



KADİR HAS UNIVERSITY
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**TURKEY'S EVOLVING RELATIONS WITH THE
KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT (KRG): FROM
2002 TO 2011**

FARUK ÇAKIR

SUPERVISOR: ASSOC. PROF. DR. DIMITRIOS TRIANTAPHYLLOU

MASTER'S THESIS

ISTANBUL, APRIL, 2019

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Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies Kadir Has University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's Discipline Area of Social Sciences and Humanities under the Program of International Relations

ISTANBUL, APRIL, 2019

I, FARUK AKIR;

Hereby declare that this Master's Thesis is my own original work and that due references have been appropriately provided on all supporting literature and resources.


FARUK AKIR



11/04/2019

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This work entitled **TURKEY'S EVOLVING RELATIONS WITH THE KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT (KRG): FROM 2002 TO 2011** prepared by **FARUK ÇAKIR** has been judged to be successful at the defense exam held on **11th APRIL 2019** and accepted by our jury as **MASTER'S THESIS**.


Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitrios Triantaphyllos (Advisor) Kadir Has University


Prof. Dr. Mitat Çelikpala Kadir Has University


Assist. Prof. Dr. Duygu Öztürk Tunçel Istanbul Medipol University

I certify that the above signatures belong to the faculty members named above.



Prof. Dr. Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe
Dean
School of Graduate Studies
DATE OF APPROVAL: 11/04/2019

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ABSTRACT

ÇAKIR, FARUK. *TURKEY'S EVOLVING RELATIONS WITH KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT (KRG): FROM 2002 TO 2011*, MASTER'S THESIS, Istanbul, 2019.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze Turkey's evolving relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) under the Justice and Development Party (JDP) (2002 – 2011). In contrast to the security-oriented policy during the 1990s, Turkey has developed relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to the level of a 'strategic partnership,' following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In particular, the relations between the KRG and the Turkish government have increased rapidly politically, economically, and as well as in terms of security since late 2007.

This thesis attempts to explain this evolving foreign policy behavior of Turkey towards the KRG from a theoretical perspective. It tries to examine these evolving relations between both two actors in terms of a combination of various events at international, regional and domestic level. Therefore, it uses a neoclassical realist framework to account for central dynamics and reasons behind the foreign policy conduct of Turkey towards the KRG, as neoclassical realism explains a state's foreign policy behavior by looking at factors at systemic, regional and domestic levels. Thus, this study argues that the new systemic, regional and local conditions brought about by the post-2003 invasion of Iraq required Turkey to reassess its previous foreign policy approach towards the KRG.

Keywords: Turkish foreign policy, Kurdistan Regional Government, Neoclassical Realism, International System, Justice and Development Party, Military, Foreign Policy.

ÖZET

ÇAKIR, FARUK. *TÜRKİYE’NİN KÜRDİSTAN BÖLGESEL YÖNETİMİ (KBY) İLE DÖNÜŞEN İLİŞKİLERİ: 2002-2011*, YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, İstanbul, 2019.

Bu tezin amacı, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) döneminde Türkiye’nin Kürdistan Bölgesel Yönetimi (KBY) ile gelişen ilişkilerini analiz etmektir. 2003 Irak işgalinden sonra, doksanlı yıllardaki güvenlik temelli politikasının aksine, Türkiye KBY ile ilişkilerini ‘stratejik ortaklık’ seviyesine kadar geliştirmiştir. Özellikle, 2007’nin sonlarından itibaren her iki taraf arasındaki siyasi, ekonomik ve güvenlik alanındaki iş birliği hızla ilerleme kaydetmiştir. Böylelikle, bu tez yaşanan bu değişimi önemli gelişmeler ışığında teorik bir açıdan incelemiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma iki taraf arasında dönüşen ilişkileri önemli olduğu düşünülen uluslararası, bölgesel ve yerel düzeyde gerçekleşen olaylar çerçevesinde incelemeye çalışmıştır. Bu sebeple, Türkiye’nin KBY’ye karşı dış politika davranışının arkasındaki temel nedenleri açıklamak için neoklasik realizmin sunduğu çerçeveyi kullanır. Çünkü, neoklasik realizm bir devletin dış politikasını belirleyen faktörleri sistemik, bölgesel ve yerel düzeyde inceleyerek açıklar. Böylece, bu tez 2003 Irak işgalinden sonra meydana gelen sistemik, bölgesel ve yerel dinamiklerin sonucunda Türkiye’nin KBY ile politikasını tekrar değerlendirmek durumunda kaldığını ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türk Dış Politikası, AK Parti, Kürdistan Bölgesel Yönetimi, Neoklasik Realizm, Uluslararası Sistem, Ordu, Dış Politika.

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Figure 4.1 The Neoclassical Realist Model of Foreign Policy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

JDP	Justice and Development Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government (in Iraq)
TFP	Turkish Foreign Policy
US	United States
IR	International Relations
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
OPC	Operation Provide Comfort
NSC	National Security Council (MGK-Milli Güvenlik Kurulu)
USA	United States of America
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
BMENAI	Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative
EU	European Union
CPA	Coalition Provincial Government
TGNA	Turkish Grand National Assembly
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
FPE	Foreign Policy Executives
MND	Ministry of National Defense

INTRODUCTION

The problematique driving this study stems from an ongoing debate on how to explain Turkish foreign policy (TFP) in general. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, various analysts, scholars, and policymakers have studied TFP and emphasized the *continuation* of TFP objectives based on Kemalist principles.¹ However, starting from the late 1980s, alternative voices have emerged, and they have underlined a *change* in foreign policy goals in contrast to *traditional* foreign policy. This debate has become more visible with the Justice and Development Party (JDP), which came to power in November 2002.

Under the JDP governments, it is generally argued that there has been a substantial change/transformation in the general vision of TFP. This debate has mainly been taking place in the context of “continuity” versus “change” in the new discussion of TFP since the late 1980s (Ülgül, 2017, pp. 60-1). In general terms and leaving aside some fluctuations from time to time, it can be said that prior to the JDP government TFP were mainly based on the principles of “Westernization” and “Status Quo” (Oran, 2001, pp. 46-53; Hale, 2013, pp. 253-58; Aydin, 1999, pp. 156-57), which refers to the context of continuity in this new debate of TFP.² Based on these objectives, Turkish policymakers abstained from an active involvement in political, cultural, and economic issues of Middle Eastern countries for a long time (Taspinar, 2008, p. 6).

On the other hand, studies, related to the framework of change, focused on TFP during the JDP rule argue that Turkey’s foreign policy orientation has been diversified in terms

¹ The principles and thoughts of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, are defined as ‘Kemalism’. These principles were republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, statism and revolutionism. For a long time, the students of Turkey and TFP have referred to these principles in their studies. For more detail on the history of these principles, See Aslan, S. & Kayacı, M. 2013, ‘Historical background and principles of Kemalism’, *NWSA-Social Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 23-30.

² These principles were originated from the Kemalist principles as it sought to modernize all aspects of social, political, economic, and cultural life of Turkey based on Atatürk’s ideas. These ideas were used as a framework by policymakers to build foreign policy objectives. Göl, A. 1992, ‘A short summary of Turkish foreign policy: 1923-1939’, *International Herald Tribune*, pp. 57-9; Aydin, M. 1999, ‘Determinants of Turkish foreign policy: historical framework and traditional inputs’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 170-76.

of its scope by engaging active relations with regions that were neglected before the JDP, e.g. Middle East, Africa, Asia and also by varying foreign policy channels such as using mediation roles and aid activities (Özcan, 2017, p. 9; Kalin, 2011-12, pp. 8-9). In that regard, one of the critical changes in the approach of Turkey has taken place vis-à-vis the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)³ in northern Iraq since the mid-2000s.

The objective of this thesis is to examine the factors behind the transformation of TFP towards the KRG under the JDP government, in the period between 2002 and 2011. Even though the transformation of Turkey's relations with the KRG began in late of 2007/8 in practical terms, the roots of this sea change go back to the times of the context of the US intervention of Iraq in 2003, which both enables and restricts Turkey's policy choices towards the KRG.

The end of Cold War brought about important shifts in the political regional and international system. In that sense, the Gulf War of 1990-91 affected the political formation of the Middle East, especially Iraq. Accordingly, as one of Iraq's immediate neighbors, Turkey faced an ambiguous environment in terms of its foreign policy. For Turkey, the main issue has been the emergence of a *de-facto* Kurdish political entity following the post-Gulf War events in 1992.⁴ Since then, Turkish policymakers have been carefully following the developments taking place in Iraq due to several reasons but mainly due to security concerns.⁵

In the beginnings of the 2000s, the international political environment witnessed significant developments in the context of the post-Cold War. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States (US) and the resulting US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 brought about critical transformations in the regional balance of power of the

³ In the literature on TFP, various names have been used for the definition of the region encompassing the KRG which are Northern Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and so on. It appears that such terminology falls short to define the region. In this study, most of these terms refer the same body, the KRG which we intend to use this name as it is the original name of the KRG states in the federated Iraq Constitution.

⁴ This political entity, the KRG as it called today, acts as a fully sub-federal state having its own military (peshmerga), representatives around the world, as well as the capacity to sign agreements with international companies.

⁵ The security concerns of Turkey were based on the rising influence of the PKK and the possibility of the foundation of a Kurdish state that may affect its own Kurdish population to seek similar goals. This will be further explained in the literature review section.

Middle East. The U.S. military presence in Iraq after the Invasion eliminated the political structure of the Iraq, which led to an existence of a Kurdish political body.

Following the 2003 Iraq Invasion, Turkey's relations with the Iraqi Kurds entered into a new era. From the mid-2000s onwards, TFP discourse has evolved tremendously from a 'security-based' one to one based on a more 'liberal understanding'. In this respect, this study seeks to account for the dynamics behind the transformation of TFP towards the KRG under the JDP rule. Accordingly, this thesis contends that due to the new systemic, regional, and domestic conditions, Turkey was forced to re-design its foreign policy goals towards the KRG.

In this context, the main question to be answered in this thesis is the following: What are the dynamics behind the transformation of TFP behavior towards the KRG under the JDP (2002 – 2011)? To answer this question, this study addresses the following sub-questions: How the changing systemic and regional conditions in post-2003 Iraq Invasion context affected TFP towards the KRG? What is the impact of transforming civil-military relations on Turkey-KRG relations during the JDP era?

To be able to answer these questions, this thesis will first review the international and regional environment that emerged with the end of the Cold War regarding its effect on TFP. In relation to this, this study will try to explain the traditional foreign policy of Turkey towards the KRG during the 1990s. Accordingly, it will elucidate the reasons behind the policy shift and analyze the dynamics that determine Turkey's relations with the KRG since the Iraq invasion in 2003. Thus, this thesis argues that the systemic, regional and domestic factors forced Turkey to redesign its foreign policy approach towards the KRG.

Significant of the Study

There are several reasons why this topic is worthy of study both in the realm of the TFP and in the IR literature. First, the establishment of an independent Kurdish state and the relationship between the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) and the KRG is a concern of national security of Turkey. Second, regarding the role and impact of Turkey in the region, the KRG seems to be a feasible strategic partner for Turkey in terms of regional politics and for economic reasons, especially due to the demand of Turkey's energy

diversification. Third, this study is important in terms of the debate over the distinction between the foreign and domestic realms in the discourse of International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). Finally, since neoclassical realism is a newly developing theory in the literature of IR, this study aims to contribute to its development by applying its independent and intervening variables to the case of Turkey-KRG relations.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter discusses the formation and the development of the KRG since its existence in 1992 by referring to significant events. The second chapter seeks to examine the literature on Turkey-KRG relations during the 1990s. In the third chapter, we will focus on the current debate in TFP under the JDP government since its advent to power in 2002. The fourth chapter aims to account for the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism. Finally, the last chapter tries to examine the analysis of Turkey-KRG relations by looking at the important developments at the international, regional, and domestic environments.

To examine the TFP behavior towards the KRG, the neoclassical realist framework is employed. Because, neoclassical realism explains the foreign policy behavior of a state in line with external (independent variables) and internal (intervening variables) factors at the systemic and domestic levels. According to this framework, the systemic factors stemming from the nature of the international system play the key role in determining a state's foreign policy choices. Even though the systemic variables have a primary role, the domestic drivers emanating from the internal political structure of the state are also of importance as the systemic pressures are filtered through them. Thus, based on the analysis of different factors, this study argues that the TFP towards the KRG in the period between 2002 and 2011 was "proactive" in contrast to the non-engagement policies of the 1990s.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE KRG

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the various factors that led to the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)⁶ in northern Iraq since its establishment in 1992. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section accounts for the situation of the KRG today. The second section elucidates the formation of the KRG from the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1990 until the 2003 Iraq Invasion, and the last section discusses the events in the aftermath of the Iraq Invasion in 2003 and its impact on the political structure of the KRG.

1.1 THE KRG TODAY

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is a federated political entity located in the north of Iraq. It was founded in 1992 as a result of the post-Gulf War conditions.⁷ After the 2003 Iraq Invasion, the KRG transformed itself into a political structure that possesses very different characteristics. Based on the federal constitution of Iraq in 2005, the KRG exercise legislative and executive power in various areas such as policing, security, education, and health policies, as well as infrastructure management

⁶ In the literature of International Relations, there are different perspectives on the definition of the KRG. Mostly, terms like 'de facto' or 'quasi-state' have been used to define the KRG. For more detail, See Jüde, J. 2017, 'Contesting borders: the formation of Iraqi Kurdistan's de facto state', *International Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 4, pp. 849-851; Natali, D. 2010, *The Kurdish quasi state: development and dependency in the post-Gulf War Iraq*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, pp. xix-xxxiii. Gunter, M.M. 1993, 'De facto Kurdish state in Northern Iraq', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 259-213; Kolstø, P. 2006, 'The sustainability and future of unrecognized quasi-states,' *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 43, no. 6, pp. 723-740.

⁷ The struggle of the Iraqi Kurds towards the central government of Iraq has a long history. They have been struggling since the creation the State of Iraq that came out after the First World War context. However, their rebellions became more tangible since the 1960s. As a result of long struggle, Saddam Hussein recognized the autonomy of the Kurdistan Region in the Autonomy Agreement in 1970. For more detail on the historical process, See Natali, D. 2015, 'The Kurdish quasi-state: leveraging political limbo', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2, p. 146; Ghareeb, E. 1981, *The Kurdish question in Iraq*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse.

including control of the local budget and natural resources.⁸ Since then, the KRG has been an influential actor in the politics of the region, and its policies have influenced regional states such as Iraq, Iran, and Turkey in terms of security and economic reasons (Natali, 2015, p. 145-6).

Since the creation of the KRG in the early 1990s, two major political parties have stood out, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).⁹ After the general elections in 2009, some new actors have appeared in the KRG political context such as the Gorran (Change) Party, New Generation, and some Islamic parties (Abdullah, 2018, p. 606). The next section will explain the formation and development of the KRG in line with significant developments that brought about the creation of the KRG.

1.2 THE GULF WAR AND THE NO-FLY ZONE

The president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein,¹⁰ launched a war with Iran that continued for eight years between 1980 and 1988. Due to the intensity and duration of the war, both states suffered extensively socially and economically while their essential services and infrastructures were ruined (Razi, 1998, pp. 697-701). After the end of the war with Iran, to recover the economic cost of war, the Saddam Regime looked for different solutions (Alnasrawi, 1992, pp. 340-343). Thus, Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990, in the hope of recovering from the postwar economic crisis (Özdağ, 1999, p. 62). On

⁸ About the Kurdistan Regional Government - gov.krd.

http://www.gov.krd/uploads/documents/About_Kurdistan_Regional_Government_2012_04_10_h13m19s26.pdf

⁹ The KDP was formed in 1946 by Mustafa Barzani. Since its establishment, it has been a major party in KRG politics. Due to ideological differences, Jalal Talabani left the KDP and established the PUK in 1975. It is the second major power in the KRG politics. After the 2003 Iraq Invasion, some new parties have emerged such as Gorran Party and some Islamist parties. For more detail on the political dynamics in the KRG, please see, Erkmen, S. 2012, 'Key factors for understandings political dynamics in Northern Iraq: a study of change in the region', *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, vol. 8, no. 31, pp. 83-102; Farhad, A.H. 2018, 'The political system in Iraqi Kurdistan: party rivalries and future perspectives', *Asian Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 606-624.

¹⁰ Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979 under the umbrella of the Ba'th Party Rule and he was overthrown with the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Marr, P. 2012, *The modern history of Iraq*, Westview Press, Boulder, pp. 175-213.

the day of the attack, the UN Security Council (UNSC) immediately warned Iraq to halt the invasion and retreat from Kuwait's territories. Later, the UNSC issued Resolution 661 and imposed sanctions and embargos on the country. Iraq did not comply with the UNSC terms, and thus a coalition of the willing under the leadership of the US intervened on the basis of UNSC Resolution 678 in what has been delivered as the Gulf War. This led to Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait on February 1991.

Following the Gulf War, on March 1991, by exploiting the weaknesses of Iraq, the Iraqi Kurds started a revolt against Saddam Hussein. It failed and was severely suppressed. Consequently, a vast refugee crisis occurred on the borders of neighboring countries, especially those of Turkey and Iran (Charountaki, 2012). In order to provide safety and humanitarian assistance to refugees, a "no-fly" zone was created via the efforts of the American, British, French, and Turkish collective humanitarian action following UNSC Resolution 688 and the attempts of, Turgut Özal, Turkey's President, for the establishment of a "Safe Haven" on April 1991 as part of Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) to ensure the safe return of the refugees (Özdağ, 1999, p. 67).

After the establishment of a safe zone, the Iraqi administration withdrew from the north of Iraq in October 1991 and the Iraqi Kurds were left to govern themselves. Elections were subsequently held in the northern part of Iraq in May 1992, leading to establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) by an alliance of the two main political parties that have been struggling against Iraq for a long time, PUK and KDP (Gunter, 1993, p. 295; Yildiz, 2012, p. 65).

After the formation of the KRG, a controversy emerged between the KDP and the PUK over how to share power in the KRG in 1994 and this led to a severe civil war between the two sides. The breakdown of the KRG with the starting of the civil war created a power vacuum in which other actors such as the PKK, Iran, Turkey, and Syria get involved in the fray (Marr 2012, pp. 245-47). This conflict resulted in the Washington Agreement¹¹ in 1998. After that, while the KRG was involved in the establishment of a

¹¹ After the elections held in 1992, disagreements erupted between the KDP and the PUK over the sharing power in the KRG, which led to a civil war that continued for four years between 1994 and 1998. Various initiatives were made to arrange armistice between the two sides, but those were ephemeral. Finally,

political system in the region, the US-led intervention of Iraq in 2003 provided different opportunities for the KRG in terms of internal and external sovereignty and as well as for the balance of the power in the region.

1.3 THE IRAQ INVASION IN 2003 AND THE KRG

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 altered the political, economic, and social landscape of Iraq and marked a turning point for the development process in the formation of the KRG. The KRG, established in 1992, took advantage of this situation and developed itself into a state-like entity with recognition in the federated constitution of Iraq in 2005.

The terrorist attacks to the World Trade Center in New York and the US Department of Defense in Washington DC, on 11 September 2001, led to the US government to declare a “war on terrorism” on regimes that threaten American security. The US first invaded Afghanistan and then turned its attention to Iraq as a result of the September 11 attacks (Marr, 2012, p. 259). Drawing upon inter-related reasons from the September 11 attacks and the argument that Iraq possessed weapons mass destruction (WMD),¹² the Bush administration occupied Iraq on March 2003.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, new political formations started to shape in modern Iraq. In this new political system, a temporary administration, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1453, was established. The aim of the CPA was to build the economic, social, and political life of Iraq that was destroyed by the War of 2003, and to help the process of the transfer of

through intense mediation efforts of the US, this dispute was resolved in the Washington Agreement of 1998. For more detail, See Tripp, C. 2007, *A history of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 255-57.

¹² Various explanations have been made regarding the reasons of the war in terms of US foreign policy. For a detailed discussion see, Hinnebusch, R. 2007, ‘The US invasion of Iraq: explanations and implications’, *Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 209-228; Jervis, R. 2003, ‘The confrontation between Iraq and the US: implications for the theory and practice of deterrence’, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2003), pp. 315-337; Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, S. 2003, ‘An unnecessary war’, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 50–60; Fisher, L. 2003, ‘Deciding on war against Iraq: institutional failures’, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 118, no. 3, pp. 389-410.

power to Iraqis. In this context, general elections were held in post-Saddam Iraq in January 2005. In these elections, the Unified Iraqi Alliance (UIA) consisted of Shi'i groups received 51 percent and the Kurdistan Alliance dominated by the KDP and the PUK polled at 27 percent (Marr, 2012, p. 289).

After the elections, discussions on the new constitution began and following a long debate and negotiations on the structure of the new Iraq, a new constitution was accepted in October 2005. In this constitution, the KRG was recognized as a federated political entity in Iraq. Following the elections and the approval of the Constitution, two leading parties, the KDP and the PUK, unified on May 2006 and formed a single political authority under the KRG rule (Yildiz, 2012, p. 66).

It is noteworthy to keep in mind that the Iraqi Kurds have their own distinct history of struggle against Iraq, established after the First World War. Even though they had acquired some autonomy status with the March Manifesto of 1970 and the subsequent 1974 Autonomy Law, the actual process of political formation came about after the Gulf War in 1990-91 and the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.¹³

After presenting a brief history of the KRG since its creation in 1992, the next section will focus on the existing literature on Turkey-KRG relations during the 1990s. This will help us to track the factors behind the transformation of TFP towards the KRG under the JDP government since 2002.

¹³ These series of agreements were negotiated between the KDP and the Iraq administration which recognized the existence of the Kurds and granted linguistic and cultural rights to the Kurdish people. Yildiz, K. 2012, *The future of Kurdistan: the Iraqi dilemma*, Pluto Press, London, pp. 15-19.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter seeks to examine Turkey's policies regarding the KRG¹⁴ from the Gulf War in 1990-91 until 2003 Iraq Invasion. An overview of the existing studies during this period will provide an analytical framework for us to understand the factors behind the transformation of TFP towards the KRG under the JDP government in the period between 2002 and 2011. The reason why this literature review starts with the Gulf War is that the KRG was established as a de facto political entity following the Gulf War. Since then, the KRG is acting as a state-like entity engaging in political and economic relations with regional and international states such as the US, Iran, and Turkey (Demir, 2015, pp. 145-164).

In this period, the policies of Turkey towards the KRG was centered on two issues. The first one was the problem of the PKK and its increasing activities from northern Iraq. The other Turkish concern was the possibility of the creation of an independent Kurdish state due to the resulting no-fly zone following the Gulf War. Therefore, TFP towards the KRG has been shaped by military-based security policies. Another subject that required a closer attention in this period is that of civil-military relations because of their impact in the decision-making process on this issue.

The role of the army in the Turkish political context was traditionally dominant, which sometimes showed itself via *coup d'états* when it deemed it necessary. This can be seen especially in security matters in the context of foreign affairs. In this respect, the military elites emerged as a key actor in the foreign policy making process with regard the KRG during the 1990s. Therefore, reviewing civil-military relations in the 1990s is essential for our analysis.

¹⁴ During the 1990s, the concepts of 'Northern Iraq' and 'Iraqi Kurds' were used in the discourse of TFP. The term "KRG" started to be used after the acceptance of the new Iraqi Constitution in 2005. Sarı-Ertem, H. 2015, 'Kuzey Irak'tan Irak Kürdistanı'na Ankara-Erbil ilişkilerindeki dönüşümün siyasi ve ekonomik temelleri', in Ö.Z. Oktav & H. Sarı-Ertem (eds), *2000'li yıllarda Türk dış politikası: fırsatlar, riskler ve krizler*, Nobel Yayınları, İstanbul, pp. 293-330.

This chapter is split into two sections. The first section analyzes Turkish Foreign Policy towards the KRG between the two wars (1990-91 – 2003), by focusing on significant developments at the regional, domestic, and international context. The second section focuses on the competing civil-military relations that become more visible in the context of Turkey's policies against the KRG during this period.

2.1 TFP TOWARDS THE KRG BETWEEN THE TWO WARS (1990-91 – 2003)

In the discourse of TFP, the issue of Iraqi Kurds began to draw high interest after the Gulf War in 1990-91 and the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Iraqi Kurds have been struggling for their freedom since the establishment of the state of Iraq after the First World War (Tripp, 2007, pp. 53-60). Although the Turkish state had been following the developments from the outset, genuine concerns for Turkey deepened with the two wars that occurred in 1990-91 and 2003. That is why, the existing literature in this period showed that Turkey implemented a 'security-oriented' policy towards the KRG (Barkey, 2011; Oğuzlu, 2008; Altunişik, 2006). The reasons behind this policy were the concerns emanating from the possible establishment of an independent Kurdish state and the growing presence of the PKK in the region (Aydın, Özcan and Kaptanoğlu, 2007; Erkmen, 2002, pp. 172-182). Thus, Turkish elites applied to military techniques to deal with the threat issues (Özcan, 2011, p. 72).

TFP towards the KRG in this period can be examined in two periods in terms of significant developments.¹⁵ The first period covers the years from the refugee crisis after the Gulf War in March 1991 to the capture of Abdullah Ocalan in 1999. The developments in this period provided headaches to Turkey in terms of policymaking. Following the Gulf War and the resulting establishment of a de facto KRG in northern Iraq, political instability and a power gap continued in the region. This situation increased Turkey's concerns significantly in the sense that the PKK would take advantage of this uncertainty to exploit it for its own ends. Thus, Turkey tried to prevent

¹⁵ The periodization stems from Gencer Özcan's article. See Özcan, G. 2003, 'Dört köşeli üçgen olmaz: Irak Savaşı, Kürt sorunu ve bir stratejik perspektifin kırılması', *Foreign Policy*, pp. 38-49.

the leverage of the PKK for using the safe area, and therefore Turkey cooperated with local authorities in the KRG administration such as the KDP and the PUK to fight against the PKK, and consequently, Turkish policymakers launched several military operations to eliminate threat perceptions.

The second period covers the years from the capture of Abdullah Ocalan in 1999 until the start of the Iraq Invasion in 2003. With the changing regional conditions, the KRG, formed in 1992, improved its relations with the US due to the support it provided during the Gulf War, and thus gained a higher degree of autonomy in the region, especially following the end of the civil war between the Kurdish parties via the Washington Agreement of September 1988.

The post-9/11 atmosphere provided a new environment for the PKK and reinforced the idea of an independent Kurdish state among the Iraqi Kurds based on the intentions of the US regarding the Middle East region. In the context the 9/11 attacks, when the US intentions for a war against the Saddam regime were revealed, it had become clear that the de facto KRG, which was considered as a natural ally by the US, would play a crucial role in helping to topple Saddam Hussein. This situation increased Turkey's concerns considerably, especially when Turkey's efforts to be involved in the process failed after the rejection of the March Motion 1, to not assist the US, by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) (Müftüler-Bac, 2005/2006, pp. 67-9).

Thus, Turkey in this era defined its priorities and "red lines", as supporting the territorial integrity of Iraq, fighting against PKK-led terrorism, and considering any attempt by the KRG to gain independence as a threat to national security. (Özcan, 2003, pp. 38-39) Thus, Turkish policymakers tried to influence the developments in the region, especially by doing their best to prevent the spread of the PKK's influence.

Before moving to the literature review section in detail, it is essential to keep in mind that TFP towards the Middle East region before the Gulf War was designed on the basis of the conditions of Cold War politics (Hale, 2013; Erkmen, 2002, p. 174; Mufti, 1998). From the Gulf War in 1990-91 onwards, the literature on Turkey-KRG relations has increased significantly.

2.1.1 From the Refugee Crisis of 1991 to the Capture of Ocalan in 1999

The origin of the relations between Turkey and the KRG started with a refugee crisis after the uprising of the Iraqi Kurds against the central government of Iraq in March 1991 following the defeat of the Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War. After the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait as a result of the intervention of the joint allied forces, Iraqi Kurds revolted against the regime for their independence by aiming to exploit its weakness during the war. Despite its defeat in the Gulf War, the Iraqi regime managed to suppress the upheavals. The repression was brutal and severe, and thus a severe humanitarian crisis occurred, and Iraqi Kurds had to flee to the borders of Turkey and Iran (Oran, 2001, p. 260; Marr, 2012, p. 233). This situation provided a challengeable task for Turkey at that time. Then president Turgut Özal intended to support an active foreign policy as a way of restoring Turkey's geopolitical importance that had started to decrease with the end of the Cold War (Charountaki, 2012, p. 187).

As a result of pressure on the international community, a “no-fly” zone was established to provide humanitarian aid to the Kurds of Iraq based on UNSC Resolution 688 of April 1991. In conjunction with the no-fly zone and with the efforts of Turgut Özal¹⁶ for the creation of a “Safe Haven,” Operation Provide Comfort (OPC)¹⁷ was initiated to provide to the safe return of refugees to their homes (Erkmen, 2002, p. 173). This operation ended in July 1991 and was replaced with OPC II¹⁸ which initiated the famous operation “Poised Hammer.”¹⁹ From the outset, this has been one of the contested issues in TFP. For Iraqi Kurds, it was a deterrence element to Saddam to

¹⁶ During this period, foreign policy choices were strongly influenced by President Özal. Özal secretly welcomed Jalal Talabani and a delegate of Masoud Barzani to Ankara to show his support. In doing so, Özal aimed to secure Turkey's Cold War position in the eyes of the West. Hale, W. 2013 *Turkish Foreign Policy Since 1774*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, pp. 161-162; Aykan, M.B. 1996, ‘Turkey's policy in Northern Iraq, 1991-95’, *Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 343-366.

¹⁷ The OPC ended in July 1991 was then replaced with the OPC II in which included ‘Operation Poised Hammer’. Later, it was named ‘Operation Northern Watch.’

¹⁸ The OPC II was a necessary extension of the OPC launched to protect the Kurdish refugees from the Saddam regime. To maintain the safe zone, a multinational force consisting of American, British, French, and Turkish troops was decided to be deployed in Turkey. For a detailed discussion, See Gözen, R. 1995, ‘Operation provide comfort: origins and objectives’, *Ankara University*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 173-191.

¹⁹ Due to the increasing PKK activities, Turkey implemented one of the largest military operations Poised Hammer with participation of 35,000 soldiers to destroy the PKK encampments. See Özcan, Dört Köşeli Üçgen Olmaz p. 40.

prevent any incursion. For Turkey, it was used as a tool to stop the spread of PKK influence in the region (Oran, 2001, pp. 254-268).

With the creation of the safe zone in northern Iraq, a power vacuum existed, which the PKK exploited for its activities (Tocci, 2013, p. 68). By utilizing from the no-fly zone, the PKK carried out several incursions against Turkey such as the Sirnak attack in August 1992 (Özcan, 2003, p. 40). This created a strong pressure on Turkish policymakers from the public to respond.

As a result, Turkey cooperated and worked with the Kurdish parties in northern Iraq, the KDP and the PUK, to prevent the rise of the PKK in the region. Thus, with the support of Kurdish groups, Turkey implemented large-scale military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq (Özcan, 2011, p. 72; Özcan, 2003, pp. 39-40). In relation to these developments, Turkey and Iraq signed several agreements²⁰ that allow them to perform cross-border operations into each other's territory to neutralize suspicious activities (Pusane, 2016, p. 20).

By the mid-1990s, Turkey increased its efforts to destroy the PKK and blamed Syria and Iran for their support to the PKK. In this sense, Turkey was almost at war with Syria, in fact, the Turkish military increased its activities on the border with Syria. As a result, Syria had to expel Ocalan from the country, and signed the Adana Accords with Turkey committing to end its support to the PKK. With this agreement, a new page began for Turkey-Syria relations (Duran, 2011, pp. 510-11).

The outbreak of the civil war between the KDP and the PUK over sharing power in the KRG in 1994 further destabilized the region. Turkey during this period tried to mediate between the Kurdish groups to prevent the exploitation of the situation by the PKK.²¹ But, the process failed. With the efforts of the US, the "Washington Agreement" was initiated for reconciliation purposes and both sides agreed to the agreement in 1998.

²⁰ Turkey signed several agreements with Iraq during this period such as the "Frontier Security and Cooperation Agreement" in 1983, "Border Security and Cooperation Agreement" in 1984, and "Security Protocol". Ibid, p. 189.

²¹ Turkey used its efforts as a mediator between the KDP and the PUK through the "Ankara Process" in 1996 to resolve the conflict, fearing that power vacuum would provide a favorable environment for the PKK to flourish. Charountaki, Turkish foreign policy and the Kurdistan Regional Government, p. 188.

Turkey's absence from the peace process made her increasingly concerned (Erkmen, 2002, pp. 4-5).

2.1.2 From Capture of Ocalan in 1999 to the Iraq Invasion in 2003

After the agreement between the Kurdish parties in 1998, a new period commenced for the regional actors in terms of their policies and priorities. The new dynamics in the region influenced Turkey's interests considerably, especially regarding the PKK and northern Iraq (Oran, 2001, pp. 270-71).

With the capture of Ocalan as a result of Turkey's strong diplomatic pressure on Syria accompanied by the successive reconciliation process between Iraqi Kurds, a new phase began for TFP. Against this background, Turkey's fears were relieved somewhat with the capture of many important PKK leaders. Even though Turkey's security concerns were reduced to some extent after the capture of Ocalan and intense military operations in northern Iraq, the US policies towards the Middle East produced new dynamics both for the PKK and the Kurdish authorities in northern Iraq.

In this period, the US administration was increasingly tough against the Iraqi regime which it considered to be a "rogue" regime within the context of "dual containment" policy. Thus, the role of Turkey as a strategic point of reference for US interests was enhanced (Oran, 2001, p. 269). Thus, Turkey's interests in this period were mostly affected by the US policies in the region (Erkmen, 2002). As such, Turkey designed its policies in line with the developments and revealed its "red-lines" in terms of its national security. The 2003 Iraq Invasion stemming from the 9/11 conditions produced a different environment for the regional and international actors.

2.2 INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLES: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

There has been a strong military influence on various aspects of Turkish politics since the creation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. In accordance with the policy of Westernization, the military elites have regarded themselves as the guardians of the

westernization/modernization process implemented by traditional state elites.²² This trend became more evident in foreign policymaking, especially when it came to security matters.²³

The Gulf War of 1990-91 and the resulting developments in northern Iraq were a litmus test for the decision-making process in terms of civil-military relations in the TFP agenda. Due to increasing security concerns both within and outside Turkey such as the Kurdish question along with the increasing presence of Political Islam, both the domestic and foreign policy of Turkey were under the strong influence of the military (Kirişçi, 2006, p. 12).

The changing regional balance of power following the Gulf War in 1990-91 and increasing PKK activities since 1984 provided an environment in which the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) had a significant say in the process of foreign policymaking over the KRG politics (Erkmen, 2002, p. 176). In other words, there was a divergence of interests between the TAF and the ruling government over policies regarding the KRG during the 1990s, especially during the presidency of Turgut Özal.

Özal's administration supported an active foreign policy towards the KRG in order to follow the developments closely whereas the TAF considered the developments in northern Iraq as a security matter that might have an impact on the Kurds in Turkey (Aykan, 1996, p. 347). Such controversies between the ruling government and military elites led to conflict in domestic politics. For example, due to the disputed Özal's policies, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Ali Bozer, the Minister of National Defense (MSB) Safa Giray, and the Chief of General Staff Necip Toruntay resigned from their offices (Oran, 2001, p. 250; Karaosmanoğlu, 2000, p. 211). Therefore, the military elites approached the issues of the post-Gulf War context in northern Iraq from

²² Since the 1960s, the military has interfered in Turkish politics several times through the coups. İlhan Uzgel discussed this relationship in terms of civilization and democratization by looking at the case of Gulf War. See, Uzgel, İ. 1998, 'Türk dış politikasında 'sivilleşme' ve 'demokratikleşme' sorunları: Körfez Savaşı örneği', *AÜ Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 307-326.

²³ In TFP, the impact of the military over foreign policy can be seen through the activities of the National Security Council (MGK/NSC) and Political Documents of National Security (MGSB). For a relationship between the NSC and foreign policy making since 1980, See Gürpınar, B. 2013, 'Milli Güvenlik Kurulu ve dış politika' [The National Security Council and foreign policy], *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, vol. 10, no. 39, pp. 73-104.

a threat perspective and believed that active Turkish involvement in the matter would lead Iraq to interfere with Turkey's Kurdish issues. Thus, from the refugee crisis in 1991, the TAF implemented several military operations such as OPC and Poised Hammer to control the events in Turkey's neighborhood.

As a result, after the establishment of the de facto KRG in the aftermath of the Gulf War, Turkey's security concerns deepened for two reasons. The first reason was the idea of a creation of an independent Kurdish state that would affect its own Kurds. The second reason was the increased influence of the PKK in the region. Therefore, the military appeared as a leading institution in determining foreign policy objectives during this era. Thus, these issues forced Turkey to follow an active foreign policy towards the KRG, supported by military operations.

To sum up, the major priorities of the TFP throughout this period regarding northern Iraq, which were mainly developed by the military elites, were to support the "territorial integrity" of Iraq, "struggling with the PKK", "supporting the situation of Kirkuk and Turkmens", and "balancing the rise of Iranian influence in both the KRG and Baghdad regime" (Doruk, 2010, p. 9).

When analyzing the existing studies on Turkey-KRG relations during the period in question, it is evident that there is a necessity for a multi-dimensional analysis to understand the Turkish foreign policy behavior towards the KRG. This is due to the fact that studies focusing on Turkey-KRG relations were primarily concerned with developments at either domestic level or systemic level in terms of the level of analysis. These factors were extensively studied and analyzed in understanding the causes behind the transformation of Turkish foreign policy towards the KRG. Also, the place of the KRG, much like the Cyprus issue, in Turkish foreign policy is not only a matter for the foreign policy realm, but also it is also highly relevant for the domestic policy setting (Oğuzlu, 2008, p. 10). Therefore, any attempt to examine Turkey-KRG relations needs to consider both internal and external factors. That is why this thesis favors neoclassical realism as an analytical framework due to its emphasis on both domestic and international variables in explaining a state's foreign policy.

CHAPTER 3

STUDYING TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE JDP

This chapter seeks to discuss the general contours of TFP under the JDP government since its advent to power in 2002. As argued in the introduction, it is usually suggested that discussions about TFP has been revolved around the concepts of ‘*continuity*’ and ‘*change*’. The *continuity* refers to the foreign policy formulation that was implemented by the governments until the late 1980s based on the ideas of Kemalism. This part of the debates usually focused on the two foreign policy goals: westernization and status quo. The change category that of changes, however, contends that the TFP agenda has been changing in terms of its scope and aims, starting from the Özal’s period, and especially, with the JDP administration.

This chapter is divided into two sections. It will first present a brief history of TFP by making reference to central events that affected TFP preferences prior to the JDP. Then, it seeks to discuss the transformation of TFP under the JDP rule according to the conditions of the international and regional system and the domestic political setting.

3.1 A SUCCINCT OVERVIEW OF TFP BEFORE THE JDP

Turkish foreign policy (TFP) has gone through several challenges and opportunities since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. During the years of Atatürk (1923 – 1938) and Ismet İnönü (1938 – 1950), TFP was shaped according to the ideas and vision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The objectives of TFP during this period were based on the motto of ‘Peace at home, and Peace in the world’ (Göl, 1992, pp. 57-59). In other words, Turkish elites followed the policies of westernization and status quo both in the domestic and foreign policy realms. The policy of Westernization meant a break with traditional Ottoman’s legacies and adherence to the Western community in the social, cultural, political, and economic realms (Aydin, 1999, pp. 159-60). On the other hand, the policy of the status quo meant maintaining the existing balance of power and territorial integrity of the country in the region, brought about by the end of the First

World War. As a result, during the Second World War, Turkish policymakers followed a policy of “active neutrality” (Balci, 2017, pp. 75-97).

The start of the Cold War provided new opportunities and risks for TFP. During the Cold War, by and large there were no major deviations in the ultimate objectives of traditional TFP until the late 1980s. In the early period of the Cold War (1945-60), Turkish foreign policy was under the influence of the Western bloc because of the security threat from the Soviet Union. Based on the changing structure of the international system from a ‘balance of power’ to a ‘bipolar’ structure, Turkey established closer relations with Western countries, which then anchored its dependence to the West both in military and economic areas by becoming a member of NATO in 1952 (Aydin, 2000, pp. 105-119). In short, until the late 1980s, the adoption of modernization and secularization in the transformation of society, and the implementation of *realpolitik* in foreign policy were the main principles of TFP influenced by Kemalist ideology.

Starting from the post-1980s, and particularly intensifying in the 2000s, alternative voices began to emerge by referring to the context of *change* in their analysis of TFP. The explanations under this category generally emphasize a pro-active and multi-dimensional approach of TFP. The debate over TFP since the end of the Cold War has generated an extensive literature on the subject. In this respect, the discussion focuses on the shifts in the external and internal environment to explain the issues and challenges of TFP. These debates intensified with the coming of the JDP government in 2002. The next section will discuss the developments in TFP under the JDP era by focusing on both external and internal dynamics.

3.2 TFP UNDER THE JDP

TFP under the JDP rule has become the subject of various debates as to whether there is a ‘change’ or ‘transformation’ in the foreign policy vision of Turkey in contrast to its *traditional* foreign policy. In general terms, it is argued that TFP under the JDP has been diversified with respect to both tools and areas in foreign policy choices (Özcan,

2017, Ulutaş, 2009). Various scholars have dwelt on the subject and underlined external (changes at the regional and international level) and internal (changes at the domestic level) factors that drive the sources of debate over TFP under the JDP government.

This section consists of two parts. The first part discusses the international and regional context since 9/11. It argues that the subsequent developments in the aftermath of 9/11 provided a demanding atmosphere for Turkey's foreign policy goals regarding the KRG in particular and the region in general. The second part looks at to internal political environment during the JDP era. It seeks to discuss the foreign policy vision of the JDP and the evolving civil-military relations that affect the foreign policy of Turkey.

3.2.1 The International and Regional Environment

The end of the Cold War brought about critical modifications in the geopolitical situation of Turkey, which feared that its strategic importance in the eyes of West would decrease. However, the ensuing developments enhanced Turkey's importance both on the international and regional stages (Sarı Ertem, 2011, p. 55). As Tür and Han (2011) argue "with the demise of the Soviet Union Turkey's perception of threat from the north was reduced, only to be replaced with the threat from the south, especially from Syria, Iran, and Iraq (p. 7). In that sense, the resulting systemic and regional events, such as the Gulf War in 1990-91 and its impact on the regional politics, yielded an unstable region for Turkey's interests.

The establishment of the KRG as a result of the Gulf War and the increasing cross-border attacks by the PKK from northern Iraq led to a highly military-based securitization of the TFP agenda and propelled the emergence of Turkey as a "coercive regional power" during the 1990s (Öniş, 2003).

With the capture of Ocalan in 1999 and the decline of threats emanating from the PKK, the TFP program started to change to a process of "de-securitization" (Tür and Han, 2011, p. 15). As Turkey began to adjust herself to the post-Cold War conditions, the 9/11 attacks on the US brought about a different sequence of events at the systemic and

regional level in contrast to the 1990s. The subsequent US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 brought about new opportunities and challenges for Turkey.

The alterations brought by Iraq's defeat in 2003 constitute a significant change in the external environment of Turkey. The resulting power vacuum and increasing uncertainty in Iraq provided a climate in which various sectarian, religious, and ethnic groups could fight to advance their interests. Similarly, this instability and power gap also drew the attention of regional players such as Turkey, Iran, and Syria to increase their influence over Iraq (Müftüler-Baç, 2014, p. 539). Consequently, it became certain that the outcome of the Iraq Invasion in 2003 shook the regional balance in Turkey's neighborhood (Müftüler-Baç, 2014, 2006; Kirişçi, 2006).

While Turkey attempted to adopt itself to the systemic and regional variations brought about by the 9/11 context in the context of the end of the Cold War, the domestic power change in Turkish politics, the election of the JDP government in 2002, brought a new understanding in Turkey's foreign policy vision. As neoclassical realism argues, the foreign policies of states are determined according to the risks and opportunities at the systemic and domestic level.

3.2.2 The Domestic Environment during the JDP

According to neoclassical realism, the role of the state and the foreign policy executives (FPEs)²⁴ are vital in a state's foreign policy formulation because the state and the FPEs are considered as the connection point between international and domestic politics (Lobell et al., 2009, pp. 45-6). The foreign policy vision of the FPEs in foreign policy making is important as they have "access to privileged information from the state's politico-military apparatus" (Lobell et al., 2009, p. 25).

²⁴ This term, the FPE, is used in the framework of neoclassical realism to refer to key persons such as ministers, advisers engaging in foreign policy making process, prime minister, and president, who are involved in the process of decision making.

Since its arrival to power in 2002, the JDP²⁵ has presented a different foreign policy vision in comparison to Turkey's long-standing traditional policy, westernization and status quo. Along with the systemic and regional drivers discussed above, several domestic factors have led to a change in TFP's image during this era. The first factor is the foreign policy understandings of the JDP elites. It is generally assumed that the JDP policymakers possess a different understanding of world politics.

The foreign policy vision of the JDP government has been shaped by the principles of Ahmet Davutoglu (2003 – 2016), in his capacity as a foreign policy advisor, foreign minister, and as prime minister. Davutoglu explained his ideas in his work, *Strategic Depth (2001) (Stratejik Derinlik)*, where he argued in favor of a multi-layered foreign policy that finds its origins in the geographical and historical depths of the country. In his study, Davutoglu underlined the role of the 'center state' in the aftermath of the Cold War environment. According to Davutoglu's doctrine, Turkey needs to pursue an active foreign policy in its surrounding areas to guarantee its security and stability (Davutoglu, 2008, p. 81).

Another important issue that underwent fundamental changes under the JDP rule is civil-military relations. Until the second term of the JDP, Turkey's domestic and foreign policy was shaped under the influence of the military due to various security concerns emanating from within and outside Turkey. In particular, the position of the army on foreign policy issues was enhanced via legal amendments that were put into effect following the coup of 1980 (Uzgel, 2003, p. 181).

In the 1990s, TFP was conducted under the high influence of the TAF because of the security threats, resulting from the PKK and the developments emanating from the KRG in northern Iraq (Özcan, 2009, p. 84). This trend began to change with the coming to power of the JDP. Various domestic and international variables provided a ground for the decline of the military's influence in the areas of domestic and foreign policy under the JDP era.

²⁵ The JDP was established in 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Most of its founding fathers come from National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş Hareketi). This movement led by Necmettin Erbakan represents the idea of Political Islam in Turkey. For more information, See Yang, C. & Guo, C. 2015, 'National Outlook Movement' in Turkey: a study on the rise and development of Islamic political parties', *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 1-28.

The role of the military on foreign policy issues began to be shaped in the context of European Union (EU)-Turkey relations in the early 2000s. The Europeanization process provided an environment to the JDP to extent its influence on the domestic and foreign policy matters and minimized that of the military (Müftüler-Bac and Gürsoy, 2010).



CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter seeks to discuss the neoclassical realist framework for a better understanding of Turkey's evolving relations with the KRG under the JDP government. Neoclassical realism focuses on the relationship between the state and society discoursed in classical realism without sacrificing the main features of structural realism regarding the restraints of the international system (Lobell et al., 2009, p. 13). In other words, neoclassical realism is not a completely different theory from its ancestors; rather it can be considered as an improvement of the realist tradition. Therefore, to understand neoclassical realist assumptions, it is essential to review the main arguments of the realist school.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. It will first discuss the relationship between classical realism and neorealism; finally, it then goes on to explain the process from neorealism to neoclassical realism. And, the last section focuses on the features of neoclassical realism by focusing on its independent and intervening variables.

4.1 FROM CLASSICAL REALISM TO NEOREALISM

The historical roots of realism date back to the works of Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*²⁶, Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, and Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. According to these earlier studies, human nature is in a situation of conflict that needs to be addressed and handled. They dealt with the problem of security and contended that enduring peace among states is unfeasible because of the conflictual nature of international politics which is eventually solved by war. They also argue that

²⁶ According to Robert O. Keohane, three main assumptions of political realism can be found in Thucydides' work. These are: (1) states are principal actors; (2) the ultimate aim of states is to seek power; (3) states are rational actors in terms of behavior. For further detail, See Keohane, R.O. 1986, 'Realism, neorealism and the study of the world politics', in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, Columbia University Press, New York, p. 7.

the state is a unitary and principal actor in politics and its national interest is to survive. The common point of these studies is that they centered their arguments around the concepts of 'power politics'. Thus, these earlier scholars referred to some fundamental elements of realist tradition in their studies such as power, national interest, survival, and anarchy (Mingst and Arreguin-Toft, 2017, pp. 77-8).

Even though the main arguments of realist thought can be found in these works, it has, however, become a dominant theory in the discipline of IR through the efforts of E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*²⁷ and Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, after the failure of Idealism in explaining international developments after World War I (Aydın, 2004, pp. 33-60).

Morgenthau provided a methodological and systematic approach of realist thought in 1948 in his influential work, *Politics among Nations*, a book covers much of the ground of international relations. In this work, he focused on the role of human nature in political affairs and then provided six principles of political realism.²⁸

For Morgenthau and classical realists, states are the key actors in international politics, and they exist in an anarchic condition of the global system. In this anarchic system, the central concern of states is to ensure their national survival. To maintain national survival, countries need to maximize their power. Thus, for classical realists, "international politics is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is usually the intermediate aim" (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 13).

What differentiates Morgenthau from the other strands of realist tradition is that he uses the human nature analogy in explaining the issues of international politics. According to Morgenthau, because human nature is selfish and power seeking, this ultimately leads to conflict and insecurity among human beings. Based on this interpretation, classical realists posit that states behave as individuals, meaning that each state acts in a unitary

²⁷ In his book, Carr focused on the issues of international relations during the inter-war period. He criticizes idealist views regarding international affairs and focuses his arguments around the factor of power in international politics. For further information, See Carr, E.H. 1939, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Macmillan, London.

²⁸ In these six principles, Morgenthau explains the ultimate aim of the states in international system by referring the human nature, national interest, and the power maximization. Morgenthau, H.J. 1948, *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace*, Peking Press, Beijing, pp. 4-14.

way in pursuit of its national interest, defined in terms of power (Mingst and Arreguin-Toft, 2017). Thus, according to classical realists, the reason why states seek to increase their power and capacity is due to the power-seeking characteristics of human nature.

Classical realists, especially Morgenthau, are primarily concerned with the character of state and national power but write little about the restraints of the international system. That is why, starting from the 1960s, classical realist thought has undergone by heavy criticisms from its opponents. These criticisms mainly refer to a similar point, arguing that if the human desire for power is the source of conflict among states, how could we account for long phases of peace? As a response to these criticisms and as a new interpretation of realist thinking, a theory of neorealism was presented by Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Waltz, 1979).

4.2 FROM NEOREALISM TO NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

Neorealism emerges as a response to critiques of classical realism regarding the changing patterns of international politics, as well as to discussions about a lack of theoretical rigor over the theory of international politics.

The debates were concentrated on the nature of the international system, the increasing importance of non-state actors in international politics, the blurring between the foreign and domestic realms, and the role of economy in international affairs (Aydın, 2004, p. 47; Herz, 1950, pp. 157-59). In short, neorealists deal with the big problems of international politics such as the causes of wars, the difficulty of cooperation amongst states, and the reason why states tend to balance against powerful states.

Drawing from debates directed at classical realism, Kenneth Waltz, one of prominent figures of neorealism, restated realist ideas to make political realism a more meticulous theory of international politics in his study, *Theory of International Politics*, in 1979 (Mingst and Arreguin-Toft, 2017).

The essential issue, in Waltz's (1979) view, is the study of the international system that consists of structure and interacting units (p. 40). In other words, neorealism posits that

understanding the relationship between international outcomes and the interacting units is vital for the analysis of international politics (Waltz, 1990, p. 34). Thus, according to Waltz, what distinguishes the international and domestic environments are differences in ordering principle (anarchy versus hierarchy), the attributes of the units (functional similarity versus difference), and the distribution of material capabilities among those units (uneven).

In contrast to classical realists, the focus of Waltz's analysis is the structure of the international system and the distribution of the power within the system (Aydın, 2004, p. 48). According to Waltz, the structure of the international system is anarchic.²⁹ States, as principal actors both in classical realism and neorealism, behave according to the conditions of the anarchy. Thus, Waltz argues that this anarchic condition of the international system determines the behavior of states, instead of the attributes of individual states, in international relations, which, in effect, makes the state a "black box." Hence, the differences among countries like cultural differences as well as their regime types, be it democratic or autocratic, are unimportant for structural realists due to the systemic incentives provided to powerful states (Mearsheimer, 2013, p. 72).

Neorealism is divided between defensive (like Waltz) and offensive (such as Mearsheimer) strands.³⁰ The major reason behind this distinction is the problem of the "security dilemma." Offensive realism differs from Waltz's theory with its argument that states can never be sure how much power is needed for achieving their security now and in the future (Mearsheimer, 2013, p. 72). Therefore, the anarchic condition of the international system requires states to maximize their relative material power, which, in effect, forces states to pursue an expansionist policy (Frankel, 1996). Thus, due to the anarchic condition of the system, some states can become too powerful in terms of capabilities, and this, in turn, causes a threat to the national survival of weak states.

²⁹ Anarchy here means an absence of central power, and therefore states have to ensure their own security and survival. Donnelly, J. 2005, 'Realism' in S. Burchill, A. Linklater, R. Devetak, J. Donnelly, M. Paterson, C. Reus-Smit & J. True (eds), *Theories of International Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

³⁰ Distinguishing neorealism as either 'defensive' and 'offensive' was first attempted by Jack Snyder. Snyder argues that the security dilemma over the foreign policy of states is not clear. For more detail see, Snyder, J. 1991, *Myths of empire: domestic politics and international ambition*, Cornell University Press, New York; Jervis, R. 1978, 'Cooperation under the security dilemma', *World Politics*, Vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 186-214.

Therefore, because of this vulnerability of the system, states need to maximize their power to ensure their survival (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 29-40).

On the other hand, defensive realism argues that the international system necessitates an expansionist policy only under certain circumstances. Consequently, based on the nature of the anarchic international environment, states comprehend that following an expansionist policy might cause a sense of threat for other states, and thus they prefer a status quo policy instead of an expansionist policy (Taliaferro, 2000/01).

While classical realists give precedence in their analyses to the characteristics of state and human nature, neorealists give primacy to the structure of the international system. Neorealism, in turn, has been criticized for its failure to explain the end of the Cold War and the post-Cold War context (Elman, 1996, p. 9).

4.3 NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

The failure of neorealist theories in explaining the events after the Cold War brought about important debates within the discipline. It has been criticized in its failure to predict the end of the Cold War and the post-Cold War events (Elman, 1996, pp. 7-9). As an explanation to this debate, the theory of neoclassical realism has emerged.

Classical realism mainly deals with the sources and usage of power in international affairs. It grounds its arguments on the pessimism of human nature. It seeks to explain the foreign policies of states by looking at human nature. Classical realists focus on the impact of power on the characteristics of the state. With the emergence of neorealism, the concept of the “structure” of the international system came to the fore to understand international affairs instead of human nature. It seeks to understand the behavior of states according to the structure of the system.

Neoclassical realism has been at the center of debates both among realist theorists and as well as in the discipline of IR since its emergence in the 1990s. In its early stage of development, it was considered as a foreign policy approach that tried to explain the anomalies of structural realism (Rathbun, 2008, p. 295; Rose, 1998, p. 145). It

eventually evolved to become a comprehensive foreign policy theory (Lobell et al 2009, pp. 5-6). Today, it is described as a theory that seeks to explain both foreign policies matter as well as the issues of international politics (Ripsman et al., 2016, pp. 1-15).

Gideon Rose³¹, who coined the term neoclassical realism in a *World Politics* article in 1998, notes its meaning as follows:

Neoclassical realism explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realist. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. Therefore, they are neoclassical. (Rose, 1998 p. 152)

As it can be deduced from Rose's explanation, to understand the responses of states to the external environment, it is necessary to analyze the impact of the intervening variables in relation to systemic conditions. In other words, although neoclassical realists begin with the central argument of neorealism that the international system constraints the foreign policy choices of states, they also argue that relative power distribution and structural pressures are alone not enough to examine the foreign policy behavior of a state.

In relation to this, because of the uncertainty and complexity of systemic imperatives, neoclassical realism underlies the unit-level incentives such as a decision maker's perceptions and the state-society structure (Rose, 1998, pp. 144-77).

By incorporating both unit-level and systemic variables, it has, therefore, been questioned and criticized by other structural realists as being "reductionist", some critics even went further by positing neoclassical realism as a logical and necessary extension of structural realism (Rathbun, 2008, p. 310). To avoid the criticisms, neoclassical realists stress the primacy of the systemic explanations and argue that intervening unit-level variables appear only under particular circumstances. Thus, it can be argued that

³¹ Rose in this article bases the foundation of neoclassical realism to the studies of scholars such as Farced Zakaria, Randall L. Schweller, William C. Wohlforth, Michael E. Brown et al., and Thomas J. Christensen. The common points of these studies are that they demonstrate that states adjust themselves to the shifts in the external environment as a result of their domestic and political context. See, Schweller, R.L. 2004, 'Unanswerd threats: a neoclassical realist theory of underbalancing', *International Security*, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 164.

since neoclassical realism offers a multi-dimensional approach rather than one factor like a systemic or unit-level development, it provides a comprehensive framework for the analysis of the foreign policy of individual states.

The main point that differentiates neoclassical realism from the other branches of realist tradition is that it adopts the intervening factors between the independent (the impact of the systemic conditions on the behavior of states) and the dependent variables (foreign policy outcomes of states) as shown in figure 1. When we look at the differences between neoclassical realism and classical realism, neoclassical realists accept that there are similarities between classical realism and neoclassical realism. Both schools focus on the complex relationship between the state and society. Both variants explain the domestic environments and foreign policy choices in terms of the interaction between state, leaders' perceptions, and institutions. However, in contrast to classical realism, neoclassical realism defines its role largely in building a clear testable hypothesis with greater methodological sophistication than that provided by neorealism (Ripsman et al., 2016, pp. 168-9). On the other hand, neoclassical realism takes the prevalence of the anarchic international system as a starting point in its analysis between the international and domestic realms (James, 2012, pp. 14-20).

As for the differences and similarities between neorealism and neoclassical realism, both start with contentions about the primacy of relative power distributions, the skirmishing nature of politics, and the centrality of conflict groups. Both variants pay attention to the primacy of systemic explanations in their analysis. It is clear, however, that neorealism and neoclassical realism diverge from each other regarding the range of the phenomena each seeks to examine, i.e. the dependent variable. The former aims to elucidate recurring patterns of international outcomes, stemming from the interactions of the units in an anarchic condition (Taliaferro, 2006, p. 446). On the other hand, the latter seeks to elucidate variations in the foreign policies of the same state over time and across different states confronting similar external restraints. It does not claim explaining wide patterns of systemic or recurrent consequences. Thus, a neoclassical realist framework may explain the possible diplomatic, economic, and military reactions of states to systemic constraints, but it cannot explain the systemic outcomes of those reactions.

Before moving into the neoclassical realists' understanding of the international system and its value-added point, the intervening variables, it is relevant to discuss the relationship between neoclassical realism and other approaches such as Innenpolitik, offensive, and defensive theories.

Neoclassical realism emerges as an alternative to a range of foreign policy approaches such as 'Innenpolitik', 'offensive' and 'defensive' theories, and it falls in the middle of the constructivist and realist schools (Rose, 1998). The Innenpolitik approaches posit that domestic dynamics such as 'political and economic ideology, national character, partisan politics, or socioeconomic structure' are significant sources for an explanation of the foreign policy of states (Rose, 1998). The main critique of this school is that it ignores systemic pushes and pulls. It focuses only on unit-level explanations. Therefore, it faces difficulties in explaining why states with analogous domestic structures behave otherwise in the foreign policy arena and why disparate states in similar conditions act alike (Rose, 1998, p. 148).

Offensive realism, in contrast to Innenpolitik theories, favors systemic factors in its analysis, which holds that security is scarce and states seek to achieve it by maximizing their relative power (Rose, 1998). According to this approach, one needs to take relative capabilities and the external environment into consideration to understand the specific behavior of a state (Rose, 1998, p. 149). The principal criticism of this framework is that internal characteristics are regarded as profoundly insignificant because of the dominant pressure of the systemic factors (Rose, 1998).

Unlike offensive realism, defensive realism undertakes that security is ample rather than rare (Rose 1998) Therefore, security is the principal aim for states. Thus, for defensive realists, power is a key instrument in ensuring security instead of being a primary purpose of its own. Thus, the key concern for states is to sustain their status within the international system rather than maximizing power (Waltz, 1979, p. 126). According to this approach, "foreign policy is the record of rational states reacting properly to clear systemic incentives" (Rose, 1998 p, 150).

Neoclassical realism contests the aforementioned approaches. Rose (1998) argues that Innenpolitik theories are mistaken because they privilege a single factor in their

explanations of foreign policies while offensive realism is flawed for a similar reason, it upholds the primacy of systemic elements on foreign policy matters (p.150).

4.3.1 Independent Variable: International System

The initial point of the neoclassical realist framework is the international system³² whose structure in this framework is anarchic as in classical realism and neorealism. By the anarchic structure of the international system, neoclassical realists express a situation of an absence of a higher authority to regulate the relations among states rather than a chaotic or conflictual situation (Taliaferro, 2006, p. 467). In such an environment, states adapt to the conditions of the system.

As mentioned above, neoclassical realism inherits the features of neorealism about the international system. Waltz (1979) describes an international system as containing units and structure (p. 79). Neoclassical realists argue that over the long-run a country's foreign policy cannot exceed the boundaries and incentives posed by the international environment (Rose, 1998).

As Rose (1998, p. 146) stated, "the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy are driven first and foremost by its relative material power capabilities." According to neoclassical realists, the key variable for a state when making a foreign policy decision is the relative distribution of power in the international system.

The neoclassical realism concept of the international system is a point of convergence with structural realism, especially with Kenneth Waltz, a prominent figure of structural realism. Even though neoclassical realist views on the international system resemble Waltz's conceptualization, they part company by adding two key systemic variables, clarity and the nature of a state's strategic environment.

³² By the term "international system", neoclassical realists refer to a system that came out in Western Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They also stress that states are the principal actors in the international system without rejecting some other significant actors such as multinational corporations, economic sectors, and terrorist networks. For more detail, See, Ripsman et al., Neoclassical theories of international politics, pp. 35-6.

Clarity is a critical systemic variable for neoclassical realists, which draws upon the idea that states face some degree of uncertainty in their interactions with each other in the international system (Ripsman et al., 2016, pp. 46-52). According to neoclassical realist understanding, clarity has three components. These can be summarized as the degree about the nature of threats and opportunities states encounter, the time frame of threats and opportunities states face in the system, and lastly the optimal policy responses of states (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 46).

Besides the levels of clarity and uncertainty, another vital variable in the neoclassical realism is the nature of the state's strategic environment. While the clarity and uncertainty are related to the range of information of the system, the strategic environment refers to the content of that information (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 52). By strategic environment, neoclassical realists mean permissive and restrictive strategic environments. In other words, the strategic environment denotes the amount and proximity of the threats and opportunities that a state confronts (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 94).

However, even though neoclassical realists posit that relative material power sets out the scope of a state's foreign policy; yet, they stress that there is imperfect 'transmission belt' connecting material capabilities to foreign policy results (Rose, 1998, pp. 146-7). Therefore, neoclassical realists suggest unit and sub-unit level intervening variables to understand the pressures and opportunities that the system provides for the state's external behavior. Now, we turn our attention to one of the major contributions of neoclassical realism, the intervening variables.

4.3.2 Intervening Variables

Even though neoclassical realism emphasizes the primacy of the international system and relative material capabilities upon states' foreign policy behavior, neoclassical realism also stresses that the influence of such mechanism on foreign policy is complicated. Therefore, according to the neoclassical realist framework, this complex mechanism on foreign policy needs to be interpreted through intervening variables at

the unit level (Rose 1998, p. 146). Neoclassical realist theory provides four broad categories of intervening variables, the images and perceptions of state leaders; strategic culture; state-society relations; and domestic institutional arrangements.³³ By relating these variables to the systemic changes, neoclassical realists provide the relationship between the systemic stimuli and the dependent variable (foreign policy outcome) to different degrees over time.

The first intervening variable in the neoclassical realist framework is the images or beliefs of individual decision makers who steer the wheels of the state. Neoclassical realists believe that the perceptions of these decision makers on systemic pressures must be investigated since “statesmen, not states, are the primary actors in international affairs” (Rose, 1998, pp. 151-2). Also, neoclassical realists classify these primary decision makers as foreign policy executive (FPE), which include the president, prime minister, key members of the government, and advisors dealing with the foreign policy making (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 61). Accordingly, the images of the FPEs are critical because they affect the process and mechanisms of foreign policy, and the perception of the incoming systemic stimuli as shown in figure 4.1.

Like all people, leaders hold some set of values, views, and images that direct their relations with the external world and vice versa. Since the prior’s experiences and values can influence these "images", they can be vastly personalized (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 62).

The second range of intervening variables is the strategic culture of a state, which affects the state’s perception of systemic stimuli and its usage on the decision-making process. Scholars who explain strategic culture often separate between organizational culture such as that of the military as a bureaucratic organization, and a broader concept of strategic culture like entrenched beliefs and worldviews (Ripsman et al., 2016, p. 66).

The third set of intervening variables include state-society relations, which mean the interactions between the main institutions of the state and various economic and societal

³³ These variables also involve alternative foreign policy approaches such as psychological, bureaucratic, societal, and institutional models. Neoclassical realists argue that choosing the relevant intervening variables is dependent to the context of the particular state. In above, they just make a broad category under four headings. For more discussion on this issue, See Ibid. p. 59.

groups. The balance between the state and society is critical because it affects the foreign policy-making process.

The last cluster of intervening variables in a neoclassical realist framework encompasses a state structure and domestic political institutions. The interactions between domestic political institutions such as parliament, the military, and the foreign ministry can have a significant impact on foreign policymaking.

In this causal chain, the dependent variable employed by neoclassical realists is the foreign policy outcome. According to the neoclassical realist framework, the scope and domain of the dependent variable are dependent on the time frame of the threats and opportunities provided in the system. This implies that responses of states to the external constraint vary depending on the nature of that imperative presents to the states.

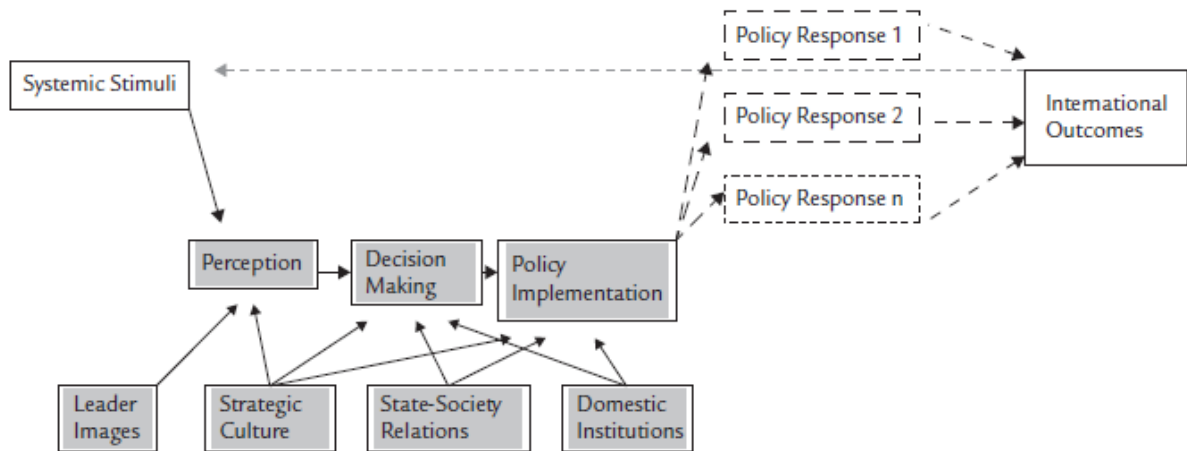
This study seeks to explain the evolving behavior of TFP towards the KRG in the period between 2002 and 2011. During the 1990s, the behavior of TFP against the KRG was based primarily on security considerations, due to the nature of the international system. The end of the Cold War reduced the importance of Turkey's strategic location in the eyes of the West. With the Gulf War and the resulting developments such as the PKK's increasing incursions and the establishment of a de facto Kurdish polity in Iraq, the uncertainty for Turkey increased considerably. Also, the domestic political structure was affected by the strong influence of the military elites in the foreign policy making process. In conjunction with these developments, Turkish policymakers implemented security-based policies towards the KRG. However, this situation began to change since the mid-2000s.

This thesis posits that the systemic factors imposed by the systemic and regional conditions were essential in generating a shift in TFP behavior against the KRG. However, the approach with which Turkish policymakers responded to systemic constraints relates to internal factors such as the foreign policy vision of the JDP, the decrease in the military's influence on foreign policy issues, and the rapid growth of the Turkish economy. That said, the framework of neoclassical realism is used to link the internal and external factors in analyzing TFP towards the KRG since 2002. As Rose (1998) claims, the foreign policy behavior of a state can be understood by looking at both internal and external factors (p. 145). According to neoclassical realism, the status

of a country in the international arena determines its conduct. On the other hand, neoclassical realists argue that the domestic level drivers play a crucial role in determining viable strategies and plans for the policies to be implemented (Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, 2009, p. 38).

With to Turkey-KRG relations, the Turkish foreign policy behavior regarding the KRG is analyzed in line with systemic and domestic level variables presented by the framework of neoclassical realism. At the systemic and regional level, the 2003 Iraq Invasion and the developments that ensued affected Turkey's behavior towards the KRG, which, in turn, forced Turkey to change its security-dominated policies to a more cooperation-based policy. This was also made possible due a different foreign policy vision by the JDP government.

Figure 4.1: The Neoclassical Realist Model of Foreign Policy



Source: Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, p. 59.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF TURKEY-KRG RELATIONS

Turkey has generally approached the issue of the Iraqi Kurds with caution, stemming from concerns that any independence action may affect its own Kurds as well as the increasing presence of the PKK, since the Gulf War of 1990-91 and the Iraq Invasion in 2003. With the establishment of the KRG in northern Iraq in 1992, Turkey's concerns have increased considerably. Therefore, during the 1990s and in the early 2000s, Turkey followed security-dominated policies to deal with those concerns.

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent developments have changed the existing regional dynamics and balance in local politics. New opportunities and challenges emerged for both regional and international actors. Due to their support of the US during the 2003 Iraq Invasion, Iraqi Kurds became close allies of the US and have improved their relationship since. In the new Constitution of Iraq of 2005, the KRG was recognized as a federated region in Iraq. It has since evolved into an important actor in the politics of the new Iraq. In relation to these developments, Turkey started to re-assess its traditional security-oriented policy towards the KRG from the mid-2000s onwards to a more cooperation-based relationship.

This thesis argues that this dramatic shift in TFP towards the KRG has been driven by several systemic/regional and domestic factors. At the systemic and regional level, the US-led invasion of Iraq, the formal recognition of the KRG in the new constitution of Iraq in 2005, and KRG's economic opportunities forced Turkey to re-evaluate its foreign policy objectives and tools towards the KRG. As for the domestic factors, the JDP's foreign policy vision and the shifting civil-military in Turkey relations fueled the shift of policy towards the KRG.

5.1 SYSTEMIC AND REGIONAL FACTORS

According to neoclassical realism, the position of a state in the international environment sets the limits of a state's foreign policy choices (Rose, 1998, p. 144). It is accepted that relative power capabilities determine the policies of countries when making a foreign policy decision. Hence, states try to adapt their plans according to shifts in the external environment. In the neoclassical realism understanding, it is argued that states tend to increase their impact/capabilities in the external environment rather than improving their power or security (Zakaria, 1998, p. 19; Rose, 1998, p. 152).

It is usually accepted that there has been a shift of policy in Turkey's approach towards the KRG since the mid-2000s, from a hard security-centered policy to a more "liberal understanding." There are systemic, regional, and domestic reasons behind the transformation of Turkey's policy towards the KRG in this period. At the systemic and regional level, the post-9/11 context and the resulting US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the economic incentives of the KRG, as well as the official acceptance of the KRG in the federated constitution of Iraq in 2005 are among the most potent drivers that led to a shift in Turkey-KRG relations (Sarı-Ertem, 2011, p. 62).

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent transformations in global politics brought about difficult challenges and opportunities not only for Turkey but also for its surrounding regions. Turkey has undergone fundamental alterations in the areas of both domestic and foreign policy (Aydin, 2000). The Gulf crisis in 1990-91 was a critical event for TFP as it shifted Turkey's non-involvement policy towards the Middle East to a more active policy (Larrabee, 2007). In line with the regional power conditions of the Gulf War, Turkey aligned with UN sanctions against Iraq, for example by shutting down the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline even if it caused severe economic costs (Hale, 1992).

The post-9/11 environment and the ensuing developments in the Middle East such as the war in Afghanistan and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 brought fluctuations in the balance of power in the political setting of the Middle East, especially in Iraq. Before the 2003 Invasion, when the rumors first started regarding the US intention to go to war, Turkish elites tried their best to find a solution without war, fearing that the instability of the region would deepen their security concerns resulted from the Gulf War. They even applied mediation channels between Syria, Iran, and the Saddam regime

(Altunışık, 2007, pp. 76-7). However, when the idea of intervention became a reality, Turkish policymakers became involved in the campaign by siding with the US and allied forces by supporting the use of Turkey's territory for military purposes. This request, the so-called March 1 Motion, however, was rejected by the Turkish parliament (Altunışık, 2007, p. 77). This situation created a distrust in relations between Ankara and Washington, and as a result the US was reluctant to provide any military assistance to Turkey in its struggle with the PKK for a long time.

The fragmentation of Iraq with the 2003 Invasion provided a challenge for Turkey's objectives in the region especially as a result of deterioration relations with the US after the March 1 Motion. Turkey was worried of the US occupation of Iraq from the beginning. Turkey's concerns were based on the instability of the region with the overthrowing of the Saddam regime. For Turkey, the insecurity would provide a basis for greater PKK action, an increase in sectarian conflicts, an increase in Iranian influence, and the fear of an independent Kurdish state (Larrabee, 2010, p. 14).

However, with the US presence in the region, Turkey's policies were shaped according to US interests. In that sense, Turkey's position regarding the KRG specifically and the Middle East in general started to transform within the context of the new US Middle East plan post-9/11 (Yeşilyurt and Akdevelioğlu, 2009, pp. 47-8). The American administration re-assessed its policy towards the Middle East and concluded that hard security measures are not enough. Therefore, in order to eliminate the threat perception, the need for political and economic reforms within the framework of democracy was prioritized. In this respect, the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in 2002 and the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI) in 2004 were promoted by the US to help the process of the renovation of the region's political, social, and economic dimensions. In line with these developments, the JDP elites, recalling the impact of the March 1 Motion, began to be concerned about being omitted from the reorganization of the Middle East (Yeşilyurt and Akdevelioğlu, 2009, p. 51). This was an important opportunity for Turkey to ensure its economic recovery as its economy started to worsen with the 2001 economic crisis. In this setting, then Prime Minister Erdogan visited the US in 2005 and announced Turkey's role in the BMENAI.

Following the signs of improvement in US-Turkey relations, the US announced its support of the fight against the PKK as a result of Erdoğan's visit to Washington in 2007, thereby marking one of the turning points in the Turkey-KRG relations (Park, 2010, p. 19).

Following the invasion of Iraq, the recognition of the KRG in the federated constitution of Iraq in 2005 showed signaled a change of perception on the part of Turkey (Yetkin, 2005). In the elections held after the new constitution, Iraqi Kurds increased their influence in Iraq politics by securing 75 seats in the 275-seat parliament while Shia groups secured 140 seats (Çetinsaya, 2005). Thus, Turkish elites concluded that the Iraqi Kurds would be a critical actor in the future politics of Iraq (Oktav, 2010, p. 59). After the elections, Jalal Talabani was elected President of Iraq while Masoud Barzani was elected President of the KRG. These developments left little choice for Turkey and, accordingly, Turkey moved to initiate relations with the KRG by allowing Barzani to use the Incirlik base to fly to the United States.

Before 2008, Turkish officials were hesitant to establish contact with the KRG administration due to concerns stemming from the "red lines" of the 1990s. However, taking into account the new dynamics that existed after the 2003 Iraq Invasion, Turkey's relations with the KRG improved significantly since the 2008 in the context of the development of relations between Turkey and the US (Sarı-Ertem, 2011, p. 54). The challenges imposed by systemic stimuli are essential factors in the analytical framework of neoclassical realism in assessing foreign policies. In this setting, as neoclassical realism argues that the changes such as unexpected shocks or a change of position by an ally in the international environment provide clues for states' foreign policy choices (Taliaferro et al., 2009, pp. 28-9).

Another critical factor that led to a reassessment of policy towards the KRG was the rivalry between Turkey and Iran over the influence in the region, especially in the KRG and in Baghdad in relation to Turkish foreign policy over the broader region (Handy, 2018, p. 182). With changes in Iraq following the 2003 Invasion, Iran, as an important regional rival to Turkey, attempted to exert its influence in the new Iraq, especially with the increasing power of the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad. These developments required Turkey, the US, and the KRG to forge closer ties. With Turkey

and the KRG having much in common with both being Sunni and pro-Western (Park, 2012, p. 110).

As a result, the disruption of the balance in the region and the ensuing events such as the rising regional influence of the Iran, the strengthening of KRG's position with the general elections in Iraq, and the shifting policy of the US towards Iraq including the announcement of its withdrawal from Iraq led to a new foreign policy style.

5.2 DOMESTIC FACTORS

After examining the systemic and regional drivers, this section will discuss the domestic factors that affected the change in TFP towards the KRG. Because neoclassical realism argues that although the international system – the relative power distribution of a state within the system – sets a parameter for a state's foreign policy, “the impact of such power capabilities on the behavior of states is indirect and complex”. Therefore, this complicated relationship needs to be defined through intervening drivers at the unit-level (Rose, 1998, p. 146).

Several factors stand out in the transformation of the TFP towards the KRG since mid-2000s. The most influential ones are the coming of the JDP to power in 2002, the growth of Turkish economy, especially in the oil and gas sectors, and the shifting civil-military relations and their impact on foreign policy making.

5.2.1 The JDP's Foreign Policy Vision

It is commonly acknowledged that the foreign policy vision adapted by the JDP since its arrival to power in 2002 is different from that of its predecessors. With the JDP government, the TFP agenda has been diversified by engaging in multiple regions such as the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Asia, which were ignored by most previous governments except for the era of the Özal rule (Kalin, 2011-12, p. 8). The

reasons behind the JDP's different foreign policy image lie at the perceptions and images of leaders of the party, especially Ahmet Davutoglu at the time.

In line with the logic of neoclassical realism, the beliefs or images of the policymakers, (the FPEs) are crucial in understanding the threats and opportunities posed by the international system (Ripsman et al., 2016, pp. 61-66). For instance, Ahmet K. Han (2013) used the "worldviews" of the JDP elites as an intervening variable in attempting to explain Turkey-Syria relations. In relation to developments in the post-2003 Iraq Invasion environment and in line with the JDP's foreign policy priorities towards the Middle East, Turkey overcame its psychological fears towards the KRG and applied diplomatic channels for the improvement of relations from 2007/8 onwards. In particular, the recognition of the KRG in the federated constitution of the Iraq in 2005 and, the subsequent invitation of Masoud Barzani as president of the KRG to the White House required Turkish policymakers to update their country's foreign policy approach through the "zero problems with neighbors' policy" (Ülsever, 2005).

In this context, one of the main policymakers behind the JDP foreign policy formulation was Ahmet Davutoglu, who aimed to improve Turkey's regional and global role as a "soft power" (Sarı-Ertem, 2011). His principles directed Turkey to pursue a proactive and multi-dimensional foreign policy during the JDP era (Aras, 2014, p. 2). Based on the policy of "zero problems with neighbors", Turkey followed a positive approach towards its neighbors which allowed the country to emerge as a "regional power" in the region (Aras, 2014, p. 2).

In the aforementioned context and corresponding to the external environment, the TFP outline under the JDP rule towards the KRG evolved from one of threat perception to a normalization process. Abdullah Gül, then foreign minister, in a statement stressed that "the Kurds in northern Iraq and Turkmens are our relatives, we want all them to live happy there" (Hürriyet, 2007). In this respect, the first official meetings between the prime minister of KRG, Nechirvan Barzani, and Ahmet Davutoglu took place in 2008.

5.2.2 The Growing Turkish Economy

Another important driver that paved the way for the evolvement of the relations between Turkey and the KRG was the growing of Turkish economy. After the formal acceptance of the KRG, the economic opportunities, specifically in terms of energy reserves, under the KRG establishment increased its geopolitical importance. With the support of the US, the KRG has signed a series of contracts with foreign corporations such as the Chinese, Sinopec, the Swiss Addax Petroleum, the Norwegian DNO International ASA, the British Sterling Energy and Heritage Oil-HGO, and Western Oil Sands of Canada (Kasayev, 2010). The Russian companies such as Lukoil, Gazprom, and Rosneft have also been operating in the KRG for a long time (Smekalova, 2018).

The growth of Turkey's energy needs particularly in terms of oil and gas required a strategic energy plan. Considering the KRG's rich gas and oil reserves and its geographical proximity, it appeared to be a feasible market for Turkey. Also, the formal recognition of the KRG in 2005 and as well as its collaboration with the Turkish authorities against the PKK paved the way for Turkey to establish good relations with the KRG. In this respect, Turkey enhanced its economic partnership with the KRG (Yılmaz, 2017, p. 134-35).

For instance, the number of Turkish business organizations operating in the KRG has increased from 485 to nearly 1,500 (Pusane, 2016, p. 21). A significant dimension of the improving economic relations between Turkey and the KRG concerns the energy reserves of the KRG, especially its oil and gas resources. (Pusane, 2016; Park, 2005). Turkey is a heavily energy dependent country, mainly on Russia and Iran, which forced Turkey to regard itself as a regional energy hub (Roberts, 2010). Thus, establishing close relations with the KRG strengthened Turkey's energy diversification and energy policies (Ustun and Dudden, 2017, p. 10).

5.2.3 Shifting Civil-Military Relations

The evolving context of civil-military relations in Turkish politics after the mid-2000s is an influential factor that enabled Turkish policymakers to re-consider Turkey's interests towards the KRG under the JDP rule.

As neoclassical realists posit that the images and perceptions of the FPEs are essential in perceiving the challenges and incentives generated from the external environment while making a foreign policy decision. The military mindset usually approaches foreign policy from a *realpolitik* perspective linked to the national security of the country. However, the understanding of a civilian mindset is different. Thus, the role of the domestic institutions, such as the influence of the TAF in our case, affects the decision-making process when a security issue comes to the fore (Sterling-Folker, 1997).

As discussed in the previous chapters, after the foundation of the NSC as a result of the 1960 coup and as well as the ensuing interventions in 1971, 1980, and 1997, the military acquired a significant and influential role in the foreign and domestic affairs as the guardian and protector of the Republic. In that sense, the rising activities of the PKK and the emergence of the KRG as a result of the Gulf War in the 1990s provided a suitable ground for the military to consolidate its position in both domestic and foreign policy realms. Thus, the overall picture of TFP towards the KRG during the 1990s and the early 2000s was based on the 'national security-centered' policies. However, this situation began to change since the mid-2000s. Various domestic and external factors have helped this process such as the harmonization process within the context of EU reforms, the KRG's rising influence in Iraq's politics after the elections of 2005, and the general elections in Turkey in 2007.

The reform packages and legal arrangements within the EU harmonization process as a result of the 1999 Helsinki Summit brought about important changes for the domestic political context of Turkey. There is a vast literature on this issue, arguing about the impact of the EU reforms on the aspects of Turkish politics (Aydın and Açıkmüşe, 2007; Özkurt, 2016; Müftüler-Bac and Gürsoy, 2010). In this respect, the legal amendments made since that time, gradually reduced the power and influence of the military. The amendment of 2001 decreased the number of military officers and increased civilian members in the NSC. Then, with the 2003 reforms, a civilian member

could be elected as the Secretary General of the NSC (Özcan, 2010, p. 30). This situation provided the opportunity to the JDP government to become more dominant in the foreign policy decision making process (Özcan, 2009, p. 83). With these regulations, the position of the NSC shifted from being the “determining” actor to having an “advising” role in national security matters (Aydın and Ereker, 2014, p. 137).

In the general election of Iraq in 2005, the KRG secured 75 seats in the parliament, while the Turkmen, promoted by Turkey, obtained only three seats (Çetinsaya, 2005). This situation provided a concrete basis for the rivalry between the civilian government and the army, as then Land Forces Commander Yaşar Büyükanıt criticized the government’s policy towards Iraq (Balci, 2015, p. 79).

Along with the regional dynamics and EU reforms, the overwhelming victory of the JDP government in the general elections provided the momentum for civil authorities to consolidate their position in domestic and foreign matters. After winning the general election in 2007, the then prime minister Erdogan and President Gül stated that they might meet with the KRG officials. For instance, in February 2007, Prime Minister Erdogan wanted to meet with Kurdish leaders in Iraq. The NSC tried to prevent this meeting from taking place (Özcan, 2010, p.39).

As a result, the EU reforms along with the general elections in Iraq in 2005 and in Turkey in 2007 forced military elites to adjust their policies according to the new conditions. This can be seen in the statements of the NSC in February and December 2005 after the Iraq elections (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, 2005). In these statements, the NSC officials underlined the importance of the new Iraqi Constitution and the results of general election in Iraq. Thus, it was understood that there was a need of a new strategy for Iraq which accounted for the new conditions. Thus, both the JDP and the military elites concluded that the KRG will be a prominent player in the future of Iraq and signaled of in favor of more constructive relations with the KRG.

CONCLUSION

This thesis discusses the transformation of TFP towards the KRG under the JDP era with respect to several dynamics at the international, regional, and domestic levels. Since the Gulf War 1990-91 and the resulting de facto emergence of the KRG in 1992, Turkish elites have been worried about the developments in northern Iraq due to security considerations. They thought that the efforts of the Iraqi Kurds for an independent state could inspire the Kurds in Turkey to seek a similar arrangement. Another concern for Ankara was the resulting power vacuum that would allow the PKK to expand its activities. Therefore, Turkish policymakers considered the emergence of the self-governing Kurdish region as a threat to Turkey's national survival. Thus, during the 1990s, Turkey applied military-based security policies towards the KRG to eliminate threats from the PKK and Iraqi Kurds. This perception increased significantly with the Iraq Invasion in 2003. After the recognition of the KRG in the Iraqi Constitution in 2005, Turkey's relations with the KRG entered a new phase. Since then, the issue of the KRG has been one of the most important subjects that occupies Turkey's domestic and foreign policy agendas.

In contrast to this complicated background, Turkey's policy regarding the KRG began to change since the mid-2000s from a security-oriented approach to a more cooperation-based one. Since 2008, Turkey and the KRG have developed a partnership that includes multiple cooperation in security, political, and economic realms. Thus, it can be argued that Turkey's relations with the KRG is one of the successful strategic relationship when compared to Turkey's relations with other Middle Eastern countries even if these were interrupted with the KRG's independence referendum of September 2017 (Kardaş, 2018).

This study sought to understand the reasons behind the transformation of Turkey's relations with the KRG since the 2000s. To comprehend the factors behind this policy change, this thesis made use of the neoclassical realism framework. Neoclassical realism claims that the systemic conditions determine the boundaries of a country's foreign policy choices. However, the impact of the systemic incentives is complicated

and uncertain; therefore, there is a need of intervening variables for a complete analysis of foreign policies.

In line with the logic of neoclassical realism, the argument of this study is that the 2003 Iraq Invasion and the subsequent developments propelled Turkish policymakers to take head of the new balance of power in the region. Drawing from the analysis of systemic and regional factors defining Turkey-KRG relations, it can be argued that Turkey reacted according to the new dynamics of the region, especially after the KRG's official recognition in the new Iraq Constitution, and re-assessed its foreign policy preferences according to its national interests. However, these factors do not adequately explain the change in Turkey's policy towards the KRG during this period.

According to neoclassical realism, to understand the relationship between external and internal environments, domestic factors need to be taken into consideration. In this respect, even though Turkey's policies towards the KRG have been shaped in parallel with regional and global developments and actors, the domestic political transformation of Turkey also led to a shift in the TFP agenda. The JDP's understanding of politics, the changing conduct of civil-military relations, and the growing economy of Turkey are the most influential internal factors that have affected Turkey-KRG relations under the JDP rule.

To sum up, this thesis claims that a combination of external shifts and internal changes caused a drastic reconsideration of TFP towards the KRG. The transformation in the balance of power in the region and domestic changes in Turkish politics, the new foreign policy vision proposed by the JDP and the change in civil-military relations on foreign policy matters, as well as the economic prerogatives of the state, led to a vital reformulation of Turkey's foreign policy approach towards the KRG. This new approach is best explained via the use of neoclassical realist theory.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information

Name Surname : Faruk ÇAKIR
Date of Place and Birth : Birecik/01.01.1990

Education

Bachelor : Istanbul Medeniyet University – Political Science and
Public Administration – 2016
Master : Kadir Has University – International Relations – 2019
Foreign Languages : English

Contact

Phone : +90543 372 9879
E-mail : farukcakirhas@gmail.com