and less-than-friendly path in the foreseeable future, though Israel and Turkey have acknowledged their mutual need to cooperate.<sup>60</sup> Second, it is very likely that both countries will try to “contain” each other by using different foreign policy instruments. For example, Israel may further increase its relations with the Kurdish autonomous region in

Iraq in an attempt to build an alliance and to prevent future Turkish influence in the area. Similarly, Turkey could prefer to have closer relations with Egypt under a possible leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. In other words, both countries are likely to pursue policies that would help them protect geopolitical assets and attract new alliances, without provoking each other into an actual war.

This topic would benefit from future research providing an extensive content analysis of the leaders’ speeches, party positions, and government programmes in both Turkey and Israel, as well as in-depth understanding of the foreign policy actions each country has taken towards each other and other political actors in international relations to examine (1) whether or not the suggested change in the image of the Other in both Turkey and Israel vis-à-vis each other is in fact taking place, (2) whether or not the images of *frenemy* and *inconvenient/untrustworthy partner* are indeed relevant in analysing the future of Turkish-Israeli relations, and finally, (3) if yes, what this all means for Turkish-Israeli relations in particular, and for Middle East politics in general.



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# Foreign Policy of Kyrgyzstan under Askar Akayev and Kurmanbek Bakiyev

Yaşar SARI\*

## Abstract

*There is a clear link between a state's domestic situation - where policy is formulated and made (called foreign policy making), and its external environment, in which policy is implemented (called foreign policy behavior). In post-Soviet states in Central Asia, such as Kyrgyzstan, the states are operating their foreign policies in conditions of enormous structural change, uncertainty and lack of experience, stemming from the fact of having only recently established their own independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Changes in the international system and regional subsystems have also pushed them toward limited choices and certain idiosyncratic foreign policy behaviors. Furthermore, these states have entered into new alliances following the September 11 events, played roles in new conflicts (in Afghanistan and Iraq - the War on Terror), and sought assistance and protection from global and regional powers that had previously been inaccessible. This paper attempts to explain the foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan from 1991 to 2010. Robert Putnam's model of the "two-level game" approach is used to explain Kyrgyz foreign policy, based on the relationships between the*

*international system and subsystems, and foreign policy and domestic politics.*

## Key Words

Foreign Policy Analysis, Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akayev, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, Multi-Vector Foreign Policy, Two-Level Game.

## Introduction

An effective way of understanding the foreign policy process is to identify the levels of analysis. These levels refer to general areas from which certain foreign policy behaviors are generated within a state, and at which foreign policy relations occur between states. With the recognition that foreign policy behavior occurs both at state and interstate levels, we can differentiate between two distinct approaches to explain the foreign policy process of a state: 1) the role of certain internal factors and actors; and 2) the role of external factors and actors. Such approaches are required to identify the sources of its foreign policy.

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When a state decides to respond to a set of factors (location, military capability, economic power, natural resource, etc.), its leaders and ruling elites as actors take certain actions. This occurs especially when a state is initiating a foreign policy action, as well as when responding to the actions of other states. One needs first to conceptualize a mechanism for how to initiate foreign policy action and how to respond to another state's action, and then conduct inquiries into the internal and external sources of foreign policy decision-making.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, there are primarily two distinct sources of foreign policy: internal and external sources - actors and factors. Internal sources refer to domestic factors and actors that are helpful in generating a foreign policy approach. Among the internal actors are the individual leaders, the ruling elites, and the ethnic minorities. The external actors that influence the foreign policy making processes of the Central Asian states have evolved differently from that of powerful states such as Russia and the United States. These contribute to the articulation and the adoption of a specific foreign policy approach. Internal factors are: political instability; weak

state institutions; power struggles among different political groups to control the state; and the economic condition of the Central Asian states. External factors refer to areas that arise beyond state boundaries, such as the regional political settings and the international system. They also lead to specific foreign policy choices. Such factors have shaped the orientation and implications of Central Asian states' foreign policies in the last twenty years.

The Kyrgyz government has struggled

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to control, govern, and contain the political elites and the ethnic groups within its borders, and has dealt with internal threats from these groups since the late 1990s.

Demonstrations and protests against

the central government had escalated into bloody clashes and two political regime changes. These internal threats also shaped its foreign policy approach. In addition to these, changes in the international system have created new regional environments, such as the War on Terror in Afghanistan. In doing so, the increased level of international involvement in the region created new opportunities and restrictions to the foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan.

## Theoretical Framework

Robert Putnam's renowned article that formulated the "two-level games" portrayed leaders as being positioned between the "two tables" of international negotiation and the pressures of domestic political forces such as its bureaucracies.<sup>2</sup> In his article Putnam underlined the importance of considering foreign policy making and actions as not only part of foreign politics itself but also of domestic politics.

One of the models for connecting the foreign policy making process to domestic politics is the bureaucratic-organizational model.<sup>3</sup> However, bureaucracy and the bureaucratic structure are likely to be less prominent in the foreign policies of new states, because bureaucracy is still weak and small compared to that of powerful states such as the United States, China, and Russia. In other words, the roles of large departments/ministries and the routines of administrative procedures are closely interlinked in the foreign policies of major powers, but less so in new and small states. Thus, it is clear that the insights of bureaucratic and organizational models to the foreign policy making of new small states are limited. One of the reasons is that these states do not have the stability to establish and/or manage stable bureaucratic institutions. Moreover, existing institutions in these states do not develop complex organizational

routines and bargaining processes with each other. Thus, because of the lack of strong bureaucratic traditions in newly established small states, the bureaucratic-organizational model is considered to be of little relevance in explaining their foreign policies. In addition, because the state itself cannot be assumed to be a unitary actor, responding primarily to external threats and opportunities, the behaviors of decision-makers become one of the most important variables in understanding foreign policy actions of small states.

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**The roles of large departments/  
ministries and the routines of  
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less so in new and small states.**

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The main argument in this paper is that the scope of a small weak state's foreign policy actions depends on the type of threats, the level of external commitment, and the characteristics of its leadership. A two-stage analysis can address some critical questions, since international threats and opportunities are often ambiguous, and domestic processes are crucial to explaining the foreign policy of small weak states. This model is based on the traditional understanding of the limited resources and power possessed by small weak states.



It is true that the security of small weak states does 'suffer' from greater sensitivity, vulnerability<sup>4</sup> and dependence from both the immediate regional and wider international environments. This makes it ever more important for small weak states to have a well thought through foreign policy, using all instruments at their disposal to ensure that their security and interests are best served. Due to their position within the system, weaker states will take their positions and roles in the international system for granted because their presence is insignificant in regards to international outcomes. Furthermore, because major states will not focus their attention on potential threats from small weak states that are likely to pose little threat, the latter may face fewer external constraints.<sup>5</sup> Thus, this two-step analysis requires scholars to understand foreign policy sources and decision-making processes.<sup>6</sup>

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**The foreign policy of a small weak state may be shaped more directly by domestic threats or may sacrifice national interests to that of its leadership.**

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Miriam Elman suggests that internal factors - domestic politics and domestic institutional choices - are more important than external factors - international and regional systems - in explaining

the foreign policy of a weak state.<sup>7</sup> Domestic institutions play important roles because they shape and provide possible options, which the government implements. Thus, the weaker the state, the more likely it is to respond to external challenges and attempt to balance against rising hegemony. Because of their diminished capabilities relative to others, weak states lack a margin of error; they must be closely integrated and linked to the external environment because if they isolate themselves their survival will be at stake, and the costs of being exploited are high - as was true of Islam Kerimov's Uzbekistan in 2001. Therefore, because of the nature of the threat, governments of weak states experiencing internal threats will have different foreign policy behaviors to end internal threats.<sup>8</sup>

Another factor that explains foreign policy behavior is the beliefs and interests of its leaders. Leaders can easily exploit the link between their own security and that of the state in order to increase their leverage over domestic politics. For instance, Askar Akayev became the leader of Kyrgyzstan after the political crisis and the Osh-Uzgen clash between the Kyrgyz and the Uzbeks in 1990. He accumulated power and authority and became the sole authority in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, by undertaking to deal with threats leaders can increase their own powers and make use of these powers against their domestic opponents.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, in newly independent small states, identity (of the state or the leader), power (the state strength) and interests (threats to the state/leadership) must be brought together at the domestic level, as well as at the international level, to fulfill Putnam's theory to explain the foreign policy of a newly established weak state, such as Kyrgyzstan. The foreign policy of a small weak state may be shaped more directly by domestic threats or may sacrifice national interests to that of its leadership. An understanding of the foreign policy behaviors of a small state, therefore, requires the analysis of how state strength affects its foreign policy and the decision-making process.

## Kyrgyz Foreign Policy in General

By 1992, as with all newly independent Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan formed its own foreign policy structures, which were similar to that of Russia. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible for the realization of foreign policy, everyday foreign policy activities and the management of diplomatic missions abroad. In addition to the Ministry, under the Presidential Administration, a separate foreign policy body called the 'International Department of the Presidential Administration' was established. From the outset these two major institutions were actively

competing for influence in the foreign policy formation, and in most cases were mutually responsible for the formulations of foreign policies, although ultimately the President decided the foreign policy direction of the country.<sup>10</sup>

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When the region assumed a lesser significance in the international arena, the foreign policy behavior of Kyrgyzstan has been linked primarily to domestic politics.

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Other institutions, groups and agencies with an interest in the foreign policy formation include: Ministries of Defence and Security; the Parliament (Jogorku Kenesh); and political parties and private businesses. However, in the Kyrgyz case, their participation in the foreign policy making process was neither clearly defined nor institutionalized. This is despite the fact that the Parliament has the constitutional power to "define major directions of internal and external policies", while ministers, including the foreign minister, generally require their position to be confirmed by the parliament.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, decisions, concerning not only foreign policy, are generally made in accordance with two important

institutional constraints. First of all, the president makes decisions on major foreign policies of Kyrgyzstan. Secondly, government, primarily the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, implements these decisions. For example, in Kyrgyzstan the constitution and the “Law on the Diplomatic Service” state the legal role of state institutions in the foreign policy making and implementing processes.<sup>12</sup>

The existence of articles in its constitution and the law, however, offers only a partial understanding of the foreign policy directions of Kyrgyzstan. In addition to the legal designs, there are also unwritten rules that go beyond legal documentations. These are politically complex organizational routines, and bargaining processes among different bureaucratic institutions, traditions and customs. As for Kyrgyzstan, as with other Central Asian states, these traditions and customs have yet to come in existence. Therefore, institutional designs for their foreign policies are missing. These gaps are filled by their powerful presidents and their entourages.

Central Asian states have the overwhelming political superiority of leaders who control the state mechanism over any other organized source of power within the political system. For this reason, decision-making processes were totally controlled by their leaders.<sup>13</sup> In other words, within Central Asian states,

the domain of foreign policy is normally reserved for a few trusted individuals, and in some cases effective decisions are made solely by one leader. Such practices have become increasingly common within the region. For instance, Akayev and Bakiyev obviously exercised considerable personal authority in the making of foreign policy decisions without any significant degree of institutional, political, or popular control over their decisions and actions.<sup>14</sup>

Kyrgyz ruling elites implemented different foreign policies to reach the same goal, i.e., to use foreign policy in order to maintain internal political order and possess critical external support for their domestic positions. Indeed, many external relationships established by the Kyrgyzstan government have constituted, above all, access to a source of balancing power to contain internal challenges and threats. In other words, the Kyrgyz foreign policy frequently rises out of a need to strengthen the domestic political order as well as the personal needs of the president.

Furthermore, since independence, Kyrgyzstan has been burdened by the very same problems that other transitional states have faced, i.e., political disorder, defining a new identity, economic shocks, and ethnic or economic minorities who do not accept the sovereignty of the central state. Another factor is that both the administrative

structure and the borders of Kyrgyzstan were determined in the Stalinist era. Therefore, Kyrgyzstan's national boundaries and ethnic composition lacked correspondence with its titular nationalities, which caused potential or real threats to the country's sovereignty and internal and external policies.

However, foreign policy issues in Kyrgyzstan have never been determined solely by domestic factors. Once at the crossroads of empires and conquering peoples, Kyrgyzstan remains at a geographic point of competition between major powers and potential turmoil. In short, external factors are also critical to any analysis of Kyrgyz foreign policies. For example, after the September 11, 2001 incident, Kyrgyzstan became the focus of competing interests of major powers; this development provided opportunities for self-interested leaders, for example, Akayev, to bring the United States into the equation to balance Russian influence in the region. In these circumstances, when the Central Asian region assumed more significance in global terms, the foreign policy behavior of Kyrgyzstan has been linked primarily to external politics.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, the opposite is also true. When the region assumed a lesser significance in the international arena, the foreign policy behavior of Kyrgyzstan has been linked primarily to domestic politics.

## Kyrgyz Foreign Policy under President Askar Akayev

Kyrgyzstan, like other post-Soviet states, has faced many political, economic and social problems, from the necessity of state/nation-building to the urgency of economic reforms. Being an independent state meant taking responsibilities as a sovereign state in the international community, as well as being responsible to its own citizens. In order to be part of the international system and its community, Kyrgyzstan had to develop certain relationships with other states and international organizations. In other words, it had to have a foreign policy.

It was a very difficult task at the beginning because the geopolitical and geo-economic situation of Kyrgyzstan complicated the development of an independent foreign policy. Therefore, Kyrgyzstan introduced a multi-vector foreign policy. The Kyrgyz authorities accepted this policy not only because they wanted to, but also because the realities dictated it. Akayev and his advisors understood that both international and regional systems provide opportunities for Kyrgyzstan. Akayev also realized that as a small and newly independent state, Kyrgyzstan required friendly relations with major regional and global players.

Furthermore, Akayev was known as a very gentle, polite and tactful person. His

efforts in establishing friendly relations with other states were successful, due in large part to his personal relations with other state leaders. Therefore, the personality of Akayev, as well as of different Ministers of Foreign Affairs, affected the formation and evolution of Kyrgyz foreign policy.<sup>16</sup>

“Kyrgyzstan’s foreign policy has been controlled by two considerations first, that the country is too small and too poor to be economically viable without considerable outside assistance, and second, that it lies in a volatile corner of the globe, vulnerable to a number of unpleasant possibilities. These two considerations have substantially influenced the foreign relations of Kyrgyzstan, especially toward major powers and its immediate neighbors”.<sup>17</sup> However, this policy was criticized by the foreign policy experts in the country. For instance, former two-time Minister of Foreign Affairs, Muratbek Imanaliev said that Kyrgyzstan is a small country and cannot have a multi-vector foreign policy. Instead, the Kyrgyz government should determine a few strong partners with whom Kyrgyzstan builds strong ally relations.<sup>18</sup>

The Kyrgyz foreign policy under Askar Akayev can be divided into two different periods to form a better understanding of it.

First, in the early 1990s, Kyrgyzstan was among the few post-Soviet states

that chose to undertake radical economic and political reforms. Economically: it issued its own currency - som - in 1993, and became a member of World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1998. Politically: it showed its commitment to moving towards a democratic transformation. It was even called “an island of democracy” in Central Asia.<sup>19</sup> These policies also affected its foreign relations with other countries. In the first decade, Kyrgyz leaders had traveled around the world to establish diplomatic relations with other states. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan signed multilateral treaties and became a member of many international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as joining some regional organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). In the fall of 1998 Kyrgyzstan was the first Central Asian state that was accepted into the WTO. It is still the only Central Asian state that is a member of that organization.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, in 1994 Kyrgyzstan began cooperation with the NATO program Partnership for Peace. The practicality of this cooperation was in educating Kyrgyz military cadres in NATO countries, for example in Turkey. Therefore, major goals of the Kyrgyz

foreign policy in this period were the consolidation of independence and sovereignty, securing national interests by political and diplomatic methods, and the creation of favorable conditions for political and economic reforms within the country.

Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s had started developing relations with Western countries, especially with the United States, in order to receive financial assistance from these countries and many other international financial institutions. Most of the assistance in the early 1990s provided by the Western countries was directed to the support of democratic and radical reforms. At the same time Kyrgyzstan was trying to keep friendly relations with Russia, because the Kyrgyz economy was heavily dependent on Russia. The fact that Kyrgyzstan and Russia were part of a single country with a shared legacy from the past was another reason for the development of close Kyrgyz-Russian relations. Most Kyrgyz political elites were either educated in major Russian cities, such as Moscow or Saint Petersburg, or had worked in Russia at some point. Akayev had both been educated and had worked in Russia for a long time. However, despite these attempts by the Kyrgyz political elites in the 1990s, Russian leadership was not paying much attention, instead focusing on its domestic problems, or promoting a Western oriented foreign policy, when

Andrey Kozyrev was the foreign minister of Russia.

Along with this balancing of foreign policy towards Russia and the United States, Kyrgyzstan has taken certain steps toward another major power, its neighbor China, which has a great influence on Kyrgyzstan. China became the largest non-CIS trade partner of Kyrgyzstan and strengthened economic and military ties with Kyrgyzstan.

Worsening security and economic conditions within the state led it to look for external assistance. Kyrgyzstan would not be able to protect its borders even in the case of a small-scale conflict. This was proven in August 1999, when a group of 150-200 armed militants (supposedly religious extremist members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) crossed the Kyrgyz border, took several local inhabitants and policemen as hostages and occupied several villages in the Batken region. For several months the Kyrgyz army tried in vain to dislodge these militants from the territory, and succeeded only after external assistance was provided.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the Batken campaign during 1999-2000 indicated the inability of Kyrgyzstan itself, and other Central Asian states, to provide appropriate resistance to international terrorist groups, and indicated the necessity to unite and form common forces to prevent further terrorist attacks. These incidents pushed Kyrgyzstan not only to cooperate closely

with neighboring countries such as Uzbekistan, but also to value being a part of regional security organizations such as SCO and CSTO.

This multi-vector policy of Akayev worked successfully till Kyrgyzstan, as well as the whole of the Central Asian region, had gained new status. The events of September 11, 2001 were critical for the Central Asian region, and of course had significant influence on the foreign policies of the states in this region, including Kyrgyzstan. The deployment of American and Russian airbases had a great influence on Kyrgyzstan's external direction. Kyrgyzstan became very important geopolitically, and its strategic position had increased its importance for the major states. Thus, the next period for the Kyrgyz foreign policy emerged following the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

When the United States announced a war against international terrorism and founded the anti-terror coalition, Kyrgyzstan was considered a good strategic and logistical location for an American-led coalition airbase to supply materials to the coalition (mainly American) forces in Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup> The Kyrgyz government quickly responded to this international change and utilized it as an opportunity to develop new priorities for its external relations. The fact was that the United States started to increase its activities as the global superpower, and, as well as providing economic

assistance, provided alternatives to the Central Asian countries for balancing the Russian influence. In other words, The Kyrgyz government established ties with the United States, while maintaining its close relations with Russia. Such ties help Kyrgyzstan balance Russia by avoiding heavy reliance on it and thus securing Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty.<sup>23</sup> It is also economically beneficial for Kyrgyzstan, because being an ally with the United States provided a chance for new investments in the Kyrgyz economy, and the airbase became an important source of revenue for the Kyrgyz government. Additionally, the terrorist groups who entered the Batken oblast in 1999 and 2000 were members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) closely connected to the Taliban movement; thus, for both the Kyrgyz and Uzbek governments, the American forces aided in dealing with these groups.

Kyrgyzstan offered its civilian airport-Manas International Airport - for a significant number of American military planes. Of course, an American-led coalition airbase in such close proximity made Russian and Chinese authorities very nervous, though they had hoped that this was only temporary. Russia did not want to lose its influence in the region, including Kyrgyzstan, whereas China considered the presence of an American airbase near its borders a threat to its national security. Later, Russia reopened an old Soviet airbase in Kant - in which



Hosni Mubarek of Egypt and Hafez El Esad of Syria were trained as military pilots in the 1960s - only 50 kilometers away from the American one. Russian and American military bases were never this close anywhere in the world. Each of these countries had its own reasons to have military bases in the Central Asian region. "The basic aim of the US in the region is not to allow Central Asia to become a source of such threats as drug trafficking, the growth of Islamic extremism and multi-ethnic conflicts. Another important aim is its energy security. The US, as the world's largest energy consumer, is trying to diversify its sources of energy supplies. Accessing the reserves of the Caspian area significantly diversifies the US energy resources."<sup>24</sup> These two aims of the US in Central Asia were the main interests of Washington.

Furthermore, the American airbase in Kyrgyzstan has great importance, due to the ongoing war in Afghanistan and the possible military attack against Iran in the future. However, the opening of the Russian military base in Kant in 2003 with the CSTO program indicates the tendencies of the Kyrgyz foreign policy. Kyrgyzstan tried to maintain a balance between Russia and the United States. The Kyrgyz president, Akayev, clearly understood Russia to be the dominant power in the region, so he tried to satisfy the Russian leadership by providing a military base.

A couple of months prior to being overthrown by the opposition in 2005, Akayev was pushing for further cooperation with Russia and China, whereas the Kyrgyz-American relations showed signs of breaking up. After the first round of parliamentary elections in February 2005, the United States Ambassador Stephen Young openly criticized Akayev; and when Akayev was overthrown in March 2005 most experts on Kyrgyzstan believed that it was done with the assistance of the United States. At that point many experts claimed that subsequently the foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan would be oriented towards the development of Kyrgyz-US relations. However, the reality was different.<sup>25</sup>

## Kyrgyz Foreign Policy under President Kurmanbek Bakiyev

In 25 March 2005, when Kurmanbek Bakiyev assumed power in Kyrgyzstan, he desired a new conception for its foreign policy. However, his policies were not very different from the previous ones. Bakiyev himself as Prime Minister during 2000 – 2002, and his first Foreign Minister Roza Otunbayeva, took the same position as Akayev. Moreover, Bakiyev and his colleagues who came to power were from the Soviet trained and educated elite, and their adherence to Russia was a very important factor in the future foreign policy direction. Many



experts talked about the significant change that might happen in Kyrgyz foreign policy. However, under Bakiyev's leadership, the new Kyrgyz authority chose to leave the foreign policy as it was and focus on domestic issues. Kyrgyz authorities announced that there would be no significant change in its external policy. The first statement concerning Kyrgyz foreign policy was made by the acting foreign minister, Roza Otunbayeva, who said that: "not only will there be no fundamental change in foreign policy, there will be no change at all in foreign policy."<sup>26</sup> In other words, Kyrgyz leaders announced that Kyrgyzstan would keep on conducting a multi-vector foreign policy. Therefore, Kyrgyz foreign policy remained based on the principles of strengthening its development of relations and cooperation with the great powers, such as Russia, China, and the United States. At the same time it emphasized the importance of its neighbors. Kyrgyzstan had also paid great attention to strengthening ties with the EU and Asian countries, especially Japan and Korea.

Despite these claims of multi-vector foreign policy, the new Kyrgyz leadership had chosen Russia as a priority in the direction of its foreign policy. It viewed SCO and CSTO as the main regional organizations.<sup>27</sup> Russia and China started using this opportunity to get rid of the American airbase in Kyrgyzstan. In July 2005 in Astana, at the summit

of SCO, the declaration calling for the United States to close the airbase and withdraw from Kyrgyz territory was accepted. However, following the visit of United States Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld in the end of July 2005, the Kyrgyz leadership's opinion on the terms of the airbase withdrawal changed.<sup>28</sup>

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The fact that Kyrgyzstan and Russia were part of a single country with a shared legacy from the past was another reason for the development of close Kyrgyz-Russian relations.

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During the same period, Bakiyev made his first presidential visit to Russia and signed an agreement with his Russian counterpart Putin to increase military cooperation, which showed the tendencies of Kyrgyz foreign policy. Thus, Bakiyev granted Russia priority in the country's foreign policy. The Kyrgyz ruling elites started emphasizing the great importance of Kyrgyz-Russian relations, supporting Bakiyev's statements on their historical and cultural commonalities, the economic dependence of Kyrgyzstan, and the great potential of future developments of bilateral relations and cooperation. Kyrgyzstan inclined towards more cooperation with Russia in the early years of the Bakiyev's regime and actively participated in regional

organizations, such as SCO and CSTO. The Kyrgyz government emphasized the value of being a member of these regional organizations. This is an indication of the attitude of Kyrgyz foreign policy towards its closest neighbors and major powers in the region - Russia and China.<sup>29</sup> Especially considering the volatile domestic conditions, Bakiyev gave priority to the development of close relations with Russia because the United States is far away, but Russia is very close. Russia could help Bakiyev to stay in power if the domestic condition worsened.<sup>30</sup>

In February 2006, Bakiyev demanded an increase in the rent payments for the American airbase from 2 million to 200 million dollars. On 19 April 2006, several days before Bakiyev's official visit to Moscow, the Kyrgyz leader made a sensational statement that had a significant impact on Kyrgyz-American relations. Bakiyev threatened: "If a new agreement on the conditions of Bishkek has not been signed by 1 June 2006, Kyrgyzstan will end its bilateral agreement with the US on the deployment of the American airbase Ganci."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, during his Moscow trip in 2006, Bakiyev stated that Russia is the eternal friend of Kyrgyzstan and the United States is a partner. He refused to take part in the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program led by the World Bank and IMF, instead accepted Russian loans and credits. After a long negotiation, the

airbase rent increased from 2 million dollars to 17 million dollars with low-interest loans, and the contract was extended.<sup>32</sup>

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Three years later, when Bakiyev visited Moscow in February 2009, he signed a Russian financial assistance package, which included Russian debt-forgiveness, \$300 million in low-interest credit loans and \$ 1.7 billion for completing a hydroelectric power station. Furthermore, he declared that the American military base will close, and asked the American military personnel to leave the country before the July 2009 presidential election in Kyrgyzstan. Such moves suggested Russia was enjoying unprecedented stature in the Kyrgyz leader's eyes. At the same time Russia and Kyrgyzstan were taking concrete steps in the name of bilateral cooperation. The Kyrgyz authorities' statement on recognizing Russia as a main strategic partner was considered proof of their pro-Russian orientation. Agreements on the creation of joint plants, loans, and building hydro-energy stations on

Kyrgyz territory are all important steps on the way to building close ties between Kyrgyzstan and Russia. Therefore, one can identify this period as constituting the high point in bilateral relations between Kyrgyzstan and Russia.<sup>33</sup>

However, following the July presidential election, Kyrgyz foreign policy shifted its attention to developing close relations with the United States. Bakiyev signed a new agreement with the United States to keep the military base in the airport under a different status, and, of course, with more payment of rent. He took a risky step by extending the American use of Gansi military base, which Russia opposed. Bakiyev's attitude indicated a change in the Kyrgyz approach to the military base. There are two reasons. Firstly, while previously the Kyrgyz government was concerned with the base's strategic value, the Bakiyev government's new attitude was based on the economic value of the base, both for (Bakiyev's) personal and national reasons. The second reason was that Bakiyev thought that he had consolidated his domestic power and did not require any external support, such as from Russia, to stay in power. Thus, Bakiyev signed a new agreement to keep the American transit base in Bishkek.<sup>34</sup>

The new agreement between Kyrgyzstan and the United States on the military base, and transferring Russian loans to Bakiyev's son Maxim Bakiyev's bank, Asia Universal Bank, angered the

Russian government, especially Prime Minister Putin. When Putin met with his Kyrgyz counterpart Prime Minister Daniyar Usenov, he accused Bakiyev and his government of not keeping their promises.<sup>35</sup> Russian TV stations, which are popular in Kyrgyzstan, openly criticized Bakiyev and his family, and broadcast programs on the corruption of his family. The Russian government, previously refusing to talk with Kyrgyz opposition leaders, invited them to Moscow.<sup>36</sup> On 1 April 2010, the Russian government terminated the preferred customs taxes that Kyrgyzstan had been enjoying. Prices of some products, especially oil and other products imported from Russia, increased and created an upheaval in the country.

It can be said that for such a small country as Kyrgyzstan, designating a certain country as a priority in foreign policy will not bring benefits. As Chairman of the Foundation of Political Research and former State Secretary Ambassador Ishenbay Abdrazakov said: "Foreign policy is to satisfy the requirements of our country and contribute to the solution of our internal problems. Since we do have a lot of problems, then our foreign policy has to be very flexible. If we will act in such a way to give priority to certain states among many states, we will lose our face, then our foreign policy, I think, will not achieve the needed goals."<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

Russian foreign policy in the early 1990s was different to that of post 1994. In the early 1990s, Russia's main priorities were to develop close relations with Western countries and organizations. That way Russia could expect to become an important member of the Western club. However, following the December 1993 election and, furthermore, following Putin coming to power in 2000, the Russian foreign policy direction turned to the former Soviet countries, including the Central Asian ones. This was precisely what Russian policymakers pushed onto the agenda. They claimed that Russia was and is the political center and a historic magnet for the Central Asian states.<sup>38</sup> This created an image of center-periphery relations, again reminiscent of a Moscow-centric past, which did not attract Kyrgyz policymakers. Especially in the second half of the 1990s, the image of Russia as the hegemon power in the region was seen with trepidation at first, and attracted diminishing enthusiasm thereafter among the Kyrgyz leaders. Kyrgyz leaders were looking for an actor who could balance Russian dominance in the region.

When the new order and rules of the post September 11 world were pronounced by the United States President George W. Bush, the countries most affected were in Central Asia, including those studied in this paper,

namely Kyrgyzstan. The post September 11 environment had caused a profound change in the region, and Kyrgyzstan adapted itself to the new environment because of its proximity to Afghanistan, not only in geographical terms but also historically, and naturally it was greatly affected. Kyrgyz foreign policy makers found alternative sources. Although some shifts in the priorities of Kyrgyz foreign policy did happen, Kyrgyzstan never experienced any strict radical change in its foreign policy.

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After spring 2005, Kyrgyzstan was transformed from a security-creating environment to a security-consuming region, which seemingly stretched from the Caucasus to western China. The post Spring 2005 environment has allowed Russia to play the role of the regional hegemon power, and nowhere has this been more prevalent than in her relationship with Kyrgyzstan where its effects and impacts have ranged from the internal politics to the attempt to close the American military base in Kyrgyzstan.

Being a newly independent state, Kyrgyzstan desired multiple channels of communication with the outside world. Therefore, first of all, Kyrgyzstan has cooperated closely with Russia, China, the United States, the European Union, Turkey, et al. Secondly, Kyrgyzstan has never had any strict radical line in its foreign policy. Kyrgyz governments have generally tried to stay away from being a place of competition for other states. However, implementing the notion of a multi-vector foreign policy is also difficult for a country that has totally dependency on international and regional powers. For this reason, it is difficult for Kyrgyzstan to remain neutral in case of conflicts between two or more of its partners, and to refrain from taking a harsh stance against one of the partners involved.

The tentative closing words one can offer in this brief investigation of Kyrgyz foreign policy consist of the obvious: there are many instances of rhetoric and only some evidence of the actual realization of the state's common personal

and national goals. Furthermore, the geography that Kyrgyzstan finds itself located in puts an inordinate amount of pressure on the country. In addition to that, in terms of domestic politics, the lack of an experienced foreign policy elite, as well as the authoritarian system of governance under Akayev and Bakiyev, hindered systematic thinking in the realm of Kyrgyz foreign policy.

Finally, both interests and fears of Akayev and Bakiyev as leaders of Kyrgyzstan, and changes in the international system and the regional subsystems have pushed Kyrgyzstan towards restricted

choices and certain indeterminate foreign policy behaviors. As a conclusion, it can be said that Kyrgyz foreign policy in the last twenty years has developed in a relatively orderly manner; of course, except when international and regional systems have been shaken and changed, such as following the September 11 attacks in 2001, and when internal political changes happened in 2005 and 2010.

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Implementing the notion of a multi-vector foreign policy is also difficult for a country that has totally dependency on international and regional powers.

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## Endnotes

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- 2 Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games”, *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1998), pp. 427-461.
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- 8 The threat could be based on internal power struggles, as in Kyrgyzstan, and/or ethnic minority refusal to recognize and rebel against the central government, or an ethnic minority’s desire to establish its own state or integrate/join a state which is established and governed by their kin, such as the Karabakh Armenians in Azerbaijan and the Abkhazians in Georgia.
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# Bangladesh - Between Terrorism, Identity and Illiberal Democracy: The Unfolding of a Tragic Saga

Rashed Uz ZAMAN\*

## Abstract

*In the case of Bangladesh, this paper argues, the nature of the prevailing political culture is playing an important role in the growth of extremist politics and the resulting violence. Most of the political parties are democratic, but only in name. Leaders of the parties are selected rather than elected, dissent within the parties is next to non-existent and grassroots members are not allowed to offer input, which is vital for maintaining a vibrant democratic system. The danger for Bangladesh, where democracy is nearly absent in all but in name, is that such a situation might create a space for both right and left wing terrorism to flourish. The objective of this paper is, therefore, to trace the evolution of Bangladesh's politics and highlight the impact of vitriolic politics as a catalyst in the spread of political extremism in Bangladesh.*

## Key Words

Bangladesh, illiberal politics, left and right-wing violence, identity politics, malgovernance.

## Introduction

Bangladesh has been viewed as a moderate, democratic Muslim-majority state that has made significant strides in economic and human development. Though the political history of Bangladesh in the first 20 years of its existence has been punctuated by periods of military and quasi-military rule, the country has experienced relative stability since the restoration of democracy in 1990. Since then the country has had four largely free and fair general elections: in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008.

While Bangladesh has in the past been synonymous with a myriad of problems such as chronic poverty, natural disasters and a huge population, it was not seen as a country suffering from the scourge of terrorism. Indeed, in spite of the 'liberalist' interpretation of terrorism, which holds that terrorism needs to be

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understood as a response to economic, social and political misery,<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh has not experienced any bout of terrorism since the birth of the country in 1971. However, this situation started changing in the late 1990s. At times, it is feared that Bangladesh is on its way to becoming a major outpost of militant Islam linked to some of the key centers of Islamic militancy in South, Southeast, and West Asia.<sup>2</sup> A series of bomb attacks all over the country in August 2005, followed by deadly attacks on judges by suicide bombers in the latter part of the same year, put Bangladesh on the radar of the international security community. Faced with tremendous pressures both from within and outside the country, the then ruling party ordered security services to stamp out the terrorists. Violent engagements followed, and after a series of dramatic encounters, top leaders of the group responsible for the August bombings were apprehended, brought to trial and subsequently executed. Other terrorist organizations were also identified and efforts were made successfully to neutralize them. However, signs are that the offensive against the terrorists did not crush them. Rather, the drive of the security forces may have encouraged the emergence of a new leadership as adamant as its predecessors in pursuing its radical goals.<sup>3</sup> The recent arrests of members of banned religious outfits only point to the

fact that Bangladesh has to travel a long road in its struggle with terrorism.<sup>4</sup>

Why is Bangladesh suffering from this malaise? One must remember that terrorism is not a mono-causal issue. One writer has identified four factors which explain the growth of terrorism: (i) increasing population; (ii) growing disparities in wealth and benefits; (iii) the expansion of religious terrorism; and (iv) advanced technology and access to it.<sup>5</sup> Paul Wilkinson, on the other hand, has listed a wider range of causes. For Wilkinson, terrorism may be brought about by: (i) states themselves; (ii) ethnic conflicts; (iii) groups believing in extreme left ideology; (iv) groups espousing extreme right ideology; and (v) religious fanatics. He does warn against treating these categories as mutually exclusive and emphasizes that many groups are motivated by a combination of religious, ethnic and political aims and motivations.<sup>6</sup>

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**Bangladesh has not experienced any bout of terrorism since the birth of the country in 1971.**

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In the case of Bangladesh, this paper argues, it is the nature of the prevailing political culture, exacerbated by a crisis of identity, which is playing the important role in the growth of extremist politics and the resulting violence.

True, Bangladesh has been a practicing democratic polity for more than half of its existence. Observers, however, have questioned the way democracy is perceived by Bangladesh's ruling elites and masses. Most of the political parties are democratic, but only in name. Leaders of the parties are selected rather than elected, dissent within the parties is next to non-existent and grassroots members are not allowed to offer input, which is vital for maintaining a vibrant democratic system.

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The political scene is further complicated by a crisis of identity which affects the majority Muslim population of Bangladesh. Since the advent of British rule in India, Bengali Muslims have gradually experienced a steady growth of collective self-consciousness as a distinct group of people, and this has had profound political implications. However, it should also be pointed out that this growth has not been a smooth or unidirectional one. Indeed, as Asim Roy points out, "The Bengal Muslim search for a collective identity was clearly caught between the two opposite pulls of an extra-territorial 'Islamic' ideology and of a local geographical 'Bengali'

culture."<sup>7</sup> The political road which was taken by the Muslims of this region saw them opting for Pakistan in 1947, but within a space of twenty-four years the 'Islamic identity' was discarded in favour of a 'Bengali culture', which manifested itself through the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. The emergence of Bangladesh, however, did not lead to an end to the quest. Rather, the saga continues and the events in the country since its inception have only served to strengthen "the persistent image of a people still groping for a commonly acceptable identity."<sup>8</sup> This in turn has led to a rupture of the Bangladeshi population strictly along partisan lines, with the Bangladesh Awami League (henceforth known as the AL) promoting itself as a proponent of 'Bengali culture' and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (henceforth known as the BNP) highlighting the importance of the country's 'Islamic identity'.

The rot does not stop here, for the political system is characterized by excessive rivalry between the leaders of the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the two main political parties of the country. As a result of this confrontational situation, Bangladesh has been afflicted with a political culture where everything centres on the desire to win power. Moreover, all this has led to the politicization of the country along party lines, with public offices being increasingly viewed as a source of self-aggrandisement. Such a situation has made observers wonder if spoil politics

will ultimately bring about terminal politics, i.e., an intensification and acceleration of violent conflict, leading to state collapse<sup>9</sup>

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**Bangladesh has been afflicted with a political culture where everything centres on the desire to win power.**

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Under such circumstances, the danger for Bangladesh, where democracy is nearly absent in all but in name, is that such a situation might create a space for both right and left wing terrorism to flourish. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to trace the evolution of Bangladesh's politics, the tussle over the identity of its majority population, and to highlight the impact of vitriolic politics as a catalyst in the spread of political extremism in Bangladesh. Such an approach has been adopted because we believe political violence should be understood as a series "of practices and cultural forms whose meanings" can only be unlocked by focusing on "the historical memory and the social relations of the society within which it arises, takes form, and achieves effects."<sup>10</sup> The paper also emphasizes the need for a more pro-people governance system that can help Bangladesh climb out of this downward spiral.

The paper is divided into the following sections: the first section looks at the

birth of Bangladesh and the faltering journey the state took until the overthrow of the military dictatorship of General H. M. Ershad in late 1990. The vexing issue of identity is seldom absent as the British and Pakistani eras recede into the background and a new country emerges from the debris of a united Pakistan. Therefore, an attempt will be made to trace the role identity politics played during this timeframe. The track record of the four democratic governments which have governed the country from 1991 to 2010 will be scrutinized in section two. The third section highlights the present situation prevailing in the country and identifies the pitfalls awaiting Bangladesh. The paper concludes by explaining how the prevailing political culture is pushing the country to the brink of an abyss and discusses what can be done to arrest this dangerous trend.

## **Terrorism, Identity and Religion in Colonial Bengal**

Bangladesh declared its independence from Pakistan on March 26, 1971. While the bloodshed and travails of the nine months long war of independence have become etched in the national memory of the country, violence was not a stranger in the land which subsequently came to constitute the country called Bangladesh. Indeed, during the British rule in India (1757-1947), the area

comprising today's Bangladesh was a part of the British Indian Empire and was known as East Bengal. The propensity of Bengal to erupt into spasms of political violence and social disorder was recognized by numerous conquerors as they tried to impose their suzerainty over the region. Historians have reviewed the history of 77 separate peasant uprisings in India during British rule,<sup>11</sup> with Bengal emerging as a centre of peasant unrest. This finding is reinforced by Stephen Fuchs, who argues that in the latter part of the eighteenth century large parts of Bengal were in a state of virtual insurrection.<sup>12</sup> While most of these uprisings cannot be considered politically conscious attempts to overthrow foreign domination, but were triggered by local grievances, at times these uprisings transmuted into religious movements. One such movement was the *Fara'idī* movement.<sup>13</sup>

Originally a peasant movement, the *Fara'idīs* combined Islamic proselytizing with attacks on landlords, usually Hindus in the case of Bengal. The *Fara'idīs* were suppressed by the British, but this could not prevent the emergence of another movement led by one Nasir Ali (alias Titu Mir), who between 1827 and 1831 rallied Muslim cultivators and weavers in the districts of Nadia, Faridpur and Twenty-Four Parganas of Bengal against Hindu landlords, money lenders and British owners of indigo

plantations. Titu Mir's activities were not only confined to bringing about changes in the socio-economic condition of the Muslim masses. A disciple of Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareilly, who between 1826 and 1831 attempted to organize a jihad (holy war) against the rule of non-believers in India,<sup>14</sup> Titu Mir concentrated on establishing the outer boundaries of Bengali Muslim identity. He brought about changes in the way Bengali Muslims donned the dhoti, the three-yard length loin cloth worn by Bengali peasants, and instructed his followers to grow beards.<sup>15</sup> Titu Mir was subsequently killed in a skirmish with the British while protesting a local Hindu landlord's imposition of a beard tax. The setbacks experienced by these movements, however, should not negate the fact that these movements had considerable impact on the minds of the Muslim population of Bengal. One observer of the movements observed that, while the material condition of the Muslims of region underwent little or no change, the era of conflict and confrontation led to the formation "of separate Islamic identity- an overzealous respect for the faith."<sup>16</sup>

While 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal witnessed violence motivated by economic issues, it was the 20<sup>th</sup> century that saw the advent of modern political violence. Between 1900 and 1910 Bengal was racked by terrorist activities. The purpose was

to force the British rulers of India to concede political power to Indians. The partition of Bengal in 1905 gave impetus to the movement and by 1907 there was a sharp increase in terrorist attacks directed towards British officials in the province.<sup>17</sup> Indians working in the law-enforcement agencies of British India were also targeted. This period also saw the emergence of secret societies whose purpose was to carry out terrorist acts and accelerate the move towards India's freedom from colonial rule.<sup>18</sup>

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Political activists, students, peasants and professionals formed what could be considered autonomous armed gangs, which were seldom accountable to any authority.

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The nationalist character of the terrorist movement taking place in Bengal during this time was strongly influenced by Hindu religious symbolism and had a deleterious impact on Bengali Muslims. The terrorists in their desire to attain greater sympathy from the overwhelming Hindu masses of India adopted '*Bande Mataram*' (Hail, Motherland) and similar slogans which appealed to their sentiments in a cultural idiom rooted in religion. Kali, the Hindu goddess of power and destruction, was put on a

pedestal as the patron of the movement. Such gestures were deeply offensive to the majority of Bengali Muslims who were already aware of their identity as a separate community. The result was widespread bitterness among the Muslim population.<sup>19</sup> A similar conclusion is reached by Richard Hula, who observes that the terror campaign, particularly in its more violent aspects, had an impact far beyond that of producing the British response. Instead, it led to antagonism between Muslims and Hindus.<sup>20</sup>

This brief foray into the history of Bengal reveals the interaction of violence and identity politics in the region during the British rule, which lasted for nearly two hundred years. Commenting on this phenomenon in Bengal, Asim Roy notes that the conflicts generated by the revivalist movements transformed from a struggle to ensure socio-economic and civil rights to a concern with religious rights, and in the process sharpened the ethnic and communal differences present in the region. With the passage of time the conflicts merged under a common Islamic fold, leading to a strict division of Hindu and Muslim communities in the region.<sup>21</sup> The terrorist movement in the first two decades of the twentieth century only served to reinforce this divide, thereby ensuring the support of the Bengali Muslims when the call for a separate homeland for the Muslims of India was raised in the following decades.

## Bangladesh from 1971 to 1990 – Lurching Between Hope and Despair

The British rule of India ended in 1947 with the partition of the Indian subcontinent and the emergence of two countries, namely India and Pakistan. East Bengal became a part of Pakistan, but the religious ideology which led to the birth of Pakistan proved inadequate to hold the country together, and Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign state in December 1971 after undergoing a nine months long war. The Awami League, led by its charismatic leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, spearheaded the struggle, and it was an Awami League government, headed by Sheikh Mujib, which took over the reins of power in the newly independent country.

The dominant position of the Awami League in the liberation struggle should not make one underestimate the complex nature of the war itself. While East Pakistani members of the Pakistan Army and East Pakistan Rifles (a paramilitary organization) fought in the war, the fact remains that the bulk of the Bengali fighters were civilian militias. Political activists, students, peasants and professionals formed what could be considered autonomous armed gangs, which were seldom accountable to any authority. The war also saw the

growth of a radical left-wing ideology, which already existed in East Pakistan.<sup>22</sup> While the majority of the civilian militias went back home after the end of the war, keen observers noted “the exploits of the liberation forces have been a kind of traumatic experience for many a young Bengali. If experience has brutalized his sensibilities, it has also affected his values and his attitude to life.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the 1971 war and the post-war retribution-based violence that targeted the opponents of the liberation struggle transformed the conflict and its aftermath into a collective trauma. Large-scale civilian participation in the war strongly politicized large segments of society.<sup>24</sup>

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**The Awami League itself seemed unable to provide any guidance to lead the new state out of the labyrinth.**

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It was this war-torn, violence-racked and politically conscious country which Sheikh Mujib inherited upon his return to Bangladesh from a Pakistani jail on January 10, 1972. The task facing the Mujib’s AL government was immense, but it was still able to present the country with a fairly acceptable democratic constitution- the 1972 constitution (adopted in November 1972), which provided for a Westminster-



type parliamentary democracy. The constitution adopted nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism as its four pillars. While various explanations were used to justify the inclusion of these goals, it was secularism which created confusion and resentment among the majority of the population. Indeed, it soon became clear that secularism as perceived in the West and as promoted in Bangladesh differed significantly. Aggravating the situation was the fact that the hurried introduction of the vaguely defined concept of secularism was really a superimposition on a mainly agrarian, backward and pre-modern society where old values, with Islam as an important component of daily life, still played a crucial role.<sup>25</sup>

The Awami League itself seemed unable to provide any guidance to lead the new state out of the labyrinth. Rather, it fumbled and sought to provide a definition of secularism which was at odds with the prevailing notion of secularism as practiced in the West. In the Western discourse secularism meant a new world-view as opposed to the spirituality and otherworldliness espoused by the major religions of the world. Influenced by rationalism, the Enlightenment and the twin forces of the industrial revolution and capitalism, secularism questioned the place of the supernatural and sacred in the affairs of human beings.<sup>26</sup>

Needless to say, such an atmosphere was not present in the newly independent country. Moreover, the AL government did not define secularism clearly, but spoke of it being used as a sort of barrier against the abuse of religion for political gains. Time and again, Mujib was at pains to point that he was not disavowing the need for Islam to be protected and patronized by the state. However, he was also concerned about the needs of other religious minorities residing within Bangladesh. The result of such a policy was not the consolidation of secularism in Bangladesh but the emergence of a situation where all religions flourished and vied with each other for state patronage. This did not go down well with the majority Muslim population of the country.<sup>27</sup>

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The presence of the Indian Army in Bangladesh after the end of the war and allegations of widespread looting by Indian troops had a negative impact on the Bangladeshis.

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The Awami League's pursuit of secularism also ran up against the anti-Indian attitude which was rapidly building up inside the country. The honeymoon of 1971, when India actively supported the Liberation War of Bangladesh, did not last long.

The presence of the Indian Army in Bangladesh after the end of the war and allegations of widespread looting by Indian troops had a negative impact on the Bangladeshis. The display of hegemonic aspirations by India, which received a boost with her comprehensive victory over Pakistan, turned a grateful Bangladeshi population into a sullen one. It was not long after 1971 that the terms anti-Indian and anti-Awami League turned synonymous. The secularist policy of Sheikh Mujib was seen as an appeasement of India and suffered a Muslim backlash as the Indian high-handedness with Bangladesh became apparent.

By 1975 the AL government had sunk into a quagmire of corruption, economic mismanagement and administrative inefficiency. Like the tragic hero of Robert Browning's "The Patriot", Mujib, the charismatic leader, lost touch with the very people who had propelled him to power. In early 1975 he discarded the parliamentary system and moved closer to a trend of authoritarianism of personal rule.<sup>28</sup> The situation prevailing within the country deteriorated further, and in August 15, 1975 a group of mid-ranking army officers killed Mujib and several members of his family. The era of military rule had started in Bangladesh.

The chaos which followed the assassination of Sheikh Mujib saw a series of coups and counter-coups being mounted, and it was only in late 1975

that a semblance of order was restored in the country with the assumption of power by Major General Ziaur Rahman.

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Bangladesh negated the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam as promoted by the Pakistani state, but it did not in any way deny its Muslim identity.

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The Zia era lasted from 1975 to 1981 and gave Bangladesh a mixed legacy. Zia reintroduced a multiparty political system in the country. He created his own political party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (the BNP), which over time has emerged as the alternative to the philosophy and politics of The Awami League. The popularity of the BNP in no way diminishes the fact that it was imposed from the top down by Zia's government and still reflects the authoritarian style of its general-turned-politician. Another of Zia's achievements was saving the Bangladesh Army from disintegrating into numerous factions. He did not hesitate to use force, and over time the Bangladesh Army was able to purge itself of factionalism. However, this happened too late for Zia, and it was the holdover of factionalism in the military which cost him his life.<sup>29</sup>

Ziaur Rahman also reversed the secularization policy initiated by Sheikh

Mujib. In 1973 Abidullah Ghazi penned an insightful essay where he pointed out the strong Islamic nature of Bengal and observed that the rejection of Pakistan was only a rejection of an inconvenient political bond. Bangladesh negated the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam as promoted by the Pakistani state, but it did not in any way deny its Muslim identity.<sup>30</sup> Zia seemed to have reached a similar conclusion. He realized how important Islam was for consolidating his rule and sought to achieve this by giving a legal and constitutional face to Bangladesh's

Islamic orientation. Zia amended the Bangladesh Constitution, did away with secularism and inserted a clause professing 'faith in the Almighty Allah'.

Changes were brought about in the school syllabi whereby courses on Islam were made compulsory for the students. However, the dangers posed by extremist Islam were not disregarded, and right-wing religious parties and interest groups were kept in check. Thus, observes Kathryn Jacques, the tenor of Zia's Islamic message was one which catered to the majority population's religious beliefs, albeit mixed with Bangladeshi territorial and cultural pride.<sup>31</sup>

Zia also withdrew the ban on Islamic political parties which the Awami

League government had imposed in the aftermath of the 1971 war. Initiating a move which was destined to have a profound impact upon the course of Bangladeshi politics, Zia popularized the concept of Bangladeshi nationalism as opposed to the Bengali nationalism of the Awami League. The new nationalism purportedly brought the ethnically non-Bengalis, including the tribal groups, within the fold of the Bangladeshi state. More importantly, it also drew a distinction between the Bengali-speaking people of Bangladesh and those of West

Bengal in India who are predominantly Hindu. One observer points out that such an action meant a "reassertion of the distinct and separate identity of Bengali Muslims

vis-à-vis the Bengali Hindus" and thus revived the question of identity which had vexed the Muslims of this region during the colonial period.<sup>32</sup> Zia's party, the BNP, has faithfully adhered to his policies, and later on in the article we will see how this has affected politics in Bangladesh.

After a brief democratic interlude, General H. M. Ershad took power in 1982 and ruled the country until 1990. Interestingly, General Ershad informed the nation that he had stepped in and assumed the reins of government because

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The new nationalism purportedly brought the ethnically non-Bengalis, including the tribal groups, within the fold of the Bangladeshi state.

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the successor regime to Zia had drifted away from the Islamic-nationalistic objectives previously set by the assassinated general.<sup>33</sup> Ershad continued Zia's policy and went further. To accord legitimacy to his rule Ershad resorted to what at times seemed a blatant policy of promoting Islam. However, in spite of his public displays of piety, Ershad was unable to acquire the public support he so desperately sought. Moreover, he neither had Zia's charisma nor was he free from the stigma of corruption. In fact, it was during his rule that corruption became endemic in the country. More importantly, Ershad's attempts to hold on to power saw him use state agencies to radicalize a generation of students and politicize the already highly volatile universities. The effect of his policy has outlived his regime and is worth quoting at length:

Finally, when the situation became too critical, Ershad also emulated the opposition parties' clashing tactics by arming and criminalizing his party's student branch and syndicates. This led to the 1987 and 1990 pitched battles on the campus of Dhaka University, the epicenter of protest. This tactic eventually proved how out of steam Ershad's government had run. The Bangladeshi state had slipped so far from Weber's ideal type of legitimate violence monopoly that the government was compelled to activate groups which would have normally threatened its survival simply in order to maintain itself. These armed gangs, some of whose leaders were given positions in Ershad's party, were used to confront opposition parties in the street, and were 'rewarded' by controlling commercial areas and running protection

rackets on them. As had already happened during and after the war of independence, though on a wider scale, this privatization of legitimate violence started a process of criminalization of politics which continues up to the present day.<sup>34</sup>

## Bangladesh from 1991 to 2011 - The Emergence of Illiberal Democracy

The Ershad era came to an end in early December 1990. The military dictator resigned in the face of a massive uprising spearheaded by the two main political parties: the Awami League headed by Sheikh Hasina, the eldest daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by Khaleda Zia, the widow of Ziaur Rahman. In the years that followed the country fulfilled the criteria of a "minimalist democracy" – regular free and contested elections, peaceful handover of power, growth of fundamental freedom and a return of civilian control over policy and institutions.<sup>35</sup> However, the fact remains that this focus on the minimalist criteria of democracy has only served to hide the real malaise, which is pushing the country to the brink of becoming what Fareed Zakaria has labeled "Illiberal Democracy".<sup>36</sup> In order to understand the factors which are propelling Bangladesh to this sad state of affairs, one needs to trace the trajectory which the country has taken in the last two decades.

The principal characteristic of Bangladesh's democratic political system is a stable two-party system. The two main political parties, the Awami League and the BNP, command the allegiance of the majority of the voters and have strong grass roots support. Between the years 1991 and 2010, the two parties have competed in four elections and have been voted in and out of office. It should also be pointed out here that despite the overwhelming domination of Bangladesh's political scene by the aforementioned two parties, a third political party adhering to Islamist politics has also made its presence felt over the years. This is the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, and critics of Jamaat-e-Islami point out that it plays a central role in what they perceive as a gradual Islamisation of Bangladeshi politics. Jamaat's political leverage underwent a noticeable change in 2001 when the BNP joined hands with Jamaat and formed the government. The Awami League's landslide victory in the 2008 elections and the abysmal performance of both the BNP and Jamaat has adversely affected the fortunes of Jamaat, but it cannot be denied that Islamist parties have carved out a space for themselves in the political milieu of Bangladesh.

While the bipolar political system has brought a semblance of stability into the political system, it has created an atmosphere which has largely negated whatever little advantages have accrued

from such a situation. Successive ruling parties have resorted to similar policies: the opposition is seldom given the opportunity to air its views either in the parliament or in the official electronic media; few or no attempts were made to incorporate the opposition in matters of policy and governance. In fact, the ruling parties seem determined to ride roughshod over their opponents and have systematically subjected opposition workers to harassment and detention through a partisan use of the law enforcement agencies.<sup>37</sup> The opposition is unwilling to forgo what it deems to be its rightful share in perpetuating this state of affairs. The pretence of following democratic norms is abandoned as soon as the election is over and a sole objective overrides all other consideration: unseat the government, force another election and return to power as quickly as possible. Milam sums up the prevailing political culture of both the AL and the BNP aptly when he writes that the natural state of Bangladesh politics is to "abjure other viewpoints; identify national interest with your party; and consider being out of power almost worse than death itself."<sup>38</sup>

This bipolar system also suffers from the legacy of the contending national identities which were introduced in Bangladesh in the early years of the country's existence, and this has been discussed in the previous pages. The struggle between the linguistic-based

Bengali nationalism and territorial-based Bangladeshi nationalism, tinged as it was with an Islamic flavor, meant a contest for the collective identity of the Bangladeshi state.<sup>39</sup> Both the Awami League and the BNP are determined not to yield any ground on this issue with the result that the country has been bifurcated along partisan lines, with supporters of both parties, and, in turn, contending ideologies of nationalism, unwilling to grant any semblance of legitimacy, whichever party is in power.

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Such a confrontational approach to politics is further exacerbated by the fact that the top leaders of both the political parties are barely on speaking terms with each other.<sup>40</sup> In such a vitriolic atmosphere, it is natural that the democratic process has not only stalled but also deteriorated over the years. Parliament has not been able to serve as an effective forum for debate, and the inability of the political parties to tolerate dissent has effectively turned it into a dysfunctional body. Under

such circumstances, a “winner-takes-all” approach termed by Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) as “partyarchy” has become the principal feature of Bangladeshi politics.<sup>41</sup> The attainment of political office is therefore seen as a means of access to and control over resources.

The situation is further compounded by the increasing reliance of political parties on hoodlums to further their confrontational politics. In fact, both the major political parties have now systematized the phenomenon, which accelerated during the Ershad era. Thus Bangladesh has witnessed a “progressive criminalisation of politics and the disconnection of a growing number of party workers from any political goals beyond using politics as a source of livelihood.”<sup>42</sup> Under such circumstances, anything and everything is up for grabs, for “the act of physical possession constitutes and reinforces other forms of power and hierarchy.”<sup>43</sup> And to ensure the smooth functioning of these grab-and-hold policies, political parties in Bangladesh have resorted to blatant politicization of the administration and law-enforcement agencies. The purpose is to facilitate their access to resources, either in collusion with the executive or by making the administration a silent spectator to these acts. More importantly, political parties have systematically used law enforcement agencies to protect their own workers while harassing members of

the opposition. Such partisan use of the state's machinery has left the ordinary citizens with a system of institutionalized anarchy where little or no protection is available against the depredations of the political criminals.<sup>44</sup>

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Political divisions, problems of nation building, economic causes and external linkages are all identified by analysts as probable causes of the emergence of religious extremism in the country.

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A more ominous fallout of such policies is the increasing politicization and subsequent deterioration of the civil service. Bangladesh today epitomizes the Manichaeon divide of "Us versus them, good versus evil" and the polarization has been institutionalized and naturalized to such an extent that nearly all public and professional associations openly declare their political affiliation.<sup>45</sup> Government employees are no exception to this trend. Indeed, what the economists identify as "selection by intrinsic motivation" has now become the norm as far as recruitment in to the civil service is concerned. As service conditions became more and more subject to political consideration, bright students are increasingly turning away from the civil service. Political appointees who

seldom have the necessary educational qualification or skill to run the administration effectively are filling the lacuna. Paul Collier's observation about the dumb class bully turned general in Africa who oversees the destruction of his country's civil administration applies to Bangladeshi politicians who have "gradually replaced the clever boys with people more like themselves. And as they promoted the dumb and corrupt over the bright and the honest, the good chose to leave."<sup>46</sup>

The Bangladesh Army also has been unable to shield itself from the prevailing state of affairs in the country. The impact of the 1971 war and the anarchic conditions which followed the war had an adverse impact on the army, and it was only after much effort and bloodshed that factionalism within the army was neutralized in the early 1980s. However, with the return to multi-party rule in 1991, the army has also been affected by the strict polarization which pervades the country. In his in-depth study of Bangladesh's armed forces, Nurul Islam notes that both the BNP and the AL while in power sought to appoint "sympathetic" officers to the top leadership of the army. Such policies have promoted "groupings" and factionalism within the army, which, in the long run, have affected its professionalism. The result of such actions has been the continued politicization of the army.<sup>47</sup>



In short, Bangladesh's experience with democracy has not been a happy one. Rather, democracy has come to be synonymous with wanton greed, disregard for the rule of law and widespread politicization of all segments of Bangladeshi society. Afsan Chowdhury succinctly summed up the present state of the country when he wrote that Bangladeshis have become post-modern citizens living in a fake modern state ruled by people with pre-modern instincts.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, today's Bangladesh strongly displays symptoms of what Chris Allen described as "Spoil Politics". In such a condition, public office or power is seen is a means of self-aggrandizement. The natural consequences of such a policy are the spread of corruption on a massive and endemic scale, the withering away of the state from a large range of functions and services, the monopolization of power in the hands of a few individuals and the loss of the ability of the state to control the means of coercion. This state of affairs has every possibility of leading to a situation of terminal decline of the Bangladeshi state, where state authority gradually disappears while the powers that be engage in a sort of corruption "feeding frenzy". Ultimately, a state fades away not necessarily through a process of violent disruption but rather through a steady erosion of its authority.<sup>49</sup>

In the case of Bangladesh, the dangers of a failing state of 150 million people are

obvious. Located in the arc of Muslim countries stretching from Afghanistan to Indonesia, any sign of political upheaval, socio-economic instability and resulting chaos in Bangladesh can make it susceptible to the spread of extremist ideology.<sup>50</sup>

It was in the 1990s that signs began to emerge of the growth and spread of religious extremism in Bangladesh. While successive governments adopted policies of either denial or selective engagement as far as religious extremism was concerned, the reality of the threat was rammed home on August 17, 2005, when a series of bombs blasts rocked the country. Since then, a spate of suicide bomb attacks have killed scores of government officials, lawyers, policemen and members of the public. The attacks, orchestrated by groups like Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) highlighted the danger facing Bangladesh. Analysts also pointed to the existence of groups like Harakatul Jihad-i-Islami-Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (AHAB), which were engaged in activities detrimental to the security of the country. Mention should also be made about the presence of smaller and shadowy bodies such as Allahr Dal (Allah's party), Hizb-ul Tahrir and Hizb-ul Touhid, which may be parts of proscribed organizations which have regrouped and emerged as new entities under different names.<sup>51</sup>



Widespread national and international pressure forced the then BNP-led government finally to acknowledge and deal with the threat. Since August 2005, law enforcement agencies have arrested hundreds of members of these extremist organizations and every member of the original leadership of the JMB has been arrested, tried and executed. While no major terrorism-related incident has been reported in the country since January 2006, analysts caution that the danger posed by religious extremists should not be underestimated. The Brussels-based International Crisis Group observed in a report that while the JMB has been decimated, its demise should not be taken for granted, and the possibility of attacks planned and carried out by a revived JMB remains a possibility.<sup>52</sup> The threat of Bangladesh-based groups interacting with foreign extremist organizations and carrying out acts of terrorism both within and outside the country should also not be underplayed.<sup>53</sup>

The end of the Cold War and the increasing pace of globalization has also raised the vexing issue of Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) and their perceived ties with terrorist organizations. Fears were expressed that terrorists would find it attractive to join transnational criminal organizations to fund the terror activities and avail themselves of services provided by TCOs. Such services may include

purchasing weapons from illicit arms traffickers or false identity documents from counterfeiters. Such a 'strategic alliance' could not but have an adverse impact upon international security.<sup>54</sup> Bangladesh also seems vulnerable to this danger, as it shares a porous boundary with Myanmar and an ill-guarded maritime boundary, and its security agencies are hampered by a lack of technology and well-trained manpower to deal effectively with such challenges. However, it should be noted that until now no trace of linkages between Bangladeshi terrorist groups and TCOs have been clearly established, and perhaps this lends credence to the argument put forward by analysts that TCOs, in spite of the possibility that collaboration may bring monetary benefits, may avoid interacting with terrorists so as not to attract unwanted attention from law enforcement agencies.<sup>55</sup>

The reasons behind the growth and spread of religious extremism in Bangladesh are manifold. As pointed out at the beginning of this paper, terrorism is a multi-faceted phenomenon, and what is being experienced in Bangladesh is no exception. Thus, political divisions, problems of nation building, economic causes and external linkages are all identified by analysts as probable causes of the emergence of religious extremism in the country.<sup>56</sup> The multi-pronged nature of extremism is taken into cognizance by this paper. However, it contends that it is

the spread of illiberal democracy which has worsened the situation and, in many a case, acted as a sort of catalyst leading to the spread of the problem. The rise of the JMB, the much-feared extremist organization which carried out the most fearful attacks experienced in Bangladesh up till now, serves to illustrate the veracity of this contention.

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**While religious terrorism is now the bugbear of the international community, the dangers of left-wing terrorism in South Asia is a security concern which is to be disregarded at one's peril.**

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The JMB emerged as an extremist organization in 1998 with the objective of establishing Islamic rule in the country. Between 1998 and 2003, the group recruited, trained and mobilized members, raised funds and undertook operations across the country. The areas where the JMB emerged in strength were located in the northern and southwestern regions of the country. Interestingly, these regions were (and still are) racked by a plethora of leftist groups who mouth Marxist-Leninist slogans but in reality have degenerated into armed groups engaged in extortion, kidnappings and killings. Among these groups, the most prominent are the Purba Banglar Communist Party

(Marxist-Leninist Janajuddho), the Purba Banglar Maoist Communist Party, the New Biplobi Communist Party, the Biplobi Communist Party, the Dakkhin Banglar Chinnomul Communist Party and the Sarbahara Party.

All these groups have been engaged in killing and extortion for decades now, and it was against the activities of these groups that the JMB and its offshoot the JMJB launched their operations in April/May 2004.<sup>57</sup> In this drive against the leftist extremist groups, the JMB and JMJB were able to garner the support of the local police administration. Siddiquil Islam alias Bangla Bhai, the JMB operative who led this drive, spoke about the assistance provided to him by the police chiefs of the districts where he operated and the rapport which developed between his organization and the local law-enforcement agencies.<sup>58</sup> Such a nexus of extremist groups and law enforcement agencies is not uncommon and can be cited as yet another example of vigilante justice perpetrated in many a part of the world. Yet such acts only serve to underline the deeper malaise affecting Bangladesh. The events surrounding the activities of the JMB and JMJB against leftist militants in reality provides a classic proof of the Bangladeshi state's inability to impose its writ upon certain geographical areas of the country. As the ability of the state to control means of coercion faded away, non-state actors, in this case donning the garb of religious

groups, stepped in to fill the void. It is difficult to ignore the striking similarities between the scenario described above and the pattern of “spoil politics leading to terminal decline” as described by Allen. Indeed, such a situation has prompted one political commentator to write that such conditions imply an absence of the state. This absence, either in certain geographical areas or in areas of social services, highlights the crisis of governance and helps “create a void, which in turn leads to the establishment of a parallel structure of authority.”<sup>59</sup>

While religious terrorism is now the bogey of the international community, the dangers of left-wing terrorism in South Asia is a security concern which is to be disregarded at one’s peril. Extremists espousing a radical Maoist ideology are now a reality in Nepal and have carved out a space for themselves in India. While the immediate causes of the spread of Maoist groups varies from one area to another, it is a fact that this outburst is a response to the appalling structural violence that has been perpetrated by elites, supported by the state, against landless and poor peasants.<sup>60</sup> In a hard-hitting piece Jason Miklian and Scott Carney point out why India is having such a difficult time in neutralizing the Maoist problem. They observe that Indian authorities have misunderstood the very nature of the problem. India’s ruling elites have mistaken industrialization for

development and blindly believe in their ability to have a 21<sup>st</sup> century economic system without fixing India’s corrupt political and judicial system. India, Miklian and Carney believe, is spending billions and using its coercive means to deal with the Maoists without addressing the basic issues of malgovernance, which have pushed the people into the embrace of the Maoists.<sup>61</sup>

Maoists have not yet emerged as a political force in Bangladesh. However, given the fact that the present nature of illiberal democracy in the country has made it difficult for ordinary people to be heard in any other way than through spontaneous and violent protests, in spite of the fact that historically the Bangladeshi state has strongly repressed such protests,<sup>62</sup> will it be too far-fetched to predict the emergence of such an extreme form of politics in Bangladesh? Siddiqui describes two recent incidents where the long suffering population finally decided to take matters into their own hands and confront the rapacious state.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, in a pattern eerily similar to the mineral-rich regions of India now plagued by Maoist extremists, the Bangladeshi people have also resorted to violent opposition against state policies with regard to the nature of mining and use of minerals.<sup>64</sup> Such policies have been identified as anti-people and driven more by venal motive than safeguarding the interest of the common man and the state. Will it be safe to assume that such

desperate people will never be influenced by radical ideologies which have such powerful appeal across the border? Also, will it be too far-fetched to assume that groups espousing violent Islamic ideologies will appear on the scene to deal with the Maoists, should the problem spread across the border? After all, the rise of the JMB and JMJB were linked to the persistent law and order problem thrown up by the presence of leftist splinter groups in Bangladesh. Bangladesh's present state should make its elites remember the haunting words of a reporter's epitaph of a dying regime:

In a society so crushed by misery, by privation and worry, nothing will speak more eloquently to the imagination, nothing causes greater unrest, anger, and hatred than the picture of corruption and privilege among the elite. Even an incompetent and sterile government, if it lived a Spartan life, could exist for years basking in the esteem of the people. The attitude of the people to the Palace is normally kindhearted and understanding. But all tolerance has its limits, which in its swaggering arrogance the Palace often and easily violates. And the mood of the street changes violently from submission to defiance, from patience to rebelliousness.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

The present state of politics in Bangladesh has done little to endear the concept of democracy to the average Bangladeshi. Rather, the sustained involvements of the members of political parties in criminal activities have

highlighted the malicious transformations such organizations have undergone over the years. Bangladesh's political culture reflects a profound ideological void and political bankruptcy of the leadership. Under such circumstances, rent-seeking policies dominate the parties – from the centre to the periphery. Violence that seems to pervade all sectors of the Bangladeshi society serves to highlight the poor quality of the country's political culture.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the ubiquitous presence of violence puts a question mark on the survivability of the country, for such violence inevitably tends to escalate, give birth to coups and counter-coups and spawn extremist organizations. Such scenarios eventually lead “to the point where a culture of political violence can come into being and with it the very possibility of democratic breakdown.”<sup>67</sup> Milam reinforces this observation and writes that Bangladesh suffers from an image of imminent failure, an image resulting from a concoction of instability and ungovernability which have been brought about by a failed political class adhering to a failed political culture.<sup>68</sup>

Despite such a pessimistic mood pervading the country, it must be pointed out that Bangladesh has made steady progress over the past forty years. The country has been able to maintain a steady rate of economic growth in spite of weak governance. Such a performance has led the World Bank to identify this phenomenon as a

“Bangladesh Paradox”, a situation where the country has slowly inched its way forward and attained growth in spite of a “truly dreadful configuration of policies and governance”.<sup>69</sup> It should also be mentioned that Bangladesh has made significant progress in terms of slowing down population growth, cutting down child mortality rates, improving access to education and health care and ensuring women’s empowerment.<sup>70</sup> Such achievements do point to the success of political parties in governing the country and may raise doubts about the efficacy of the gloomy predictions. However, the Bangladesh conundrum persists and analysts are still at a loss as to how one can reconcile the country’s stable economic growth rate with the confrontational politics prevailing in the country.<sup>71</sup>

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**The vexing issue of identity which seems to have divided the Bangladeshi political milieu can only be dealt with by a healthy all-inclusive democratic system.**

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The state of democracy in Bangladesh has also experienced some positive development. Over the years, vertical accountability, mainly through the workings of an active civil society and vigilant media, has increased, but horizontal accountability has not undergone a similar transformation.<sup>72</sup>

Rather, the same malaise of illiberalism has prevented the various branches of the government, including the judiciary, from playing the desired role, leading one commentator to bemoan the presence of a “Democracy of un-public opinion” in the country.<sup>73</sup>

However, such a situation should not make one question the validity of democracy itself. Indeed, history tells us that the road to representative and accountable government has been torturous for many a political unit. Bangladesh needs to move ahead with its democratic experiment in spite of the malaise affecting it. In other words, the response of the Bangladeshi people to flawed democracy should not be less but more democracy – a democracy of constitutional liberalism, i.e., the tradition which protects people’s dignity and autonomy from all sorts of coercion. Bangladeshis need to be empowered so that they do not remain abstract legal citizens, but act as active agents who can formulate and pursue their interests on their own vis-à-vis the existing structures of dominance and privilege.<sup>74</sup> Such a democracy will also assist the Bangladesh state in dealing with threats of violence from religious extremism, for “democracy diminishes the threat of violence and terrorism by sub-state actors, including religious extremists affiliated with religious political parties.”<sup>75</sup> Of course, this democracy also needs to ensure the participation of the

total population of Bangladesh in the democratic process. The vexing issue of identity which seems to have divided the Bangladeshi political milieu can only be dealt with by a healthy all-inclusive democratic system. The spate of terror attacks and the recent litany of arrests of terror suspects made by law enforcement agencies should not draw attention away from the fact that a well-governed

Bangladeshi state can effectively deal with the scourge of terrorism should it earnestly desire to do so.<sup>76</sup> Only such a democracy can prevent Bangladesh from hurtling down the precipice on which it stands precariously. The alternative to this might be a fate which will not be a happy one for millions of Bangladeshis and South Asians.

## Endnotes

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## Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction

*By Marijke Breuning*

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*Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction* by Marijke Breuning is a well-designed comprehensive analysis of foreign policy decision making that places individual decision makers, leaders in other words, at the centre. Yet, while focusing on individuals the book also takes into account the opportunities and constraints to foreign policy decision making brought about by various institutional, domestic and international factors. The author overtly accepts that foreign policy decisions are result of a “complex interplay of multiple factors” (p. 9). The argument that within this interplay of numerous factors and constraints, opportunities and choices for foreign policy decisions are predominantly determined by leaders drives this book. Within this context, Breuning makes a point of examining leaders’ personalities, motivations, and perceptions to understand the process of foreign policy decision making (p. 11).

Throughout the book, the author’s main concern is to discuss and explain concepts and theories of foreign policy decision making by using different historical cases as examples. Not only does she explain concepts which can be thought of as particular to the field

of foreign policy decision making, such as framing, operational code, emotions, and models of decision making, she also looks at some others that are also widely used in the fields of political science and international relations, and are mostly taken to be well known to the audience, like rationality, good decision, bad decision, political culture, sovereignty, anarchy, hard power, and soft power. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this situation multiplies the value of the book by facilitating the understanding of concepts and how they are linked to each other in foreign policy decision making.

The book is organised in seven parts which are complementary to each other. In the first part, Breuning introduces the book by explaining the importance of studying foreign policy decision making with particular attention on leaders as the major actors. The questions of “how foreign policy decisions are made; why leaders make the decision they make; why states engage in specific kinds of foreign policy behaviours” are the major questions that foreign policy analysts try to answer (p. 16). Instead of making a mere analysis of historical facts, the aim is to bring out knowledge with the help of systematic comparison methods

to contribute to the advancement of understanding the similarities and differences between foreign policy decisions and behaviours (p. 17).

The second part of the book focuses on the importance of studying leaders' behaviours, motivations, perceptions, emotions, and personalities to understand foreign policy decision making. Although there may be various institutional, domestic, and international constraints, leaders determine political options and make decisions at the end. Breuning emphasises the importance of analysing leaders' personalities in order to understand their political behaviours and discusses the strategies of "operational code" and "leadership trait analysis". She supports these theoretical frameworks with examples of US presidents. This facilitates understanding not only the theories but also how these theories become meaningful in foreign policy decision making. Nevertheless, the author does not avoid one of the main difficulties of studying the personalities of leaders: whether or not the leader is giving out correct information about their political behaviours.

The third part of the book presents the complex interplay between leaders' individual capabilities and personalities on the one hand, and various constraints and opportunities beyond leaders' controls on the other hand, in foreign policy decision making. Breuning underlines the importance of problem representation and framing in the

determination of foreign policy options (pp. 68-69). The representation of the same problem can change from one country to another and from one leader to another. This process is very much affected by leaders' personality traits such as how conceptually complex they are, their past experiences, knowledge, and beliefs, and how the problem has been framed.

In the fourth part, the author focuses on the close environment of leaders, namely advisors and bureaucrats who are among the most influential actors in foreign policy decision making. The interplay between the leader and this top environment in the formation of foreign policy decisions is discussed by using different historical examples. According to Breuning, the role and responsibility of individuals in foreign policy decision making is very much dependent on the structure of the political system (p. 86). In addition, leaders' personalities affect the way they organise executive bodies, and if they have influence over these bodies the more his or her personality will become prominent in foreign policy decision making (p. 94). Within this general theoretical framework, the author also compares presidential and parliamentary systems, small advisory groups and coalition governments with regards to leaders' role and influence in foreign policy decision making.

In the following two parts of the book, Breuning concentrates on the domestic and international constraints within

which foreign policy decisions are made. With regards to domestic constraints, she focuses on the role and impact of the public on the formation of foreign policy options. While even in non-democratic systems the domestic audience may have some level of influence on the determination of options, their impact increases in societies where decision makers are accountable to the public (p. 133). Moreover, societies' political cultures and national histories are also considered domestic constraints as a result of their influence on the framing and representation of problems (p. 127). In terms of international constraints, Breuning explains geographic size and location, population, economy, and military expenditure as the objective constraints that influence a country's foreign policy decisions. The author explains the influence of these constraints in this way: if all other things are taken as equal, the leaders of states with smaller territories, populations, economies and limited resources are more likely to perceive greater constraints than the leaders of states with larger population, size, economy and more resources (p. 147). However, the influence of these international constraints on a leader's foreign policy decision making will change according to their relationships with other states; objective constraints may gain importance in relationships with different states. In the last part of the book, Breuning clearly sums up

the previous parts and brings together the various pieces of the foreign policy decision-making puzzle. Numerous factors at various levels of analysis influence foreign policy decision making. The interplay between these factors influences leaders' foreign policy decisions and behaviours, and these factors change from one case to another. She concludes by repeating that although the broader frame is drawn from various domestic and international constraints, leaders remain prominent actors in foreign policy decision making and the major emphasis in foreign policy analysis is made on leaders and the psychological dynamics.

Last but not least, this book is structured in a way that facilitates its argument reaching its audience. It takes its place among the must-read resources of foreign policy analysis literature with its comprehensive approach to the subject and coherent style enriched with cases not only from American history but also from various countries around the world. Regardless of their background, this book will be useful for anyone who wants to understand the process of foreign policy decision making and the role of leaders in it.

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## Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders, and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations

*By Stephen G. Walker, Akan Malici and Mark Schafer (eds.)*

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The foreign policy behaviours of states were until the 1950s traditionally analysed by academics within the framework of a realist perspective. The realist approach views the state as a unitary actor and accordingly its foreign policy behaviour is a result of its strategic interaction with other states. Scholars, at that time, only focused on national attributes, geopolitics and the foreign policy behaviours of the states. Therefore, domestic components of the states, sociological factors of the society, and psychological traits of the leaders were not taken into account in such analyses.

However, since the 1960s, academics have begun to examine the deficiencies of the realist method. They have started to accept that foreign policy has a much more complex decision-making process and several different factors can affect the outcomes as well as the process of foreign policy making. Scholars have started to examine the domestic components of states, such as political parties, regime types, public opinion, media, parliaments, council of ministers and other bureaucratic units on the one hand;

and on the other, they have also taken into consideration sociological (identity, culture, nationalism, religion, etc.) and psychological factors (perception, cognition, attitudes, beliefs, etc.) in their analysis.

In *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders, and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations*, the editors Walker, Malici and Schafer stress the need for the incorporation of socio-psychological approaches in foreign policy analysis. By using Alexander L. George's Operational Codes and qualitative methods, they try to observe the effects of beliefs, learning, national and international factors, cognitive abilities, binary role theory, and small group dynamics on the foreign policy decision-making process. They also test their hypothesis by using various case studies, such as with Fidel Castro and American presidents. They reach very interesting and remarkable results where the correlation between a foreign policy process and the socio-psychological factors can be clearly traced via statistical variables.

The authors frequently underline the importance of taking into account socio-psychological factors to gain a better understanding of the decision-making processes. Yet, they also add that focusing only on the socio-psychological dimension would not be adequate for observing the whole process. One might think of two points in this regard. Firstly, having accepted the need for studies that makes an in-depth and advanced level of analysis, academics have been using the Operational Codes (i.e. political future), but the significance of psychological concepts and factors are still as important as the Operational Codes perspective, and thus a scholarly effort to combine and to integrate both perspectives and factors in their studies is essential in order to reach a comprehensive and realistic analysis of foreign policy decisions. Secondly, academics have to prepare their studies within the framework of other factors in addition to the socio-psychological dimension. Even the authors claim that analysing the socio-psychological and leadership dimensions per se is not sufficient to understand the foreign policy analysis field. In this respect, for example, the international/national system in which the leaders are acting and formulating their decisions has to be examined. These structures, both national and international, sometimes give an opportunity to the leaders to take more risky decisions. But sometimes they limit their behaviours.

The essays in this book use Operational Codes and game theory models as well as fundamental realist concepts, such as power, influence, etc. However, the existing international system is based upon more liberal and cooperative understanding. The scholars here seem to have only given a small role to liberal concepts, such as international organisations, morality, human rights and international law, which may also be necessary to explain the foreign policy behaviours of the states.

The Operational Codes model uses the expected utility concept in which it is assumed that after making a cost/benefit analysis, states will behave in the way that is best for them. But in practice leaders can be under the influence of (rational or irrational) psychological factors, such as nationalism, ideology, or simply emotions. Thus leaders may not act in the expected way, which may lead to problems in the scientific evaluations based on the game theory and the Operational Codes models.

As already mentioned by Richard Snyder and his colleagues, the foreign policy-making process is a social event and therefore it is not possible to totally reconstruct it in order to observe the process in a true way. Scholars who work on foreign policy analysis will continue to make evaluations and prepare their academic studies lacking that all-inclusive knowledge; therefore, their predictions will not always be completely

correct. Nevertheless in today's globalised world system it is necessary to concentrate on all the possible factors affecting the process in order to realistically analyse foreign policy and make some predictions. The realist approach, geopolitical perspectives, national attributes, the international system and states' strategic interactions are not sufficient to understand that process due to the fact that there is no clear distinction between domestic and foreign policies. As mentioned by Eric Singer and Valeria Hudson in *Political Psychology and Foreign Policy*, political

psychology studies on the foreign policy “seek to build an integrated theory of world politics, linking domestic and international levels of analysis.”

Last but not least, the book is helpful to understand the effects of socio-psychological factors upon the foreign policy process by using the Operational Codes; therefore, I suggest students read it carefully.

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## Understanding Foreign Policy Decision-Making

*By Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr.*

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It has become a commonplace of International Relations (IR) disciplines to fail to predict many beginnings and endings in world politics, including the end of the Cold War and other more recent gripping episodes, such as 9/11 and the Arab Awakening. Foreign policy decision-making (FPDM) is a subfield of IR, and it too has its share of responsibility for this failure. This is arguably related to the fact that since

World War II foreign policy analysis has set the scientific standards and academic stakes a little too high. This was evident particularly in its search, often associated with the first generation, for a unified grand theory of foreign policy-making by way of multilevel and multicausal scientific explanations. Neither rigorous empirical aggregate data analysis nor statistical tools were able to increase the explanatory and predictive power

of the field significantly. Later, in the 1980s, a more “moderate” middle-range theory search aimed to reconcile the grand theoretical principles with the complexity of the real world. Indeed, after the ambitious first generation, the second and third generations (late 1980s to the present) have had more moderate research aims and agenda that have been less concerned with data accumulation in comparative fashion than with single case studies with sound analysis. Indeed, the end of the Cold War further encouraged more recent scholars of the third generation to investigate the particular rather than the general aspects of foreign policy-making with a view to producing less general and abstract, but more contextually informed, temporally and spatially bounded, analyses.

*Understanding Foreign Policy decision-making*, by Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr. is a tour d’horizon of foreign policy-making analysis that offers valuable insights into the complex world of decision-making processes, with many case studies attuned to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks presented in the book. The book is a primer providing the readers with alternative theories of decision-making that are explicated through case studies selected from a range of diverse foreign policy settings across different countries. Although the authors do not single out any research avenue or model as the determinant or most important in understanding and

assessing FPDM, their emphasis clearly is on the processes of decision-making.

Mintz and DeRouen are two prominent scholars of political psychology, and their book advocates a psychological approach to foreign policy decision-making that “explains not only outcomes of decisions but also the processes and distortions that lead to decisions and the decision dynamics” (p. 9). The emphasis on the process is rather indicative of their distaste for the shortcomings of strict rational actor models, which, they argue, are limited and limiting our efforts to understand the dynamics of many alternative models of decision-making, such as the cybernetic model (p. 69) or prospect theory (p. 75). Consequently, it is clearly a strength of the book that it is engaging rather than simply dismissive of “irrational” sources of foreign policy behaviour, and as such is a valuable corrective to variants of realist theories that treat the state-level inputs of decision-making in a mono-causal manner. Diverse sources of foreign policy behaviour are thus rewardingly addressed and incorporated into analysis so as better to capture the complexity of decision-making processes.

The authors examine FPDM under four headings. The first is “the decision environment”, comprising types, levels and biases of decision-making. The second section revolves around different models of decision-making categorized as rational and its alternatives. The

third explicates the determinants of FPDM, incorporating psychological, international and domestic factors. The last section presents the important issue of the marketing of decisions. A main thrust of the book is that in addition to factors such as leaders' deterrence strategies and/or arms races, Mintz and DeRouen rightly seek to underline the fragmented nature of decision-making processes that often result in sub-optimal policy outcomes. For instance, the poliheuristic model of decision-making envisages that leaders will first sidestep domestic political hurdles before moving on to choosing the optimal policy from amongst the subset of available options (p.79). The authors rightly seek to expand beyond such constraints on rational behaviour in order to show that leaders often opt for "satisfying" rather than "optimal" policy choices in foreign policy-making processes. Another reason is that there exist so-called cognitive shortcuts in information gathering and processing that guide the decision maker in his/her efforts to evade elaborate mental processing and instead simplify the issue at hand. Among such shortcuts is the use of analogies that conceptually equip the maker and taker of foreign policy decisions with a pretext for cognition and action (p.103). To fully treat diverse influences on FPDM, the authors also elaborate on various psychological factors, domestic, international and economic conditions,

in addition to public opinion and cultural interactions. Another such factor is the operational codes that give a cultural lens and "cognitive map" for decision makers to find their way in the uncharted waters of world politics (p.102).

The book very helpfully presents a series of case studies ranging from the Falklands War of 1982 to the 1993 U.S. invasion of Panama, concluding with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, with a view to animating the concepts, models and theories discussed in the chapters. It is significant to note that in their case study of the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003, Mintz and DeRouen find that most of the decision models discussed in the book are *able* to predict the invasion (p. 175) ,thus leaving it to students to choose the model that "best" explains the case. It should be stressed that, although very pedagogical, this approach seems to gloss over the murky issue of what defines "the best fit".

A characteristic research subject of the third generation has been the issue of framing in FPDM. Mintz and DeRouen take up the issue in detail. In addition to the psychological factors and external pressures that affect the foreign policy decisions of leaders, the authors demonstrate the relevance and impact of "marketing" through "frame tactics" that are used for manipulating/massaging the truth to influence the public. Chapter 8 resourcefully discusses

framing and media effects on FPDM using illustrative case studies. The authors skilfully identify concepts and frameworks related to the marketing and framing strategies of leaders who want to garner public support. Frames are tellingly categorized as “marketing tactics” (p. 149) derivative of the decision makers’ political agenda and calculus. Although the book is careful not to dismiss cases where the media effect is conspicuous or at least “one of reciprocal influence” with policy makers (p. 161), theoretical preference is, nonetheless, for the “manufacturing consent thesis” that sees governments and media controlled by power elites vying for influence. Such an approach to frames and media effect, however, may foreclose other avenues for rethinking the media-foreign policy nexus in two ways. First, the approach places the public into the picture only at the receiving end and as a rather passive consumer of the “the framing tactics” available in the meaning-market monopolized by the powerful decision makers and their spin doctors. Secondly, in such a context it would not be clear why *certain* frames resonate better with the public and how this can constrain the leaders’ tactical menu for framing strategy. There are many cases where frames go beyond being simple tactics and become constitutive of decision makers’ understandings of the situation in the first place; however, this aspect is not addressed in the book.

The book covers much ground remarkably well indeed, and features many conceptual, analytical and theoretical frameworks. However, precisely because of its wide scope it is sometimes not easy to see how the central argument works its way out of so many overlapping themes, concepts and theories of foreign policy. This would be particularly the case for students of foreign policy who seek to reconcile, for instance, the rational and non-rational sources of decision-making. Despite its breadth, the book is also unhelpfully reluctant to connect its robust discussion of FPDM with otherwise diverse and vigorous theories of IR. With the exception of a brief engagement with neorealism, the book regrettably sidesteps many recent theoretical overtures that fall outside the predictable gamut of realist or neo-realist schools of contemporary Anglo-American IR. This is rather disappointing, since the book could have also been used as a methodological toolkit and conceptual road map for students who are ill-equipped to apply their extremely general and unspecified theoretical frameworks to real-world case studies. This said, the book still resourcefully makes available necessary concepts, models, terminology and methods for anyone in IR discipline to become more pragmatic and programmatic. The point here is that it could have served as a corrective to the nonfigurative and

sometimes very condensed nature of theoretical discussions that often exclude more practical, real-world engagements.

A related problematic issue that is not much addressed in the book is a discussion of *agency* of decision makers in FPDM. The authors do not accept the rational actor model as the one and only viable model in FPDM, a very necessary corrective to the strictures of rational choice or neorealist schools of thought. Indeed, the authors rightly refer to their agents as having limited information-processing capabilities, and preferring “satisfying” rather than “optimal” alternatives (p. 34), due to many dynamics in “the decision environment”, or because of “the psychological, domestic, international political and cultural factors” (p. 97-106). In addition, agents (leaders or decision makers) are taken to operate in a highly dynamic and complex interactive setting and under time constraints, to name but a few more hindrances. Despite all such mediating influences on agents, or many other restructuring effects/hindrances, however, the book treats foreign policy makers as having the capacity to act otherwise. Mintz and DeRouen’s implication here is that human subjectivity and intentionality are autonomous and can escape the dictates of constraints or other determinants of FPDM.

Although a legitimate position, such an acceptance of an autonomous

individual must also posit that agents and factors/effects/contexts exist externally and independently of each other, a position not so tenable in social theory, which prefers to posit the intersubjectively constituted nature of both agents and contexts (Giddens, 1986). Crucially, the latter view is more receptive to ever-changing contexts of meaning and more nuanced to accept indeterminacy in foreign policy practices. Such an acceptance of indeterminacy would necessarily entail an “intrinsically ambiguous and open-ended nature of practices” whose source or meaning can hardly be located in some “unproblematically given subject or generative structural principles” (Doty, 1997: 376). While the book provides a good discussion of different sources of decision-making, there exists a tension in Mintz and DeRouen’s treatment of the objects of analysis and the ability of agents in making foreign policy. That is, despite its misgivings and reservations, the authors’ agents/actors never seem to lose control either of their practices or of the situation in general. In other words, Mintz and DeRouen’s agents could still imagine *better* courses of action in the last instance, no matter how difficult and ambiguous “the decision environment” can get. This is arguably because of their underlying ontology: social contexts, meanings, subjects and their interpretive, social dispositions and relationships are assumed to be

already in place before agents/actors find themselves in “interactive settings” of foreign policy decision (p. 28). Put differently, in spite of all the drawbacks that can work to the contrary, leaders and decision makers remain sovereign subjects while acting in and shaping the extremely complex, paradoxical and ambiguous events and settings. This is a difficult position to maintain, though. But Michel Foucault’s famous dictum springs to mind: “We need to cut off the King’s head: in political theory that still has to be done” (1982: 121), Mintz and DeRouen’s kings appear frail, their heads are sometimes dizzy and confused, but miraculously never decapitated.

All in all, this is certainly a bold and impressive book in its sweep and ambition to present highly complex issues in a most straightforward manner. Mintz

and DeRouen present a meticulous and excellent study of FPDM processes that should be essential reading for students, scholars of IR and kingmakers.

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## When Things Go Wrong: Foreign Policy Decision Making Under Adverse Feedback

*By Charles F. Hermann (ed.)*

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Understanding foreign policy is one of the major tasks for scholars of international politics. Addressing that task, especially since the end of

the Second World War, scholars have developed a distinct field of foreign policy analysis and introduced a vast number of theories to explain factors



determining states' foreign policy. The necessity of and ambition to understand and explain foreign policy has resulted in the emergence of a large toolbox for analysing the complex processes of decision making. Regarding the variety of complex decision-making processes, it might be reasonable to argue that the book *When Things Go Wrong: Foreign Policy Decision Making Under Adverse Feedback* just adds some additional tools into the toolbox that are quite handy when used to address and fix "appropriate problems". In that sense, the title, the foreword and the introduction of the book clearly identify the main question—what do decision makers do when things go wrong?—and provide the reader with an easy user's manual for the tools that are presented throughout the chapters. The reader-friendly organisation of the chapters together with the step-by-step and clear argumentation of the authors adds quality to the interesting topic.

The book addresses situations in which foreign policy makers receive feedback that the policy they are following is failing. The first chapter starts with the important question of after receiving negative feedback, do policy makers stay the course or change direction? (p. 1) Throughout the book the question is divided into three further questions: (1) When do leaders reconsider their prior policy/action? (2) Does such reconsideration result in a new foreign policy or do leaders continue following the prior one? And (3) if leaders decide

for change what is the magnitude of that change? Having appropriated a variety of theoretical approaches (prospect theory, control theory, political psychology, group thinking, operational code analysis, etc.) the chapters in the book aim at clarifying the decision makers' response to adverse feedback in sequential and protracted decision-making processes. Different variables are at play that impact a decision makers' response varying from the significance of the problem, the nature of the ultimate decision unit (a single leader, a group or coalition, p. 12), and the expectations, power and accountability of the decision makers.

Foreign policy decisions are generally made in response to specific problems and/or opportunities. Building on this, the second chapter by Hermann and Billings analyses small-group decision making in response to protracted problems that require continuous attention. In such situations, a small group of decision makers reconvene numerous times after receiving negative feedback on their prior actions. Asking the three questions mentioned above, the authors generate a number of theoretical propositions. They propose that the expectations of leaders on the appropriateness of the initial action, the nature of the decision-making group (for example, the existence of a minority positions within the group), the group's commitment to the prior action, and the accountability of the group to

domestic constituents all have an impact on the decision makers' sensitivity to adverse feedback, and the likelihood of a reconsideration of prior action and policy change.

In relation to group decision making, the third chapter by Hermann introduces "group efficacy" as a significant variable to explain decision makers' response to adverse feedback. Taking LB Johnson Administration's decisions on the Vietnam War as an empirical case, the author argues that if group efficacy is high then decision makers will become more committed to their initial policy which decreases the possibility of a policy change in response to adverse feedback. The same empirical case is used by Preston in the fourth chapter that analyses the impact of dominant leaders on in-group dynamics. He presents a leadership typology based on the leader's need for power, interest in policy area, and sensitivity to the context.

In the following chapter Garnson compares the two previous approaches by analysing the Chinese-American relationship during the Bush Administration. The author claims that both group efficacy and leadership style have affected the response to adverse feedback. If the leader chooses to get closely involved in the decision-making process, the advisory board might bolster his/her position. In addition, quite interestingly, Garnson points out that adverse feedback does not always mean

that the policy is failing and sometimes, as it is in the case of Bush Administration, the leadership might decide to continue with the status-quo policy.

A similar finding is also presented by Walker, Schafer and Marfleet in the sixth chapter. Utilising "Operational Code Analysis" the authors here explore the reasons behind the British strategy of appeasement with Hitler's Germany in 1939. Through an analysis of Chamberlain's speeches, the authors argue that his operational code was oriented towards appeasement and propose that his beliefs played a critical role on Britain's persistence in following the appeasement policy despite adverse feedback.

An alternative explanation for a "stay-the-course in response to adverse feedback" policy is also proposed by Vancouver in chapter seven. Using control theory, Vancouver argues that the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq in 2003 could have been predicted (p. 144). He proposes that control theory provides a promising approach for explaining sequential decision making.

The book ends with recommendations to policy makers in dealing with adverse feedback. In the last chapter (chapter eight) Hermann restates the major objective of the book, which is to provide "theoretical explanations that can account for the circumstances which may trigger the decisions to continue or decisions to adjust or change course" (p.

174). Then he calls for policy makers to frame their policies as experiments (or quasi-experiments) rather than definitive solutions. Accordingly, they would recognise that those experiments might fail or succeed so that it would be easier for them to admit, learn from, and correct their mistakes in the future.

*When Things Go Wrong* gives detailed theoretical explanations and serves the purpose that is stated by the editor both in the introductory and concluding chapters. However, it is possible to make a constructive critique to increase reader satisfaction and to develop the theoretical insights that are presented throughout the book. First, although the volume has been organised in a reader-friendly manner, the reader should be aware that the authors assume familiarity with the theoretical approaches that are presented in the relevant chapters. Such assumption requires the reader to have prior knowledge (or at least familiarity) of foreign policy analysis and decision-making literature. In that sense, the book stands as a complementary but not an introductory source to be used only by advanced foreign policy analysts. Second, although all chapters present empirical examples, the case selection remains limited as all cases are from countries that have democratic regimes and decision makers are all chosen from western countries. A more diversified case selection (for example, countries with non-democratic regimes, fundamentalist or religious governments and decision

makers from non-western countries) might improve the generalisability and predictive capacity of the theoretical explanations presented throughout the book. The book in its present state tells the reader that the authors have been selective of cases that support their theoretical arguments, which hampers the applicability of the otherwise very prospective nature of the theories presented by the authors.

Finally, *When Things Go Wrong* is an interesting and useful source that provides some necessary tools for analysing complex decision-making processes. In fact, these theoretical tools might be quite effectively used in analysing recent developments in Turkish foreign policy, especially with the uprisings in the surrounding regions. With a short review of recent news, one might encounter many comments on the existing adverse feedback regarding Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu's so-called "Zero-Problem" policy. For instance, considering recent Turkish-Syrian relations, it might be valid to ask "what would Turkish leaders do when they receive negative feedback on the Zero-Problem policy? Will they follow the course, adjust or change direction?" Those analysts who are interested in such a topic might find useful theoretical insights in the chapters of this book.

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## The Cold War and After: History, Theory and the Logic of International Politics

*By Marc Trachtenberg*

Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012, 317 pages,  
ISBN 9780691152035.

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The concepts of “power politics” and “anarchy” are widely used to describe and understand the logic of international politics in the discipline of international relations (IR). Although there are many explanations regarding the nature of international politics and its working logic, realism has become one of the predominant mainstream theories for the explanation of international politics. *The Cold War and After: History, Theory and the Logic of International Politics*, by Marc Trachtenberg, a professor of political science at the University of California, deals with one of the most important problems and debates of the IR discipline: how do some researchers find ways to connect conceptual and empirical issues each other? Trachtenberg answers this question by focusing on three aspects of international politics: theory, history, and policy. The field of international relations, for Trachtenberg, is supposed to be triadic. As can be understood from the chapters of the book, theory, history, and policy are

three component parts, and are tightly connected with each other intellectually.

In the first section of the book, Trachtenberg examines the theory of realism, which is mainly based on the logic of power politics and the idea of an anarchical order, an influential theory in international politics. However, he differentiates himself from the central assumptions of realism and the scholars who particularly deal with the problem of international order. In each case discussed throughout the book, Trachtenberg demonstrates the value of examining detailed documentary evidence while keeping a clear-cut theory of how the international system works and of the fundamental forces influencing the way states behave in mind. As he openly states in the opening chapter, the realist school in international relations is guilty of a gross exaggeration when it goes so far as to say that states are always and exclusively concerned with the ruthless maximisation of their own power at the expense of others. Accordingly, he argues

that there are ways in which systemic forces can play a stabilising role in the international system. While he accepts the importance of the system, his main concern is to understand how exactly such a system works. Contrary to a standard understanding of the realist framework, Trachtenberg claims that systemic forces can actually play a positive role, and that systemic pressures by and large can have a stabilising effect in international politics. For Trachtenberg, it is a fundamental mistake to see conflict as an event which is essentially driven by systemic forces or, in other words, essentially rooted in the anarchic structure of international politics. Therefore, if the system is not a basic source of instability, then the real problems are generated by forces welling up at the unit level that give rise to policies which are not rational in political terms. In this sense, according to Trachtenberg, problems as a rule develop not because the system pushes states into conflict with each other, but because states overreach themselves and pursue policies that make little sense in terms of the incentives the system creates.

In the second chapter of the first section, Trachtenberg also deals with the question of international order which is another central issue of IR theory. Rather than putting forward a new hypothesis regarding the nature of the international order, the chapter makes a simple

point about method that deals with the general problem of the topic. The author underlines the fact that primarily we need to deal with the theoretical issue of how things work in a purely anarchic world, and only after we reach conclusions at this level can we be in a position to deal with questions pertinent to the role of such specific real world facts as the questions of democratic institutions, international organisations, economic interdependence, and international law. More importantly, the author emphasises the importance of empirical work which deepens our understanding of what makes order in international life. Therefore, the real aim of the chapter is to understand how international politics works by focusing particularly on empirically oriented research.

With the use of a conceptual and methodological examination, Trachtenberg tests his argument by examining the relationship between the United States, Europe and the Soviet Union during the Cold War and the US's world policies after the Cold War. He focuses on how the US accepted the east-west partition of Europe after 1945 despite some belligerent sloganising about "rolling back" Soviet power; how exactly Washington decided in the early 1950s to press for the rearmament of West Germany as part of a package including the commitment of US troops

to European defence; and the tortuous course of the US's relations with France in the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than examining the general discourse of the US, France, and the West Germany towards Cold War challenges of the international politics, he prefers to show us different and competing perceptions among foreign policy leaders.

In the third section of the book, Trachtenberg focuses on the question of policy. The first chapter of this section analyses the concept of a preventive war particularly by focusing on its historical centrality in US policy. Considering the issue in a historical perspective, Trachtenberg argues that the notion of a preventive war is not alien to US traditions of foreign policy; on the contrary, such a policy was actively contemplated by the Kennedy administration during the Cuban missile crisis, by Bill Clinton as a counter to the North Korea's nuclear development in the 1990s, and earlier by Franklin D. Roosevelt against Japan and/or Germany before Pearl Harbor. For Trachtenberg, preventive strategy is not directly determined by the nature of the international system as it claimed in realism. He argues that the realist approach, at least in its purest form, somewhat overstate the importance of systemic forces. In reality, a tendency to think in preventive war terms is not built

into the basic structure of the system; people are instead drawn to this type of thinking only when a certain political judgement is made about the nature and manageability of the conflict at hand. Therefore, according to Trachtenberg a preventive policy is based on a judgement about the future.

In the last chapter of the book, Trachtenberg evaluates the legitimacy of the US-led war in 2003 against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Examining the issue in terms of international law, Trachtenberg insists that the invasion of Iraq was by no means illegal since the broad principles of international law allow states to resort to any means they consider necessary to counter a serious threat to their national interests.

All in all, *The Cold War and After* achieves its pledge of providing a non-deterministic account to serve as a persuasive response to arguments against the importance of the power politics in the Cold War era and after. Added to this, Trachtenberg does a great job in combining his powerful conceptual analysis with rich historical data regarding the Cold War and after.

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## Islam Without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty

*By Mustafa Akyol*

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Islamic militancy once again occupies the centre stage in the European agenda. Mohamed Merah, a 23-year-old Frenchman of Algerian origin, murdered three children and a teacher outside their Jewish school in Toulouse on Monday, 19 March 2012. In that attack, Merah killed a seven-year old girl by grabbing her by hair and shooting her through the head in her schoolyard. Before these tragic murders, he killed three Muslim foreign legion paratroopers in Moutbaut, France. President Sarkozy made a risky announcement that Claude Guenuet, the interior minister, would stay in Toulouse until the killer was found. Within a few days, on 22 March, the killer was shot and killed by police sharpshooters after a 32-hour siege on his apartment. Merah was a home-grown Islamist terrorist and a self-proclaimed Jihadist. Being a psychologically unstable person rather than a committed religious zealot, intelligence reports show that he was under close scrutiny by the French and the US security services because of his visits to Pakistan and Afghanistan. He received firearms training in Waziristan from a person linked to Al Qaeda.<sup>1</sup>

The initial reactions of sorrow have been mixed with fear as the security services failed to anticipate the threat posed by Merah, a potential terrorist who professed an interest in radical Islam and who was on French and US watch lists. However, the fact that the worst Al Qaeda-inspired act of terrorism in France was done by a home-grown Islamist terrorist has dramatically changed the French political climate, which has been shaped by the overheated rhetoric about immigration and security in the intense rivalry in the presidential elections in April. France was traumatised by these dramatic incidents, which even brought a temporary halt to the bitterly contested presidential election that was happening at the time. However, we soon saw that “a race to the bottom” started between two presidential candidates, the leader of the extreme right-wing party Le Pen and then president Sarkozy, regarding how much more security France needs. Sarkozy was behind his Socialist rival Hollande before these murders and his polls received a much needed boost as the debate shifted from the economy where he is weak, to law and order where



he is strong. Sarkozy benefited from this murder and he was able to channel the fears and emotions of the voters. Sarkozy proposed to make it illegal to repeatedly visit websites promoting terrorism or to travel to abroad for indoctrination. Throughout those intense four days Sarkozy appealed for national unity bringing together the Jewish and Muslim leaders and insisting the killer's actions would not undermine the values of the Republic, which was not enough for him to win the elections.<sup>2</sup>

With the return of heightened debates on radical Islam, Mustafa Akyol's book is a timely text, directed mainly towards a Western audience that tries to present a moderate alternative. Akyol looks at "how the more aspiring interpretations of Islam will be able to flourish" (p. 202). And he has an ambitious task to respond to both questions from the well-informed circles on the debate as well as the average reader. Throughout the book, Akyol first analyses the deep roots of sectarian divisions within Islam and then examines the challenges that an authentic Islamic identity faces with modernity. He briefly analyses the Ottoman-Turkish ways of confronting modernity and the ways of entering into a genuine dialogue with it. Akyol expands his analysis towards the rest of the Muslim world, looking at how modernity was applied by force with imperialism in the 19th century and the nationalist authoritarian regimes in the twentieth century.

Secularism, capitalism and technology are all part of the Western challenge towards the Muslim world. Arguing that we live not in a secularising world but a de-secularising one, Akyol argues that "the secularist project is a part of the problem and not the solution. The attempt to push religion out of Muslim mind creates, in its worst forms, authoritarian regimes. Even its mild forms are unhelpful, for they fall short of addressing the religious aspirations of Muslim societies, something that is here to stay in the foreseeable future" (p. 202). Defending "democratic conservatism", defined by the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan as "a concept of modernity that does not reject tradition, a belief in universalism that accepts localism, and an understanding of rationalism that does not disregard the spiritual meaning of life" (p. 223), Akyol rejects "terrorism" in the name of Islam, but he is conscious of the roots of Islamic terrorism: the radical methods already existing in Islam, Western imperialism, and the aggressive modernisation under authoritarian regimes. However, if a dialogue between tradition and modernity is a dimension of this, the search for building a genuine democratic political system is the other part, as seen in the current debate in Turkey.

Covering such a wide time span - from the ancient times up to today - and thematic scope - from divisions within



Islam to contemporary experiences of Muslim countries including Turkey - the book touches upon many controversial topics. This inevitably leaves it with many problems in conceptual analysis and leaps in historical perspective. The lack of conceptual integrity and frequent historical inaccuracies sometimes push Akyol into the paradoxical situation of falling into the trap of modernisation theory, the very concept that he claims to criticise. For instance, he claims that “if the fall of economic dynamism led to the decline of Islamic rationality and liberty a millennium ago, can the rebirth of economic dynamism revive them? To put it another way, can socioeconomic progress in Muslim societies also lead to progress in religious attitudes, ideas and even doctrines?” (p. 135) Terms such as “updating our religious understanding”, “Islamic capitalism”, “Muslim middle class” show his belief that moderation through economic development and cultural and political rationality is a way out from the radical option.

Finally, his search for Islam without radical extremes tries to reach a normative position despite reality demonstrating the reverse. Akyol sees ways of finding a compromise between them. He trusts in the secular state and believes that Islam is better placed in society and culture than in politics. Akyol states that “Accepting the secular state could also help Muslims focus on what is really important.

Islamic movements have lost too much time, and caused too much tension, in the twentieth century with their endless quest for *systems* based on Islam. What they should have focused on instead was advancement of Islam’s faith and culture - through arts and sciences, evangelism and advocacy, education, charity and the media. All these can be carried out by individuals and communities without backup from a state. In fact, they are almost always done better *without* state involvement - as the American experience proves.” (p. 261). Unfortunately, the world is not the way the Americans, or the West in general, would like to see it. The events in France were a clear example of this. Akyol, as a Turkish intellectual, is expected to be more sensitive about this in many ways.

## Endnotes

- 1 James Boxell, “Polite side of Mehra points to two faces for French killer”, *Financial Times*, 25 March 2012, p. 2.
- 2 Hugh Carnegie, “Security Sarko cements his comeback credentials”, *Financial Times*, 25 March 2012, p. 9.

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# Style and Format

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Articles submitted to the journal should be original contributions. If another version of the article is under consideration by another publication, or has been or will be published elsewhere, authors should clearly indicate this at the time of submission. Manuscripts should be submitted to perceptions@mf.gov.tr

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## Books

John Smith, *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, p. 100.

John E. Smith (ed.), *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, pp.100-102.

John Smith and Mary Jones, *The Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Co., 1999, p. 100.

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John Smith, "Article Title", *Journal Name*, Vol. #, No. # (Month Year), p. #.

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## Articles in Edited Books

John Smith, "Article Title", in Mary Jones (ed.), *Book Title*, New York, New York Publishing Company, 1999, p.100.

## Official Papers

Parliamentary Papers: Select Committee on Manufacturers (Parl. Papers, 1833, VI), 0.456. Subsequent references as:

SC on ... (PP, 1839, VII), 00.2347.

Hansard (Commons), 4th ser. XXXVI, 641-2, 22 Aug. 1895.

## Theses

For titles of published and unpublished theses use italics:

John E. Smith, *Title of Thesis*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Name of the University, Year, Chapter #, p. #

## Internet References

Center for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "A Global Spring- Why NATO needs to go Global", at <http://www.sam.gov.tr/perceptions/volume13/autumn/DustinDehEz.pdf> [last visited 21 October 09]

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All diagrams, charts and graphs should be referred to as figures and consecutively numbered. Tables should be kept to a minimum and contain only essential data.

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Use numerical values (14, 233) to express numbers 10 and above.

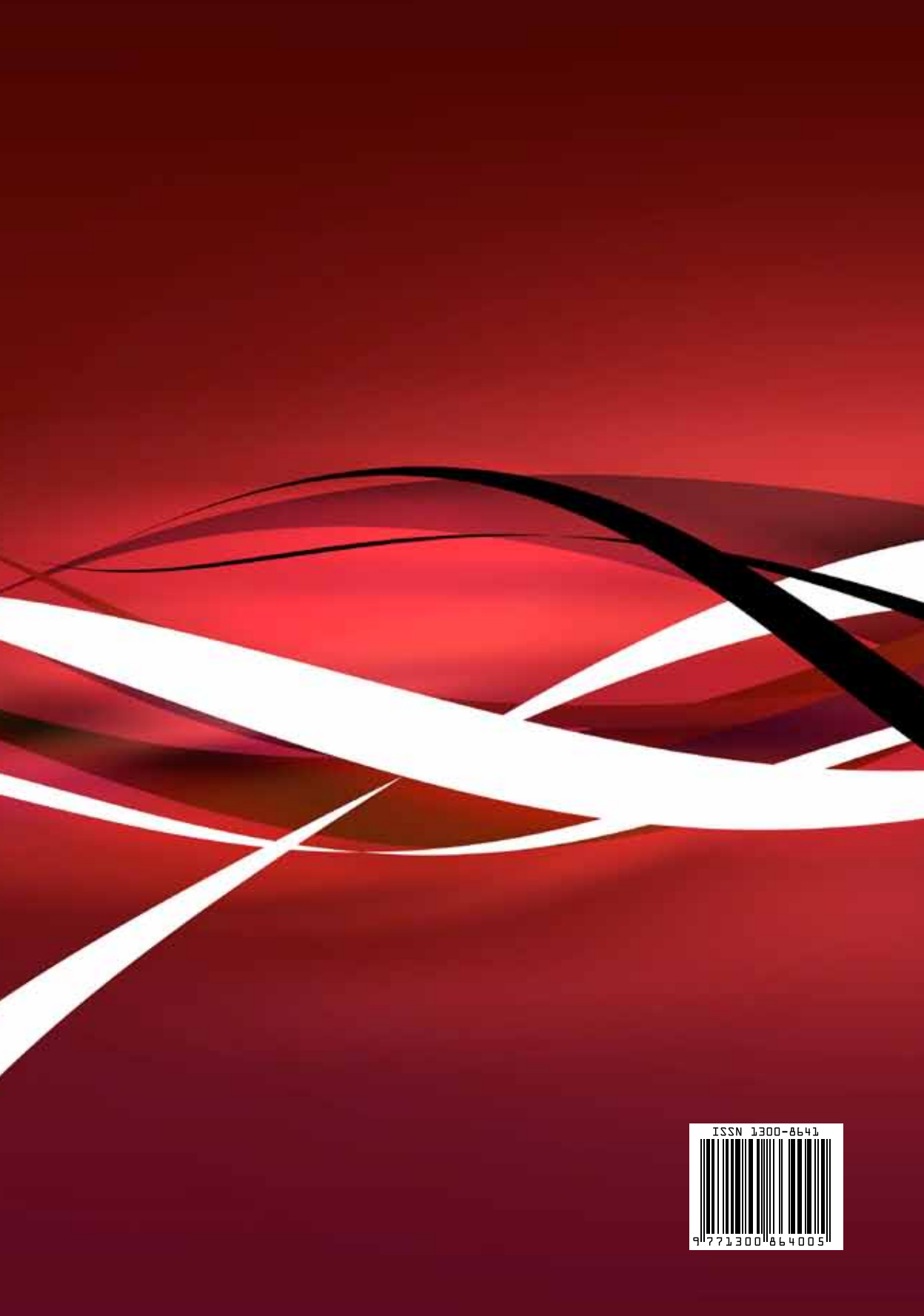
Figures should be used to express numbers under 10 that are grouped for comparison with figures 10 and above: *The results showed that 2 out of 20 recipients disagreed with the proposal.*

Use figures and the percentage sign to represent percentages: *A significant majority, 62%, said they would support the fundraising campaign.*

Use the word "percentage" when a number is not given: *Researchers determined the percentage of rats...*

Dates, ages, and money should be represented by figures: *2 weeks ago, She was a 2-year old, The workers were paid \$5 each.*

Common fractions should be written out: *One fifth of the respondents...*



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