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**A NEW STRATEGY FOR A NEW TURKEY?**

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Professor Peeter Mürsepp

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I have written the Master's thesis independently

All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In recent years, a new strategy and politics that have been implemented by Turkey are being criticized both domestically and internationally. Increasing the number of disagreements Turkey has with other states, including almost all neighboring countries, quantifiably affected economic, political and people-to-people segments of cooperation within a broad region that cover the Black Sea basin, Caucasus, Middle East, Central Asia and the EU. The research mainly focuses on a new strategy that Turkey is adopting these years while claiming that it has the potential to insist on, then on leading a circle of post-Ottoman states. Besides, this research aims at making analytical steps towards an understanding of the political history and political culture of Turkey, chronologically by explaining it as a whole. As a result of an in-depth analysis of Turkish political history and the current Turkish strategy, the thesis comes up with a new, alternative vision for Turkish politics.

The research first presents the appearance of classical Ottomanism, before shifting to the establishment of Turkey with a historical explanation. Afterwards, the thesis shows how and why neo-Ottomanism appeared and regenerated. Furthermore, the current foreign policy of Turkey is analyzed in order to explain main features of neo-Ottomanism in detail. Before the conclusion, the research compares neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism, and finally discovers the essence of neo- Kemalism as the main argument of the thesis.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Neo-Ottomanism, Neo-Kemalism, Middle East, Syrian Civil War, Parallel State Structure

## INTRODUCTION

Due to the process of international system's multipolar global re-design that is currently under way, Turkey has been in search for a right strategy in order to get accustomed to the new world. This search, in a more noticeable fashion, took place after the second victory of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the country's Prime Minister refers to stability. The economy boomed from 2002 until 2007 at an annual rate of 7.2% (Jarosiewicz 2013), and undoubtedly, the nation-state perception decreased largely worldwide.

The important role of international organizations, economic interdependence of states and collective focus towards common problems such as dangerous climate change, terrorism could be acceptable reasons to reach strong globalization. The reason why these factors could be features of globalization is that states are not self-enclosed anymore as they used to in the bipolar world system during the Cold War. However, states could act more independently since we reached the multipolar world system thanks to globalization. For instance, states do not go to war easily any more due to economic interdependence, which also could be called neo-Liberalism (Martinez, Arnaldo 1996). Indeed, if country "A" loaned money to country "B", both states would not start conflicts because maintaining their economy is in their interest. Country "A" would ask country "B" to thrive because it would repay the loan and also give financial support. Additionally, big corporations open their branches in other countries, so this could be a restriction of any conflict possibilities largely as economy stands in a very crucial aspect. Other than that, Democratic Peace Theory saying democratic states do not go into war against each-other, is also one of the basic feature of the neo-Liberalism.

Globalization is a process occurring universally and enables Turkey to become more powerful both economically and politically. The older self-enclosed strategy turned into outward- oriented growth instead. Indeed, the establishment and development of the Republic of Turkey until 1991 certainly did not allow any kind of realist strategies due to the world conditions. Atatürk 'the father of Turks', and his colleagues implemented absolute self-enclosed politics as well as maintained good relations with all countries due to the fact that

Turkey did not possess sufficient military or economic power after WWI and the Turkish Independence War. Therefore, Turkey needed to develop first and for this reason, Atatürk announced the maxim as the main foreign policy “Peace at home, peace in the World” (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011). Thereupon, the country stayed nearly impartial in WWII towards both sides thanks to Kemalist strategy. However, once Joseph Stalin threatened Turkey and claimed the cities of Kars and Ardahan in the Molotov’s communication of 1945 (Bilgin, Kivanç 2010, 43-60), Turkey had to side with the West during the Cold war. This is all to say that there were no appropriate conditions to show up with neo-Ottomanist or any kind of imperialist ideologies in those years.

In fact, the word “neo-Ottomanism” was firstly mentioned during the invasion of Cyprus in 1974 (MacDonald 2016) and Turgut Özal’s last term between 1990 and 1993 (Laçiner 2009, 172). These expressions particularly increased following the Halabja poison gas attack in the war between Iraq and Iran as well as during the Gulf War (Taspinar 2008, 10). Indeed, Turgut Özal, the eighth president of Turkey, allowed half a million Kurds (Gunter 2010, 70) to immigrate to Turkey, proving the importance of the country in the Middle East. Yet, after he died from a heart attack that could be considered suspicious, this policy was never heard of until some of Erdoğan’s actions in 2009.

Although the neo-Ottomanism policy (Czajka, Wastnidge 2015) could be seen relevant as a reflection of globalization, such an approach is criticized because it is outmoded, not profitable and highly dangerous for Turkey. The reason why it is highly dangerous is that the current world conditions do not allow any kind of unification, particularly in the Middle East in terms of an alternative power against Western states. Therefore, Turkey has lived many tragic events such as blasts in highly populated cities, increasing terror, isolation from other states and devaluation of Turkish currency. Indeed, the neo-Ottomanist thought could be considered as a Realist approach in international relations because it provides a high degree of opportunism, imperialism and state- focused approaches. In addition, neo-Ottomanism conducts to use power in order to become more powerful in the anarchic system with interfering external issues. To exemplify this, it could be proven with Turkey’s attitude against perceived dictatorial powers by helping rebels during the Arab Spring could clearly illustrate that it wants to get back its old power. Yet, some other states such as Iran, USA, Russia, Syria and Israel do not consent to this idea at all since they do not want to lose their control in the Middle East either.

It is certain that the Justice and Development Party (AKP), in which Erdoğan was the party leader from 2001 until 2014, was not founded based on neo-Ottomanist discourse either. The party promised “Conservative Democracy” (Taspinar 2012) just as Christian Democratic parties in the West. Indeed, it truly represented the Turkish version of those parties and it could be commented that Erdoğan and his leadership were pro-American or pro-Western until 2009. The reason why the party did not show its true colours such as neo-Ottomanism or will for a presidential system is that the environment was not ready to hear of these discourses yet because the post-modern coup ended in February 1997 (Ibid.), and its effects were still felt. Essentially, there was a strict secularism in the country until 2000s, weak coalitions and subsiding economy tuckered the Turkish people from status quo and they needed to possess an alternative party with a powerful leader regardless of his secularity. Also, Turkey suffered from a dramatic shrinkage of the economy between 1994 and 2002, reaching the highest severity in 2001 (Yeldan 2002, 2). In one sense, these developments and the search for a strong leader in Turkey could be interpreted as similar to Boris Yeltsin’s Russia and Vladimir Putin’s accession to power in 2000.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected Mayor of Istanbul in 1994 (Akkoc 2015) and got the public’s attention by his determined, hardworking and problem solver features. His popularity suddenly reached a peak on December 6, 1997, by reading poetry that sent him to prison. Essentially, he read an amended verse from a famous poem, in his demonstration and he was arrested as the text consisted of the following religious words:

“The mosques are our barracks,  
The domes our helmets,  
The minarets our bayonets,  
and the faithful our soldiers...” (Ibid.)

Strict secularism was intensively dominating the country during the 1990s and therewith, the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office of Court of State security sued Erdoğan, claiming that he threatened essential aspect of secularity. He was dismissed from his work as Mayor and jailed for four months. This event increased his popularity even more, and even some people with opposite ideas to the official status quo objected and gathered to support him. Further details on this topic are going to be introduced in the related section to readers. The reason why the subject of the thesis is interesting for contemporary research is that the research recommends withdrawing neo- Ottomanist or any imperialist policies and

remembering Turkey's old strategy with some amendments in order to stay in a better position in current world conditions. What the research mainly advises is that rather than becoming absolute self-enclosed or imperialist, implementing neo-Kemalism in the Turkish foreign policy, will provide security and it will decrease the high tension in the region for sure. Additionally, as the conflicts in the Middle East are still ongoing and Turkey plays an important role in influencing developments at its borders, the research emphasizes on contributing to the resolution of the Syrian issue and achieving global peace.

When it comes to the previous strategy and official ideology of Turkey, called Kemalism (Tunçay 2009), has normative framework being solidified by the Turkish Constitution, is also interrogated in the research. It could be suggested that some of its features are no longer suitable for the new political structure. The reason why it could be considered not suitable is that it was entirely shaped by the conditions of the 1930s, which refer to the risk of another world war and increasing fascism in the world. Therefore, Kemalism was founded to survive in a strict realist anarchic international system and use the self-defense method by not getting involved in any kind of potential dangerous issues. Indeed, Turkey did not possess such big strength to go to war after many conflicts such as Balkan Wars, WWI and the Independence War. That is why, as soon as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first president of Turkey realized the risk of war, he signed pacts of non-aggression with his neighbors: The Balkan Pact with Greece, Romania, Yugoslavia in 1934 (Degerli 2009) and the Treaty of Saadabad with Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan in 1937 (Van Wilgenburg 2009), and tried to improve the Turkish economy and defence industry instead. In addition, İsmet İnönü, the country's second president who used the Kemalist policy as well, by not taking sides until six months before the end of WWII despite a huge pressure from both sides. Hence, the Kemalist view could be considered more liberal, peaceful and pragmatic than neo-Ottomanism. In fact, Kemalism could be treated as neo-Realism since it used to acknowledge of international organizations and treaties, being concerned about states' opportunities in a rational way rather than classical Realism.

The research claims that lessening the two following principles of Kemalism (statism and secularism) are required to implement neo-Kemalism in order to get accustomed to the new system of the world. Readers are going to be introduced to ways in which these two principles, apart from the main spirit of the ideology, shall be shaped according to



requirements and benefits of a new Turkey. Essentially, Kemalism itself allows any kind of variance by its 'reformism' principle.

To come to the point, the thesis presents a new strategy, which could be placed somewhere in the middle of neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism, and argues with it in detail. The research calls the new idea 'neo-Kemalism' or 'Liberal Kemalism', considers it a necessary policy and supports it with legitimate reasons in order to practice it on the world stage in a more rational approach towards regional or universal issues. With neo-Kemalism, Turkey could conduct the neo-Realist policy by balancing powers between states, avoiding conflicts in order not to accumulate too many expenses, and booming economically as a result.

With regards to the outline of this research, it follows a chronological explanation, starting with the emergence of Ottomanism ideology after the introduction. Then, the research mentions about the establishment of Turkey and Kemalism that is the founding philosophy of modern Turkey. Afterwards, the emergence and regeneration of the neo-Ottomanism have been explained with their effects such as the current foreign policy of Turkey which consists of disagreements with other states, the latest coup attempt and tension with the Gülenist movement. Also, EU-Turkey relations, which could be seen as the main link of implemented neo-Ottomanist politics of the country, have been argued in a separate chapter. After the EU-Turkey relations, the research illustrates its own argument with a table to compare mentioned ideologies and make an extensive analysis in order to clarify the table. Finally, the thesis ends with a brief conclusion together with answers of the research questions.

Overall, it shall not be forgotten that becoming a superpower mostly requires an ever-growing economy and standing in an impartial and allied position in the international arena, so the research suggests that its policies could play a more important role for Turkey to achieve its targets, and stand as a peaceful actor in its unstable location. Finally, the research presents the following research questions, which are going to be answered in the thesis, particularly in the conclusion part.

### **Research Questions**

1. What could be the plan for neo-Ottomanism to exist in a stable way?
2. What would be the most probable result of the neo-Ottomanism policy in current circumstances?

3. Why is this policy shown as invalid in the thesis and what are applicable reasons?
4. What would happen if Turkey applies neo-Kemalism in its foreign policy instead of neo-Ottomanism?

### **Methodology**

Regarding this research work's methodology, the research uses both primary and secondary sources to support the arguments of the work. Apart from them, 'the process tracing method' enables the research to present causes and consequences of the elements used in the thesis.

The process tracing method is employed in order to assess the developments by simplifying the input-output method. Indeed, process tracing is a way to evaluate qualitative evidence, which answers the research questions. The base of this method is to provide a thorough description of the causes and consequences of different events so that the research could analyze them in a correct way. For example, process tracing helps the research to identify new political phenomena, come up with a unique thesis as well as analyze new casual statements. In addition to the process tracing method of the research, a comparative table is used to present ideologies in order to justify the research's opinion on the real argument.

Primary sources provide direct information about events or people. In this work, the research takes advantage of historical and legal documents, speeches and testimonies, which are part of interviews. As for secondary sources, which are also supportive methods of the thesis, the research employs the following ones: Mass media and government reports, newspapers, journal articles that evaluate previous research. In addition to these methods; books, historic data and information, as well as online sources were used in the thesis in order to reach the required general data. Therefore, all these methods together with a careful follow-up of current developments in the world, which change and shape the political agenda almost every day, assist in the creation of this thesis.

## **1. EMERGENCE OF OTTOMANISM**

Ottomanism was a perception, which appeared prior to the First Constitutional Era of the Ottoman Empire in 1839 (Cogen 2016, 73). Supporters of this idea believed that Ottomanism is the only way by which the Ottoman Empire could deal with problems that it was facing. The policy took its inspiration from the French Revolution since it was promoting equality among all nations as well as the sense of belonging to a nation. That is why Ottoman Empire wanted to adopt the equality trend by blocking any kind of separation from the Ottoman land.

In fact, Ottomanism was founded especially for non-Muslims to provide absolute equality before the law and keep the state alive. Despite the huge loss of land by the Empire until that time, it was still inhabited by many ethnicities. Therefore, thinkers of Ottomanism came up with this idea in order to prevent any other separation because of the nation state trend due to rising nationalism, which was one of the main factors leading to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Campos 2011). The rescript of Gülhane (Tanzimat Fermanı) aimed to place non-Muslims under guardianship indoors, and take measure against Western states in order to save the country from very bad outcomes. Indeed, it provided equal rights for all, protection of people and property as well as positive changes in the army, judiciary and economic fields (Karpas 2016,10).

Nevertheless, Ottomanism was rejected both by many non-Muslim and Muslim nations and increased polarization between nations in the Empire instead. The second attempt of Ottomanism, which was brought with the Ottoman Reform Edict in 1856, established the policy more comprehensive one (Davison 1963, 3). Though, it was prepared by Western thinkers and signed by the Ottoman Empire forcefully. The research points out that the Ottoman Empire did not assimilate any minorities even if it faced these big problems and risks from them. Hence, those privileges given by the Reform Edict led to a bigger will to set up new countries by minorities in the end.

The third attempt, occurring after two successful ones, was claimed by ‘Young Ottomans’ in 1865. Some famous poets such as Namık Kemal, Şinasi and Ziya Paşa attended the Young Ottomans Movement (Yavuz 2009, 20) and tried to announce the benefits of Ottomanism by publishing newspapers. They were highly influenced by Montesquieu and Rousseau in order to achieve their goals and worked for the first Ottoman Constitution. One of the biggest factors of Ottomanism is that it claims to possess a constitutional monarchy instead of an absolute one by opening an assembly accepting non-Muslims parliamentarians (Campos 2011). Finally, the first Assembly in the Ottoman Empire was opened on March 19, 1877 (Sohrabi 2014, 42), including 46 non-Muslim parliamentarians out of 115. However, the Russo-Turkish War in 1878 (OnWar, 2017) and its consequences, such as negative attitudes towards Muslims by Christians in the Balkans as well as losing lands such as Edirne (Ibid.), questioned the Ottoman ideology and led to the appearance of new ones: for example, Turkism and Islamism until the collapse of the Empire. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was a sympathizer of Turkism, launched the Turkish Independence War and set up the new state accordingly (Landau 1995, 74).

Briefly, Ottomanism was an unsuccessful recovery attempt for the Ottoman Empire in the XIX century although it is nowadays considered as the basis of democracy because it provided equality and the freedom of choice for elections in the history of the Ottoman Empire as well as Turkey.

## **2. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY AND KEMALISM**

Every state on earth has its own foundation stories. While some of them are established by agreements, others are founded by their own national struggles such as Turkey. By the time Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who is the founder of Turkey, launched the Independence War, he asked his nation the crucial question: “My nation! Would you accept to live under captivity and derogation?” and strengthened his decision by saying: “Either independence or death!” (Gawrych 2013, 117). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was a colonel during the Gallipoli War in 1915-16, well commanded the army, and the Ottoman Empire won the War as a result (Anzac Website 1998-2016). He got a valuable reputation in the state, which played a crucial role after four years, referring to the foundation of Turkish National Grand Assembly and start of the Independence War.

In this chapter, the research illustrates the foundation of modern Turkey in order to form a basis for the whole work. To start explaining the topic, we should go back to WWI, which precipitated the end of the Ottoman Empire. The Empire was called ‘Sick man of Europe’ (Çırakman 2002, 64) in the XX century as it lost a lot of lands in consequence of wars, independence declarations of minorities, and facing a debt spiral. In these conditions, the Empire considered WWI as a big chance to get back its lands and reputation as soon as the War began. Thereupon, it attended the war with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire side, which is called Central Powers, against Allies. Although the first half of the War was on behalf of the Central Powers, the fate of the world was changed by USA’s official decision to go to war. Even though Turkey did not lose the war practically, the heads of the Empire decided to abandon the War due to Germany’s defeat. Indeed, Turkey won at two fronts; Gallipoli War, which also partly contributed to the collapse of the Russian Empire as it blocked aid from British warships, and the Siege of Kut against 11800 British and Indian troops (British National Archives Website, *s.a*).

As soon as the Ottoman Empire lost the War officially, it signed the Armistice of Mudros that was entirely aimed at collapsing the ‘Sick Man of Europe’, especially with its seventh and twenty- fourth clauses. Indeed, they provided the Allies with a right to occupy territories for safety reasons (Hale 2013, 28) and at the same time, they pleaded to invade six cities in the Eastern Anatolia: Van, Bitlis, Elazığ, Erzurum, Sivas and Diyarbakır. Essentially, the seventh clause showed the real aim of the treaty while the twenty-fourth referred to the setting of an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia (German History in Documents and Images 1918). In addition, Wilson’s Principles about self-determination were causing a big trouble for the Empire as it hosted minorities.

The *Treaty of Sevres* was officially signed by Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire but never came into force because Mustafa Kemal and his fellow fighters launched the Independence War in Anatolia. Nonetheless, the Allies occupied the requested lands in the Treaty of Sevres and shared the Empire<sup>1</sup>. During the Independence War, however, Italy disagreed with other Allied states because ‘Smyrna’ (İzmir) city and its surroundings were given to Greeks instead of Italy, indirectly taking side with the Turkish Grand National Assembly by selling guns and carrying soldiers in its ships. Additionally, Soviet Russia, which was recently founded, helped Turkey for its own benefits officially with the Treaty of Moscow (Gürel *s.a.*, 10), as well as Italy. During the occupation of the capital İstanbul by the British army, Mustafa Kemal and his fellow fighters Kazım Karabekir, Refet Bele, Rauf Orbay and Ali Fuat Cebesoy (Kösebalaban 2011, 64) decided to settle down in Anatolia and launched the struggle. Eventually, Mustafa Kemal got the chance to meet the last Ottoman Sultan ‘Mehmet Vahdettin’, whom he overthrew three years later. He received the order from the Sultan to sail to Samsun with the ‘Bandırma’ boat (Kusadasi guide 1998-2012), authorized the organization of the public, prevented the army from breaking and started struggling against enemies in Anatolia. Later, however M. Kemal was given the death penalty by the same Sultan when the Allies coerced him. When M. Kemal departed from İstanbul, he saw the British warships in Bosphorus and claimed: “As they have come, so they will go” (Sansal 1996-2016).

First, he arrived in Samsun on May 19, 1919, (Shaw 1997, 343) and called people out, and then he announced the ‘Amasya Protocol’ (Ibid.) in which he mentioned the occupation of the state, calling delegates from every city to open the Turkish Grand National Assembly

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<sup>1</sup> Map in Appendix 1

and fight with the occupant. Meanwhile, his attempts were traced by the British intelligence services and governors were ordered to arrest him. Yet, on the contrary, he did not step back and was able to gather people in Erzurum on July 23, 1919, and Sivas on September 4, 1919 to organize conventions (Global Security 2011).

After gathering delegates in Sivas, Mustafa Kemal was elected Head of the Assembly and decided to establish the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara. Eventually, the Assembly was founded on April 23, 1920, and started its activities by fighting Pontus, Greeks, Armenians, French and diplomatically the British Empire between 1920 and 1922. Eventually, Mustafa Kemal and his army achieved the unexpected and won against all occupying states. In this way, the National Assembly officially abolished the Ottoman Empire, which was 623 years old on November 1, 1922, and Ankara was selected as the new capital city. Also, the Treaty of Sevres was abolished and the Treaty of Lausanne was signed on July 24, 1923, instead (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 2011). Thereupon, Mustafa Kemal and his closest fellow İsmet İnönü brought the proposal to set up the Republic of Turkey in the National Assembly, ultimately the new Turkey was founded on October 29, 1923, and Mustafa Kemal was elected the first president of the Turkey (Sansal 1996-2016).

With the foundation of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal governed the country as president until his death on November 10, 1938. He reformed many areas in this period of 15 years. He founded a state with a new regime and regulated society with modern rules, not based on any religion but with the ‘Turkish Nation’ concept, so it shows that he was standing very far from Ottoman or Islamist views since both caused failure before. While Ottomanism failed by self-determinations of minorities due to rising nationalism and Russia’s provocation towards Slavic nations, Islamism was not seen as viable either, since Sultan Mehmed V (namely Caliph of Islam) called Muslim people to fight with the Ottoman Empire against the Allies on November 14, 1914 (Duffy, 2009), and Arabs did not attend it, because they were promised territories by the Allies. Thus, all these developments showed that imperialist ideas were down, and nationalism was leading the world. Before discovering the Kemalist (Atatürkist) ideology, we shall better to observe some of his main reforms while he was in power:

- Abolition of the Sultanate on 1 November 1922 (Sansal 1996-2016)
- Choosing Ankara, the capital on 13 October 1923 (Ibid.)
- Proclamation of the Republic on 29 October 1923 (Ibid.)

- Abolition of the caliphate on 3 March 1924 (Ibid.)
- Adoption of the new constitution on 20 April 1924 (Ibid.)
- The Hat Law on 25 November 1925 (Ibid.)
- Adoption of the Civil Law on 4 October 1926 (Ibid.)
- Alphabet reform on 1 November 1928 (Ibid.)
- Assigning political rights to women on 3 April 1930 (Ibid.)
- Attempt of the multi-party system by Atatürk's encouragement on 12 August 1930 (Ibid.)
- Language Revolution on 12 July 1932 (Ibid.)
- Surname Law on 2 June 1934 (Ibid.)
- Adoption of secularism in the Constitution on 5 February 1937. (Ibid.)

As for Atatürk's principles, Kemalism is essentially the official ideology of Turkey. He mostly collected his thoughts and revolutionist mind from the French Revolution and shaped them according to the Turkish Nation. These principles consist of six sub-ideologies and depict six arrows: Republicanism, populism, secularism, reformism, nationalism, and statism (Tunçay, 2009). While some politicians consider Kemalism as a leftist view, some say it is a third way denying both leftist and rightist views. Essentially, the Turkish Army is based on the Kemalist ideology as well and that is why military coups could be seen as an excuse by civil governments to violate Kemalism. There is no reason to doubt why the Turkish Army is one of the largest militaries in the world as the Atatürkist thought gives a great importance to the army's development. Indeed, it is concerned about Turkey's geopolitical location, as well as its gains and losses. According to Kemalist ideas, Republicanism means that sovereignty belongs to the public and the state is governed accordingly. Atatürk's word "Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation" (Culbertson 2016, 95) explains the situation very well. He emphasized the importance of the republic by saying "The Republic is the most appropriate way of government to the Turkish Nation's character and traditions." (Aldeniz, *s.a*).

Populism stresses the concept of national sovereignty, forbids disputes between social classes and adopts democracy (Ibid.). The State should target the welfare of citizens and their happiness, provide a division of labor and solidarity among all people. There should not be



any kind of discrimination or privileges in society, and everyone is equal before the law regardless of their religion, gender, race and language.

Secularism provides the separation of religious affairs from governmental ones, meaning that the state cannot make a distinction in terms of religion or sect and does not apply any religious principles in law. In other words, the state is not based on religion concerning education, the judiciary or any governmental areas. According to secularism, all kinds of attitude, except for worshipping in mosques, are done according to the constitution instead of holy writs. Religion belongs to peoples' private life and no one could interfere with it. Indeed, secularism is the most controversial idea in Turkey due to the fact that the country predominantly consists of a Muslim population. Besides, pro-Kemalist governors and authorities misused secularism even against moderately religious people for decades in Turkey. That is why its importance was not understood correctly and considered as irreligiousness among the population. While religion was not able to interfere with the state's policies, the state, on the other hand, could regulate religious affairs. Therefore, this dilemma and misconduct of secularism have not been accepted by the majority in Turkey. For instance, the prohibition of headscarves for women in governmental buildings, isolation of religious people at that kind of workplaces and pressure towards them caused the development of an anti-secularism view in Turkey after all. For instance, Merve Kavakçı, elected as a deputy in 1999, was fired from the National Assembly and even lost her Turkish citizenship because she wore a headscarf in the parliament (Barras 2014, 123). Several other examples of secularity misapplication exist in the past, but those kinds of wrongdoing gradually disappeared and are about to end entirely. Even, female officers are allowed to work in the Turkish Army with a headscarf as of February 2017.

Reformism means adopting Atatürk's reforms, improving them as well as saving them from any potential risks. This principle consists of two meanings: firstly, removing all obscurantist orders from the past, and setting organizations suitable for the current era. Secondly, it opposes stereotypes and continuously advises new developments. Here, Atatürk supports permanent revolution as a means of modernization (Aldeniz, *s.a*).

Nationalism in itself does not mean chauvinism or fascism for Atatürk. Since he knew that there were a lot of different ethnicities in Turkey and that the country could be provoked by other states at any time, he created his version of nationalism based on the experience of living on the border of Turkey and feeling Turkish. According to him, a nation is a

community that lived together in the past and is decided to live together in future as well, owning the same land, a common language, sharing a culture and emotions. That is why, he always called the population ‘Turkish Nation’ regardless of their ethnicity, and reacted strictly to Kurdish separation movements. Indeed, he chose the sentence “How happy is the one who says I am a Turk” (Gürbüz 2016, 31) during the ceremony of the 10th anniversary of Turkey to reinforce his strategy. Therefore, the research could be interpreted that there is a deep difference between Kemalist and Ottoman views.

Terminally, Statism mainly stands for economy and aims to limit the private sector in the state economy (Aldeniz, *s.a*). This principle could reflect an influence by the Soviet Revolution as it supports interference in the economy by the state. According to Atatürk, Statism is required to strengthen and nationalize the economy in order to create the Turkish modern life. In his Statism principle, private enterprises are not blocked but controlled by the state. Opponent parties criticized this policy very extensively later, and the Turkish public elected opposition parties instead of Atatürk’s one, CHP, due to economic crises and the reality of capitalism. Therefore, Statism principle could be called an unsuccessful thought since the USA and its main economy trend, Capitalism, had a great victory against the socialist policy of the economy in the last century. Thus, we currently witness how some so-called ‘Socialist’ countries such as China or Cuba must comply with opposite policies in order to survive in the new system, especially after USSR’s dissolution.

### **3. EMERGENCE AND REGENERATION OF NEO-OTTOMANISM**

Neo-Ottomanism is a policy claiming that Turkey must regard its older nations and lands, particularly in the Middle East and Balkans because those territories were the last to be lost in the Ottoman Empire time. Moreover, this policy does not refer to nationalism but it concerns Kurds, Arabs, Rums (Greeks of Turkish nationality), Macedonians, Bulgarians and other ethnicities living in the area. Unlike Turkey's official philosophy, neo-Ottomanism does not include ideas such as secularism and pragmatism. It aims to gather all the above-mentioned populations in order to connect them to the Turkish Government, which would indirectly govern them. According to the research, neo-Ottomanism is nowadays popular because Balkan states suffer from financial problems and Middle Eastern nations witness permanent instability due to conflicts, therefore Turkey appears as a savior with its new strategy.

The word neo-Ottomanism was first mentioned by some journalists by the time Turkey sent troops and invaded Cyprus in 1974. However, this term did not impact world politics in those years, on the contrary, heavy sanctions were implemented by the USA since it did not give Turkey the consent to act this way. For this reason, this term was not heard again until 1991, when Turkey started setting an intense diplomacy and opening schools in Turkic states, which were separated from the USSR.

Turgut Özal, who was the eighth president of Turkey, played an active role in the Middle East region from 1989 until his death on April 17, 1993 (Seibert 2012). Indeed, Özal accepted the migration of millions of Kurdish refugees from Iraq to Turkey in 1991 (The UN Refugee Agency Website 2003). Furthermore, he gave a big importance to Middle Asian-Turkic Republics that became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as it was mentioned above. However, he could not complete his political career and suffered a fatal heart attack on April 17, 1993, during his presidency. Although his death was considered

suspicious for several years, his body was exhumed and pathologists confirmed that it was a natural death, and not an assassination (No Initial... 2012).

When it comes to the regeneration of neo-Ottomanism, it could be illustrated with Erdoğan's first critics against Israel, which date back to the summit of World Economic Forum in Davos in 2009. Erdoğan's harsh remarks to the Israeli president Shimon Peres over the Gaza conflict, then leaving the meeting made an overwhelming impression in the world, but particularly in the Turkish and Arab societies. Arab people possessed so much sympathy towards Erdoğan and saw him as potential Caliph in oppressed Islamic countries. Afterwards, relations with Israel damaged gradually, and the ones with Palestine blossomed instead. While implementing these policies, Erdoğan and his bureaucrats emphasized Israel's bloody attacks against Palestinian civilians and the necessity of Islamic Unity against the solid policy of Israel. As a result, the crisis between Turkey and Israel culminated in history with the Gaza flotilla raid of 2010 (Booth 2010).

Not only good relations with Palestine and harsh critics of Israel but also interfering with countries that lived the Arab Springs, led Erdoğan to be slowly called the leader of Muslims in the Middle East. However, these developments played against Iran and Israel. Erdoğan's interviews stressing the importance of secularism and democracy in Egypt after the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak were highly relayed by the media. On the other hand, some looked with suspicion to these words due to Erdoğan's statement in the year of 1993: "You cannot be laic and Muslim at the same time. You either are going to be a Muslim or laic. When they are together [he means secularism and Islam] it is like a negative magnet, they repulse each other. When the situation is this when someone calls himself a Muslim, he cannot possibly say he is also laic. Why? Because Allah who created the Muslims has the absolute command" (Tiberge 2009).

Even though Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seems the main actor of the neo-Ottomanist policy, the backroom boy is Ahmet Davutoğlu; the former Foreign Affairs Minister, and previous Prime Minister of Turkey. Apart from being a successful academician, he is also seen as the main creator of this policy since he suggested to not give up the Ottoman legacy and supported his claim very extensively in his book 'Strategic Depth' (Walker 2001). Moreover, he advised that Turkey must become more imperialist by controlling the Middle East, Caucasus and Balkans, this way turning into an alternative leader in the world. His

mentality and work moved him to Foreign Affairs Ministry first, then to the position of the Prime Minister.

When it comes to the crunch of the neo-Ottomanism that refers to 2011, positive outcomes of the new strategy started showing negative effects with the Syrian Civil War. Details of those negative consequences will be studied in a comprehensive way in the following chapters of the thesis. In addition, the research classifies them with main lines as an introduction such as disagreements with the West and neighbors because of inappropriate conditions, escalation of terrorism due to weak security measures and Gülen's movements, as well as the broken rhythm of economy and democracy. All of these excuses including current problems will be introduced to readers with legitimate reasons and explanations.

Other negative and dangerous developments not only present in Turkey, but worldwide are Islamophobia and ultra-nationalism, with regards to the continuity of the European Union. Escalation of radical right views in Europe and America, which are mostly fed by Euroscepticism in recent months, could trouble many countries in the European Union as well. After the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the EU by referendum on June 23, 2016, some believe it might generate a domino effect and consequently, potential dangerous movements may appear in Europe. That is why this work offers a middle-of-the-road approach for Turkey to stay in a better position in the eye of the world after observing these developments.

Turkish government recalled Atatürk's word "Peace at home, peace in world" in some point with the new Prime Minister, Binali Yıldırım, and therefore, reconciliation and normalization with Israel, Russia took place by government. Besides, the new failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, led to very comprehensive and different consequences for Turkey such as solidarity and purity, which will also be mentioned in their own chapter. However, that positive atmosphere has gone, and tensions with West, particularly with the EU has been taking place nowadays.

Another example of neo-Ottomanism could be clearly expressed with some initiatives of Turkish Government such as organizing 'The Solution Process' (Turkey's 'Solution Process'... 2015) or 'The Democratic Initiative' to solve the Kurdish issue, creating a dialogue with PKK. The attempt was unsuccessful due to the insincerity of PKK that continued ditching in eastern cities to store their weapons and tried to restart the conflict due

to positive effects of the ‘The Democratic Initiative’ (Aytaç 2010) on Kurdish people in the country.

To extend the practices of shifting to the neo-Ottomanist foreign policy, highly interfering with the Israel-Palestine issue and current active moves in world politics after the Arab Spring could be listed as main indications of the new strategy of Turkey. It is required to note that all these movements were restarted by Erdoğan’s premiership after 2007 and have peaked with his presidency by 2014. Apart from his expansionist and active politics in the Middle East, the Turkish Government tries to rebirth the Ottoman Empire’s influence in Balkan states and Eastern Europe as well. For example, Turkey has funded and opened education organizations built mosques, backed the exportation of some television series about the Ottoman Empire to remind that it possessed better welfare and freedom before the First World War than now. Besides, Erdoğan frequently came up with the ‘National Pact’ discourse<sup>2</sup> in his speeches planned by Mustafa Kemal before the Independence War, but it could not be achieved as Turkey did not annex the Balkans and Northern Iraq due to Britain’s diplomacy trump in the Lausanne talks of 1923 (History of the Turkish Republic 1983). Thus, calling Erdoğan and his government ‘Islamist’ instead of ‘Ottomanist’ would not be accurate after these new attempts towards mentioned issues.

Overall, it is surely beyond doubt that shifting the mindset of the state has highly affected the Turkish society and the country since people grew up with the Kemalist ideology through education, media and the state structure. In other words, the country adopted a defensive policy and kept rational and pragmatist relations with other countries, so people did not witness any blast or conflicts in the most known cities of Turkey before. However, this new strategy could be seen as a kind of crucial gambling for Turkey since it could either make the country a new conflicted area or a new super power. By August 24, 2016, Turkey has been fighting against Daesh, PYD-YPG groups in Syria and it has eliminated Daesh from its borders as well as Northern Syria (Shaheen 2016). Besides, nowadays Erdoğan talks about entering into Al Raqqa, which is the so-called capital of Daesh, as the next step after saving Al-Bab city. This intervention is called ‘Operation Euphrates Shield’ (Ibid.) and it affects this thesis to a large extent because its argument is based on current developments in Turkey and the Middle East, which change every single day. For example, Turkey announced that Al-Bab city was cleared from Daesh members by Turkish and Free Syrian Army, so Operation

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<sup>2</sup> Map in Appendix 2

Euphrates Shield is officially over by February 24, 2017. The USA decided to support the PYD regarding Al-Raqqa operation. On the one hand, while Donald Trump's government is attempting to maintain good relations with Turkey by sending several American bureaucrats and communicate in a constructive way, unlike Obama's government, it keeps supporting PYD by sending heavy armored vehicles and weapons on the other hand. Besides, nowadays, Russia and Iran together with Assad's regime, are not satisfied with Turkey's operations in Al-Bab and Al-Raqqa, so tension with those states increased again due to their support to PYD and YPG, which are recognized terrorist groups in Turkey. Indeed, a pan-Kurdish Conference hosting PYD members was even organized in Moscow on February 15, 2017 (Van Wilgenburg 2017). That is why some journalists claimed that Assad's regime and PYD would cooperate. Hence, the research believes that the Syrian issue is still quite unpredictable after witnessing how balances and sides are fragile and easily change.

Finally, the research criticizes the neo-Ottomanist policy in Syria since it is required for Turkey to maintain its future in a peaceful way even after the Syrian Civil War. Also, economic expenses for the Syrian issue, as well as the daily casualties are to be seen as remarkable. Therefore, while the research considers Turkey's operation against Syria to clear its border from Daesh reasonable, it accepts that the rescue of Al-Bab is sufficient, so now Turkey shall not participate in the Al-Raqqa operation in Iraq as there would be many more casualties, expenses and new disagreements with big states unless they agree on terms altogether. Rather than this policy, Turkey could send its businessmen to investigate rescued areas and rebuild destroyed cities to relocate refugees and realize its 'Safe Zone' objective by agreeing with other states, so that most refugees could go back to their countries and sustain their lives in peaceful areas.

## **4. CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY OF TURKEY**

As it has been mentioned up to this stage, the Republic of Turkey has been carrying out realist, imperialist attitudes and has been concerned about its legacy unlike before 2009. Disagreements that started first with Israel, continued and enlarged with Syria, Egypt, Iran, Russia, USA and the EU later. Turkey has started establishing anti-dictatorship policies during the Arab Spring and adopted an identical policy towards the Syrian Civil War. Even though Turkey possessed a very large trade volume with Russia, for example, 38 billion dollars in 2008 (Cetingulec 2016), both countries separated and Turkey chose its classical partner, which is the USA and NATO when it came to the Syrian Civil War in 2011. However, the Syrian issue did not end like other dictatorships in Arab states but instead, it has turned to a very complicated issue due to interventions and appearance of terrorist groups in the country. Nevertheless, it is required to be known that Turkey has entirely lost its confidence towards the USA due to the Syrian conflict and Fethullah Gülen issue. The United States of America firstly appeared as the partner of Turkey in terms of supporting the Free Syrian Army, which is called a moderate opposition group in Syria, however, then it isolated Turkey and began supporting PYD and YPG (US based... 2017), which are recognized as terrorist groups by Turkey, using the excuse that they effectively fight against Daesh. However, weapons given by the USA to Kurdish groups were used to kill Turkish soldiers by the PKK terror organization. That is why Turkey often announces that there is no difference between PKK and PYD-YPG. Besides, Fethullah Gülen, the creator of a clone or parallel state in Turkey, which has been approved by the overwhelming majority of Turkey and whole judiciary, is not being extradited to the USA, so this situation causes a bigger distrust. Furthermore, USA's and the EU's warnings to Turkey regarding human rights, democracy and counter-terrorism disconnected Turkey, and create economic damage. These developments and Turkey's harsh reactions do not only extend ties between Turkey and the West but also push Turkey to cooperate with opponents such as Russia, China and Iran. To give an example, good relations between Russia and Turkey and their ceasefire attempts



regarding the Syrian Civil War in Astana, Kazakhstan together with Iran left the USA and EU out of the issue. Moreover, Turkey's order of defence missile systems from China, Erdoğan's reference to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and SCO's decision in the next meeting in Turkey (Turkey to chair... 2016) are other examples of bad relations between Western states and Turkey. Additionally, economic indicators such as the limitation of arms trade by the USA and some EU states with Turkey, advertising Turkey as an unsafe destination, and credit rating organizations' low vote for Turkey consolidate the reality of negative relations between these powers.

As for relations between Turkey and Eastern states, they are fluctuant but also more stable when compared to the ones with Western states. Actually, very few countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Azerbaijan supported the Turkish Foreign Policy after the aircraft crisis with Russia until May 2016, and that is why Turkey was isolated in this period. Essentially, relations between Russia and Turkey started breaking when Russia and Assad's forces attacked Turkmen in Northern Syria (Çelik 2015). Then, Russia violated the Turkish airspace a couple of times and Turkey decided to shoot the Russian aircraft after many warnings on November 24, 2015. While the trade volume between Russia and Turkey was 30 billion dollars and was supposed to be increased to 100 billion (Cetingulec 2016), this event decreased this trade volume to a large extent. Indeed, Russia suffered from economic sanctions and isolated Turkey on the international arena, also because Turkey experienced tensions with Iran and Syria, which are Russia's stable partners. Moreover, Turkey set a strict policy and barrier against Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's undemocratic regime (Erdogan blasts... 2016). Even the Turkic Republics, as well as Chechnya, sided with Russia after the crisis. Almazbek Atambayev's (President of Kyrgyzstan) interpretation strengthens this argument. He stressed: "Even if it had entered Turkey's airspace, as they claim, for seventeen seconds, the mutual relations, which were built for more than twenty years, should not be hit for those seventeen seconds" (Kyrgyzstan... 2015) and asked Turkey to apologize to Russia. However, Turkey did not apologize for several months, so both countries suffered from sanctions and deterioration of the relations.

Erdoğan and the Turkish Government, however, changed their mind and decided to correct their isolated image. Firstly, Ahmet Davutoğlu the Prime Minister resigned and the new one, Binali Yıldırım (former Minister of Transport and Communication) was indirectly appointed by Erdoğan on May 22, 2016 (Erdogan ally... 2016). He announced that Turkey

would reconcile with all neighboring countries including Israel. Thus, Israel and Turkey solved their problems, which started in 2009, and Turkey apologized to Russia for the warplane incident and approved to pay compensation. Also, unofficial talks regarding Turkey's reconciliation with Egypt and Syria were heard during this period. However, terrorism increased in Turkey and several blasts occurred, including in big cities as a result. The situation was proceeding as if the army would react harshly as it was mentioned in previous chapters of this thesis. While Turkish people were expecting another blast after the one in Nice, France, a much bigger event took place in Turkey that is the Military coup attempt on July 15, 2016. We are going to be introduced to this fact further as well as to the issue of Fethullah Gülen in the next chapter. Therefore, Turkey had to deal with domestic problems and stopped its international affairs for a while. There is no doubt that relations between Western states and Turkey highly decreased and led to a counter effect towards Eastern ones as a result of the purges after the coup attempt. Thus, Erdogan ordered the closure of 1043 private schools, 1229 foundations and associations, 35 medical institutions, 19 unions and 15 universities (Letsch 2016) belonging to Fethullah Gülen, claiming that they are serving for the USA. Also, Vladimir Putin clearly sided with Turkey by some statements regarding Fethullah Gülen's Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) after the coup attempt (Guldogan, Kutlugun 2016).

One and a half months after this tragic event, Turkey decided to enter into Syria due to Daesh's suicide bombers in the South East and called this intervention 'Operation Euphrates Shield' (Shaheen 2016). This operation could be seen as an important message to Western countries, particularly the USA, showing how the Turkish Army is able to carry out foreign operations even if it consists of thousands of FETÖ members. As it is already known, Turkey possesses a comparative advantage of a strong military and a young population, which is illustrated by this operation. Indeed, Turkey has eliminated Daesh members who occupied lands near Turkey and invaded their second biggest city Al-Bab in order to create a security zone for refugees (Ibid.). However, the USA did not comply with this intervention and stopped coalition attacks against Daesh over Al-Raqqah. This situation has caused Daesh's members to get prepared for Turkish attacks within its territory. For this reason, Erdoğan accused the US-led coalition of supporting terrorists in Syria including Daesh. In fact, the USA's unwillingness regarding the Turkish occupation of Al-Bab (Balanche 2017) could be interpreted as a wish that PYD-YPG occupies the city and unites with its Kurdish province in

Northern Syria. That is why, the tension between these two states has both increased due to this situation, and Turkey's cooperation with Russia over Syria. As a response, PKK, which has been allegedly indirectly supported by the USA for several years, set up a suicide bomber blast in İstanbul killing 38 people and injuring 155 others on December 10, 2016 (Damon et al. 2016). Also, Andrei Karlov, the Russian Ambassador in Turkey was assassinated by a Turkish policeman belonging to FETÖ in Ankara (The Assassination... 2016). As we have observed, current wars between states are occurring as proxy wars or take advantage of terrorism. These situations could be seen as reactionary messages from other sides. Essentially, USA's message to the coalition of Turkey, Russia and Iran was very clear, as the ambassador was killed one day before the meeting of these countries regarding the solution process in Syria. According to many political authorities, the United States wants to block their attempts and join in the decision-making process as well since it has noticed that Turkey, Russia and Iran became guarantor states on the Syrian issue. When it comes to fragile relations between Russia and Turkey, both presidents are determined to normalize the relations, accusing FETÖ and other provocations for both the warplane incident and crisis over Syria.

By the beginning of March 2017, Turkey has added a new severe dispute with Europe due to the Turkish Constitutional Referendum on April 16, 2017. Since Germany and the Netherlands cancelled some meetings of Turkish Ministers who wanted to visit the countries and talk in organized meetings to promote the 'yes' vote for Turks in German and Holland cities, Turkey, particularly president Erdoğan harshly criticized Germany and the Netherlands by accusing and referencing it to Nazi implementations. Furthermore, Deniz Baykal, the previous leader of the CHP cancelled his meeting as well even if he was going to ask for a no vote from Turkish people in Germany. Also, Austria blocked the referendum promotional meetings of Turkish bureaucrats in their countries. Therefore, both the Turkish Government and opposition parties did not agree with these blockages in the name of democracy. In fact, the research approaches this development siding with democracy and supports freedom of speech, however, as CHP and other opposition parties warned, Turkey shall also take into account its own freedom of speech inside of the state before criticizing others. Additionally, even if Turkey is right about this issue, it would lose its argument due to harsh accusations such as the 'Nazi' title. Therefore, the Turkish leadership shall take care of its language when it does need to criticize and avoid devastating and aggressive comments.

Briefly, this topic has aimed to illustrate the current Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Leadership's mentality in order to reflect the Turkish sub consciousness and the neo-Ottomanist approach. Troubling effects and risky developments of the Neo-Ottomanist view since 2009 have proved how the country plays a big game to win its legacy, consisting of Northern Syria and Iraq, back. Witnessing the developments in Turkey and in Syria, which change almost every day, required the research to often revise its information and interpretations.

#### **4.1 Parallel State claim and Fethullah Gülen**

First of all, the research would like to emphasize the fact that this chapter has been prepared during ongoing interrogations, trials of coup plotters, as well as leaked letters and videos by FETÖ members. However, since it is a crucial issue that obliged Turkey to send more than 85 files to the American Ministry of Justice for the extradition of Gülen, the research only mentions essential facts. The reason why the research includes this topic is to remark how Gülen's structure was hidden for decades in the Turkish Government, the way the agents of FETÖ acted in some operations as well as the latest military coup attempt, which directly connects and helps the research to support its argument. Indeed, the research severely supports the respect secularity of the country instead of dealing with issues such as headscarves and recommends the implementation of a merit system to work in governmental areas, instead of practicing favoritism, as it was the case for FETÖ. For example, this organization prioritized individuals belonging to religious branches or having political connections, so that they could serve as spies in the government.

The Parallel State Structure (PSS) is a puzzling group created by Fethullah Gülen in the early 1970s. As a matter of fact, he has been developing a tight community of members, depicting himself as a 'messiah' and creating alliances with important associates since 1974 (15 July Coup Attempt... 2016, 4). Since Gülen tried to be active in key events, he extensively encouraged the 1980 military coup. Moreover, he participated in the 'Post-Modern Coup' of February 28, 1997, by backing high-ranking generals who forced the legal government to resign in 1997. Those examples portray how Gülen's opportunism enables the promotion of his sect internationally.

Starting from 1974 until the 1990s, Gülen's main strategy was to enlarge the Parallel State Structure by establishing private educational institutions. Also, as soon as the cold war resolved, he was able to reach Central Asia and especially Turkic Countries, totaling more than 100 countries across the globe. Then, by the 1990s, Gülen represented the 'pro-Western face of progressive Islam' (Ibid.) as opposed to the emerging Islamic radicalism, increasing his popularity even more. Other than that, this special organization employs legal ways to enlarge its network and carry out forbidden operations. For example, members do not need to smuggle arms or commit crimes in order to come to power because civil servants, military agents and police officers supply those in official manners. This method called 'taqiyah' (Ibid.) reflects the infiltration of members pretending to be innocent in official instances.

For many years, the Parallel State Structure represented one 'education movement' arranging social activities and promoting Turkish language and culture in schools, both in Turkey and abroad. After the coup attempt, inspections revealed 'false bottoms' in those institutions that in reality served as meeting places for FETÖ members (Ibid.). As PSS agents worked in governmental fields such as the national intelligence, police, armed forces, judiciary, the central bank, Gülen was able to govern Turkey indirectly.

Several elements preceding the coup attempt are helpful in understanding the timeline of events. Indeed, the detention of seven people including a couple of admirals in Izmir was an alert for his supporters. Also, in the same week of the coup attempt, the Intelligence Service published 600 names of army officers (15 July Coup Attempt... 2016, 16) believed to maintain ties with the Parallel State Structure and therefore expected to be dismissed in August 2016. Therefore, those soldiers decided to operate in a hurry as it was their last possibility. Moreover, Turkey sent 85 packages of documents to the USA requesting Fethullah's extradition (Toosi 2016).

Interviews of army officers captured after July 15 clearly point out to Gülen's involvement and give some insight into the recruitment tactics. For example, Levent Türkkan, a former helper of the staff of Turkish Armed Forces confessed that PSS members raised him in their properties so that he could escape from poverty and also provided him with illegal examinations of Military High Schools in advance (15 July Coup Attempt... 2016, 19). The Parallel State Structure assigns its members to strategic positions in different spheres by providing examination questions, training them to remain hidden while gaining power (acting

secular in the Army or judiciary and sharing conservative democratic views in the government).

Furthermore, Hulusi Akar, the Chief of Staff was obliged to sign the coup declaration in Ankara and was told: “If you want, we can get you in touch with our opinion leader, Fethullah Gülen” (Ibid.). Finally, Adil Öksüz, in other terms Gülen’s right hand orchestrated the coup attempt in the Akıncı Air Base but was liberated by judges belonging to FETÖ on the next day.

Claiming that the CIA supported Gülen’s organization as well as the coup attempt is understandable for the majority but very difficult to prove in practice. Therefore, the research needs to first investigate why Gülen has been living in the United States for over 15 years. One possible reason could be that the USA attempts to control Islam through Fethullah’s speeches. Then, the leader might portray the Islamic version of the ‘Opus Dei’, because he manages a similar organization in several states. Also, it can be noted that both corporations stood behind coup leaders and pro-American governments in different countries. Moreover, the USA realizes the value of religion when influencing the Middle East, therefore hosting Fethullah in Pennsylvania represents an advantage. Finally, the fact that Gülen extradition has not occurred yet highlights the USA’s assistance and its dread of confessions about help from the CIA and other allies.

On August 5, 2016, the newspaper ‘Akşam’ depicted ‘10 CIA Agents in Büyükada, İstanbul’ (Georgy, Ozkan 2016) with their hotel bookings during the attempted coup night. One of the participants and former CIA agent, Henri Barkey told CNN unconvincingly that the meeting was about the Syrian civil war (Safak 2016). Another source described the event in the following statement: ‘Sixteen foreigners entered Büyükada Island just before the coup in a clandestine manner and booked hotel rooms on the island, but they left the island immediately as the coup failed. This covert group was led by Henri Barkey, an expert on Turkey’s affairs and former CIA agent’ (Turkey coup... 2016).

Terminally, it could be interpreted that all these elements proving the CIA’s attitude towards Turkey highlighted its desire to witness a successful coup or a civil war. Yet, both the population and pro-democratic forces in Turkey stood together against the coup and prevented a catastrophe such as a new conflict as it is the case in Syria.

## **4.2 Military coup attempt of 2016 and its impacts on foreign policy**

The coup attempt in Turkey sparked off in the late hours of July 15, 2016, and continued until midday of the next day. Both governmental forces and the population repressed it, and this event does not only represent a milestone in Turkish history but also shook the balance between some countries worldwide. This chapter of the thesis presents the background, chronology and aftermath of the military coup attempt.

This event is the fifth and most threatening occurrence in recent Turkish history. The successful suppression of the coup prevented the country from becoming a new Syria or Egypt. As the research claims that Fethullah Gülen's Organization coordinated operations of the coup attempt, it is useful to review the background of this event. Indeed, prior to 2012, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Fethullah Gülen maintained cordial relations (Akyol 2014). However, the first dispute between the government and the Parallel State Structure happened on February 7, 2012. That day, a prosecutor belonging to FETÖ named Sadrettin Sarıkaya wished to interview the head of the National Intelligence Service (MİT), Hakan Fidan about leaked Oslo talks between the MİT and PKK (Interior... 2015). Sarıkaya's objective was to infiltrate the Intelligence Service for the first time by arresting Erdoğan, who worked as the Prime Minister at that time. However, the plan foiled and the Turkish Government realized what was Gülen's true face. Afterwards, the government created a law by using the majority power of the assembly, stating that any personal belonging to the government cannot be called for interrogation unless the Prime Minister allows it. For this reason, Hakan Fidan did not participate in the invitation from Sarıkaya and the government solved the first crisis this way.

The second conflict is illustrated by the Gezi Park protests of 2013. Retrospectively, officials and the media supporting the government blame FETÖ for this environmental march that turned into violent demonstration across Turkey. Indeed, the neutralization of protesters was surprisingly brutal and therefore caused more revolt. The government believes that FETÖ police officers behaved violently against protesters by using excessive amounts of tear gas and water cannons as well as provoked protesters by burning their tents. Also, the newspaper 'Zaman', which was directly linked to Gülen's organization, surprisingly took a side against the government ever since AKP came to office. Also, organizers of the event demanded the cancellation of the construction of the third airport in Istanbul, the Project Canal Istanbul as well as the third Bosphorus Bridge (Kural 2013). By May 2013, the country was

economically thriving, showing a growth rate of 4.2% (The Turkish Economy 2013, 5), debts were reimbursed to the International Monetary Fund, for example, \$412 million as the last instalment (Harvey, Bilgic 2013) and no stand-by agreements remained. Certainly, the Turkish Lira was a lot more valuable than nowadays. Also, the inauguration of the third Airport in Istanbul next year will highly benefit Turkey as it the city's geopolitical location is significant. To sum up, FETÖ started destabilizing Turkey to prevent it from becoming financially independent in this blossoming period.

The third conflict sprung from the closure of Gülen's teaching institutions, which were generating a significant income, by the government. The fourth crisis involved a corruption investigation scandal taking place in December 2013. Indeed, businessmen supporting the government, minister's sons were arrested and some were imprisoned for several months. Even Erdoğan's son was about to be taken into custody (Letsch 2013).

From this event until the coup attempt, polarization heightened between politicians and the population. The Turkish president got more controlling, kept arresting FETÖ members in all fields but at the same time, relations with the West declined. However, the Parallel State Structure managed to dissimulate its members within the Turkish Army while preparing the Coup Attempt. Some of them even worked as Erdoğan's bodyguards prior to being imprisoned. It is important to remember that on July 15, no pro-coup supporters were found in the streets and opposition parties assisted the government in the parliament which was bombed four times, so solidarity prevailed rather than a civil war threat. A timeline of events is important to clarify developments of the coup attempt (Turkey timeline... 2016).

21:30 (EET) – The junta blocks both bridges over the Bosphorus. Also, tanks and soldiers stop the traffic from Asia to Europe, causing massive congestion (Ibid).

21:50 – Helicopters and fighter jets are seen in the capital and Istanbul. Gunshots are heard in Ankara (Ibid).

22:00 – The Turkish Prime Minister tells on NTV that unauthorized 'military activity' is ongoing and will be neutralized (Ibid).

23:00 – Rebels capture the Chief of Staff of the Turkish Army in Ankara and occupy the governmental TRT channel (Ibid).

23:15 – A news anchor reads at gunpoint the statement denouncing the president, announcing the overthrow of the administration and the declaration of martial law (Ibid).



23:30 – President Erdoğan calls the public to take it to the streets in a video: “We will overcome this; the coup plotters will pay a heavy price” (Ibid).

00:00 – A military helicopter fires over Ankara and tanks are standing in front of the Turkish Parliament, which was bombed while parliamentarians worked inside. The Turkish Justice Minister declares: ‘loyalists of US-based preacher Fethullah Gülen are behind the attempted coup’(Ibid).

01:50 – Explosions occur in Istanbul but according to the Prime Minister, the developments are under control (Ibid).

02:20 – Erdoğan lands in Istanbul and addresses a crowd of supporters who liberated the airport from tanks and soldiers (Ibid).

02:30 – Parliament premises in the capital are bombed once more while soldiers start surrendering in Istanbul. The Turkish Interior Minister informs the media about the neutralization of the coup attempt (Ibid).

04:00 – At least 60 deaths and the arrest of about 130 rebels are recorded (Ibid).

Daybreak – Troops occupying bridges in Istanbul finally capitulate and the government announces the arrest of more than 700 individuals, officially calling the coup attempt a failure (Ibid).

Some important measures were taken by the government after the coup attempt were so strict that thousands of civilians, together with opposition parties, raised their voice. Indeed, since July 15, 70000 people were processed and 32000 of them were arrested. Also, more than 50000 individuals working in the military, police, judiciary and education have been dismissed (32000 people... 2016).

Right after the coup attempt, Turkey took a stand both against the USA and the West and built good contacts with Russia once again. This is due to USA’s unwillingness to extradite Gülen. Also, while Russia criticized the coup attempt from the beginning, Europe and the USA accused the Turkish president of organizing this bloody event and condemned the arrests. This chronology of facts angered Erdoğan to the point that he lashed out at a senior US official in an angry speech:

“It's not up to you to make that decision. Who are you? Know your place! Instead of thanking this nation that quashed the coup in the name of democracy, you are taking sides with the coup plotters. My people know who is behind this scheme. They know who the superior intelligence behind it is, and with these statements you are revealing yourselves, you are

giving yourselves away. The coup plotter is already in your country; you are already feeding him” (Turkish president... 2016). Later, however, leaders from the EU and USA came to Turkey in order to issue supportive statements officially, and avoid breaking ties.

As a summary, the research states that the coup attempt of July 15, 2016, turned a page in the political sphere for Turkey as it led to warmer relations with Eastern countries but deteriorated the bond with Western ones. Also, interrogations and developments concerning FETÖ take place daily in Turkey.

### **4.3 Turkish military intervention in Syria**

The Turkish intervention in Syria, called ‘Operation Euphrates Shield’ is a cross-border operation led by Turkey and the Free Syrian Army in the civil war. The main goal of the operation is neutralizing Daesh, in order to provide safety in Northern Syria by creating a buffer zone of 5000 km<sup>2</sup> and blocking the Kurdish autonomy (PYD) near the border (President Erdogan ... 2016). The main distinction between the Coalition Forces and Turkey is the PYD, YPG issue. While Turkey recognizes them as terrorist groups because they share the same mentality with PKK, which is an internationally recognized terrorist group, Coalition Forces, particularly the USA support these organizations since they fight against Daesh (Turkish FM... 2016). However, Turkey often slams the USA and the EU because of this support and reminds them about the NATO partnership. Also, president Erdoğan claimed that USA’s weapon supply to the YPG has been used by PKK against Turkish soldiers a couple of times. For this reason, the Turkish Minister of Defence warned the USA and Germany regarding the shutting down of the NATO’s aircraft base in Incirlik, Turkey (Batchelor 2016). Besides that, Turkey warned the EU as well regarding the cancellation of the refugee agreement after hearing negative implementations about Turkey.

As for the preparation stage of the operation, it could be said that it began with rising actions of Daesh such as bombing a wedding ceremony in Gaziantep by using a child as a suicide bomber on August 22, 2016 (Visser et al. 2016). Then, Turkey retaliated by bombing Jarabulus and Manbij and officially entered into Syria on August 24, 2016 (Raghavan, Cunningham 2016). Although Turkey has been warned by coalition powers not to attack Kurdish groups and discontinue its operations in more southern territories of Syria, the

Turkish Government has announced that Turkey would carry out necessary operations to eliminate Daesh and prevent a Kurdish corridor next to its border. Of course, such rhetoric is not welcomed by Western states, and terrorism from both Daesh and PKK against civilians rose in Turkey to a large extent. Moreover, while Turkey was trying to capture Al-Bab by fighting against Daesh, US-led coalition paused Mosul's operation (Iraqi ... 2016) and indirectly allowed Daesh militants to help in Al-Bab against Turkey. For this reason, Erdoğan came up with the allegation that the US and the West help Kurdish terrorist groups as well as Daesh. While Turkey was accused of helping it in the past, now the parties and claims have inverted. Even this situation reflects the real face of the Syrian Civil War, which is the most unclear and complicated fact in current issues of international relations.

Indeed, Turkey together with the Free Syrian Army is getting closer to the Russian-Iranian coalition after all developments. However, the Turkish leadership has extensively accused Al-Assad's government from the beginning of the Civil War and therefore is not willing to reconcile with it. In addition, Turkey is not supporting Iran's sectarian approach in the area, so these facts are the hardest issues Turkey must face in order to become a stable actor in peace talks with Iran, Russia and Syria. Yet, they could still deal well with each other regarding most topics and signed a peace agreement about the ongoing Syrian conflict, which emphasizes that Daesh and Al-Nusra Front shall be abolished by all parties first, and then Syrians would solve remaining problems on their own, in the absence of radical terrorist groups. It is important to remind that the Russian ambassador in Turkey was assassinated before the signing of this peace agreement.

Essentially, many authorities and commentators including this work reflect USA's game behind the curtain for all these assassinations. Also, some Turkish journalists close to Erdoğan's government, imply that Britain has the superior mind against the USA to regain its power in the Middle East by disgracing the USA. To contribute to this theory, England's changing approach in a good way towards Turkey and Russia could be counted.

To sum up, Operation Euphrates Shield is one of the determining elements for Turkey to test if the neo-Ottomanist approach is doable or not. If we need to make a decision based on achievements against Daesh, it could bring positive results, but the discussion about the presidential system together with repressive affairs of government, the waning Turkish currency and economy highlight that it is not logical to continue this strategy.

## 5. EU-TURKEY RELATIONS

There is no doubt that current EU-Turkey relations are one of the biggest indicators of the current foreign policy of Turkey, neo-Ottomanism. Therefore, this topic is a link and effects of neo-Ottomanist politics of Turkey before reaching the argument. This chapter is firstly going to summarize historical facts on the relations between the European Union and Turkey, then it will emphasize the current situation by indicating the implemented strategies and their effects on mostly Turkey. While the European Parliament was willingly accepting the accession negotiation on October 3, 2005<sup>3</sup>, it oppositely agreed on stopping the Turkey's accession process due to Turkish purges, and arrests of journalists in 2016. Essentially, the following subject of the thesis is not going to concentrate on the developments between two sides, because it will seek for the main reason and result of the argued ideologies in the work.

Turkey, as it is known, was one of the first states to seek close cooperation with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959, which is illustrated by its application for association. This intimacy resulted in a deal called the Ankara Agreement, signed on September 12, 1963 (Chronology of Turkey-European... *s.a.*). Then, the next milestone occurred when Turkey submitted an application for full membership to the EU on April 14, 1987. After six years of developments, Turkey and the EU signed the Customs Union to escalate the negotiation process. Until 2004, both sides took effective steps to realize their aims regarding the membership process and finally the European Commission decided to open membership talks with Turkey on December 17, 2004 (Ibid.). After this year, Turkey gradually implemented the Copenhagen Criteria to become a full member. Actually, it could be said that Turkey has been a half member of the European Union unless we count the latest negative developments between the two sides.

However, the research considers that the approach both sides implement towards each other is insincere in this toilsome negotiation process. The reason why is that Turkey indeed was more democratic, well developed and more suitable than some other member countries in

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<sup>3</sup> Photo in Appendix 3

the European Union until recent years. For example, while Turkey has been waiting for decades to become a member of the union, Cyprus could easily possess it even if the land does not stand in the European continent and the country's accession to membership might not have been evaluated thoroughly. Therefore, some decisions, particularly regarding the membership, could be considered as unfair, political and biased. If Turkey had become a member state in the beginning of XXI century, it most likely could not hold its current imperialist strategy and both sides would satisfy economic and political conditions. On the contrary, it seems like both the EU and Turkey enjoyed keeping their relations in the middle because this situation has worked for both to their advantage. The EU did not include a Muslim majority state with its high population and economic influence, and Turkey did not select a certain side in the international arena because it needed to improve relations with the Eastern world, particularly with Russia.

When it comes to current relations between the European Union and Turkey, we are certainly unable to draw an accurate picture of them. Indeed, the reason of this reality is connected to the argument of the thesis. Whenever Turkey changed its foreign policy from Kemalism to neo-Ottomanism, all well-structured relations with the EU have gradually gone. Yet, the refugee crisis was thought to change the negative atmosphere at some point around 2015, but it made a counter-effect instead. Since Turkey received around three million refugees from Iraq and Syria and several thousands of them were trying to immigrate to Europe, the EU wanted to sign an agreement with Turkey to prevent a massive flow of refugees into its territory. This agreement aimed to permanently host refugees in Turkey in exchange for financial aid and visa-free travel for Turkish citizens to Europe. However, the agreement was not completely realized by Turkey because of its refusal to change articles concerning the softening of counter-terrorism law in Turkey (Nielsen 2016), both the promised visa-free action and financial aid were not applied. Essentially, Turkey's attitude of not signing the last two articles of the whole package could have been the right choice since counter-terrorism is not connected to the essence of the agreement and Turkey has been suffering from terrorism for decades. Therefore, while Turkey continued hosting refugees by closing its borders to Europe and spent over 25 billion dollars, the EU did not apply either the visa-free travel agreement or financial help to Turkey.

After 2009, which could be counted as the milestone of Turkish Foreign Policy due to the application of neo-Ottomanism, relations between Turkey and Israel damaged to a large

extent, which affected the ones with the West as well due to Israel's influence on the economy. However, a world economic crisis already existed that year, so it did not affect only Turkey. Therefore, the year 2009 could be called a small beginning of the tension between the West and Turkey.

Bigger unfavorable developments began with the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Indeed, before revolts spread in Syria, Turkey held a good position in the Arab Spring and it seemed like the democracy front won against dictators. In these years, Turkey was acting with the West and severely supported democratic regimes in the Middle East. Even president Erdoğan was organizing trips to transformed countries and took a side with democracy in Arab societies. He was welcomed as his speech was very effective against the Israeli Government at the Davos Economic Forum in 2009, so this reputation worked for him during meetings. Most likely, for this reason, Turkey thought that it could hold back the "Caliphate" office after 87 years. Since the Ottoman Empire possessed this privilege by 1517 after winning the Battle of Ridaniya (Battle... s.a) and well governed the whole Islamic world until the XX century, Turkey remembered its legacy to re-govern Middle Eastern countries with its administration. However, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was not an unreasonable leader whose government removed the caliphate office. He understood that it did not bring anything positive anymore, and a great example to illustrate this trend was the label 'Sick Man of Europe' before and during WWI. While the Ottoman Sultan who was also the Caliph called Saudi Arabia to participate in the Jihad against Allies during the war, yet Saudi Arabia stabbed the Ottoman Empire in the back and acted with Allies to receive its independence. This betrayal, as well as ineffective structures of Islamic nations in the Ottoman Empire, revealed the necessity of promoting Nationalism. Therefore, Atatürk focused on the Turkish nation to save it and give independence to Turkish people living in Thrace, Anatolia and Northern Iraq instead of staying with the Imperial state structure. Additionally, in order to prevent discord in the government and improve Turkey to the level of Europe, he abolished the caliphate although he had the possibility to get the leader's title. Yet, he knew that England and other engine powers in Europe would not recognize Turkey in League of Nations, and relations would not be healthy with states, which were leading the world. Hence, he preferred nationalist, democratic, bourgeois, pragmatist and rational approaches for Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s. As a result, Turkey held great relations with not only its neighbors, but the majority of states

did not directly attend WWII and dealt with its own development instead thanks to the Kemalist policy.

To get to relations with the European Union, the Ottomanist willingness of Turkey suddenly decreased in the eye of the West and damaged the relations to a large extent. For instance, when the Syrian Civil War was launched, Turkey completely broke its ties with Assad's Regime quickly and sided against it. Yet, this time Russia was on the opposition's side and Assad's collapse was not easy as for other dictators. The Neo-Ottomanist strategy revealed that it is not suitable for our era and Turkey's excessive interference with the Civil War together with close relations with Russia and China troubled the West. Moreover, in 2011 Erdoğan's party AKP was elected for the third time with 49,83% of votes (Official... 2011), making it stronger, and decisive in politics. Thus, Kemalism was about to be suppressed with implementations of Erdoğan's government as well as Turkey's Judiciary investigations towards Kemalist-Atatürkist army officers via FETÖ linked prosecutors and judges. Then, all these victims were released after FETÖ and Turkey leadership began fighting each other.

Apart from these situations, some Turkish journalists and academicians were also taken into custody, arrested or jailed between 2011 and 2017. This situation especially made the EU more decisive about Turkey's failure of obtaining the membership. Yet, the Turkish Government defended itself every time and harshly criticized the EU for siding against Turkey, and some of its arguments are indeed strong, particularly concerning the freedom of expression of PKK representatives such as legal protests, the possibility to organize meetings, by certain EU countries. Indeed, while PKK members were easily organizing events, lived safely and threatened Turkey from abroad although being officially recognized as a Terrorist Organization by the EU, critics of Turkey's actions by the EU looked unfair after all. Thus, both sides increased their insincere attitude towards each other, obviously reflecting on the current situation.

In addition, Turkey survived a bloody coup attempt on July 15, 2016, but none of the EU leaders visited and took into account the respect for the democracy in the country. On the contrary, EU severely criticized the Turkish Purge, which allowed to dismiss FETÖ linked personals of the state and refused to send back any criminals who escaped to Europe, especially to Greece. These developments increasingly heightened the stress so nowadays, Turkey is calling Germany 'Nazi', and the EU describes Turkey as 'autocracy', cancelling

meetings and fueling diplomatic insincerity. This is the unfortunate due to governors' application of wrong politics between two big powers.

In conclusion, neo-Ottomanism is also not bringing any positive outcomes to relations with the European Union, which is one of the most stable and powerful organization, on the contrary, it worsens the result day by day. Atatürk and his ideology hold a pro-Western mentality even if it also targets the development of a great balance and relations with the East, and provides healthier conditions to both Turkey and Europe. If Turkey applies Atatürk's legacy instead of the XIX century's unsuccessful strategies, it would definitely give a positive outcome when it comes to relations with the EU. Implementation of westernized democracy with a Turkish political culture, economic and technologic developments, peace maintenance outside of the country and the implementation of better relations with the EU would open a great door for Turkey again, just as it was the case in the past. Thereupon, when Turkey asks Europe to cancel the allowance of PKK activities or demands other measures such as the extradition of political criminals, Europe most likely would be more reasonable to avoid losing ties with neo-Kemalist Turkey, possessing at the same time a great democracy and economy, with a powerful state structure.



## **6. COMPARISON BETWEEN IDEOLOGIES**

The research has discussed three policies until now and brought the ideal ideology to light, which is neo-Kemalism. To sum up these three mentioned ideologies, Turkey, called Ottoman Empire at that time, firstly established the Ottomanist policy to save the Empire in the XIX century. Noticing that it was not a good idea due to uncontrollable Nationalism, particularly Slavism in the world, the empire needed to copy the Western States and turned to nationalist alternatives and finally founded the new Republic with a Kemalist ideology as a natural reaction to the world's political conditions. Therefore, Kemalism was practically implemented until Erdoğan's second accession to power around the year 2007. Finally, we have been witnessing that the Turkish Government tried possessing the Ottoman legacy by implementing a realist policy, called neo-Ottomanism by 2007.

As for the ideal policy, neo-Kemalism is the main defined strategy of this work. However, it has not been detailed yet since the argument of the thesis stands in this chapter and the conclusion. The research strongly supports its ideology and recommends to the Turkish leadership to implement it due to the necessity of current conditions. The latter are not providing as much free movement as the last decades. The reason why is the rise of the right wing in both European and American leaderships or main oppositions has made the world more fragile and troubled. Therefore, instead of imperialist approaches, countries that are important actors in conflicted areas must step very carefully not to escalate stress in these territories. That is why Turkey must immediately give up conducting the unsuccessful Ottomanist strategies and possess a more logical position in the eye of the world. For example, while entering Syria (Operation Euphrates Shield) to clear Daesh militants from its border is very appropriate and legitimate, but enlarging operations to southern or eastern areas does not make sense since damaging sensitive relations with the USA, Russia and Iran is much worse than dealing with domestic issues and keeping silent for a while. Moreover, Turkey shall set a diplomatic relation with the Syrian Regime as well if it wants to be successful at the peace talks table regardless of the fact that Assad's Government killed

thousands. A state cannot be well governed by ambition, revenge or any kinds of emotions but only intelligence.

At this point, the research presents neo-Kemalism as an intelligent way to fulfil all necessities in current world's conditions. Indeed, neo-Nationalist politicians in Turkey share more or less the same ideas with this research, especially about the Syrian Civil War. For instance, the Turkish Government should not have broken all relations with Assad's Regime since the beginning of the conflict, and it still shall reconcile with it to solve the problem democratically. Then, Turkey, Russia and Iran must be guarantor countries in Syria so that both Russia and Iran could strengthen Assad if Turkey would make them give up siding with PYD- YPG groups in return. These kinds of diplomatic steps would not only stop costing a lot for Turkey but its prestige would also increase. Therefore, applying the neo-Kemalist view towards the Syrian issue means, not over interfering with such problems, approaching rationally and diplomatically the big powers, agreeing with the Syrian Regime to eliminate PYD-YPG groups, and being a decisive actor instead of a hot-tempered one.

When it comes to general features of neo-Kemalism, the main argument of the thesis, it is essentially the regeneration of Kemalism according to the XXI century's conditions. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of Turkey, was a smart nationalist bourgeois, so most countries still remember him with respect. He was even praised by many leaders of his term even if the era was fully consisting of nationalist egos and war possibilities between the 1920s and 1940s. Furthermore, he was such a smart and reasonable politician that all issues were solved peacefully in his presidency, which lasted for 15 years. Hence, keeping his strategies in the international arena except for simply modifying them to match new conditions would be the best way for Turkey to improve. The essence of Kemalism means believing in sciences, rejecting zealotry and permanent revolution to improve the country. Thus, this improvement shall not include old tactics such as using only military power to solve problems. Technology, economic development, which mostly is based on producing and seeking profits with a bargaining and logical way shall replace the current Turkey's method. Therefore, neo-Kemalism with its Republicanist, pragmatist, populist, secular, and reformist lights promote a better Turkey in its problematic geo-politic location.

Now, the thesis will evaluate neo-Ottomanism further by simply indicating its positive and negative sides, then it will implement the same approach for the Kemalism ideology, and after collecting positive features of both ideologies, it will finally present a middle way

strategy, called ‘Neo (liberal)-Kemalism / Atatürkism’. To compare both strategies, the research is going to use a table so that he clarifies its discourse by marking pluses and minuses. This way will bring us to the conclusion that is the final argument explained in this and next section of the thesis.

Indeed, this part of the thesis could be seen as the major connection to the argument as well as the summary of the whole work. Comparing theories after reviewing all historical explanations and indicating their features with the help of a table is helpful in comprehending the essential message of the work. The research finds a rational way for Turkish Foreign Affairs to decrease the political tension with regional powers, stabilize the country and get a better profit in the economic sense instead of leading an aggressive policy. Before observing the comparison table, it might be good to remember some of Atatürk’s quotations to brighten our future particularly in the Syrian Civil War, in which thousands of innocent people have lost their lives.

“Unless a nation's life faces a peril, the war is a murder.”

“Peace at home, peace in the world.” (Other quotes... *s.a*)

“Religion is an important institution. A nation without religion cannot survive. Yet it is also very important to note that religion is a link between Allah and the individual believer. The brokerage of the pious cannot be permitted. Those who use religion for their own benefit are detestable. We are against such a situation and will not allow it. Those who use religion in such a manner have fooled our people; it is against just such people that we have fought and will continue to fight. Know that whatever conforms to reason, logic, and the advantages and needs of our people conforms equally to Islam. If our religion did not conform to reason and logic, it would not be a perfect religion, the final religion.” (Mustafa... 2009-2013).

## **6.1 Ideological Comparison and Argument**

The Table 1 presents three ideologies which were mentioned in the whole research. In the first column, neo-Ottomanism that is the current policy of Turkey is evaluated by its features. Then, Kemalism which used to be the main policy of Turkey until recent years is

presented in the second column. Finally, the argument of the research is shown as a recommended strategy for the country in the future. Extensive explanations follow the table 1.

Table 1. Comparison between Neo-Ottomanism, Kemalism and Neo-Kemalism

(+: positive feature, -: negative feature)

Neo-Ottomanism	Kemalism	Neo-Kemalism (thesis)
Asking for ‘National Pact’ (-) Constructive steps for the refugee crisis (+) Presidential System (-) Over interfering to external issues (-) Euro-sceptic (-) Realism (-) Overconcerned with ex-Ottoman states (-) Softened secularism (+) Liberal economy (+)	Problem Solver (+) Self-enclosed (-) Parliamentarian system (+) Rational (+) Republicanism (+) Nationalism (+) Populism (+) Strict secularism (-) Reformism (+) Statism (-)	Problem Solver Helping refugees Parliamentarian system Rational approach Republicanism Nationalism Populism Softened Secularism Reformism Liberal economy

Source: Compiled by the author

Starting with negative sides of the Neo-Ottomanist thought, demanding a ‘National Pact’ instead of the official ‘Lausanne Treaty’, seeking for a presidential system, interfering with external issues, possessing an Euro-sceptic approach, applying the realist method in international relations, and being over concerned with the ex-Ottoman states shall be discussed first.

First of all, ‘demanding the National Pact’ re-emerged in president Erdoğan’s speeches during his demonstrations. Initially, Mustafa Kemal and his fellow fighters asked for it before and during the Turkish Independence War. After winning against Greek troops and removing occupant states from Anatolia and İstanbul, Mustafa Kemal sent his best colleague İsmet İnönü (Yetkin 2016) to the Lausanne Peace Talks in order to discuss the borders, remove capitulations, apply the National Pact, solve the issue of Ottoman Empires’ debts, and handle the recognition of new Turkey by leader states. However, parties in Lausanne did not agree on all above-mentioned issues and the conference was delayed. In-between the first and second

talks, Turkey tried to establish itself, prepared a new constitution and abolished the Ottoman Sultanate. However, Mustafa Kemal's opponents in the National Assembly began harshly criticizing him as well as İsmet İnönü because the state was not internationally recognized yet. That is why, Turkey was about to attack the last British troops near İstanbul and Çanakkale, but Lausanne talks were restarted on April 23, 1923, and finally, parties signed the peace agreement on July 24, 1923 (Ibid.). While the most problematic issues such as capitulations, Ottoman debts were solved in favor of Turkey, and the Bosphorus issue was also handled in the same way at the Montreux Convention regarding the Regime of the Straits in 1937. However, the Mosul issue (Sluglett 1976, 116-125), which opposed England and Turkey was delayed. Yet, since Iraq was extremely important for England due to crude oil reserves, it allegedly launched Kurdish-Islamic uprisings called Shaikh Said revolts in the East of Turkey in 1925 (Popular Islam ... *s.a*), and Turkey had to spend time and the majority of its financial resources to suppress these uprisings. Therefore, Turkey was obliged to cancel its land benefit from Northern Iraq and Syria and received a compensation instead. That is why this issue, as well as other lands and Greek islands, could be seen as a concession from the 'National Pact' idea. However, since Turkey saved itself from the Sevres Agreement, won its fight against occupants and established an acknowledged state, these concessions could be disregarded when compared to conditions of the XX century. Otherwise, without concessions, the tension would increase between countries and Turkey might not be recognized by the League of Nations. Erdogan's statements regarding this issue are the following:

"They [opponents of Turkey in the First World War] forced us into signing the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 and was persuaded to sign the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Someone tried to deceive us by presenting the Treaty as a victory. But everything is clear. In Lausanne, we gave the Greek Islands in the Aegean Sea, the cry which is heard on our shores (they are located very close to the Turkish coast). There are our mosque and our Holy places. We are still fighting for the shelf. These problems arose because of those who sat at the table in Lausanne and could not defend our rights". (Erdogan criticized ... 2016).

Moreover, Chrysopoulos reported the Turkish president's following statements on the matter "What would happen if Turkey stays away from Syria and elsewhere? Would there be peace and security in those regions?"

"The rules set by the victorious powers of World War II did not give Turkey the right to survival. With the Treaty of Sevres (1920), Turkey was divided into 7-8 pieces. Turkey did

not accept that dichotomy that formed today's border. The debate on the Treaty of Lausanne begins at this point. Of course, we are content that we benefited from the Treaty of Lausanne. But it is a treaty that can be discussed. Under no circumstances is its sacred text. And of course, we will discuss it." (Chrysopoulos 2016).

According to the research, these explanations by the president are considered quite dangerous and unnecessary. The reason why is that Turkey already possesses several issues both in the domestic and international arena, so these expressions do not only increase the tension but also negatively affect the economy. As the research has emphasized from the beginning, the state shall be rational instead of maintaining an aggressive attitude. Surely, countries hold their own benefits and profits, and Turkey shall definitely have a right of speech in the Syrian issue since it is a neighboring country and they share a 911 kilometers' border, but comments shall not be exaggerated. Furthermore, current terrorist acts affect Turkey the most, and the state shall have a right to act on this issue. However, critics regarding the official treaty signed between sovereign states do not make any sense for neither the country nor the society, so essentially Turkey shall avoid expressing these kinds of speeches and focus on improving its economy and peace first. If Turkey would hold a bigger economy and double its revenue, make its country more democratic and safer, then for instance, most likely the USA would extradite Fethullah Gülen, Israel would respect Turkey's affairs, the European Union would improve relations with Turkey, so the country would receive more benefits, without over participating in Syrian and Iraqi wars. That is why the rational approach to improving the economy is much better than implementing a strict Realism and include aggression in the agenda.

Secondly, Turkey has considered the introduction of a presidential system, which was unofficially confirmed with 51.42% of 'yes' votes at the time of writing this thesis. Even though Erdoğan's party could not reach a sufficient vote in the parliament to change the constitution, the leadership of the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), which possesses the least parliamentarian in the assembly, changed its mind and decided to support the presidential system after the coup attempt on July 15, 2016. However, the presidential system would affect Turkey in a negative manner since it gives the president special rights particularly in terms of his competence on the justice. Furthermore, as it is known, the presidential system is more suitable for federal states with bicameral legislatures. Since Turkey is a Unitarian state even if it hosts many ethnicities, Turkey should have avoided

shifting to this system, reinforce and change some rules in the parliament instead. For example, the threshold of 10%, which is the highest in the world shall be decreased, the possibility of forming coalitions shall be removed due to the experience of witnessing weak governments, and parliament members must be independent of their leadership of parties so that the system could work in a healthy way. Although the constitutional offer consisted of 18 articles regarding the presidential system, the thesis will argue with the contested ones to claim that it is not suitable for a democratic Turkey at all. The Constitutional Court, which is the highest body of the Turkish judiciary, consists of 17 persons and the president appoints 14 of them according to referendum result of 2010. By this referendum, the number of members chosen by the president will be 15 and 12. Apart from this, with the new constitutional amendment, the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors members' number will be reduced to 13 from 22, four of them will be appointed by the president, two of them will be chosen by the Minister of Justice and his undersecretary holding a permanent membership and the rest will be selected in the assembly. Apparently, six members, if the permanent members are counted among the 13, will be appointed by the president. Moreover, concerning the current structure of the Constitutional Court, the judiciary will be highly connected to The Presidency and will less likely be fair when it comes to presidential issues.

Another controversial topic among the articles is the hard conditions for supervising the government. In other words, when a president will be elected by 50,01% people, (s)he and his/her government will barely be investigated by the National Assembly even if it reflects nearly the totality of individuals. Parliamentary investigations of any possible blame perpetrated by the president could be launched in the parliament with three-fifths of favorable votes. Following the completion of those investigations, the assembly could vote to open a case the president with a two-thirds favorable vote. Indeed, the counted 'yes' vote which is around 51% would not represent the qualified majority of Turkish people. Therefore, we could suppose that the newly confirmed referendum would not last for decades since it has been approved with only 1.2 million difference in votes.

The last but not least point in the discussion is that the president could keep his membership in his party and the Prime Ministry office would be closed. According to the current constitution, the president must resign from his party, and stay impartial. However, it did not work well with Erdoğan, who declared that indeed, 'human nature could not stay impartial'.

Overall, in terms of the check and balance system, this offer could be commented as unsuitable for the country and would not provide much democracy in the state. That is why, welfare, politics and economy would be negatively affected. Even though MHP and AKP authorities together with president Erdoğan insistently announce that there will be quick decision-making, a strong government, one captain of the ship and no wasting time for coalition talks, which are their strong points to influence voters towards ‘yes’, other articles in the package could be quite dangerous for a democratic Turkey as they might allow a authoritarian leader who holds all powers in his hands.

The third important issue to be discussed in the conclusion is the Euro-sceptic attitude of Turkey. As it was constantly mentioned in the work, Turkey must be concerned about its economy, so it must maintain and develop its relations with the European Union. Even though the European Union made some faults, it shall not be forgotten that Europe is the safest and most stable continent in the world. What this thesis mainly portrays about the membership of the European Union is that Turkey must continue its talks, but mostly focus on its economic profits instead of strictly trying to become a member. In other words, Turkey shall create good relations with both Western and Eastern sides since it is situated in the middle of the world, and its geopolitical location is crucial. Therefore, applying a rational policy towards both parties would enable Turkey to achieve its financial growth plan. For instance, Germany has the biggest trade with Turkey, and the European Union consists of 28 countries, so why shall Turkey risk breaking ties with all of them and damaging its economy? Also, if it claims that some EU countries shelter PKK members, establishing a strong economy and waiting for their deportations instead of arguing would be much better. That is why, Turkey must focus on producing, exporting and enlarging its power so that its political wishes would be heard.

As for the fourth negative fact of neo-Ottomanism, which is conducting the Realist approach in the international system, Realism does not allow any cooperation between countries as it claims that states must pursue their own economic and military opportunities in the international system. However, as we have seen it earlier, this policy only brought negative results. Therefore, it is not suitable as a long-term policy for any country. However, neo-Realism, which rather uses scientific methods in international relations gives importance to the balance between states, as well as to the creators of this balance, which are International Organizations. Additionally, neo-Realism is entirely system-centered and more objective than



Realism. That is why, neo-Kemalism, a part of neo-Realism shall be replaced with the current Realist-Neo-Ottomanist approach.

Lastly, in recent years, Turkey is concerned with ex-Ottoman states and their societies to a large extent. Interfering with their domestic affairs, donating millions of dollars to countries such as Kyrgyzstan, and other influencing actions such as representing a strict side of the Syrian war are not logical ways to achieve important aims because neither Syrian, Iraqi nor Turkic people in the Middle East care about the Ottoman Empire nowadays. Therefore, these actions could be replaced by local investments or other developmental targets on those territories.

When it comes to negative sides of Kemalism, less unfavorable elements exist than for the disputed neo-Ottomanism such as being self-enclosed and implementing Statism. Also, the Kemalist level of secularism could be decreased due to the percentage of Muslims in Turkey. Essentially, it could be said that Secularism and Statism are about to die in Turkey, but since Statism is one of the main theories of Atatürk's principles together with Secularism, which cannot officially be amended in the Turkish constitution, and is not practically implemented, the research still disputes them as if they are part of the theory.

According to Kemalism, Turkey shall only be concerned with its own benefits, not interfere with any other state, and get along with neighboring countries, indeed giving an air of pragmatism. However, that perception was shaped according to the conditions of the 1930s, so it might change now due to the multipolar structure as well as neo-Liberal economics. Therefore, Turkey should be interactive to earn positive results.

Regarding the Statism principle, it can be interpreted that it is not suitable for Turkey. It is indeed a very appropriate welfare system, provides Social Democracy for Nordic or Scandinavian states, but Turkey cannot apply it due to its geopolitical location, which obliges the country to generate more income from taxes in order to strengthen its army as well as its defence system. The latter certainly represents a negative side of being neighbors with countries in conflict even if it is located within a good climatic area. If Turkey would decide to become entirely Social Democrat and survive only for its citizens, it would surely struggle against terrorist groups in the East due to the lack of weapons. Therefore, the liberal economic system is more convenient for Turkey than applying Atatürk's Statism policy.

Lastly, Atatürk's Secularism principle was strictly carried out in Turkey until Erdoğan's second accession to power. Indeed, Turkish people's mentality is already sort of

secular when compared to Saudi Arabia or Iran, as the Ottoman Empire applied the real spirit of Islam for centuries, however, the last term of the Empire was not good due to a religious misconduct, affecting the state as well. Therefore, Atatürk brought a certain degree of secularism to the country in which women could not even wear their headscarves in governmental areas until 2007. Moreover, some other radical rules existed such as the obligation to wear hats for Turkish men and the prohibition to have a beard during shifts at work. These regulations were not welcomed by the society as 98% of the population is Muslim. Thus, president Erdoğan softened or cancelled these customs and increased his popularity by redefining secularism. According to him, the “State should have equal distance from all religious faiths” (Erdogan says... 2016). This is actually correct but does not exactly conform to Atatürk’s idea. However, Turkey appreciated the softening of secularism and confidence in Erdoğan increased in practice. Therefore, the research claims that Atatürk’s secularity shall be transformed and softened in neo-Kemalism.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of the thesis, it is necessary to reach a comprehensive outcome by discussing all features of ideologies mentioned above and summaries the essence of neo-Kemalism, which has been selected as the most appropriate way for Turkish Leadership in current times.

Therefore, the concluding part of this work will study in depth the mentality of the whole research, and clarify each of the research questions to illustrate the main discourse. In other words, the research would like to answer the research questions, which were listed in the introduction.

What could be the plan for neo-Ottomanism to exist in a stable way?

Globalization and a multipolar world system are the essential reasons for the existence of neo-Ottomanism because they allow such steps outside of the country. Additionally, neo-liberal conditions, which lead to an economic interdependence of countries decrease war possibilities between states, so probably the Turkish leadership does not see it as a dangerous strategy for its own future.

What would be the most probable result of the neo-Ottomanism policy in current circumstances?

The most probable result would be a bad reputation for the country. Indeed, economic and political disagreements would remarkably damage the government's targets. That is why, the research highly recommends Turkey to possess good relations with all actors and try to boom its economy by producing, exporting and making investments instead. Therefore, the best policy to apply in this case is neo-Kemalism, which is seen as a rational, logical and necessary strategy. The framework for neo-Ottomanism could be listed as a rising globalization, multipolar world structure and the dissatisfaction of Turkish leadership. At the point when the USA backed Turkey during the Arab Spring, authorities most likely supposed that Turkey was going to be successful in the Middle East by applying an imperialist approach. However, then the USA isolated Turkey, particularly in the Syrian issue by

cancelling the support of the Free Syrian Army and turning to PYD-YGP 52 instead. Therefore, the most probable result of this policy would be unsuccessful if the Turkish leadership continues to conduct it, and the reasons why this new strategy is bringing positive outcomes neither in international relations nor in domestic affairs have already been studied.

Why is this policy shown as invalid in the thesis and what are applicable reasons?

Current developments already answer the research's questions. Devaluation of the Turkish currency due to shortcoming relations with engine powers of continents together with aggression towards them causes economic problems and unrest in the country. While the unemployment rate is 12,1% and the society is not satisfied with prices, there is no need for an imperialist approach and downgraded relations with other countries. Not only economic reasons are applicable, but also a possible cold war together with an ongoing proxy one would never improve the situation in the country. Therefore, all bureaucrats, diplomats and technocrats are required to provide a peaceful future for the people instead of sticking to realist methods, which were used and brought the world to a disaster in the 1940s.

What would happen if Turkey applies neo-Kemalism in its foreign policy instead of neo-Ottomanism?

Turkey would possess much better relations with other determinant actors, present itself as a peacekeeper and problem solver country, deal with its own necessities and improve itself in other fields just as it did in the past, particularly between 1923 and 1950. Turkey would become more concerned about enhancing the level of its standards such as producing technology and reaching the level of contemporary civilization, which was aimed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

As a result of the extensive research, the research strongly recommends to Turkey, which is one of the most important actors in its region, to implement a more convenient political approach and generate a policy called neo-Kemalism accordingly. Surely, Turkey wants to protect its historical legacy, but it must realize that in the XXI century, even the biggest powers cannot easily step into or invade territories due to the power of the media and reactions of the society. Therefore, instead of conducting its current imperialist policy, Turkey must keep a good reputation, focus on becoming powerful, democratic and financially independent. This way, all its political requests would not only be realized, but its importance in the international system would increase so that Turkey would be able to indirectly apply imperialist policies such as organizing investigations in related areas.

To put it in a nutshell, the thesis has claimed that Turkey must give up its current realist policy in Foreign Affairs to become stronger and more prestigious, both politically and economically. By this way, Turkey could achieve its 2023 and 2071 visions and occupy a good position in the multipolar world structure.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Map of Turkey according to the Treaty of Sèvres (1920)



Source: (The Greatest... 2012)

## Appendix 2. Map of Turkey according to the National Pact (1920)



Source: (Akyol 2013)



**Appendix 3. Picture of EU parliamentarians voting “Yes” for Turkey regarding the EU membership process in 2005**



Source: (EU Parliament... 2005)