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## **Turkish Foreign Policy, State Identity and Elites, Continuity and Transformation**

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### **Abstract**

Turkey is an important player in international politics due to their military power, geo-political situation, historical background, and many other factors. There is a need to analyse the consistency and changing aspects of Turkish foreign policy. There are many studies that examine its foreign policy, not a many that focus on the issue of identity. Identity is critical factor to decide foreign policy. Especially for Turkey, foreign policy is as same as seeking the state identity which would be accepted by other countries. There are not so many studies to analyse who choice one identity which influence foreign policy from a various kind of identity, and how the identity influences the foreign policy. This article mentions, first, Turkish state identity consists of three aspects. Sometimes they are impossible to exist together at the same time. Second, while reviewing foreign policies follow the change of foreign policy. Sometimes Turkey is not worth of, however they do not change foreign policy because of identity. Third, how elites' consciousness decided and influenced foreign policy, their identity reflected foreign policy. Fourth, how identity is kept and change in Turkey. Traditional elites gradually lost their power foreign policy transformed. Therefore, relation state identity and foreign policy and the role of elites would be cleared to understand Turkish foreign policy easily.

**Key words:** Turkey, identity, foreign policy, elite, westernization

### **1. Turkish States Identity**

#### **1.1. Importance of identity**

Turkish state identity is diversity. Turkey is always asked whether it belongs to the West or the East, whether it is European or Asian, the Middle Eastern, whether it is Islamic or secular. The answer is that no one of those options alone is correct, and yet people insist still that just one is chosen. How does Turkey answer the question? As for the issue of identity itself, there have been many different attempts to define what it means within certain parameters. Alexander Wendt says it shows who she/he is and what she/he is.<sup>2</sup> Henry Nau defines identity as self-image.<sup>3</sup> Peter Katzenstein says identity is a subjective fundamental attribute of the state<sup>4</sup>, and Shinya Baba emphasizes the magnitude of identity and indicates that power, influence, and interest are only part of identity.<sup>5</sup> Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu mentions

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What Stats Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization*, 46(2), 1992, p. 398.

<sup>3</sup> Henry R. Nau (Japanese translated by Koji Murata), *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy*, (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 2005), pp. 26-31.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Katzenstein (edit.), *The Culture of National Security*, (N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> Shinya Baba, *Identity no Kokusai Seiji (International Politics of Identity)*, (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 1980), pp. 12-13.



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that “when states construct their identities, they formulate at the both domestic and international levels.”<sup>6</sup>

According to constructivists, an agent is not a rational actor who pursues profit after constantly calculates profit and loss, but acts after judge who he/she is (identity) and what he/she wants (interest). Identity and interest are not given, but are the sources of action and constructed socially in relation with others. If others do not agree with a person’s self-consciousness, a person attempts to correct this discrepancy. In the case of the state, the mechanism for effecting this amendment is diplomacy. Just as individuals, when they live their social lives, essentially seek to be recognized by others for who they are, what they belong to, and the kind of person they are, so too do states also seek a similar kind of recognition by others.<sup>7</sup>

The reason interaction between identity and foreign policy is important is that a sense of identity distinguishes “we (us)” from “they (other)”<sup>8</sup> an enemy and an ally and, in so doing, strengthens the “we”-notification. Regional integration like EU (Europe Union) is led by we notification. Besides that, it also embodies that which states seek to be, and states act to establish identity because it requires authentication from others. When such an identity is indeed accepted by others, it means that foreign policy based on identity is a success. As such, in order to be able to better understand and predict a state’s behaviour it is useful to understand how identity affects foreign policy.

A state’s identity consists of several different elements. These could be historical, cultural, or religious; they could be the personal characteristics of political leaders; they could also be ideas reflecting their role and goals in the international community. As such, it is therefore proposed that state identity can be classified into the following three forms: indigenous identity; official identity; exogenous identity.

### 1.2. Indigenous Identity

An indigenous identity is inherited in a group of elements such as tribe, language, geography, culture, history, religion, and ethnicity. These indicate the sense of belonging of the people. These elements pull people together even when they are not particularly aware of it. Having languages, customs and lifestyles in common gives rise to an increased sense of intimacy among people and can then in turn trigger group formation. Groups based on kinship or territorial relationships cohere strongly and maintain tight bonds: once a group is formed,

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<sup>6</sup> Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, “Modernity, Identity and Turkey’s Foreign Policy”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol.10/ No.1/ 2008, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> Baba, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 13-14. For individuals, Erik H. Ericsson (Japanese translated by Nao Nishihira and Yue Nakajima), *Identity and Life Cycle*, (Tokyo: Seima Shobo, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).



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its members instinctively protect it. Within a group, a sense of companionship and consciousness is shared and comes to be further formed and constructed as an identity. The consciousness once formed and built they are inherited from generation to generation. Indigenous identities have been accumulated and formed over an extended period.

The indigenous identities of the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor of the de facto Turkish Republic, were Islamic state and there was self-conscious of a Muslim. It was true that there were Christians, Jews, and others in the Ottoman Empire, but the majority of its inhabitants were, however, Muslims and state governed by Islamic law.

After the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, Islam was placed under state control. Despite that, though, the practice, in the personal arena, of Islam was not prohibited by the Republic, meaning that its status as one of the numerous indigenous identities was neither denied nor deleted. As individuals, many Turkish citizens are proud to be good Muslims,<sup>9</sup> celebrating Islamic festivals and following religious customs in their daily lives. People identify their Muslim identity.

At the state level, instead of Islam new identity was introduced by the western orient government. Republic leaders aimed at establishing modern state which was different from old Ottoman Empire. They needed an official identity.

### 1.3. Official Identity

Official identities are defined by policy makers for the state management and show states' goals or policies. It is a centripetal concept that has a political character and is used to make a group state. Because state is political system and sometimes lack of indigenous elements, so official identity is needed to make state.

Under European imperialism, borders were drawn in colonial Asia or Africa that failed to consider the sense of belonging felt by the native populations of those regions. Often, people who did not share a common identity were contained together within the same national border. When such counties become independent, official identity is needed in order for people to be able to come together. When the identities present amongst member of the population are diverse and inconsistent, conflicts are likely to occur; in order to overcome such difficulties and promote unity within the group, it is necessary to then create a new identity and encourage its permeation throughout society.

Domestically, official identity is used as the basis for asserting the legitimacy of control and is the “identity confirmed by order.”<sup>10</sup> Until the unified official identity has successfully

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<sup>9</sup> Author interviewed a female graduate student and a woman in May 2010 in Ankara.

<sup>10</sup> William E. Conolly (Japanese translated by Atsushi Sugita), *Identity / Difference*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten), p. 45.



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permeated society, a heterogeneous group of people will not become an established state and the legitimacy of the leaders remains unproved. When the regime changes to new one, it denies and cut off the old one. New regime needs new identity suitable for new regime. The new identity makes the new system. Leaders use politics, education, propaganda, and sometimes pressure to disseminate the new identity all over the country.

In Turkey, some political leaders say that the country is a secular, democratic and Western, others say Muslim in Europe, and others say bridge, centre country. These statements are subject to variation and affect foreign policy over time.

Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, played a role of balancer but also a member of the European balance system.<sup>11</sup> It can be said that the Ottoman elites were conscious that and they were a part of the Europe. In other words, the perception of being a member of the European system was inherited to the elites of the Turkish Republic in the 20th century. At the end of the Empire, Western-style education in medical schools or military academies was used as tool in modernization reforms; as a result of that, West-oriented elites were created and these, in turn, went on to forge a new Turkey. They recognized Turkey as a "civilized country of Europe", to maintain its Western identity.

Bozdağlıoğlu says that Turkey's official Western identity was created as a result of the country's modernization project in their years of following Kurtuluş Savaşı.<sup>12</sup> In the Republic, six principles were proposed by Kemal Atatürk, which form the foundations of what was later called Kemalism. They are as follows: Republicanism (Cumhuriyetçilik), Populism (Halkçılık), Nationalism (Milletçilik), Secularism (Laiklik), Reformism (İnkılapçılık), and Statism (Devletçilik). It is generally understood that secularism is the core and most important of those principles; the introduction of secularism marked a clear break up with the past and transition to the West.

Turkey set a goal to become a civilized and advanced nation. Being recognized as a member of the West is as same as being a modern, civilized and progressive nation. It is pointed out that European identity remained strongly conscious as a political elites' goal to carry on the Atatürk tradition.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of that leaders struggle in diplomacy, Turkey became a member of the Western camp during the Cold War. It is said that Turkey joined the Western alliance against

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<sup>11</sup> William Beik (edit.) "The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe", *New Approaches to European History Series*,  
[http://archive.org/stream/The.Ottoman.Empire.and.Early.Modern.Europe/The.Ottoman.Empire.and.Early.Modern.Europe\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/The.Ottoman.Empire.and.Early.Modern.Europe/The.Ottoman.Empire.and.Early.Modern.Europe_djvu.txt)

<sup>12</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, *Op. Cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>13</sup> Pia Christina Wood, "Europe and Turkey: A Relationship under the Fire", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, (Winter 1999), pp. 95-115.



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USSR's threat. It is too simple. The consciousness that the Russians were others made Europe and Turkey alliance (we).

When the Cold War ended the international order changed: Turkey insisted on being a “bridge”, and in the twenty-first century it transformed into recognition of a “central state (merkez ülke)”.

### 1.4. Exogenous Identity

Indigenous identity has accumulated and formed within the nation whereas exogenous identity is often formed by external stimuli.

Exogenous identity is also an image that can be seen in other countries. For instance, the role of balancer that regulates order in the international power balance and of negotiator when conflict occur, are ones that are created from external factors. When the assumption of such a role or position is the goal of the state, that is, exogenous identity overlaps with the official identity, and then there are no problems. If not overlapping, identity crisis occurs.

From a European perspective, Turkey is in most cases seen as being an Islamic, Middle Eastern country. Europe was formed as an entity in distinction from those other nations further east, termed “the Orient,” and it has repeatedly redrawn its boundaries even as it maintains them.<sup>14</sup> It is said that Europe was born and integrated with “our” consciousness because there was a different existence such as the Ottoman Empire and Russia as the east.<sup>15</sup>

While Turkey claims to be a member of the West, Europe does not necessarily agree with that assessment; this discordance in recognition has proved to be a remarkable and major issue in Turkey's experience with the EU's admissions process. In 1963, the Ankara Convention was held to deal with the joining the EEC (European Economic Community). Then the chair Hallstein said that Turkey was part of Europe.<sup>16</sup> In some areas integration with Europe has seen progress, for instance Turkish football teams belong to European leagues and Turkish singers have won European music contests, whilst Turkey's largest city Istanbul was even designated the European City of Culture in 2010.<sup>17</sup> Turkey also joined Custom Union in 1995. No further progress beyond that can be seen though.

Since 2002, when the AKP regime first assumed power, Turkey's integration into Europe has stalled more markedly. Some European leaders have started to repeatedly state

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<sup>14</sup> Burak Akçapar, *Turkey's New Europe Era*, (Maryland: Rowman & Little Field Publishers, 2007), pp. 41-45.

<sup>15</sup> Iver Neuman, *Uses of the Other*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1999), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Address by Professor Dr. Walter Hallstein President of the Commission of the European Economic Community on the occasion of the signature of the Association Agreement with Turkey, 1963, *Archive of European Integration*, University of Pittsburgh Library System, <http://aei.pitt.edu/14311/>

<sup>17</sup> Akçapar, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 34-37.



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that Turkey is not European<sup>18</sup> and one veteran French politician said Turkish membership of the EU would spell the “end of the European Union.”<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, Turkey's application for EU membership has remained stagnant for nearly fifty years.

Turkish state identity contains components that struggle to coexist, such as Islam (indigenous identity) and secular, western (official identity), and often only one identity can be chosen.

Indigenous, official and exogenous identities are not completely separated; they may be matched or are related in a variety of ways. Sometimes they complement one another but, equally, at other times they find themselves in competition.

### **2. Development of Foreign Policy**

State identity is reflected in the various foreign policy decisions made by elites in the state. The identity of elites' or policymakers' manifests itself in the policies they develop and support, and the nature of their diplomatic efforts; approval of those things is then necessarily also a form of approval of the agents' identity. If diplomatic moves are successful then the policymakers' choices are shown to have been successful, and that also in turn ensures that the legitimacy of their rule remains secure. As that process is repeated, a form of absolute identity will gradually emerge, and the existence of agents with that identity will also be absolutized.

Turkish foreign policy can be characterized and categorized as belonging to one of the following three historical periods.

#### **2.1. 1923-1970s**

From the establishment the republic in 1923 to the 1970s was one during which foreign policy was decided by elites who possessed Western identity. Construction and modification of official identity was the goal of policy.

After practicing good neighbour diplomacy in the early days of the foundation of the Republic and adopting “aggressive neutrality” during World War II, during the Cold War period Turkey steered toward the Western side, adopting an anti-communist position in a liberal economy and democratic system led by the United States. The reason for Turkey's participation with the West in this regard was not only to counter a military threat posed by the U.S.S.R., demand to cede territory and management of the Turkish straits, or to receive economic and military assistance, but also because it judged the Soviet Union as being a

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<sup>18</sup> Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and others. <http://www.afpbb.com/article/politics/2590017/4000444>

<sup>19</sup> Bordering on the ridiculous: why Turkey is not a European country, <https://www.politico.eu/article/bordering-on-the-ridiculous-why-turkey-is-not-a-european-country/>



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threatening “Other”. Turkey notified that the Soviet Union was a “communist state”, "east side" and thus different from Turkey, which was a Western and democratic state.

Turkey’s accession to NATO (1952) was understood to be recognized as a member of west which shares the common values of freedom, democracy, and equality<sup>20</sup>. Despite that, the reason that the other NATO members approved Turkey’s accession was primarily strategic rather than acknowledgement of a common identity. Matsutani pointed that the reasons why NATO members disagree Turkey and Greece accession, first enlargement of NATO was too fast, secondly, they were afraid that aid from US would decrease, third especially Turkey was different from NATO members in culture, customs.<sup>21</sup> There was, then, a degree of discordance in the nature and terms of mutual recognition. As such, even after joining NATO, Turkey's security was not guaranteed. Whilst American missiles were deployed at an airbase in Turkey, Turkey could neither participate in US-USSR negotiations and it did not join the circle of Western leaders during Cuban missile crisis (1953). Also, when it came to the issue of Cyprus, Turkey did not gain support from Western countries: the U.S. banned arms exports to Turkey (1975-1978). Strategically, then, NATO was not always profitable for Turkey. Despite such a divide between itself and Western countries, however, Turkey did not choose to leave the Western camp. Throughout the Cold War NATO was represented as the bastion of Western identity.<sup>22</sup> Only was NATO a proof that Turkey was European country.

During this period foreign policy was being decided by elites who kept Western (European) identity as an official identity which was always placed first. At the same time, those elites also made indigenous identity subordinate to official identity. Foreign policy was able to continue so long as policy-making powers were shifted among agents with the same identity.

### 2.2. The 1980s

This was a decade during in which various domestic phenomena led to the diversification of both identity and foreign policy. In the 1980s, the military seized power through a coup d’etat and with the aim of regaining stability and re-integrating the society after domestic unrest. The military regime insisted on the implementation of TİS (Turkish-Islamic Integration theory, Türk-İslam Sentezi). The military government focused on two

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<sup>20</sup> North Atlantic Treaty, "The Parties to this Treaty are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law". [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm)

<sup>21</sup> Hironao Matsutani, *Gendai Toruko no Seiji to Gaikou, (Modern Turkish politics and diplomacy)*, (Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 1987), p. 222.

<sup>22</sup> Pinar Bilgin, "The Peculiarity of Turkey's position on EU-NATO Military/Security Cooperation: A Rejoinder to Missilori", *Security Dialogue*, Volume: 34 Issue: 3, 2003, p. 345.



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indigenous identities, Turk and Islam; Islam sought to as a tool to protect Turk portray in the regime. The military itself has publicly embarked on state management using Islam.<sup>23</sup>

This transformation of identity structures through TİS concept, led by elites, led to the claim of being “Muslim country in Europe” in Özal’s government. Tugrut Özal (Prime Minister 1983-1989, President 1989-1993) worked in government offices, in private companies, and in the World Bank after graduating from Istanbul Technical University. He was a member of the Aydınlar Ocağı, and had a relation with Islamic group. Under his administration, religious subjects were added to school education syllabuses and the ban on headscarves in public schools was relaxed.

As to his foreign policy, while maintaining the previous official identity of being a member of Europe, Özal recognized the indigenous identity of Islam and this was reflected in foreign policy decisions that were made.

Under Özal’s leadership, Turkey also intensified its relations with EC, and he transformed the country’s identity, both culturally and politically, from that of a “fully secular and westernized” regime to that of a “technologically Western, but culturally Easterner” state.<sup>24</sup>

His goal in doing so was Turkey’s accession to the EC; this was an objective that he also shared with the secular elite.<sup>25</sup> As Özal pointed out, “the EC was the only way to ensure Turkey’s European identity for Turkey’s political leaders, despite the serious challenges in its relationship with the EC.”<sup>26</sup> Özal argued that the Turks were European Muslims, which meant that Turks did not have to change their mentality or cultural style in order to become Europeans, and that other Europeans consequently had to accept them as they were.

Özal thought that there were three requirements for accession to the EC: being European, having an established democracy, and having a free economy, and he believed Turkey met all requirements.

The issue of EC accession is a difficult one not only for Turkey but also for Europe, as it has the potential to shake the foundation of European as well as Turkish identity.<sup>27</sup> Islam is

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<sup>23</sup> Fumiko Sawae, Sezoku Shugi Taisei no Naka no Islam Seitou Toruko no Jirei, "Islamic Political Parti in Secular Regime the case of Turkey", *Asia Africa Area Studies*, (2001), 1: p. 261 [https://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/79970/1/aaas\\_1\\_251.pdf](https://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/79970/1/aaas_1_251.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Muhittin Ataman, “Özalist Dış Politika: Aktif ve Rasyonel Bir Anlayış”, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/301101>

<sup>25</sup> Akan Makovsky and Sabri Sayarı, *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p. 150.

<sup>26</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, *Op. Cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>27</sup> USAK, “Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Policy: Özalism”, *Turkish Weekly*, March, 2009.





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not an indigenous element of Europe; rather, it is a conflicting factor. Turkey is asked if it is Europe or Islam (not Europe) to join EU.

### 2.3. Post-Cold War Period

When communist block collapsed and end of the Cold War, a new issue how to make Eastern European countries integrate with Europe emerged. EC's intention to integrate Eastern European countries has added a "cultural aspect" that was previously lacking in EC policy as well as economic, democracy level and law system, human rights.<sup>28</sup> Even though Eastern European countries were economically weaker, law system was substandard performance, they were nonetheless still considered to be more culturally European.

The changes of world order have similarly led Turkey to seek a new identity. The threat of Russia was perceived to have disappeared and so, shifting from seeing itself as "the bulwark of the Western camp" or "fort against the communist bloc".

The disappearance of Russia had the same meaning as the disappearance of other, which was common to Turkey and Europe. Turkey created a new identity to function as its *raison d'état*. This new identity was as the bridge connecting East and West, developed and developing countries, the continents of Europe and Asia. Contrary to Turkey's speculation, however, this new position only served to strengthen the international perception of it as being a "torn country" that does not clearly belong to any one particular world.

Turkey tried to bring to the fore it is ethnic (indigenous) identity when making diplomatic overtures and moves toward the newly established and independent countries in central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan)<sup>29</sup> that coalesced following the disruption of the Soviet Union. Despite its attempts to capitalize on such cultural similarities, however, Central Asian countries largely failed to recognize Turkey as being a Big Brother, because it lacked the monetary resources required to assist those countries at the time. "Nothing can be achieved with the vain words spent on historical and cultural unity".<sup>30</sup> Under the USSR, indigenous identity was sealed in Central Asia for a long time, it took a time they rediscover their indigenous identity.

In Turkey, Welfare Party led by Necmettin Erbakan (PM 1996-1997) formed a cabinet in 1996. The reason FP emerged was as follows. At those days, people found that western

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, "Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty", [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1612/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1612/)

<sup>29</sup> Turkey led Head of State Summit of Turkic speaking Countries in 1992 (Turkic Council, The Cooperation of Turkic Speaking States since 2009). Members are Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Hungary (observer).

<sup>30</sup> Saadettin Gömeç, "Türkiye-Türk Cumhuriyetleri İlişkileri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", *Journal of International Social Research*, Volume: 1, Issue: 1, (November 2007), p. 114. [https://www.sosyalarastirmalar.com/cilt1/sayi1/sayi1pdf/gomec\\_sadettin.pdf](https://www.sosyalarastirmalar.com/cilt1/sayi1/sayi1pdf/gomec_sadettin.pdf)



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system did not give all the people economical wealth, drug abuse or crimes increased. These were negative side of westernization. Existing political parties could not dissolve social problems. FP showed Islamic value, virtue and provides people whose identity was instable with the destination of identity.<sup>31</sup>

Due to Erbakan's Islamic background, Milli Görüşü, his government thought highly of Islamic and developing countries. They made Developing-8 also known as D-8, Organization for Economic Cooperation in 1997 with the participation of Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, and Nigeria which, together with Turkey, represented eight prominent Muslim countries.<sup>32</sup> This was dramatic change of foreign policy.

Military was apprehensive of Islamization which FP promoted inside Turkey. Soon they intervened to exclude FP. (Post Modern Coup, 1997) in order to maintain secularism, that is, a more Western identity. But Europe criticized this intervention as being undemocratic and rejected Turkey's request for EU membership. Ironically, the military, which tried to maintain its western identity, was criticized and marginalized by Europe. This represented an identity crisis for Turkey.

### 2.4. Under AKP Regime

In the November 2002 elections, the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) won 34% of the vote and in 2007 they increased this to 47%. CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) got 21%. This meant that, as Rabasa said, "a form of political Islam has moved out of the political shadows to become a major actor in Turkish politics."<sup>33</sup> AKP is the successor of the Islamic movement "Milli Görüşü". AKP refers to itself as a moderate conservative party rather than as Islamic one, and its leaders, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gül have different from previous generations by neither loudly advocating Islam nor denying secularism.

The rise of the Islamic elite seems to mark an attempt at creating a new identity. At the beginning AKP did not deny secularism, but gradually changed their position. They insist that some use secularism as a tool of control of religious. That is not correct. AKP said all religious must be respected and need to liberate Islam from states' control. They try to liberate Islam under state control and eventually positioning it as official identity.

"Leaders' perception of the role that their states should have in international system, that is their role conceptions, depends on those leader's backgrounds.<sup>34</sup> Their tendency to Islam was expressed their wives wearing head scarf in public spaces. The ban on wearing

<sup>31</sup> Masami Arai, *Toruko Kingendaishi, (Turkish modern history)*, (Tokyo: Misuzu shobo, 2001), p. 295.

<sup>32</sup> Berdal Aral, "An Inquiry into the D-8 Experiment: An Incipient Model of an Islamic Common Market?", *Alternatives*, 4(1-2), (July 2005), pp. 1-15.

<sup>33</sup> Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, (RAND Corporation, 2008), p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, *Op. Cit.*, p. 69.



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such items has itself been gradually lifted, the government stating that wearing a headscarf is a human right or freedom. Similarly, AKP built many religious schools (imam hatip) so as to rise “pious generation”.

New foreign policy was started by AKP. Ahmet Davutoğlu asserted Strategic Depth policy.<sup>35</sup> Davutoglu Doctrine consists of zero problems with neighbours, proactive diplomacy, rhythmic diplomacy, and pivotal country. Turkey has also positioned itself as a central state and plays a role as a negotiator or intermediary. By using its geopolitical and geostrategic position, Turkey can become a regional as well as a global actor<sup>36</sup>.

Strategic Depth shows historical and cultural common with surrounding countries which depends on indigenous identity. Turkey tried to succeed in improving relations with neighbouring Islamic Arab countries, and this more aggressive diplomatic stance had not been seen before the formation of the AKP government.

AKP play various identity cards. They keep relation with Europe through the EU accession process, at the same time involved in Middle Eastern countries, Central Asia and Africa continent. The AKP help Palestine and maintain good relations with the Muslim Brotherhood. Such a pro-Islam, pro-Arab attitude led to deterioration in Turkey’s relations with Israel. The Mavi Marmara incident occurred in 2010,<sup>37</sup> exports of military equipment from Israel to Turkey ended. These were negative impacts in terms of security and diplomacy.

The news that large numbers of the Uygur population of Xinjian in the People’s Republic of China were being detained in camps by the communist government stimulated indigenous identity in Turkish citizen. There are linguistic, ethnic, and religious similarities between Turks and Uygur, and anti-PRC demonstrations happened in many cities across Turkey.<sup>38</sup>

Besides, Erdogan insists “the world is bigger than 5”. He criticized that there are many countries in the world, only five countries which is permanent members of U.N. Security Council, determine the world issue. He disagrees with the current international order, UN

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<sup>35</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Türkiye merkez ülke olmalı", Radikal, 26.02.2004, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yorum/turkiye-merkez-ulke-olmali-702116/>, Ahmet Davutoğlu, (Japanese translated by Ko Nakata), *Stratejik Derinlik*, (Tokyo: Shoshi-Shinsui, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> Lale Sariibrahimoğlu, “Davutoglu Promoting “Strategic Depth” in Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 6, Issue: 89, (May 8, 2009), <https://jamestown.org/program/davutoglu-promoting-strategic-depth-in-turkish-foreign-policy/>

<sup>37</sup> The Mavi Marmara with Turkish citizens and activists carrying relief supplies to Palestine was attacked by Israel coast guard. Nine activists were killed and Israel soldiers were injured. Turkish government asked for apology and two countries relations definitely worsened.

<sup>38</sup> Turkey has accepted Uygur refugees from Xinjian for a long time. AKP government criticized PRC communist government using word "genocide" and called boycott. But around 2020 they stopped criticize PRC, even though western countries started to criticize PRC for human rights abuse. AKP prioritizes Chinese economic power.



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structure and decision-making process. Islamic value is one of the reasons Erdogan's protesting against status quo. "The AK Party has all along emphasized religious (Islamic) and cultural values and traditions as Turkey's invaluable cultural assets worthy of conservation. The AK Party's political orientation is strongly aligned with the principle of justice. The Quran contains strong references to justice."<sup>39</sup>

### 3. The Role of Elites

Identity is a crucial factor of foreign policy, although, just concept and it does not do anything itself. Identity influences behaviour of the person who possesses that. Therefore, when analysing a state behaviour, the kind of identity the policymakers have can be seen to be of importance. Usually, political decisions are made by elites who have greater power than the general public, so it is necessary to pay attention to the identity held by the elite.

Identity is constructed when the state encounters other nations, international organizations, communities, societies, and/or by other external factors. While interacting with other countries and a wide variety of actors in international society, a state's elites will come to learn with values and norms with which they were not previous familiar, and they bring these back with them. These new values and norms gradually establish themselves and percolate throughout the entire country; they help to form a new identity, sometimes excluding previous ones as they do so.

The role of elite in Turkey can be categorized as being typical of one or other of the following periods: founding to the 1950s; the 1960-1980s, the 1980s-1990s and 2000-.<sup>40</sup> During the period from the founding of republic to the 1950s there was a single leader. At first Atatürk and a little people, founding fathers, participated in a policy decision. Later members in the political power centre changed, most of them including bureaucracy, judicial, academic circle were pro-western position. This was a time in which policy decisions were being made among players with a western identity, and there the period also saw foreign policy followed a consistently pro-western course.

Due to the progress of democratization from the 1960s to the 1980s, policy makers who had a western identity still kept power, various new actors appeared. Political Islam movement emerged. It was a time that oversaw a diversification of identities, interaction with domestic factors and of foreign policy. As consequence of security issues that developed during the 1980s and 1990s, the military that resurfaced, and this was the period when Turkey needed to seek a new identity following end of the Cold War and the attendant changes in the

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<sup>39</sup> *Insight Turkey*, winter 2019 / Volume 21 Number 4.

<https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/the-world-is-bigger-than-five-a-salutary-manifesto-of-turkeys-new-international-outlook>

<sup>40</sup> Baskin Oran (ed.), *Turkish Foreign Policy 1919-2006, Facts and Analyses with Documents*, English version, (Utah: University of Utah Press, 2011), pp. 35-49.



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international community. Official identity (=western identity) was held by elite in military, especially those in the National Security Council where military guided on policy. They had power and rights sometimes used them to maintain their identity. On the other hand, the indigenous Islamic identity survived in the private domain.

The point to be noticed is new pro-Islam elites of AKP accept western values and systems. They seemed to have placed indigenous and official identity in the same priority. However, they gradually emphasized Islam and began to eliminate other identities. Foreign policy changed dramatically that Turkey began the behaviour which represents Islam world. Gradually, Turkey and its Western allies increasingly found themselves conflicting over various issues. Turkish intervened in the conflicts in Middle East and Northern Africa then diplomatic frictions with the West are getting bigger. Some Western observers say that Turkey should be removed from NATO despite the threat that Russia still poses to that alliance.<sup>41</sup>

There has been a conspicuous decline in the number of West-oriented elites, mainly in the military. They were excluded from policy decision process under the name of democratization. As a result, it became difficult for the military to keep their identity and led the change of pro-western foreign policy.

The self-conscious of Turkey is a democratic state permeated among people. Because democracy is the condition to be cleared for EU membership, Turkey continued democratic reform for a long time. It is AKP government that carried out reforms mostly to achieve EU membership standards. Through such a reform and contacts with other countries people came to dislike military's political intervention, which was against democracy. Such transformation led state identity change.

Under AKP regime, another new actor which holds Islamic identity appeared at forefront of politics. The Gülen group which established by Fethullah Gülen who is a famous Islamic scholar who argues for the importance of education, the denial of violence, the adoption of a positive stance toward secularism and the need to keep a distance from political Islam. The AKP and Fethullah Gülen had very close relationship and Gülen's Hizmet Movement has extended not only inside Turkey but also foreign countries. The number of believers increased the schools, cultural events, media outlets, business networks and NGOs managed by the Gülen group. Under the AKP government Gülen's followers started to enter the centre of the administration instead of traditional elites. AKP and Gülen shared a common consciousness in considering the traditional elite as an enemy.

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<sup>41</sup> "It's time to expel Turkey from NATO", *The Spectator*, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/it-s-time-to-expel-turkey-from-nato>, 30 October 2020.



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After the attempted coup of July 15, 2016, Gülen believers in many organizations – such as the military, police, legal circle, civil service, and educational institutes – were purged by the government. Gülen himself and his followers seemed to be the perpetrators of the coup.

### 4. Structure of Turkish State Identity

A characteristic of the structure of Turkish state identity is as already mentioned, consisted of various elements, elites decide which element should be the highest priority. Then elites promote foreign policy depend on their identity. Even though a decided foreign policy is not worth the cost, it is not always changed. Because identity distinguishes, we (friend, alliance) and they (other, enemy) and this distinguish holds a key of diplomacy. It is safe for nations to keep relation with friends, alliance, which share “we,” consciousness.

Turkish foreign policy had been firmly anchored on varieties of Kemalism for 70 years.<sup>42</sup> From 1923, when the Republic was founded, to the 1970s, official identity, namely western identity was put highest priority. Pro-west foreign policy was promoted. As long as priority of state identity is consistent, foreign policy also consistent. For Turkey to construct and be approved western identity by others are main issue in its foreign policy. This period official identity - western elite’s identity- was the most important if western elite keep the power foreign policy did not change.

Even though Western identity was denied in the diplomatic field repeatedly, Cuban missile crisis or Cyprus issue, it continued to maintain policies centred on Western identity unchanged.

From Turkey’s point of view, NATO is a military organization aimed at protecting values such as the free economy and democratic system. It is a proof of the Western camp. This is because elites kept decision making process and the rank of identities did not change.

Though western elite denied Muslim identity especially in diplomatic arena, Muslim identity was revived repeatedly. There may be conflicts between indigenous and official identities. Even one identity is lost or thought lightly, it does not disappear completely. When the identity with power becomes fragile, other identities reappear.<sup>43</sup>

But leaders put official and indigenous identities in equal positions because of political reasons. For example, Turkey’s self-awareness of being a “Muslim in Europe” seen in the

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<sup>42</sup> Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 6, November 2006, p. 945.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Mansgach, Edward Rhodes, “The National State and Identity Politics: State Institutionalism and “Markers” of National Identity”, *Geopolitics*, 12:2007, pp. 426-458.



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1980s insisted on the fusion of identities.<sup>44</sup> Turkey is not only Muslim but also European, and those two identities are not fundamentally incompatible.

As another feature, identity is neither given nor ever completed. It is constructed through contact with others. As such, it is natural for identity to change; however, it means that the priorities are changed. Changes in the international society or order not only prompt changes in a state's role or/and position, but can also stimulate change in a state identity.

During cold war era, Turkey played a role of the bridge against the communist block for a long time. When U.S.S.R. collapsed and their threat disappeared, the role of bloc was not needed. They become bridge using some of indigenous identity. Turkey had sought new role and identity.

Domestic change also leads transformation of state identity and foreign policy. Voting behaviour of the people may change as the people encounter information due to technological advances. This situation will eventually encourage a change of leaders. Bringing changes in people's thoughts and self-awareness. When the leader changes, so does the official identity.

The change in demographic composition also influence state identity and/or foreign policy. The educational content varies from generation to generation; identities are not same among people. Differences in education lead to differences in identity, as the concept of who I am is established through education. Western secular education system has largely continued in place, but recently AKP has promoted religious education. It is hard to say that pious education has taken root now, though, there may be some impact in the future.

Globalization promotes movement of people across the border. When people meet foreign people who speak unfamiliar languages, and have a different common knowledge, they strengthen "we" and "they" consciousness.

### Conclusion

The importance of identity is that it is the root of a state behaviour. States act to construct their identities by implementing foreign policy, like individuals do through social interaction. Identity also distinguishes "us" and "them", enemies and allies, in international society. This distinction is a major factor in diplomacy. Occasionally, policies that are not worth the cost and friction with other countries are also due to identity. As already mentioned, state identity consists of three aspects, indigenous, official and exogenous. They are sometimes overlapped and other times opposed each other.

Regarding Turkey, long lasted pro-western foreign policy was due to elites having western style education, accepted western value decided policies. They prioritized western

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<sup>44</sup> Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu, "Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Ozalism", *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, 9 March 2009.



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identity as official one and excluded indigenous one. On the other hand, indigenous identity does not disappear, and when the Muslim elite emerged like FP in the 1980s, Military needed domestic stability; it appeared on the front stage.

In the 21st century, AKP took power instead of western elites, they develop foreign policy depends on their Muslim identity which also changes image other countries have toward Turkey. Besides, changes in the international order urge Turkey to change its role. Transformation both inside and outside Turkey, it can be said Turkey's state identity may change.