

Who is in Charge of Making Decisions?  
The Competition between  
the Government and the Foreign Policy Bureaucracy in Turkey (1991-2014)

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**Abstract**

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This study argues that the fragmentation in foreign policymaking due to adopting different foreign policy ideas, that is, ideas of the elected leadership and the bureaucracy, is likely to generate competition between the state agencies that constitute the foreign policy bureaucracy. Turkish foreign policy between 1991 and 2014 offers an explanatory platform to understand how an anti-establishment, revisionist party demonstrates its toolbox in defining divergent foreign policy ideas, whereas the state's foreign policy elites stood by with preestablished ideas. I suggest that the term between 1991 and 2002 was an example of the bureaucratic decision-making model. In this model, state agencies work through their internal decision-making systems and cooperate to inform the ultimate decision-maker. In this vein, Turkish foreign policy between 2002 and 2011 was a period that showed how the AKP government introduced its foreign policy agenda while working in the bureaucratic decision-making model. I also argue

that Turkish foreign policy of Turkey from 2011 to 2014 introduced the governmental decision-making. In this period, the purpose of government was to formulate policies against the preestablished ideas of Turkish foreign policy bureaucracy. The anti-establishment feature of AKP's foreign policy embodied the divergence between the elected and appointed officials. As a case study, the bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel were based on the cooperation between the armies and the MFAs between 1991 and 2002. The collaboration gave both sides the capacity to operate in Middle Eastern politics. In the term between 2002 and 2014, however, the bilateral ties were tested with multiple crises while Turkey's decision-making system transitioned to the governmental decision-making model. The decline of the appointed bureaucrats in decision-making and the rise of elected officials ended the years based on partnership. Overall, the analysis based on a series of interviews conducted with 83 foreign policymakers in Turkey and Israel shows that the turf war in the foreign policy bureaucracy is a conceptual framework for comprehending how elected officials use bureaucratic tactics to undermine the involvement of bureaucrats in decision-making processes.

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# **DEDICATION**

To Mom, Dad, Bartu, and Mert

# Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. PUZZLE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

In the first days of 2020, a former Turkish career diplomat posted a picture of an old timber desk drawer with a note stating, ‘if you ask me what this [picture] depicts, I say it is the embodiment of institutional tradition. Diplomats that worked on the same desk for a century wrote their names at the bottom of the drawer at the Turkish embassy in London. The first signature is dated 1914’ (Ulgen 2020). Diplomats serving at the embassy used the same desk for almost a century. They added their initials in the drawer before departing for posts assigned by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

The noted social media moment describes what collective memory and tradition symbolize for foreign policymakers. The foreign policy bureaucracy derives its authority from the shared consensus of recognized elites (Goldstein and Keohane 1993) and creates harmony among various state agencies over the state’s foreign policy options. The preestablished ideas of a given state’s foreign policy—that is, a set of ideas that stem from tradition and a shared image about the foreign policy objectives of a state—are likely to create a disagreement between the bureaucratic agencies and the elected officials. Although it is an anticipated outcome that a government disagrees with the bureaucracy in foreign policymaking, the government that adopts an anti-establishment stance is more likely to ‘invoke discursive frames that mobilize support by prescribing a ‘correction’ or revision of foreign policy to align with the interests of the idealized sovereign community’ (Jenne 2021, 325).

In this framework, adopting an anti-establishment stance helps the government redefine the state’s way of foreign policymaking, primarily with elected officials. The divergent

government's policy agenda also embraces crisis-based, short-term interests and nurtures willingness to take political risks. In this case, the government fundamentally disagrees with the foreign policy bureaucracy that represents tradition and a shared image of foreign policy objectives. The fragmentation in foreign policymaking due to adopting different foreign policy ideas, that is, ideas of the government and the bureaucracy, manifests itself in decision-making processes.

I imply by ideas in this study that institutions represent certain ideas and formalized decision-making processes 'when a group of individuals who share certain ideas come together and decide to organize around that idea' to build state institutions (Ozkececi-Taner 2005, 253). The duality in foreign policymaking through the government's ideals versus the bureaucratic agencies' posits puzzling questions: Why do the government and the bureaucracy engage in competition regarding foreign policy ideals?

To analyze and respond to this question throughout the study, I will introduce my arguments in the following section and demonstrate how those hypotheses fit into the existing literature in foreign policy analysis and Turkish foreign policy.

## 1.2. ARGUMENTS

Turkish foreign policy between 1991 and 2014 offers an explanatory platform to understand how an anti-establishment, revisionist party demonstrates its toolbox in defining divergent foreign policy ideas, whereas the state's foreign policy elites stood by with preestablished ideas. The bureaucrats working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the General Staff (OGS), the operating agency of the Turkish Armed Forces, historically had powerful positions in defining Turkish foreign policy and its preestablished ideas. I argue that the term between 1991 and 2002 was an example of the bureaucratic decision-making model. In this model, state agencies work

through their internal decision-making systems and cooperate to inform the ultimate decision-maker. Turkey's aforementioned period was an example of the model because of the dominant role of MFA, OGS, and PMO. In this vein, Turkish foreign policy between 2002 and 2011 was a period that showed how the AKP government introduced its foreign policy agenda while working in the bureaucratic decision-making model.

I also suggest that Turkish foreign policy of Turkey from 2011 to 2014 introduced the governmental decision-making. In this period, the purpose of government was to formulate policies against the preestablished ideas of Turkish foreign policy bureaucracy. The anti-establishment feature of AKP's foreign policy embodied the divergence between the elected and appointed officials. Some examples of these policy practices were ignoring tradition and shared image in Turkish foreign policymaking, making foreign policy decisions based on crises rather than principles, and taking political risks based on the consensus among only elected officials.

The shift from the bureaucratic to the governmental-decision making model influenced the dynamics of Turkey-Israel relations. As a case study, the bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel were based on the cooperation between the armies and the MFAs between 1991 and 2002. The collaboration gave both sides the capacity to operate in Middle Eastern politics. In the term between 2002 and 2014, however, the bilateral ties were tested with multiple crises while Turkey's decision-making system transitioned to the governmental decision-making model. The decline of the appointed bureaucrats in decision-making and the rise of elected officials ended the years based on partnership. Both states adopted different roles incompatible with each other's foreign policy agenda after 2014.

### 1.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study contributes to the discussion about the conflict between the government and the foreign policy bureaucracy. The next part of the dissertation lays out the current theoretical framework. It discusses how my arguments fit within the larger body of literature on foreign policymaking, foreign policy bureaucracy, and Turkish foreign policy. My objective is not only to examine previous works in these areas but also to demonstrate how this study bridges the gap between three different aspects of foreign policy analysis.

#### *1.3.1. Foreign Policy Bureaucracy*

Graham Allison (1971, 3) explains the bureaucratic politics model as ‘the “maker” of government policy is not one calculating decision-maker but is rather a conglomerate of large organizations and political actors’. In a competitive environment, many actors bargain, ‘and act in terms of no consistent set of strategic issues but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals (Allison 1971, 144). As a pioneer of the FPA literature, the model suggests that ‘foreign policy decisions are the product of political resultants or bargaining between individual leaders in government positions, whereas the organizational process model maintained that foreign policy actions are generated by the behavior of large bureaucracies with parochial priorities and perceptions following standard operating procedures’ (Jones 2010, 2).

A vast critical literature discusses the role of bureaucracy in foreign policymaking in response to Allison (1971)’s bureaucratic politics model. Jones (2010; 2012) compiles the main criticisms of the model into nine points by reviewing almost thirty papers written on the model. According to the classification, the bureaucratic politics model is too complex, too imprecise, not genuine, too closely tied to the American political system; is unable to determine the actor’s policy stand clearly; ignores the roles of other actors outside of the executive branch, the personality and

past experiences, power of the president in American foreign policy, and finally, undermines democratic accountability.

To respond to the criticism of the model, Drezner (2000) introduces a modified ideational approach in bureaucratic politics and points out the sources of bureaucratic preferences and the use of organizational culture to sustain ideas. As I discuss in the following chapters, this study follows this lead. It defines the foreign policy bureaucracy as a dominant component of foreign policy decision-making, and its culture and preferences influence decision-making processes as long as the government in charge aligns with the bureaucratic structure.

In the last thirty years, the bureaucratic politics model is also analyzed, combining various other foreign policy analysis (FPA) theories. For instance, Kaarbo (1998) and Kaarbo and Gruenfeld (1998) introduce social psychology into bureaucratic politics. These works concentrate on inter- and intra-group competitions as well as the influence of minority players vis-à-vis more dominant players in the foreign policy bureaucracy. The studies call to analyze the human tendency that creates conflicts in foreign policymaking decisions. Additionally, Brummer (2013, 2) explores the model through poliheuristic theory and looks at ‘the connection between the policy choices of the decision makers and the interests of their respective organizations’. Finally, Cantir and Kaarbo (2012) explore its scope through role theory. In their work, the authors do not assign roles to an entire elite group in decision-making. Rather they argue that different individuals or subgroups in foreign policy held different roles. Their approach to defining the decision-maker elite in different groups influences the arguments of this study.

Each state agency that operates in the foreign policy bureaucracy brings its own approach and institutional priorities into the decision-making processes. Thus, the involvement of various state agencies prevents the creation of ‘a smooth interagency process that handles policy planning’

(Drezner 2009, 11). For instance, in American foreign policymaking, ‘the president does not simply issue foreign policy diktats that are then faithfully implemented by the foreign policy community. Domestic politics, bureaucratic interests, and political maneuvering and competition frame much of the US foreign policymaking process’ (Marsh 2014, 269). Another reason for the complexity of cross-and inter-agency communication is the acceleration of globalization and the growing interdependence of states. These global challenges ultimately upgrade the turf war between the president/prime minister and Congress/parliament. The interdependence of a state with the global economy ‘reinforces these bureaucratic battles, as several executive branch departments seemingly oriented toward domestic affairs now are also stakeholders in the foreign policy game’ (McCormick 2018, 14).

The layer of bureaucratic rivalry also exists within the foreign policy bureaucracy, whose conditions are set by the revisionist government. According to this approach, the bureaucratic agencies do not represent the nation and the state on the ground that these institutors and bureaucrats are eager to agree with the international actors without considering the people. ‘[D]ue to its professional formation and the elitist traditions attached to it, the diplomatic corps will likely appear suspicious to a populist leader and his followers’ (Plagemann and Destradi 2019, 288). In that sense, bringing the government’s foreign policy agenda to the forefront would help the government bring the voices of the ‘nation’ and avoid aligning with the elitist traditions in decision-making.

### *1.3.2. Foreign Policy Analysis and the Non-Western Context*

As a subfield of international relations, FPA offers an extensive set of tools to understand the conditions, processes, and consequences of the foreign policy bureaucracy. The argument that humans are *the* decision-makers rather than the structures or the states is the backbone of the

studies on foreign policy analysis. The Western political theory tradition also substantially shapes the FPA literature that usually chooses case studies from the states to rely on democratic institutions. In that sense, details of turf wars between the bureaucracy and the government are well-documented in studies on American foreign policymaking (Snyder et al. 1954; Allison 1971; Allison and Halperin 1972).

The non-Western political systems, however, are almost out of the scope of the FPA literature, although there is an intention to acknowledge this gap (Hudson 2014). Additionally, little research has been done on how competition in the foreign policy bureaucracy occurs in non-Western systems (Kaarbo 1998; Desrosiers and Lagassé 2009). In other words, the number of theoretical studies subjecting non-Western countries such as Turkey and Israel is also very little compared to the works on the European and North American cases (Acharya and Buzan 2010; Brummer and Hudson 2015). I point out the inclusion of non-Western case studies not for the sake of diversity in the FPA as a discipline, although this would be an excellent achievement for the field, but findings from the non-Western context also help to understand better the foreign policy decisions of the governments that have revisionist, populist, and nationalist agenda.

Foreign policy bureaucracies and ‘foreign ministries are all over the world – in “small” states as in “big” ones, in democracies as in authoritarian regimes – subject to strong competition with a plurality of state and non-state actors inside and outside state institutions’ (Lequesne 2019, 781). In that sense, the declining role of the ministries of foreign affairs is not unique to Turkey, even though Turkish diplomats usually do not have aristocratic backgrounds, as Neumann (2012) discusses in the Norwegian case, and even though the Turkish ministry does not recruit from a large pool of qualified candidates, as Lequesne and Heilbronn (2012) exemplify in the French case. Additionally, non-Western states such as China (Sun 2017) and Israel (Sheffer and Barak 2013)

offer an understanding to generalize the weakening role of the ministry. In both states, the competition between state organizations, usually between the army, the MFA, and different state departments, and societal pressure which aims to blame the ministry for diplomatic failures are factors that consolidate the image of the political party in power by attributing all diplomatic success to the party's leadership.

### *1.3.3. Turkish Foreign Policy (1991-2014)*

The Turkish economic liberalization process started in the early 1980s, and the collapse of the Soviet Union pressured Turkey to challenge its solemnly Western-oriented perspective on foreign policy. Following the end of the Cold War, Turkey had to redefine its priorities in domestic and foreign policies. Additionally, the rise of political Islam and ethnic Kurdish nationalism in the 1990s did not help the Turkish bureaucrats immediately identify what Turkey's capabilities could have been in the post-Cold War era (Ozkececi-Taner 2005).

The decision-making literature on Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s concentrated on coalition governments (Ozkececi-Taner 2005, Kaarbo 2012). The scholarship prioritized examining top-down decision-making through the 'ultimate decision unit' (Hermann and Hermann 1989) rather than analyzing the process from down to top through the bureaucratic actors. In that sense, the scholarly work covering the 1990s and the early 2000s discussed Turkey's search for identity (Öniş 1995, Kösebalaban 2011), first in Europe (Müftüler-Baç and Gürsoy 2010), and then in the Middle East (Altunışık and Martin 2011).

Turkish foreign policy after 2002 was more likely to respond to ideology and ideas than it did during the Cold War years (Robins 2003). The consecutive electoral successes of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP) governments from 2002 gradually transformed the principles of Turkish foreign policy. The AKP era started with the question of

whether there would be an ideological shift in Turkish foreign policy (Alpan 2016; Gulmez 2013; Kirdiş 2015). Nonetheless, it took almost a decade for the AKP government to reflect its neo-conservative agenda on foreign policy decisions, specifically towards Europe (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber 2016; Yilmaz 2016). In this vein, the discussion on the ‘shift of axis’ or a multi-dimensional approach considering the weakening of the commitment to EU membership and Turkey’s deepening relations with the Middle Eastern states dominated the second decade of the AKP governments (Başer 2015; Kardaş 2012; Öniş 2012, 2014; Öniş and Kutlay 2017).

In the latter half of the 2000s, much attention was also paid to the question of whether Turkey had rising economic capabilities in the Middle East (Kirişçi 2009; Öniş 2012) and if its soft power policy was making it a player in regional politics (Oğuzlu 2007). Some scholarly works, primarily written by Turkish academics, found Turkey’s policy towards the Middle East as inevitable: ‘As Turkey’s national security interests, as well as the nature of Turkey’s relations with the European Union and the United States, have increasingly become informed by developments in the Middle East. In this sense, Middle Easternization does not suggest a break with the West but rather the growing salience of the Middle East in Turkey’s relations with the West’ (Oğuzlu 2008, 3).

One of the main reasons for the discussion on the ideological dimension of Turkish foreign policy, namely the rapprochement between the Middle East and Turkey, was the strong leadership styles that dominated the decision-making processes. AKP government’s foreign policy vision embodied the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu’s ideas. Specifically, these ideas included international activism, repairing Turkey’s relations with neighboring countries, and using soft power tools to become a regional player in the Middle East (Aras 2014; Cohen 2016; Ilgit and Ozkececi-Taner 2014; Kardaş 2012). The personification of power over political figures

introduced the ideas of ‘the dismantling of the existing institutions and the claim to build a new country’ (Selçuk 2016, 572). At this point, studies also focused on the personalities of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to investigate whether his ideals caused a rupture in Turkish foreign policy (Çuhadar et al. 2017, 2020; Kesgin 2013, 2019).

The foreign policy strategy of the AKP changed Turkey’s strictly Western-oriented, non-interventionist perspective towards a more historically-referenced yet multilateral structure. Starting from the late-2000s, the Turkish MFA and the military were excluded from the decision-making system, while the politicization of foreign policy dominated decision-making. Several domestic developments led the consecutive AKP governments to alter foreign policy direction: The Ergenekon and Balyoz cases were significant political and legal controversies in Turkey between 2007 and 2013. ‘In March 2007, the weekly journal *Nokta* published the diaries of retired Navy Commander Admiral Özden Örnek. The diaries revealed that in 2004, some top Turkish commanders were plotting a coup d’état’ (Aydinli 2011, 231). The diaries were illegally taken from the admiral’s personal computer. The leak revealed a divide in the Turkish Armed Forces in the early 2000s on the commanders’ concerns on national security vis-à-vis AKP’s Islamist policy and whether a military intervention should have been staged.

The judicial process involved investigating and prosecuting a network of military officers, politicians, journalists, and academics who were accused of plotting to overthrow the AKP government. The court cases started criticism about the aims of the AKP and whether the government utilized the claims to diminish the military’s standing in Turkish policymaking. During the trials, the AKP government presented a constitutional package to the parliament, which was approved by the majority of the MPs who were members of the AKP. ‘The 2010 package included the following changes: armed forces personnel would be adjudicated in civilian courts

for non-military offenses; it would be possible to try the generals who had staged the military intervention of 1980; and the decisions of the High Military Council on purges from the military would be subjected to judicial review' (Gürsoy 2012, 749). In August 2010, for the first time after the 1980 military coup, a civilian government was involved in the National Security Council's decisions on promotions of high-ranking military personnel. Control of the AKP government over the armed forces through promotions ended OGS' dominant role in Turkish foreign policymaking.

The politicization of foreign policymaking through popular support in international issues, especially in its third term in government after the 2011 elections, encouraged AKP political leaders to build ad-hoc initiatives and sideline old policymaking norms such as communicating through diplomats, seeking long-term benefits, and relying on bureaucratic expertise. The nature of foreign policy to relying on unelected bureaucrats and complex diplomatic rules 'add to the impression of a detachment of foreign affairs from the "true" people' (Destradi and Plagemann 2019, 14). In this vein, the severity of disagreement between the bureaucracy and government manifested itself starting in the 2010s while 'the government engaged in an effort to extend its control over the foreign affairs bureaucracy, with some success' (Akkoyunlu 2021, 250). The disagreement between the MFA and the government was first made public with a written statement published by seventy-two retired ambassadors and consul-generals. The retired bureaucrats protested the then-PM Erdoğan's calling the diplomats '*mon cher*' to imply the elitist structure of Turkish foreign policy. Some of the signatories clarified the beginning of severe conditions in the relationship as 'the role of PM in decision-making increased, there was more involvement of security and intelligence units, and it appeared "inner circles" within bureaucratic institutions to decrease the role of MFA. The reaction of MFA was to withstand it in a non-public way, and there

was a struggle based on obedience versus protest' (Interview with a Turkish ambassador, February 13, 2018).

Considering the period between 2002 and 2014, the 2011 Arab Spring added an alternative dimension to the leader-centered analysis in foreign policy, which exclusively focused on authoritarian/competitive authoritarian tendencies and democratic backsliding in Turkish foreign policy (Esen and Gumuscu 2016, 2019). Some scholars read the post-2011 era from a systematic perspective and move beyond the dynamics of domestic politics and the democratic shift: Turkish foreign policy 'cannot be divorced from the interactions of domestic politics and external dynamics. Turkey's relentless quest for a more autonomous space predicated on nationalism and unilateralism initially generated widespread domestic political support for the government' (Kutlay and Öniş 2021b, 3064).

While 'shift of axis' (Başer 2015) or 'dramatic shifts' (Kutlay and Öniş 2021a) were frequently used to analyze the AKP era foreign policy, the policy shift is also named as a populist foreign policy (Aslan 2021) and revisionist foreign policy (Akkoyunlu 2021). As I demonstrate in this study, change in Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government can also be read from different perspectives, such as 'how a changing elite power structure may remove traditional restraints on foreign policy' (Aydinli and Erpul 2021, 2), or how 'increasing heterogeneity in the elites resulted in an incremental shift in the Turkish foreign policymaking process' (Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm 2021, 569).

In the next section, I demonstrate the ways in which the study discusses the noted elite structure through a case study and how the methodology of the dissertation supports those arguments.

## 1.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section, I examine the brief history of Turkey-Israel relations to explain my choice of case study for this research. In the second part, I describe the methodology and design of the study and discuss details of the data that I obtained from interviews, official statements, and published memoirs. Finally, I clarify the limits of the dissertation in reference to its timeline and case selection strategy.

### *1.4.1. Case Selection*

Turkey's rapprochement with Israel started in the 1990s following the positive atmosphere of the Oslo Accords. 'An uncharacteristic era of rapprochement between Israel and its Arab neighbors during the first half of the 1990s had contributed immensely to the forging of very close relations between Turkey and Israel' (Aytürk 2011, 675). This was a new episode in the bilateral relations, which were previously shaped by Turkey's pro-Palestinian policies. Although Turkey-US relations always had an influence on Turkey-Israel relations, a series of military agreements signed between Jerusalem and Ankara in February 1996 had an impact beyond the two states. 'First, Turkey appeared to have abandoned its traditional policy of balancing the Arabs with Israel in favor of a clear-cut alliance with the latter. Second, though the two states were known to have had several military and security cooperation agreements in the past, they had never reached a pact with such scope and depth, and one given such wide publicity, as that of 1996' (Bengio and Özcan 2001, 68).

Although the political Islamist background of the AKP was not in favor of an alliance with Israel, the relationship continued through arms deals, joint military drills, and intelligence exchanges until the end of the 2000s. According to Altunisik and Cuhadar (2010), the 2003 Iraq War led to an intra-Arab state division while weakening the regional power role of Egypt. The

vacuum that the absence of Egypt created was filled by non-Arab states such as Turkey and Iran. Whereas Iran subsequently gained strength in Iraqi politics, Turkey became more active in its relations with Syria and aimed to mobilize its developing regional power by acting as a facilitator between Israel and Syria. Hence, Israel credited Turkey's regional role, hoping that Turkish involvement would decrease Iran's control over Syria, Lebanon, and Hamas (Aytürk 2011).

The AKP governments diminished the role of the Turkish army and the ministry of foreign affairs from foreign policymaking in the 2010s. In the pre-AKP era, these institutions were in favor of military and economic cooperation with Israel starting from the 1990s. In the second half of the 2000s, however, the change in foreign policy actors rapidly deteriorated the bilateral relations: The 2009 Gaza War ended the mediation process, and the Mavi Marmara flotilla case in 2010 suspended diplomatic ties.

According to a former Israeli ambassador, 'Israel had not internalized the fact that the Islamist Justice and Development party had gained full and exclusive control over the Turkish political scene as well as Turkey's foreign policy' (Liel 2010, 25). In this vein, Israel's realization of the change in Turkish foreign policymakers raises the question of why the government and bureaucracy compete about foreign policy ideas. This is also where the puzzle of this work is situated. The sequences in Turkey-Israel relations between 1991 and 2014 offer examples of the shift at the bureaucratic level and explains how Turkey's foreign policymaking altered from the bureaucratic to governmental decision-making model.

#### *1.4.2. Methodology*

To illustrate the turf war conditions in Turkish foreign policy bureaucracy, I interviewed 61 foreign policy elites in İstanbul and Ankara, Turkey, between September 2017 and August 2018, and 22

foreign policy elites<sup>1</sup> in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Israel, between March and June 2018. The respondents included senior Turkish and Israeli diplomats who served as ministers, undersecretaries, and bureaucrats from various state departments. To analyze alternative explanations, I also interviewed journalists and academics.

Among the eighty-three respondents, 42.1% were diplomats (35 respondents) who served between 1991 and 2014. Five of the respondents were still serving in a position, while thirty respondents were retired diplomats with the rank of ambassador when the interviews were conducted. The selection criteria for the interview were either served in a historical embassy (such as Washington, DC, Berlin, London, Paris) or as the undersecretary of the ministry or a director-general/deputy undersecretary of a major department (such as Policy Planning, Bilateral Political Affairs, Economic Affairs). 8.4% of interviewees (7) were active bureaucrats working in the MFA, military, and state departments. 37.3% were academics (31) in different career ranges and whose expertise was foreign policymaking. Seven of the academic interviewees were affiliated with a think-tank and had first-hand experience working with government officials on foreign policy issues. Finally, 12.1% of interviewees participated in the research with their professional experience as a journalist (4), retired high-ranking general (4), and businessperson (2).

The gender profile of interviewees consisted of overwhelmingly male respondents (88%) as opposed to female respondents (12%). The gender ratio was more unbalanced in the bureaucratic cluster (which includes diplomats and bureaucrats in total), where 42 interviewees were male (92.9%), and only 3 of them were women (7.1%).

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<sup>1</sup> I also met with a serving Israeli diplomat in London, UK, whom I included to the Israeli respondents column in Figure 1.

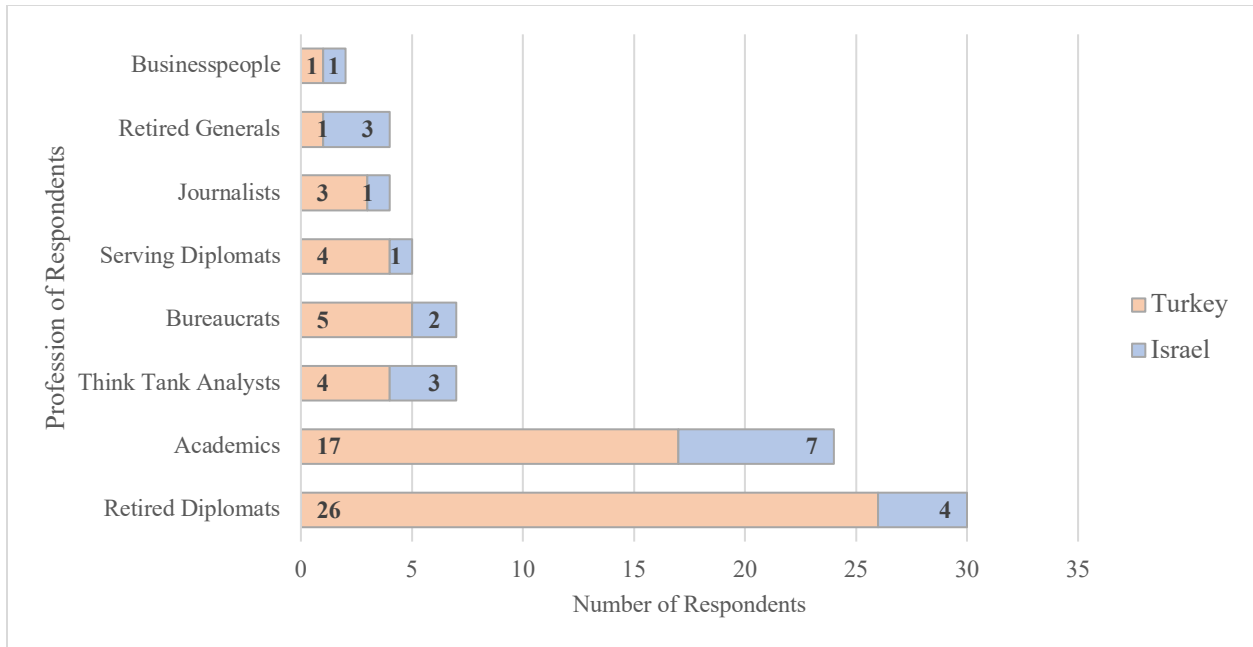


Figure 1: Respondent Profile (N=83)<sup>2</sup>

The findings draw from a series of 60- to 90-minute interviews with foreign policymakers and policy observers. All the interviews were conducted under the condition of anonymity to the sources. I contacted each respondent with the reference of a previous interviewee. The operating language was Turkish and English, although some Turkish respondents briefly switched to English to emphasize their points. The interviews were not audio-recorded in Turkey; instead, I took notes during the sessions and transcribed the notes within an hour or two after each conversation. In Israel, the respondents asked me to record the sessions to make sure what I cited in this study would be their own words. The interview questionnaire included broad, open-ended questions to recognize the respondent's perspective regarding the focus of the issue.

Elite interviewing is still a rare practice in examining the foreign policy bureaucracy, although there is a call to use methods other than textual sources, such as ethnography in the discipline (Neumann 2012). 'Bureaucracies are designed to guard information, and foreign policy

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for further details on respondents.

institutions do so explicitly, with little allowance made to transparency or public engagement’ (Kuus 2013, 118). In this vein, the interview technique is the rarest opportunity to reveal information from bureaucratic decision-makers. In comparison, textual sources produced by state agencies are usually professionally redacted and share little information about the decision-making process. However, ‘interviewing, despite its flaws, is often the best tool for establishing how subjective factors influence political decision-making, the motivations of those involved, and the role of agency in events of interest’ (Rathbun 2009, 686).

Although limited public access to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives prevented me from utilizing relevant primary materials<sup>3</sup>, I was able to triangulate the data from my interviews with published memoirs of Turkish bureaucrats and public statements of state agencies. To detect any biases and misrepresentation, I have created a codebook on ATLAS.ti and removed some details of the interview transcripts so that details such as dates, places, and names were not included, if not match with open-access sources. Since all the respondents were senior figures who worked with each other for an extended period, I also cross-referenced the details of responses with each other in the coding phase.

As I discussed in another study, I utilized these data to conduct process-tracing (Gülen 2022). Bennett and Checkel (2015, 7) define process-tracing as ‘the analysis of the evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case’. The method is a crucial way of understanding how a revisionist, anti-establishment government learns the ‘art of foreign policymaking’ while transforming the established agencies. To unfold the process of AKP

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<sup>3</sup> The MFA launched its new archive facility in 2012. Since then, the Directorate for Diplomatic Archives has been working on 65 million pages of documents dated between 1919-2000. 51 million pages were digitized by the end of 2018 (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019). However, an interviewee who was the head consultant for the digitalization project noted that the ministry prioritizes non-sensitive issues such as Turkey’s relations with the Baltic countries over other diplomatically crucial materials to share with the public (Interview with a political appointee at the President’s Office, February 22, 2018, İstanbul).

governments' ideals over foreign policy bureaucracy, 'the descriptive component of process tracing begins not with observing change or sequence, but rather with *taking good snapshots* at a series of specific moments' (Collier 2011, 824) (emphasis added).

#### 1.4.3. *Limitations of the Study*

As in each study, there are certain logistic and time-wise limitations of this dissertation which focuses on Turkish foreign policy and Turkey-Israel relations between 1991 and 2014. Those dates were crucial to understanding the competition between the bureaucracy and government in Turkish foreign policymaking. As many Turkish respondents from the bureaucratic cluster defined, 1991 was the year that Turkey discovered its capabilities beyond the Cold War conditions and started to exercise its influence in its near geography. In domestic politics, despite the instability of the coalition governments in decision-making, Turkish foreign policy was immune from the turf wars of domestic politics. In that sense, the 1990s was a decade that represented the ground conditions of Turkish policymaking.

2002 was the year that the AKP came to power as a single-party government following the reign of almost-a-decade-long coalition governments. For almost a decade, the AKP governments promised stability in domestic politics, financial parameters, and foreign policy. The AKP pledged to open a new page in Turkey's relations with the European Union, Middle Eastern states, and the United States following the country's crucial economic crises in 2001. Turkey-Israel relations in that decade also transformed from the zone of influence of military decision-makers to civilian decision-makers.

Finally, the 2014 presidential election once again altered the decision-making in foreign policy as the newly elected president made the presidential office the omnipotent decision-maker, while other state departments, including the MFA, simply carried out the orders. I do not imply

that structural changes after 2014 in Turkish foreign policy, i.e., shifting to the presidential system or Turkey's evolving relations with Israel, had no effect on the severity of decision-making. Rather, this study focuses on conditions at the bureaucratic level before Turkey's decision-making system was transformed in 2014. In that sense, some chapters build on the narratives of bureaucrats, rather than focusing on the narrative of ultimate decision-makers such PM Erdoğan or FM Davutoğlu. In sum, the research aims to derive insights from elected and appointed policymakers before all significant changes in Turkish politics materialize.

### 1.5. ORGANIZATION OF DISSERTATION

In the following chapter, I argue that the conflict between the foreign policy goals of the government and the bureaucracy resulted in the creation of two distinct decision-making models: Bureaucratic and governmental. To scrutinize these two models, I discuss decision-makers, political and economic conditions, and the severity of competition among state departments in the 1990s, before the AKP era. In the second half of the chapter, through case studies, I investigate the competition between the foreign policy bureaucracy and the rise of political appointees in the first AKP period.

The third chapter focuses on the perceptions of elected and appointed bureaucrats. The narrative of the rivalry between the two groups is explored through the factors of education, generation, class, and experience. I also examine the role of institutions in differentiating the two types of bureaucrats. Later, the chapter delves into the approach of AKP bureaucrats in working with appointed bureaucrats.

The fourth chapter explores the ways in which Turkey-Israel relations evolved between 1991 and 2014. While both Prime Minister Erdoğan and Prime Minister Netanyahu gained control over all foreign policy decisions, the chapter analyzes the perception of bureaucrats that shaped

the relationship in the last three decades. In doing so, the chapter refers to previous concepts in the study and examines the decline of appointed bureaucrats and the rise of elected officials in decision-making.

In conclusion, I summarize the findings and examine the two decision-making models that I introduce earlier. Finally, I visit the avenues that open for further research in foreign policy bureaucracy and Turkish foreign policy.

## Chapter 2. DECISION-MAKING MODELS

### 2.1. BUREAUCRATIC DECISION-MAKING MODEL

The model relies on the approach that a few state agencies, namely the ministry of foreign affairs, army, prime minister's office, and president's office, are the fundamental decision-makers that operate in a system where the authority of each agency is set. Also, those agencies closely cooperate while deciding and implementing the state's foreign policy priorities. In the following sections, I will discuss the bureaucratic-decision making model through the roles of each core agency and examine the designated policy practice and political conditions to run the model.

#### 2.1.1. Institutional Framework of the Model

The bureaucratic decision making-model is operated in two levels (1) the agency level, where state institutions work through their internal decision-making systems, and (2) the system level, where state institutions cooperate to inform the ultimate decision-maker and implement the decision.

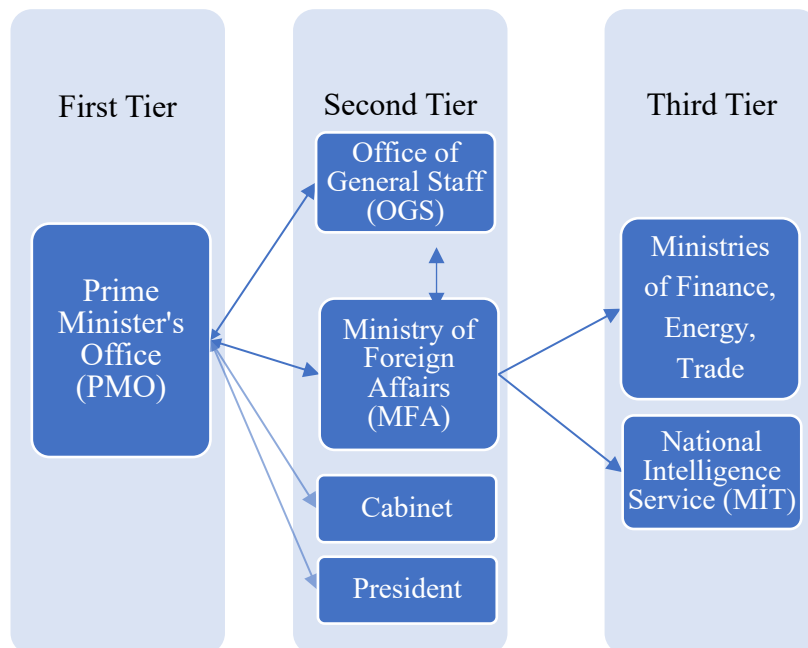


Figure 2: Bureaucratic Decision-Making Model (1991-2007)

As Figure 2 suggests, the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA), the office of general staff (OGS), and the prime minister's office (PMO) were the core agencies of Turkish foreign policy between 1991 and 2007. First, I discuss the role of each state agency in the model by positioning the ministry as the core agency, but not the core decision-maker, on the ground that the Turkish MFA had constitutionally and practically been in charge of coordinating foreign policy in Turkey. Second, I examine how the model was implemented following the government change in 2002. Third, I discuss the ways in which elected representatives play a role in the model and to what extent they were embedded in it.

### 2.1.2. *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

The Turkish MFA was built on the traditions of its Ottoman predecessor (*Hariciye Nezareti*), founded in 1836<sup>4</sup>. Some of the practices of the Ottoman period were preserved with a few adjustments in the ministry, such as communication methods. For instance, the writing culture in the ministry still symbolizes more than penning a position paper. Typically, a junior diplomat drafts a position paper considering the request from the department's senior diplomat. The draft paper is an opportunity for a junior officer to show competency on the issue. Once the junior officer hands in the document to the senior, the latter pays attention if all the details are analyzed before signing and passing it to the department director. In the meantime, the senior uses this opportunity to test the analytical abilities of the junior officer: the quality of those notes, namely service notes<sup>5</sup>,

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<sup>4</sup> The Turkish MFA declared 1836 as its official founding year, whereas the first Ottoman diplomatic mission was launched in 1793 in London (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Service note in the Turkish MFA is written to inform the minister, undersecretary or the relevant department about an event or a meeting. Regardless of the writer's diplomatic rank, the diplomat that attends the event writes the note addressing the superior officer. In the final stage, the note circulates in each department including the minister and the undersecretary (Umar 2016, 148). It is also known as a note verbal, which is 'a strictly formal, third person, no-frills communication. A note is generally rubber-stamped at the bottom and initialed by the person authorizing its issue' (Berridge and Lloyd 2012, 265).

is a sign of the officer's performance and influences future appointments regarding the appreciation of the seniors. The quality of the document depends on how long the senior spends analyzing the suggestions since a well-written position paper should help the senior diplomat spend less time on the document. Based on the document, the senior might ask follow-up questions when the junior diplomat hands over the document.

The proficiency of the junior diplomat in responding to questions is a vital sign of how the career of a junior diplomat will shape. This talk teaches the junior diplomat how to communicate with superiors and peers and write a persuasive position paper to promote. Long corridors of the ministry, where the door of each office should stay open until its owner is appointed as an ambassador, symbolize the career path of a junior diplomat that has to stride through every day while senior diplomats have the opportunity to hear how the junior officer answers questions. In the jargon of the ministry, no one climbs high enough unless 'the corridor record (koridor sicili) is satisfactory'.

Writing is one of the traditions that the diplomats describe as a part of the institutional memory, which consists of the collective actions and thoughts shared and documented in the ministry. The writing culture helps the ministry stay on track while informing senior and junior diplomats working on the same issue in different departments. Each diplomat has to share service notes with the ministry's archive to consult later.

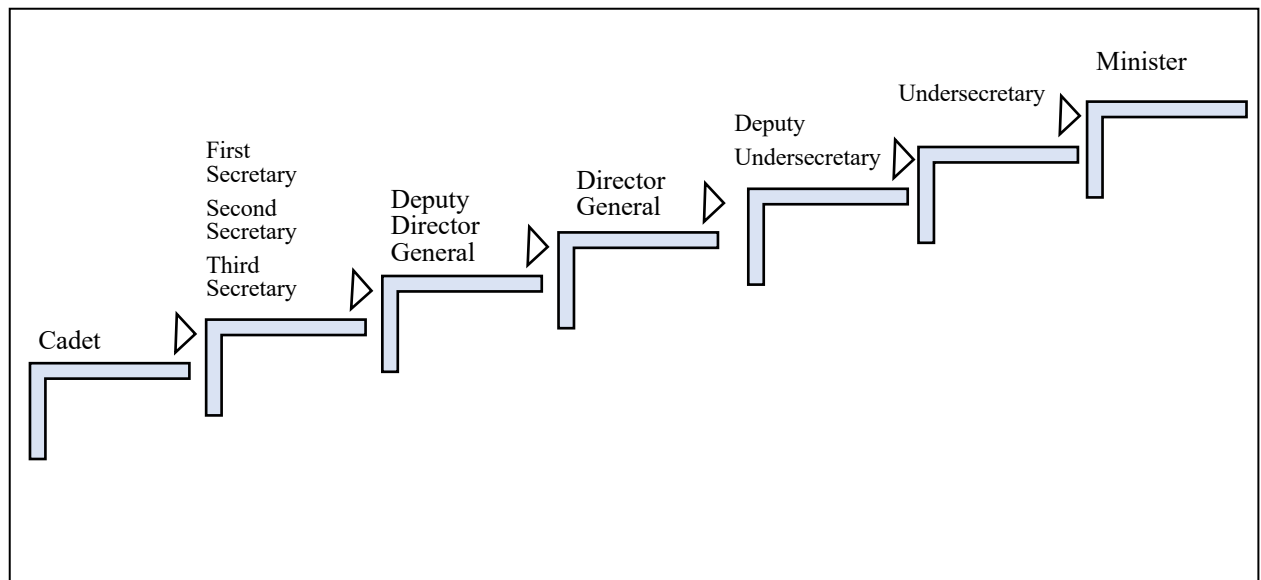


Figure 3: Hierarchical Structure of the MFA<sup>6</sup>

Source: MFA (2011)

There is also a verbal version of the communication within the ministry that the diplomats use to make a decision. The undersecretary or the deputy undersecretary of the ministry invites director generals and mid-level diplomats working on the same issue to discuss a particular case. Participants are free to express their ideas no matter what their ranks are. Following articulating the positions, the head of the meeting, usually the most senior diplomat, either the undersecretary or the deputy undersecretary, summarizes each suggestion and shares their own position while a mid-level diplomat takes notes. Then, the senior diplomat announces the conclusion of the meeting. If it does not need further consultation, the meeting outcome is adopted as the ministry's position and circulates in other ministries and the prime minister's office.

The urgency of the issue dictates what method, verbal or written, the ministry would follow to reach a foreign policy decision. If the ministry requests other state agencies' positions, the bureaucrats from those agencies are invited to a meeting in the ministry, or they send their agencies' positions through a document.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendices B and C for the organizational structure and diplomatic ranks of the Turkish MFA.

In a matter of urgency, again, diplomats prefer to make a decision through a combination of oral and written methods: As in the written version, a junior diplomat drafts a paper that includes a list of suggestions to handle the crisis. The junior diplomat is expected to discuss the reasons for those suggestions by concluding the paper with a resolution. The position paper lands on the senior diplomat's desk with alternative suggestions that are still on the paper. The senior diplomat reads those suggestions and puts initials at the end before sending it to the superior. Depending on its importance and urgency, the document might be transferred to the minister or the undersecretary. If it is an important issue, the director general calls the cabinet of the undersecretary to prioritize that folder among others and to present the undersecretary before its usual turn.

The bureaucratic decision-making model aims to bring various ideas, approaches, and skills to the negotiation table before making a decision. On the one hand, even a junior diplomat, typically in their mid-20s, freshly college or master's graduate, can participate in the planning process. What position would be adopted and passed to the senior diplomat's desk is an important opportunity for the junior to show professional skills. On the other hand, the model is fed by diplomats whose backgrounds, norms, and values are similar. Although there are disruptions because of personal rivalries and political and ethnic taboos, in theory, those individual differences are put aside in the final stage to make the ultimate decision. A retired senior diplomat, who represented Turkey in multilateral organizations in the 1990s, explains that 'the ministry shapes people's way of thinking and leads them to act with the ministry's policy coherently. In that sense, it is tough to challenge the ministry's position as an individual' (Interview with a retired diplomat, August 18, 2018).

Norms of the bureaucratic decision-making model in the ministry did not change depending on the government, political party in power, or coalition partners during the 1990s. The

former undersecretary of the ministry served between 1991 and 1995 pointed out that ‘even though there was no harmony between state agencies at the time, communication channels were open, and there was a working mechanism to make the decision’ (Interview with a retired diplomat, February 10, 2018). In that sense, the model works when the decision-maker agencies aim to stay within the limits of foreign policy principles while also negotiating with each agency’s role in the model.

### 2.1.3. *The Office of General Staff*

Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was *the* dominant actor in the 1990s, it was not the only institution that informed and made suggestions to the prime minister and the president. The office of general staff (*Genelkurmay Başkanlığı*- OGS) played a substantial role in shaping policy in accordance with its hawkish position in security-oriented foreign policy decisions. OGS became the front face of foreign policy decisions due to Turkey’s prevalent security concerns and tumultuous civil-military relations since the 1950s. Still, the cooperation between the ministry and the office of general staff rarely led to a disagreement after the Cold War.

The ideological proximity of the two institutions and the clear division of responsibilities led to a unified approach in foreign policymaking: While the minister of foreign affairs was in charge of briefing the prime minister and cabinet on international issues, the office of general staff had the upper hand in security issues on Iran, Iraq, Syria, and NATO. Diplomats were not only hesitant to step in to assert the ministry’s position in security-oriented cases but also preferred to go along with the division of work and to influence the government in policy-oriented issues such as the relations with the European Union (EU) and the United States. The shared approach in foreign policy bureaucracy was that both agencies did not doubt each other’s agenda in protecting state interests. A senior diplomat who served as the deputy undersecretary between 1996 and 1998 stated,

Disagreement was rare between the ministry and the office of general staff; it occasionally happened during military coups when the army was in charge of governing. For instance, as the ministry, we were against Greece's return to the military wing of NATO in 1979. However, OGS was in favor, and they did approve the Greek request following the 1980 coup. Besides those extreme times, OGS had a very close relationship with the ministry. They thought that the rest of the bureaucracy was ignorant as the politicians, and the only exception was the ministry. If there were an agreement on an issue between the MFA and OGS, no state agency or politician would have objected (Interview with a retired diplomat, February 20, 2018).

In terms of the division of work, three practices brought the agencies together to work on a regular basis. First, the close cooperation between the MFA and OGS in the 1990s ritualized on Thursday and Friday lunches: The deputy chief of general staff met with the deputy undersecretary of the ministry on Thursday to discuss that week's foreign policy agenda. They prepared the issues that the chief of general staff and the undersecretary of the ministry would decide the following day at lunchtime (Interview with a retired diplomat, February 10, 2018). Those weekly meetings were the main venues where two influential foreign policy agencies check each other's position on a particular matter.

Second, the office of the general staff was in charge of providing information since it had more personnel and resources than the ministry. According to an academic that attended meetings of the Turkish armed forces in the 1990s states, there were a few junior and mid-level diplomats working on maritime policy in the ministry. In contrast, the military staff in the Turkish naval forces outnumbered the diplomats (Interview with an academic, July 11, 2018). The number of staff also dominated, which agency would share the intelligence and brief the rest of the bureaucracy. Hence, the office of general staff collaborated with the ministry after processing military intelligence, and then the two agencies discussed the issue. The reliability of information gathering through military channels and relying on the Turkish military's perception in processing intelligence was highly criticized during the 2000s on the ground that the risk evaluation of the

military sources was already a part of the information gathering. The military perception shaped the decision-making from the beginning without leaving room for further civilian consultation in the ministry (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 28, 2017). In other words, military thinking in policy planning was predominant in the 1990s. The influence of military thought solidified OGS' role in decision-making and gave it an opportunity to influence both PMO's and MFA's approaches to a specific political issue (Figure 2).

Third, the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*- NSC) meetings were where OGS and the MFA worked together in the 1990s. Monthly meetings that the president, prime minister, ministers of justice, defense, foreign affairs, and interior, the chief of general staff, and commanders of land, air, and naval forces attended were designed to discuss security issues, which widely included domestic and foreign policy matters. A senior diplomat that used to draft the ministry's NSC position papers as the deputy undersecretary of the ministry between 1991 and 1995 describes those meetings that,

NSC meetings had two stages: Preparation for the position paper and presenting at the meeting. First, every ministry organized internal discussions to decide what to add to the monthly agenda. Other state agencies might participate in those meetings, such as the intelligence service, OGS, or the police department. There were usually discussions at those meetings between [the ministry] and the officers from OGS. However, at that time, they were qualified, argumentative people, and they did trust us, rather than trusting politicians, [...] whom we also did not trust. Based on the outcome of internal meetings, [the ministry] used to draft ministerial position paper considering the options that the OGS personnel would not have wanted to include. We did our best not to incorporate those less favorable suggestions into the ministry's position paper. Finally, the position paper was sent to the minister of foreign affairs through the undersecretary's cabinet and the undersecretary to include their notes or address their concerns.

Second, a couple of days before the scheduled NSC meeting, the secretary general of the NSC<sup>7</sup> would have invited the representatives of state agencies for a briefing. Every representative read their position paper while the secretary general kept time and asked that the paper be shortened if the reader exceeded the designated time, typically 20 minutes. The secretary-general would have told the representatives to edit particular suggestions before the

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<sup>7</sup> From 1991 to 2004, all secretaries generals of the NSC were four-star generals until Ambassador Yiğit Alpogan was appointed as the first civil secretary general. The institutional reforms for the harmonization to the EU widely diminished the NSC's influence over civilian decisions after 2003.

meeting began. The revised versions of position papers would have been read at the NSC on the meeting day, and other NSC members might have asked questions or clarified further while the representatives were in the room. After the Q&A part, the representatives, typically mid-level officers, would have been invited to leave. The NSC members worked on the final paper, which was declared the government's official position. The final paper would not have included all the details; instead, it summarized the crucial points of the meeting. It was less likely that the final paper would have changed after the meeting, the Council of Ministers might discuss the NSC decisions before approving, but this was less likely to happen (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 24, 2018).

When I raised the question of rivalries between OGS and MFA in those NSC meetings to influence the PMO's decision, some of the senior diplomats argued that the role of the NSC was an intermediary to balance the competition between the prime minister and the president, rather than between the two agencies that I mentioned. Some of them, however, called the structure undemocratic because of the dominant role of OGS and non-negotiable decisions of the meetings: 'The ministry or other agencies were not able to ask the position paper of OGS while sharing theirs' (Selcen 2019, 53). On the OGS front, the flag officers criticized the ministry's soft stance in its position papers during the 1990s. A retired major general that served as the Director General of Strategic Planning at OGS between 1997 and 2001 states,

The ministry did not intend to shape the conditions that led to making a decision. Rather, it aimed to react to crises. It was always self-possessed and liked flying low. However, the army had to be accurate. If a high-ranking general disagreed, it meant no; the decision did not change. In the 1990s, the army was accused of not sharing power and of military tutelage. However, none of the civilian bureaucrats or elected politicians wanted to be held responsible or to make the final decision. I think those people had a governing weakness (*hükmetme zaafiyeti*), so they tended to ask OGS to make the final decision. For instance, the ministry did not escalate the crisis in principle, but some crises should have been expanded to solve. In those circumstances, the office of general staff was in charge of escalating and solving the crisis (Interview with a retired general, August 10, 2018).

#### 2.1.4. *The Prime Minister's Office, President, and Other Agencies*

As the head of government, the prime minister is the ultimate decision-maker in the bureaucratic model. Other than exceptional circumstances when the president stepped in, usually due to the personality rather than an institutional role in decision-making during the 1990s, the prime minister

still has the final decision and might or might not consult the decision with the cabinet based on the topic. Once the prime minister's position on the issue becomes clear, the directive returns to the ministry to implement. In other words, 'the ministry forms the policy and the prime minister along with the government shape based on the ministry's design' (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 19, 2018).

In case of a disagreement between the ministry and other state departments, such as the office of general staff, the prime minister makes the final decision. During the early 2000s, when minority rights, specifically Kurdish rights, were a priority in Turkish foreign policy agenda towards the European Union membership, according to two MFA deputy undersecretaries, the ministry was in favor of legalizing the speaking of the Kurdish language in public. However, the office of general staff was against adopting such liberal policies. In this circumstance, the prime minister was the one who decided while also aimed to not disagree with the office of general staff. Nevertheless, the rupture between the ministry and the office of general staff was rare when the decision-making was named as security-oriented (Interviews with retired diplomats, February 12 and February 28, 2018).

The president's office was not a typical actor in decision-making but played a more prominent role than its traditional position during the terms of Turgut Özal (1989-1993) and Süleyman Demirel (1993-2000). Özal's presidency was in the late-1980s when the Gulf War was in full swing, and Demirel was in office when the tumultuous years came after the end of the Cold War.

Both bureaucrats as inner observers and academics as outsiders state that the importance of the president's office depended on the president's personality and how severe Turkish foreign policy conditions were encountered. Nevertheless, the president's involvement in foreign policy

was still in cooperation with the ministry: Until 2014, the president's foreign policy advisor and chief of staff were appointed from career diplomats. The diplomats who served in this position stated that they worked with the president in harmony. Besides, the undersecretary of the ministry was regularly invited to the president's office for further consultations. A senior diplomat that observed this relationship states: 'Although Özal was the first president to participate in foreign policy decision-making actively, he did not attempt to change the role of ministry in the model. Ironically, every political leader is eager to change the ministry, however, they end up complying with the *establishment [respondent's original wording]*' (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 25, 2018).

Finally, two groups of agencies occasionally participated in the bureaucratic decision-making model by attending meetings at the ministry and sharing position papers. The first group was the economic bureaucracy, namely the Undersecretary of Treasury and International Trade<sup>8</sup> (*Dış Ticaret Müsteşarlığı-DTM*) at the Prime Minister's Office and the State Planning Department<sup>9</sup> (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı- DPT*) at the Ministry of Finance. These agencies were frequently called '*the backbone of the establishment [respondent's original wording]*', but their influence did not go beyond advising on technical issues, although these were top state departments due to the state-sponsored investment plans in the post-Cold War era (Interview with a retired diplomat, February 13, 2018).

The second group was the security-based agencies such as the National Intelligence Service (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı- MİT*) at the Prime Minister's Office and the Directorate General of Security (*Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü- EGM*), acting as the chief police force, under the Ministry of Interior. In the 1990s, the intelligence service shared information with other state agencies upon

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<sup>8</sup> The undersecretary is reorganized as the Ministry of Economy in 2011.

<sup>9</sup> The department is reorganized as the Ministry of Development in 2011.

request, and its officers served in the embassies under the command of the ambassador, who described intelligence officers as ‘self-contained’ and ‘unaccountable’ about their operations (Interviews with retired diplomats, August 18, 2018, and October 27, 2017).

As Figure 2 depicts, PMO, MFA, OGS, Cabinet, President, and departments of various ministries participated in Turkish foreign policymaking between 1991 and 2002. According to the descriptions of civil servants served at PMO, MFA, and OGS, those three departments had a prominent role in shaping Turkey’s foreign policy decisions. The bureaucratic structure and military understanding in those institutions rarely led to disagreement between appointed bureaucrats and elected politicians. However, the primary reason for consensus was the product of similar-minded decision-makers and their unchallenged authorities in decision-making. As I describe in the next section, the AKP government and its foreign policy priorities challenged those priorities in the 2000s.

## 2.2. IMPLEMENTING THE MODEL

In the following sections, I discuss the period between 2002 and 2007. This section aims to examine the repertoire of the bureaucratic decision-making model and to understand why the model was kept until 2007, although new state agencies and elected representatives operated in the model.

The decision-making mechanism did not comprehensively change when the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*- AKP) came to power in 2002. The first task that pushed the Turkish MFA and the newly-elected AKP government to work together was the 2003 Iraq invasion. The four-month-old AKP government headed by the then-prime minister Abdullah Gül sought support to pass the resolution in the parliament to allow the positioning of the US forces in Iraq via Turkey. The Turkish government negotiated with Pentagon and the US State

Department while the ministry's Directorate General of Bilateral Political Affairs was the department to lead the negotiations on the Turkish side. The director general served between 2001 and 2014 describes the way of decision-making during the talks,

AKP was not still the majority in the parliament [in 2003], so the government did not intend to change the classical way of decision-making. But we [the ministry] realized later that they [the government] made certain promises to the US, especially during Erdoğan's early visit to the White House<sup>10</sup>. We thought the US aimed to intimidate the Turkish parliament for its consent by landing warships in Mersin [the port city in southern Turkey]. We were unaware of the promises the Erdoğan team made without our presence during the visit, but those promises never came up during the negotiations. We received all the instructions from the government rather than the [AKP] party (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 31, 2018).

The chief negotiator who represented the Turkish side and worked with the ministry's department also points out another round of negotiations in the AKP leadership ranks,

AKP had no experience in foreign policy and had to follow the ministry's suggestions. AKP was surprised about what to do in negotiations and having two leaders [Erdoğan as the party leader and Gül as the prime minister] troubled [the US] on how to make decisions. Still, I also have to give credit to PM Gül for keeping the party on his side during the rejection of the proposal at the parliament (Interview 15, January 17, 2018).

Prime Minister Gül's intention to work with the ministry on the eve of parliamentary voting was also mentioned by his advisor. His press advisor stated that the prime minister was eager to work with the ministry. He convinced his party to adopt the ministry's suggestions in the parliamentary voting: '[Gül] invited the undersecretary of the ministry three days before the voting and asked him to write a report that addresses political, economic, and military consequences of passing the resolution. He then shared this report with the members of the AKP and told them that they would make their own decision without the party mandate' (Sever 2015, 43).

The divided leadership in the AKP government was restored when Gül moved to the positions of minister of foreign affairs and deputy prime minister once Erdoğan resumed his role

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<sup>10</sup> Erdoğan was briefly banned from holding political office between 1999 and 2003 when his party won the 2002 general elections. During his visit in December 2002, he was still the party leader rather than a serving PM.

as prime minister (PM) in March 2003. Still, the bureaucratic decision-making model was kept with an even more influential role of the ministry: The 2004 Annan Plan, which brought Turkish, Greek, Greek Cypriot, and Turkish Cypriot leaders together to negotiate a United Nations (UN) proposal to resolve the Cyprus dispute. Turkey's permanent representative at the UN and the ministry's Secretary General for European Union Affairs, the top Turkish diplomat in charge of EU Affairs, were in the Turkish delegation during the United Nations-sponsored talks. According to the two diplomats, the AKP government was in full cooperation with the ministry in framing Turkey's position despite the opposition of the Turkish chief of general staff and its most ardent supporter, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş (Interviews with retired diplomats, February 20 and February 12, 2018).

The UN-sponsored negotiations also caused a rift between the two-top decision-makers of Turkish foreign policy: The pro-European stance of the government in the Cyprus negotiations encouraged the ministry to adopt a slightly different and less hawkish stance than its old ally, namely the office of general staff. At the same time, the discussion on militarism in Turkish politics was in full swing while the AKP government was eagerly adopting a liberal agenda to start Turkey's EU accession negotiations. The rising criticism about the military's role in decision-making became visible with the EU integration process. The military's role in decision-making limited AKP's earlier policies, which included Islamist ideas that the military had been historically against.

Those two significant events in the first 18 months of the AKP governments also brought some institutional changes in decision-making, which were still compatible with the bureaucratic decision-making model: As it was the most crucial goal of Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, the EU accession talks kept dominating the foreign policy agenda of the first AKP

government. The government did not aim to reduce the predominance of the ministry, and Gül as a minister of foreign affairs, fully supported the Turkish MFA's ability in the negotiations. Accordingly, the Turkish government empowered the Secretariat General for European Union Affairs<sup>11</sup> (*Avrupa Birliği Genel Sekreterliği-ABGS*), which was previously launched under the PMO in July 2000 following the recognition of Turkey's EU candidacy status in the 1999 Helsinki summit of the European Council.

The Turkish government assigned the ABGS to oversee the accession negotiations with the EU institutions and to sustain the communication between Turkish state agencies working on various negotiation chapters. The first two secretaries general of the ABGS, who were both career diplomats, noted that the government worked hard to balance bureaucratic rivalry between the ABGS and the ministry due to the growing budget and the decision-making role of the former and February 28, 2018). However, the rivalry was less sharp than the ministry's antagonism with other state agencies because the management cadres of the ABGS were also career diplomats. Even the ministry was relieved that the ABGS shared some of the technical burdens of the long and detailed negotiation process as long as the ministry would still have been in charge of shaping Turkey's EU agenda. The diplomat that served as the ministry's deputy undersecretary for European Affairs in 2010 mentioned cooperation between the agencies: 'The ABGS director was always appointed among the senior diplomats of the ministry, so we [the ministry] worked on political issues while the ABGS cooperated with other state agencies in technical subjects (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 23, 2018)'.

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<sup>11</sup> It is unlikely to find a better institutional framework than the ABGS to understand Turkey's Europeanization adventure. Prior to 2000, the Turkish MFA had a deputy undersecretary and a directorate general in charge of European affairs (Özcoşkun 2018). With the foundation of the ABGS at the prime minister's office in 2000, the secretariat general started to switch between the prime minister's office (2000-2003, 2005-2007, 2009-2011) and the ministry (2003-2005, 2007-2009) (Tekin and Güney 2015). It was also transformed into the Ministry of European Union Affairs between 2011 and 2018. Finally, the department reorganized, again, under the authority of the ministry following the 2018 shift to the presidential system.

Another department on the rise during the first AKP government was the Special Representative for Iraq (*Irak Özel Temsilciliği- IRÖT*), which was launched in 2003 as a deputy directorate general of the ministry. It was an impromptu department because of its place on the ministry's hierarchy and its relations with the government: Osman Korutürk was the first diplomat appointed to the position. His diplomatic rank was more senior than the director general of the Middle East, whose authority included IRÖT. Besides, the representative model adapted from the US Special Representative for Iraq to directly contact the US agencies working in Iraq. Following the failure of the vote at the Turkish Parliament in March 2003, the Turkish government was eager to control the damage in Turkey-U.S. relations and appointing a partner, and senior bureaucrat on the Turkish side might have helped to repair the relations. The representative had broader authority over Turkey's Iraq policy than other senior ministry figures. The second representative that served between 2007 and 2009, explained,

The department's model was borrowed from the United States, and the representative had broader authority, which was wider than my rank. I could personally call the chief of general staff, the minister of foreign affairs, the undersecretary of the national intelligence service, the prime minister, and even the president. The office was also formed to improve relations with the new administration in Baghdad and the United States and set a new tone in the relationship with Kurds [in northern Iraq]. I think [at the time] the AKP decided to create new platforms that would bring its input to foreign policy. They did not know how to handle state agencies, so they preferred to launch small but extra powerful units within these agencies to dominate decision-making (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 25, 2017).

The position of the representative should have caused a problem in the ministry's strict hierarchy since the representative was under the directorate general of the Middle East but was in charge of reporting to the minister of foreign affairs and the prime minister. Bypassing the director general for the Middle East and the undersecretary of the ministry in the chain of command was out of the ministry's playbook. So, how did the diplomats prevent a potential conflict?

The first deputy representative that worked with Ambassador Korutürk at IRÖT stated that the department paid attention to informing the undersecretary about the process as a matter of courtesy. However, it was not expected to do so (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 20, 2018). In addition, Aydın Selcen, his successor who served as a deputy representative at IRÖT between 2006 and 2008, mentioned in his memoirs that although the department was careful to notify the higher ranks, the tension in the ministry still existed due to the IRÖT's independent budget out of the ministry and its close cooperation with the then-chief advisor to the Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu (Selcen 2019, 49-57).

To better examine the conditions that paved the way for small but extra powerful units within the MFA, such as ABGS and IRÖT, in the following section, I will discuss the political scene that the AKP created its foreign policy agenda. The main question of the next section will be how the elected politicians started to appear as crucial figures to challenge the role of bureaucrats in the decision-making process.

### 2.3. POLITICAL SCENE OF THE MODEL

During his tenure as the minister of foreign affairs (FM) between 2003 and 2007, diplomats praised Gül's effort to collaborate with the ministry and not to change the decision-making model in favor of the government. The foreign policy bureaucracy shared a concern about FM Gül's influential role in his party and his potential agenda to use his political power in government to change the way of decision-making. In the early 2000s, as a minister and one of the founders of the AKP, he had the upper hand in party politics and foreign policy. In contrast, there was an intra-party competition about who would lead foreign policy.

Gül was the most experienced AKP politician in international politics due to his previous posts in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council in Europe, where he represented his former

Islamist party. Despite his political background, his interest in hearing the ministry's suggestions was praised by the diplomats that ideologically disagreed with his party affiliation. The diplomat who worked with Gül while serving as the special counselor to the minister between 2003 and 2007 and his chief foreign policy advisor when Gül was president between 2007 and 2014 explained his role in decision-making,

As both the minister of foreign affairs and the deputy prime minister, Gül was an influential figure in foreign policymaking. Previously, he served as PM, so Erdoğan's ministers were first served in the Gül cabinet. In that sense, Gül had influence over the ministers. Regarding foreign policy, he carefully listened to the suggestions of his advisors from the bureaucracy. He even asked what a third secretary thought despite the strict, hierarchical rules of the ministry. For instance, I used to give daily briefings about international events. He listened to me in the morning session and then listened to the undersecretary of the ministry about the same content in the afternoon to hear different perspectives. He also invited the ambassadors whose posts ended to listen to their versions [of events]. He was the one who informed PM Erdoğan, influenced him in foreign policy, and drew the line between the government and his party. Because of his position, the ministry was strong, and the strong minister made the ministry stronger (Interview with a retired diplomat, May 11, 2018).

Ahmet Davutoğlu started his political career as an advisor to PM Erdoğan and FM Gül in 2002. He was eager to play a role in Turkey's policy towards Iraq in his early years. One of the main motivations of diplomats to praise Gül's performance as FM was criticizing his successor in the ministry. Typically, career diplomats were appointed to advisory positions in the ministry until Ahmet Davutoğlu's appointment to the ministry as an ambassador. Entitling a non-bureaucrat, Davutoğlu had no experience in bureaucracy. It was not a mundane practice in a state agency where career diplomats competed to get closer to the decision-making mechanism.

In the 1990s, Davutoğlu was a figure that was known in Turkey's Islamist circles with the reputation of his writings on geostrategy. In that sense, career bureaucrats did not know Davutoğlu's vision very well<sup>12</sup>, and senior diplomats recalled his influence as limited on FM Gül.

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<sup>12</sup> Almost all the diplomats that I interviewed sarcastically, and also proudly, declared that they never finished reading Davutoğlu's most-cited book, *Stratejik Derinlik* [Strategic Depth] (Davutoğlu 2009).

Additionally, Davutoğlu was not the sole advisor who competed to have a seat in decision-making when Egemen Bağış, Cüneyt Zapsu, and Ömer Çelik, advisors of the then-PM Erdoğan, had connections to introduce the AKP in Washington DC and the European capitals.

In those early years, Davutoğlu's ability to influence foreign policy decisions was deliberately limited by FM Abdullah Gül and the ministry bureaucracy. The chief negotiator that headed the negotiations between Turkey and the United States during the 2003 Iraq invasion pointed out that Davutoğlu had almost no contribution to the position paper offered by Turkey to the United States. His influence was limited by Abdullah Gül, who positioned himself as the chief decision-maker with the support of the MFA bureaucracy (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 17, 2018). This limitation might have forced Davutoğlu to join the advisory team of the prime minister while keeping his appointment in the ministry. Although his policy recommendations were rarely entered into the position papers in the early 2000s, the senior diplomats were aware of his influence over the PM and tended to ask for his analysis before drafting a position paper (Interview with a retired diplomat, October 27, 2017). The changing dynamics between the senior diplomats, who had access to the FM, and the chief advisor, who had access to the prime minister and the party in power, did not transform the decision-making model. Nevertheless, the first five years of the transition were the scene of minor changes as empowering small but extra powerful units in the foreign policy bureaucracy and competition within the AKP as a party to govern foreign policy between FM Gül and the chief advisor to the PM Davutoğlu. The next five years witnessed a significant transition trend in foreign policy with the launch of the Davutoğlu era, which I will examine in the following section.

## 2.4. TRANSITION

Following the election of Abdullah Gül as the Turkish president in 2007, Ali Babacan was appointed as the minister of foreign affairs, while Davutoğlu continued to serve as the advisor to the FM and PM until 2009. Gül's leaving the ministry changed the balance that set the rules in the relationship between diplomats and the AKP policymakers. Although Gül gave the impression of continuing his moderator role between the appointed bureaucrats and elected politicians (Sever 2015), his authority was limited due to the limited role of the presidential office over foreign policy. In the following sections, I will examine the conditions of transition in the political setting and the ways in which those conditions influenced the roles of appointed bureaucrats and elected politicians in foreign policymaking.

### 2.4.1. *Conditions of Transition*

Between 2007 and 2011, the AKP and the government were challenged by severe domestic and international conditions: the closure trial of the party, the discussion of whether an AKP-affiliated figure could have been elected as the president, and AKP's fight against the military tutelage through judicial cases. They were all a litmus test for the party to consolidate its power in Turkish domestic politics. On the European forefront, however, the motivation for the EU integration process slowed, and the membership negotiations got stuck considering both EU's internal dynamics and Turkey's prospering economic cooperation with the Middle Eastern countries. In line with various internal and external challenges the AKP faced, the Turkish MFA was cautious. The ministry observed how the new balance between the bureaucracy and the party would have been constituted. The increasing public support for the AKP convinced the diplomats that the AKP governments would have been more long-term partners than the ministry had anticipated, and diplomats should have found a way to work with the government.

The main change in foreign policy in the mid-2000s was the introduction of economic reforms and the advancing presence of Turkish investments in the Middle East. In line with the discussion, if Turkey was a rising trading state (Kirişçi 2009), the Turkish government aimed to reach markets in its periphery while a new conservative, bourgeois class, whose members were the pioneers of economy-oriented foreign policy, was emerging. Accordingly, the deputy undersecretary of the ministry between 1991 and 1995 compares the two decades,

Previously, foreign policy had no economic dimension. Thus, politicians were not interested in who made [foreign policy] decisions. Once international trade boomed following the Cold War and Turkey started trade relations with various countries, the ministry's role in decision-making gradually declined. After that point, the politicians did not listen to our advice (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 24, 2018).

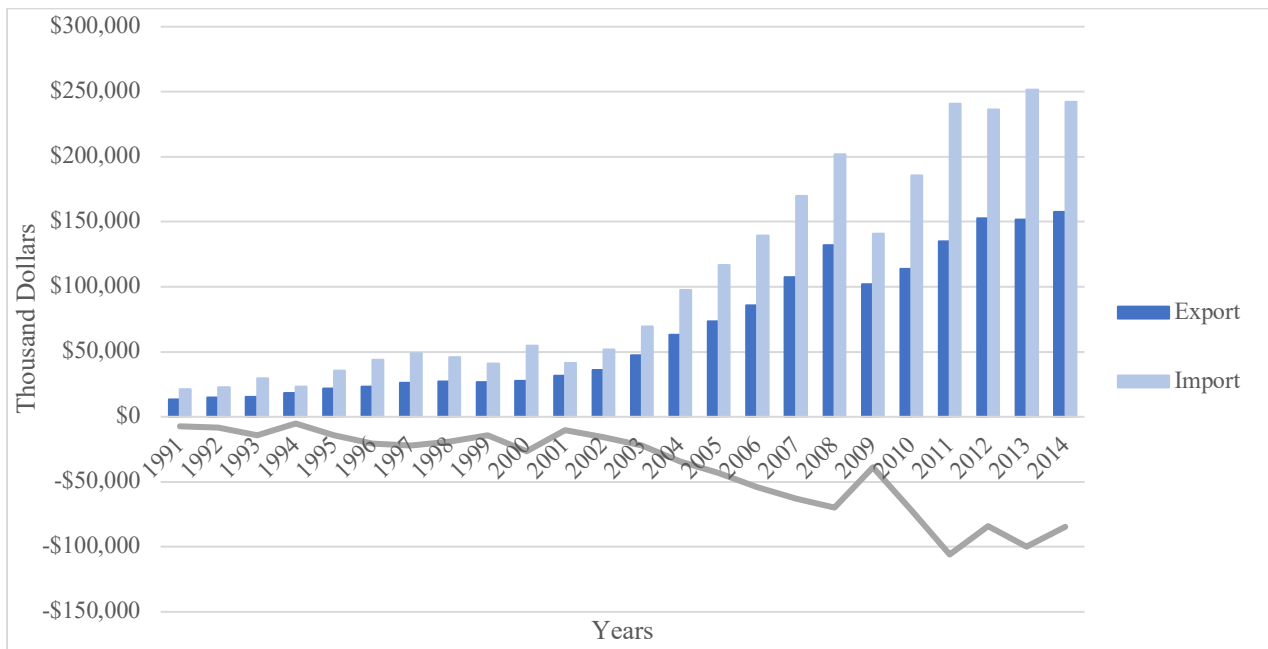


Figure 4: Turkey's Foreign Trade in Years (1991-2014)

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK 2020)

As Figure 4 suggests, Turkey's economy-oriented foreign policy manifested itself when the 2000s ended: Iraq and Syria were the main partners in transiting Turkish goods to the markets in the Gulf area and beyond. Ankara signed numerous trade and visa exemption agreements to support its newly launched, export-based foreign policy. Following the second election victory of

the AKP in 2007, the conservative business organizations such as MÜSİAD (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association), DEİK (Foreign Economic Relations Board), and TUSKON (Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey) often attended the PM's official visits abroad and shared their requests with the government officials<sup>13</sup>. Those government-sponsored international visits were also clear messages sent to the host states that Turkey diplomatically supported the investments of the newly-emerged business elite. For instance, TOBB (The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey) started its think tank, TEPAV, in 2004 and immediately matched Turkish entrepreneurs with government officials on official visits. Its former director stated that 'TOBB and TEPAV participated in these official visits to help businesspeople start a conversation and share their requests with government officials (Interview with a think tank analyst, November 25, 2017).

Economy-oriented foreign policy also convinced the ministry and ambassadors to include economic relations in their agenda. In that sense, the Turkish ambassador to Qatar served between 2007 and 2009 and mentioned his agenda in Ankara before leaving for Doha,

If Turkish companies are in the country where an ambassador is recently posted, [ambassadors] meet with their representatives before leaving. For instance, I visited TEKFEN and ENKA, Turkish energy and construction companies that have investments in Qatar, and also met with the business networks such as DEİK. Those networks organized events in honor of the ambassador so that I could meet with other company representatives at these business dinners (Interview 12, February 13, 2018).

Conditions of foreign policy transition were mainly based on the priorities of AKP's foreign policy agenda. After 2007, the government's agenda focused on increasing foreign trade volume and instructed the ministry to follow its policies. It was an expected outcome that the ministry would have followed the instructions of the PMO. However, for the first time, career diplomats felt obliged to personally contact the business communities where they served and played an influential

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<sup>13</sup> PM Erdoğan visited 84 countries between March 2003 and May 2011 (KDK 2011).

role in strengthening trade relations. In the following section, I will scrutinize the ways in which the AKP government reflected its policy agenda in the MFA bureaucracy and how the MFA responded to the transition request.

#### 2.4.2. *Transition within the Turkish MFA*

Turkey's policy to strengthen its economic ties, particularly with developing countries, was formed through opening diplomatic missions in the countries, whereas previously, Turkey had no diplomatic missions. Central and South Americas, as well as Africa, was the scope of this policy, where the numbers of Turkish entrepreneurs were soaring (Figures 5 and 6).

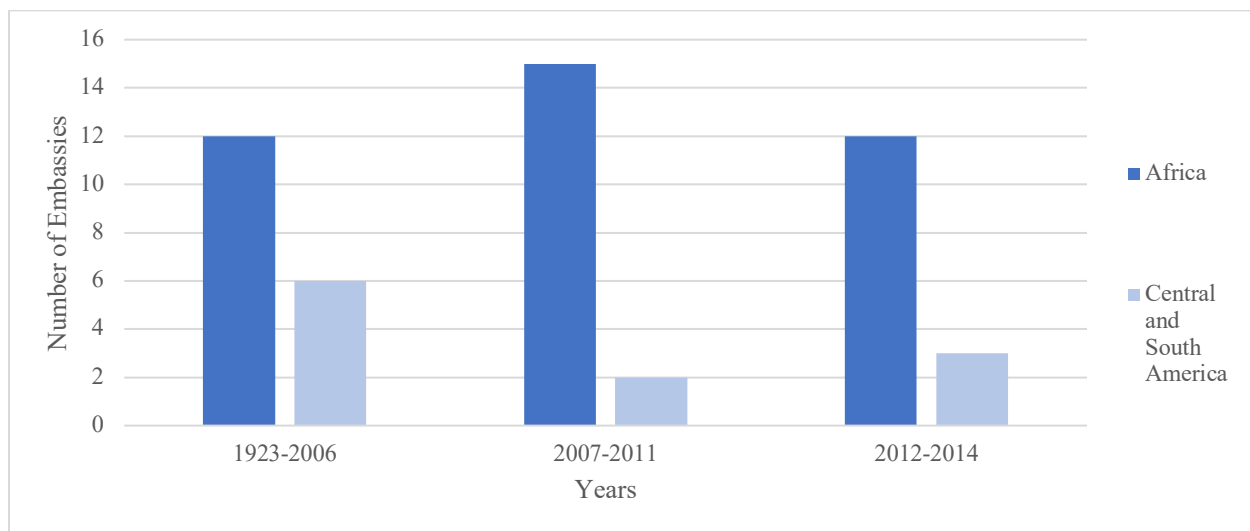


Figure 5: Number of Turkish Embassies in Africa, Central and South Americas (1923-2014)

Source: MFA (2020)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix D for the list of countries.

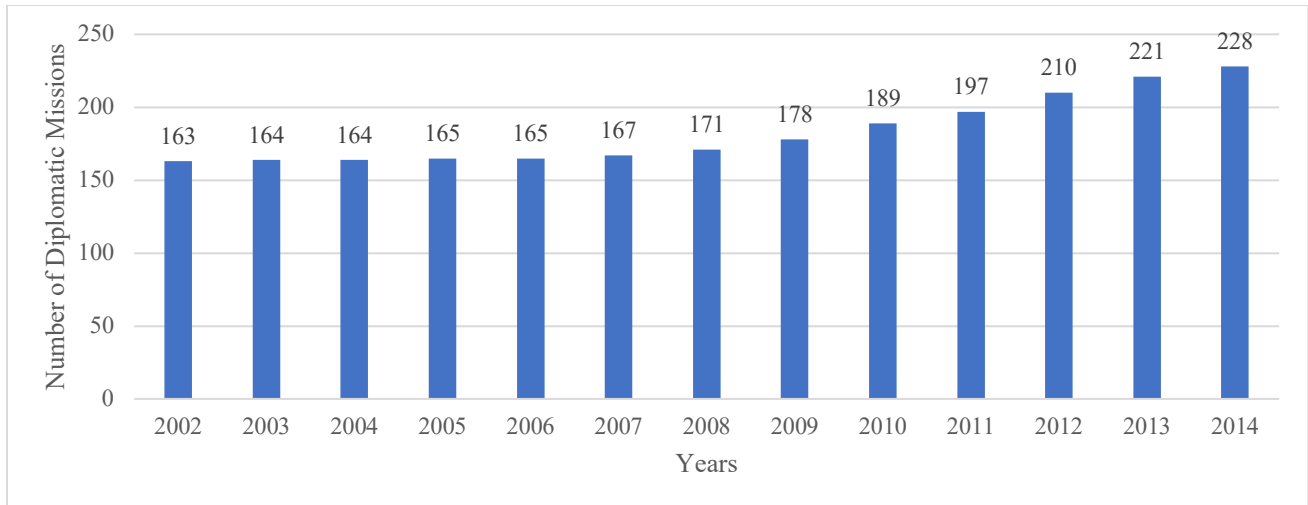


Figure 6: Number of Turkish Diplomatic Missions in Years (2002-2014)

Source: Balcı (2017)

Many diplomats read the increase in the number of diplomatic missions as an ideological re-orientation. The deputy undersecretary who served between 2007 and 2010 described the political conditions in a case where he was asked to draft a report that lists potential countries where Turkey would have launched diplomatic missions: ‘My department was assigned to write a guideline for new diplomatic missions and decided on a few criteria following the UN rules<sup>15</sup>. We reported ten countries for the first phase. The report was sent back with a note stating that we should have adopted different criteria and raised the number of missions from 10 to 20’ (Interview with a retired diplomat, December 13, 2017). The former director of the MFA’s Center for Strategic Research (*Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi- SAM*) served between 2016 and 2018 confirmed the change in criteria,

The criteria for establishing new missions were based on the [government’s] political vision and interests in the respective country. Accordingly, the ministry was consulted to report potential countries. But mostly, the criteria were the requests of entrepreneurs that had investments in those countries. The potential trade volume was the motivation for opening a new diplomatic mission. We could have launched four diplomatic missions in Africa with the same resources we would have spent establishing a mission in

<sup>15</sup> The 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

Luxembourg. We should consider the cost-benefit analysis (Interview with a political appointee, January 18, 2018).

Launching new diplomatic missions in those geographies also led to a discussion on promotion in the ministry. Senior diplomats criticized the faster promotion of junior diplomats compared to previous generations: ‘A diplomatic mission usually works with three to five people, so the ministry had to promote junior diplomats faster than my generation to sustain the minimum number of diplomats in the missions. A junior diplomat I previously worked with was appointed as an ambassador after spending 19 years in service. However, I was appointed after serving 25 years in the ministry’ (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 23, 2017).

The indicators of transition in foreign policymaking also manifested themselves in the role of ambassadors. The Turkish MFA annually started to bring the ambassadors together in 2007 in Ankara. It was not a new practice in the ministry, but the Turkish government used the Ambassadors’ Conference to introduce its foreign policy goals in the late-2000s. The deputy undersecretary served between 2007 and 2010 noted,

We [ambassadors] used to meet occasionally to discuss region-based problems. For instance, ambassadors serving in Europe met either in Ankara or a European capital to discuss Turkey-EU relations. Or if the agenda was on the Armenian issue, the Deputy Directorate General for [Central Asia and] the Caucasus invited ambassadors to Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Russia. The Ambassadors’ Conference first incorporated those independent meetings and provided a platform to discuss various issues in one session. However, the venue turned into government-sponsored policy briefs, where we only had to listen to the government's ideas rather than discuss them. The conference was a platform where the government announced its goals through the speeches of the director of intelligence service or the director of religious affairs (Interview with a retired diplomat, December 13, 2017).

Criticism of the ineffectiveness of those meetings and the obligation of attendance while serving abroad were common among ambassadors. However, some ambassadors were eager to use the sessions to share their critique on the shift in decision-making. They were usually disappointed

with the discussion culture, which rarely allowed them to participate in meetings. Turkey's ambassador to Japan between 2007 and 2011 said,

The meetings were always packed: we listened to all those guest speakers from the intelligence service and the directorate of religious affairs on the first day. Then, we split into working groups to discuss region-based problems. However, we still had a rare chance and limited time to share what we thought, and still, the government did not pay attention to what we argued. The meetings were like running a public relations campaign, and the government aimed to impress public opinion. It was impractical to travel from different capitals to attend those meetings. The flights were booked, and I was invited when serving as the ambassador to Japan. Still, once I returned to the ministry's headquarters [in Ankara] as an advisor, the invitation was no longer extended (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 19, 2018).

To track the policy transition and its effect on the decision-making process in the ministry, I mentioned launching diplomatic missions, especially in South American and African states, and a new initiative to bring ambassadors together in Ankara. The other component of transition in policy and decision-making was empowering the role of political appointees in the bureaucratic setting, which I will discuss in the following section.

#### *2.4.3. Transition in the Role of Politicians*

After the end of the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Gül's tenure in 2007 and his move to the president's office, the hierarchy in the ministry was gradually changed by two prominent figures, Ahmet Davutoğlu, the-then advisor to the FM and PM and Feridun Sinirlioğlu, the Deputy Undersecretary for Bilateral Political Affairs at the time. Davutoğlu and Sinirlioğlu worked as shadow ministers to run the ministry in the presence of a weaker minister of foreign affairs. For instance, the duo represented Turkey in indirect talks between Israel and Syria and conveyed messages from parties during the meetings between 2007 and 2009. As Turkey's ambassador to Israel between 2002 and 2007, Sinirlioğlu brought the messages of the Israeli negotiation team

while Davutoğlu was traveling to Damascus to inform the Assad administration<sup>16</sup>. The earlier collaboration between Sinirlioğlu and Davutoğlu eased the transition period after Davutoğlu became the minister of foreign affairs and Sinirlioğlu was appointed as the undersecretary<sup>17</sup> in 2009. According to the diplomats, there was no divergence between the two figures. Sinirlioğlu was in charge of keeping the ministry in order, and Davutoğlu coordinated the political responsibilities of foreign policy decisions. An academic with access to Davutoğlu's circle recalled his appointment as 'he finally found the people who speak his language' (Interview with an academic, February 22, 2018).

The appointment of Davutoğlu as a minister received mixed reactions from ambassadors: some of the senior figures believed that he would have finally left the shadow minister position and would have been held accountable for the consequences of his ideas. Some of them, however, were more concerned that Davutoğlu would have fully revealed the Islamist foreign policy agenda of the government with the help of his inner circle. The plan of FM included closer relations with the Muslim states in the Middle East and Africa and more emphasis on Turkey's Ottoman past<sup>18</sup>.

The noted circle was formed by Davutoğlu's former students from his early career in academia, AKP members, and the senior diplomat, Feridun Sinirlioğlu, the Deputy Undersecretary for Bilateral Political Affairs at the time. The absence of career diplomats, other than the undersecretary and a few early promoted mid-level diplomats, caused a silent reaction on why career diplomats had a limited role in foreign policy decisions. It was primarily silent because it was a concern among career diplomats whose next promotion depended on the same circle.

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<sup>16</sup> I examine the mediation process in Chapter 4.

<sup>17</sup> Eventually, Sinirlioğlu became the longest-serving undersecretary in the Republican era of the ministry (2009-2016).

<sup>18</sup> I elaborate and analyze how the shift towards Islamist foreign policy agenda evolved in Chapter 3.

Turkey's ambassador to Iraq between 2009 and 2011 mentioned the requirements to become a member of the circle,

I had never been accepted as one of its members, although I closely worked with Davutoğlu during my prior post [as the Special Representative for Iraq]. A solidarity group emerged around him, and its members were people from think tanks, business networks, and academia. The circle had a vertical organization focusing on Davutoğlu, and listening to his speech was like attending a religious ceremony as well as a social activity (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 25, 2017).

The criticism of career diplomats was that the circle relied on groupthink<sup>19</sup>, and FM Davutoğlu was the spokesperson for those decisions he picked from his circle. Turkey's ambassador to the United States between 2010 and 2014 also explained,

There was a team of people outside and inside the ministry, and they only talked to each other. Davutoğlu brought the decisions they discussed in this group to the official meetings. Some of those decisions were made in the discussions, and none of the diplomats were present. We belatedly were aware that those decisions were made either in the [AKP] party headquarters or in the circle (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 8, 2017).

According to career diplomats, Davutoğlu's vision was ideologically driven, self-opinionated, over-categorical, and exaggerated Turkey's capabilities in international politics. It also needs to remember that his later career influenced all those descriptions as the prime minister between 2014 and 2016, which ended with his disagreement with the president.

Still, the undersecretary's office was the mechanism that balanced the political agenda of the government and the requests of the ministry. Sinirlioğlu played a vital role in convincing his colleagues to work with the new FM, while Davutoğlu worked with his circle and a few junior diplomats who were promoted faster than usual during his term. A senior diplomat recalled that 'we, as diplomats, could not have directly reached the minister to discuss the agenda of our

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<sup>19</sup> According to this approach, resources and conditions limit the abilities of a group of people who are in charge of making the ultimate decision. Discussion of an advisory group may end with 'deadlock', which happens when a closed group of decision-makers discusses limited options, exhibits self-censorship, does not tolerate alternative and contrary approaches, vilifies outside groups, and sees itself morally superior (Mintz and DeRouen 2010, 44).

departments, so we had to send the documents to the undersecretary and to expect to hear from his [Sinirlioğlu's] office. The ministry's tradition of contributing the document from the junior diplomat to the minister was cut off' (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 25, 2018). The undersecretary was also a critical actor in representing 'the bureaucratic experience' of the ministry when the decision-making model was changing. Another senior diplomat who served as the chief foreign policy advisor to the prime minister between 2013 and 2016 and closely worked with the undersecretary Sinirlioğlu said,

We [the MFA] are the engineers of foreign policy. We do intellectual preparation for foreign policy decisions, tell the options, and urge the potential consequences of every decision. But we do not object to the government. In other words, a horse should not unseat its cavalry while riding. At the end of the day, we are a part of the system, and we do not overthrow it. In that sense, Sinirlioğlu was a figure that managed foreign policy without unseating the cavalry. It was a *truth test* [emphasis added] (Interview with a serving diplomat, April 17, 2018).

If the undersecretary was such an eminent figure to represent the values of the ministry, then how did the transition occur? Many senior diplomats in the ministry argued that the change in foreign policymaking was inevitable and the government would have eventually transformed the role of the MFA in the decision-making model. A retired diplomat who served as Turkey's ambassador to the United States between 2001 and 2005 recalled the shared sense among his colleagues in the ministry at that time as 'it was not possible to resist the change, the cost of resisting was unbearable' (Interview with a retired diplomat, October 29, 2017).

The cost of resistance to change in the decision-making model for career diplomats were either accepting a lower post or resigning. Between these two options, the undersecretary was the gatekeeper in the transition period that promised to convince the elected representatives, especially the prime minister and the minister, through his close personal relationship and cooperation. Contrary to the office of general staff's hawkish attitude and ultimatums against the change,

Turkey's ambassador to the United Kingdom between 2010 and 2013 said, 'the ministry objected to foreign policy decisions that the government made, but we preferred convincing and explaining the likely results of certain decisions. However, the office of general staff did not use this way. In that sense, Sinirlioğlu slowed down the change despite compromises but aimed to protect the ministry' (Interview with a retired diplomat, December 13, 2017).

FM Davutoğlu and the undersecretary Sinirlioğlu designed the transition period in decision-making. Their agenda to work together created a balance between bureaucrats' working culture and elected politicians' policy priorities. Regional politics also supported the foreign policy duo in a way that the government performed well in its international trade policies and had the upper hand to introduce its foreign policy priorities to supplement its trade goals. In the following section, I will discuss how the transition ended, and Turkish foreign policymaking had to fully embrace the government's policy priorities at the cost of the bureaucratic decision-making model.

## 2.5. GOVERNMENTAL DECISION-MAKING MODEL

The governmental decision-making model relies on the idea that diversification in foreign policy to adapt effective trade, diaspora, and humanitarian aid policies decreases the role of bureaucrats in foreign policy decision-making. The representation of elected politicians in foreign policy manifested through ad-hoc groups, personal relationships, and outsourcing decision-making to the political appointees. Once various experts and political appointees join the decision-making system and advance through personal relations to the ultimate decision-maker rather than through bureaucratic promotion, foreign policy decisions focus on short-term benefits and moral and ideological preferences of the ultimate decision-maker. In the following sections, I will discuss the governmental decision-making through the roles of the three state agencies where political

appointees are recruited and examine institutional actors and political conditions on which the model was built.

### 2.5.1. Institutional Framework of the Model

As Figure 7 points out, the governmental decision-making model relies on cooperation between agencies under the prime minister's authority. In this phase, the ministry of foreign affairs, the president, and the office of general staff step down to the role of information provider rather than decision-maker. In contrast, the prime minister's office assesses the decision-making process with the political appointees working closely with the office.

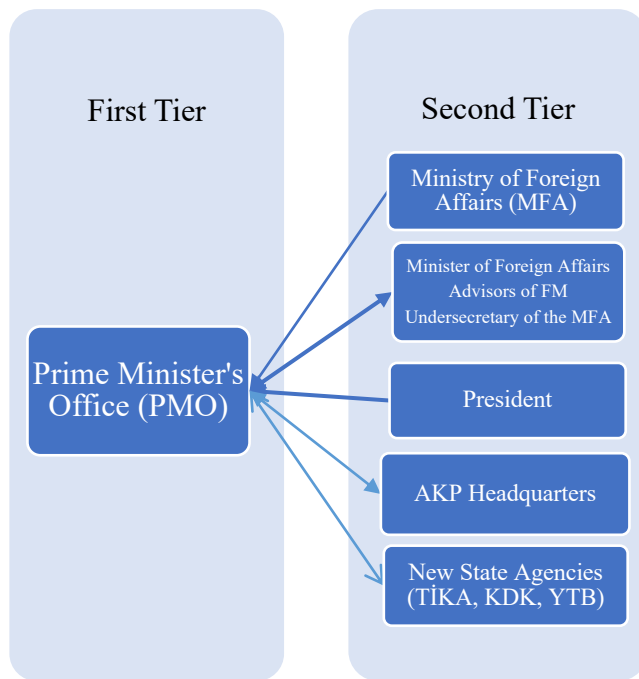


Figure 7: Governmental Decision-Making Model in Turkish Foreign Policy (2011-2014)

In the Turkish context, new agencies under the PMO, such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Office of Public Diplomacy (KDK), and the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) asserted their dominance over the ministry and the office of general staff starting from 2011. While the role of the office of general staff

diminished in the 2010s, the ministry of foreign affairs kept its position under the condition of adjustments in its authority over foreign policy. The president was also unilaterally consulted while the cooperation between the prime minister's office, the minister of foreign affairs and minister's advisors, the undersecretary of the MFA, and the AKP headquarters led to making decisions. In that sense, I will first discuss the role of the three agencies, namely TİKA, KDK, and YTB, in foreign policy decision-making. Second, I will emphasize the conditions and institutional actors that run the model between 2011 and 2014.

### *2.5.2. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency*

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı-TİKA*) was founded as the Directorate for Economic, Cultural, and Technical Cooperation under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1992 (Özcoşkun 2018, 96). Its founding purpose was to support the newly independent Turkic-speaking states in Central Asia into adopting tenets of the market economy and hence creating investment opportunities for Turkish entrepreneurs. In 1999, the department was reorganized as an undersecretary and moved to the Prime Minister's Office. The department was restructured in that year as regional desks such as the Middle East and the Caucasus, Balkans and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, and South and East Asia, Pacific, and South America by abandoning its thematical organizational structure based on economic, trade, technical, educational, cultural and social cooperation (Sevin 2017). TİKA became an influential agency in 2011 through an executive order that increased its organizational and financial capabilities to enlarge its activities beyond Central Asia.

TİKA directors closely cooperated with the prime ministers after the AKP came to power in 2002. They were the first-generation bureaucrats raised during the AKP governments era and appointed in positions that the prime minister, and the president after 2014, had sole authority.

Table 1 shows that the career trajectories of TİKA directors served between 2003 and 2014 also reveal that all three bureaucrats were promoted to positions that the prime minister and later the president closely worked.

Table 1: Careers of TİKA Directors (2003-2019)

Director (Years in Position)	Following Appointment
Hakan Fidan (2003-2007)	Deputy Undersecretary at the Prime Ministry (2007-2010) Undersecretary of the National Intelligence Service (2010- )
Musa Kulaklıkaya (2007-2011)	First Turkish ambassador to Mauritania (2011-2014)
Serdar Çam (2011- 2019)	Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism (2019- )

The increasing role of TİKA in foreign policymaking is also noticeable in its relations with the ministry. The change in TİKA's code through an executive order in 2011 made it an ad-hoc institution that is not obliged to coordinate with the MFA (Sevin 2017), (KHK/656 2011). The regulation also granted access to the budget of other state agencies with the approval of the deputy prime minister that TİKA worked for. Therefore, the budget of the agency increased between the years 2003-2013 to almost five times that of the term between 1992-2002 (Akıllı and Çelenk 2019, 143) when Turkey's overall spending on humanitarian aid rose from \$73 million in 2002 to \$3.3 billion in 2013 (Lepeska 2014). The director of the Department of East and South Asia, Pacific and Latin America at TİKA highlighted how increasing financial resources made the agency a decision-maker: 'We did not seek the permission of the MFA for projects since we had own budget. According to the constitution, an ambassador was the senior officer and represented the state where our office served, but, in reality, the ambassador could not order us' (Interview with a bureaucrat, February 20, 2018). A senior expert from the Department of Balkans and Eastern Europe confirmed the limited authority of the MFA over TİKA projects,

An ambassador was not a party in TİKA's decision-making system, which was centralized in [the Ankara headquarters]; any project proposal came through our local offices or the

deputy prime minister we worked for. The ambassador might help the local office pass the request from official channels. Other than that, we only invited the ambassador to the project's opening ceremony rather than consulting with [the ambassador] to decide which project we would work on (Interview with a bureaucrat, January 20, 2018).

On the ministry side, the former SAM director who served between 2014 and 2016, who was also a non-career diplomat during his post in the MFA, shared his observation about the hierarchy between TİKA and the MFA,

It depended on the TİKA representative in a particular country whether to report activities to the embassy. It was usually out of courtesy if a representative would inform the ambassador. Also, it was ineffective for TİKA to work with the MFA since the TİKA director and deputy directors could personally reach the prime minister and the president to consult. The agency also did not need the MFA support since it could access first-hand information through its local offices and share it with the prime minister's cabinet. It worked like *a second MFA* because TİKA had been directed by people who had less bureaucratic connections but more political ties to the government (Interview with a political appointee, February 12, 2018).

A senior ambassador served in the countries where TİKA has local offices also confirmed the limited cooperation between diplomats and TİKA representatives in local,

We organize weekly briefing sessions with the attendance of attaches in charge of culture, trade, and military issues in the chancellery, and we update each other about that week's agenda. If one of these issues is related to TİKA projects, we invite its representative to weekly meetings. Otherwise, the representative is not a regular member of these gatherings. TİKA has its autonomy, but we also work in coordination (Interview with a serving diplomat, January 23, 2018).

### 2.5.3. *The Office of Public Diplomacy*

The Office of Public Diplomacy (*Kamu Diplomasisi Koordinatörlüğü*- KDK) was founded under the Prime Minister's Office in 2010. However, Turkey's public diplomacy efforts did not start with KDK. The ministry spokesperson between 2005 and 2006 mentioned an earlier attempt to create a public diplomacy campaign while serving as a and how the idea faded away within the bureaucratic decision-making model,

I did try to bring the [public diplomacy] issue to the ministry’s attention before KDK was founded. However, it did not work because of the bureaucratic processes in Turkey. I invited five international experts working on public diplomacy, and they gave seminars at the MFA and other state agencies on adapting a public diplomacy agenda. The MFA went against doing public diplomacy activities within a bureaucratic structure and did not want to participate in these activities (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 8, 2017).

Lobbying, especially in the method of public diplomacy, was not one of the ministry's priorities, which favored state-to-state relations rather than ‘building credibility among foreign publics’ (Cowan and Arsenault 2008, 11)<sup>20</sup>. In that sense, KDK was in charge of transferring the lobbying activities from the MFA. The disinterest of diplomats in lobbying did not match with the foreign policy agenda of the Turkish government in the early 2010s<sup>21</sup> , and the government was looking for an active agency to realize its foreign policy goals. The deputy director of TİKA, who previously served as an expert at KDK, explained the mission of the agency,

Turkey was lobbying through the activities of embassies, especially in the Middle East, but it was not an effective method, and we needed an institutional structure. Following the foundation of KDK, we started organizing workshops and invited international academics and experts from think tanks and shared our ideas in a better way. For instance, we aimed to reach the groups in Libya [during the 2011 civil war] that had sympathy for Turkey’s experience and invited them to the meetings in Turkey (Interview with a bureaucrat, September 6, 2018).

Table 2: Careers of KDK Coordinators (2010-2014)

Coordinator (Years in Position)	Following Appointment
İbrahim Kalın (2010- 2012)	Deputy Undersecretary at the Prime Minister’s Office (2012-2014) Spokesperson to the President (2014- )
Cemalettin Haşimi (2012-2014)	Head Counselor to the Prime Minister and Director General of Press and Information at the Prime Minister’s Office (2014- 2016)

<sup>20</sup> An extended definition of public diplomacy would be ‘the effort by the government of one nation to influence public or elite opinion of another nation for the purpose of turning the policy of the target nation to advantage’ (Potter 2002, 46).

<sup>21</sup> Usually, Turkey’s lobbying activities are outsourced by professional corporations located in the Western capitals. During my research on Turkey’s public diplomacy efforts in the United Kingdom in 2012, the only narrative that united the divided Turkish diaspora in London was that the Turkish embassy in London had limited interaction with the Turkish citizens, The lobbying requests coming from both AKP and oppositional parties’ supporters were ignored by the Turkish diplomats (Gülen 2012).

KDK's efficiency, as TİKA, was limited by its director, whose role determines to what extent the agency has access to the government and the budget. In that sense, the move of KDK's first coordinator, İbrahim Kalın, to the role of deputy undersecretary at the Prime Minister's Office in 2012 diminished the importance of KDK in decision-making (Table 2). The Davutoğlu circle defined the short-term role of KDK in the governmental decision-making model as 'an initiative of its first director'<sup>22</sup>. Once its founding director was promoted to the deputy undersecretary, the agency's 'legal, financial, and organizational capabilities severely decreased, and it turned into a government propaganda machine of the government' (Interviews with retired diplomats, February 6 and February 12, 2018).

#### 2.5.4. *The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities*

The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (*Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı*- YTB) was founded under the Prime Minister's Office in 2010 considering organizing diaspora activities. Compared to TİKA and KDK, YTB kept a low profile in its activities between 2011 and 2014, which was also reflected in the career of its director<sup>23</sup> served during that period.

Although diaspora<sup>24</sup> has a vague connotation for the Turkish bureaucracy, YTB started by reaching out to international students who received degrees from Turkish universities. Most of the graduates were originally from Turkish-speaking communities in the Balkan countries that used to be a part of the Ottoman Empire. Previously, the Higher Education Council (YÖK) offered those

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<sup>22</sup> KDK was eventually dissolved following the 2018 shift to the presidential system.

<sup>23</sup> Kemal Yurtnaç served as the YTB director until 2014 and appointed as the counselor to the prime minister between 2014 and 2016.

<sup>24</sup> The word, 'diaspora' in the Turkish language almost exclusively refers to the Armenian diaspora and none of the Turkish state agencies were named with the intention of not bringing a potential discussion on the Armenian genocide.

scholarship programs with a quota for each Turkish university. As a first issue, YTB took over the management of the program and rebranded it as Turkey scholarships.

In 2011, the agency expanded its scope. It aimed to reach out to the students who graduated from the Gülen movement-affiliated schools in African countries and offered college and postgraduate scholarships to further studies in Turkey. As the former director of the MFA's SAM explained, keeping the record of international students was one of the tasks of the Turkish consulates. This task was transferred from the MFA and its diplomatic missions to YTB after 2011 (Interview 22, January 18, 2018). Over the years, YTB also reached out to the children of Turkey-originated immigrants in Europe and started to offer Turkish language summer schools. In that sense, the agency was eager to eventually create a network in European countries to support the Turkish state's lobbying activities.

The increasing role of the three agencies, TİKA, KDK, and YTB, in foreign policy decision-making, also brings the question of why they were founded and run under the prime minister's office rather than the ministry of foreign affairs that, historically in charge of realizing the agenda of these agencies. In the following section, I will scrutinize how those agencies operated at the decision-making level.

## 2.6. IMPLEMENTING THE MODEL

I approached elected politicians and political appointees to find out why the AKP government founded new state agencies and, most importantly, why they were functional to apply the governmental decision-making model for only a certain period. Respondents mentioned two arguments: Diminishing the bureaucratic alignment in decision-making and projecting the Turkish government's foreign policy ideals. 'Bureaucratic oligarchy' was the keyword to explain 'the non-democratic characteristics of bureaucratic decision-making' before 2011 when the AKP

bureaucrats mentioned the roles of the three agencies in foreign policy. According to this narrative, Turkey was in need of visionary people who thought beyond Turkey's introverted foreign policy priorities, and those people asked why Turkey should have to be content with its foreign policy limitations. KDK's former coordinator served between 2016 and 2018, explained that think tanks might have correspondingly brought alternative approaches to foreign policymaking. Still, the intellectual capacity of the country had not been adequate to diversify its foreign policy tools. The new state agencies have to fill the noted intellectual gap by moving the decision-making process out of bureaucracy (Interview with a political appointee, February 23, 2018).

As a prominent pro-government think tank that sent its senior experts to the Turkish parliament on the ranks of the AKP, SETA (Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research- *Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı*) was founded to fill the noted intellectual gap while positioning itself as a pro-government research institution. Its Director of Foreign Policy Studies agreed that even SETA had limited influence over decision-making due to the ignorance of AKP members. In that sense, he pointed out a more influential role of the agencies in the governmental decision-making model,

Non-bureaucratic, sub-governmental agencies are the best way to bypass the unwieldy bureaucratic structure in Turkey. These departments are flexible and able to break a single form of thinking that solely relies on Western ideology. Also, the flexibility of those agencies allows them to reach the higher authorities in two steps rather than going through all the bureaucratic stages. Finally, the recruitment policy of those departments is based on diversity. So, we ended up having two kinds of foreign policymakers, introverts [the ministry] versus the bureaucrats in the field. The ministry is introverted and away from the field; however, those agencies are in the field and functioning as soft power tools (Interview with a former MP, February 19, 2018).

'Projecting the government's foreign policy ideals' was the approach that career diplomats frequently stated while responding to the question. There were, however, nuances in the argumentation among the bureaucrats: 'The shift in foreign policy agenda led the government to

diversify its foreign policy agencies' and 'the government intended to reduce the role of the MFA in decision-making'.

The MFA bureaucrats and bureaucrats in other state agencies saw the diversification as a negotiation platform to work with the AKP government. Although the career diplomats criticized the decreasing role of the MFA in decision-making, they also stated that the MFA's human capacity was incapable of responding to various demands coming from stakeholders. From teaching the Turkish language in the diaspora to organizing lobbying campaigns were above and beyond MFA's human resources and budget. A mid-level diplomat who served at the ministry's Directorate General of Policy Planning between 2014 and 2018 explained,

For many years, the ministry represented Turkey in every aspect of diplomatic relations: economic, cultural, and lobbying. Those tasks are exhausting, and hard to reach long-term benefits. When I joined in the mid-1990s, the ministry had a limited number of officers, and we needed support. Now, those agencies support us and take responsibility for those tasks. However, we work in coordination, and it is our [ministry's] constitutional duty to make foreign policy decisions. We also have to call those agencies into account for the tasks we disagree on (Interview with a serving diplomat, November 29, 2017).

It is worth reminding that serving and retired diplomats evaluated the changing decision-making model and the decreasing role of the MFA after Turkey shifted the presidential system. During the period that I conducted interviews, both serving and former civil servants were well aware of the new decision-making mechanism in foreign policy and inclined to define the less influential role of MFA with caution. Nevertheless, regional developments in the Middle East boosted the rising profile of new state departments and political appointees in the Turkish governmental decision-making model.

## 2.7. POLITICAL SCENE OF THE MODEL

The popular protests across the Middle East and North Africa that defined the Arab Spring challenged Turkish foreign policy, for the first time, since the end of the Cold War. The popular

demands to democratize political systems in Middle Eastern states gave the AKP policymakers a chance to expand Turkey's role in the region. Classical diplomacy represented by the ministry defined the main pillars of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East as preventing conflicts between the Arab states, building bilateral relations through economic ties, and supporting pro-U.S. alliances in the region.

Following the 2011 popular protests, according to senior diplomats, the Turkish government lost its ethical values<sup>25</sup> while seeking an active leadership role in the Middle East. A retired career diplomat, who also served as the minister of foreign affairs of the first AKP government between 2002 and 2003, noted that the Turkish government saw the Arab Spring as a 'golden opportunity' to lead the popular protests across the Middle East in favor of Turkey's changing foreign policy priorities (Interview with a former FM, January 8, 2018).

The shared narrative among the senior diplomats that still served in the early 2010s was that Turkey solidified its support to the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated groups in Egypt to implement its foreign policy agenda. According to this approach, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) movement, under the leadership of the-then Egyptian president Mohamed Mursi was in close contact with the AKP headquarters. The inner circle of the then-minister Ahmet Davutoğlu frequently visited Egypt to brief the Mursi supporters on winning elections and consolidating the power of MB in office. One of the founding members of SETA and a former member of the parliament from the AKP between 2015 and 2018 described the noted cooperation as '[SETA] published reports that discussed the role of Ikhwan [*Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, Muslim Brotherhood in Arabic] in Egypt, but also, it connected the AKP members with the people participated in these protests. They exchanged ideas in panels. Bureaucrats also consulted with us [SETA] and asked

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<sup>25</sup> The diplomats I interviewed described the twist in Turkish policy as 'the Arab Spring unsettled the ethical codes/values of the government' ('*Arap Baharı hükümetin ahlakını bozdu*').

us to write reports about the popular movements in the Middle East' (Interview with a former MP, November 28, 2017).

Adapting significantly different policies towards the Middle East also excluded the two significant actors from foreign policy decision-making. First, the Office of General Staff moved into a limited role due to the consecutive judicial cases which prosecuted former flag officers for attempting a coup in the early 2010s. The Ergenekon trials, which led to the arrest of more than 500 people, including political activists, journalists, military officers, and politicians, went on for almost a decade. The case was built on the alleged connection between the Turkish armed forces and a shadowy organization that aimed to commit terror attacks and a military coup against the AKP government in the 2000s. In the meantime, the ministry was represented in the decision-making model with the participation of its minister and undersecretary, who did not collect ideas from the diplomatic cadres anymore. An academic who served as the interim minister of the European Union Affairs in 2015 described the changing role of the ministry after 2011,

The government chose to make decisions with directors of newly founded state agencies because it was hard to work with the bureaucratic structure, and bureaucratic agencies were not coherently working with the government. So, the government bypassed some of the agencies [which previously made decisions] or reorganized them. This was a political choice. The prime minister chose option A rather than option B. Also, in the early 2010s, Turkey adopted two channel-based foreign policies: domestic policy-focused and economy-focused because Turkey's EU negotiations slowed down. There were terrorist attacks, [Gezi Park] protests domestically, and the Arab Spring. The rhetoric of the first channel was shaped and articulated by prime minister Erdogan and the second channel was governed by the MFA, which was in charge of economic policies that were also a part of foreign policy at that time (Interview with an academic, June 21, 2018).

In this chapter, I argue that the divergence in foreign policy goals of the government and the bureaucracy materialized through the creation of two decision-making models: bureaucratic and governmental. Decoupling the role of the established agencies in Turkish foreign policy between 2002 and 2014 helped the elected officials redefine Turkish foreign policy's objectives.

First, the chapter highlights the tension between the appointed bureaucrats and elected government officials. Through case studies, I scrutinized the competition in the foreign policy bureaucracy and the rise of political appointees involved in the decision-making. In the case of Turkey, as the government's foreign policy ideas diverged from the bureaucracy, the new state agencies, TİKA, KDK, and YTB, were empowered by the elected officials to alter the decision-making process. Second, the period between 1991 and 2014 showed that electoral support for AKP policies and the degree of disagreement between the officials encouraged the elected officials to realize divergent foreign policy goals. Those goals differed from the foreign policy ideals of the foreign policy bureaucracy. As a final step in applying the governmental decision-making model, the limit of authority and organization structure of new state agencies became the epicenter of the rivalry between the AKP government and the classical Turkish foreign policy bureaucracy, namely the MFA, OGS, and the PMO.

## Chapter 3. INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENTS

I will use the following section as a kaleidoscope to dive deep into the motivations and perceptions of the MFA bureaucrats who served between 1992 and 2014. I will describe why Turkish diplomats joined the MFA and how the profession shaped their perspectives about their colleagues in different state departments. I name all these features of being a part of the institutional culture as the ‘institutional involvement’. The term describes the attribution that the diplomats use to define their belongingness to the ministry, which influenced them from upbringing/social class to retirement. Backgrounds of appointed bureaucrats and elected politicians came up during almost all the interviews I conducted with Turkish policymakers. Also, decision-makers mentioned how their social class and generation influenced their ways of understanding the relationship between the bureaucracy and elected officials.

This chapter aims to answer the question of to what extent the backgrounds of two decision-makers, elected and appointed officials, differed from each other and how their qualifications influenced the decision-making processes. What I suggest as a difference is more generational rather than a social class-based variation among decision-makers. The chapter serves the main argument of this study in two ways: (1) It shows that there is a variation in the generation and social class among Turkish diplomats, and it is not likely to talk about a monolithic elitist culture in the MFA. (2) Accordingly, the chapter shows that perceptions of elected and appointed about each other were prone to the government’s foreign policy goals rather than a working environment that both types of bureaucrats experienced. In this vein, the following section will be organized under three headlines: Before joining the MFA, during the profession, and what it meant to serve as a Turkish diplomat.

### 3.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF MFA BUREAUCRATS

#### 3.1.1. *Joining the MFA*

As in any elite circle, schooling and its network prepared Turkish diplomats for future roles. Diplomats that I interviewed listed specific qualifications in order to join the MFA: Being educated, Western, secular, speaking more than two languages, and coming from a privileged background (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 24, 2018). In the Turkish context, a number of high schools instructing in foreign languages (always Western languages such as French, English, or German) were the first step toward being a part of the MFA network. Most of the Turkish diplomats I met were born after 1945 and graduated from high schools in metropolitan cities such as İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir. Although there were exceptions that some of the respondents mentioned, ‘MFA was home to a group of people who graduated from certain high schools. Childhood connections continued in professional life, and long-term friendships started before joining the ministry. These connections professionally helped most diplomats when assigned abroad’ (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 31, 2018). In other words, the earlier networks were not only crucial for being a part of an elite circle, but they were functional to support each other abroad under tight economic conditions, which I will explain in the following parts.

Language skills gained in high schools also encouraged future diplomats to choose their undergraduate degrees at specific colleges. Considering the limited opportunities for college education, the generation born after 1945 had few options other than starting a civil career after graduation. Usually, Ankara University's School of Political Sciences (*Mülkiye*) was home to generations of civil servants. The school was founded in 1859 to raise civil servants for the Ottoman bureaucracy. In the Republican era, it preserved its reputation as a home for high school graduates who wanted to work in state departments.

For college graduates, there were two kinds of exams they needed to pass to join the MFA: While the written exam measured the writing skills of candidates in Turkish and a foreign language that they chose, the oral exam was organized by a jury of senior diplomats. Senior diplomats, as the gatekeepers of the ministry, were ‘precise to evaluate candidates and to make sure that candidates fit into the profile of future diplomats’ (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 8, 2017).

Once the graduate joined the MFA with the ranking of cadet, the brotherhood<sup>26</sup> gained an institutional identity. As I described in the previous chapter, the corridor record is kept from day one, and brotherhood solidified with *the year of promotion*. It was the class year a cadet joined the MFA, and year-long cadet training created a sense of belonging among junior diplomats. One of the most frequent jokes made in the ministry was ridiculing a person's entrance year based on the performance of fellow cadets who joined the MFA the same year.

### 3.1.2. *MFA Promotion*

Considering future appointments, diplomats were keen to support each other and to help friends from the same promotion get appointed to major capitals together (Interview with retired diplomats, February 12 and 13, 2018). Diplomats were also well aware of the social network in

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<sup>26</sup> Gender was still detrimental for the diplomats served between 1992 and 2014, although more and more female civil servants joined the Turkish MFA starting from the early 1990s (Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm 2021). However, the decision-making mechanism was still based on masculine identity. ‘Ideology of masculinity’ in foreign service is a term as Dean (2001, 4–5) explains through the American experience: ‘The actions and attitudes of foreign policy decision makers were grounded in prescriptive lessons learned in a series of exclusive male-only institutions—boarding schools, Ivy League fraternities, and secret societies, elite military service, metropolitan men’s clubs—where imperial traditions of “service” and “sacrifice” were invented and bequeathed to those that followed. (...) These institutions served to imbue men with a particular kind of “manhood,” that one of the crucial experiences of individuals in such institutions is an indoctrination in an “ideology of masculinity”’. Still, the stereotype that the U.S. State Department is ‘overwhelmingly “pale, male, and Yale” has persisted through both Democratic and Republican administrations’ (Bass 2020).

which they participated. They described it as a solidarity network formed through entry year, high school, or college, and even some respondent named the network a *schism*.

The entry year to the ministry was one of the most critical dynamics in future promotion. Even after 30 years, the promotion year could still have supported the careers of diplomats: If a colleague was appointed as an undersecretary, it was expected that he would have helped his fellow cadets to get assigned to important capitals (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 20, 2018).

In a habitat where being appointed to major capitals was a goal, the brotherhood and solidarity networks could have easily clashed. In other words, ‘the MFA was not a workplace where one made many friends; rather, one competed against colleagues’ (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 20, 2018). The competition for getting promoted almost created a ‘caste system’, where career diplomats and consul officers had different payment schemes and promotion regulations (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 20, 2018). Even the colors of ID badges that diplomats wore at the headquarters in Ankara were classified according to the ranking in the hierarchy up until the mid-1990s (Interview with a former diplomat, January 23, 2018). In this sense, most interviewees mentioned the similarities between the Turkish MFA and OGS with the following features: Western, well-educated, self-disciplined, hierarchical, speaking more than a language, not politicized, professional, and not depending on government policies.

### *3.1.3. Serving as a Turkish Diplomat*

It is also worth questioning the features that diplomats attribute to the profession while talking to an outsider. Most of the respondents spent their whole careers during the Cold War years. Their understanding of state capacity and Turkey's foreign policy clinched with the idea that the MFA was the sole representative of state interests. What they implied by state interests were defined by a diplomat,

When we define the MFA, we [diplomats] mean tradition, working style, and collective thinking but also respecting an individual approach. The ministry is also an educational institution that has trained generations of civil servants since the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's diplomacy tradition has a respectable global reputation that relies on hierarchy. I call this tradition 'shared wisdom', which helps the MFA go through tough times (Interview with a serving diplomat, January 18, 2018).

Outside of the MFA, it was also challenging for diplomats to socialize with a limited budget and the responsibility to represent state interests even in their own social circles. The first obstacle was diplomats' limited compensation package which pushed them to stay indoors: 'Diplomats survive with savings that they kept while serving abroad. They must save from their pension because they must enroll their kids in private schools once they return to Turkey. Whatever, I do not like to discuss these things!' (Interview with a serving diplomat, April 17, 2018).

The respondent's experience was based on his children, who lived in three different countries until turning 18 years old. Once the diplomat's family returned to the country for a position in the headquarter, even if the diplomat was promoted and received a better compensation package, his children's education expenses costed a big chunk of the compensation. Due to the different geographies the diplomat served; his kids usually attended English language-instructed schools. Once the diplomat returned to Ankara, the officer had very limited options until the late-2000s: either sending his kids to free state schools whose instruction language was usually Turkish<sup>27</sup> or enrolling them in private schools that instructed in Western languages.

The accommodation was another challenge that limited the socialization of diplomats and hindered mingling with native communities while serving abroad. Due to the limited budget and unavailability of state-supported accommodation options, diplomats prioritized living nearby the embassy building (Selcen 2019). This choice created a close-knit community with colleagues in

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<sup>27</sup> Most of the diplomats could not send their children to state-run prestigious high schools that instruct in Western languages. Turkey's strict education system based on country-wide entry exams halted the free education chances of this group.

the same Turkish diplomatic unit. Sharing daily lives outside the embassy also brought diplomats closer. Once they returned to Ankara to serve in the ministry headquarters, they still had modest accommodation preferences due to the limited compensation packages.

As the representation of the generation born after 1945, diplomats usually saved up for their retirement and joined a community cooperative that built vacation houses specifically for the MFA retirees. One of the respondents described the post-retirement solidarity network by mentioning a summer house facility in a popular vacation resort,

There is a housing complex in Bodrum that consists of 190 houses whose owners are mostly MFA members. In retirement, we see each other in summer. Our kids call there their hometown since it is one of the rarest places, they can call home. The summer houses brought us together in retirement, and all the discussions picked up there. We even wrote and published a letter on the MFA personnel decree while spending the summer there (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 25, 2018).

Retired diplomats also meet once a month in İstanbul and Ankara. Most respondents mentioned that the summer house and funerals were the most common places they saw each other after retirement.

#### *3.1.4. Demographic Profile of Diplomats*

Up to this point, I described the expected profile of a diplomat: Western, Anglo-Saxon, prestigious (WASP) background of state servants representing the state abroad while removing their own personal approaches to foreign policy decisions. Nevertheless, nuances in institutional involvement were detrimental to understanding the role of the Turkish MFA in decision-making. As it was hard for an outsider to penetrate such a close-knit community, only a handful of academics had a chance to observe the decision-making process at the MFA until the 2010s. In

reference to Gramsci's definition of 'organic intellectual'<sup>28</sup>, an academic described the MFA as an intellectual community designed to protect state interest (Interview with an academic, September 18, 2018). Still, this was a vague definition from an outsider's perspective of how the MFA functioned and how its civil servants defined their roles.

The main reason for a little discussion about the MFA was bound to the argument that 'the MFA bureaucracy usually named all experts, even academics working on foreign policy analysis, as an amateur and unqualified. The ministry never wanted to let anyone play its ball' (Interview with a former diplomat, January 23, 2018). Although there was widespread criticism about the elitist structure of the Turkish MFA, the criticism did not always reflect reality. A retired diplomat explained the elite image of the MFA with an example from the 'mon cher discussion',

MFA diplomats are like shopkeepers, not aristocrats. We used to go everywhere to follow up on contracts of Turkish workers and represent Turkish subjects in courts. We represented everyone from all segments of Turkish society. So, it is a biased assumption that MFA people come from the upper class. Rather, most of them came from middle-class backgrounds like mine. They came from families of junior army officers or civil servants. Although a group of people was born and raised in İstanbul, many diplomats were also from smaller, rural cities (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 22, 2017).

A serving diplomat in his fifties also agreed with the homogenous demographic structure of the MFA,

I was raised in a small town. Although my parents had college degrees, I finished high school in a small town. What the government circles mean by "mon cher" is that a group of bureaucrats attended good schools and came from an urban background. When I asked the people around PM Binali Yıldırım why they tell the mon cher story, they responded that the MFA represents the Ottoman Empire's elite class. While Ottoman diplomats enjoyed their privileges during the last years of the Empire, ordinary people suffered immensely. They call us the predecessor of the Ottoman elite class and accuse us of not defending state interests. But they have no idea how we spend our lives saving from our pension (Interview with a serving diplomat, April 17, 2018).

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<sup>28</sup> Gramsci explains in his 'Prison Notebooks' that 'an intellectual or someone of professional standing (i.e., a doctor, lawyer, or priest) who rises to that level from within a social class that does not normally produce intellectuals, and remains connected to that class' (Buchanan 2010).

The demographic data that the MFA’s website shared with the title of ‘Equal Opportunities’ distinctly stated that the MFA personnel were not selected from a particular segment of the Turkish society. According to the ministry’s dataset, ‘once it is checked the professions of parents of 302 MFA personnel joined between 1998 and 2006, it is seen that only 6.96% of them are the children of MFA bureaucrats’ (Table 3). Although promotion years (1998-2006) in the dataset did not include the entrance years of respondents of this chapter, it is still refreshing data to argue that a significant portion of the parents that were part of the study were civil servants (46%). Presumably, part of the engineer-architect, attorney-judge, and MD-pharmacist categories were civil servants for the mentioned generation. In that sense, it is more likely that diplomacy was a profession tailored for the children of civil servants, if not exclusively for the children of MFA personnel.

Table 3: Professional Backgrounds of Parents of MFA Personnel joined between 1998-2006

Profession	Percent
Civil Servant	39.4%
Self-Employed	17.55%
Other	13.25%
Engineer- Architect	11.26%
MFA Personnel	6.96%
Attorney- Judge	4.30%
MD-Pharmacist	4.30%
Bank Employee	2.98%

Source: MFA (2022)

The generational gap between diplomats born in the 1940s and after the 1960s appeared during the discussion on being a member of the MFA. Most respondents adopted the 'we as diplomats' versus 'them as government officials' approach. The diplomats clearly distinguished the career diplomats and other civil servants.

‘We versus them’ discourse was more nuanced in the diplomatic generation born after the 1960s. Although the younger generation of diplomats recognized the polarized policy of the government against the ministry, still, they criticized how the previous generation of diplomats defined themselves and their relationship with the government,

Our older brothers responded to the *mon cher* discussion with a letter, but they made a mistake. They did not say, “you call us cosmopolitan, but we are a class that the [Turkish] Republic created”. Instead, they explained what *mon cher* means in Turkish. But this is a class issue! Also, this is a reason for jealousy! The government officials are jealous of the MFA people's social class. The class is a very productive concept to drive popularity (Interview with a serving diplomat, April 17, 2018).

The divergence between the two generations of diplomats was also observable in their approaches to working with elected officials, mainly prime ministers, and ministers of foreign affairs. In the next part, I will analyze how the identity of diplomats influenced their way of working with governments in charge before the AKP came to power in 2002.

### 3.2. WORKING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

In this section, I examine the ways in which the diplomats interacted with the elected officials while pointing out characteristics that I introduced in the previous part. This section scrutinizes the traits that diplomats attribute to themselves and how they used these qualifications while negotiating with elected political leaders. I will focus on the relationship between MFA personnel and prime ministers, presidents, and ministers of foreign affairs that served between 1992 and 2002. Analyzing the earlier relationship pattern between the appointed and elected officers will help us to move beyond the common perception of 'AKP versus bureaucracy disagreement'. The traditional approach of appointed and elected officials to each other while making a decision sets the ground for understanding the change in the decision-making mechanism after 2002.

### 3.2.1. *Ministers of Foreign Affairs (1991- 2002)*

When the Cold War ended in 1992, Hikmet Çetin served as the minister of foreign affairs (1991-94). He was named as one of the pioneers, along with minister İsmail Cem (1997-2002), in changing the traditional decision-making structure and the MFA. Çetin's tenure impacted the ministry and foreign policy direction, whereas the coalition governments' period in the 1990s offered an unstable decision-making mechanism. Inside the MFA, Çetin's period 'abolished the caste system of the MFA' (Interview with a former diplomat, January 23, 2018). A former diplomat who resigned from the MFA in the late 1990s explained,

TİKA and SAM were founded during the Çetin tenure. He initiated to launch of a research center to transfer academic knowledge to the ministry. When SAM became a place where diplomats were sent to exile, he introduced a group of academics as advisors and created a network system to hold SAM accountable. In the meantime, Çetin's tenure introduced the regional expertise concept to the ministry<sup>29</sup>. He encouraged young Ph.D. holders to apply for the entrance exam and used their language skills for regional expertise to change the way of approaching the job. Eventually, Çetin hoped these young people would have moved stones with their fresh attitude and influenced their colleagues with their diverse skill sets (Interview with a former diplomat, January 23, 2018).

In attempting to influence the MFA people from the inside by hiring young regional experts, the MFA reacted with displeasure. The young cadres were experts in their regional concentration. Still, according to the retired diplomats, they were not diplomats and lacked the diplomatic skills to have a say in decision-making. Once Çetin was replaced by İsmail Cem, the young cadres transferred to the minor departments that dealt with the paperwork. After a while, they quit the civil service and joined the private sector (Interview with a former diplomat, January 23, 2018).

Çetin's period also witnessed a different approach to decision-making. While coalition governments struggled to negotiate on domestic politics and stabilize inflation rates, Turkish

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<sup>29</sup> For more details on whether diplomats should be generalists or regionalists, see: Lequesne (2019).

foreign policy in the 1990s was led by top diplomats and ministers, rather than prime ministers: Both Çetin and Cem's period introduced Turkey's activism in its immediate geography. Turkey started to join international peace forces in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Afghanistan as part of the NATO peace operations. The international involvement created a tradition in the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and helped the Turkish army to internationalize. In foreign policy, it was the first time the Turkish MFA started to play an active role in international organizations (Interview with a retired diplomat, October 27, 2017).

Turkey's first active policies in the Middle East could be observed during this period, too. I will examine this issue in the next chapter; however, Çetin's tenure was also crucial to understanding the rise of Turkey-Israel relations. The first official visit of a Turkish politician to Israel since 1948 was Çetin's trip in 1993. Çetin's diplomatic advisor at the MFA at that period pointed out that Turkey sought to adopt a balanced regional policy in the Middle East. While Ankara was breaking the ice with the Arab Middle Eastern states, it also aimed to send a message to Israel that Ankara cared about Jerusalem and wanted to keep its balanced approach in the Arab-Israeli relations (Interview with a retired diplomat, December 13, 2017).

The second duo that challenged the MFA's traditional foreign policy approach came to power in the 1990s. İsmail Cem's tenure as a minister of foreign affairs (1997-2002) and Süleyman Demirel's term as a president (1993-2000) marked a significant challenge for diplomats. İsmail Cem's popular image, which later encouraged him to launch a short-lived political party and run at the 2002 general elections, did not have many supporters at the MFA.

Despite various political crises in the coalition governments, Cem's charismatic leadership over foreign policy issues helped Turkey adopt a new and peaceful understanding with its neighbors, such as Greece, Russian Federation, and Middle Eastern states. Rapprochement with

Turkey's neighbors was a bold policy for the MFA diplomats. 'It was revolutionary for the MFA to build better trade relations with Turkey's immediate neighbors. Nonetheless, the MFA bureaucrats agreed with Cem because they knew that Cem was not interested in changing the hierarchy in the ministry. Rather, his attention was building close relations in Turkey's immediate geography right after the Cold War ended' (Interview with a former diplomat, January 23, 2018). The nuance of Cem's policy relied on trade relations and not politicizing the bilateral conflicts with neighboring countries (Interview with an academic, October 26, 2017).

Cem's alignment with MFA traditionalists is worth considering his revolutionary role in the 1990s' foreign policy decisions. Süha Umar, who served as the Deputy Director-General of OSCE<sup>30</sup>, Arms Control, and Disarmament, mentioned in his memoir that the ministry's position about Turkey's involvement in the 1991 Madrid Conference was adamant. The ambassador offered that Turkey should have been a party to the negotiations. He pointed out Turkey had diplomatic experience in multilateral negotiations starting from the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) in the 1980s, and it could use this expertise to adopt an influential position in the negotiations. However, the MFA was a house of traditionalists who defended the authority of their departments viciously. He detailed a discussion on the Middle East Peace Process in 1992,

Turkey was not invited to the bilateral talks between Israeli and Arab officials at the 1991 Madrid Peace Process. But we [the Turkish delegation] were invited to participate in multilateral negotiations that began in Moscow in January 1992. To discuss Turkey's involvement strategy, we made a preparatory meeting under the leadership of the then-deputy undersecretary for Middle East affairs, Ambassador Bilgin Unan. All the senior diplomats who attended the meeting disagreed with my idea that Turkey could have contributed to the peace process. According to them, Turkey was not familiar with Middle East politics. The MFA had not enough workforce to provide information about the issues. They all insisted on not participating. But I disagreed. Even my department was suffering from the same workforce shortage [...]. But Turkey had gained experience in regional security and non-proliferation by participating in the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) signed between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. I represented Turkey's positions by attending bilateral meetings in Brussels, Moscow, Cairo, and Paris

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<sup>30</sup> Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe.

on a weekly basis [...]. I proposed to the ministry that Turkey could have worked as a facilitator between Middle Eastern countries and used its experience in the Moscow negotiations. Nevertheless, none of my colleagues wanted to adopt an active position in the Moscow talks (Umar 2016, 143–44).

When I approached one of the participants of the preparatory meeting before the 1992 Moscow negotiations, a retired diplomat pointed out a *schism* in the ministry. The senior diplomat said, ‘the ministry *shapes* you; it *shapes* how you think! If your personality *fits* into being shaped by a superior authority, you never take a risk and go along with the traditional policy. This was exactly what happened in the Moscow talks. The ministry did not mind what diplomats could have accomplished through their experience. Ankara supports team effort rather than having a personal mark on the policy’ (Emphasis added) (Interview with a retired diplomat, August 18, 2018). A former undersecretary of the ministry who served in the early 1990s confirmed the criticism on the unanimity in bureaucratic decision-making. According to the veteran diplomat, the ministry’s policymakers lacked vision, as Umar raised, and there is a disproportion between ambition and capacity in Turkish foreign policy (Interview with a retired diplomat, February 10, 2018).

The traditionalist approach in the ministry was also intertwined with the generational features of diplomats. As I discussed in the previous section on demographic features of Turkish diplomats, the overarching motto of Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s was adopting a pro-European, pro-US stance and only collaborating with Middle Eastern states on an economic basis. Accordingly, most respondents implied that the traditionalists in the 1990s rarely thought Turkey-Middle Eastern states relations beyond trade and rarely mentioned any cultural connection with the region. A former ambassador to Israel who served in the 1990s explained the so-called dislike of the Middle East at the MFA: ‘The MFA has a weird instinct. It does not like Arabs. Before the 1990s, the ministry only wanted to keep good relations with Arab societies but never wanted to involve in intra-Arab politics. The Middle East was a competition field between the USA and

USSR, and Turkey did not want to interfere with any parties. However, the Iran-Iraq war and Saddam's campaign to Kuwait pushed Ankara to involve in the region, which was an uncomfortable approach for the MFA people' (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 23, 2017).

### 3.2.2. *Presidents (1991-2002)*

The early 1990s were unstable due to numerous elections and coalition governments. In foreign affairs, however, President Turgut Özal was an elected official with a solid and distinctive foreign policy agenda than MFA's traditional approach to foreign policy. According to diplomats that worked with him in the presidential palace, Özal was the first president to participate in foreign policymaking after the first president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk,

Özal did not want to change the decision-making system from scratch, although he had his own foreign policy agenda. But the intention to change the decision-making did not start with Özal, although he was the first to make it until the AKP years. There was a tradition in Turkish governments: Each government aimed to change the ministry from the day after coming to office. After six months in office, they all gave up and went along *with the establishment*. *The outsiders* assumed that the ministry was very bureaucratic and had no idea about the country. Once they became a part of the decision-making, they understood how wrong their assumption was. [Nevertheless] The recent mon cher discourse motivated the government to change the ministry (Emphasis added) (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 23, 2017).

During my interviews in Ankara, the AKP bureaucrats enthusiastically mentioned Özal's foreign policy goals once we discussed the names that changed Turkish foreign policy. An academic who worked on Özal's foreign policy ideas and served as the vice president of SETA pointed out how Özal made a considerable impact on AKP's foreign policy ideals. He told,

The second Özal term in the 1980s resembles today's AK party foreign policy goals. Both administrations transformed and improved Turkey's foreign policy goals. I classified the last three decades as Özalization (1980s), de-Özalization (1990s), and re-Özalization (2000s). [...] Özal transformed Turkish foreign policy from security-oriented to opportunity-oriented. The first time, we observed the role of identities in foreign policymaking during his tenure. Previously, there was no discussion about the identity aspect of foreign policy, such as Pan-Turkism. His term was also revolutionary in putting Ankara at the center of policy decisions

apart from NATO and the EU. In other words, Özal came up with different foreign policy approaches for Turkey and introduced an independent foreign policy from the USA and Europe. Although Turkey kept its interdependent relations with the West, first time, Ankara built relations with non-Western states. [...] He accomplished these goals *despite* the MFA. He even said, “I saved Turkey from Mülkiye”. This was an important message that was sent to the Turkish bureaucracy. Turkey's intelligentsia raised from the Mülkiye and Özal *cleaned the bureaucracy* except for the MFA and the Treasury Department (Emphasis added) (Interview with a think tank analyst, February 19, 2018).

Progressive diplomats supported the new approach that the Özal administration brought to foreign policy. Turkey's proactive approach in the Middle East in the early 1990s was the outcome of the Özal administration. Turkey's ambassador to Iran<sup>31</sup> between 1987 and 1988 stated that Özal worked hard to develop Turkish trade in the Middle East and even increased exports to both countries during the Iran-Iraq war.

Working with Özal during his presidency and participating in his foreign policy decisions also positively impacted the careers of diplomats. According to a retired diplomat that served as the MFA-appointed foreign policy advisor of President Özal, the AKP administration chose him as *persona grata* and handed Turkey's special mission to Iraq because of his good relations with Özal: ‘The AKP government assumed that I should have been flexible in discussing different options since I had worked with Özal’ (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 25, 2017).

In general, diplomats were not happy to work with Özal's foreign policy agenda and observed their decreasing power over foreign policy decisions. The Özal-led administrations, first as prime minister (1983-89), then president (1989-93), even *physically* distanced the MFA from decision-making processes,

When I joined the ministry in the 1970s, the MFA and the PMO were at the same complex. It was an L-shaped building. You just needed to open the door to step into the building where the PMO was located. We [the MFA] stayed in the same building until Özal became the prime minister. Later, Özal *kicked us out* of the complex. There was a symbolic meaning in sharing a building with the PMO. Until the 1980s, the political practice was that the MFA worked as a spokesperson for the government. I would say foreign policy

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<sup>31</sup> Turkey's ambassador to Iran represented Turkey both in Iran and Iraq during the 1980-88 war.

was *above parties* and the MFA, so to speak (Emphasis added) (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 25, 2018).

When Özal's foreign policy agenda challenged the role of the MFA, the glue that kept the MFA in the decision-making mechanism was its undersecretaries. Charismatic diplomats such as Özdem Sanberk and Gündüz Aktan were appointed undersecretaries and represented the MFA's viewpoint among the elected officials (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 25, 2018). The analogy of 'strong undersecretary versus antagonistic minister' was frequently referred to by the generation that worked with Özal when describing their working culture with the AKP-affiliated elected officials.

Tumultuous regional crises in the 1990s kept challenging the traditional approach to foreign policymaking. Turkey's trade relations with the Balkans and the Middle East were damaged due to regional conflicts in the post-Cold War era. To tackle the international trade crisis of the Turkish economy, Presidents Özal and Demirel made themselves available to contact business communities when trade routes were affected by political turmoil in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Iran, and Israel. I will explore the personal involvement of President Demirel in Israel-Turkey relations in the next chapter. Still, as the last elected politician in this chapter, his mark is crucial to understanding the relationship between the MFA bureaucrats and elected officials. A former Turkish ambassador who served in the 1990s in Israel gave an example of Demirel's foreign policy agenda: 'Businesspeople were reaching out to President Demirel in the early 1990s. They demanded to upgrade the Turkish mission in Tel Aviv to an embassy. Demirel ordered the MFA for the upgrade, but it did not happen immediately. It took two years to work on it. We followed the MFA protocol to make it properly' (Interview with a retired diplomat, November 23, 2017).

To sum up the 1990s and the role of the Turkish MFA in decision-making, I explore the social class, educational background, and solidarity network of Turkish diplomats in this section. The significance of the Turkish experience appeared in, what I call, institutional involvement. In this case, diplomats interiorize their profession and define a field of expertise as a part of their professional identity. They are inclined to exclude other state departments and political actors. The cases exempt from institutional involvement occur when a president and/or a minister of foreign affairs introduce their foreign policy agenda. In the Turkish case, Hikmet Çetin and İsmail Cem had two different approaches to introducing their foreign policy plans: On the one hand, Çetin was interested in hiring non-traditional backgrounds for the MFA and faced backlash from the ministry. On the other hand, Cem was more interested in ideational differences in foreign policymaking and did not focus on hierarchy in the ministry. Finally, presidents Özal and Demirel both had ambitious foreign policy agendas. Whereas Özal disagreed with the MFA and aimed to move the decision-making authority to his entourage, Demirel was more cooperative in introducing his policy and convincing the MFA bureaucrats. Those four political figures have been significant in understanding what the AKP governments aimed to change in the following decade. In the next section, I will explore how the AKP government challenged the unwritten and unanimous rule of Turkish foreign policy that every government had to convince the foreign policy bureaucracy, specifically the MFA, in order to succeed in foreign policy.

### 3.3. OBSERVING THE TRANSITION FROM THE MFA

In this part, I examine how the MFA bureaucrats perceived the transformation of decision-making and how they defined their role in the AKP era. In doing so, I aim to show the difference between pre-and post-AKP periods. Thus, I will focus on three themes: (1) criticism within the MFA, (2) transition within the ministry, and (3) political appointees of the MFA.

### 3.3.1. *Criticism within the MFA*

Before the 2000s, senior bureaucrats were critical of decision-making processes in foreign policymaking as long as critics stayed behind the closed doors of the MFA. In these closed-circle discussions, diplomats had raised three structural problems: (1) Lack of ground rules in decision-making, (2) ambiguity of foreign policy goals in the long run, and (3) disproportion of ambition and capacity (Interview with a retired diplomat, February 10, 2018).

In the 2000s, the lack of ground rules was the most anticipated problem, where elected and appointed officials had no common ground to negotiate. Turkey's former representative to the UN in the 2000s mentioned those three problems with an example from the 2003 Annan Plan between Turkey, Greece, Greek, and Turkish Cypriot community leaders,

One of the significant weaknesses of Turkish foreign policymaking was that we wasted our time with missing opportunities. It was a common practice to declare a negative stance in the first place, then contradict our position. We made the same mistake during the 2003 Annan Plan negotiations and aimed to reach the maximum result rather than agreeing on the optimal position. We, as policymakers, could not have foreseen the changing international conditions. We did not estimate the status quo in Cyprus would have stayed for 40 years. We also did not see the culture of peace would have spread all around the world. After the 1980s, the norm became peaceful coexistence rather than our suggestion, where the state drew the line between communities (Interview with a retired diplomat, February 12, 2018).

To address the structural problems, FM Abdullah Gül asked a senior diplomat to draft a report. The senior focused on three headlines in his report: 'Restructuring the ministry organization, restructuring SAM to make it an influential office, and reforming in-service training' (Interview with a retired diplomat, October 29, 2017). However, the terms of the diplomat and FM Gül ended without putting the suggestions into practice. However, both cases show that the ministry is aware of the structural problems in decision-making.

### 3.3.2. *Transition within the MFA*

The early years of AKP foreign policy (2002-07) aimed to gain trust inside and outside the country. The governments did not intend to start a significant discussion about the institutional design of foreign policymaking. Instead, the AKP governments created an image of being eager to work with the appointed bureaucrats until the second term.

AKP governments' policy agenda focused on more external actors than paying attention to the MFA until 2007, the year that Ahmet Davutoğlu became the minister of foreign affairs. The appointment of Ahmet Davutoğlu as a minister of foreign affairs (FM) was met with suspicion and reaction. 'Davutoğlu's appointment had more influence on *the inside* than the outside' (Emphasis added) (Interview with a serving diplomat, April 17, 2018). The primary issue of the Davutoğlu term was reforming the MFA code regulating promotion, titles, and hiring criteria. The consecutive legislations issued in 2010, 2011, and 2013<sup>32</sup> allowed the recruitment of diplomatic personnel from several backgrounds, whereas the position of career diplomat was previously restricted to the graduates of political science and law departments. Promoting administrative staff to career positions was one of the solutions to control the criticism from the ministry. Simultaneously, salaries and benefits of the MFA personnel were substantially raised after each legislation.

The 2010 and 2013 legislations also brought the most controversial issues to the forefront: Appointments of non-career diplomats to diplomatic posts. Historically, the Turkish government rarely appointed non-career diplomats, although the legislation before 2013 did not dictate appointing career diplomats solely to diplomatic missions abroad. The 2013 legislation, however, not only paved the way for selecting active political figures such as the elected/non-elected

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<sup>32</sup> The code has been updated various times with legislative decrees since 1923. The recent version can be accessed at Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013).

members of the AKP but also allowed the government to appoint non-career diplomats to career positions in the ministry's headquarters in Ankara. Accordingly, the 2010 legislation led the non-career diplomats to use the title of ambassador in different roles in the bureaucracy after their diplomatic mission ended.

For many years, insiders of the ministry had complained about the foundational legislation regulating pensions, childcare, health benefits, promotions and accommodation, and education expenses of families and diplomats. The benefits of career diplomats, such as moving stipends, childcare, and, most importantly, retirement benefits, were traditionally augmented with every promotion and reached the upper limit with the title of ambassador, which is one of the highest levels that a civil servant could reach in the Turkish bureaucracy. In that sense, the 2010 policy reform took much criticism from the diplomatic circle. The 2010 bill allowed to entitle non-career bureaucrats as ambassadors even if they served in Ankara. The previous practice was that non-career bureaucrats used the title and relied on benefits only for the period they served abroad. While the legal framework was changing, Feridun Sinirlioğlu, the acting undersecretary, 'was in charge of damage control, although ambassadors criticized the potential consequences. Sinirlioğlu told [diplomats] should find common ground [with the government] since the AKP determined – no matter what – what to pass the bill in parliament' (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 20, 2018).

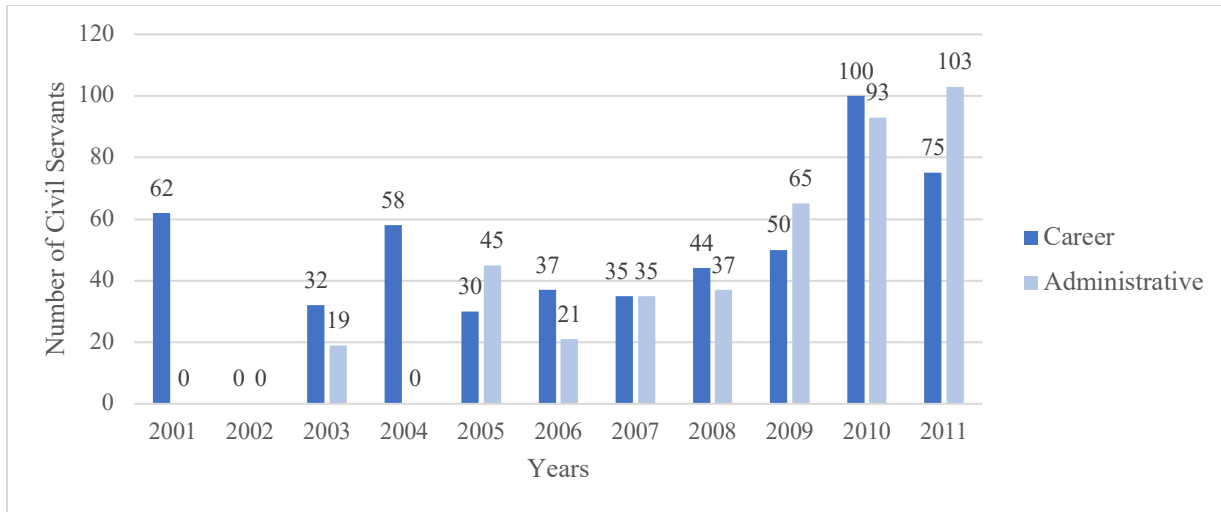


Figure 8: Number of Diplomatic Recruitment in Years (2001-2011)

Source: Dinçer and Kutlay (2012, 17)

Reform in recruitment policy was required to review entrance exams. Before the legislations, the ministry had invited the top-ranked applicants in the national civil servant exam to take the ministry's exam. Candidates had attended various written exams that tested their skills in translation, international law, and the history of Turkish foreign policy. The selection committee, led by senior diplomats, also conducted interviews with the candidates in the last round. The 2010 legislation changed the system by introducing the multiple-choice exam as the first step. The written and oral exams continued to be offered. However, senior diplomats criticized the new policy that they had to select that year's cohort from the top scorers of the multiple-choice exam, which was organized by a national exam authority of the government (As Figure 8 depicts, the number of cadets joined to the ministry as 2010 and 2011 cohorts were 39.4% of the total number of career and administrative personnel joined the MFA between 2001 and 2011).

The suspicion about top scorers was their ties to the AKP, especially after some of those junior diplomats were dismissed from the ministry following the 2016 coup attempt. The concern was whether the selection process was merit-based, which was confirmed after the 2016 coup

attempt documents became public. Most junior civil servants in top state institutions had access to questions before taking the exam and ruled out their peers with favoritism and connection with AKP circles.

### 3.3.3. *Political Appointees of the MFA*

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the Davutoğlu term as the FM and PM changed the decision-making practices and replaced them with a new understanding that relied on the AKP decisionmakers. Accordingly, Davutoğlu also had a different approach to working with the diplomats and was eager to redesign the ministry and decision-making processes (Aras 2014, 2015). The hallmark of this era in the ministry was the introduction of non-diplomats into diplomatic circles. The number of non-career diplomats attending decision-making meetings made the career diplomats call this group 'the circle members'. The group decision-making in the Davutoğlu circle clinched the idea in the ministry that there would be dual discussions in foreign policymaking in the future: One in the ministry and one in the circle.

Davutoğlu had a welcoming approach to criticism raised by people outside the ministry. He did not prefer to defend the ministry [against criticism], and he talked to us [diplomats] as he was talking to the outsiders. For instance, we held a meeting following Hamas won the legislative elections in Gaza [in January 2006]. In those meetings, we put our personal views aside and evaluated the possible scenarios in response to the situation. I explained in the meeting that the world called Hamas a terrorist organization and, although we did not call it, we should have been careful about responding to the election results. Davutoğlu was eager to convince me that Hamas was not a terrorist organization. But the discussion was not about whether it was. It did not matter if I called it a terrorist organization or not. The matter was how we would have responded to the change, but Davutoğlu was talking to us the way he was talking to the people outside [of the government] (Interview with a serving diplomat, May 11, 2018).

The common criticism raised by career bureaucrats who worked with Davutoğlu was that he insisted on getting more than the crisis offered and did not consider how much risks it needed to take. While driven by his ideas, his circle did not consider the ministry's suggestions and named

those ideas as conservative and unreliable. Davutoğlu and his circle initiated various changes that the AKP would offer after 2011, which I will discuss in the following section.

### 3.4. TRANSITION THROUGH THE AKP BUREAUCRATS

In this part, I will discuss what the AKP decisionmakers think about the MFA and working with appointed bureaucrats. To understand the inside of the AKP decision-making, I will explore the arguments of circle members and the shared ideas that brought them together, which also separated this group of bureaucrats from career diplomats. I define the circle members as political advisers of Davutoğlu and his personal contacts from academia who were later appointed to the MFA roles, such as SAM director. Additionally, academics worked at İstanbul Şehir University<sup>33</sup>, and pro-government think tank professionals were members of the noted group. Still, this was not a close-knit network that supported its members throughout the Davutoğlu term. Rather, people had a one-to-one connection with Davutoğlu and were promoted through personal connections.

Those professionals' way of understanding how the MFA worked and what the career diplomats represented in the decision-making is crucial to grasping the relationship between the elected and appointed officials. For instance, an academic who directed a pro-government think tank in the late-2010s noted that diplomats had a 'distinct public image': 'The mon cher perception was shared by the public, even in the 1990s. Public perception agreed with the nickname because almost all the retired diplomats joined the politics from the CHP ranks [main opposition party]' (Interview with a think tank analyst, January 22, 2018).

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<sup>33</sup> The university was established in 2008 by the Foundation for Sciences and Arts (BİSAV), whose founders included Davutoğlu. Following Davutoğlu's disengagement from the AKP and the founding of his own political party, the assets of the university were frozen by the government, and the control of the university was transferred to its guarantor state-run university in January 2019. Finally, the government shut down the university in 2020 due to its financial controversies.

As a cure to the like-minded people of bureaucracy, the Davutoğlu administration introduced non-career diplomats to the ministry. As I discussed in the previous chapter, one of the early homes of those bureaucrats was the ministry's research center, SAM. Previously, non-career directors of SAM either worked with Davutoğlu in academia or had connections with his circle. A former SAM director who was appointed to the position in the Davutoğlu era explained what his colleagues brought to the ministry,

The government built a relationship with the bureaucracy when Davutoğlu was appointed as a minister. Those days, [the government] followed the bureaucracy with suspicion. We needed a mechanism to *synchronize* the ministry and the government and to lead the bureaucracy. Davutoğlu was a figure who worked like a foreign policy consultant at the time when the government needed (Emphasis added) (Interview with a non-career bureaucrat, February 12, 2018).

The circle members in charge of coordinating the decision-making had a self-critical attitude, too. According to a political appointee, AKP bureaucrats 'learned to make a decision by actually making many decisions' (Interview with a non-career bureaucrat, February 23, 2018). The circle members, however, differentiated their approach to decision-making by pointing out how eager they were to take risks. In doing so, a political appointee at the PMO questioned diplomats' risk-taking capability,

I have been thinking about low performance of career diplomats since I arrived in Ankara. I wonder why career diplomats do not want to take risks while making decisions. Do they not want to take risks because of personality traits, career concerns, or the bureaucratic system? Diplomats are very anxious once they make a decision because they would end up held accountable. I am still unsure if they are hesitant to be warned by a higher authority or if keeping a low profile is their choice (Interview with a non-career bureaucrat, February 23, 2018).

Besides, generational differences were crucial to understanding the confrontation between career and non-career bureaucrats. As a bureaucratic tradition, the cohort-based promotion in the ministry allowed career diplomats to promote to ambassador positions after their mid-50s. However, non-career diplomats were usually appointed in similar roles in their early 40s. The difference in

experience level raised disagreement between the two groups due to the different perceptions about Turkey's recent political history. Contrasting roles as representing the country (career diplomats) and witnessing the country's political history (non-career diplomats) in the last four decades led to understanding the major political crises from different perspectives. A non-career diplomat exemplified,

Bureaucracy does not change its decision-making style based on the government in charge. If a bureaucrat was against Ecevit's 1974 Cyprus campaign<sup>34</sup>, that person also disagrees with the 2018 Operation Olive Branch<sup>35</sup>. Experience plays a huge role here. An ambassador who is roughly 55-60 years old should have witnessed three to four military coups. Interruption in civilian governments, for sure, leaves a trace on their judgment and limits options in their decisions (Interview with a non-career bureaucrat, February 23, 2018).

Non-career diplomats also pointed out the educational background of career diplomats as the last reason for the divergence between the elected and appointed officials. According to the circle members, not offering various options in case of a political crisis stemmed from the college education of diplomats,

College education in political science in Turkey is based on history and law. Once a cadet graduates and joins the MFA, there is no intellectual capacity in the ministry to push the intellectual boundaries of a young person or encourages the young officer to understand problems on structural or theoretical frameworks. The ministry does not support officers to develop intellectually, so those people are the local version of WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant): *White, ethnically Turkish, secular, and Western-minded*. But the monotype is not a problem just for the Turkish bureaucrats. This is a common practice in other countries, too (Interview with a think tank analyst, January 25, 2018).

In sum, arguments of non-career diplomats in joining the decision-making processes could be summarized under five groups: Public opinion aligns with non-career diplomats, coordination

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<sup>34</sup> Turkey's second Cyprus campaign in 1974 under the leadership of PM Bülent Ecevit came after the breakdown of peace talks between the Greek, Turkish Cypriot community leaders, Turkey, and Greece. Following the 1974 operation, Turkey controlled of 36% of the island and moved approximately 60,000 Turkish Cypriots from south to north of the island.

<sup>35</sup> Turkey's cross-border military operation with the Syrian National Army (SNA) in the Afrin district of northwest Syria. To create a buffer zone from the People's Protection Unit (YPG) away from the Turkey-Syria zone, the Turkish armed forces and SNA pushed YPG forces further into Syria and changed the demographic structure of the region by transferring Arab refugees from south of Syria.

problems in decision-making, different perceptions about risk-taking, and generational and educational differences between the two groups of bureaucrats. To better understand the critical stances of both groups, in the next section, I will discuss the coping mechanisms of these groups while working with each other.

### 3.5. COPING MECHANISMS

I discussed the common concerns of AKP bureaucrats in the previous chapter. Both the AKP decisionmakers and the career bureaucrats agreed that the early AKP governments until the 2010s were willing to work with the bureaucracy since the elected officials had no option to replace the MFA with government-oriented bureaucrats.

In the 2010s, the position of the AKP government was ‘creating a compatible bureaucracy’, which would not exclude the MFA, but introduce state departments aside from the ministry (Interview with an academic, February 6, 2018). The intention was not founding new departments under the MFA but coordinating those new offices with the MFA and its diplomats. The reason for getting the ministry's approval was that the government was still dependent on the technical aspect of diplomatic knowledge in Turkey’s fundamental foreign policy areas, such as the relations with the EU and the US. The formula that the AKP bureaucrats came up with was to focus on ‘the less desirable foreign policy issues’ such as diaspora relations, public diplomacy, and foreign aid<sup>36</sup>. Accordingly, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) was assigned to work on diaspora relations. The Office of Public Diplomacy (KDK) was founded to be in charge of public diplomacy. Finally, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) revived

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<sup>36</sup> Founding new departments to extend the government’s authority over foreign policy is not a genuine tactic of AKP policymakers. Drezner (2000) discusses the Carter and Clinton administrations through similar tactics, and I discuss the Turkish case through examples from TİKA and ABGS (Gülen 2022).

to concentrate on foreign aid policies. Still, cadets joining these three institutions enrolled in in-service training programs organized by the MFA Diplomacy Academy. According to an academic who taught at the academy, 'still, TİKA, YTB, and KDK cadets are shaped by the core ministry values when joining the bureaucracy' (Interview with an academic, February 6, 2018).

Adding new agencies to decision-making had different interpretations in the Turkish bureaucracy. From the government's perspective, it functioned as speeding up the bureaucratic decision-making mechanism. For career bureaucrats, it implied that the government had a different ideology, so it needed to work with like-minded bureaucrats in these new agencies. Two distinct narratives materialized in responding to the question of 'what intellectual sources the foreign policymakers rely on'. One of the former ministers of foreign affairs of the AKP government responded that,

My predecessor [Davutoğlu] had an ideological preference in favor of Sunni groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkish foreign policy in the late-2000s aimed to connect with oppressed and underrepresented Muslim groups. It was a purely political choice. The reason was that Davutoğlu and AKP foreign policymakers built their international networks via those communities. For instance, I come from a Francophone academic tradition, so I work with colleagues from Algeria and Morocco. Likewise, Davutoğlu and his team followed the Middle East through their Sunni contacts in the region. They understood the developments from their contacts' perspectives (Interview with an academic, June 21, 2018)

However, the bureaucrats in the ministry perceived the AKP foreign policymakers' relationship with the Sunni groups in light of the radicalized foreign policy agenda. According to common among diplomats in the 2010s, AKP foreign policymakers added identity into foreign policy by building relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Moreover, the AKP governments were eager to play an international role in order-building. A former diplomat who was elected as an MP from the opposition İYİ Party after his retirement articulated that,

Turkey joined the Organization of Islamic Corporation (OIC) with a reservation in 1969. The secularism article of the Turkish constitution did not allow to become a full member of the

organization. From this tradition, we moved to build foreign policy based on *auxiliary connections*. What I mean by auxiliary is that the AKP and the Muslim Brotherhood shared the same political stance. AKP policymakers put their sense of belonging to the Brotherhood ideology and accepted this ideology as a reference point to make decisions. As an outcome, Turkey's policy towards Egypt was shaped by the Brotherhood's interests (Emphasis added) (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 18, 2018)

Those two different interpretations of AKP's foreign policy choices could be observed in the activities of pro-government think tanks. Until the 2010s, MFA's SAM and OGS' SAREM dominated the discussion on bureaucracy among a few Turkish think tanks. Along with the ministry's SAM, the bureaucracy cooperated with the Office of General Staff's (OGS) research institute, SAREM (Stratejik Araştırma ve Etüd Merkezi- Strategic Research and Exercise Center). The center was founded in 2002 as a department under OGS. According to the then-chief of general staff, it was launched as a Western-style think tank that brought together military officers, civil bureaucrats, and academics. It was designed to 'conduct research on security, geopolitics, geostrategy, and provide data and alternative approaches to the decisionmakers' (NTVMSNBC.com 2002). In the AKP's early years, the bureaucracy was aware of a potential disagreement in policy options between the bureaucracy and the AKP. Thus, bureaucracy-affiliated, and semi-independent think tanks were eager to spread the message of the MFA and OGS.

The leading actor, the AKP, aimed to fill the intellectual gap with its circle. In that sense, SETA was built to cooperate with AKP policymakers in 2005. Many analysts working for the organization later moved on to civil service roles, such as joining the parliament and appointing non-career bureaucrats. Additionally, as a journalist shared, SETA was named as the hub of intellectual knowledge at AKP when the party did not have trust in the bureaucracy (Interview with a journalist, July 17, 2018). A non-career diplomat who was also a former SETA analyst explained how the 'establishment' in the think tank environment perceived the different foreign

policy goals of the AKP governments: ‘Davutoğlu's Middle East policy [analyzed at SETA reports] was embraced neither by military officers nor by diplomats. Davutoğlu made policies that the MFA was not interested in or had no authority over. This caused tension among high-ranking military circles’ (Interview with a think tank analyst, February 22, 2018).

SETA offered an example to examine another aspect of how elected officials perceived the role of appointed bureaucrats in Turkish foreign policy. In 2018, the vice directors of the institute defined the organization as ‘a pro-government think tank’ (Interview with think tank analysts, January 25 and February 19, 2018). SETA founders wanted to launch a think tank that intellectually contributed to the AKP policies. The purpose was ‘to transfer the discussion outside of the party to inside’. According to a former analyst, ‘the AKP founders attended the earlier meetings of SETA, but they did not want to influence the think tank founders’ (Interview with a think tank analyst, February 22, 2018). The founder cadre defined themselves as the first generation of professionals in the think tank, whereas the post-2007 group became increasingly involved in the AKP decision-making. Most of them were appointed as non-career bureaucrats<sup>37</sup> (Interview with a think tank analyst, February 22, 2018). The last generation of professionals, which replaced the second generation after the 2011 elections, define their roles as ‘reframing the AKP's agenda and organizing advocacy campaigns’ (Interview with a think tank analyst, January 25, 2018).

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<sup>37</sup> An academic criticizing the second generation named its members as SETAnists, referring to Satanists. He called the second generation as great scholars but accused them of ‘being the paw of the regime’. The academic who worked at İstanbul Şehir University and had first-hand experience in the SETA circle pointed out the second generation’s close connection started when they worked at the university, then moved to SETA, and eventually transformed their career into politicians at the AKP ranks (Interview with an academic, February 6, 2018).

In the post-2011 period, SETA organized off-the-record events but shared its reports with the ministry. However, once asked about the level of relationship between the MFA and SETA, a vice director defined the communication far from good,

[The MFA] still represents bureaucratic politics. The ministry is cautious about our activities, and the distance is getting bigger and bigger as we keep criticizing them. The ministry is still hesitant to shout out Turkey's interests. They do not want to see a problem in their nearby geography, or they are unaware of them! We call the MFA to think Ankara-centered. It is the most challenging organization to transform (Interview with a think tank analyst, February 19, 2018).

Another senior SETA professional disagreed 'with the myth that SETA worked like a kitchen, baked policy ideas for the government' (Interview with a think tank analyst, January 25, 2018). Instead, according to the analyst, the think tank offered a platform to socialize through its events. Once it provided the platform, 'policymakers interacted with people from different backgrounds, but not only from bureaucracy'. The same senior figure also explained that he paid regular visits to the ministry headquarters to present SETA's report findings (Interview with a think tank analyst, January 25, 2018).

Still, all the SETA senior figures I talked to agreed that their impact evolved through informal relations with policymakers. Specifically, nominating former SETA analysts as MPs and appointing them as bureaucrats<sup>38</sup> made the organization more visible and influential in the decision-making.

A senior diplomat who worked in the 2010s with the FM and PM disagreed with the MFA's critical approach to SETA. According to the diplomat, SETA and SAM under AKP governments worked as the Ministry's Policy Planning Department and 'sneaked their reports in the ministry' (Interview with a retired ambassador, November 25, 2017). To emphasize the principle in

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<sup>38</sup> A few examples of those figures are Fahrettin Altun (director of communications at the President's office), Burhanettin Duran (member of the Foreign and Security Policy Committee at the President's office), İbrahim Kalın (spokesperson at the President's office), Talip Küçükcan, and Taha Özhan (former MPs from AKP).

diplomacy that the department first introduces its position wins the discussion, the diplomat stated that both SETA and SAM ‘prevailed in the thinking process of decision-making after the 2007 elections’ (Interview with a retired ambassador, November 25, 2017).

SETA was not the only intellectual source that the AKP foreign policymakers relied on. An academic who served as an MP from the AKP noted that the post-Cold War conditions mainly influenced the ideological mindset of AKP foreign policymakers. According to this approach, AKP policymakers witnessed the rise of Brazil, China, Argentina, and India in the early 2000s and wanted to add Turkey to this list. Additionally, the founders of the party, who had been in politics since the 1980s, experienced Western ideas primarily through higher education: ‘The diverse experience gained from both the East and the West helped them to adopt a *flexible* thinking style’ (Emphasis added) (Interview with an MP, November 28, 2017).

Respondents used the ‘flexible mindset’ and ‘civilization’ (*medeniyet*) interchangeably in their responses. The MP and other non-career bureaucrats referred throughout our conversations that AKP foreign policymakers had a genuine understanding of civilization. According to this approach, ‘the civilization that Turkey situates itself, and sometimes leads, contains first, the Turkic and Muslim communities, then, the Islamic world, and lastly, the Christian communities that live in the Muslim-dominated geographies’ (Interview with an MP, November 28, 2017).

The definition also resembles the *ummah* understanding of political Islam, which refers to the community of believers that transcend national, racial, and class divisions to unite all Muslims. According to a former minister of foreign affairs who served in the AKP governments, ‘AKP adopted a sectarian policy. And the interpretation of its *ummah* policy in foreign policymaking represented all Sunni groups as Iran represents Shi'a communities in the Islamic world’ (Interview

with a former minister, January 8, 2018). It is also called neo-Ottomanism<sup>39</sup> in academic and popular discussions, but it did not penetrate into policy discussions in the MFA. According to Turkey's former ambassador to Iran, the term was neither used in official documents nor referred to in the discussions at the ministry (Interview with a serving diplomat, May 11, 2018). In practice, however, the term was applied through policies of the new state agencies. TİKA's agenda to repair Ottoman-era buildings in Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East was called as an example of neo-Ottomanist policies. According to a senior TİKA expert, the agenda also confused the countries where TİKA conducts projects,

Turkey's humanitarian aid policy is conducted by cultural codes, such as repairing an Ottoman-era church or mosque, rather than business goals, as USAID [United States Agency for International Development] follows. The US and China make development plans if their business communities invest in specific geographies in the long run. On the contrary, Turkey has an 'ancestral building' [*ecdad yadigarı*] discourse and develops projects in the countries where Turkey has cultural connections. President Erdoğan and TİKA president call it "Turkish style humanitarian aid". This policy does not expect payback, such as business outcomes, and relies on *sincerity*. But I am not sure if Turkey has no expectations. If this is the case, what is the goal of paying the salaries of Sudanese civil servants? There is an ambiguity about purposes, which leads to neo-Ottomanism critique from international actors (Emphasis added) (Interview with a career bureaucrat, January 20, 2018).

The 2007-2011 period under the leadership of Davutoğlu and his circle was the initial step in redesigning the bureaucratic politics in Turkey. Introducing new state agencies, intellectual actors, and ideas prepared Turkish foreign policy for the fully AKP-dominated era. In the next section, I will discuss the post-2011 general elections and how the AKP foreign policymakers perceived their roles as decisionmakers and understood international conditions.

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<sup>39</sup> Davutoğlu defines Turkey not as a regional actor seeking acceptance from the West but as an 'order setting agent' 'embracing its Islamic imperial heritage in the former Ottoman territories' (Davutoğlu 2012, Akkoyunlu 2021).

### 3.6. AKP-DOMINATED FOREIGN POLICY

With the 2011 elections and the Arab Spring, Turkey began to respond to regional crises, specifically in the Middle East. Prior to that, foreign policymaking was traditionally under the control of career bureaucrats. It was ‘a safe zone from the interaction of elected officials and immune from public opinion’ (Interview with a serving diplomat, May 11, 2018).

In 2011, however, the AKP decisionmakers articulated that Middle Eastern states demanded Turkey's involvement in regional crises (Interview with a career bureaucrat, February 20, 2018). While Turkey increasingly concentrated on public perception and public diplomacy activities, its decisionmakers became prone to risk-taking in the immediate geographies. According to a senior non-career bureaucrat from KDK, ‘public diplomacy activities and new state agencies under the PMO launched due to AKP leaders’ eagerness to make decisions beyond Turkey's classical foreign policy understanding. Visionary leaders and risk-taking decision-making structures were the key players of the post-2011 Turkish foreign policy’ (Interview with a non-career bureaucrat, February 23, 2018).

In the interviews I conducted at KDK and TİKA, senior bureaucrats called 2011 the year that their organizations became more visible in foreign policymaking. Turkish policymakers declared their intention to represent the country on every international platform with the help of more state departments such Yunus Emre Institute (Turkey's official language institute as British Council), AFAD (Turkish Natural Disaster and Emergency Authority), Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent), and Turkish Airlines (Interview with a think tank analyst, February 19, 2018).

The emblem of the policy was the criticism of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and a call to reform its five-seated permanent representative system. ‘World is bigger than five (with a stop hand gesture as in traffic signage)’ discourse popularized by AKP policymakers when

Turkey was elected as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2009-2010. In the following years, non-career bureaucrats mentioned that the UNSC decision-making system is an ‘illegitimate practice’ of the international system, and it should be criticized, if not reformed: ‘It is hard to rationalize “the world is bigger than five” policy if you adopt a rationalist stance in international politics. Thus, we [Turkey] know our limits, but it is our mission to criticize the international system under the limits of our role’ (Interview with a non-career bureaucrat, February 23, 2018). Accordingly, a senior bureaucrat from TİKA pointed out Turkey’s ‘increasing international responsibility and its active president who responded to international crises’. The same respondent compared Turkey with Norway while explaining his perception of the UNSC: ‘[Turkey] do not want to be like Norway, which stands back and keeps all its wealth from the international community. We adopt an active foreign policy. We need to adopt an active policy to grow our business. Our economy develops, and our people get braver if we open up to the world’ (Interview with a career bureaucrat, February 20, 2018). However, a think tank practitioner from SETA emphasized the limits of Turkey’s critical foreign policy and stated, ‘Turkey could never be like Iran and turns its back to the West. [The Turkish government] criticizes the West by staying in the Western system. We criticize the [UNSC] decision-making system by pointing out the Western principles as democracy’ (Interview with a think tank analyst- February 19, 2018). Turkey's critical stance at the UNSC was proof of the different foreign policy agendas of the established agencies. In this case, traditional values in Turkish foreign policy as being non-partisan in international crises and not seeking an active role in international organizations challenged by AKP foreign policy goals.

While applying a novel foreign policy agenda, the relationship between state agencies and policy direction was intertwined. As the main argument of this study that the institutions are the

outcome of the policy change, numerous diplomats confirmed that the AKP government had a two-staged plan,

The first move was to weaken the established bureaucratic agencies, and the second was to set goals according to the government's ideology and change diplomatic practices. The government aimed to change the diplomatic practices earlier but did not have agencies. After 2011, the AKP government adopted a narrative apart from historical Turkish diplomacy and even practiced its narrative. The ministry now only functions in preventing extreme foreign policy errors. Nowadays, Turkish foreign policy relies on a personal decision-making system rather than a collective structure (Interview with a retired diplomat, January 18, 2018).

The senior diplomat's observation was not limited to diplomatic circles and was even shared by former AKP policymakers. A former minister of foreign affairs agreed that a new era in decision-making started in 2011, and the new decision-making system was designed to rely on the top of the administration, which was PM/President Erdoğan. Although directors of MFA departments still worked with senior decisionmakers, reports and position papers that mid and junior-levels officers wrote have been ignored in the decision-making processes. In that sense, the former minister explained decision-making conditions in the post-2011 era: 'The government had various reasons to shift its foreign policy rhetoric: breakdown of the EU membership process, Gezi protests, Arab Spring, PKK, and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). The government made a choice and thought it was impossible to reach decisions with existing institutions, so it either had to *bypass or transform* institutions' (Emphasis added) (Interview with an academic, June 21, 2018).

Turkish foreign policy between 1992 and 2014 went through various stages until its latest step, the AKP-dominated era. To analyze this change, in this chapter, I focus on the role of elected and appointed bureaucrats and their perceptions of their positions. In doing so, the chapter relies on a disagreement between those two groups. Both groups' arguments regarding education, generation, class, and experience level are critical in deconstructing the narrative of 'bureaucracy

versus government'. Institutional involvement, which I discuss in this chapter, also offers an explanatory platform to differentiate the roles of two bureaucratic types in Turkish foreign policy. In the latter sections of the chapter, I included the AKP bureaucrats and their approach to working with career bureaucrats and self-attribution to their positions. Finally, I discuss the coping mechanisms of both groups of bureaucrats while the AKP government changed the decision-making model and shifted to the governmental decision-making.

## Chapter 4. APPLYING MODELS-

### TURKEY-ISRAEL RELATIONS (1991-2014)

In this chapter, I will examine the themes of the second and third chapters by drawing examples from Turkey-Israel relations between 1991 and 2014. The fourth chapter will not only discuss the decision-making patterns from the perspective of Turkish foreign policymakers, but also it will examine the change in decision-making mechanism by encapsulating crucial moments from the bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel. To triangulate the interview data based on Turkish participants' responses in the previous chapters, this chapter includes observations of Israeli decision-makers who worked with their Turkish counterparts.

In the following sections, I will discuss Turkey-Israel relations between 1991 and 2014 as a case study and analyze the noted two decades in the three periods: (1) Political conditions that set the rules (1991- 2002), (2) bilateral relations from the Netanyahu/Erdoğan era to Mavi Marmara (2002- 2010), and (3) re-decline of the bilateral relations (2010-2014). Each period relies on four themes that came up in interviews: (i) the security aspect and (ii) the economic aspect of the period, (iii) relations between Turkey, Israel, and the United States, (iv) stances of the Israeli and Turkish diplomats about each other.

#### 4.1. POLITICAL CONDITIONS THAT SET RULES (1991- 2002)

##### *4.1.1. Background of the Period*

The Oslo Accords made an impact beyond Israel-Arab relations and readjusted the priorities of Turkey- Israel relations, which were previously shaped by the Cold War-dominated conditions. The periphery doctrine of Israel set the rule in the relations throughout the Cold War years. The doctrine foresaw launching an alliance between Israel and non-Arab, pro-Western states in the

Middle East to tackle the united opposition of Arab states after the 1948 War. The first Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion sought to build strategic relations with Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia (as well as ethnic groups in pre-dominantly Arab states such as Maronites in Lebanon and Kurds in Iraq and Syria)<sup>40</sup>. The foreign policy strategy that was born in the early years of Israel was named by Israeli policymakers as the main principle that Turkey-Israel relations were built on. Israel's ambassador to Turkey served in the late-2000s defined the doctrine as 'the fundamental need of Israel to find allies in the region. It was a strategic goal of Israel since its establishment, and Turkey was always on the agenda of Israel because of [Turkey's] hostility towards the Arab world' (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018). Even until the late-2000s, the doctrine maintained its significant role in the relations, and it made Ankara one of the most important capitals in Israeli foreign policy. Ankara was one of the capitals where the senior Israeli diplomats wanted to be appointed to advance their careers (Interview with an Israeli academic, May 11, 2018).

Another component of the bilateral ties prior to the Oslo Accords was the communal relations between the two countries built through Turkey's Jewish population, the largest Jewish population outside Israel in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire (Brink-Danan 2012). While Turkish diplomats named the relationship as 'historical' in reference to the history of the Jewish community in Palestine during the Ottoman era (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, January 17, 2018), Israeli diplomats call it a 'historical bridge based on people-to-people relationship' (Interview with a serving Israeli diplomat, June 26, 2018). In this vein, the launch of the

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<sup>40</sup> 'The premise of the periphery doctrine was that Israel's Arab neighbors could not accept the existence of Israel in the region because of their adherence to pan-Arabism. Hence, advocates of the periphery doctrine advanced strategic collaboration between Israel and non-Arab or non-Muslim actors in the Middle East. (...) The essence of the doctrine was that these actors shared with Israel the same sense of threat from pan-Arabism, and therefore they would embrace such collaboration' (Voller 2015, 509).

Quincentennial Foundation (QF) in 1989 to celebrate the arrival of the Sephardic Jewish communities to the Ottoman territories after the 1492 Inquisition was the pinnacle of the people-to-people relationship<sup>41</sup>. The support of the Turkish MFA to launch the foundation could also be read as Turkey's interest in Israel in the early 1990s. A Turkish journalist defined the role of the QF as the first institutional mechanism in the relationship. 'The foundation aimed for a rapprochement in the bilateral relations. The [Jewish] community made an effort. The community leaders specifically supported developing the relations through the pro-Israel lobby in the US, and Turkey cherished the lobby's influence over American politics' (Interview with a Turkish journalist, July 17, 2018). Accordingly, Israel's charge d'affaires in Ankara in the late 1980s pointed out the involvement of the Turkish MFA in bilateral relations,

The Turkish MFA and Jak Kamhi<sup>42</sup> brought the idea of celebrating the anniversary of the arrival of [Sephardic] Jews. Israeli and Turkish consulates all around the world celebrated it together. At that time, I was the consul-general in Atlanta, and we attended many events with the Turkish consul-general. It also served Turkey's arguments against the Armenian genocide. It was a win-win situation for Turkey and Israel (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, March 27, 2018).

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<sup>41</sup> According to its statement of purpose, the Quincentennial Foundation 'not only celebrates the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Sephardic Jews on Turkish soil in 1492, but also the remarkable spirit of tolerance and acceptance which has characterized the entire Jewish experience in Turkey'. By sharing the official testament, Brink-Danan (2012, x) points out that 'Turkish Jews were previously not considered meaningful players in the Turkish political scene, this campaign, with its museums, academic treatises, and heritage tours, offered them a public platform from which to count as a quintessentially and quincennially, tolerated minority'. It is crucial to note that the young generation of the Jewish community in Turkey declines the tolerance rhetoric and criticizes the willful cooperation of the community leaders with the Turkish state. Politically active section of the young Jewish population aims to cooperate with other minority groups, such as Kurds, in Turkey and exposes the anti-Semitist rhetoric in the Turkish media and society. To share this approach, the young generation has founded an online media platform called *Avlaremoz*, which is also an ardent critic of the community's semi-official newspaper *Şalom*. According to its 'About' section, *Avlaremoz* [we shall speak] was born against *kayades* [silence, ignorance] and 'was founded by Jewish, non-Jewish, less Jewish, more Jewish, sometimes Jewish people from Turkey' (Avlaremoz 2020).

<sup>42</sup> Jak Kamhi (1925-2020) was a prominent figure of the Jewish community in Turkey. Apart from his business background, he was involved in community affairs and was active to build a dialogue between the Turkish state and the Jewish community in Turkey. In 1991, the Turkish MFA awarded him with 'the Distinguished Service Award' and the Turkish President's Office awarded 'the Highest Service Award' due to his contribution in promoting Turkey abroad and the country's industrial development. Kamhi's support in Turkish foreign policy and Turkey-US relations was also cited in his funeral. The current president of the Quincentennial Foundation, Silvyo Ovadya mentioned Kamhi's Washington visit with a group of businesspeople to remove the US arm embargo following the 1974 Cyprus Operation (Sasun 2020).

Nevertheless, the main component of the relations prior to the Oslo Accords was neither the Jewish community nor the cherished Ottoman past. The pro-Israeli lobby groups in the United States, which Turkey started to hire for public relations (PR) campaigns against the recognition of the Armenian genocide in the early 1970s, were the anchor of the bilateral ties. In the 1990s, Turkey's policy in Washington, DC, which was delaying the recognition of the Armenian genocide, also 'received aid from Israel's foreign ministry and Jewish organizations in the US and Turkey' (Ben Aharon 2019, 345)<sup>43</sup>. A journalist working on Turkey-Israel relations explained the dynamics of this period,

The early 1990s were the times when the relationship between the American Jewish lobby groups and Turkey was getting closer. Turkey was eager for this rapprochement. The Turkish state, at that time, also adopted a 'tolerance narrative', which the Jewish community in İstanbul embraced. All the effort behind rapprochement through the foundation and the tolerance narrative was a newly emerged argument against the Armenian lobbies in DC. Israel also lobbied for Turkey in DC at that time. So, the early 1990s were the outcome of shared political interests between Turkey, Israel, and the United States (Interview with a Turkish Jewish journalist, November 1, 2017).

Before the 1993 Oslo Accords, the 1991 Madrid Agreement was crucial in shaping Turkey-Israel relations. The agreement 'was a positive shock to the relationship. Following the Madrid reconciliation, the [Turkish] diplomatic representation was upgraded to an embassy in 1992, and then, the anniversary of the 500th anniversary followed' (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, March 27, 2018). Turkey's rapprochement was not immune from Israel's developing relations with the Arab states following the Madrid process. According to a former Israel's ambassador to Jordan in the 1990s, Israel started to enhance its ties with the Arab world after the 1991 Madrid Conference and signed an agreement with the Palestinians in 1993. 'The 1994 Jordan-Israel treaty

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<sup>43</sup> Ben Aharon (2019, 347) also notes that 'there remains a basic, fixed issue, less influenced by outside parties but one that affects Israeli policy in regard to recognition of the Armenian genocide—the memory of the Holocaust as "unique. (...) This could serve as a major obstacle because it might actualize the threat of "competition" over genocide commemoration and of the possible "trivialization" of Jewish suffering, according to those who espouse that view'.

came after, and Israel [was able to] develop its relations with other players in the Middle East such as Turkey' (Interview with an Israeli diplomat, April 16, 2018).

Before the 1993 Oslo accords, the bilateral relations were restricted to secret meetings. Intelligence officers from both states used to meet once a year in a European capital (Interview with a former Turkish diplomat who served in Israel, November 23, 2017). While the Oslo process eventually transformed Israeli foreign policy in the Middle East, its reflection brought normalization and transparency into the bilateral relations. 'The post-Oslo atmosphere legitimized having relations with Israel all around the world while Turkey also moved to adopt a visible relationship with Israel' (Interview with an Israeli academic, April 22, 2018). The peaceful atmosphere encouraged Turkey to appoint its first ambassador, Onur Gökçe, to Tel Aviv in 1992. Eventually, Turkey decided to upgrade its diplomatic mission from charge d'affairs to embassy after Egypt and Jordan recognized Israel as a state (Interview with a diplomat, January 20, 2018)<sup>44</sup>.

#### *4.1.2. Evolving Relations*

Which state agencies in Turkey and Israel encouraged their respective governments to upgrade the relations? The overwhelming response of the interviewees to this question was military establishments. Although the beginning of military ties went back to the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in 1983-85, military-to-military cooperation formed the backbone of the relationship after the 1993 Oslo Accords (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, March 27, 2018). The collaboration did not aim to organize joint military operations against a third state. Instead, it was a strategic partnership that relied on purchasing/selling military equipment and training military personnel. According to the former head of the Military Intelligence Research

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<sup>44</sup> In his book, the last Turkish charge d'affairs in Israel, Ekrem Güvendiren, tells that he already held the title of ambassador, but the Turkish diplomatic mission's level was not upgraded to embassy until 1992 (Güvendiren 2012).

Division of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), who served in the 1990s, ‘if you sell some intelligence system and aircraft, you need to train the buyer about how to use it. The vendor needs to organize seminars and training sessions with the customer’ (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018). The retired Israeli general also points out a pattern that Israel has been relying on to start a diplomatic relationship,

When [Israel] began to sell certain military products, that is usually how the relationship begins. The importance of security is greater here [in Israel] than in many other countries. Security consideration in Israel is more important than in other countries which seek to expand economic cooperation. (...) It began as a business relationship [with Turkey] and expanded. This is exactly the same relationship pattern we have been developing with India [in the last couple of years] (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018).

The 1974 decision of the American Congress<sup>45</sup> to cut off arms sales and modernization of US-made military equipment made Israel the primary resource to compensate for Turkey’s military needs. Turkey’s willingness to diversify its suppliers in military equipment was timely in the early 1990s, considering the conflict between the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) that had spread beyond Turkey’s southeastern provinces and became an extraterritorial conflict in Iraq and Syria. Under these circumstances, Turkish political and military decision-making focused on expanding its military resources beyond the United States.

A retired Israeli general pointed out Turkey’s reasoning for approaching Israel to diversify its military suppliers: ‘Israeli military system is less expensive and has some unique capabilities. Some of them are designed according to the specific demands of a client, whereas Americans usually do not. We [Israel] also buy our military equipment from the US. Still, no army wants to be fully dependent on one supplier, even if the supplier is the US, and even if it knows everything

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<sup>45</sup> Congress and the Senate approved the bill to cut off military aid once Turkey shipped American equipment to its forces in Cyprus. Although Congress gradually lifted the embargo in the following decades, the then-undersecretary of the Turkish MFA said that the US delayed the modernization program of the military equipment up until the 2000s (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, February 10, 2018).

about the capabilities of your military’ (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018). Israel’s former ambassador to Turkey agreed with this approach and added that ‘the US never provided the technology of the weapons that were sold to Turkey, and this was an advantage for Israel. Transferring technology eventually helped the Turkish army to develop its own military industry. The better relationship was also in the interest of Israeli military industry to sell more arms [to Turkey]’ (Interview with a retired Israeli general, April 2, 2018).

While Turkey modernized its military technology with the Israeli systems<sup>46</sup>, mutual training programs and military exercises helped the Israeli Air Forces (IAF) to train its personnel in Turkish air space (Interview with a former Turkish diplomat who served in Jerusalem, January 20, 2018). The collaboration between the two states’ air forces also aimed to send a message that both countries were developing their military capabilities vis-à-vis the Iranian threat (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat who served as the foreign policy advisor to PM Mesut Yılmaz, February 12, 2018).

Modernizing Turkey’s military equipment did not only respond to Ankara’s threat perception about Iran and the armed Kurdish groups in and beyond Turkey but also there was a shared threat perception that led to a rapprochement between Turkey and Israel. Hafez al-Assad’s Syria was the epicenter where the interests of the two countries met. According to a retired Israeli general who worked as the Deputy Commander of IAF in the 1990s, both countries ‘saw a shared enemy in the Assad regime which was hostile to Israel and provided refuge to the PKK leader [Abdullah]

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<sup>46</sup> The Israeli general clarified which military systems that Turkey was interested in: ‘Israel is not good at producing big platforms like tanks, ships, or airplanes. We know how to develop systems that those platforms use. Today, you can take two identical F-16 airplanes. When you install an advanced electronic network, computer system or missile system to one of them, other F-16 fails, even though platforms are the same. So, Israel is very good at producing intelligence, electronic and missile systems on existing platforms. For Turkey, in terms of cost effectiveness, we are better than other suppliers, including the US’ (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018).

Öcalan' (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 29, 2018). Another high-ranking Israeli general explained the common threat perception in the deterrence context,

Hafez al-Assad was very frustrated because he knew if he had not been careful about military confrontation with Israel or Turkey, this relationship would have caused to open two fronts. It was not because we had an agreement that both sides guaranteed to help each other. Turkey even could not do it because it was part of NATO. But it gave us a lot of confidence that we could deter (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018).

While regional factors made Turkey-Israel relations more visible in the 1990s, in the next section, I would like to visit the original argument of this research that decision-makers were the main actors in shaping the relations. Each side's perception is a vital part of this study to examine what led to cooperation in the 1990s.

#### *4.1.3. Political Conditions*

In the early 1990s, leading actors of the relationship were Turkish and Israeli generals who negotiated the conditions of military equipment purchase, organized mutual training sessions, and discussed the regional threats in those gatherings. For outsiders, commonalities of both groups of generals were that (a) prioritizing their state's interests and (b) coming from a state tradition that the military had the upper hand in foreign policy decisions (Interview with a Turkish Jewish journalist, November 1, 2017). Once I asked retired Israeli and Turkish generals what they thought about the professional qualifications of their counterparts in the 1990s, responses were highly positive. A retired Turkish general defined the shared approach of the two states: 'We [Turkey] were very close with Israel, even on the personal level, at that time. We used to prefer to cooperate with Israel rather than Arabs. Both [Turkish and Israeli] militaries faced similar threats in the Middle East, and both of us did not like Arabs. I also personally do not like Arabs. Turkey and Israel shared similar concerns about Arab states' (Interview with a retired Turkish general, August 10, 2018).

On the Israeli side, the former head of the Planning Directorate at IDF echoed this approach and noted that Turkey was ‘his favorite country to visit, where he felt he was honored and welcomed’ (An interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018). The most important aspect of the personal relationship built in these years was that both sides got to know the priorities of each other and ‘understood the narrative of the other country’. What the Israeli general implied by the narrative was the role of personal perspectives in decision-making and the national sensitivities of high-ranking generals to perceive the other state. The Israeli general clarified his point,

[IDF] learned how to respect sensitive matters in Turkey, which were Kurdish and Armenian issues. Turkish generals were very easily offended. We always had to be careful to give all the honor. Let me give you an example: In April 2000, [Israel] began preparations for unilaterally withdrawing from Lebanon, and we had a meeting with [Secretary-General of the UN] Kofi Annan in Jerusalem. I was in charge of conducting negotiations with the UN about the location of the line to withdraw. I joined PM [Ehud] Barak. The meeting was unsuccessful, and we could not achieve a common understanding. But Barak and Annan decided to continue the discussion a day later. That day, I had to be in Turkey. There was a trilateral meeting<sup>47</sup>, and the most extensive exercise of the three armies done together in the sea. The Turkish general invited the three leaders of the armed forces for a weekend in Istanbul. But I had to cancel my visit to Turkey to participate in those talks in Jerusalem. So, I needed to explain my decision to two people who could have easily been offended: my wife and the Turkish general. (BG: Why were you so careful with the Turkish general?) It was the self-perception of Turkish generals. They all felt very confident about themselves, about their status. During one of my meetings in Turkey, we had lunch, and one of the members from the Israeli group asked if he could smoke. The Turkish general said that there was a new regulation in TAF. No one could smoke indoors, and he told a story: One heavy smoker who was a four-star general wanted to smoke in a meeting with 20 people, and the new regulation stated if there were more than five people in the room, it was a public space, and it was prohibited to smoke. So, when an officer reminded him of the rule, the general told 15 people to leave. It is a typical example of [Turkish generals’] mindset (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018)’.

A former Israeli diplomat confirmed the mutual trust between Turkish and Israeli generals in the 1990s, which sometimes included matters beyond military issues,

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<sup>47</sup> The Israeli general referred to the trilateral military exercises between Jordan, Israel, and Turkey. Turkey signed military training agreements with Jordan in December 1984, and with Israel in February 1996. Süha Umar, Turkey’s ambassador to Jordan in the 1990s, explains the purpose of the common training programs: ‘Syria, Egypt, and Iran harshly criticized the agreement with Israel. On September 17, 1997, in our meeting, King [Hussein of Jordan] talked about his approach to the Turkey-Israel military cooperation. He said that comments of the Arab states were exaggerating the scope of the cooperation. King was right. Turkey signed numerous military training agreements with eight Arab states and all were enforced except the agreement with Libya’ (Umar 2016, 87, 185).

Having good relations with the Turkish army helped us to solve problems. The Turkish army was the channel to solve them. Not only in military issues, we contacted the Turkish army, but we also had an open and very intimate channel of communication. When the Israeli chief of staff called his colleague in Turkey, they could speak about everything, and he could say, 'Look, we have some political problems, so please try to help us by using your political influence'. In a way, this was the back channel we used to maintain good, close relations with Turkey (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

Nevertheless, there had been a disagreement about the role of the Israeli MFA in foreign policy. Israeli generals were likely to define the influence of Israeli MFA as 'traditionally very low' in decision-making. According to this approach, Israel's security perception, which described threats as an 'existential crisis', gave a significant role in decision-making to the security establishment rather than the diplomatic establishment (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018). Still, the Israeli MFA was on the decision-making table to coordinate the relationship with its Turkish counterparts in the 1990s. A serving Israeli diplomat compared the Israeli and Turkish MFAs and their role in the decision-making processes before the 2000s,

The Turkish MFA had some strong characteristics and strong traditions. Its intellectual capacity, professionalism, and understanding of international politics made it a major player in Turkish politics. However, the Israeli MFA always had to struggle for its position in foreign policymaking. While struggling for its role, the security establishment was and still is its major rival. It had to share its role and compete for its place in foreign policy making. Because security concerns are always on the Israeli agenda, and this makes Israeli foreign policymaking *balagan* [chaos in Hebrew]. (...) The Israeli MFA does not cherish diplomatic protocol or hierarchy. However, the Turkish MFA always cares and pays attention to diplomatic rules. The Turkish MFA's emphasis on diplomatic practice imposes its order on its counterparts. It pushes the Israeli MFA to work within the diplomatic culture. (...) [In the 1990s] Israel had to work within the diplomatic culture if it would have wanted to keep up with Turkey. Because our Turkish counterparts sent their demands through diplomatic channels, the Israeli MFA was in charge of dealing with Turkish requests (Interview with a serving Israeli diplomat, June 26, 2018).

While MFA to MFA relations were on track, the military-MFA ties on both sides of the relationship were under the authority of the security establishment. The Israeli diplomat who served in Turkey in the 1990s said that 'the Turkish military was advocating for Turkey-Israel relations and the Turkish MFA and army were not in contrast when Israel was on the agenda. The

security-related outlook was also prominent on the Turkish side’ (Interview with a serving Israeli diplomat, June 26, 2018). A former Israeli ambassador to Turkey exemplified how both sides sustained the ‘security-related outlook’ until the early 2010s,

We established annual strategic dialogue meetings between Turkish and Israeli MFAs in the 1990s. Every year, we either met in Turkey or Israel. Ministries of Defense representatives attended these meetings, too. We discussed both regional and bilateral issues. When I was in Turkey as an ambassador, these meetings were still going on. It went on until the Mavi Marmara [Flotilla case] (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018).

In line with the diplomatic engagement, sales of military equipment and the organization of joint military exercises between Jordan, Israel, and Turkey in 1996-98 were the two major topics of Turkey-Israel cooperation in the 1990s. The third and less prominent topic was intelligence sharing between the two states. According to a retired IAF general, Israel shared its aerial intelligence on the whereabouts of PKK leader Öcalan who lived in Syria (Interview with a retired Israeli general, June 5, 2018). In return, Ankara provided intelligence to Jerusalem since Turkey had ‘a long border to some of Israel’s biggest enemies, namely, Syria and Iraq’ (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018). The head of the military intelligence department at IDF between 1995 and 1998 confirmed the common threat perception, specifically against Iran and Syria in the 1990s (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 15, 2018).

Although Turkey was eager to diversify its suppliers in purchasing military equipment, Ankara was keen to name Jerusalem as a gatekeeper to Turkey’s interests in Washington, DC. Ankara expected both the support of Israeli decision-makers and pro-Israel lobbies in Congress. Israel’s former ambassador to Turkey in the 2000s stated that ‘Turkey always regarded Israel as an instrument that could help Turkish foreign policymakers to get closer to the US. Israel’s capability to reach American administrations, the American public, and Jewish lobbies shaped Israel’s image

among Turkish policymakers' (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018). Another Israeli ambassador who served in Turkey in the early 2000s shared a nuanced comment about the role of the Jewish community in Turkey: 'Jewish community's influence in Turkey made Turkey believe that Israel could help Turkey on its relations with the US. From the very beginning of my mission in Turkey, if someone from the [Turkish] government visited me and asked me to help him in DC, I always said yes. Every Israeli ambassador in Ankara received the same request' (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, May 17, 2018).

While 'there was an anti-Semitic approach in the idea that the Jewish lobby was capable to change everything in DC', the Israeli policymakers and diplomats served in Ankara supported Turkey's assumptions (Interview with an Israeli journalist, April 9, 2018). There were two agendas of Turkey's requests from the US through Israel and pro-Israel lobbies in Washington, DC: Securing military equipment and pushing back the recognition of the Armenian genocide in Congress. For the first agenda, military equipment, a retired Turkish general clarified the goal of the Office of the General Staff (OGS): 'The most intense relationship with Israel was built between 1997 and 2000 when Erbakan was PM. OGS realized that the good relationship with the US went through Israel. However, the point OGS ignored was that having good relations with Israel did not have to mean having a bad relationship with Arabs.' (Interview with a retired Turkish general, August 10, 2018).

Turkey's second agenda in its relations with Israel was building a pro-Turkey block in the American Congress. In 1994, the first time a Turkish prime minister paid a visit to Israel. PM Çiller had a concrete agenda to ask for Israel's help in Congress. According to the PM's foreign policy advisor, Çiller first visited Israel, then Egypt. She publicly asked for Israel's support to fight against the recognition of the Armenian genocide in Congress and active cooperation in the

modernization of Turkish arms (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, February 28, 2018). Considering the changing dynamics in the Middle East, ‘Egypt and Jordan supported Çiller’s official visit because they did not want to be the only regional countries to speak to Israel anymore. After this visit, Israel also started to hear Turkey’s argument. Even the pro-Israeli groups in Europe lobbied for Turkey’s accession to the Customs Union<sup>48</sup>. Those groups reported their endorsement activities to Turkish embassies in Europe on a regular basis’ (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, July 27, 2018).

#### *4.1.4. Economic Conditions*

Although the security-based rapprochement was the main agenda of the relations in the 1990s, other factors influenced the military cooperation: Economic relations between Turkey and Israel were positively affected by the 1990s’ military cooperation in a way that Turkey fulfilled its international trade goals. According to the former chairman of the Israel-Turkey Business Council, Turkey started a campaign to develop its foreign trade volume in the 1980s. European entrepreneurs launched partnerships with Turkish shareholders to invest in infrastructure and automotive. ‘The expansion also urged the Israeli businesspeople that Turkey had potential. Both countries shared a similar vision, specifically through cooperation with the US. Turkey’s absence and inefficiency in the Middle East might have brought the two states together’ (Interview with a Turkish-Israeli businessperson, April 17, 2018).

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<sup>48</sup> Turkey joined the European Union’s Customs Union in 1996. Turkey’s accession to the Union ‘accelerated trade liberalization and opened up Turkish industry to external competition’ (Kutlay and Öniş 2021b, 1097).

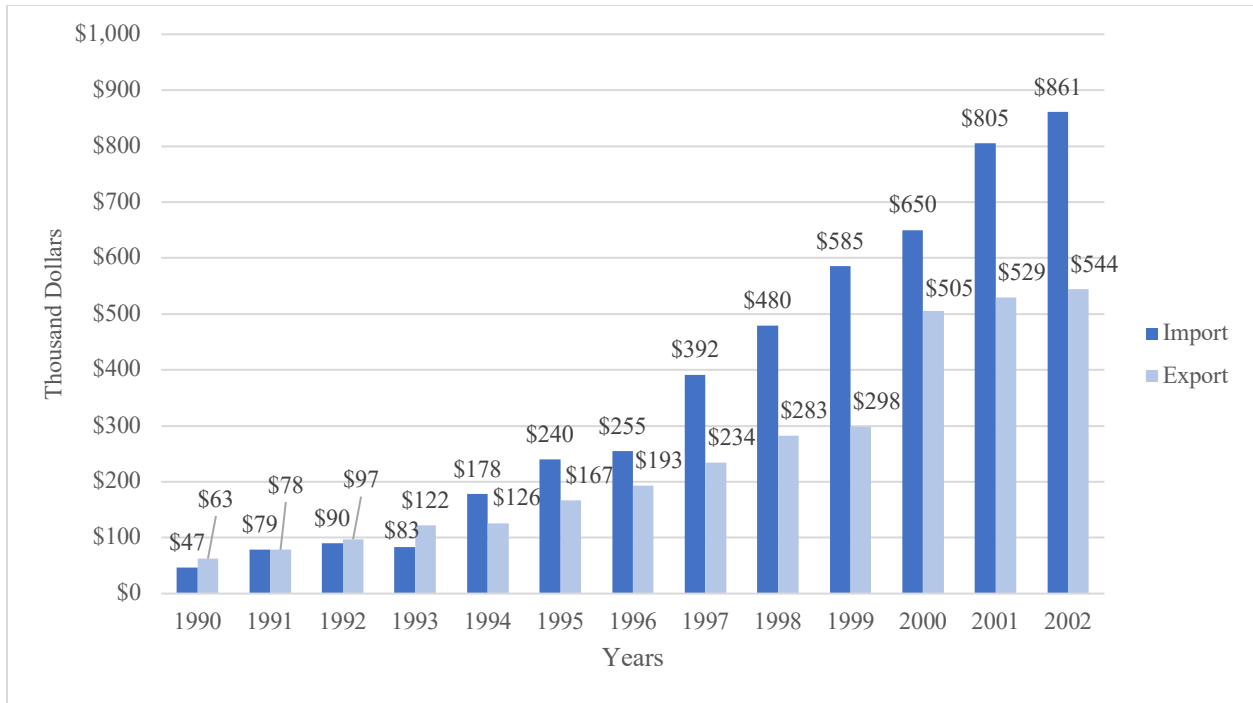


Figure 9: Turkey’s Import and Export to Israel in Years (1990-2002)<sup>49</sup>

Source: Derived from the dataset provided by TÜİK (2020)

On the diplomatic side, as I briefly mention in Chapter 3, the upgrade of the Turkish mission in Tel Aviv to the embassy was the request of the Turkish business community. Between 1995 and 1999, Turkey and Israel signed agreements on free trade and tax regulation. Those agreements increased the trade volume almost ten times compared to the first five years of the decade (Figure 9). The Turkish diplomatic team in Israel spent a long time negotiating these agreements. According to Turkey’s ambassador to Israel served at that time, the contracts ‘opened doors to Turkey in military and commercial senses, but they mainly helped Turkey to get the support of the US, specifically, support of the Jewish lobbies in the United States’ (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, November 23, 2017).

<sup>49</sup> TÜİK data does not include the volume of military spending into its yearly data. Neither TAF nor IDF disclosed the volume of military agreements signed between Turkey and Israel.

According to a Turkish-Israeli businessperson, in the 1990s, Israeli investors also ‘discovered’ raw materials that Turkey could offer for the Israeli industry.

Most of the [Israeli] investors made aliyah from the Eastern European countries. They knew the local culture and were able to speak the language. They were traveling to Poland or the Czech Republic to purchase raw materials. Until the 1990s, Turkey was introverted, and the Israeli business community was unaware of the opportunities that Turkey could have offered. Turkey’s image changed with the rise of tourism. Israeli investors visited Turkey firstly for vacation, then got to know the country [...] In the early 1990s, the Turkish business community saw Israeli entrepreneurs as Superman: Israelis could fix every deal and reach out to every market for the Turkish business community in the world (Interview with a Turkish-Israeli businessperson, April 17, 2018).

#### 4.1.5. *Shared Concerns in Foreign Policy*

The final component of the rapprochement relied on the identity aspect of relations. While political Islam was rising in the 1990s and receiving public support to replace decade-old coalition governments in Turkey, the Turkish bureaucracy reacted to those changes by emphasizing the state's secular character. Accordingly, throughout the interview period, many Turkish and Israeli respondents mentioned the secular characters of both states in the 1990s. As it was an expected outcome of thinking and speaking of past events almost three decades later, respondents were likely to reconfigure their stance in light of the current political climate<sup>50</sup>. In retrospect, governments in both countries emphasized a particular ideology and religious identity in foreign policy decision-making.

The Turkish respondents were eager to count Turkey’s secular model of decision-making in foreign policy as one of the primary reasons for building a closer relationship with Israel. According to this approach, Turkey and Israel shared a common identity in the Middle East: Non-

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<sup>50</sup> To some extent, this study also focuses on clash based on identity between ‘pious’ elected politicians and ‘secular’ appointed bureaucrats in Turkey. Pious/conservative/secular were identities that Turkish respondents frequently used to define themselves, others, their groups, and opponent political figures. Accordingly, the Israeli interviewers pointed out the decline of secularism in the Israeli politics with Benjamin Netanyahu’s prime ministry years and the rise of nationalistic Judaism in the decision-making.

Arab and democratically advanced states. ‘Turkey’s advantage in developing relations was decreasing the modernization expenses of its armed forces while Israel benefited from Turkish air space by participating in joint exercises. However, the reward of the mutual relationship was both Israel and the Arab states wanted to hear Turkey’s position in the region’ (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat who served in Tel Aviv, January 20, 2018). The then-undersecretary of the Turkish MFA further explained that signing security and economic agreements with Israel meant an alliance against Iran and supporting secular foreign policy in Turkey. Concurrently, a former Israeli ambassador to Turkey pointed out the commonalities of the two states: ‘Both countries are not Arab where the majority of the geography is Arab states. Both are democratic and confronting the same dangerous conditions in the region such as Iran and its intention to export the [Islamic] revolution, instability in Syria, and making the Mediterranean a safe space’ (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, May 17, 2018).

Additionally, the Israeli foreign policymakers were eager to have a relationship with a Muslim country (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, February 10, 2018). A former Israeli diplomat who served in the Middle East in the 1990s stated that ‘Israel felt Turkey was an asset in the 1990s because it was a Muslim country, very moderate, it could have been a bridge between Israel and the Arab world. The dominant factor in the Israeli approach was how to nurture and upgrade the relationship’ (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018). An Israeli journalist who followed the bilateral relations in the last three decades clarified the expectation of Israel and the misunderstanding of the Israeli decision-makers at that time,

In the 1990s, there was a strategic, regional partnership. But there was also Israeli misunderstanding about Turkish society. Even today, Israeli politicians, scholars, and generals who cooperated with Turks think that the Turkish army was the guardian of democracy. [The Turkish army] was the guardian of fundamental secularism, not democracy. Secularism is not equal to democracy. This was a very wrong perception in the Israeli establishment (Interview with an Israeli journalist, April 9, 2018).

Although the influence of the US foreign policy was prominent in the Middle East in the post-Cold war era, and there was a motivation that ignited rapprochement between Turkey and Israel. Both sides shared some features in their bureaucratic decision-making systems: Both Turkey and Israel saw their partnership immune from the dynamics of the Middle East such as religion, imperial history, and ideology. Accordingly, both states defined their priorities in the relationship with limited human capacity only through the perspectives of the diplomats and generals. All those strictly controlled factors created a ‘golden decade’ in the relations, which paved the way for close cooperation between the security establishments. Nevertheless, the change of decision-makers on both sides gradually altered the dynamics of the relations in the 2000s, which I discuss in the following section.

## 4.2. BILATERAL RELATIONS FROM THE NETANYAHU/ERDOĞAN ERA TO MAVİ MARMARA (2002- 2010)

### 4.2.1. *Background of the Period*

Turkey’s Justice and the Development Party won the parliamentary elections on November 3, 2002. The party received 34.29% of all votes to build a single-party government, and it was the first time a political party single-handedly came to power after the 1950s. The change in power was also a curious case for regional partners of Turkey: Turkey’s regional neighbors and Israel questioned the policy direction of the conservative government after Ankara spent a tumultuous decade with coalition governments.

Israel followed the governmental change in Turkey with caution, and Israeli foreign policymakers were reluctant to accept the shift in Turkey. ‘The expectation was [that] the Turkish military would eventually win the power of decision-making’ (Interview with an Israeli diplomat, June 26, 2018). This idea dictated that Turkey-Israel relations would have returned to the TAF’s

area of influence. In other words, the Israeli approach in the early 2000s was that the bilateral ties would have been on track as long as generals from both sides were in power. Accordingly, a retired Turkish general described the early 2000s as the continuation of relations. Until the relations deteriorated, military cooperation kept its profile due to the active role of TAF and the OGS in Turkish foreign policymaking. The then-deputy chief of OGS gave an example from 2007,

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recognized the Armenian genocide in 2007<sup>51</sup>, and we, OGS, acted on it. I called and shared my discomfort about the [ADL] statement with my colleagues working for the Jewish lobby groups in Washington. Eric Edelman, the then-counselor of the Department of State under Secretary Condoleezza Rice, arrived in Turkey in a hurry from Moscow, where he was on an official visit with Rice. He got an appointment from OGS, and we also shared our discomfort with him. Edelman, also Jewish, told me there was a misunderstanding and that he would take care of it. Later the chief rabbi of Turkey asked for an appointment [from OGS], and he wanted to soften the situation in the meeting. Even though he told us Israel was uncomfortable about the situation, we told him this was not about Israel (Interview with a retired Turkish general, August 10, 2018).

Yet, this was an anecdote about the position of OGS regarding Turkey-US relations. However, it is crucial to mention that the Turkish general shared the quote once asked about Turkey-Israel relations after 2002. Although he stated that Israel was not part of the conversation, he also made sure to include Israel's stance in explaining the ADL position. The Turkish general further noted that OGS's discomfort was not shared with the American authorities through the Turkish embassy. According to the retired Turkish general, the Turkish MFA 'does not like to work with political lobby groups and prefers to work with the state departments to build a formal relationship'. However, the then-deputy chief of OGS wanted to 'get an immediate response, and it was more efficient to contact through personal acquaintances in the United States. If the Turkish MFA had contacted on behalf of OGS, the Turkish state department would have received a response in a

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<sup>51</sup> Earlier in 2005, PM Erdoğan received ADL's Courage to Care Award and the organization supported Turkey's stance on the Armenian genocide in the following years. In the 2007 statement, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman 'formally recognized the Armenian Genocide but – in what appeared to be a gesture intended to appease the Turkish government – voiced the organization's continued opposition to legislation before Congress'(ANCA 2007).

longer period'. The same Turkish general also referred to his 2006 visit to Washington, DC, where he met with 'the members of the Jewish lobbies upon their request' (Interview with a retired Turkish general, August 10, 2018). The quotation above tells how OGS used the tactic of speeding up the decision-making process to opt out the MFA. The tactic was later widely used by the AKP governments in the following years. Still, it is also evident that OGS was not reluctant to apply the same decision-making model to sustain its significant role in Turkish foreign policymaking.

#### 4.2.2. *Evolving Relations*

On the political forefront, although the Israeli MFA 'had a concern about the Islamist background of the AKP from the day one, Israeli diplomats were surprised about the eagerness of [PM] Erdoğan to keep the relationship on track' (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018).

A retired Israeli diplomat who served in the 1990s in İstanbul explained that the quest to adopt a new approach to bilateral relations came from the AKP government in early 2004,

Feridun Sinirlioğlu was Turkey's ambassador to Israel, and he traveled to Turkey to accompany [Bashar] Assad for his Ankara visit [in January 2004]. Once he returned to Israel, he called me and said that Assad asked Erdoğan to mediate between Israel and Syria. Feridun asked me to convince PM [Ariel] Sharon. However, I failed for two reasons: (1) Sharon ordered to start disengagement of Israel from Gaza. While disengaging from Gaza, it was impossible to start talks with Syria. (2) PM Sharon also said, "Bush would kill me if I started talks because the US does not want a peace process with Syria". Since we had no option for starting an official process, I convinced Feridun to start the track-two diplomacy. First, we met in various cities in Israel, Turkey, and at Sinirlioğlu's residence [in Tel Aviv] until October 2004. In those meetings, Turkey's ambassador to Syria [Halit Çevik] was also present. But we could not have brought any Syrian or Israeli diplomats because Assad only wanted the track one [diplomacy]. Then, while I was in Istanbul, Halit Çevik saw me at the İstanbul Airport and told me to bring a Syrian diplomat. Otherwise, the Turkish side would not have continued this way. Later, a Swiss diplomat approached me at one of the international meetings. I asked if Switzerland would have been interested in conducting the track-two diplomacy between Syria and Israel. I also mentioned Turkey dropped out [of the process]. The Swiss diplomat told me that if Turkey had left, they could have joined, but I should have told the initiative to the Israeli foreign policymakers. Then, we went on track two with Switzerland for two years<sup>52</sup>. Only in February 2007, the Israeli

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<sup>52</sup> Informal talks between Jerusalem and Damascus were held between 2004 and 2006. Discussions centered on an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange of Damascus ending its support of anti-Israel groups and

MFA picked it up (...), and Turkey returned to the process after the 2006 Lebanon War (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, March 27, 2018).

The unwillingness of the Bush administration to start a new peace process in the Middle East was an opportunity for Turkey. The US, as a traditional mediator of Israel in its disagreements with the Arab states, was absent from the scene (Interview with an Israeli policy analyst, May 7, 2018). Additionally, 'Turkey felt that there was a gap in terms of mediation and AKP's ideology was in line with the idea that Turkey could have been a mediator in the Middle East' (Interview with an Israeli policy analyst, March 26, 2018). Turkey's eagerness to start unofficial talks between Syria and Israel, and later Israel and Palestinians, was not an unknown process, specifically in Israel. An Israeli journalist following up with Turkey on those early years of the 2000s described,

In December 2003, I interviewed Erdoğan when he was a newly elected PM. He gave the interview on Wednesday, and its headline was "Erdoğan wants to mediate between Israel and Palestine as well as Israel and Syria". Then, on Friday, Assad paid a [official] visit to Ankara first time. My colleague on Channel 2 [the Israeli TV channel], who works on the Arab media, said, "it is not a coincidence that you met with Erdoğan, and Erdoğan met with Assad now". The message to the Israeli public was that Erdoğan really wants to mediate [between Israel and Syria] (Interview with an Israeli journalist, April 9, 2018).

In the early days of the AKP government, official visits were the main events to share the AKP-led foreign policy and its agenda on mediation. AKP policymakers were eager to explain Turkish foreign policy under the party's rule<sup>53</sup>. Specifically, the number of Erdoğan's international visits signaled the prospective AKP foreign policy orientation: PM Erdoğan visited 84 countries, most of them European states, between 2003 and 2011 (Office of Public Diplomacy 2011). Still,

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distancing itself from Iran. The talks were later discussed by two representatives from both sides in a meeting organized by a Turkish think tank. For the transcript of the meeting, see: GPOT (2008).

<sup>53</sup> Official visits of FM Hikmet Çetin (1993), PM Çiller (1994) and, President Demirel (1996) to Israel were crucial to develop the bilateral relations along with official visits of President Weizmann (1994) and PM Sharon (2001) to Turkey. Still, the AKP period official visits were the ones that shaped the relationships as the visits of FM Gül (2005), PM Erdoğan (2005), President Sezer (2006) to Israel and FM Livni (2006), PM Olmert (2008), Presidents Katsav (2003) and Peres (2007) to Turkey.

Israel was on Turkey's radar to introduce an active role in the region, whereas the attention of Turkish policymakers was on the accession talks with the EU.

In that sense, PM Erdoğan officially visited Israel in May 2005. He was not the first Turkish prime minister officially visit Israel. PM Çiller's 1994 visit paved the way for military relations. However, it was more important for Turkey to test the waters about its mediation agenda. Although the visit focused on whether Erdoğan would wear a kippah in Yad Vashem<sup>54</sup>, it was a critical visit for both countries. The-then Israeli ambassador in Turkey explained,

He [Erdoğan] came with two hundred people. It was a very important visit. I think he understood the importance of strategic relationships during this visit. (...) Before the visit, there was a discussion between the Turkish officials and us [in Ankara]. I told [the Turkish diplomats] doors to the Arab states open through Israel. Turkey needed to be influential in Israel. Like Syria, if you could bring Israel to the table, it would be an opening door for you (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, May 17, 2018).

Foreign policy advisor to the-then PM Sharon also confirmed the visit's success, although there was hesitation about AKP's foreign policy intentions: 'Erdoğan came to Israel during the days of Sharon. It was an excellent, smooth, well-coordinated visit. There was no mistake. Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu was serving as Turkey's ambassador to Israel, and he was very knowledgeable about sensitivities in Turkey and how to overcome them during the visit. So, a potentially tense visit went very well' (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

Reciprocally, Peres's 2007 visit was as influential as Erdoğan's. In November 2007, Israeli President Shimon Peres visited Ankara with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and they both addressed the Turkish Parliament on the same day. The visits were the pinnacle of optimistic times when Turkey wanted to play a negotiator role between the Israeli and

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<sup>54</sup> The issue if Erdoğan would wear kippah as a tradition to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem was the main attraction of the visit. During my interviews, respondents in Israel, even the Israeli officials visited the Center with the Turkish delegation, speculated whether or not he eventually wore it. The official report from both Israeli and Turkish press was that he did not wear it during the visit (Myre 2005).

Palestinian authorities. A Turkish academic who worked as a consultant at the Central Bank of Turkey (CBT) in 2003 explained the earlier idea for building an industrial park in Erez near Gaza to exemplify the favorable atmosphere between the three parties,

CBT and TOBB (The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey) asked me to initiate an investment project in Erez, and Turkish, Palestinian, and Israeli businesspeople met in Ankara. President Peres initially supported the idea and paved our way [politically], and TOBB funded the project. In 2005, we started the Industry for Peace Initiative<sup>55</sup> and shuttled between the parties. 2005 was the moment because Israel had withdrawn from Gaza, and there was an optimistic atmosphere in Israel while Turkey wanted to have the scene as a soft power player. The idea was that Turkish businesses would have invested in the West Bank and Galilee. And Ambassador Sinirlioğlu was in charge of the project on the Turkish side (Interview with a Turkish academic, November 25, 2017).

The-then Israel's ambassador to Turkey explained the goals of Turkey's project to build a peace process between Israeli and Palestinian sides,

Our [Israeli] embassy initiated it, but we convinced Erdoğan as it was his idea. The idea was Turkish side cared about the Palestinians. Still, there was no way we could have a direct economic program for Palestinians, especially in Gaza [while Hamas was in power]. We thought if we could have convinced the Turkish side to launch a three-sided organization, [Turkey] would have built an area on the border of Israel and the West Bank. Why was it important to build it on the border? Because there was terror activity on the border, and if the area [would] have been built on the border, there would have been job opportunities for Palestinians and Israelis. [Israel] also planned to build schools and kindergartens. Turkish and Israeli diplomats visited Erez, but Hamas destroyed the plan. They want to keep Palestinians under Hamas' control. (BG: How did Turkey react when Hamas destroyed the area?) Turkey could not have done anything, but [Israel] saw that good relations with Turkey would have changed the reality on the ground (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, May 17, 2018).

Eventually, Turkey's effort to be an economic and political moderator in the region reached a conclusion in 2006. Syrian and Israeli sides agreed on Turkey's indirect mediator role. At the

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<sup>55</sup> The Industry for Peace Initiative aimed to build a commercial hub near the Erez crossing that divides Israel and Gaza. In its public announcement, the Initiative explains its reason d'être: 'The Erez Industrial Estate (now known as the Palestinian Industrial Free Zone) covers 600 acres of land, located on the very northern tip of Gaza. Up until the Israeli disengagement of August 2005, the Estate was being operated by the Israelis. Nearly 6000 Palestinians were employed by around 200 businesses, half of which were owned by Israeli companies. (...) But with the Israeli withdrawal, businesses were vacated and the door to the Israeli market was closed shut. As a result, employment dropped to nil and almost all firms abandoned the area. The revitalization of Erez which is strategically located on the Israeli-Palestinian border has been the centerpiece of the Ankara Forum' (TEPAV 2006).

same time, the main agenda of negotiations was the status of the Golan Heights, which was an unresolved border issue between Israel and Syria since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war<sup>56</sup>. While Syria requested the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territory in exchange for full peace, Israel's conditions were that Syria would scale down its ties with Iran and end its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip (Hoffman and Keinon 2008; VOA 2009). Concurrently, a new government under the leadership of Ehud Olmert was the main advantage of the Turkish mediation compared to the Sharon governments. As an Israeli observer pointed out, Olmert did not consider the launch of negotiations as a risk but rather as an opportunity: 'Olmert did not come from a military background and was much younger than Sharon. He was more advantageous, more open to taking a risk' (Interview with an Israeli journalist, April 9, 2018).

#### 4.2.3. *Political Conditions*

During my interviews in Israel, I encountered various comments about the content of negotiations and the roles of negotiators. An Israeli negotiator who collaborated with the Turkish side since the beginning of the mediation process described the conditions in which Israel agreed to Turkey's involvement.

There was always an approach in Israel if we should have started to do something about Syria. [PM] Sharon did not believe in the discussion [on peace negotiations] during his term. He wanted to wait and see Bashar al-Assad's policy about Israel after he came to power. (...) The UN Resolution 1595, after the Hariri assassination, turned the spotlight on Syria, and the Assad regime was weakened. So, Assad wanted to send a message that Syria wanted peace with Israel. (...) During his first days [in office], also Olmert did not believe in Syria and adopted Sharon's policy. But then, we heard something changed [in Damascus]. After the Lebanon War in February 2007, Syria acted responsibly and did not try to open a front against Israel. [The Syrian regime] tried to keep Hezbollah in Lebanon rather than moving to Syria and opening a new front from the south. So, [Israel] felt Assad behaved responsibly, and it might have been time to change our attitude about Syria. We did not have direct relations with Damascus, and the Bush administration did not want to involve in it, which they always wanted [in the past]. The US said that Syria worked

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<sup>56</sup> A negotiator from the Israeli team listed the four pillars of the negotiations on the Golan Heights as borders, water, security, and normalization (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

against the administration in Iraq, and Washington did not believe in Assad. Eventually, we told the US [that] we would have looked for potential mediators, and we had two candidates: Turkey and Russia. We looked for countries that had influence over Syria and close relations with it. Russia was supplying most of the Syrian arms, and Syria had an \$8 billion debt to Russia. Then, Turkey also used to solve its problems with Syria, and there were good relations between Erdoğan and Assad. We decided to go with Turkey and arranged a visit to Ankara for Olmert. During the visit, Olmert asked Erdoğan to help find out if Syria would have wanted to start peace talks with Israel. Olmert also tried to find out if Erdoğan would have been interested in being a mediator. Erdoğan willingly said yes because he wanted to be a bridge between the West and Arab-Muslim world. He felt he could have done it; this was his main task. Two major players in this task were Davutoğlu and Sinirlioğlu. Davutoğlu was close to Erdoğan and the Syrian administration (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

Turkish foreign policymakers were aware of their advantageous position. Syria's isolated state after the 2007 Lebanon War and the trend in the Syria-Turkey rapprochement encouraged Turkish decision-makers to step in. Additionally, the personalities of appointed bureaucrats in Turkey and Israel played a significant role in defining the mediation conditions. On the one hand, Ahmet Davutoğlu, foreign policy advisor to PM Erdoğan, and Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu, undersecretary of the Turkish MFA at that time, represented the Turkish team. On the other hand, Shalom Tourgeman, foreign policy advisor to PM Olmert, and Yoram Turbowitz, chief of staff of PM Olmert, formed the Israeli team. While the Turkish side informed PM Erdoğan and the Israeli side worked with PM Olmert, according to the negotiators' narratives, the Syrian side was only represented by Syrian President Assad. An Israeli diplomat who served in Turkey at that time mentioned that the Israeli embassy in Ankara was not informed throughout the negotiations on the ground that the process did not go through the embassy (Interview with an Israeli diplomat, June 26, 2018). Israel's ambassador to Turkey confirmed that the Israeli MFA was never involved in the process. 'Even Olmert's cabinet was not aware of the details about the negotiations' (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018).

A negotiator from the Israeli team also explained the mechanics of the negotiation process: Syria and Israel sent messages to each other via Turkey. Israeli negotiators flew to the İstanbul

Ataturk airport every two to three weeks, met with the Turkish team, and returned to Israel the same day to avoid leaks. Following the meeting of Turkish and Israeli teams in Turkey,

[Davutoğlu] traveled to Syria. He always met with Assad and delivered messages. He was well accepted in Syria. Davutoğlu and Sinirlioğlu did it together. They cooperated, and there was trust in each other. They were an excellent team [for Israel], they were speaking as one voice. We also developed good relations with them and trusted them; we knew they would convey our messages as we said. Usually, in these trilateral talks, your words are transmitted differently; sometimes, 80% of your message is delivered. But Sinirlioğlu and Davutoğlu were good; they expressed 100% of what we said. They did not try to look pretty, so we were blessed to have Turkey as a mediator. Erdoğan followed up in detail and supported the talks (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

As I discussed in Chapter 2, the relationship between elected politicians and appointed bureaucrats shaped the decision-making processes in Turkey. The small group decision-making pattern prevailed in the negotiation process, too. The Turkish MFA was not aware of the indirect talks between the parties, nor the Israeli MFA was aware of it until a year after it started. The Israeli negotiator referred to the possibility of a leak once more institutions joined the table<sup>57</sup>. However, the respondent went beyond the issue and revealed a similar perception about the role of MFAs in foreign policy decision-making,

In the [Israeli] setting, we were two people, and only reported to PM [Olmert]; we did not report to anybody else. If the Israeli MFA had joined us, the Israeli ambassador to Turkey would have attended the meetings, he would have reported to the [Israeli] MFA, and the ambassador could have also talked to his counterparts in Turkey! Once this happened, there would have been too many people in the loop. Moreover, if we started peace negotiations with Syria, Israel would have needed to pay the price, which was the Golan Heights, and there was no consensus on Golan in Israel then. (...) When negotiations began, we updated other offices, such as the IDF and the Ministry of Defense. It was still limited even when Olmert informed the minister [of foreign affairs]. Olmert gave all the instructions only to me, so the Turkish side ensured that there was no other track in Israel (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

The regional politics also interrupted negotiations when Israel bombed a Syrian nuclear reactor in the northeastern Syrian province of Deir al-Zor near the Turkey-Syria border in

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<sup>57</sup> Medzini (2011, 93) points out that ‘access to information is power, and many [Israeli] prime ministers were determined to deny this to some of their colleagues, claiming, justifiably, that leaks made it impossible for Israel to conduct secret negotiations’.

September 2007 (Melman and Raviv 2018). Although Israel acknowledged its role in ‘the Operation out of the Box’ a decade later, the operation did not halt the process. Turkey-Syria relations were at the pinnacle. Even the-then Israeli ambassador in Ankara declared, ' God, I wish I was a Syrian ambassador in Ankara and being treated like him. Relations between Syria and Turkey were just perfect’ (Interview with a retired Israeli ambassador, April 2, 2018). Accordingly, the reaction of Damascus to the bombing was detrimental to Israel's keeping up with the negotiations,

One of the tests of Assad after the bombing was his behavior: Assad behaved responsibly again, contained the bombing in his inner circle, and did not respond to Israel. We thought this might be a new approach in Syria. From November 2007 to May 2008, we worked intensively on messages and concluded that this would have been serious because the Syrian track was serious. If this round were not serious, we, Israel, would also have jeopardized our relations with Turkey. Turkey had a lot to lose if it failed, especially since it would have lost its reputation. We said we joined this track very sober; we knew not only Syria but also Turkey was on the spot. Everyone claimed that the talks were not serious. They were the ones who did not know its content. Turkey was much more important than Syria to us, and we did not want to jeopardize our relations. When you talked to Feridun [Sinirlioğlu] and Davutoğlu at that time, you would have sensed that Syria was hesitant because of the intensity of Turkey-Israel relations (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

Eventually, on May 15, 2008, parties went public and announced that Syria and Israel had met for indirect talks through Turkey’s mediation. Israel’s concerns about going public were distinct: It was to prevent any further leak and, to distract the attention from the allegations of corruption for PM Olmert during his terms in office as PM and the mayor of Jerusalem. Still, the negotiations continued as indirect talks after the announcement. The Syrian and Israeli sides met in different rooms in the same hotel in Istanbul as they had met before. The Turkish team went back and forth between the rooms and conveyed messages to the parties. The Israeli negotiator told the process after the announcement,

There were four issues on the table: borders, water, security, and normalization. We [Israel] wanted to hear answers about them, and we explored each issue in different meetings. We were based on what was already agreed on in the past. During the fourth

meeting, we reached a point in all the issues. The Turkish team told us that the Syrians and we needed to sit together and finalize the deal. Turkey said the matters became too professional and too detailed. We were diplomats and could not have mediated on security issues when the issue came to the national security of Israel and Syria. So, the Turkish team advised us to bring generals who knew the issues, and Turkey would have initiated a meeting between Syrian and Israeli generals. The Turkish team would have been in the meeting, but they could not have delivered messages anymore because of the professional content of the security chapter. They did not want to miss the details about such an important issue, so they told us the talks needed experts from both sides. We agreed to move to direct talks and to sit in the same room. We appreciated the Turkish approach (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

In July 2008, PM Olmert's announcement to not run for the Kadima party leadership and to resign from office once his party elected a new leader stopped the mediation process. The personalities of decision-makers had played a considerable role in the process, and the absence of Olmert's support would have derailed the talks. Turkey took the initiative and approached Olmert, as an interim PM, and Assad to convince both parties to keep up with the mediation. Israel agreed under the condition that Syria should have fulfilled the expectation in the security chapter. The Assad regime would have scaled down its ties with Iran and ended its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip (Hoffman and Keinon 2008; VOA 2009). Davutoğlu played an active role in getting approval from both the Syrian and Israeli sides. In contrast, Israel was hesitant if Assad would take the risk of negotiation over security issues with an interim Israeli PM. In other words, Assad knew Olmert 'did not have the ability to pass a deal with Syria from Knesset' (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

The agenda of PM Olmert in his last visit to Ankara on December 22, 2008, was 'to meet Erdoğan and to ask him what Syrians wanted to do in terms of security issues. If Erdoğan's response about the Syrians would have pleased Israel, the Syrian FM would have come to Ankara and joined direct talks with Israel under the auspices of the Turkish team' (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018). Prior to Olmert's Ankara visit, the Israeli and Turkish

negotiation members agreed that Erdoğan would have sent an envoy to Syria to get approval from the Assad administration and would have informed the Olmert administration about the process.

In the meantime, the tension in the Gaza Strip was increasing due to Hamas's decision to resume rocket fire in response to the violation of the ceasefire. Three-week-long Operation Cast Lead/2009 Gaza war had a massive impact on the negotiations where Turkey distanced itself from Israel on the ground that Ankara's diplomatic reputation was tarnished. Israeli negotiator described the last round of the talks and the atmosphere on those days,

[Olmert's team] left Ankara on Monday, but we started to get bombed from Gaza on Sunday. While we traveled to Ankara on Sunday, over a hundred missiles were fired against Israel. During the meeting in Ankara, Olmert told Erdoğan that missiles were coming towards Israel and Israel could not shut its eyes. [Israel] should have responded. We went back to Israel on Monday. On Tuesday, missiles hit Israeli cities again, and Olmert decided to call the Israeli cabinet to meet. The Israeli cabinet met on Wednesday and decided to bomb Gaza. We targeted to hit the Hamas leadership, but we wanted a surprise attack, and the cabinet gave the PM and Defense Minister the authority to decide on timing. They decided to do it on Saturday morning since it was Shabbat. Everyone would have thought it was a holiday in Israel. Even the Israeli team did not know the Israeli moves in the following days. When we were in Turkey at the beginning of the week, the only thing we told the Turkish team was we could not be quiet, so Erdoğan knew Israel had to react, but he did not know the timing neither of us knew. However, Turkey was offended. We told them we had not updated you before the bombing because we also did not know when it would have happened. Everyone concluded that Turkey knew and did not prevent it. Another way of criticizing the Israeli move was if Turkey and Israel had good relations, and when Turkey was hosting the Israeli PM, how did Turkey not know that the Israeli cabinet would bomb Gaza? Then the follow-up question was, what kind of friendship was this? So, the criticism came from both ways (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

The closed-circle structure of the negotiation process was one of the main reasons for failure. The personal trust between negotiators and the absence of pre-set understanding of negotiation rules did not help the process when negotiation conditions changed. A former Israeli ambassador to Turkey compared Turkey-Israel-Syria negotiations with the Oslo process,

Talks with the Palestinians started in Oslo. [The Israeli team] went to Oslo, none of them were serving in the government [at that time], but they were people of defense like Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas]. Later on, the agreement was signed in the Wye River Memorandum. The Oslo papers were 2-3 pages, but the Memorandum papers were 2,600

pages because conditions had to be determined. The agreement should be multilateral; however, nothing was there in the Turkey-Syria-Israel [negotiation process]. And you cannot do it with secret meetings without the involvement of the US, Russia, Europe, and the UN. Expectations of Erdoğan were very high, while the Israeli side was less enthusiastic (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, May 17, 2018).

Turkey's former ambassador to Israel mentioned the involvement of the United States as a 'guarantor state' and pointed it out as a missing point that the Turkish team should have paid attention to (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, November 3, 2017). Also, regional leaders such as Jordan and Egypt followed the mediation with caution on the ground that 'historically Jordan was the protector of East Jerusalem and Egypt was for the Middle East' (Interview with an Israeli diplomat, June 26, 2018). Finally, Israeli analysts that have been following Turkey read the ground rules of negotiations as 'Turkey's belief in its own PR campaign in the Middle East',

When Turkey said, "we can bring peace to the Middle East because we are Muslim and we have a shared history", this was a strategic mistake. Because the shared history is terrible, on the other hand, Turkey wanted to limit the influence of Iran. But would Egypt or Syria have let Turkey achieve this goal? When Turkey pushed a bit, Syria and Egypt became its enemies. Moreover, the Arab Spring ruined the dream, too. Turkey's crucial asset was building ports for trade, but it understood this asset as a naval officer looking at the map in the 19th century. This was a very old fashion [approach] (Interview with an Israeli academic, April 13, 2018).

Another issue was Turkey's visibly pro-Palestinian stance that started with the 2006 visit of Hamas leader Khalid Mashal. Following the election in Gaza, Mashal was invited to Ankara to leverage relations with Hamas; however, it was not an official visit. The AKP, as a party, invited Mashal to Turkey rather than the Turkish MFA extending an official visit to the authority in Gaza<sup>58</sup>. A retired Turkish diplomat recalled the day Mashal arrived in Ankara: 'No one knew at the Turkish MFA that Mashal would have come to Ankara. I directed all calls [made to the MFA]

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<sup>58</sup> Following the 2006 election in Gaza, 'no Western country or Middle Eastern state on friendly terms with the West were willing to have diplomatic contacts with Hamas. The AKP government provided Hamas with a high-profile endorsement by receiving the Hamas leader, when even the Turkish Foreign Ministry declined to extend an invitation to Mashal' (Öniş and Yılmaz 2009, 19).

to the AKP headquarters. I heard later that the AKP people were mad at me' (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, November 25, 2017).

On the one hand, the idea in the AKP ranks was that Turkey supported democratic elections in Gaza. Hamas could not have been ignored if Turkey wanted to be a regional actor in the Middle East (Interview with a Turkish academic, February 27, 2018). On the other hand, Turkey's relations with Hamas helped Israel during the release of Gilad Shalit, an IDF soldier kidnapped near the Kerem Shalom crossing by Hamas's military wing in June 2006. The-then Israeli ambassador to Turkey explained how functional the Turkey-Hamas relationship was in the early negotiations for Shalit's release,

Before the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit, Erdoğan met with Hamas leaders in Ankara. I criticized the visit and was expecting to be announced persona non grata. They called me to the Turkish MFA and told me that I would be out if I talked the same way again. But the day Shalit was kidnapped, I met with Davutoğlu [serving as Erdoğan's foreign policy advisor at that time]. I told him that [Israel] needed the help of Erdoğan to know what happened to the Israeli soldier. Erdoğan accused me and said, 'Less than a week ago, you criticized our relationship with Hamas, and now you asked me to talk to them?' I said, 'yes, this is the [Shalit's] life that matters'. He said, 'I am not sure you have enough support from your government to ask me to do this'. From his office, I directly called Tzipi Livni [Israeli FM at that time]. 2 hours later, Davutoğlu took the plane and went to Damascus. He met with Mashal there, and he came back and told me that Shalit was alive. So, the information about Shalit came through Davutoğlu. This is one of the examples of how Davutoğlu was influential [in directing relations with Syria]. Later, [Israel] understood we were not able to stop the [Turkey-Hamas] relationship. So, we did our best to use the relations. [Israel] understood that we could have sent messages through this connection (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, May 17, 2018).

Another former Israeli ambassador to Turkey mentioned Israel's discomfort with the Mashal visit and Turkey's recognition of the election result in Gaza. However, at that time, 'the Israeli public was too sensitive about captured soldiers, and this overcame every issue. It was a weakness for Israel' (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018). Eventually, Turkey was involved in the negotiations along with Egypt, Syria, and Qatar. Shalit was released after five

years of captivity in the Gaza Strip, and Israel released 1,027 Palestinian prisoners under the condition that some were exiled to Turkey, Syria, and Qatar (Eichner 2011; Reuters 2011).

#### 4.2.4. *Economic Conditions*

On the economic forefront, the change in Turkey's export to Israel was small but still recognizable. In a decade (2003-2013), the Turkish business community increased its export to Israel four times (Figure 10). A Turkish businessperson selling software to Israel mentioned two reasons to explain the pike in trade relations: (1) It was a sign that the quality of Turkish goods was increased in a decade, and Israel served as a gatekeeper to reach the Western markets, specifically the US market. (2) Flexible business culture of Israel compared to Europe helped Turkish business community to feel at home culturally and to garner personal relations with the Israeli business community. The Turkish entrepreneur explained those conditions,

Israel is a small market that reaches only seven million people compared to the consumer profile of Arab states. But Israel's positive side is its business community helps you to reach other markets. Israeli people help and teach you how to do business in the American market. It is easier to build a trusting relationship [with Israelis] compared to Europeans. In Europe, an [business] agreement matters, but Israelis make a deal with a verbal promise like in Turkey. There is no such culture in Europe (Interview with a Turkish businessperson, November 15, 2017).

The interviewee also reminded the upper limit of trade volume between the two countries on the ground that Israel has a limited consumer market. However, Israel's geographical proximity to Turkey and sending Turkish goods to the Ashdod port made Israel one of Turkey's primary business partners in the Middle East (Interview with a Turkish businessperson, November 15, 2017).

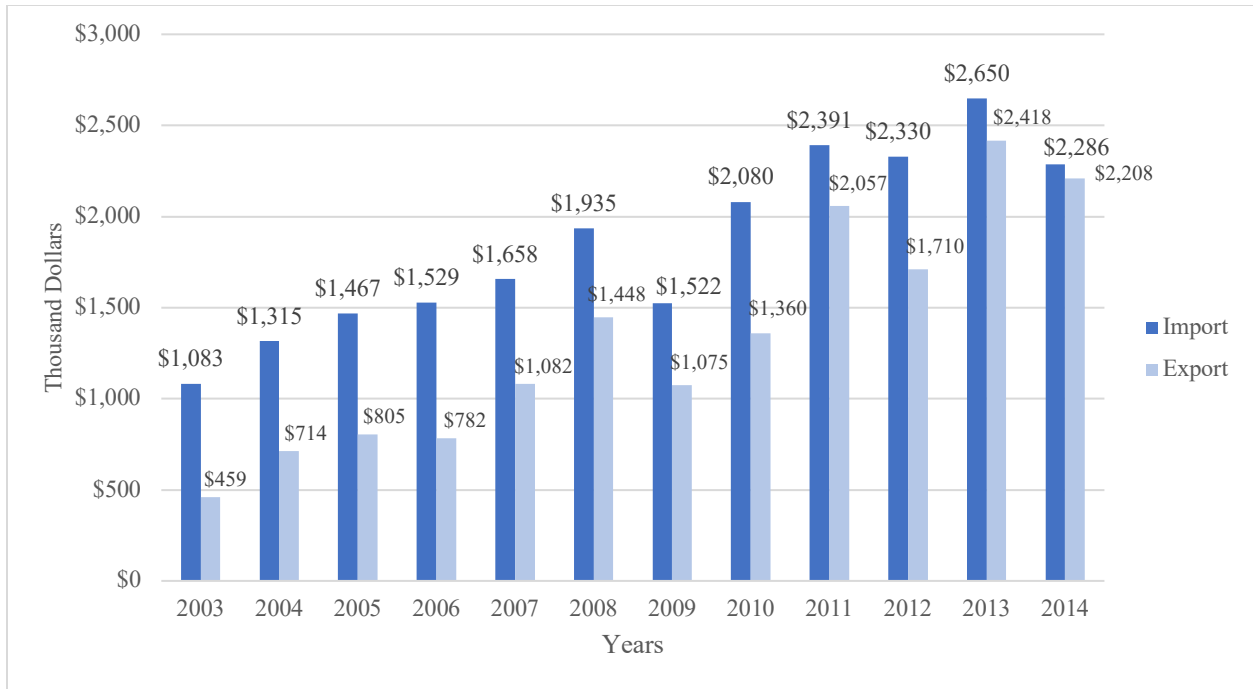


Figure 10: Turkey's Import and Export to Israel in Years (2003-2014)<sup>59</sup>

Source: Derived from the dataset provided by TÜİK (2020)

Prior to political crises in bilateral relations, the former chairman of the Israel-Turkey Business Council and Chamber of Commerce & Industry also noted 'the complementary structures of two economies': 'Turkish industry is based on the workforce. It provides mass and extended industrial production capabilities that perfectly dovetail with the needs of the Israeli economy that is based on advanced technologies and that continually seeks to penetrate new global markets' (Carmon 2018, 1).

#### 4.2.5. *Unshared Concerns in Foreign Policy*

The common understanding in Israeli politics was that foreign policy had always been under the authority of the security establishment. There was a widespread belief that 'Turkey could not have

<sup>59</sup> Figure 10 also includes Turkey's trade volume with the Palestinian Authority, whose economy mainly relies on the export of Turkish agricultural products (Interview with a Turkish academic, November 25, 2017).

been a broker because it could not force anything on Israel'. There was also disbelief about Turkey's role as a mediator once the process became public. An Israeli academic clarified the common understanding about Turkey's role in the late-2000s,

Why did the Israeli security establishment think Turkey could be a good option in mediation? No one believed in [the idea that] Turkey would have brought peace. This is like asking why the EU started accession negotiations with Turkey when no one believed in Turkey's membership. Someone brought the idea from the political establishment, and Israel thought Turkey would have been under control if it dealt with mediation. Turkey could not be a broker because it could not force anything. I think there was a lot of Orientalism in the Israeli approach, like keeping the nervous bull busy, pretending to respect it, and saying that you are great and important, then it would be happy. But Israel did not understand that Turkey had aims and goals even though they were not smart. It is a very Israeli way of thinking: "Why not try? Let's try and see the rest later". But it was a mistake; it gave Turkey the impression that it had a role to play (Interview with an Israeli academic, April 13, 2018).

In the aftermath of the 2008-09 Operation Cast Lead, which ended with severe consequences for both Israel and Hamas, Turkey's miscalculation in foreign policy decision-making became apparent. The Israeli operation in Gaza mobilized masses in Turkey on the eve of the local elections in March 2009<sup>60</sup>. PM Erdoğan's rhetoric was harsher than before. He referred to Israeli action in Gaza as 'savagery, 'a crime-against humanity', 'state terror', and warned Israel that it would 'reap what it sows' (Rainsford 2009). The Turkish PM also declared that he 'had lost confidence in PM Olmert as a partner for peace and felt personally betrayed by the fact that he was not informed of the impending Israeli operation during Olmert's visit to Ankara' (Aytürk 2009, 61).

The Olmert government was cautious in responding to the Turkish government. The idea on the Israeli side was that the Turkish governments historically supported the Palestinian argument

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<sup>60</sup> Aytürk (2009, 61) also mentions that popular protests against the Israeli operation 'were organized by civil society institutions such as trade unions, professional organizations, and bars, but the majority were inspired and carefully coordinated by the Anadolu Gençlik Derneği, an association indirectly linked with the Saadet Partisi (SP). Tens of thousands participated in one such rally in Ankara on January 19, 2009, and another meeting in Diyarbakır drew a huge mass of people numbering 50,000 according to some estimates'.

in military operations, and this case was no exception. According to the then PM Olmert's advisor, 'Israel was in contact with Turkey during the Gaza operation, and [the Israeli officials] knew what [the Turkish officials] would have said and how Israel would have contained it. Turkey criticized Israel based on peace discourse, which was also France's rhetoric (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018). After the war, the then-Israeli ambassador to Turkey also advised his government 'to disregard Erdoğan's way of expressing his anger. It could have passed as long as military and trade relations were fine' (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018).

However, the Israeli stance on Turkey had to change following a World Economic Forum session joined by PM Erdoğan and President Peres in Davos, Switzerland, in 2009. The perception in Israel about the Davos scene<sup>61</sup> was, this time, the crisis was not one of the 'diplomatic crises [happened] behind the curtains as it was before, but the [Israeli] public watched it. It was about AKP, its leadership style, and Turkey's intention to make the crisis public. And it paid off: Davos showed the Arab street that Erdoğan could be a leader against Israel in the Middle East' (Interview with an Israeli think tank analyst, March 26, 2018).

Still, neither state suspended its diplomatic relations despite the discussion in Davos. The then-Israeli ambassador in Turkey was invited and accepted by Erdoğan and Turkish ministers (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018). On the military forefront, however, Turkey signaled its protest. In October 2009, Ankara announced that the Israeli air forces were no longer invited to the NATO-led exercise. 'The drill was postponed indefinitely after other [states],

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<sup>61</sup> Peres was in defense the position of Israeli military campaign in Gaza in a Forum session where Erdoğan was also one of the speakers. Towards the end of the discussion, the moderator, the Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, did not let Erdoğan a turn to respond. Eventually, Erdoğan got a minute. "Mr. Peres, you are older than me" he said. "Your voice comes out in a very high tone. And the high tone of your voice has to do with a guilty conscience. My voice, however, will not come out in the same tone". Erdoğan continued, saying to Peres, "When it comes to killing, you know well how to kill". Eventually, the prime minister gathered up his papers and departed, saying, "And so Davos is over for me from now on" (Bennhold 2009). A day after the incident, Peres said he had an amicable phone conversation with Erdoğan and they agreed on not take the spat personally (CNN 2009).

including the United States and Italy, refused to take part without Israel's air force' (Turkey barred Israel from NATO exercise over Gaza-PM 2009).

The trend started with military cooperation in the 1990s upgraded into a political rapprochement between Turkey and Israel in the 2000s. Despite Turkey had a historical pro-Palestinian stance, Ankara and Jerusalem shared a common stance in Middle East politics, which was limited cooperation with regional states. Shared interests in defining themselves out of the regional politics magnified the bilateral relations more than its capacity up until the foreign policy agenda of the AKP government solidified in the region. While the end of the 2000s was approaching, Turkey's policy in the Middle East focused on going above and beyond limited cooperation with Israel in the region. Thus, the period between 2002 and 2010 closed with a significant political crisis in bilateral relations. In the next section, I will discuss Turkey's ambitious regional policy in the early 2010s and how its policy transformed the bilateral ties with Israel and changed the foreign policy ideas of the Turkish policymakers.

#### 4.3. RE-DECLINE OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONS (2010-2014)

##### 4.3.1. *Background of the Period*

Just three months after the Davos crisis, the-then Turkey's ambassador to Israel, Oğuz Çelikkol, was invited to the Israeli MFA to discuss the representation of a fictional Israeli diplomat in a popular Turkish television series. The Israeli deputy FM, Danny Ayalon, invited the press to the meeting room without prior knowledge of the Turkish ambassador. In Ayalon's statement in Hebrew<sup>62</sup>, the deputy FM made clear that he 'would not shake hands with the [Turkish]

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<sup>62</sup> In his memoir, Çelikkol (2014) tells that Ayalon set him up so the Turkish ambassador sat on a lower sofa. The ambassador was not expected to be treated in an undiplomatic way. Çelikkol defines Ayalon as a friendly figure who supported Turkey while serving as Israel's ambassador to the United States. Furthermore, Çelikkol explicitly writes

ambassador, the Israeli MFA had no intention to display a Turkish flag on the conference table’ (Reuters 2010). The Israeli delegation also made the Turkish envoy sit on a lower couch, confronted by three Israeli officials in higher chairs.

The last straw in the relations came in May 2010. Six international vessels carrying 560 activists from fifty countries set sail from Antalya, Turkey. The convoy intended to breach the Israeli and Egyptian naval blockade and deliver aid to the Gaza Strip, which was under international embargo since Hamas’ election victory in February 2006 (Çelikkol 2014). The Free Gaza Movement (FGM) led the convoy, which previously organized eight boat trips to Gaza to breach the Israeli blockade imposed on Gaza. On the ninth trip, the European Campaign to End the Siege and the Turkey-based İHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı) were the organizers along with FGM (FGM 2022). On May 31, 2010, the vessels ‘were intercepted 72 nautical miles from the Gaza Strip, as IDF commandos landed on the largest ship, the Mavi Marmara’ (Aran and Yishayahu 2022, 6). The struggle between passengers and IDF commandoes ended with the killing of nine Turkish citizens and a Turkish-US dual national. 55 passengers and 10 IDF soldiers were also injured. The senior Turkish diplomat who headed Turkey’s national inquiry team after the incident stated that Israel wanted to send a strong message with its harsh response that ‘nobody would dare to come again’ (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, February 13, 2018). ‘The ships were subsequently brought to the Israeli port of Ashdod, where activists were arrested and interrogated until their release and deportation the next day’ (Aran and Yishayahu 2022, 6).

The-then Turkish diplomat who served at the embassy in Tel Aviv said that the Turkish MFA advised the Turkish non-profit organizations not to join the campaign. The diplomat clarified that

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that he has no background in Hebrew language and did not understand what Ayalon told the press during the meeting.

the Turkish state helped the Palestinians more easily when Turkey-Israel relations were on track' (Interview with a mid-level Turkish diplomat, November 29, 2017).

The Mavi Marmara flotilla incident started the competitive era of fact-finding missions. The first report published by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (UN) in July 2010 aimed to determine if international law was violated<sup>63</sup>. The following year in January 2011, the Turkel commission that prepared the national report of Israel found the actions of the Israeli navy and Israel's blockade of Gaza were legal under international law<sup>64</sup>. According to a witness who appeared before the Israeli commission, 'the consequences [of the Flotilla incident] were more important than the event. It reflected hate towards Israel, and there was no way [Israel] would have fixed this' (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 27, 2018).

The Turkish National Commission of Inquiry also announced its report in February 2011. The Turkish MFA formed an investigation team headed by a career diplomat and representatives from other state departments. They investigated the past activities of activists and interviewed the passengers on board. Eventually, the Turkish commission concluded that the Israeli commandos boarding the Mavi Marmara had an unlawful action and breached international human rights<sup>65</sup>. The Turkish diplomat who headed the commission noted that FM Davutoğlu appointed him with a warning that the diplomat would not have more important files on his desk in the next couple of

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<sup>63</sup> According to the report, 'the fact-finding mission concluded that a series of violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, were committed by the Israeli forces during the interception of the flotilla and during the detention of passengers in Israel prior to deportation' (UN Human Rights Council 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Part one of the Turkel Commission Report concludes, 'on board the Mavi Marmara and the other flotilla vessels was a group of IHH and affiliated activists that violently opposed the Israeli boarding. (...) The force used against civilians on board the flotilla was governed by the principles of "necessity" and use of "proportionate force" associated with human rights-based law enforcement norms' (Prime Minister's Office of Israel 2011, 278).

<sup>65</sup> The Turkish MFA reports that 'during the attack, excessive, indiscriminate, and disproportionate force was used by the Israeli soldiers against the civilians on board (...). The passengers only exercised a lawful right of self-defense, without any firearms, against the armed attack of the Israeli forces' (Turkish National Commission of Inquiry 2011, 4-5).

years. The Turkish commission also followed the progress of Israel's Turkel commission, and both national commissions presented their findings in separate sessions at the UN's Palmer Commission (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, February 13, 2018).

Finally, the long-expected report of the UN Secretary General's Panel of Inquiry, namely the Palmer Commission, reviewed the national reports of Turkey and Israel. The panel did not meet with survivors but only held direct meetings with the points of contact appointed by each government. Turkey expected that the panel would adopt its suggestions since Ankara took the initiative and pressured the Obama administration to form an independent commission at the UN (Interview with the Turkish representative of the Palmer Commission, February 10, 2018). Although the panel findings were not legally binding for the parties, Turkey and Israel lobbied to influence the final report in accordance with their national arguments. In this regard, the crucial findings and suggestions of the report were:

- The naval blockade was imposed as a legitimate security measure to prevent weapons from entering Gaza by sea and its implementation complied with the requirements of international law.
- Although people are entitled to express their political views, the flotilla acted recklessly in attempting to breach the naval blockade. The majority of the flotilla participants had no violent intentions, but there exist serious questions about the conduct, true nature, and objectives of the flotilla organizers, particularly IHH. The actions of the flotilla needlessly carried the potential for escalation.
- The incident and its outcomes were not intended by either Turkey or Israel. Both States took steps in an attempt to ensure that events did not occur in a manner that endangered individuals' lives and international peace and security.
- Israel's decision to board the vessels with such substantial force at a great distance from the blockade zone and with no final warning immediately prior to the boarding was excessive and unreasonable.
- Israeli Defense Forces personnel faced significant, organized, and violent resistance from a group of passengers when they boarded the Mavi Marmara, requiring them to use force for their own protection (UN Palmer Report 2011, 4).

#### 4.3.2. *Evolving Relations*

Although the Palmer report was long-awaited, it did not suggest a road map to normalize bilateral relations. Two days after the Flotilla incident, Oğuz Çelikkol, Turkey's ambassador to Israel, left Tel Aviv 'for consultations in Ankara following the evacuation of 490 Mavi Marmara passengers from the Ben-Gurion airport on three civilian airplanes sent by the Turkish government. [The ambassador] did not return to Israel even though he continued to act as the Turkish ambassador to Israel for several months in Ankara' (Çelikkol 2016). However, Israel's ambassador to Turkey stayed a year longer than his counterpart in Tel Aviv, and Turkey decided to expel him later in August 2011. The ambassador told his last year in Ankara,

I stayed [in Ankara] one more year, but I had very limited capacity. I was not accepted by ministers and not invited to the Ramadan dinner annually organized by the PM. I was certainly limited. The Turkish foreign policymakers were confident that the UN would have stepped in and the decision of the UN [Palmer] commission would have supported the Turkish government, so they wanted first to hear the decision. While the UN commission was writing its conclusion, they led me to stay in Ankara. I would have been sent away a year earlier, but they preferred to keep me. Later, Turkey was not satisfied with the UN decision, but before they asked me to go, luckily, my term ended in August 2011. I packed all our stuff in Ankara and sent them to Israel in the summer of 2011. When I heard Turkey expelled me as an Israeli ambassador to Turkey, I was already in Israel. I was saved from the shame of pushing out (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 2, 2018).

The reason for the Israeli ambassador's expulsion was Israel's refusal to meet Turkish demand for an official apology and the payment of compensation to families of the dead. In return, Israel wanted Turkey to expel a senior member of Hamas' military wing who had resided in Istanbul and to annul all legal claims against IDF officers involved in the flotilla raid (Ravid 2015). Once Turkey's goal was to 'make sure that Israel's action of murder recognized by the UN Palmer Commission', Ankara listed its conditions to normalize the relations as an official apology, compensation for the families of the deceased, and lifting the blockade to Gaza (Interview with a Turkish representative of the Palmer Commission, February 10, 2018). The reciprocal conditions

brought another round of negotiations between the two states, which started during the investigation of the Palmer commission and took almost five years. But why did it take so long to reach an agreement?

To better understand the negotiation process, one needs to be aware of the bureaucrats who represented Turkey and Israel in the process. Both states appointed high-level bureaucrats who directed their respective MFAs. Choosing bureaucrats rather than political appointees was a significant choice in the sense that delicate international disagreements were still the expertise area of diplomats. On the one hand, Özdem Sanberk, Turkey's representative in the Palmer commission, was a retired career diplomat who served as the undersecretary of the Turkish MFA in the 1990s. According to a senior Turkish diplomat, Sanberk was chosen because of his wide-range experience as well as coming from the circle of the-then undersecretary Sinirlioğlu (February 13, 2018). Sinirlioğlu worked as a counselor to Sanberk during the latter's undersecretary role at the Turkish MFA. On the other hand, Joseph Ciechanover, Israel's representative in the UN Commission, had a similar profile as an academic-turned-civil servant that served as director-general of the Israeli MFA in the early 1980s. 'Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Barak, and Foreign Minister Lieberman chose Ciechanover after he was recommended by a panel, headed by National Security Council head Uzi Arad, who was looking for someone with both a diplomatic and security background' (Keinon 2010).

#### *4.3.3. Political Conditions*

Turkey and Israel started the bilateral negotiations in 2011, while Sanberk and Ciechanover represented their states in the Palmer commission. A year after Sanberk left his position to the undersecretary Sinirlioğlu, Ciechanover also handed over his role to Dore Gold, the then-director

general of the Israeli MFA<sup>66</sup>. The main obstacle that took five years to handle was the method of compensation payment. According to a member of the Turkish negotiation team, ‘Israel wanted to pay the compensation to the Turkish state rather than the bereaved families. Israel wanted to have the guarantee that the families would not seek further legal proceedings in any country’ (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, February 10, 2018).

The negotiations followed a similar pattern as Turkey’s mediator role between Syria and Israel. After undersecretary Sinirlioğlu became the negotiator, according to a senior Turkish diplomat, FM Davutoğlu and PM Erdoğan fully trusted in him and his diplomatic abilities. Sinirlioğlu only informed both elected politicians about the negotiation process and did not share detailed information with the Turkish MFA. ‘Sinirlioğlu worked with his deputy, who was the former Turkish ambassador to the United Arab Emirates<sup>67</sup>, but only Sinirlioğlu discussed the process with Davutoğlu and Erdoğan. Discussing the process in a small group was a preference, rather than a political choice’ (Interview with a retired Turkish diplomat, February 10, 2018).

The Israeli negotiation team was familiar with Sinirlioğlu’s negotiation style from his years as a Turkish ambassador in Tel Aviv. The Netanyahu government, following the 2009 general elections, had a hawkish attitude in foreign policy compared to its predecessor under the leadership of Olmert. Additionally, the AKP government started its third term in parliament after winning the highest majority (49.83%) in the 2011 general elections. The election results substantially changed

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<sup>66</sup> Dore Gold was also an influential bureaucrat in the PM Netanyahu’s foreign policy circle. He started his career at the MFA as an advisor to the FM Netanyahu (1996-97). Before the 2000s, he acted in significant roles by negotiating with the PLO, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. He served as the Israeli ambassador to the UN during the term of 1997-1999. Between 2000 and 2013, he was out of the sight in terms of official roles, but he was active in Track II diplomacy through his director position at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. He joined the political scene, again, as an advisor to PM Netanyahu in 2013. His return to the Israeli MFA as a director-general happened in May 2015, which he held the position until October 2016 (Keinon 2015).

<sup>67</sup> Hakkı Akil was Turkey’s ambassador to UAE between 2008 and 2009. He returned to the MFA headquarters as a deputy undersecretary when FM Davutoğlu appointed Sinirlioğlu as the undersecretary of the MFA in 2009 (Gürcanlı 2009).

the AKP foreign policy, whose reflections were also observed by the Israeli policymakers during the negotiations. A retired Israeli general that attended the talks as a vice prime minister at the PM Netanyahu government described the post-Mavi Marmara attitude of the Turkish team,

After the [Palmer] report was published, [Israel] was ready to discuss the rest. I knew Sinirlioğlu from his time in Israel. It was fine to discuss with the Turkish delegation, but after they returned home, all the common understanding was gone. After the third meeting, I realized that Erdoğan did not want to settle [the issue]. He wanted to humiliate us and took advantage of it. I said this was a hopeless [situation]. He supported Hamas! Unbelievable! He was not on our side; he was a rival! (Interview with a retired Israeli general, May 15, 2018)

The Israeli negotiator in the Israel-Syria-Turkey negotiations underlined the reluctance of both sides: ‘None of the sides wanted to take the responsibility. Israel did not want to apologize as Erdoğan demanded, and Erdoğan knew that Israel could not have lifted the blockade on Gaza. Both sides stuck and blamed each other’ (Interview with a former Israeli advisor to PM, May 3, 2018).

In a deadlocked situation, US President Obama’s visit to Israel in March 2013 aimed to start a dialogue between the two sides. The escalating civil war in Syria and the regional security vacuum were the main reasons the Obama administration sped up the negotiation process. On the last day of his official visit, Obama urged the Israeli government to revive the negotiations and reach a conclusion. On the same day, Netanyahu called Erdoğan, and the Israeli PM ‘expressed Israel’s apology to the Turkish people for any mistakes that might have led to a loss of life or injury and agreed to conclude a compensation agreement’. In return, the Turkish PM accepted the apology ‘on behalf of the Turkish people’ and ‘expressed regret over the recent worsening of their ties, which have vital strategic importance for the peace and stability of the region’ (Friedman 2013).

Turkish and Israeli PMs agreed on clauses regarding the blockade conditions in Gaza, exchanging ambassadors, and dropping criminal charges against Israeli officials at the Turkish courts (Rudoren and Landler 2013). Again, the payment method of the compensation for dropping the charges against the Israeli officials at the Turkish courts extended the negotiation period, which eventually ended with a reconciliation agreement signed in June 2016. According to the deal signed by the parties,

- Israel agreed to pay \$20 million in compensation to the bereaved families, and the compensation would be delivered by Turkey to the parties.
- Turkey was allowed to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza via the Ashdod port.
- Turkey agreed to pass legislation protecting Israeli officials from legal liability.
- Both sides of the agreement will begin the normalization process by appointing ambassadors to capitals and removing sanctions that they applied against each other (Ravid 2016).

The post-Mavi Marmara period annihilated military cooperation, the central pillar of the relations a decade ago. After expelling the Israeli ambassador to Turkey, PM Erdoğan announced the suspension of all military ties with Israel. Following the cutting of diplomatic relations in September 2011, Israel expected that ‘the halt in trade [would] only apply to commercial ties between the Turkish government and [the IDF], which mainly involved Israeli security exports. Such deals were estimated to be worth several million dollars a year – a tiny fraction of Israeli exports to Turkey, which totaled \$13 billion in 2010’ (Ynetnews 2011).

Two reasons were crucial in suspending the military relations on the Turkish front: The end of military agreements and the declining role of the Turkish army in decision-making. Regarding the terms of arm sales agreements between the two countries, Turkey felt relieved on the ground that most of its defense contracts with Israel, such as upgrading Turkey’s US-made jets and tanks, had already been delivered (BBC News 2011). For the rest of the military agreements

that Turkey needed Israeli technology, Ankara possessed the military equipment via third parties.

A retired Israeli general told how Israel provided the services after the Flotilla incident,

Turkey had a contract with Boeing. The company sold new intelligence airplanes to Turkey when Israel supplied some services. The Israeli government decided to terminate the agreement and not sell the rest of the systems. But Turks continued to want them after the Flotilla case. (...) Turkey was clever; they said: Boeing was the main contractor and Israel was a sub-contractor, so Israel had an agreement with Boeing to deliver. Otherwise, Turkey would have asked for compensation. Boeing was under pressure. [The Israeli company] made an exception eventually. If we did not deliver, some American companies would have been harmed. But it took some time. I was working as an advisor to the Israeli company [that delivered the equipment], and Boeing asked me to talk to the Israeli government to allow some exceptions (Interview with an Israeli retired general, May 27, 2018).

Turkey's changing decision-makers were the second primary reason for suspending military relations. The absence of Turkish generals in military deals inevitably affected military ties. A retired Israeli diplomat who served as an advisor to the Knesset sub-committee on Foreign Affairs explained the role of the Turkish army in the post-Mavi Marmara period,

The role of the Turkish army was totally diminished. This was one crucial channel in sustaining the dialogue between the Turkish and Israeli security establishments. Once the Turkish military was removed from its traditional role, the trend disappeared, and the cooperation based on mutual military training was gone. Moreover, Turkey's political orientation vis-à-vis Palestinians annihilated the whole atmosphere. Nowadays, diplomatic relations have been restored, but I do not think the quality of relations would be the same as it was (Interview with a retired Israeli diplomat, April 16, 2018).

#### 4.3.4. *Economic Conditions*

The stagnation in political and military relations was not echoed in trade relations. As Figure 10 depicts, both Turkey's demand for Israeli goods and Turkey's export to Israel increased. Turkey's export to Israel rose by 70%, and accordingly, its import increased by 34% between 2011 and 2014 compared to the 2007-2010 term. On the import side, the fluctuation of the value of the Turkish lira was effective in this trend. A Turkish businessperson that had investments in Israel explained the composition of trade relations in the post-2011 period,

The level of diplomatic relations does not have an impact on trade relations. For instance, political crises did not affect flights between the two countries. When you compare the number of flights, it did not change now [after the 2016 agreement] and during the crisis. I think there is a limit to trade volume, and I would not expect a rise in bilateral trade because of the size of the Israeli market. That is why there are no vast differences between bad and good times [in the relations] (Interview with a Turkish businessperson, November 15, 2017).

The former chairman of the Israel-Turkey Business Council also confirmed the glass ceiling of trade volume. However, he also pointed out mutual investments in both states,

Turkish economy grew consistently and rapidly until 2013; then, the trend slowed down. That's why the Israeli business community became hesitant to invest [in the Turkish market] and preferred to move to Germany and the Netherlands. Also, Turkey's image radically changed in Israel. Israeli people perceived that Turkey was equal to Erdoğan. 80% of the Israeli population read the newspaper on a daily basis, and the Israeli media is more powerful than the Turkish one. Turkey's image deteriorated over time, and its image was infiltrated into society by the media. The Israeli business community observed the society's disagreement and decided not to invest in Turkey due to the potential social cost. I call it a 'voluntary boycott'. Even after the relations improved in 2016, the de-facto boycott remains there (Interview with an Israeli-Turkish businessperson, April 17, 2018).

Turkey's response to the trend of a 'voluntary boycott' was not to hire Israeli companies as contractors in state-sponsored projects. The bilateral trade statistics announced by Turkey and Israel never included military purchases. However, state-sponsored projects, especially medical purchases, were essential to the bilateral trade. According to the former chairman of the Israel-Turkey Business Council, there was no blacklist of Israeli companies hired as contractors in Turkish public-funded projects. Nevertheless, when the non-AKP affiliated Turkish companies were gradually excluded from public-funded projects, Israel-based companies and their offers were also not shortlisted in these projects (Interview with an Israeli-Turkish businessperson, April 17, 2018).

#### 4.3.5. *New Dynamics in Foreign Policy*

In the post-2011 period, the dominant discourse that ‘Ankara-Washington, DC relations shaping Ankara-Jerusalem relations’ also transformed (Interview with an Israeli journalist, April 9, 2018). The US-Turkey-Israel alliance significantly altered not only because of deterioration in Turkey-Israel relations but also Turkey’s involvement in the Syrian civil war and Ankara’s unwillingness to provide unconditional support to the US position in Syria. Anti-Israel policies in Turkey also fed in late 2010. At that period, ‘Turkish foreign policymakers thought that there was no cost of accusing Israeli policies in Turkey because there was no pro-Israeli lobby in Turkey’ (Interview with a Jewish-Turkish journalist, November 1, 2017). The anti-Israel discourse in those years was named anti-Semitist and anti-Israel by retired Turkish diplomats. Most of the respondents affiliated with the Turkish MFA linked the anti-Israel policy with the historical anti-Semitist stance of political Islam. In other words, the Turkish respondents clinched the Arab Spring and Turkey’s rising profile in the Middle East with AKP’s agenda that relied on political Islam and anti-Semitism. Also, a Turkish ambassador described the anti-Israel rhetoric of the AKP after the Arab Spring: ‘A part of the [Turkish] society and the government shared some of those [anti-Semitic] ideas. The AKP’s success was turning society’s misdemeanors into policy. While feeding this policy, the decision-makers also brought their [anti-Israel] ideology that they adopted earlier in their life’ (Interview with a retired Turkish ambassador, December 13, 2017).

As was expected in the governmental decision-making, serving Turkish diplomats had no space to go against the AKP policy. In this vein, when asked, serving Turkish diplomats disagreed with their retired colleagues about the direction of Turkish foreign policy. A mid-career diplomat who served at the Tel Aviv embassy of Turkey articulated that the Israeli MFA created a particular political agenda about Turkey after the Flotilla incident,

The Israeli MFA is very powerful in creating an image and convincing the Israeli society along with this perception. For instance, here [in the Turkish MFA], only a career diplomat can tweet [from the MFA's official Twitter account]. However, a junior civil servant working for the Israeli MFA can tweet without paying attention to the content. Accordingly, Israeli society accepts whatever the government offers. What the [Israeli] government says about Turkey becomes the common understanding in the [Israeli] society (Interview with a Turkish diplomat, November 29, 2017)

In response to Turkey's harsh criticism of Israeli policies, Jerusalem decided to review Israel's alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean. A serving Israeli diplomat who worked in the Ankara embassy said, 'Turkey's relations with Israel's [Arab] neighbors distanced Israel from Turkey in the 2010s. It pushed Israel to join a triangle with Greece and Cyprus. (...) For a while, mutual trade defeated political problems between Turkey and Israel. However, once energy security came to the forefront [with Israel's newly discovered natural gas resources in the Mediterranean Sea], Israel started looking for other regional partners' (Interview with an Israeli diplomat, June 26, 2018).

Eventually, Turkey's policy change was sealed with the Turkish presidential election in 2014. PM Erdoğan was elected president and handed his role in government to FM Davutoğlu. Erdoğan's presidency significantly changed the decision-making system where the Turkish MFA and its bureaucrats were no longer involved in shaping Turkey-Israel relations. On the one hand, the foreign policy goals of both governments diversified once PM Erdoğan and PM Netanyahu controlled all foreign policy decisions. On the other hand, Israeli and Turkish militaries, the hidden balance mechanism of the golden years, lost their role with the rise of elected politicians.

## Chapter 5. CONCLUSION

My primary motivation for this research is to find an answer to the question of why the government and the bureaucracy engage in competition regarding foreign policy ideals. More specifically, I question the ways in which the foreign policy bureaucracy copes with the changing foreign policy goals of a government. To find answers to those questions, I scrutinize the literature on foreign policy analysis and foreign policy bureaucracy, and Turkey-Israel relations as a case study. Although the Western states are not immune from the changing foreign policy goals and revisionist government policies, the non-Western context also promises variation in coping mechanisms and foreign policy competition at the bureaucratic level.

Methodologically, major IR theories disregard the research agenda of bureaucratic decision-making in the non-Western context. Considering the system-level focus of IR theories, FPA offers a stance to consider the decision-maker's influence. In that sense, the FPA framework allows me to approach the research question from various angles: Bureaucratic decision-making, demographic characteristics, regional context, and domestic politics. I use the FPA framework to examine the research question from the perspectives of elected and appointed officials. By using the narratives of decision-makers that I collected through semi-structured interviews, I challenge two assumptions about Turkish foreign policy between 1991 and 2014: (1) Appointed bureaucrats have no influence over the ultimate foreign policy decisions, and (2) the elected officials have a fixed policy agenda that does not consider the reactions of foreign policy bureaucracy.

The competition between the government and the foreign policy bureaucracy was recently discussed by scholars working on populism. According to the populism studies approach, the government that adopts an anti-establishment stance is more likely to argue that the government offers an ideal foreign policy agenda that reflects the values of the society. On the flip side, the

government's position implies that the bureaucracy does not stand with the priorities of society. The duality created by the government regarding foreign policy values was also prominent in Turkish foreign policy between 1991 and 2014.

The era of divergent ideals of the Turkish government did not start with the AKP era in Turkish foreign policy. The tenure of President Özal (1989-1993) also witnessed a discrepancy between the presidential office and the foreign policy bureaucracy regarding Turkey's involvement in the First Gulf War. Still, the limited role of the president's office in foreign policy-making and fragmentation in coalition governments throughout the late early 1990s did not reduce the role of the Turkish MFA in decision-making. In that sense, the 1990s were the era of collaboration between the MFA and OGS in decision-making. The bureaucracy-led decision-making model preserved its role following the single-party government under the AKP leadership in the 2000s. However, the mid-2000s were the times of the rise of smaller but extra powerful units within the MFA and the Prime Minister's Office. This alteration in foreign policy bureaucracy gave a chance to the AKP government to prioritize its foreign policy goals. Following the government's revisionist agenda, 2011 was the year that government-led foreign policy goals dominated Turkish foreign policy.

Accordingly, I examined Turkish foreign policy and Turkey-Israel relations between 1991 and 2014, I found support for the argument that the foreign policy bureaucracy is a component of the decision-making processes and its level of involvement in the process depends on the foreign policy agenda of the government. It is more likely to observe a dominant role of the bureaucracy in cases where the government's foreign policy ideals align with the bureaucracy's pre-established ideas.

I also found support for the argument that Turkey-Israel relations were not exempt from the competition between the appointed and elected officials. For instance, I revealed that the Israeli decision-makers did not consider the transition in decision-making, from bureaucratic to governmental, for a long time and were either surprised or ignored when the Turkish elected officials did not rely on the terms of cooperation, which set the relations in the 1990s. Further, I found that the conflicted policy decisions of the Turkish appointed and elected officials on the bilateral relations were also the product of divergent ideas on Israel and Israeli foreign policy.

In this concluding chapter, I summarize these findings and look at the implications of competition between the two groups of decision-makers. Finally, I discuss the directions that future research opportunities can focus on.

## 5.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The second chapter explores the involvement of various state agencies in the decision-making process in Turkish foreign policy. It focuses on the role of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as the central agency responsible for coordinating decision-making but not as the primary decision-maker. The bureaucratic decision-making model functions well when the elected and appointed officials aim to adhere to foreign policy principles and effectively communicate with each other. For instance, a former undersecretary of the MFA pointed out that there was open communication and a working mechanism to make decisions, even though there was no harmony between agencies at the time. In that sense, the president, cabinet, and departments of various ministries participated in foreign policymaking between 1991 and 2002, with PMO, MFA, and OGS having a significant role.

The chapter also covers the implementation of the decision-making model after the government change in 2002 and the extent to which elected representatives participate in the

process. I explore the factors that allow for the rise of small yet influential units within the MFA, such as ABGS and IRÖT. I also focus on the political environment created by the AKP and how the AKP government started to shape its own foreign policy agenda. This section's primary focus is to illustrate how elected politicians emerge as key players in challenging the traditional role of bureaucrats in the decision-making process.

In the transition period, there were only minor shifts in the foreign policy bureaucracy, as the AKP government saw competition between FM Gül and the PM's chief advisor Davutoğlu in terms of who would shape the party's foreign policy ideals. The next five years, however, marked a significant shift with the advent of the 'Davutoğlu era'. For instance, career bureaucrats were required to directly engage with the business communities in their respective regions and exert their influence to enhance trade ties. To understand the transition of decision-making and its impact within the ministry, I point out the establishment of diplomatic posts, particularly in South American and African countries, and a new effort to gather ambassadors in Ankara. In addition, the political climate in Middle East politics played a role in favoring the AKP's foreign policy ideals, as the Turkish government was successful in its international trade policies, giving it the advantage to implement its foreign policy objectives to complement its trade objectives.

The transition ended with the government's policy priorities fully embraced at the cost of the bureaucratic decision-making model. In that sense, the government decision-making model relies on cooperation between agencies under the PMO's authority, with the MFA, president, and OGS serving as information providers rather than decision-makers. In other words, the PMO and political appointees played a crucial role in the decision-making process. As the final step in implementing the governmental decision-making model, the extent of power and organizational structure of newly established state organizations, TİKA, KDK, and YTB, became a source of

conflict between the government and traditional Turkish foreign policy institutions such as the MFA and OGS.

The third chapter focuses on the question of to what extent the backgrounds of elected and appointed decision-makers differ and how their qualifications have an impact on the decision-making process. The chapter suggests that the difference between the two types of decision-makers is more of a generational variation rather than a class-based social variation. The chapter supports the main argument of the study in two ways: (1) It demonstrates that there is variation in generation and social class among Turkish diplomats, which undermines the idea of a monolithic elitist culture within the MFA; (2) it shows that the perceptions of elected and appointed officials about each other are shaped by the government's foreign policy goals rather than the working environment that both types of bureaucrats experience.

The significance of the Turkish experience appears in, what I call, institutional involvement. The Turkish experience is relevant as diplomats tend to internalize their profession and define it as a part of their professional identity, often leading to the exclusion of other state departments and political actors. Most respondents affiliated with the MFA noted that they have similar characteristics with the high-ranking generals, including being Western-oriented, highly educated, disciplined, hierarchical in structure, multilingual, non-political, professional, and independent of government policies.

The four political figures, ministers of foreign affairs Hikmet Çetin and İsmail Cem, and presidents Turgut Özal, and Süleyman Demirel, have been influential in understanding what the AKP governments aimed to change in foreign policy in the following decade. Further, examining the dynamic between appointed and elected officials in the 1990s can aid us in shifting away from the prevalent notion of 'conflict between the AKP and bureaucracy'.

In the transition period between 2002 and 2011, the common criticism made by career bureaucrats who worked with FM Davutoğlu was that he was overly ambitious and did not consider the potential risks involved. FM Davutoğlu and his inner circle disregarded the recommendations of the ministry, considering them conservative and untrustworthy. Despite this, the-then Turkish FM implemented several changes in the ministry. The 2007-2011 period, under the direction of Davutoğlu and his team, marked the beginning of restructuring the bureaucratic politics in Turkey. Accordingly, non-career bureaucrats categorized why they became part of the decision-making process in the post-2011 period: Public opinion was in favor of non-career diplomats, bureaucratic decision-making had coordination issues, there was a public demand to take risks in foreign policy, and differences in education and generation between the two groups of bureaucrats. The establishment of new state agencies and ideas set the stage for a fully AKP-controlled era of Turkish foreign policy.

The fourth chapter examines Turkey-Israel relations from 1991 to 2014 as a case study. It analyzes the two decades in three periods: (1) Political conditions that established the rules (1991-2002), (2) bilateral relations from the Netanyahu/Erdoğan era to the Mavi Marmara incident (2002-2010), and (3) the decline of bilateral relations (2010-2014). Each period is based on four themes, including (i) the security aspect, (ii) the economic aspect, (iii) relations between Turkey, Israel, and the United States, and (iv) the views of Israeli and Turkish diplomats about each other.

The post-Oslo atmosphere provided a favorable environment for countries to establish relations with Israel, including Turkey. This led to the appointment of Turkey's first ambassador to Tel Aviv in 1994 and the upgrading of its diplomatic mission from charge d'affaires to an embassy. The upgrading of the Turkish mission in Tel Aviv to an embassy was a request made by the Turkish business community. From 1995 to 1999, Turkey and Israel signed agreements on free

trade and tax regulation, which significantly boosted the trade volume by nearly ten times compared to the first five years of the decade.

Turkey and Israel viewed their partnership as separate from the religious, historical, and ideological issues pertaining to Middle East politics. As a result, the relationship was only managed through diplomatic and military channels, leading to a successful “golden decade” of cooperation in security. Nevertheless, changes in the decision-makers on both sides resulted in a shift in the dynamics of the relationship in the mid-2000s.

In 2006, Turkey indirectly mediated between Israel and Syria, with the main topic of negotiations being the status of the Golan Heights. A new government under PM Olmert was seen as more advantageous and open to taking risks compared to the previous Sharon government. This cooperation strengthened the bilateral relations until the foreign policy of the AKP government in the Middle East solidified. As the end of the 2000s approached, Turkey’s regional policy shifted away from cooperation with Israel and ended in a significant political crisis in 2010. The Mavi Marmara Flotilla incident became the epitome of the governmental decision-making model in bilateral ties. The absence of Turkish military and diplomatic cadres in the decision-making process had an impact on the relations.

The alteration in decision-makers was finalized with the 2014 Turkish presidential election, where PM Erdoğan was elected president and FM Davutoğlu took over as PM. Erdoğan’s presidency marked a shift in the decision-making system, with the Turkish foreign ministry and bureaucrats no longer playing a role in shaping relations between Turkey and Israel. This resulted in a diversification of foreign policy goals: Governments of PM Erdoğan and PM Netanyahu took full control of foreign policy decisions. At the same time, the Turkish military, which had served

as a balancing force during the “golden years,” lost its influence as elected politicians gained more control.

## 5.2. FUTURE RESEARCH

The Turkish case is not unique regarding the changing characteristics of the foreign policy bureaucracy and decision-making process. Recently, the US foreign policy apparatus went through similar turmoil, where the State Department bureaucrats explicitly disagreed with the Trump administration over foreign policy goals (Gramer, De Luce, and Lynch 2017; Drezner 2019). The autonomy of the president over foreign policy decisions at the expense of the State Department’s criticism was widely discussed. According to a Democratic staff report prepared for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate, career bureaucrats serving at the State Department reported that ‘senior leadership exhibit[ed] a sense of disrespect and disdain for their work, prompting many to leave the profession’ (SFRC 2020, 5).

This study has implications for the nexus between populism, policymaking, and Turkish foreign policy. The populist turn in foreign policymaking is an indicator of understanding the antagonism between the appointed and elected officials. The foreign policy ideas of populist leaders are less likely to thrive in the established bureaucratic structure due to their revisionist and anti-establishment rhetoric. However, populist administrations still appear ‘to succeed in eroding the capabilities of existing institutions, making any restoration of liberal internationalism more difficult’ (Drezner 2019: 724). Accordingly, debates over populist foreign policy should pay more attention to the government-bureaucracy rivalry.

De Faria et al. (2013) observe a similar trend in Brazil, where policymaking is subject to the whims of the president and policymaking takes place in ‘a hurry’ since the president has a fixed term in office while the bureaucracy historically inclines to make long-term strategies (Cason and

Power 2009, 135). Relatedly, this study has implications for the presidentialization of foreign policymaking. Future research should further examine how the presidentialization of foreign policy influences the role of the bureaucracy in the decision-making processes.

Regarding Turkish foreign policy scholarship, future research can also seek to understand the role of Turkish political appointees serving in capitals such as Prague, Tokyo, and Washington, DC. Also, Turkey's humanitarian aid policy in Africa, particularly Turkish engagement in Somalia, offers a case study to scrutinize the anti-establishment rhetoric of a revisionist government.

Finally, Turkey-Israel relations have gone through turmoil since I concluded the research in the fall of 2018. Recently, both states appointed ambassadors after five years of apathy following the 2018-19 Great March of Return in Gaza. In the absence of diplomats and military officers in decision-making, the bilateral ties did not enhance. Still, they did not become the scene of the major crises as in the early 2010s. Future research opportunities should further question the calm period of Turkey-Israel relations under the sole authority of the elected officials.

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## APPENDIX A

### RESPONDENT DETAILS

<b>Category</b>	<b>Turkey</b>	<b>Israel</b>	<b>Total</b>
Retired Diplomats	26	4	30
Academics	17	7	24
Think Tank Analysts	4	3	7
Bureaucrats	5	2	7
Serving Diplomats	4	*1	5
Journalists	3	1	4
Retired Generals	1	3	4
Businesspeople	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>83</b>

\*Serving Israeli diplomat at the Israeli embassy in London, UK.

## APPENDIX B

### RANKING OF CAREER DIPLOMATS, CONSULAR OFFICERS, AND EXPERTS

These annexes are from the foundational code of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Code 6004) that issued on July 7, 2010 (Official Gazette No:27640).

The code is updated various times with legislative decrees. The tables below are based on the version came into effect in 2013 considering the annulled Article 20(4) on April 9, 2014.

Not official translation. All translations from Turkish are mine.

#### Annex 1- Career Diplomats

Group	Title	Minimum Year in Service to Earn the Title
First Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ambassador</li> <li>- Director of the Center for Strategic Research</li> <li>- Envoy (Minister Plenipotentiary)</li> <li>- Consul General (First Class)</li> </ul>	Administrative Class
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charge d’Affaires</li> <li>- Consul General</li> <li>- Deputy Permanent Representative</li> <li>- First Counselor of Embassy</li> <li>- First Counselor of Permanent Mission</li> <li>- Minister Counselor</li> <li>- Special Counselor to the Undersecretary</li> <li>- Counselor to the Ministry</li> <li>- Counselor for Press and Public Relations</li> <li>- Member of the Advisory Board for Foreign Policy</li> <li>- Director of Department</li> <li>- Cabinet of the Ministry or the Undersecretary</li> <li>- Internal Auditor</li> </ul>	
Second Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charge D’Affaires</li> <li>- Consul General</li> <li>- Counselor of Embassy</li> <li>- Counselor of Permanent Mission</li> <li>- Deputy Consul General</li> <li>- Director of Department</li> <li>- Cabinet of the Ministry or the Undersecretary</li> <li>- Internal Auditor</li> </ul>	6 years
Third Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charge D’Affaires</li> <li>- Counselor of Embassy</li> <li>- Counselor of Permanent Mission</li> <li>- Deputy Consul General</li> <li>- Head of Section</li> </ul>	4 years

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cabinet of the Ministry or the Undersecretary</li> <li>- Internal Auditor</li> </ul>	
Fourth Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First Secretary</li> <li>- Consul</li> <li>- Internal Auditor</li> </ul>	2 years
Fifth Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second Secretary</li> <li>- Vice Consul</li> </ul>	3 years
Sixth Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Third Secretary</li> <li>- Vice Consul</li> </ul>	2 years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cadet (for career diplomats)</li> </ul>	1 year

## Annex 2- Consular Officers and Experts

Group	Title	Minimum Year in Service for Title
First Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Director for the Strategy Development [under the Deputy Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs]</li> </ul>	Administrative Class
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consul General</li> <li>- Counselor of Embassy</li> <li>- Counselor of Permanent Mission</li> <li>- Counselor for Press and Public Relations</li> <li>- Director of Department</li> </ul>	
Second Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consul General</li> <li>- Counselor of Embassy</li> <li>- Counselor of Permanent Mission</li> <li>- Counselor at Press and Public Relations</li> <li>- Cabinet of the Ministry or the Undersecretary</li> <li>- Director of Department</li> </ul>	6 years
Third Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Counselor of Embassy</li> <li>- Counselor of Permanent Mission</li> <li>- Deputy Consul General</li> <li>- Head of Section</li> <li>- Cabinet of the Ministry or the Undersecretary</li> </ul>	6 years
Fourth Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First Secretary</li> <li>- Consul</li> <li>- Cabinet of the Ministry or the Undersecretary</li> </ul>	6 years
Fifth Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second Secretary</li> <li>- Vice Consul</li> </ul>	3 years
Sixth Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Third Secretary</li> <li>- Vice Consul</li> </ul>	4 years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attaché</li> </ul>	1 year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cadet (for deputy consuls and experts)</li> </ul>	1 year

Source: <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/BAKANLIK/Mevzuat/5-kariyer.pdf> (Accessed on January 15, 2020)

## APPENDIX C

### CATEGORIZATION OF DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR TITLES

#### Categorization of MFA Officers

Career Diplomat	Contributes to making and executing foreign policy decisions. Has responsibility and duty to represent the state in relations with other states and international organizations regarding bilateral and multilateral ties. Analyzes and follows up the latest development in international relations. Has authority to sign consular documents in case of being appointed to permanent positions abroad.
Consular Officer and Expert	Are appointed to the positions in accordance with their expertise areas at the HQ and abroad.
Foreign Affairs Expert	Holds office at the HQ and is not appointed to permanent roles abroad.
Legal Counselor	Gives expert opinion on various legal issues, specifically in international law. Eligible to work abroad up to 5 years and at least 3 years at the HQ.
Advisor	Gets hired in accordance with exceptional expertise areas that the MFA works on. Needs to submit documents for advanced level in a foreign language. Additionally, PhD diploma and/or professional experience at least 5 years are required.
Assistant Expert and Financial Expert	Are appointed to the positions only at the finance departments of the MFA.
Central Officers	Are appointed to positions on administration, technical and health services in the HQ.

Source: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/bakanliktaki-temel-memuriyet-kategorileri.tr.mfa> (Accessed on December 23, 2019)

## Title Categories

Ambassador	Represents the state and its president in the country where is accredited. Is the chief of all departments serving under the embassy.
Permanent Representative	Is appointed to represent the state in an international organization. Also holds the title of ambassador.
Envoy- Councilor Envoy-Deputy Permanent Representative	Those titles are for the most senior officers ranking after the ambassador and permanent representatives in embassies and permanent missions.
Consul-General (First Class) Consul General	Senior officers of consulates. Both career diplomats and consuls might be appointed with this title.
Foreign Affairs Expert/ Central Officers	Deputy experts take an exam to qualify and being appointed as an expert after serving 3 years at the ministry. Experts only serve at the HQ.
Other Titles	Other titles that career diplomats and consuls might be appointed as first counselor, counselor, first secretary, second secretary, third secretary, and attaché. In consulates, officers are entitled as deputy consul general, consul, vice consul, and attaché.

Source: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/unvanlar.tr.mfa> (Accessed on December 23, 2019)

## APPENDIX D

### INAUGURAL YEARS OF TURKISH EMBASSIES LOCATED IN AFRICA AND CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAS

#### Africa

Country	Turkish Embassy opened in
Egypt	1925
Libya	1953
Sudan	1957
Morocco	1957
Tunisia	1957
Nigeria	1962
Senegal	1962
Algeria	1963
Kenya	1968
Somalia	1981
South Africa	1994
Ethiopia	2006
Tanzania	2009
Ivory Coast	2009
Cameroon	2010
Ghana	2010
Madagascar	2010
Mali	2010
Uganda	2010
Zambia	2011
Zimbabwe	2011
Angola	2011
The Gambia	2011
South Sudan	2011
Democratic Rep. of the Congo	2011
Mauritania	2011
Mozambique	2011
Gabon	2012
Namibia	2012

Country	Turkish Embassy opened in
Niger	2012
Burkina Faso	2012
Djibouti	2013
Chad	2013
Eritrea	2013
Guinea	2013
Republic of the Congo	2014
Benin	2014
Botswana	2014
Rwanda	2014
Sierra Leone	2018
Burundi	2018
Equatorial Guinea	2018

## Central and South Americas

Country	Turkish Embassy opened in
Brazil	1929
Mexico	1931
*Chile	1931
Argentina	1936
Venezuela	1957
**Cuba	1980
Peru	2010
Colombia	2011
Ecuador	2012
Dominican Republic	2013
Panama	2014
Guatemala	2015
Bolivia	2018
Paraguay	2018
Trinidad and Tobago	2018

\* Chile: The Turkish diplomatic mission in Santiago opened in 1930 and shortly after, moved to Buenos Aires, Argentina. The mission moved back in 1944 and the first Turkish ambassador was appointed in 1954.

Source: <http://santiago.be.mfa.gov.tr/Mission/MissionChiefHistory> (accessed on December 26, 2019)

\*\* Cuba: The diplomatic mission in Havana opened in 1979 and the first Turkish ambassador was appointed in 1980.

Source: <http://havana.be.mfa.gov.tr/Mission/MissionChiefHistory> (accessed on December 26, 2019)

Geographical categorization of the states above is based on the Turkish MFA's website.

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