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## MEASURING FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVISM THROUGH INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS: REGIONAL ORIENTATION AND POLICY ANALYSIS



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### Abstract

Existing explanations about foreign policy activism in Turkey have revealed two significant findings. Accordingly, the foreign policy activism of Turkey has enormously increased in two decades, and the regional orientation has firmly switched from Westernization to Easternization. To test these arguments, this study aims to answer two important research questions: (1) To what extent the foreign policy activism of the government has changed in two decades? (2) Which policy domains have been prioritized by the government in international affairs between October 2002 and January 2022? For this investigation, a novel data set is constituted and then coded by the content-coding technique through Python. Employing the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) common coding scheme, the 1270 international agreements are assigned to 21 major policy domains. Research results confirm that the regional orientation of government in foreign policy activism has firmly changed after second legislative tenure. Results also surprisingly posit significant shifts across policy domains between these years.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, International Agreements, Comparative Agendas Project, Turkey, Justice and Development Party

### Dış Politika Aktivizmini Uluslararası Anlaşmalar Aracılığıyla Ölçmek: Bölgesel Yönelim ve Politika Analizi

#### Öz

Türkiye'deki dış politika aktivizmiyle ilgili mevcut açıklamalar iki önemli bulgu ortaya çıkardı. Buna göre, Türkiye'nin dış politika aktivizmi yirmi yılda önemli bir ölçüde arttı ve bölgesel yönelim ciddi bir ölçüde Batılılaşmadan Doğululaşmaya geçti. Bu argümanları test etmek için bu çalışma iki önemli araştırma sorusunu yanıtlamayı amaçlamaktadır: (1) Hükümetin dış politika aktivizmi yirmi yılda ne ölçüde değişti? (2) Hükümet, Ekim 2002 ile Ocak 2022 arasında uluslararası ilişkilerde hangi politika alanlarına öncelik verdi? Bu araştırma için özgün bir veri seti oluşturulmuş ve daha sonra Python aracılığıyla içerik kodlama tekniği ile kodlanmıştır. Karşılaştırmalı Gündemler Projesi (CAP) ortak kodlama şeması kullanılarak, 1270 uluslararası anlaşma, 21 ana politika alanına atanmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, hükümetin dış politika aktivizmindeki bölgesel yöneliminin ikinci yasama döneminden sonra önemli bir ölçüde değiştiğini doğrulamaktadır. Sonuçlar ayrıca şaşırtıcı bir şekilde bu yıllar arasında politika alanları arasında önemli kaymalar olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dış Politika, Uluslararası Anlaşmalar, Karşılaştırmalı Gündemler Projesi, Türkiye, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi

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## INTRODUCTION

After the 1990s, a broad size of literature considering Turkey's foreign policy vision has argued that a passive and uni-dimensional standpoint has been replaced by an assertive and multi-dimensional foreign policy activism in Turkey. Expanding close ties with the Middle East and North Africa (hereafter, MENA) in two or more decades required a paradigm shift for the traditional foreign policy orientation in the country. In addition to the European-based assertiveness after Helsinki Summit, an uncertain path for the democratization process envisioning Arab upheavals has pushed decision-makers of foreign policy agenda to be aligned with the re-defined axes in the region. This switch, on the other hand, not only led to paradigmatic shifts across regional destinations but also created multi-dimensional foreign policy activism in Turkey. This study, in a basic sense, focuses on these theoretical and practical ruptures through international agreements signed and then ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (hereafter, TBMM) in two decades.

Literature on foreign policy activism in Turkey has posited several arguments to address recent shifts in regional foci and government agenda-setting. While a couple of scholars improved economy-based accounts to explain further integration with the outside by gathering substantial evidence from small and medium-size entrepreneurs' activities abroad (Gumuscu & Sert, 2009; Kirişci, 2011; Tur, 2011), the remaining others examined changing axis from neo-classic passiveness to the neo-Ottomanist assertiveness in the Middle East by employing Ahmet Davutoğlu's '*Strategic Depth*' doctrine (Kara & Sözen, 2016; Sayari, 2000; Sözen, 2010). Zero problems with neighbors as a principal standpoint of the foreign policy vision concluded from doctrine has been argued that increased Turkey's presence in both Middle East, Northern Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa with Anatolian Bourgeoisie's economic and trade networks in these regions since 2002. Similar to this line, educational and cultural networks across these regions enabled the Turkish government to develop cultural and economic affiliations through soft power instruments.

According to the general argument of the literature, the efforts of Turkish governments to be involved in bilateral and multi-layer international collaborations have gained significant momentum after abolishing the two-pillar world order due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Relative progress in foreign policy activism has transformed since the 1990s in this way. Earlier efforts to establish close connections with the neighbors were mainly carried out through proactive and more integrated policy instruments. Following Turkey's decision to participate in the Gulf War, initial periods led to the use of more active foreign policy apparatuses with the Central Asian and MENA countries with whose cultural and political ties are traced back to the Ottoman Period. This accelerating vision reached its zenith when governing Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, hereafter AKP) came to power in 2002. Candidatship negotiations for the EU integration process between Turkey and Europe were the primary principle that dominated agenda-setting of foreign policy activism under the rule of the party in its first term. However, whether the same line has been pursued throughout the party's tenures as a mostly debated topic in literature is sought to be addressed in this paper through empirical evidence.

Paying more attention to the abovementioned insights, this paper proceeds as follows. In the first part, existing explanations about the foreign policy activism of Turkey with its close and distant neighbors are introduced by employing a general overview of the literature. Following this, under the heading of data and method, the data building and analyzing process with the preferred method is given. In the results, findings for foreign policy activism for each legislative tenure are illustrated with frequency distributions of region-specific and policy-specific fluxes by assigning each international agreement ratified by the TBMM to the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) common coding scheme. Thanks to this method, discussed questions above are addressed by looking at the first shift of the axis in regional orientations and changing the prioritized level of policy domains within a particular country.

## **1. CURRENT APPROACHES**

As a central component of this paper, activism in foreign policy is explained as intensification in the number of bilateral and multilateral collaborations envisioning vital policy domains with the different countries (Aydın Çakır & Arıkan Akdağ, 2017: 335). While bilateral cooperation is occurred in establishing a connection between two countries, multilateral cooperation requires more poles for political compromises among nations (Tür, 2011). Although the global world has been providing relative opportunities to set a government's own agenda without needing additional assistance from another country, togetherness for future economic and political successes has necessitated more integration with the outside. Ranging from economy, culture, transportation, and law to health, labor, security and civil rights, governments worldwide intend to find appropriate partners to make bilateral and multilateral alliances upon these vital policy domains.

Established connections between countries, however, have never been fixed regulations. Changing demands in the global conjuncture, re-aligned power balances, and coming new agenda setters to the power in the countries might lead to various ruptures in the foreign policy agendas of the government by turning existing collaborations on their head. Hermann (2009), for these ruptures, developed a theoretical frame defined as the level of change in which four micro and macro stages in changing foreign policy activism are accounted for. (1) Adjustment changes which refer to changes in the level of effort, (2) program changes which postulate the qualitative changes in the programs and goals such as transforming foreign policy apparatuses from the use of military force to the soft power, (3) problem/goal changes which mean initial purposes are changed and (4) international orientation changes which most extreme change in the foreign policy orientation of the government (Hermann, 2009: 5). Covering three decades in the foreign policy agenda-setting of Turkey, Altunışık and Martin (2011), for instance, posited that Turkey's policy towards the Middle East has been adjusting change since the 1990s without fundamentally changing axis, goals, and programs only allowing a limited kind of change from economy-based collaborations to the security-driven issues through soft power instruments (Altunışık & Martin, 2011: 571). The same theoretical account was also considered by

Haugom (2016) by scrutinizing changing internal dynamics that shaped the foreign policy route of the government (Haugom, 2019).

The theory of change in foreign policy orientation has extensively been studied in Turkey. Mapping more macro scales such as Kemalism, Neo-Ottomanism, and Turkish Gaullism, Taşpınar (2011) captured the multifaceted nature of Turkish foreign policy visions since the Second World War (Taşpınar, 2011). Pursuing these shifts, Yavuz (2016), by partly emphasizing the territorial ties inherited from the Ottoman legacy, points out the Ottomanist vision in the agenda-setting of foreign policy (Yavuz, 2016). Similar paradigm shifts were also pronounced in some studies by stressing religion-based ruptures (Kara & Sözen, 2016; Sözen, 2010), Caucasian re-orientation (İşeri & Dilek, 2011), changing signatory countries of the international agreements (Aydın Çakır & Arıkan Akdağ, 2017) and continuities in change while transitioning from Europeanization to the Euro-Asianism (Öniş, 1999; Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009).

Recent trajectories experienced across the Middle East have changed traditional accounts to explain the power balances between actors (Sayari, 2000). Accelerating democracy demands with the rising number of upheavals among the Middle Eastern countries, for instance, forced to change existing explanations about the Turkish foreign policy vision in the region (Özpek & Demirağ, 2014). This process, in essence, has transformed the position of Turkey towards the Middle East from unilateral passiveness to the multilateral assertiveness utilizing soft power instruments through cultural and economic collaborations with the countries (Aydın Çakır & Arıkan Akdağ, 2017; Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009). Several important events, including the US invasion of Iraq, the 9/11 attacks, the Syrian civil war, and informal solidarity between regional sects, have also contributed to the shift of the axis in the traditional foreign policy activism of Turkey in recent decades (Haugom, 2019; Yorulmazlar & Turhan, 2015). In such cases, many traditional IR theories such as constructivism, structural realism, and critical realism were accounted to scrutinize the reasons that lagged behind this paradigmatic shift.

While explaining the shift of axis in the foreign policy agenda toward the Middle-East, the beginning date was started with the Turkish government's participation in the Gulf War in the 1990s (Bilgin & Bilgiç, 2011; Özpek & Demirağ, 2014; Sayari, 2000). From this date onwards, different phases were counted to analyze the changing axis in the agenda-setting. Accordingly, the Turkish governments' foreign policies toward the Middle-East have transformed from the caution and passiveness to the multifaceted assertiveness since the Turgut Ozal's period till the AKP incumbency (Taş, 2020; Yavuz, 2016). Expanding close ties with Iraq, Iran, and Syria have positioned Turkey as a bridge between the West and East in this period. Although activism mainly occurred with soft power instruments until the 2000s, the newly emerged power vacuum and escalating conflict between different terrorist organizations forced the government to realign its position through military involvement (Özpek & Demirağ, 2014; Sayari, 2000). For Keyman (2009), getting more involvement in the Middle East in three decades has not only been through the use of hard power but also the use of soft power instruments employing economic, cultural, and political ties, resulted Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision based on

the *Strategic Depth* (Keyman, 2009). This presence, however, is explained through the traditional IR theories. For this account, Altunışık and Martin (2011) emphasized the importance of structural realism, which posits that structural changes in the Middle East aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq enabled the AKP to play an active role in the region (Altunışık & Martin, 2011). Özpek and Demirağ (2014) also highlight the identical dimensions of Turkey's presence in the Middle East by illustrating the political-Islamist identity of the governing AKP with particular reference to the constructivism (Özpek & Demirağ, 2014: 331).

Rising foreign activism in the Middle East was also strengthened with the economic networks improved by the Turkish entrepreneurs' investments in the region. Given more integration aftermath of the Gulf War and the ascendance of AKP to the power in the 2000s encouraged the devout bourgeoisie called '*Anatolian Tigers*' to go and invest abroad. Tür (2011), partly emphasizing the trade and economic networks of the small business circles of the devout bourgeoisie in the Middle East, argues that rising collaborations with the countries in the region have mostly been provided by the economic policy based on free-market principles of the governing AKP since 2001 (Tur, 2011: 593). Kirişci (2011), pursuing the same economy-politic account, analyzed the demonstrative effect of Turkey in the region with the label of '*trading state*' (Kirişci, 2011; Kirisci & Kaptanoğlu, 2011).

However, the tendency to strengthen multi-layer collaborations with the Middle East should not be seen as an immediate response springing out in the escalating conflict between Western and Eastern countries. Instead of this, Middle-Easternization should be considered the articulated regional tendency to the government's foreign policy agenda, after the obscureness of the negotiation talks in the Europeanization process. This valuable indicator has already been confirmed by the mainstream literature by describing the shift of the axis from Europeanization to the Middle-Easternization (Oğuzlu, 2008; Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009; Özpek & Demirağ, 2014; Taş, 2020). Despite accession to the European Integration process has gained significant momentum since the first candidateship was announced at Helsinki Summit (1999), after the party's second tenure (2007-2011), negotiations have entered into depth deadlock between Turkey and Europe. Explaining this paradigmatic shift, some argued that domestic matters holding the government agenda triggered changing of foreign policy orientation. Oğuzlu (2008), for instance, stressed the Kurdish question abroad with the increasing representatives of the ethnic minorities in the real politic (Oğuzlu, 2008: 5). Accordingly, rising demands for the pluralized politics in the country forced the elected government to be more involving in the Northern part of Iraq. This, in turn, led to a practical rupture in the foreign policy agenda-setting of the government.

Notwithstanding the internal and external factors that have played a major role in rupturing foreign policy orientation, the first term under the rule of the party, has shown remarkable leaps in many domains ranging from economy and culture to democracy and social mobility. Literature, in this respect, almost confirmed this assertive behavior in Europe either by observing leadership-based discourse analysis (Bilgin & Bilgiç, 2011; Öniş, 1999; Özpek & Tanriverdi Yaşar, 2018) or institutional arrangements made to repair domestic law following candidateship expectations (Hale & Ozbudun,

2009; Heper, 2003; Özbudun, 2007). Unyielding commitment to democracy, recoveries in many democratic values, and re-opening of the public space to the excluded groups have been considered as a result of the assertive policy vision of the government towards Europe in the first term.

However, whether proposed estimations and given explanations about the shift of axis from Europeanization to the Middle Easternization corresponded with the systematic analysis of foreign policy activism of government requires a data-driven perspective. In the next part, by filling this gap, the foreign policy activism of the government is measured through the international agreements, which are considered as good indicators to determine the foreign policy route of the governments (Aydın Çakır & Arıkan Akdağ, 2017). In this way, the switches between regional orientations and policy domains can be grasped through a systematic data-driven perspective.

## 2. DATA AND METHOD

Addressing the abovementioned research questions, an original data set including bilateral and multilateral international agreements was constituted by using the web scrapping method through the Python Programming Language. As a policy channel, international agreements were argued that good indicators to measure the foreign policy agenda-setting of the government (Aydın Çakır & Arıkan Akdağ, 2017: 340). In the Turkish legislative order, bilateral and multilateral international agreements are signed by the governments and only put into force with the ratification of the TBMM. For this reason, arrangements those only ratified by the TBMM are taken into considered mostly because an agreement might be signed during a different legislative term and ratified during another term (Aydın Çakır & Arıkan Akdağ, 2017). To prevent statistical miscalculations and provide more reliable results, agreements that were only ratified by the TBMM were retrieved from the TBMM website. As a result, 1270 bilateral and multilateral international agreements ratified by the TBMM between October 2002 and January 2022 are analyzed. Table 1 descriptively introduces these details.

**Table 1. Number of International Agreements Ratified by the TBMM in Two Decades**

Legislative Tenures	N
2002-2007	255
2007-2011	310
2011-2015	266
2015-2018	337
2018-2022	102

Source: TBMM

According to table 1, the period with the highest foreign policy activism was between 2015-2018 with 337 bilateral and multilateral agreements. It should be noted here that the reason lagged behind this highest activism is the highest frequency of international agreements which regulate defense issue between Turkey and other countries. In this term, government signed many bilateral and multilateral agreements to make collaborations on national and international defense to curb any internal and external terrorist attacks either triggered by the putschists following 15 July coup attempt or other organizations. It also noteworthy to suggest that, the low frequency of activism in the last term (2018-

2022) relates to the fact that this term has not been completed yet and the data set covers the only period between July 2018 and January 2022. This, in turn, is one of the research limitations of this study.

To find the aggravated level of regional orientation of the international agreements ratified in each legislative period, the country categorization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (hereafter MFA) is used. Accordingly, ten regions (Europe, Balkans, MENA, South Caucasus, South Asia, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, North America, Latin America and Caribbean and Asia-Pacific) admitted by the MFA are randomly enumerated. In this way, the signatory sides can easily be coded to find regional orientation of an international agreement.

For detecting policy domain focused in an international agreement, the common coding scheme of the CAP is used. Consisting of 21 major and more than 200 minor policy domains, as a more extended version of the Policy Agendas Project (PAP), CAP has been preferring a standardized codebook in exploring the agenda-setting of the governments for a long time (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Bevan, 2014; Jones & Baumgartner, 2004). Although CAP coding scheme generally is used for making comparative analysis between country's domestic policy agenda (Bulut, 2017; Bulut & Yildirim, 2020; Yildirim et al., 2020), the international affairs category (code 19) may enable us to conduct comparative researches upon foreign policy agendas of the governments across the world.

To code regional orientation and policy foci of an international agreement, title and short summary is preferred. Contrary to more complicated laws and bills, title and summary of the international agreements are quite clear. In general, title of the agreement contains the signatory sides and the short summary presents the content and purpose of the agreement in brief. Below Table 2 illustrates the coding logic of the international agreements ratified by the TBMM which randomly selected from different legislative tenures.

**Table 2. Sample Coding Scheme of International Agreements**

Law Number	Year	Title of Agreement	CAP Policy Code	Country Code
4932	2003	Draft Law Approval of the Agreement to Avoid Double Taxation Taken on Income Between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Sudan	1 (Macroeconomic)	7(Sub-Saharan Africa)
5788	2007	Draft Law Approval of the Framework Agreement on Military Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain	16 (Defense)	3(MENA)
6603	2013	Draft Law Approval of the Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the Republic of Chile	18 (Foreign Trade)	9(Latin America and Caribbean)
6829	2015	Draft Law Concerning Approval of Maritime Transport Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the Republic of Poland	10 (Transportation)	1(Europe)

As seems in table 2, the title of the bill gives quite clear details about the regional orientation and policy content of the international agreement. Because it regulates the rules and procedures for preventing double-taxation in both Turkey and Sudan, for instance, the international agreement (Law Number 4932) was assigned to policy code of 1 which implies the macroeconomic field in CAP codebook and country code of 7 which is determined for encompassing Sub-Saharan Countries.

In a nutshell, given dataset and method enable us to assess changing regional orientation and switches across policy domains in two decades. Thanks to this perspective, whether arguments posited in the literature about foreign policy activism from Europeanization to Middle Easternization is corresponded with the quantitative findings of international agreements is addressed. In addition to this, matches between regions and policies and shifts of it across years can be observed clearly. The next section presents these details.

### **3. RESULTS**

#### **3.1. First Legislative Tenure (2002-2007)**

Below figure 1, the overall findings of the foreign policy activism in the first legislative tenure are introduced. According to descriptive details, the vast majority of the international agreements ratified by the TBMM focused on the European region. A large part of the total agreements signed with the European countries addressed the economy-based issues. Following this; transportation, foreign trade, law and crime, and civil rights constituted the other prioritized policy domains in the government's foreign policy agenda with the European countries in the first legislative period.

MENA, within the context of foreign policy activism has generated the secondly preferred regional orientation between 2002 and 2007. The remarkable finding for the agreements signed with the MENA region confirmed the several hypotheses in the literature which posited that mutual corporations in the foreign trade brought the Turkish government together with the many MENA countries (Yavuz, 2016; Yorulmazlar & Turhan, 2015). The Free Trade Agreements, the protection and encouragement of the investments and commercialization of the textile industry have been some of the favored topics in foreign trade activism with the MENA region. The other salient policy fields including transportation and economy, on the other hand, have been intensely politicized between Turkey and the Middle East.



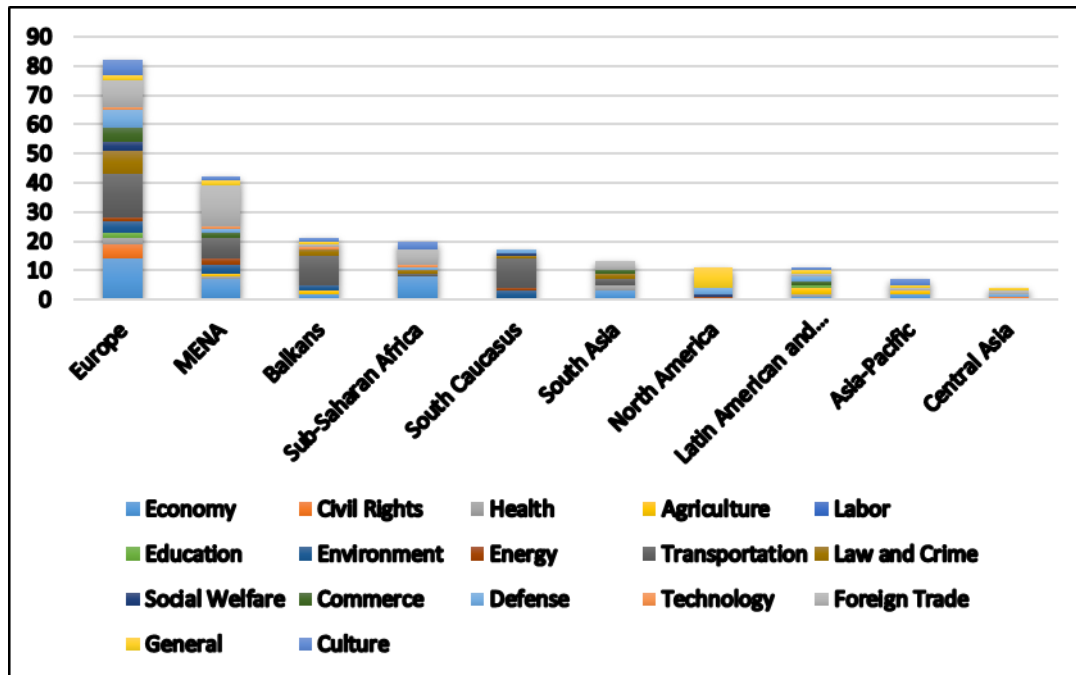


Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of International Agreements Between 2002-2007

In terms of the less prioritized regional orientation in foreign policy activism, Central Asia, Asia-Pacific, and Latin American countries composed a small part of the international agreements ratified during the first legislative tenure. Only eight agreements, for instance, were signed with the Central Asian countries. Cultural and civil rights issues were the top agendas between Turkey and countries where located in this region. Another striking finding of the first tenure demonstrated that almost all policy domains were negotiated between Turkey and Latin American countries. Ranging from economy to cultural issues, many countries in Latin America signed either bilateral or multilateral international agreements with Turkey to keep abreast of the agenda in the region.

When looking at the prioritized policy domains in the first term, one can easily notice that transportation, foreign trade, and economy were the salient issues in the government’s foreign policy agenda. In addition to strengthening further economic corporations between countries, the avoidance of double-taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion effectuated a large proportion of the agreements. This peculiar pattern, however, was not the sole factor to explain foreign policy activism through the economics means in the first term, a general evaluation of the data revealed that economy-based agreements have commonly addressed such issues in two decades.

Following this general assessment, looking at the most highlighted issue domains on the basis of regional orientation is needed. To do so, when the policy category with the highest frequency is weeded out; it is observed that bilateral or multilateral cooperation is preferably made in the fields of economics with the European region and sub-Saharan Africa, foreign trade with the MENA region, transportation with the South Caucasus and the Balkan countries, and defense with North America.

### 3.2. Second Legislative Tenure (2007- 2011)

After introducing the first term's analysis which prioritized policy domains and targeted groups are scrutinized, in this second part, whether the same regional orientation and policy fields are pursued is analyzed. The general tendency in the literature postulates that Europeanization has been replaced by Middle-Easternization after the second term. If that is the case and how, is aimed to be elucidated by comparing the weight of policy categories with regard to the country groups in this part. Here in figure 2, as it can be seen, this shift of axis is visualized.

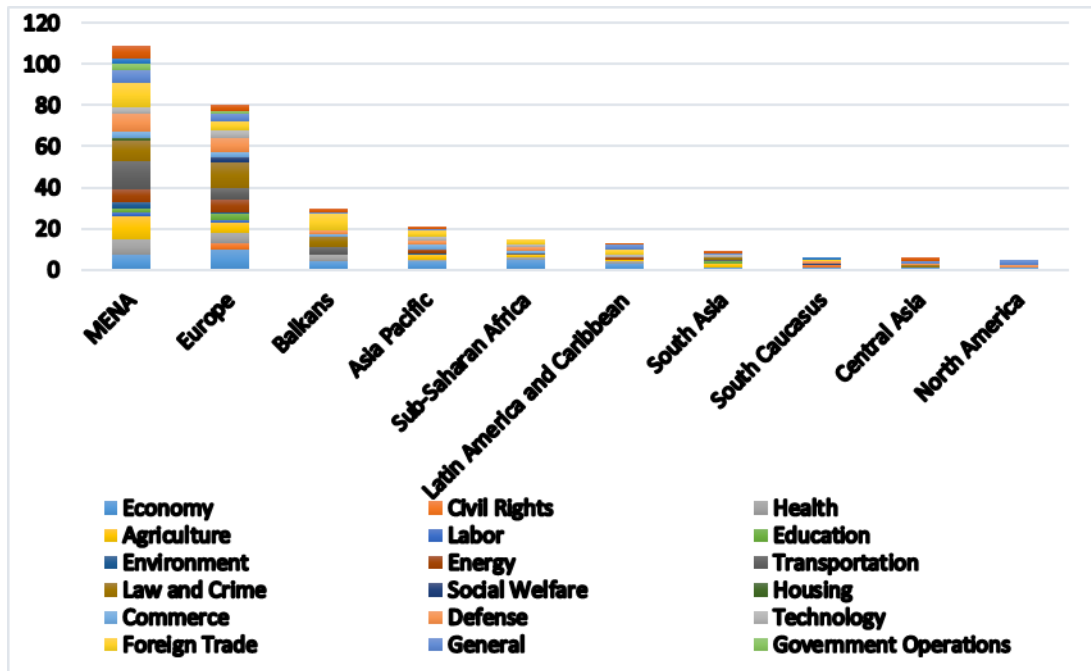


Figure 2. Frequency Distribution of International Agreements Between 2007-2011

According to a central argument which is defined as the shift of axis, foreign policy activism predominantly turned its attention from European region to the Middle East (Haugom, 2019; Öniş & Yilmaz, 2009; Sözen, 2010). The persuasiveness of the ‘theory of shift of axis’, in terms of regional orientation, was confirmed while coding international agreements ratified by the TBMM in the second legislative tenure. Descriptive analysis displays that the highest frequency of the number of international agreements is detected between Turkey and MENA countries and overwhelmingly with Syria. In arithmetical proportion, 38 of 310 bilateral agreements which signed with the MENA region focused on Syria by partly emphasizing such policy fields including economy, defense, culture, and foreign trade.

Transportation, foreign trade, and agriculture as policy domains were politicized between Turkey and MENA region in the second term. Following this, secondly prioritized regional orientation in foreign policy activism has been European region. Economic issues still were top agenda in the agreements signed with the European countries. In addition to this, topics regulated social security issues were allocated the policy-based attention between Turkey and Europe. Most strikingly, several policy fields

which have never been politicized with the European countries in the first term, gained political importance through the agricultural, cultural and labor issues throughout the second term.

Less prioritized regional orientation was, on the other hand, detected between Turkey and North America. Although this region was attended to make compromises in such fields mostly including defense issues, the second term paid lesser attention to these issues with the Northern part of America. Similar to the first term, Central Asia still was located as the less prioritized regional orientation in the government foreign policy agenda. While transitioning from the first term to the second, by losing its rank of importance in foreign policy activism, the South Caucasus regressed to the eighth line.

The saliency or insignificance of the policy domains in the foreign policy activism is also needed to scrutinize for the government's second tenure. For the salient issues, just like those locations in the first term; economy, foreign trade, and law and crime were mostly raised awareness among the 21 major policy domains. On the other side, housing, labor, and civil rights have received less policy-based importance in the foreign policy performance of the government in the second term. Another analysis revealed that specific issue areas with particular regions demonstrated considerable differences while transitioning from the first tenure to the second. Although Europe has still protected its importance in the field of economy like in first term, Sub-Saharan Africa was replaced by the MENA region for economy-based agreements in the second term. MENA region was also put on the agenda for the issues encompassing transportation, defense foreign trade and culture. Lastly, the technology has been the top agenda between European region and Turkey between 2007 and 2011.

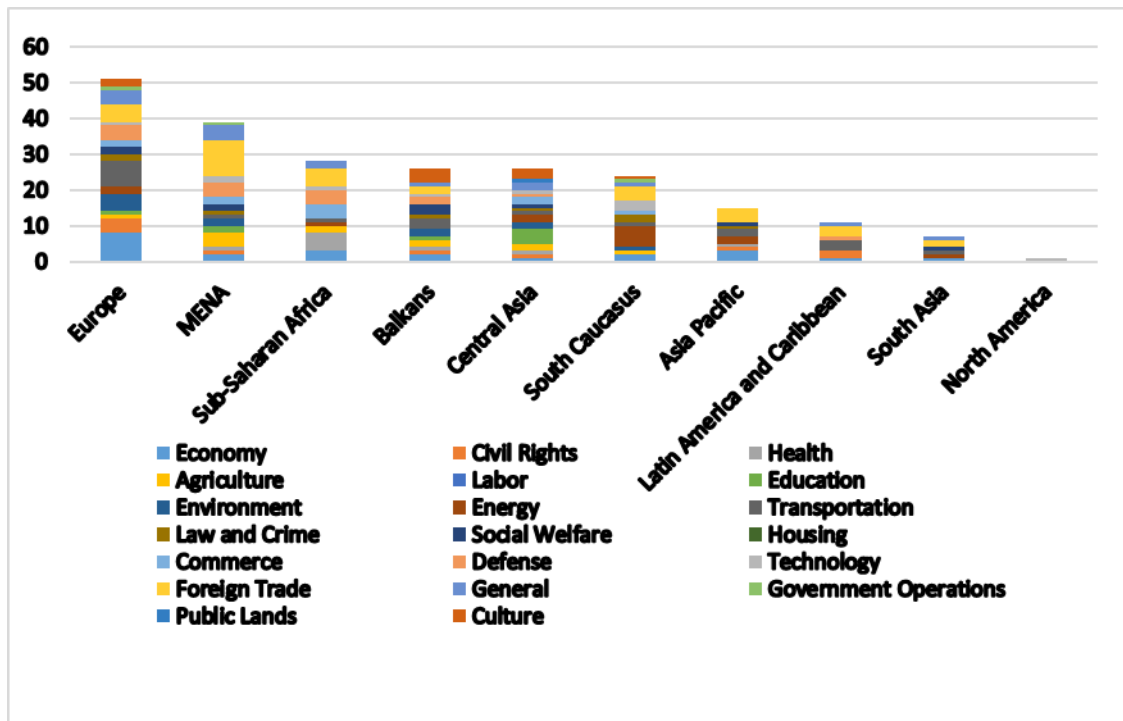
### **3.3. Third Legislative Tenure (2007-2011)**

The third incumbency gathered several alterations in the foreign policy activism of the government. As seen in figure 3, the European region retrieved its prioritization in the third legislative tenure. At this time, the most prioritized foreign policy orientation was turned from the MENA to the European countries. Economic topics were attended again in the international agreements signed with the European region. Following this, transportation, environment and foreign trade have been concentrated policy domains in the agreements.

Foreign trade was also considerably attended in the bilateral agreements signed with the MENA countries. The 10 of the total 39 bilateral agreements signed between Turkey and MENA countries regulated foreign trade activities carried out either in Turkey or related countries. This value is also the highest one among the other agreements which regulated foreign trade issues between Turkey and any countries in the third term. Contrary to the first and second terms, some policy domains including education and culture have never been allocated for the foreign policy activism with the MENA region.

Another distinguishing feature of the third term analysis is about the proportionality of the agreements signed between Turkey and different regions. Although in the first and second terms, the proportion of the agreements aggravated in Europe, MENA and Balkan countries, in the third term, remaining other regions have almost been disturbed equally in terms of frequency. The similar

proportions of the agreements signed with the Sub-Saharan Africa, Balkans, Central Asia and South Caucasus ensured that foreign policy activism in the third period was more balanced compared to other periods.



**Figure 3. Frequency Distribution of International Agreements Between 2011-2015**

Less policy activism with North America has lasted throughout the third term of the government. Although previous periods have shown a little activism in defense issues with the Northern part of America, in the third legislative period, only one bilateral agreement was signed between Turkey and US to make a corporation in the field of science and technology. Paying more attention to the CAP coding guidelines, this agreement, in this respect, was assigned to the technology domain and this made the foreign policy activism with North America quite low.

One of the remarkable findings of this analysis is the high frequency of the international agreements signed with the Turkic Republics in Central Asia. Despite previous periods paid to lesser extent activism with Central Asian countries, in the third term, many bilateral agreements ranging from economy and civil rights to the technology and culture were signed with the different countries including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan in the region. This finding proves that as of the third period, the government tended to increase its bilateral or multilateral cooperation with Turkic Republics in its foreign policy orientation. Considered as a contribution to the shift of axis literature, this analysis confirms that the Turkification trend in foreign policy activism reached an important stage in the third term.

When looking at the prioritized policy domains with the specific regions, whether the same tendency has been lasted is needed to scrutinize. Economy-based issues were generally compromised

with the European countries in the third period, just like in the previous incumbencies. But differently, it has been determined that the cooperation on energy has shifted from the MENA region to the South Caucasus. The most important collaborations that have increased this activism have occurred thanks to the natural gas agreements between Turkey and Azerbaijan. The activism on the foreign trade, on the other hand, has still been continued in the MENA region.

#### **3.4. Fourth and Fifth Legislative Tenures (2015-2015; 2015-2018)**

Foreign policy activism in the fourth and fifth legislative tenures has shown remarkable differences when compared to the previous terms. First and foremost, in this term, the government paid huge attention to the defense issues by making many bilateral and multilateral international agreements with the different countries. This different activism can be explained by considering the effects of the coup attempt carried out on 15 July 2016 on the political realm. To protect the country's resources against the possible attacks either stemming from inside or outside, the government signed many international agreements. Sub-Saharan Africa as a regional orientation has come to the fore in making foreign policy activism on defense issues. This region, on the other hand, has not only been a targeted country to make collaborations on defense issues but also became the main region with the highest frequency of the agreements ratified during the fourth and fifth legislative tenures.

The second crucial aspect of this term's foreign policy activism is the changing level of prioritization of regions in the government agenda. The European region, in this respect, has regressed to the second line and the first line was replaced by Sub-Saharan Africa. The MENA region, similarly has become the thirdly prioritized regional orientation in the government foreign policy agenda. When looked at the frequency distribution of each policy domain in the agreements signed with the first three regions, several distinguished factors caught our attention. First, defense issues have gained considerable size of policy attention in the agreements made with three regions. Particularly, Sub-Saharan Africa has been the main region where collaborations on defense have the highest frequency. Following this, Europe became the second partner in making foreign policy activism on defense policies. The vast majority of the agreements in which defense issues were mattered, focused on the combat against domestic and external terrorism either preventing of it through diplomatic cooperation or associated law and regulations.

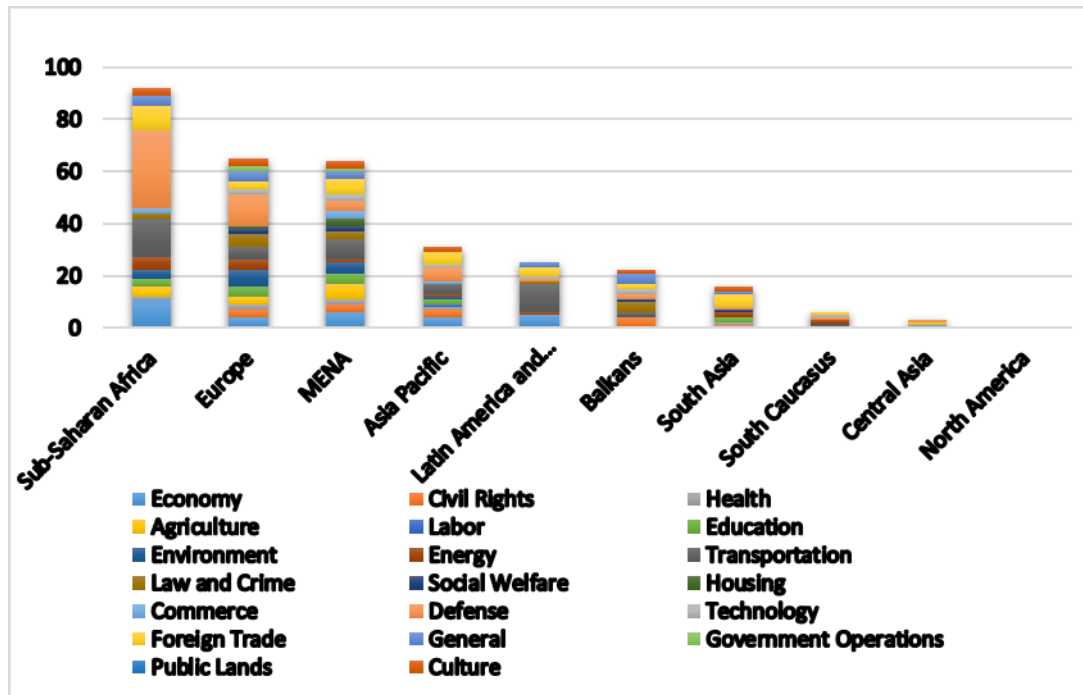


Figure 4. Frequency Distribution of International Agreements Between 2015-2018

The same trend has been continued for the North American region where foreign policy activism has not received sufficient attention on the government agenda. In the fourth and fifth tenures, this region has remained the less prioritized regional orientation with any agreements signed between Turkish government and Northern American countries. When compared with the previous tenure, Central Asian countries have also not received the same policy attention as well. This, in turn, led to a gradual decrease of Turkism in foreign policy orientation of the government throughout the fourth term.

Energy-based agreements with the South Caucasus have also decreased in the fourth term. Although Azerbaijan as a regional orientation has been targeted country for the energy-based collaborations with Turkey, a few agreements which only regulated cultural associations were ratified by the TBMM in this term.

Lastly, it is needed to look at the prioritized policy domains with the particular domains in the fourth and fifth tenures. Table four, in this regard, visualized that issues regulated the transportations have mostly collaborated with the Latin American and MENA countries. Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe have been the main destinations to make cooperation on defense issues in this term. These regions have also been the regional orientations where collaborations on foreign trade have the highest frequency in the fourth and fifth tenures.

### 3.5. Sixth Legislative Tenure (2018-2022)

The last analysis of this study focuses on the sixth legislative tenure which has been lasting from 2018 onward. Although the current period has not been completed yet, because of the research time limitation, only 99 bilateral and multilateral international agreements ratified by the TBMM till January

2022 were analyzed. Below table 5 illustrates the overall findings for the descriptive analysis of the last term.

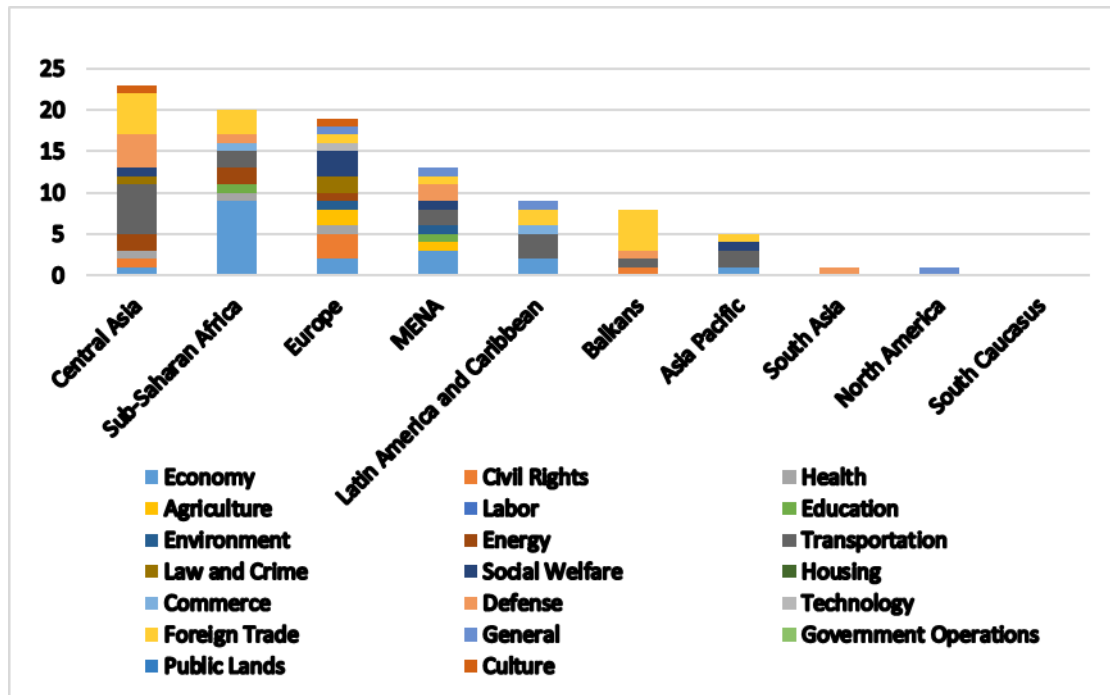


Figure 5. Frequency Distribution of International Agreements Between 2018-2022

According to details, Central Asia has been the main destination with the highest frequency of the foreign trade agreements. Turkic Republics, in this term, re-gained their prioritized position among the other regions. Following the highest weight of the foreign trade agreements, transportation domains including air, highway and maritime have constituted the secondly prioritized policy realm in the international agreements signed with the Central Asian countries.

Sub-Saharan Africa remained the second line in this term. The vast majority of the agreements signed with these regions overwhelmingly adjusted economic issues. The prevention of the double-taxation and fiscal obligations were the central minor arrangements that constituted the axes of the economic cooperation between Turkey and Sub-Saharan countries.

In the last term, the less prioritized regions have been South Asia, North America and South Caucasus. Although North America has still lasted its position, South Caucasus, for the first time became the regional orientation where foreign policy activism quite low. European region, with its wide spectrum on policy fields, protected its prioritization level among the first three countries. From social welfare and environment to civil rights and culture several policy fields have been attended for foreign policy attention in the European region.

## CONCLUSIONS

Activism in the foreign policy refers to the intensification of the interaction with the outside. Literature on the foreign policy activism, in this respect, has analyzed the issue of agenda setting, re-orientation with newly emerged regional targets and switches among policy domains. Conducted studies that measure the foreign policy activism in Turkey, to scrutinize these indicators, generally focused on the discourse analysis and constructive aspect of the traditional IR theories. Systematic data-driven perspective to make clear definitions, however, remained under investigated except of few studies.

This article makes several contributions to the literature on foreign policy activism in Turkey. First and foremost, shift of axes between regions and switches among the policy domains are examined together. Thanks to this method, whether asserted hypotheses about the shift of axes in the foreign policy orientation of government is corresponded with the results of data-driven analysis are proved. For this assumption, literature argued that there has been a shift in the foreign policy activism of Turkey from Europeanization to the Middle-Easternization in recent decades.

Second, the article measures the changing policy orientation of the governments with the particular country or region. Although some studies have accounted this perspective, no analysis has conducted a standardized coding scheme to measure broadly defined major and minor policy categories that constituted the agenda-setting of an international affair. Using CAP common coding scheme, this study matches the major policy categories with the different regions to observe whether the same policy domain has been negotiated with the same country throughout two decades. This on the other hand enables us to assess the frequency distribution of the use of hard and soft power instruments across years which is another central argument of the literature.

For abovementioned arguments, literature emphasized several outcomes. First, foreign policy activism has extensively increased with the participation of Turkey in the Gulf War in the 1990s. Accordingly, in addition to the Western countries, Middle East has gained geo-strategic and geo-cultural importance to realign Turkey's position in the region. Use of hard power instruments have been replaced by the use of soft power instruments in the affairs developed between MENA region. Although given assertions are corresponded with the results of this study to a certain extent, shifts in both regional orientations and policy domains show considerable differences. As a matter of fact, shift has not only been occurred from Europeanization to the Middle-Easternization, but also from Euro-Asianism to the Sub-Saharan Africa in the last decade. For the switches in policy domains, findings demonstrate that defense issues have gained strategic importance in the international agreements either signed with Europe, MENA or Sub-Saharan Africa after 2015. Energy, on the other hand, as a policy domain has generally been the bilateral policy domain between Turkey and Central Asia. Finally, while issues including foreign trade, economy, transportation have been the central policy domains negotiated with European, MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa in the first three legislative terms; culture, education and



environment have gained political importance to redefine the geo-cultural scope of Turkey with those countries in last three decades.

With this methodological and data-driven approach, this article measured foreign policy activism through international agreements. Although this is not the only case in which activism is measured through the bilateral and multilateral international agreements, given quantitative details, frequency distributions, shifts across policy domains, and regional orientations might enable researchers to make further inquiries on the foreign policy of Turkey through the same method.

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