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# Turkey's approach to the Arab spring revisited: political field and foreign policy in the AKP era

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing from Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, this article sheds light on the relationship between the AKP's foreign policy toward the Middle East and its twenty-year rule in Turkey. It argues that Turkish foreign policy can be understood by looking at the evolving strategies adopted by AKP in the political field. In the early 2010s, the AKP emphasized conservative social values, neo-liberal reformism, and support for the Arab Spring to accumulate political capital. However, as the expected regional change did not materialize, and as domestic legitimacy eroded, the party has resorted to an increasingly nationalist discourse to preserve its dominant position.



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## Introduction

At the end of March 2014, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) recorded yet another victory in the Turkish local elections. In Ankara, cheering crowds gathered outside the party headquarters to celebrate this outcome. Then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, leader of the AKP, held a speech from one of the building's balconies. After greeting ecstatic supporters, the 81 Turkish provinces, and the 'sister and friendly capitals and cities of the world,' he continued by saying:

I thank my brothers in Palestine who saw our victory as their victory. I thank my brothers in Egypt who are struggling for democracy and who understand our struggle very well. [...] I thank my suffering brothers in Syria who pray for our victory although in a great pain, facing starvation and under bombs and bullets.<sup>1</sup>

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These references to the Palestinian question, the struggle for democracy underway in Egypt, and the Syrian civil war reflect the great foreign policy investment the AKP made toward the Middle East since the party won its first general election in 2002. Indeed, under the leadership of Erdoğan, Turkish foreign policy in the region was characterized by a proactive approach. This could be seen during the Arab Spring, when the AKP enthusiastically supported the uprisings and the consequent emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood and similar movements as the leading political forces after the collapse of the old authoritarian regimes. The abovementioned speech also demonstrates how foreign policy themes had been incorporated into the national political discourse and were being used as a strategy to cement the AKP's hold on its conservative constituency, while also trying to legitimize itself as the representative of the religious masses in the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> This suggests a connection between AKP's domestic political discourse and its foreign policy, a relationship that has already been at the center of numerous works.

Within this debate, analysts and scholars have depicted Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East under the AKP as driven by both the projection of its 'soft power' and the promotion of Turkey as a political model for the region.<sup>3</sup> This understanding was based on three aspects that characterized the AKP political experience between 2002 and 2013. First, under the auspices of Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbors' principle, Turkey's regional policy marked a shift from the previous security-oriented approach.<sup>4</sup> Second, the AKP's domestic governance, which initially featured pro-market economic policies, moderate political liberalization, appeal to religious constituencies, and efforts to peacefully solve the Kurdish issue, attracted the interests of the media and academics around the world,<sup>5</sup> including Arab intellectuals and politicians.<sup>6</sup> Third, Erdoğan's criticism of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians bolstered his popularity and prestige in the Arab World.<sup>7</sup>

The AKP's foreign policy experienced an evolution during the Arab Spring. Indeed, while Turkish leaders had neither presented their country as a model of political development, nor publicly called for political change in the region, these aspects became fundamental features of AKP's foreign policy and domestic political discourse during and after the outbreak of the Arab Spring.<sup>8</sup> This was encouraged by the initial electoral successes of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and of Ennahda in Tunisia, which seemed to strengthen the relevance of the AKP as an example of compatibility between religious constituencies and democratic-neoliberal government practices.<sup>9</sup> However, after more than a decade from the beginning of the Arab Spring, this situation has radically changed. In Syria, Bashar al-Assad managed to preserve his regime, while the resultant uprising and repression degenerated into a bloody civil war. In Egypt, the brief political experiment

that began in 2012 with the presidency of Mohamed Morsi – a member of the Muslim Brotherhood – was suppressed a year later by a coup led by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. In Tunisia, in July 2021, President Kais Saied dissolved the parliament, removed the prime minister, and commenced a crackdown against civil society and political parties, including Ennahda.

Concurrently, since 2013, the AKP's rule in Turkey experienced a significant transformation in light of the electoral alliance created with the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP), the purges which occurred after the 2016 attempted coup, and the controversial constitutional reform that transformed the country into a presidential republic. These changes in the domestic realm are closely linked to a shift in foreign policy discourse. The latter evolved from explicit support for a democratic change in the Middle East, to a more populist, militaristic, and nationalist posture,<sup>10</sup> characterized by an aggressive rhetoric targeting the West and the Kurdish political groups in Syria,<sup>11</sup> and, more recently, by attempts to restore ties with authoritarian regimes in the region.<sup>12</sup>

This evolution leads one to reconsider the relationship between domestic political struggles and foreign policy, both theoretically and empirically. While the impact of the domestic rise of AKP on Turkish foreign policy has been explored by different approaches, few works engage with both the changing mode of governance of the AKP and the gradual change in Turkish foreign policy. Through a relational and historical-sociological analysis, this article addresses this gap. It argues that Turkish foreign policy during the Arab Spring was the product of the political struggle between the AKP and the old Kemalist establishment. Accordingly, foreign policy discourses – including the so-called Turkish model – served to solidify the position of the party in the national political arena, and was later abandoned once the pillars of AKP's domestic political domination changed. In developing the argument, the article relies on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of political field. Therefore, this work contributes to the literature concerning the role of domestic politics in shaping foreign policy in the AKP era, as well as to the stream of works advancing sociological and relational perspectives on Turkey.

In carrying out this research, I have adopted a mixed methodology. To map the position of the AKP in the political field, I have engaged with existing literature on Turkish politics and Turkish foreign policy, which includes academic and secondary literature. In addition, I have carried out a Bourdieu-informed discursive analysis of speeches and texts found in existing works, websites, and articles directly written by AKP members. This combined research approach underscores Bourdieu's theoretical contribution to Turkish studies, which involves a sociologically informed analysis that connects both the external (foreign policy) and the internal dimension of the evolution of AKP's rule. As such, the below analysis seeks to unveil how discourses reproduce strategies of accumulation of political capital.<sup>13</sup>

The article is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief discussion of the contribution of Bourdieu's political field in explaining the relationship between AKP's domestic rule and foreign policy discourses. It is followed by an examination of the historical trajectory of the AKP in the Turkish political field from the foundation of the party to the Gezi Park protest. This analysis demonstrates how foreign policy discourses emerged from the political struggle between the AKP and the Kemalist establishment in the national field. The following section explores the developments leading to a change in the AKP's discourse. Finally, the conclusions are presented.

### **Bourdieu in Ankara: political field, national politics, and foreign policy discourses**

Much of the previous literature on Turkish foreign policy addresses the relationships between domestic politics and foreign policy through ideational factors. These include AKP's 'national role conception' as a model country,<sup>14</sup> its vision of state identity,<sup>15</sup> and its ideological preferences toward Islamism.<sup>16</sup> While these works have made noteworthy contributions, they lack a theoretically-informed connection between ideas deployed in foreign policy and the socio-political dynamics underpinning AKP's domestic power. This connection cannot be grasped by current International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis scholarship concerned with the role of ideational constructs, since it tends to neglect the issue of power.<sup>17</sup> This article extends existing analyses to go beyond the identification of ideational constructs guiding AKP's foreign policy. It focuses on analyzing the structure of power behind foreign policy discourses. This understanding is crucial in deciphering how foreign policy sustains AKP's domestic political domination.

The connection between ideas, socio-political power, and foreign policy is a crucial aspect of both the historical sociological and historical materialist traditions in IR. Through these different lenses, the ideas and discourses underpinning AKP's foreign policy are seen as integral components of the hegemonic project of a rising bourgeoisie.<sup>18</sup> However, the prevailing inclination of these theoretical traditions to explain international political phenomena, whether directly or indirectly, through the mode of economic production presents a challenge when attempting to paint a comprehensive picture of the AKP era. Indeed, while Turkey's regional policy before the uprisings was characterized by the creation of market opportunities for the bourgeoisie – to the extent to which some analyst referred to Turkey as a 'trading state'<sup>19</sup> – after 2011, the AKP reorganized its discourse around the necessity to promote democracy in the Middle East. This shift put Ankara's regional trade relations at risk, as seen in the cases of trade with

Syria and Libya. This change in behavior cannot solely be attributed to the preferences of a social class that had benefited from the previous regional posture of the Turkish state. In this sense, the AKP was never a passive instrument of the Turkish bourgeoisie.

In this context, one can appreciate the relevance of Pierre Bourdieu's political sociology. In particular, his concept of political field represents a crucial analytical tool for the deconstruction of the power structures underlying the adoption of specific foreign policy discourses. Concurrently, Bourdieu's field theory, with its focus on the autonomy of the different spheres of social life, diverges from the economic determinism and structuralism which characterized the historical sociological and historical materialist traditions in IR. A key aspect of Bourdieusian theory is the attention to the linkages between ideas and power. According to Bourdieu, the production of ideas is always related to the conquest and preservation of power,<sup>20</sup> which, in the political arena, depends on the mobilization of segments of society behind discourses. As Thompson points out, Bourdieu's political field is the site where 'words are actions and the symbolic character of power is a stake,'<sup>21</sup> that is the power to be recognized as a legitimate spokesperson of the nation, to impose beliefs, and to change the social world by changing the categories of its representation.<sup>22</sup>

Before introducing the key concept of political field, it is necessary to discuss the key concepts underpinning Bourdieu's theory, according to which the social world is divided in a series of relatively autonomous social universes that he terms *fields*. A field can be defined as both a structured relational space of positions and as an arena where different agents struggle for domination.<sup>23</sup> The functioning of a field is regulated by what he terms *doxa*: a shared belief, or an internalized set of taken-for-granted rules accepted by all players. Bourdieu defines *doxa* as 'the ordinary acceptance of the usual order which goes without saying and therefore usually goes unsaid.'<sup>24</sup> Despite being perceived as natural, *doxa* reflects the power relations between the different positions in the field. Therefore, the rules of the field are not neutral as the boundaries of the field itself are at stake in the wake of power struggle. The struggle over the demarcation of the field – which, at its core, is a struggle over the interpretation of *doxa* (or over the very definition of *doxa* itself) – is reflected by Bourdieu's contraposition of heterodox and orthodox positions, namely between those who have 'an interest in pushing back the limits of *doxa* and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted' and those who have 'an interest in defending the [original] integrity of *doxa*.'<sup>25</sup> To compete in these social arenas, agents must acquire a 'sense of the game,' or *habitus*. For Bourdieu, *habitus* is a system of durable and transportable dispositions that works both as 'structured structure' and a 'structuring structure.'<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, *habitus* is shaped by the structure of the field. On the other hand, it generates and organizes agents' strategies in the field.

The relations and struggles between different positions or agents are determined by the possession of field-specific resources or *capital*. A significant aspect of innovation in Bourdieu's theory is the extension of the concept of capital beyond the material and economic dimensions, so to include social, cultural,<sup>27</sup> and symbolic capital. The latter is the most important resource in the social universe and is defined as 'the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability that are easily converted into political positions.'<sup>28</sup> Symbolic capital disguises the perpetration of an act of power by presenting it as 'legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience, or the services of others.'<sup>29</sup> The accumulation of this 'supreme' form of capital allows the exercise of symbolic power (or symbolic violence), which is defined as 'that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even themselves exercise it.'<sup>30</sup> The social agent who is in the position of exercising symbolic power is therefore in the position of imposing the 'legitimate vision of the social world and of its divisions,'<sup>31</sup> effectively camouflaging its own privileged position in the field under a mantle of legitimacy.

This struggle over different visions of the social order is the defining character of the political field, which is the field where political agents, including political parties and politicians, struggle for symbolic domination.<sup>32</sup> Bourdieu defines the functioning of the political field by using the notion of supply and demand, according to which political parties produce and sell political goods (policies and ideas) to the citizens-consumers.<sup>33</sup> In exchange, politicians obtain political support in the form of credit and prestige. Political capital, a form of symbolic capital,<sup>34</sup> is thus the source of power that delineates the structure of the political field. Political capital is accumulated through political discourses aimed at mobilizing segments of the population behind particular visions of the political order, which Bourdieu defines 'principles of vision and division.'<sup>35</sup> In this sense, the political field is 'the site *par excellence* in which agents seek to form and transform their visions of the world and thereby the world itself.'<sup>36</sup>

In this article, I posit that foreign policy discourses are part of these principles of vision. In other words, they are part and parcel of the strategies of accumulation of political capital deployed by political agents. Through the conceptualization of foreign policy discourses as political discourses, it is possible to view the international dimension as a constant presence in the development of domestic power struggles, thus appreciating how the agents' positions in the political field are key to their interpretation and depiction of external events.

In this perspective, the AKP's foreign policy during the Arab Spring was the product of a power struggle between an orthodox Kemalist (secularist and nationalist) principle of vision and a rising heterodox position embodied

by the AKP. This struggle defined the structure of the Turkish political field in the 2000s and early 2010s and was characterized by an appeal to democracy and to religious values by the AKP to mobilize an emerging pious bourgeoisie and thus enhance its position in the field. In this context, foreign policy is part of AKP's strategies of accumulation of political capital. The Arab Spring offered AKP the opportunity to further accumulate prestige by presenting its principle of vision as the leading ideological force behind the democratic transformation of the region. However, as the regional uprisings failed to lead to such transformation, and the AKP's own domestic dominance started to crumble with the contestation in Gezi Park in 2013 and the rise of the Kurdish left-wing political party, the AKP needed to re-define its strategies of accumulation to attract new social constituencies.

### **Locating the AKP in the Turkish political field from its foundation to Gezi Park: the democratic-conservative principle of vision and foreign policy discourse under the AKP**

Turkey's support for the democratic transformation of the Middle East during the Arab Spring can be considered as the international dimension of AKP's strategies of accumulation of political capital in the national political field. Therefore, to understand the genesis of this foreign policy rhetoric, and how it connects to the first decade of AKP's rule, it is necessary to examine the political habitus of the AKP, which emerges from the interplay between the structure of the field and the history of the party. The trajectory of the AKP can be traced back to the Turkish Islamic movement and to the political experiences of the different political parties emerged from the religious organization *Millî Görüş* (National Outlook). It was within this political group that the cadres of the AKP, including Erdoğan, had their first political socialization, which eventually helped them construct a relation with religious voters. Therefore, the conflictual relationship between the *Millî Görüş* and the Kemalist establishment is crucial in understanding the ideological foundation of the AKP.

As Akdeniz and Göker argue, the Turkish political field has been historically characterized by a secularist and nationalist *doxa*, which they define as a 'Republican cosmology',<sup>37</sup> but can be also called Kemalism. In this context, Islamism and religious political discourses were regarded as forms of heresy, to be excluded from the universe of legitimate political discourses. This exclusion was enacted through different strategies. For instance, in his famous 1927 speech, the *Nutuk*, Atatürk included secularism as one of the six main principles of the Republic, while, at the same time, reinterpreting the history of Turkish people by downsizing the role of Islam and stressing the pre-Islamic past of the Turks.<sup>38</sup> Afterwards, throughout Republican history, Kemalist positions in the field framed Islam, and the Islamic



Movement, as ‘inherently and categorically opposed to their civilizing mission,’<sup>39</sup> and labeled any reference to religion in the field as ‘reactionary’. Notably, the exclusion of Islamists also served to justify the position of army officers in the field, effectively portraying them as ‘the guardians of Kemalism,’<sup>40</sup> a privilege which they had already gained by virtue of their fundamental role in the creation of the field itself during the period of Mustafa Kemal’s direct rule.<sup>41</sup>

The secularist logic within the field was weakened by two developments. First, in 1980s, the military employed religious symbols to curb the influence of leftist-communist socio-political movements in politics and society.<sup>42</sup> This tendency, known as ‘Turkish-Islamic synthesis’, can be considered as an attempt by the Kemalists to redefine Islam according to Turkish nationalism. Secondly, since the 1980s, the political field has experienced increasing external pressures. Indeed, the neoliberal reforms began under Turgut Özal in the 1980s, weakened the secularist state’s bureaucracy while favoring the integration of large sections of rural populations into the middle class, leading to the subsequent rise of a new provincial bourgeoisie.<sup>43</sup> These new social positions developed in synergy with religious networks active in the fields of culture and education, such as *Hizmet*, the organization led by America-based preacher Fetullah Gülen. Throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s, Özal’s Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP), was the main representative of these societal forces within the political field. However, with the decline of the ANAP following the death of its charismatic leader in 1993, the *Millî Görüş* and its political wing, led by Necmettin Erbakan and the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP), positioned themselves as the political representatives of these social positions. Despite electoral successes in both the 1994 municipal elections (which saw the election of a young Erdoğan as mayor of Istanbul) and in the 1995 general elections, the RP failed to cement its position in the field, as the 1997 ‘post-modern coup’ testified.

The RP’s failure to turn these significant changes in Turkey’s socio-economic fabric into political capital was mainly due to the outdated habitus of the party, which was unable to balance its idealistic manifesto with the practical necessities of the Kemalist-dominated field. Therefore, the establishment had enough space to censor both its overture toward Iran and the Middle East in foreign policy and the perceived latent ‘Islamization’ of society ‘promoted’ by the Erbakan administration. This put the establishment in the position of exercising its prerogative of guarantor of the preservation of the integrity of the Kemalist *doxa*. For instance, during a trip to Washington, DC, in February 1997, General Çevik Bir warned that ‘Turkey today is faced with a radical Islamic threat. As the military, we have to speak out.’<sup>44</sup> Following a memorandum issued by the army later that month, Erbakan was forced to resign, and the RP was later dissolved

by the Constitutional Court. The poor performance of the *Millî Görüş* in this power struggle played a role in its disaggregation. Between the end of 1990s and the early 2000s, a reformist faction led (among others) by Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, emerged. After failing to take over the movement, the reformists decided to abandon the *Millî Görüş* and to form a new party: the AKP.

The initial trajectory of the AKP in the political field consisted in the movement from Islamist heresy to democratic-conservative heterodoxy. This difference is perfectly explained by Bahri Zengin, a member of the old guard:

[T]hey [the reformists] wanted to follow real politics, which meant that we must act according to political restrictions in Turkey. They said that the military, the media and the big industrialists determined the political structure of Turkey and we had to try to get their support.<sup>45</sup>

In its manifesto, in addition to representing the religious constituency by maintaining some references to Islam as an important element of the cultural identity of the Turkish nation, the AKP also stressed its support for the core values of the Republic,<sup>46</sup> outlining a neo-liberal economic program targeted toward the emerged provincial bourgeoisie.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, the AKP inadvertently absorbed the Islamist challenge within the field's boundaries.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the strategy of accumulation of political capital followed by the party represented a certain degree of break from the extant *doxa*, thus reflecting the heterodox position of the AKP as the vehicle for a gradual 'doxic change' within the field. The core of this strategy was the monopolization of the 'democratization discourse' by the party, which combined a pro-democracy rhetoric with the external pressures exercised on the political field by the European Union's (EU) integration process (which started in 1999 and was initially supported by the AKP). For instance, Ece Özlem Atıkcı and Kerem Öge stress how the enhancement of democracy was the most prominent theme in AKP members' speeches leading up to the 2010 referendum on judicial reform, which marked the decline of the army as a political agent.<sup>49</sup>

Understood this way, the AKP's strategy aimed to challenge the boundaries of the existing political *doxa* by stressing the only element of Western political culture that questioned the dominant position of the military: democratization. İbrahim Kalın, a member of the AKP, stressed how as values like 'representative democracy, transparency, rule of law, human rights and free-market economy [...] open up more space for a free market of ideas, the old Turkish secularism feels cornered and disenfranchised.'<sup>50</sup> As a result, the call for democratic reforms and civilian rule, in addition to social conservatism and neoliberal governance, became integral components of the party's strategy to accumulate political capital, which was based on what I refer as 'democratic-conservative principle of vision'.

Foreign policy discourse during this first part of the AKP's rule is part of this principle of vision. Between 2002 and 2011, the AKP's foreign policy discourse toward the Middle East was characterized by Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbors' principle,<sup>51</sup> as well as a strong emphasis on economic interdependence and on the role of Turkey as a facilitator of dialogue.<sup>52</sup> In this context, the AKP neither claimed to be a model, nor particularly advocated for democratic change in the region. In this regard, in 2004, Davutoğlu was clear in stressing that "Turkey does not want to be a model to anyone."<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, democracy was framed as "Turkey's most important soft power."<sup>54</sup> This discourse served the strategies of accumulation of political capital in two ways. First, the focus on the economy and economic interdependence in regional policy – also demonstrated by the free trade agreement with Syria which entered into force in 2007 – supported the economic interests of emerging bourgeoisie, which saw the opening of new market opportunities through AKP's foreign policies. Second, by stressing the relevance of non-military sources of power, this discourse legitimized the decreasing influence of the military in foreign policy and, consequently, in domestic politics.<sup>55</sup>

With the outbreak of the Arab Spring, AKP's foreign policy discourse evolved. This change, however, was neither sudden nor abrupt. In the case of Libya, for instance, the AKP initially resisted the idea of an external intervention.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, since the uprisings, the AKP's discourse incorporated a call to a political change in the region, and, later, the wish to export its political brand. This represented an attempt to impose its democratic-conservative principle of vision upon other political fields in the Middle East.

A significant input in this adaptation of the strategies of accumulation of the party came from the international discussion around the 'Turkish model'. This concept was neither novel nor a genuine product of Turkish political field. Rather, it was firstly advanced by American politicians and foreign policy experts after the emergence of several Turkic Republics following the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the time, the Turkish model of political and economic development was seen by American leadership as a means of contrasting Iranian influence in the region.<sup>57</sup> This discourse resurfaced after 9/11, when, within the American field of expertise, the Turkish model began being seen as a response to the 'clash of civilizations' discourse.<sup>58</sup> This discourse then moved from the field of cultural production to the American political field. Indeed, both Republican President George Bush and his Democratic successor Barack Obama repeatedly suggested that Turkey could act as a political model for the Muslim world.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, during the Arab Spring, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton affirmed that it was 'vital' that Middle Eastern countries 'learn the lessons that Turkey has learned and is putting into practice every single day.'<sup>60</sup>

While American agents promoted this discourse because they mainly saw it as a useful tool to promote their political and economic model of

development in the Middle East,<sup>61</sup> it would be simplistic to reduce its impact on Turkish foreign policy to center-periphery dynamics. Indeed, the AKP was certainly not a vehicle of American influence in the region. However, American infatuation for a Turkish model perfectly aligned with the evolution of different political fields in the Middle East, where the AKP's political experience was used by some Islamist parties to legitimize their rising position in their respective political struggles. For example, Rashid Ghannouchi, the leader of Tunisia's Ennahda, was unequivocal in his support for the idea that the Turkish experience was 'the closest to the Tunisian situation'<sup>62</sup> and that Turkey was 'a model country [...] in terms of democracy.'<sup>63</sup> At the same time, Moroccan Islamists also debated the applicability of the Turkish model,<sup>64</sup> and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, during and after the 2012 presidential campaign, 'kept highlighting the political and doctrinal similarities with Erdoğan.'<sup>65</sup>

Therefore, the Turkish decision to abandon what can be considered as an initially cautious approach in favor of full support for the demands of the Arab streets was neither dictated by a genuine desire to support the establishment of liberal-democracies in the region, nor, as suggested by some,<sup>66</sup> the sole result of ideological affinities between the AKP and Islamist parties in the Arab world. Rather, the changes occurred in Middle East politics during the Arab Spring created the space for the AKP to accumulate prestige, and, therefore, political capital, through the support for political change and for the rise of a new political class in the region. In other words, by presenting itself as the model, or source of inspiration, of post-authoritarian governments in the Arab world, the AKP accumulated international prestige that could be converted in political capital at home. Risky foreign policy moves can be better understood through this lens. An example is the support for the Syrian opposition against Bashar al-Assad, which was composed also by Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood. The AKP was ready to sacrifice good relations with Damascus, which had once been a great foreign policy accomplishment for the AKP government, to present itself as the main sponsor of a political change in Syria.

Importantly, AKP's approach to the Arab Spring was not a break from the democratic-conservative principle of vision and not, therefore, from the political habitus developed by the party in the domestic political field. Erdoğan's Cairo speech in 2011 offers a fitting example. On that occasion, in front of an audience consisting in members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the then-Turkish Prime Minister called for the 'new Egypt' to adopt a secular constitution, specifying, however, that it 'is not secularism in the Anglo-Saxon or Western sense; a person is not secular, the state is secular.'<sup>67</sup> This reference to secularism reflects the dispositions embodied by the AKP in the domestic struggle against the Kemalist establishment. Indeed, as written above, before challenging the Kemalist principle of vision, the AKP had to accept

the 'rules of the game' (including secularism) to be recognized as a legitimate player in the political field. At the same time, it pushed the boundaries of these rules by opposing the strict notion of Kemalist secularism, instead promoting one that is more in line with the lifestyle of the AKP's religious constituency.

Through this episode, it is possible to appreciate the complex strategy of accumulation of political capital deployed by the AKP during the Arab Spring. On the one hand, the foreign policy discourse must reflect the practical necessities of the national political game. On the other hand, this discourse was embedded in transnational power relations, in which the AKP tried to enhance its prestige not just by supporting like-minded political movements but imposing upon them, and, therefore, upon the political fields where they are located, its vision of the social world. Therefore, Erdoğan's 'suggestion' on secularism should be also read through the prisms of the symbolic power relations between the two groups, especially considering his position as the leader of the dominant group in the Turkish field, as well as his prestige in the Egyptian street (prior to the speech, Erdoğan received a triumphal welcome in Cairo). In other words, as Bourdieu would have put it, AKP's policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and other similar parties in the Arab world, was an attempt 'to universalize the particularisms of a single historical tradition';<sup>68</sup> that is, to impose its principle of vision as the new common sense in the Middle Eastern political debate.

This operation of 'export' of a Turkish model was not straightforward. For example, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood could not endorse the adoption of a secular constitution, as this would have empowered other Islamist groups in their field.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, the Egyptian movement criticized the above-mentioned part of Erdoğan's speech. At the same time, other aspects of the so-called Turkish model – such as the ability to combine religiosity and basic democratic practices, as well as successful economic governance – attracted the interest and praise of Islamist political movements in the region, thus enhancing the symbolic capital of the party.<sup>70</sup> As demonstration of the alignment of the strategies of accumulation of political capital between the AKP and these Arab-Islamist agents, Erdoğan's party sent electoral advisers to Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood during the 2012 elections to help them reshape their political message.<sup>71</sup> The Turkish leadership was effectively engaging in a complex game, in which the strengthening of its position in the national political field went hand to hand with the rise of these political groups during the Arab Spring.

In the national political field, this foreign policy served to mobilize political capital and thus consolidate the symbolic power of the AKP within the field itself. This also explains the continuous references to foreign policy themes in the party's discourse.<sup>72</sup> An example of that was the speech delivered by Erdoğan after his triumph in the 2011 general elections:

Today, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans have won as much as Turkey ... We will become much more active in regional and global affairs. ... We will take on a more effective role. We will call, as we have, for rights in our region, for justice, for the rule of law, for freedom and democracy.<sup>73</sup>

By linking the AKP's success to 'rule of law, freedom, and democracy' in the region, the then – Prime Minister tied a value-based foreign policy to the dominant position of the party. Importantly, this strategy of accumulation of political capital did not end with the wave of counterrevolution (and, in the case of Syria, of successful repressions) in the Middle East, nor with the Gezi Park protest. On the contrary, the commitment to a pro-democracy foreign policy discourse served as a mean to preserve Erdoğan position as the leader of the AKP and as the spokesperson on its constituency in a moment of crisis. In particular, the 2013 coup in Egypt which ousted Morsi was framed as 'an attempt to destroy democracy.'<sup>74</sup> This strong stance taken by Erdoğan was part of this strategy to mobilize religious and conservative constituencies behind the AKP.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, when the pillars of AKP's position in the field seemed compromised, the opposition to authoritarianism in Egypt and confrontational foreign policy vis-à-vis the newly established regime of al-Sisi in Cairo (and against the regime of al-Assad in Syria) played an important role in preserving the strategy of accumulation of political capital based on the image of the AKP as an agent supporting democracy. Thus, after the August 2013 Rabaa square massacre (where at least one thousand pro-Morsi demonstrators were killed by the Egyptian army), references to the plight of Egypt's Islamists became recurrent in the AKP's political discourse (as demonstrated by the speech delivered after the 2014 local elections), while the four fingers salute representing the massacre became a widely used political symbol in political rallies held by Erdoğan and the AKP.<sup>76</sup>

### **The change in the strategies of accumulation: the emergence of the nationalist-conservative principle of vision**

While Erdoğan managed to preserve his position in the Turkish political field, the collapse of Morsi's government still dealt a significant blow to his party. The return to power of the Egyptian military, culminating in the establishment of the al-Sisi regime, fundamentally reshaped the Egyptian political field. Crucially, the exclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood – marked by their designation as a terrorist organization – was a pivotal aspect of this transformation. As the Egyptian military received support from countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, a gradual re-imposition of different authoritarian principles of vision took place throughout various political fields. This process of restoration was solidified by the failure of the anti-Assad revolt in Syria, where Erdoğan supported the opposition, as

well as by the more recent authoritarian turn in Tunisia, which led to a new wave of repression against political parties, particularly Ennahda. Within this evolving context, the democratic-conservative principle advocated by the AKP started to lose relevance, and the party's stock of symbolic capital in the region began to diminish. Even though Erdoğan criticized the Gulf monarchies for their perceived collaboration with military intervention and 'condoning terrorism',<sup>77</sup> these statements did little to bolster the AKP's standing. Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Egypt deteriorated as al-Sisi severed ties with Ankara, while Saudi Arabia and their allies in Abu Dhabi took punitive measures against Turkish agents, 'freezing them out of regional diplomacy and cancelling investments in Turkey'.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the AKP's support for militant groups in Syria raised suspicions among the Arab public.<sup>79</sup>

However, while these external developments impacted the AKP's position in the national political field, the abandonment of the previous principle of vision and the reconfiguration of the AKP's political discourse was also made possible by concomitant internal circumstances. The first signal of transformation came from the Gezi Park protest. In addition to accusations of hypocrisy for the handling of the crisis, the AKP experienced the beginning of a rift among its ranks during the protests. While prominent members of the party defended the right to protest and apologized for the excessive use of force,<sup>80</sup> Erdoğan took a tough stance against the protester, famously denouncing them as *çapulcu* (looters). This rift is also evident in the condemnation and criticism from agents in the intellectual and religious fields who used to recognize the AKP as their political representative. For instance, the once-pro-AKP Mustafa Akyol argued that Erdoğan's new Turkey was no longer a democratic model for the Middle East and that it resembled a 'poor imitation of the Kemalist 'Old Turkey''.<sup>81</sup> Another example is the conflict between Erdoğan and Fethullah Gülen, whose movement *Hizmet* was influential in many fields of society and played a major role in the social, economic, and cultural rise of the AKP's core constituency, the conservative bourgeoisie. In this conflictual context, media associated with the movement exploited the protests to criticize the government, thus questioning Erdoğan as the legitimate political representative of the dominant social class.<sup>82</sup>

In the aftermath of the Gezi Park protest, the AKP started to experience a transformation from 'an ideological vehicle for the 'devout bourgeoisie' to an appendage of the personalized rule of [...] Erdoğan'.<sup>83</sup> This trajectory has been partially maintained by Erdoğan's ability to sustain his claim to act as the legitimate representative of the AKP's constituency. A passage from a speech delivered by Erdoğan in the summer of 2013 before a crowd of supporters exemplifies his strategy of preservation:



Now I ask, is Malaysia here, is Kuala Lumpur here?' The crowd replies with jubilation: 'Here!' So it goes on: 'Is Pakistan here, is Lahore here? Is Macedonia here, is Skopje here? Is Gostivar here? Is Prizren here? Is Pristina here? Is Bosnia here, is Sarajevo here? Is Zenica here? Is Angola here? Is Myanmar here?' Every time the audience answers, it goes on for minutes, from Gaza to Baghdad, from Basra to Aleppo. Erdoğan has not yet made a single substantive statement, but the audience is ecstatic and feels part of something big.<sup>84</sup>

This not only reveals that Erdoğan's prestige among the AKP's core constituency, his political capital, and his ability to exercise symbolic power within the dominant group were still intact (further testified by the massive response to his appeal during the 2016 attempted coup), but also underscores the importance of foreign policy discourses in maintaining a dominant position within the political field.

However, given the decline of national economy, the deterioration of the Syrian crisis, and the failure to export the Turkish model in the Middle East, the conditions of the field evolved. In turn, the democratic-conservative principle of vision underpinning the AKP's dominant position was no longer viable. In this context, Erdoğan and his party had to readapt their strategies of accumulation so to mobilize other segments of society. An important role in this transformation was played by the Kurdish issue.

The AKP's initial position regarding the Kurds marked a break from Kemalist orthodoxy. Indeed, since the establishment of the Republic, the political field had always denied any ethnic identity other than the Turkish one, to the point that the military referred to Kurds as Mountain Turks' (*Dağ Türkleri*).<sup>85</sup> Thus, Kurdish nationalist discourse was regarded by Kemalists as one of the greatest challenges to the field's *doxa*, in addition to the Islamist one.<sup>86</sup> Other political agents tried to contest this exclusion by mobilizing political capital through discourses aimed at creating a new sense of shared identity between Turks and Kurds. For instance, in the 1980s, Turgut Özal tried to assimilate the separate Kurdish identity within a (neo)-Ottoman multi-ethnic model,<sup>87</sup> while, in the 1990s, Erbakan's *Millî Görüş* was able to attract considerable support among the Kurdish population using Islam as a 'historical common denominator'.<sup>88</sup> The initial strategy of accumulation of political capital of the AKP regarding the Kurds presented elements of continuity with these approaches, which is unsurprising since the *Millî Görüş* is integral part of the party's habitus. In this regard, it is important to look at the speech that Erdoğan delivered in Diyarbakir in August 2005. Here, the then-Prime Minister recognized the existence of a 'Kurdish problem' and pledged to resolve it 'with more democracy, more civil rights and more prosperity'.<sup>89</sup>

This was accompanied by another public statement made by Erdoğan in the Grand National Assembly in November 2005, in which he rejected 'nationalism based on ethnic origins' and promoted a reconciliation under



the aegis of a multi-ethnic Turkish citizenship.<sup>90</sup> This supra-national identity, which can be described as *Türkiyelilik* (which literally means ‘from Turkey’),<sup>91</sup> relies on the evocation of the common Islamic roots of Turkish and Kurdish people as one of the tools for the mobilization of the most religious (i.e. Sunni) segment of the Kurdish population.<sup>92</sup>

In line with this strategy focused on the absorption of Kurdish demands within its principle of vision, the AKP also elaborated a new foreign policy discourse toward Kurdish entities in the Middle East and, therefore, new security practices. For instance, in November 2013, during a state visit of the Kurdistan Regional Government’s President Masood Barzani to Diyarbakir, Erdoğan referred to the region in Northern Iraq as ‘Kurdistan,’<sup>93</sup> an utterance usually rejected by the Kemalist political agents.<sup>94</sup> During the same event, Erdoğan also affirmed that ‘[r]ejection, denial, and assimilation have ended with our government,’<sup>95</sup> thus further emboldening the image of the AKP as the agent of the Turkish-Kurdish reconciliation, both in the national political field and in the Middle East. This intersection between the integrationist and democratic strategy vis-à-vis Kurds at home and the amicable relationship with Iraqi Kurds shows how power struggle over the national political field affected foreign policy. As part of this strategy of accumulation, the AKP government initially tried to engage with Syria’s Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat*, PYD), which, during the Syrian civil war, exploited the chaotic situation to create a *de facto* independent Kurdish entity in the northeast of the country along the southern border of Turkey. For instance, the PYD’s leader was invited in Istanbul to hold a meeting with Davutoğlu.<sup>96</sup> Concurrently, the AKP government took a bold step toward a resolution of the long-running conflict with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK) with the beginning of the so-called Solution Process (*Çözüm Süreci*).

Nevertheless, the AKP’s strategy for mobilizing the Kurdish constituency faced two significant challenges. First, the Turkish political field remained heavily characterized by Turkish nationalism. This, coupled with recurrent violent actions by the PKK, often constrained the AKP’s political discourse on certain occasions. Thus, even though the ‘AKP’s emphasis on democracy and human rights [...] influenced this political party’s approach to the Kurdish question during its early years in office,’<sup>97</sup> it is also true that the AKP occasionally resorted to nationalist and hardline discourses in alignment with the field’s prevailing views. This was often a response to criticism from the opposition, which saw the opening on the Kurdish question as ‘irresponsible’ or even ‘treason.’<sup>98</sup>

Second, the AKP’s claim to represent Kurdish demands was challenged by the Kurdish nationalist movement, exemplified by the Democratic Regions Party (*Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi*, DBP) and, from 2014, even more successfully by the Peoples’ Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP).

Following the 2011 elections, this movement initiated a series of protests, denouncing the AKP's failure to fulfill the promises made to Kurdish constituencies. In response, Erdoğan stated:

Let my citizens give their votes with their own will. Do they do it? You see, threats ... This is not democracy, this is not freedom, these are not basic rights. There is no longer a Kurdish issue in this country. I don't accept it.<sup>99</sup>

Despite this negation of a Kurdish issue and other speeches in which Erdoğan explicitly referred to it as 'a PKK issue,' no significant changes in the strategy of mobilization under the concept of *Türkiyelilik* occurred. For instance, after the Resolution Process was launched in 2013, then-Prime Minister Erdoğan returned to speak about a Kurdish issue, stating:

Just as they cannot separate the Turk from the Kurd, they cannot separate the Kurd from the Turk. What is a bigger torment than a mother being unable to speak to her child in her mother language? We will see that the ones at the mountains leave, prisons are empty, 76 million embrace one another and be a new Turkey together.<sup>100</sup>

It was only around the June 2015 election that a significant change in the strategies of accumulation of political capital by the AKP took place. The HDP, led by Selahattin Demirtaş obtained more than 13 percent of the popular vote, thus not only becoming the first pro-Kurdish party able to overcome the 10 percent threshold necessary to enter the Turkish parliament, but also surpassing the AKP as the Kurds' most voted party. Significantly, the HDP was able to claim representation of both (left-wing) Kurds seeking greater autonomy within Turkey and of other groups traditionally not represented in the Turkish field of politics, such as feminists, LGBTIQI + organizations and environmentalists. This mobilization occurred through an inclusive and democratic principle of vision.<sup>101</sup> In deploying this principle, HDP was very straightforward in stressing the gap between the AKP's claim to be the 'party of democratization' and Erdoğan's plans to increase his personal power through the presidential reform. The political message promoted by Demirtaş, summarized by his famous slogan 'we will not make you the President,'<sup>102</sup> was one of rejection of the political order envisioned by Erdoğan. At the same time, as a result of the AKP's perceived support for the Kurdistan National Council – a political rival of the PYD with strong ties with Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party<sup>103</sup> – and the accusations to have covertly assisted ISIS during the battle of Kobane,<sup>104</sup> relations with the PYD deteriorated. This had significant implications for the AKP's prestige within the Kurdish constituency and the ability of the Turkish state to exert some form of control in Northern Syria.

After losing the absolute majority in the Grand National Assembly in the June 2015 elections, President Erdoğan prevented then-Prime Minister Davutoğlu's attempt to form a coalition government, thus forcing a return

to the polls. During the following electoral campaign, characterized by a return of violence with the PKK and by the end of the ceasefire and peace process, Erdoğan portrayed the HDP as an extension of the PKK, thus implicitly depicting Demirtaş as a ‘terrorist.’<sup>105</sup> Eventually, during the November 2015 elections, the AKP was able to attract some of the MHP’s voters and to regain absolute majority in the legislature. The re-securitization of the political discourse surrounding the Kurdish issue and the appeal to the nationalist constituency signaled a shift in the AKP’s position in the field, which was no longer represented by the democratic-conservative principle of vision. Rather, through the establishment of the People’s Alliance (*Cumhur İttifakı*) with the MHP, the party deployed a nationalist-conservative principle to not only mobilize what remained of its former social base (the devout bourgeoisie), but also segments of Turkish society usually associated with Turkish nationalism.

The changing strategies of the AKP have led to the restructuring of the field. This new configuration is characterized by two main aspects. The first one is the fragmentation of the political representation of the devout bourgeoisie, as evidenced by the emergence of new parties, like Davutoğlu’s Future Party or Ali Babacan’s Democracy and Progress Party, which, together with the *Millî Görüş*’s Felicity Party, side with the opposition. The second, and interrelated, aspect is the resurgence of Turkish nationalism, especially ethnic-nationalism as a mean to accumulate political capital. The 2023 electoral campaign is an apt example of this. On that occasion, the HDP’s external support for the opposition candidate, the leader of the Kemalist Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, was exploited by Erdoğan, who accused his adversaries to have ties with terrorism. He even displayed ‘a doctored video that portrayed PKK leaders singing along with Kılıçdaroğlu’s campaign song’ at his rallies.<sup>106</sup> As a part of the new principle of vision, Erdoğan and his party also deployed a new concept, the ‘Turkish century,’ which was framed as the ‘new red apple’ (*‘yeni Kızılelma’sıdır’*) of the nation.<sup>107</sup> The striking aspect of this emerging discourse is the fact that it downplays religious symbolism, while highlighting nationalist mottos, such as ‘One Nation, One Flag, One State, One Homeland.’<sup>108</sup> The promotion of this new discourse through domestic media demonstrated the transition to a new principle of vision, all of which was made possible by this restructuring of the field.

In terms of foreign policy discourse, the new strategy of accumulation of political capital initially presented elements of both change and continuity with the previous position occupied by the AKP. On the one hand, as a mean to mobilize political capital, it relied on a more aggressive and nationalist foreign policy discourse. On the other hand, however, this discourse was also framed as to preserve the AKP’s prestige within the devout bourgeoisie, whose political representation become more fragmented. For instance,

Erdoğan and the AKP have so far maintained a pro-Palestine rhetoric, allowed members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood escaping al-Sisi repression to relocate in Turkey,<sup>109</sup> and expressed concern over the arrest of the 'brother [Rachid] Ghannouchi [the leader of Ennahda]' by Tunisia's authorities.<sup>110</sup>

However, the shrinking political capital possessed by political Islam in post-Arab Spring Arab political fields, the nationalist elements in the new strategy of accumulation, and the economic difficulties affecting the prestige of the AKP party in the field weigh over the evolution of the foreign policy discourse. Importantly, the presence of nationalist groups – including the military, which reacquired a central, although no longer dominant, position in the field following the 2016 failed coup, as evidenced by the appointment of Hulusi Akar as Minister of Defense – is an important factor. The new strategy of accumulation of political capital of the AKP created the conditions for the current foreign policy of rapprochement with al-Sisi.

## Conclusion

The Arab Spring represented a turning point for both Turkish foreign policy and the AKP's domestic governance. As this article illustrates, the failure of Arab religious parties to consolidate their power and the eventual return to power of the *ancien régime*, have had serious repercussion for the party's discourse. This has slowly shifted from advocating an 'axis of democracy' between Turkey and the post-Arab Spring democracies,<sup>111</sup> to claiming to represent the 'oppressed majority' in the Middle East,<sup>112</sup> while carrying out an aggressive stance in Syria and Libya, to finally promoting an 'axis of Turkey,' which would include also authoritarian regional states.<sup>113</sup> This development in foreign policy discourse has coincided with a profound transformation of the AKP's political message at home, which became not simply more authoritarian, but more explicitly nationalist.

This article demonstrates how Bourdieu's political sociology provides a convincing explanation connecting the national and international sides of the AKP's political experience. Through the concept of political field, this work argues that, rather than the party's identity, or ideology, it is the changing strategies of accumulation of political capital the key for understanding AKP's national and international trajectory. Until the Arab Spring, the position of the party in the political field, and in the Middle East, was defined by a democratic-conservative principle of vision and division, which challenged the traditional Kemalist and nationalist vision of socio-political reality by mobilizing important segments of Turkish society behind a heterodox political discourse based on social-conservative and neo-liberal values, as well as by a democratic – although not liberal – form of political legitimization. In this period, the AKP broke with the Kemalist orthodoxy in different ways,

notably by challenging the nationalist common sense regarding the Kurdish issue, and by redefining the foreign policy discourse toward the Middle East.

As the article demonstrates, at the outbreak of the Arab Spring, the AKP tried to export its principle of vision to other political fields in the regional political space through a the mediation of political agents in the Arab world, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. However, after the coup in Egypt and legitimacy crisis suffered by the AKP in the national realm, the democratic-conservative principle could no longer mobilize enough capital to preserve the dominant position of the party in the field. In this delicate conjuncture, Erdoğan led to a reconfiguration of the party's political discourse toward a nationalist-conservative principle of vision. This transformation has had profound consequences not just for foreign policy discourses, but also for the configuration of the Turkish political field itself, which is experiencing a revitalization of Turkish nationalism. Indeed, the AKP's alliance with the MHP, re-securitization of the Kurdish issue, and recent anti-Syrian refugee propaganda are all signs of the 'stickiness'<sup>114</sup> of nationalist discourse in the field.

As the AKP era is entering a new phase with the victory in the 2023 elections, as well as with the ongoing process of reconstruction of diplomatic relations with authoritarian governments in the region, including the al-Sisi regime, understanding the interplay between the national and the international is crucial for mapping the future evolution of the political experience of the party, as well as Turkish position in the Middle East in general. The conceptual apparatus delineated by Bourdieu offers an insightful toolkit for doing so.

## Notes

1. "FULL TEXT: Turkish PM Erdoğan's Post-Election 'Balcony Speech'," *Hürriyet Daily News*, April 1, 2014.
2. Ayata, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 106–8; Kirdis, "The Role"; and Yeşilyurt, "Explaining Miscalculations," 70–1; 78–9.
3. Angey-Sentuc and Molho, "A Critical Approach," 2–3. See also, for instance Altunisk, "The Turkish Model"; Altunisk, "The Possibilities and Limits"; Çavdar, "Islamist New Thinking"; Kubicek, "Debating"; and Keyman, "Globalization, Modernity and Democracy."
4. See, for instance, Aras and Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation."
5. Toprak, "Islam and Democracy"; Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*; and Hale and Ozbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism*.
6. Perekli, "The Applicability"; Samaan, "The Rise"; and Gerges, "The Islamist Moment," 402.
7. Samaan, "The Rise," 62–4.
8. Aras, "The Davutoğlu Era," and Dal and Erşen, "Reassessing."
9. Gerges, "The Islamist Moment," and Chamkhi, "Neo-Islamism."
10. This transformation of AKP's domestic political rule is often presented by part of the previous literature as an 'authoritarian turn' of the party's rule. However,

this periodization risks presenting a rather simplistic picture of the AKP's political experience, as many scholars see a certain continuity in its political practices throughout its two decades of government. These works point at the discriminatory nature of the AKP's government towards political and ethnic minorities, at its abuses of the anti-terror law, or at the latent authoritarian nature of its neo-liberal economic policies. While acknowledging this objection, this paper underscores a gradual shift in the party's political discourse and strategies of governance from the 2010s. This shift is marked by the abandonment of a 'liberal' rhetoric and by the formal alliance with the nationalist right. On the previous literature seeing authoritarian tendencies in the AKP from the beginning see Tansel, "Neoliberalism"; Erensü and Alemdaroğlu, "Dialectics of Reform"; and Babacan et al., *Regime Change in Turkey*.

11. cf. Aras, "The Crisis and Change."
12. "Turkey and Syria Agree to Improve Ties After Talks in Moscow," *AP News*, May 10, 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/syria-russia-turkey-ministers-talks-reconciliation-10a415b545c0365275f22a9b78806627>.
13. On Bourdieu and discourse analysis see Nolan, "Stimulating Conversations," and Sayer, "Pierre Bourdieu."
14. Aras and Gorener, "National Role Conceptions"; Dal and Erşen, "Reassessing," and Özdamar, "Domestic Sources."
15. Kirdiş, "The Role," and Hintz, *Identity Politics*.
16. Yeşilyurt, "Explaining Miscalculations," and Özpek and Yaşar, "Populism and Foreign Policy."
17. Guzzini, "A Reconstruction," 150.
18. Yalvaç, "Strategic Depth" and Hoffmann and Cemgil, "The (Un)making."
19. Kirişçi, "The Transformation."
20. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 181.
21. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction," 26.
22. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 234–9.
23. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction," 14, and Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation*, 97–104.
24. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 424.
25. Bourdieu, *Outline*, 169.
26. *Ibid.*, 72.
27. Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation*, 119.
28. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 291.
29. Swartz, *Culture & Power*, 43.
30. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 164.
31. Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class," 13.
32. Davis, "Forms of Capital," 206; Akdeniz and Göker, "The Historical 'Stickiness,'" 314; and Dodge, "Bourdieu Goes to Baghdad," 29.
33. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 171–2, and Akdeniz and Göker, "The Historical 'Stickiness,'" 314.
34. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 192.
35. *Ibid.*, 238–9.
36. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction," 26, italics in the original.
37. Akdeniz and Göker, "The Historical 'Stickiness,'" 321.
38. Morin and Lee, "Constitutive Discourse."
39. Kasaba, "Kemalist Certainties," 28.
40. Brown, "The Military and Politics," 237.

41. Cf. Akdeniz and Göker, "The Historical 'Stickiness'," 321.
42. Çetinsaya, "Rethinking," 374. See also Şen, "Transformation."
43. Akdeniz and Göker, "The Historical 'Stickiness,'" 322–3, and Hoffmann and Cemgil, "The (Un)making," 1288–9.
44. Quoted in Bozdağlıoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 137.
45. Quoted in Atacan, "Explaining," 194.
46. Atacan, "Explaining."
47. Coşar and Özman, "Centre-Right Politics."
48. Tuğal, *Passive Revolution*, and Akdeniz and Göker, "The Historical 'Stickiness,'" 326.
49. Atıkcı and Öge, "Referendum Campaigns."
50. Kalin, "Debating Turkey," 93.
51. Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision," 80.
52. Ibid., 84–6.
53. Davutoğlu, interviewed for *al-Ahram*, 2004, as quoted by Kalin, "Debating Turkey," 96, note 24.
54. Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision," 80.
55. Benhaïm and Öktem, "The Rise and Fall," 22.
56. Taşpınar, "Turkey's Strategic Vision," 135.
57. Bal, "The Turkish Model."
58. Benhaïm and Öktem, "The Rise and Fall," 29, and Iğsız, "From Alliance of Civilizations."
59. Kubicek, "Debating," 67.
60. Quoted in Elshinnawi, Mohamed, "Would the Turkish Model Work in Arab Spring Countries?," *Voice of America*, March 4, 2013. <https://www.voanews.com/a/would-the-turkish-model-work-in-arab-spring-countries/1614984.html>.
61. Benhaïm and Öktem, "The Rise and Fall," 30.
62. Torun, "The Debate," 17, footnote 33.
63. Quoted in Elshinnawi, note 60.
64. Perekli, "The Applicability."
65. Ayyash, "The Turkish Future."
66. Yeşilyurt, "Explaining Miscalculation," and Özdamar and Devlen, "Man vs the System."
67. *Hürriyet Daily News*, September 15, 2011, quoted in Dal and Erşen, "Reassessing," 271.
68. Bourdieu and Wacquant, "On the Cunning," 41.
69. Gumuscu, "Class, Status, and Party."
70. See Perekli, "The Applicability"; Samaan, "The Rise and Fall"; Aydın-Duzgit, "The Seesaw Friendship"; and Ayyash, "The Turkish future."
71. Perekli, "The Applicability," 86, and Aydın-Duzgit, "The Seesaw Friendship."
72. See Öniş "Multiple Faces," 49; Pala and Aras, "Practical Geopolitical Reasoning"; and Özdamar, "Domestic Sources," 102.
73. Güsten, "Mandate for a New Turkish Era," *The New York Times*, June 15, 2011, as quoted in Pala and Aras, "Practical Geopolitical Reasoning," 290.
74. *Bugün*, July 5, 2013, as quoted in Yegin, "Turkey's Reaction," 412.
75. Hoffmann and Cemgil, "The (Un)making," 1282, and Yeşilyurt, "Explaining Miscalculations."
76. Ayata, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 106, and Yeşilyurt, "Explaining Miscalculations," 14–15.
77. Pala and Aras, "Practical Geopolitical Reasoning," 296.



78. Cook and Ibish, "Turkey and the GCC," 5.
79. Samaan, "The Rise and Fall," 66.
80. "Turkey Protests Continue Despite Apology," *Al Jazeera*, June 6, 2013. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2013/06/06/turkey-protests-continue-despite-apology/>.
81. Quoted in Ozkececi-Taner, "Disintegration," 211.
82. Cornell, "Erdoğan's Looming Downfall."
83. Stein, *International Relations*, 207.
84. Martens, "Volkstribun und Demagoge," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 17, 2013.
85. Sagnic, "Mountain Turks."
86. Akdeniz and Göker, "The Historical 'Stickiness'." See also Yeğen, "The Turkish State Discourse."
87. Ataman, "Özal leadership."
88. Taşkin, "AKP's Move," 62.
89. "Turkish PM Addresses Kurdish Question," *Al Jazeera*, August 30, 2005. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/8/30/turkish-pm-addresses-kurdish-question>. On AKP's policy towards the Kurds, see also Efeğil, "Analysis."
90. Taşkin, "AKP's Move," 62.
91. Ibid., and Akdeniz and Göker, "The Historical 'Stickiness'," 33.
92. Cf. Günay and Yörük, "Governing Ethnic Unrest."
93. Necef, "Barzani and Erdogan Meet," 3.
94. Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbour*, 86.
95. Quoted in Saraçoğlu and Demirkol, "Nationalism," 309.
96. "PYD Leader in Visit to Turkey Proposes Formation of Provisional Council Until Political Solution," *Hürriyet Daily News*, July 27, 2013.
97. Pusane, "Turkey's Kurdish Opening," 85.
98. Ibid., 88.
99. "Kurdish Question for Erdoğan: A Changing Discourse over the Years," *Bianet*, September 27, 2021. <https://bianet.org/haber/kurdish-question-for-erdogan-a-changing-discourse-over-the-years-250881>.
100. Ibid.
101. Günay and Yörük, "Governing Ethnic Unrest," 31–2.
102. Yilmaz, Shipoli, and Demir, "Authoritarian Resilience," 1123.
103. Gunter, "The Kurdish Spring," 450–3.
104. "Kurds Protest Against Turkey as IS Advances on Kobane," *BBC News*, October 7, 2014. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29518448>.
105. Yilmaz, Shipoli, and Demir, "Authoritarian Resilience," 1124.
106. Esen and Gumuscu, "How Erdoğan's Populism Won," 23.
107. "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan *Yeni Şafak* için yazdı: Cumhurun yüzyılı olacak," *Yeni Şafak*, January 2, 2023.
108. Halil Akkoç, "Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'dan yeni yıl mesajı: Asıl çıkışımızı Türkiye Yüzyılı ile 2024'le birlikte başlatıyoruz," *Yeni Şafak*, December 31, 2023.
109. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Expresses Gratitude to Turkey," *Daily Sabah*, May 2, 2021.
110. Merve Aydoğan, "Turkish President Expresses Concern over Developments in Tunisia," *Anadolu Agency*, April 19, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkish-president-expresses-concern-over-developments-in-tunisia/2875992>.
111. Lindenstrauss, "Turkey and the Arab Spring," 7.
112. Kirdiş, "The Role," 184.



113. “Axis of Türkiye: FM Pledges a Powerful Country in Foreign Policy,” *Daily Sabah*, April 13, 2023. It is noteworthy that in the speech delivered by Çavuşoğlu there is a reference to the 2300-year-old Treaty of Kadesh between Egyptians and the Hittites of Anatolia.
114. Akdeniz and Göker, “The Historical ‘Stickiness’.”

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