Aspiration and Activism: Middle Power Behavior During International Power Shifts

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Table of Contents

<u>Abstract</u>

This study investigates the relationship between international power shifts and middle power behavior in foreign policy. I argue that, in times of changing global power dynamics, internal and external variables come together to create an environment conducive to heightened middle power activism. I assess how domestic politics condition the foreign policies of middle powers during power shifts. The degree of foreign policy activism, and whether it is benign or revisionist, are contingent on domestic political conditions. Middle powers and states that are aspirant to middle power status are more likely to take on more offensive foreign policies if they are facing domestic economic and political challenges at the time of the global power shift. I find evidence that states are more likely to initiate use of force in environments of strategic rivalry when they are facing domestic turmoil, and scrutinize how strategic rivalries affect middle power behavior during shifts. I also conduct a case study on Turkey, focusing on three different time frames, to demonstrate the impact of domestic politics and power shifts on foreign policy activism.

Introduction

When it comes to making an impact on international system, great powers are the central players. However, with their unique positions, middle powers have also been affecting international politics. Middle powers are crucial in order to understand the shifts in international order as they affect the process of reshaping the order. Moreover, international power shifts create changes in middle power behavior because these states try to balance their internal demands and external environments. Since middle powers' reactions have important ramifications regarding international order, studying their behavior is essential. Currently, there is a global power shift from the west to the east, which has been affecting the hierarchy of power relations. As great powers are trying to protect the status quo or alter the hierarchy in their benefit, middle powers' reactions are important intervening variables. As China rises, middle powers such as Brazil, India and Turkey are facing new challenges and finding new opportunities that are peculiar to them due to their middle power positions. Their responses to these challenges and opportunities are essential for reshaping the current international context. Therefore, analyzing their behavior will shed light on some particular dynamics of the contemporary world politics.

The above example regarding the current power shift raises some important questions: How do the shifts in international order, conditioned by domestic political structures, affect middle power behavior? To what extent the domestic and regional circumstances of middle powers affect their activism while operating under the systemic constraints and opportunities a power shift creates? What is the impact of their rivalries on the way they address changes? Why do some contemporary middle powers do not behave in accordance with the conventional middle power definitions? The existing literature on power shifts mostly focus on great power behavior, while the literature on middle powers mostly focus on established middle powers such as Australia and

Canada. Thus, these literatures have not given plausible answers regarding the two-way relationship between middle powers and global power shifts. This study attempts to answer these questions to provide a better understanding of this important phenomenon related to international politics.

In this paper, I will argue that the combination of domestic politics and external dynamics create an environment conducive to heightened middle power activism during power shifts. Moreover, middle powers and small states that are aspirant to middle power status are more likely to take on more offensive foreign policies if they are facing domestic economic and political challenges at the time of the global power shift. I will also argue that, as the degree of the activism increases, strategic rivalries may affect these states' behavior during global power shifts.

To be able to clearly articulate my argument, I shall define some concepts as they are going to be used in this paper. When I talk about states that are *aspirant* to middle power status, I do not refer to any small state that wants a bigger share in international system. Relative material power capability is the most important condition for middle power status as it is what makes great powers perceive middle powers as strategically important. So, for a state to be considered as aspirant of middle power status, engaging in middle power-like behavior is not enough, as it will not be taken seriously unless it has relative material power capabilities. For example, Turkey was an aspirant state in 1950s because it was engaging in middle power-like behavior, and it was militarily the most powerful actor in its region.

Another important concept is *activism*. The concept should be clarified as it can indicate a lot of different phenomena. Activism, as it is used in this paper, can be defined as a foreign policy strategy to change, preserve or create a particular international order, in line with the interests and perceptions of the decision makers. This strategy can be used to handle existing problems, or it

can indicate a long-term effort to reach certain goals. An activist foreign policy can be benign or revisionist. It can be said that a state has an active foreign policy when it is taking initiatives (initiation of conflict, coalition building efforts etc.), strategically using available means to reach goals. Moreover, a policy can be considered activist if there is internal or external opposition to it.

When I mention *power shifts*, I am not just referring to shifts that create a dramatic change in the international system. Some power shifts, such as the one at the end of the Cold War, create definitive and sharp changes in the system. Others change certain dynamics in the international structure, and may signal a significant change in the future, such as the power shift in the 1980s and the current power shift from west to the east. Both kinds of power shifts affect the framework of the international environment, therefore they are both relevant for this paper.

To evaluate my argument, I will conduct a case study on Turkey, focusing on different time frames, namely the immediate post-World War II, Cold War, and the post-Cold War & AKP. To illustrate how strategic rivalries create an opportunity-rich environment for diversionary policies, I will conduct a large-N analysis.

This study has important implications for international security and international order. As regional powers, middle powers affect regional stability. Great powers' desired policies to reach their security goals cannot be implemented without the alignment of middle powers, and NATO is a great example to that. Also, examining middle power behavior during international power shifts will provide insights regarding the future of the international order considering the current power shift from the west to the east. Moreover, since I assess how aspirant small states pursue activist strategies to become middle powers in line with how they perceive their place in the international order, this study is also connected to the discussion on status change for states in the global hierarchy.

The remainder of this article is divided into five sections. First one reviews the existing literature on middle powers and middle power behavior. The second section develops the theory and lays out an explanatory model for middle power behavior during international power shifts. The third section is the empirical analysis, where the relationship between strategic rivalries and initiation of militarized disputes is tested, and the relationship's ramifications for foreign policy is analyzed. The fourth section is the case study on Turkey. The last section summarizes the main points and concludes.

Literature Review

Robert Keohane categorized states as follows: ": A Great Power is a state whose leaders consider that it can, alone, exercise a large, perhaps decisive, impact on the international system; a secondary power is a state whose leaders consider that alone it can exercise some impact, although never in itself decisive, on that system; a middle power is a state whose leaders consider that it cannot act alone effectively but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution; a small power is a state whose leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system.".[1] Wang and French suggest that middle powers are actors with constrained material capability when compared to major powers.[2] When defining the notion, they explain that middle powers are not able to influence major international economy and security issues, however they have the means to protect themselves from other states' undesirable acts.[3] Although there is a long history of categorizing

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[1] Robert O. Keohane, "Review of *Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics*, by George Liska, Robert E. Osgood, Robert L. Rothstein, and David Vital." *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 291–310, 296.
[2] Hongying Wang and Erik French, "Middle Range Powers in Global Governance," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 6 (2013): 985–99.
[3] Wang and French, "Middle Range Powers in Global Governance," 985-99.

states according to their material power capabilities, defining middle powers is not a straightforward process.

Even though the concept of middle power has been used since the 16th century, it became popular immediately after WWII with Canada's persistent claims to middle power status.[4] The Canadian government used the concept to justify its claims that countries' status in the international order should be proportionate to their capacity to contribute resources and expertise, and it deserved to be treated differently than less developed states.[5] Not surprisingly, the existing literature on middle powers mostly focus on established middle powers such as Australia and Canada.[6] According to this literature, middle powers act as stabilizers and "good international citizens" in international politics, seeking international stability and multilateral solutions to international problems. However, the behavior of middle powers vary, and their behavior is also shaped by the international context they are existing in, therefore the theory has been frequently revisited.

There are different approaches used when defining middle powers. The positional approach considers the material capabilities of middle powers relative to those of other categories of states.[7] Material power capability is the primary condition for middle powers to be perceived as strategically important by great powers. It is also what enables middle powers' initiatives to be feasible and it provides middle powers with a significant degree of foreign policy autonomy.

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[4] John Ravenhill, "Cycles of middle power activism: Constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 52:3 (1998): 309-327, 309.
[5] Ravenhill, " Cycles of middle power activism: Constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies," 309.
[6] See, for example, Mark Beeson, "Can Australia save the world? The limits and possibilities of middle power diplomacy." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65:5 (2011): 563-577; Andrew Carr, "Is Australia a middle power? A systemic impact approach." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68:1 (2014): 70-84; Adam Chapnick. "The Canadian Middle Power Myth." *International Journal* 55, no. 2 (June 2000): 188–206.
[7] Bruce Gilley and Andrew O'Neil, "China's Rise through the Prism of Middle Powers," in *Middle Powers and the Rise of China*, edited by Bruce Gilley and Andrew O'Neil, Georgetown University Press, 2014, 4.

The behavioral approach focuses on the policies middle powers pursue. This is closely linked with the material capabilities of a middle power, and it is where the terms *middle power activism* and *niche diplomacy* become relevant. System stabilization, active participation, coalition building, and regional leadership have been listed as predicted middle power behavior. Also, active participation of middle powers in multilateral and international institutions is important in terms of the maintenance of the liberal global order. Furthermore, middle powers are perceived to be pro-multipolarity and they favor a rules-based international order since they can function more effectively in such a context. However, even though some middle powers behave in line with these predictions (such as Australia, Canada and Scandinavian countries), some others (such as Turkey and Hungary) do not.

Conventional definitions of middle power usually rest on states' material capabilities such as the size of their GDPs and military forces, and their geographical areas. However, middle powers' foreign policy choices and the way they conduct their diplomacy are also important determinants. A useful approach for defining middle powers is the approach used by Copper, Higgott and Nossal (CHN) which focuses on middle powers' diplomacies and the way in which they seek to reach their foreign policy goals.[8] Drawing on this literature, John Ravenhill comes up with a definition of middle power status encapsulated in 5 Cs: capacity, concentration, creativity, coalition-building and credibility.[9] As aforementioned, capacity is a necessary condition for middle power status. Since capacities of middle powers are limited, the number of foreign policy goals they can pursue at a time is also limited, which is why concentration is important. Their creativity and the force of their ideas can make up for their relative economic, military and political

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[8] Cooper, Andrew Fenton, Kim Richard Nossal, and Richard A. Higgott, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*. UBC Press, 1994.
[9] Ravenhill, " Cycles of middle power activism: Constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies," 310.

weaknesses. Forming coalitions with like-minded states is also considered to be a middle power behavior because this way they may reach their goals they would not have been able to reach alone. Also, middle powers' initiatives are more acceptable by great powers since these states are not in a position to be the single major beneficiary of an initiative.

Moreover, since nothing in this list explains why middle power activism occurs, Ravenhill turns to 3 other Cs: context, content and choice[10]. Context stresses the international, regional and domestic contexts under which the middle powers are functioning. Content refers to the qualitative change in behavior. Middle power activism as choice considers the effects of different governments and leaders on activism. Ravenhill concludes that systemic structure constraints limit the options available to middle powers, and changes in the structure affects the available options.[11] Nevertheless, middle powers enjoy a considerable element of choice.[12]

Theory

Taking neoclassical realism as a starting point, I seek to build an explanatory model for middle power behavior during international power shifts. This model does not attempt to explain or predict everything about middle power behavior during international power shifts. It aims to create a general analytical framework to refer to when analyzing such behavior.

Relative material power capability is the most important condition of being a middle power and it also enables middle powers to enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy in their foreign policymaking. However, since they will always be relatively weaker against great powers, that autonomy is limited. Also, since middle powers are susceptible to actions of great powers, they

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[10] Ravenhill, " Cycles of middle power activism: Constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies," 313.
[11] Ravenhill, " Cycles of middle power activism: Constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies," 324.
[12] Ravenhill, " Cycles of middle power activism: Constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies," 324.

have to account for the international context more than great powers do. Therefore, in the foreign policymaking of middle powers, the primary independent variable is the context of the international system as it determines the boundaries middle powers can act freely within.

States desire to benefit from the international environment and they simultaneously try to deal with the struggles it creates. The structure of international order creates systemic constraints for states, and they can only act between those boundaries. Thus, states are dependent on their international environment. Power shifts affect the international environment and boundaries. Rosenau defines change in world politics as follows: "Change means the attrition of established patterns, the lessening of order, and the faltering of governance, until such time as new patterns can form and get embedded in the routines of world politics.".[13] Middle powers must address these changes while at the same time balancing internal demands. They must conduct their foreign affairs carefully and in a way that addresses both the international changes and their domestic conditions to make sure they can function. Even though the international environment sets the framework for foreign policy, actual foreign policy preferences cannot be determined without the effect of domestic level variables.

The power shift after WWII had created a bipolar world order. Under that system of bipolarity, middle powers were important pillars in international security. Middle powers' involvement in NATO and the Warsaw Pact are the most notable examples to this. Both the US and the USSR tried to bring as many of them as possible under their influence.

During the Cold War, there was widespread scholarly consensus that middle powers' and small states' foreign policy preferences were shaped mainly, if not only, by external forces,

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[13]James N. Rosenau, "Governance, order, and change in world politics," in *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics,* ed. James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1.

ignoring the domestic political processes.[14] However, this does not mean that domestic and regional politics did not matter. As different power shifts create different environments and policy options for these states, one must interpret the behavior of these states accordingly, keeping the unique changes a power shift creates in mind. The degree of the change also matters. Considering the unique security concerns, the dramatic shift in power and the bipolar order during the Cold War, neutrality was not an option for many middle powers and small states, even though many of them did not want to choose sides. They were forced to side with either the USSR or the US, due to internal and external pressures. It was not the case that their domestic politics did not affect their foreign policy preferences, they were simply trying to find the best foreign policy formula within the boundaries of the time.

Similarly, many other middle and small states, such as Egypt and India, became members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was established after the Korean War, as an effort to preserve their sovereignty and independence in a highly demanding, complex and bipolar international environment. This coalition building effort was aimed at reducing the pressures from the US and USSR, which wanted these states to choose sides. Similar to states which could not stay neutral even though they desired it, members of the NAM were also trying to balance the demands from their internal and external environments within the boundaries the international structure of the time had created. The international structure of the Cold War limited these states' abilities to pursue an active foreign policy, although that does not mean that domestic independent

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[14] See, for example, Fox, Annette Baker. "The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II" University of Chicago Press (1959), 2021; Wolfers, Arnold "Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics." Johns Hopkins University Press (1962); Rosenau, James N. "Pre-theories and Theories of International Politics", in *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics* ed. R. Barry Farrell (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966); Waltz, Kenneth N. "Theory of International Politics. " Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

variables did not matter. Not surprisingly, after the Cold War, research on the same issue has demonstrated that domestic politics mattered for the foreign policies of such states.[15]

Many observers interpret the foreign policy behaviors of middle powers during the Cold War as varieties of alignment, and thus adaptive, taking Rosenau's adaptation theory as a point of departure. According to Rosenau's theory, "any foreign policy behavior undertaken by the government of any national society is conceived to be adaptive when it copes with or stimulates changes in the external environment of the society that contribute to keeping the essential structures of the society within acceptable limits".[16] Even though it is a useful framework to understand states' need to adapt, Rosenau's framework underscores the importance of states' need to adapt to their external environments while neglecting domestic variables in foreign policy making. States need to adapt to their environments, and the Cold War significantly limited the foreign policy options for the states in question. So, a foreign policy of adaptation was the most feasible foreign policy formula for many states. However, even during the Cold War, we observe many activist elements in middle powers' and small states' foreign policy to change or preserve the international order according to their governments' perceived interests. Therefore, I argue that the activism in the bipolar international order of the Cold War is different in kind from the activism observed after the end of the Cold War due to systemic constraints.

The end of the Cold War gave way to the rise of new policy issues and new actors, which was an important factor driving the interest in making predictions about middle power behavior.[17]

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[15] See, for example, Davies, Graeme "Inside Out or Outside In: Domestic and International Factors Affecting Iranian Foreign Policy Towards the United States 1990–2004." *Foreign Policy Analysis,* 4: (2008) 209–25; Deets, Stephen "Constituting Interests and Identities in a Two-Level Game: Understanding the Gabcikovo–Nagymaros Dam Conflict.*" Foreign Policy Analysis* 5: (2009), 37–56.

[16] James N. Rosenau, "Foreign Policy as Adaptive Behavior: Some Preliminary Notes for a Theoretical Model," *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 (1970): 365–87, 367.

[17] Gilley and O'Neil, "China's Rise through the Prism of Middle Powers," 9.

The end of the Cold War brought major changes to the international system. For many middle powers and small states, this meant the removal of the extreme pressure of the bipolar order and the major security concerns. The new international environment allowed these states to pursue more activist foreign policies. Considering the country specific behavior of many states, it is possible to observe that their activisms are different. Currently, not all middle powers and small states are pursuing benign (dovish) activism such as Canada and Australia. States such as Turkey and Hungary are behaving very differently, adopting more aggressive foreign policies and punching above their weights. This behavior can be defined as revisionist (hawkish) activism. That indicates a difference in active behaviors after the end of the Cold War, and it is a difference in degree. A state's position on the scale between benign activism and revisionist activism can also change over time.

To give an example, Canada is currently pursuing a benign activist foreign policy to preserve the favorable international environment, whereas Turkey is pursuing an offensive foreign policy to challenge and change the existing order. Under the international environment of the post–Cold War era, both states have the ability to pursue more activist foreign policies, however the degree of their activism is different. As Ikenberry points out, in the context of a shift in the global power dynamics, secondary and weaker states have more options for maneuvering and bargaining.[18] As domestic politics is an important determinant of foreign policy, I argue that the differences in the degree of activist behavior can be explained by domestic variables. Moreover, states that are experiencing domestic problems such as economic crises, unemployment, or

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[18] John Ikenberry, "Between the Eagle and the Dragon: America, China, and Middle State Strategies in East Asia." *Political Science Quarterly* 131:1 (2016): 9–43, 34.

domestic unrest against the government tend to pursue more offensive policies during global power shifts to benefit from the changing boundaries.

Kutlay and Öniş show that, even though middle powers are expected to behave in accordance with their material capabilities, not all middle powers do that, and they analyze the systemic opportunity structures and changes in domestic politics to address the unusual foreign policy behavior of those middle powers, concluding that this behavior is enabled by a combination of external dynamics and domestic politics.[19]

A state does not need to be a middle power in order to engage in middle power-like behavior. For small states with middle power aspirations, engaging in such a behavior may be a good strategy as they try to gain a better place in international system. For example, during the Cold War, Turkey engaged in middle power-like behavior even though it was a small state, and exhibited an activist foreign policy to become a NATO member. Currently, Vietnam is a good example as it is becoming more involved in the global arena in terms of trade and foreign policy. Gilley and O'Neil explain this in the best possible way: "Many middle powers will not behave according to the predictions of middle power theory but will still be middle powers. By the same token, many smaller and even great powers may engage in middle power–like behavior without being middle powers.".[20]

Based on the above discussion, my first hypothesis is:

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[19] Mustafa Kutlay and Ziya Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," *Third World Quarterly* (2021), 6.
[20] Gilley and O'Neil, "China's Rise through the Prism of Middle Powers," 10.

Hypothesis 1: Middle powers and small states that are aspirant to middle power status are more likely to take on more offensive foreign policies if they are facing domestic economic and political challenges at the time of a global power shift.

To support the hypothesis, I will explain the case of Denmark. During the Cold War, as a solution to its security issues, Denmark preferred the Scandinavian Defense Union over NATO because of ideological reasons.[21] However, plans for the union failed, and neutrality was very dangerous. Denmark had to prioritize the Soviet threat and the international demands, and in accordance with the demands of the international system at the time, it joined NATO in 1949. Denmark had a long tradition of neutrality, but it had to address the international demands to ensure its security. Thus, it engaged in coalition building. Denmark's membership to NATO can be considered as activist behavior enabled by the global power shift. This is also another example of a small state engaging in middle power-like behavior.

During the Cold War, Denmark constantly tried to balance the demands of its domestic political environment and the demands of NATO and US, as they were in contrast most of the time. In the first three decades of the Cold War, the most controversial issues were the establishment of bases and deployment of missiles on Danish soil, as there were both external pressures to do so and domestic opposition from political actors.

In 1982, Danish economy was in a serious crisis, and the Social Democratic Government lost its parliamentary majority. This led to the formation of a new coalition consisting of the Christian People's Party, the Conservatives, the Centre Democrats, and the Liberals. In a few months, a new "alternative majority" was established in the parliament by the Social Liberals, the

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[21]Fredrik Doeser, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: The Fall of the Danish 'Footnote Policy,' " *Cooperation and Conflict* 46, no. 2 (June 2011): 222–41, 226.

Socialist People's Party, the Social Democrats, and the Left Socialists.[22] They began to adopt foreign policy resolutions against the will of the government.[23] During the *footnote* period between 1982 and 1988, foreign policy was characterized by skepticism toward the alliance and the US.[24] This shows that, even during the Cold War, domestic variables were affecting foreign policy. Domestic political and economic problems, combined with the changing dynamics of the Cold War during the 1980s, led to a more offensive foreign policy. This supports Hypothesis 1, as the footnote period demonstrates how the power shift in the 1980s, combined with Denmark's domestic economic hardships, resulted in a more active and aggressive foreign policy. Moreover, although Danish foreign policy was characterized by the politics of adaptation during the Cold War, short-term active policies were being adopted. This is due to the power shift in the 1980s, as the international order of the Cold War started to change in this period.

After 1989, Denmark had more foreign policy options. Pedersen explains that from 1989 to 2001 Denmark's strategy was *active and engaged internationalism,* and in the first decade of the 2000s it shifted to *international activism*.[25] The post – Cold War strategy of active internationalism aimed to contribute to the creation of a global order based on liberal values.[26] During this period, Denmark played an important role in integrating the Eastern European and Baltic states to new economic and political networks. Its foreign policy sought to ensure multilateral cooperation and strengthen international organizations, guided by liberal principles.[27]

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[22] Doeser, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: The Fall of the Danish 'Footnote Policy'," 228.
[23] Doeser, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: The Fall of the Danish 'Footnote Policy'," 228.
[24] Doeser, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: The Fall of the Danish 'Footnote Policy'," 228.
[25] Rasmus Brun Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" *Cooperation and Conflict* 47, no. 3 (2012): 331–49, 336.
[26] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?", 337.
[27] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?", 337.

Active internationalism was a result of the power shift the end of the Cold War had created combined with perceived domestic interests.

After 9/11, the US expected states to take a stance in the War on Terror.[28] Thus, states had to choose between maintaining multilateral cooperation or getting involved in a narrow coalition with the US.[29] There were opposing views in the parliament. The opposition wanted to maintain a traditional multilateral strategy and the government wanted to take part in an American-led coalition.[30] In the end Denmark chose to support the American line as it was believed that Denmark would have more room to maneuver and could increase its international gains.[31] The fact that Denmark felt directly threatened by externally defined strategic enemies also affected the decision.[32] Thus, Denmark's strategy shifted to a more offensive foreign policy activism. As opposed to active internationalism, which is based on liberal values and a traditional multilateral approach, international activism is associated with offensive liberal and neo-conservative ideas that underscore democratic states' duty of making a difference in international politics and promoting liberal values".[33]

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the main argument was that "Denmark should put aside its small state complex, drop all notions of isolation and neutrality, and instead see itself as part of a broader global consensus that offered new and greater opportunities to exert Danish influence internationally, since the Danish room for maneuver had been expanded by the alliance with the United States".[34] According to Denmark's perception, alliance with the US would

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[28] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 339.
[29] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 339.
[30] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 339.
[31] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 340.
[32] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 335.
[33] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 340.
[34] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 340.

help Denmark to transition from a small state to a middle power.[35] The era of international activism was characterized by Danish war participation, increased militarization of the security policy and the transformation of Denmark's small state position in the international system.[36] Danish foreign policy in the post–Cold War era demonstrates how Denmark's position on the activism scale changed. More importantly, it shows that the foreign policy got more aggressive as Denmark became an aspirant state, and the periods of a more offensive foreign policy align with those of global power shifts.

Historically, countries that want a bigger share in the world have pursued activist foreign policies. They have wanted to alter the existing arrangements to better reflect their own perception of their status in the world. However, the degree of their aggression varies depending on the international context these countries are functioning under, their regional context and domestic politics. This is why Denmark's international activism was not revisionist, even though it was offensive.

Ravenhill demonstrates that middle power activism is cyclical, meaning that it increases and decreases depending on several factors, and government & leadership change in Australia and Canada have significantly affected the cycles of their middle power activism.[37] Considering that Australia and Canada are relatively more consolidated democracies, the fact that their activism is affected by government and leadership change is important. It suggests that in countries like Turkey and Hungary, which went through authoritarian turns and are ruled by charismatic and populist leaders who can make decisions relatively easily, the cycles would depend on

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[35] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 341.
[36] Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: Differences in Kind or Degree?" 336.
[37] Ravenhill, " Cycles of middle power activism: Constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies".

governments and leaders to a greater extent. This also suggests that the regime type and political institutions are important.

As Colgan and Keohane explain, "today's crucial foreign policy challenges arise less from problems between countries than from domestic politics within them".[38] Grzywacz and Gawrycki argue that "a middle power embedded within consensus-oriented domestic political context is less likely to introduce significant changes in its foreign policy, while a middle power embedded within conflict-oriented structure is more likely to do so.".[39]

Based on the discussion, I argue that the most important domestic independent variables affecting the degree of foreign policy activism are regime type and government & leadership change. Governments' and leaders' desire to stay in power, ideologies and perceived interests create the framework foreign policy decisions. Their perceptions may not always align with the actual national interests, as their visions for their political legacy and for the country may be in contrast with immediate interests of the nation. Moreover, since domestic economic and political turmoil highly affect their ability to stay in power and to reach their domestic political goals, they may use foreign policy as a tool to empower themselves. Since the ability to implement decisions are contingent on how much power a leader/a government has accumulated, how the political institutions work, and the checks and balances in the country, regime type is also crucial.

Middle powers that are experiencing domestic problems at the time of a power shift tend to take on more offensive foreign policies. Various domestic problems such as economic hardship, domestic political unrest and unemployment may cause this. Decision makers can take advantage

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[38] Jeff D. Colgan, and Robert O. Keohane, "The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither." *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 3 (2017): 36–44, 36.

[39] Anna Grzywacz and Marcin Florian Gawrycki, "The authoritarian turn of middle powers: changes in narratives and engagement," *Third World Quarterly*, 42:11 (2021), 2629-2650, 2630.

of the new policy options a power shift creates to solve or ameliorate domestic problems. As the degree and the offensiveness of the activism increases, middle powers become more likely to engage in diversionary foreign policy, if their domestic problems are persistent. Furthermore, leaders/governments that face strong opposition and institutional obstacles to their desired political objectives are more likely to adopt diversionary policies.

Middle powers can take advantage of the room changes create in international system and engage in diversionary foreign policy. However, small states are not able to do the same because of systemic constraints. They simply do not have enough military power, soft power and international audience to enable them to engage in such policies. As aforementioned, middle powers have considerable military capabilities, regional influence, and they enjoy a greater element of choice compared to small states. Thus, they meet the necessary criteria to take advantage of the new systemic opportunities to divert attention at home. Similarly, even though great powers have more material capabilities and more broad interests, they are also constrained because their costs tend to be higher. So, middle powers are more able to engage in this strategy compared to other states.

Diversionary foreign policy can show itself in various forms such as threats, political speech, displays of power, engagement in disputes and use of force. Engaging in diversionary foreign policy requires a consideration of relative capabilities and possible risks. For diversionary policies to work, decision makers must justify their acts in the eyes of the public. Thus, environment of rivalry becomes an important variable affecting the decisions. It is much easier for the political elite to justify their diversionary policies if they are picking fights with their rivals, directly or indirectly.

Based on this, I introduce another hypothesis, which will be discussed in detail in the empirical analysis section:

Hypothesis 2: States that experience domestic problems are more likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes in environments of strategic rivalry.

Currently, there is an international power shift from the west to the east. As China continues to rise, it is aware of the roles that middle powers play. In 1990s, China realized that its aggressive policies such as its stance against Taiwan and its trade negotiations were causes of concern for its region, thus hurting its regional power, so it changed its foreign policy.[40] It wanted to decrease dependence on ties to the US and form better relationships with non-western states.[41] Moreover, one of its focus areas was its diplomacy with leading middle powers.[42] As China was rising, there was a risk of a coalition forming against it. Thus, it sought to build its own coalition consisting of "principal newly emerging market economy countries".[43] This can also be thought of as a "principal non-western powers" coalition, including countries like Russia, India, South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey and Mexico.[44]

Scholars from institutions such as the People's Liberation Army and the Central Party school have been working on *"zhongdeng qiangguo"*, which translates to English as "middle-level powerful state", in order to provide insights for China's foreign policy.[45] China is aware that middle powers can play important roles as both allies and rivals, and they are essential in terms of upholding and reshaping the current international order. Therefore, China provides these states

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[40] Gilley, Bruce. "China's Discovery of Middle Powers," In *Middle Powers and the Rise of China*, edited by Bruce Gilley and Andrew O'Neil, Georgetown University Press, 2014, 46.
[41] Gilley, "China's Discovery of Middle Powers," 46.
[42] Gilley, "China's Discovery of Middle Powers," 46.
[43] Gilley, "China's Discovery of Middle Powers," 46.
[44] Gilley, "China's Discovery of Middle Powers," 46.
[45] Gilley, "China's Discovery of Middle Powers," 47.

with alternative political and economic options without conditionalities. By not forcing those countries to choose sides, it can bring more of them under its influence.

As Patience points out, the adjustment to the post-Cold War multipolarity has created more states which try to punch above their weights and assert themselves as middle powers.[46] Recently, the declining of the liberal international order has been a crucial external variable enabling middle powers to take on more aggressive foreign policies. The decline has also created an environment conducive to authoritarian and populist turns in middle powers, thus it is not surprising to see an increase in the number of populist leaders in power. Moreover, as Balfour argues, populist governments undermine the global liberal order.[47]

Consider the case of Hungary. The country made significant progress in establishing a democratic political system in the period from the end of communism to 2010.[48] It was admitted to NATO in 1999, and to the EU in 2004. After Viktor Orbán's Fidesz came to power in 2010, Hungary has made a dramatic U-turn, as János Kornai puts it.[49] Fidesz drafted a new constitution, its own new Fundamental Law, and subsequently amended it in authoritarian ways which brought a new electoral system in the authoritarian direction and abolished the guarantees related to the independence of the judiciary and pluralism.[50] Kornai demonstrates that the basic institutions of the rule of law have been abolished or weakened, and the holders of power can

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[46] Patience, Allan, "Imagining middle powers. " *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68:2 (2014): 210-224.
[47] Balfour, R., J.A. Emmanouilidis, H. Grabbe, T. Lochocki, C. Mudde, J. Schmidt, C. Fieschi, C. Hill, M. Mendras, M.K. Niemi, and C. Stratulat, "Europe's troublemakers: The populist challenge to foreign policy." Brussels: *European Policy Centre* (2016).
[48] Federigo Argentieri, "Hungary: Pathbreaker of Populist Nationalism." In *Central & East European Politics,* edited by Wolchik & Curry, 287-311. Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, 295.
[49] János Kornai, "Hungary's U-Turn: Retreating from Democracy". *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 3 (July 2015): 34-48.
[50] Argentieri, "Hungary: Pathbreaker of Populist Nationalism," 296.

arbitrarily change the law in their favor.[51] According to Kornai, Hungary under Viktor Orbán has moved from "from the subset of democracies into the subset of autocracies".[52]

Hungary has shown no interest in leaving the EU or NATO.[53] Nevertheless, it has challenged several EU institutions while taking advantage of the benefits of membership.[54] Visnovitz and Jenne argue that Orbán consciously chose to engage in diplomatic conflicts with Hungary's Western allies and initiating deeper relationships with its Eastern allies.[55] However, they also stress that since breaking ties with Western allies would be too costly for Orbán, and that this behavior is an indication of his attempt to increase room for political maneuver, rather than an intention to break away.[56] In line with its Eastern Opening, Hungary has formed new ties with Russia and China.[57] Paks nuclear power plant which is financed by Russia, Chinese-financed Budapest-Belgrade railway line and the establishment of a Chinese Fudan University in Budapest are examples to these lasting ties. Visnovitz and Jenne argue that the foreign policy under Orbán reflects the populist-authoritarian turn of Hungary.[58]

The case of Hungary demonstrates the aforementioned patterns. Its autocratic turn and offensive foreign policy to gain more international influence are enabled by the international system. Moreover, the autocratic U-turn under Orbán has shown its effects in foreign policy, so this case demonstrates the interdependent relationship between domestic politics and foreign

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[51] Kornai, "Hungary's U-Turn: Retreating from Democracy," 34-48.
[52] Kornai, "Hungary's U-Turn: Retreating from Democracy," 34-48.
[53] Kornai, "Hungary's U-Turn: Retreating from Democracy," 34-48.
[54] Argentieri, "Hungary: Pathbreaker of Populist Nationalism," 307.
[55] Visnovitz, P., Jenne, E. K. "Populist argumentation in foreign policy: the case of Hungary under Viktor Orbán, 2010–2020," *Comparative European Politics* 19 (2021): 683–702.
[56] Visnovitz, P., Jenne, E. K. "Populist argumentation in foreign policy: the case of Hungary under Viktor Orbán, 2010–2020," 693.
[57] Visnovitz, P., Jenne, E. K. "Populist argumentation in foreign policy: the case of Hungary under Viktor Orbán, 2010–2020," 695.
[58] Visnovitz, P., Jenne, E. K. "Populist argumentation in foreign policy: the case of Hungary under Viktor Orbán, 2010–2020," 695.

policy once again. The dramatic change in Hungary's foreign policy also underscores how leadership change can affect foreign policy activism. Hungary, under Orbán, uses the window of opportunity created by the recent decline of the liberal international order to assert itself as a stronger state in the current global order.

In relation to the declining of the liberal international order, relative decline of the US power in the international arena and the EU's disintegration have been important factors. The EU has found itself in a stalemate in response to the challenges it has been facing.[59] Brexit, the rise of Eurosceptic nationalist parties in member states which led to the weakening of liberal democratic EU values, the EU's foreign policy failures in regard to the Middle Eastern and Ukrainian crises cast doubts on the EU's capabilities in both regional and global governance.[60]

Certain EU policies create resentments, causing some states to turn their backs at the EU and looking for alternatives. For example, Both Hungary and Turkey are disappointed with the EU. The Syrian refugee crisis is a good example to illustrate that. Turkey initially adopted an open-door policy while Hungary tried to close its borders.[61] Even though they took different stances, both Orbán and Erdoğan used the issue to "generate a nationalistic critique to build domestic popular support and claim moral superiority over the EU".[62]

In contrast to the US and the EU, China has been providing alternative political and economic options that do not require the adoption of liberal values, which has become an attractive path for many middle powers. Onis and Kutlay explain that the authoritarian China-Russia axis

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[59] Ziya Öniş, and Mustafa Kutlay, "Global Shifts and the Limits of the EU's Transformative Power in the European Periphery: Comparative Perspectives from Hungary and Turkey," *Government and Opposition* 54, no. 2 (2019): 226-53, 227.
[60] Öniş and Kutlay, "Global Shifts and the Limits of the EU's Transformative Power in the European Periphery: Comparative Perspectives from Hungary and Turkey," 227.
[61] Öniş and Kutlay, "Global Shifts and the Limits of the EU's Transformative Power in the European Periphery: Comparative Perspectives from Hungary and Turkey," 232.
[62] Öniş and Kutlay, "Global Shifts and the Limits of the EU's Transformative Power in the European Periphery: Comparative Perspectives from Hungary and Turkey," 245.

appeals to Hungary and Turkey because it offers a new political economy model with economic benefits, however this model is incompatible with EU norms since it requires the concentration of political power in the hands of the centralized executive. [63]

In their book, Gilley and O'Neil mention that China's rise creates new political, security and economic challenges for middle powers due to their status in the international system.[64] That is because middle powers are susceptible to pressures from great powers and they must balance external and internal demands. They also find that the responses from middle powers are far from being "mere varieties of realignment" and show the middle powers' capacity for initiatives that seek to maintain an orderly global system.[65] Thus, even though their impact on China's foreign policy is limited, they are shaping the regional contexts in which China's rise is occurring.[66] The current power shift, combined with domestic factors, can explain the contemporary active foreign policies of many small and middle states.

Empirical Analysis

As pointed out above, middle powers and aspirant states take on more offensive foreign policies if they are facing domestic economic and political challenges at the time of a global power shift. Global power shifts create a change in the foreign policy options for these states.

States have to consider their rivalries when making foreign policy. Therefore, I expect a state's rivalries to have an impact on the way it addresses the changes an international power shift create. Rivalries are an important determinant of states' coalition-building behavior. Furthermore,

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[63] Öniş and Kutlay, "Global Shifts and the Limits of the EU's Transformative Power in the European Periphery: Comparative Perspectives from Hungary and Turkey," 246.
[64] Gilley and O'Neil, "China's Rise through the Prism of Middle Powers," 2.
[65] Gilley and O'Neil, "China's Rise through the Prism of Middle Powers," 2.
[66] Gilley and O'Neil, "China's Rise through the Prism of Middle Powers," 2.

states may use their rivalries to their advantage. Engaging in diversionary foreign policy and use of force may become a beneficial strategy to achieve objectives for the leaders of these states as change in their environments require new solutions. Since the current power shift enables middle powers to take on more aggressive foreign policies, the ones that are facing persistent domestic problems may engage in diversionary foreign policy, So, I chose to focus on how rivalries affect diversionary use of force.

When picking up fights abroad, decision makers must be able to justify their actions. Therefore, they are most likely to get involved in diversionary foreign policy and use of force when there is an environment conducive to justify the initiation of conflicts. The literature on security and war studies have shown that rivalry is one condition that creates such an environment.[67] Initiating external conflict with a rival is more likely to be justified in the eyes of the public.

Therefore, I want to test if states which are experiencing domestic turmoil (e.g. economic stagnation, high inflation rates) are more likely to initiate conflicts abroad when they have certain types of rivalries.

To test this, I used the dataset from the article *Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force* by Mitchell and Prins.[68] The authors contend that diversionary behavior is conditioned by the strategic and historical relationship among states.[69] They argue that in certain types of environments the domestic political conditions are more strongly tied to the use of force.[70] States which operate in

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[67] William R. Thompson, Kentaro Sakuwa, and Prashant Hosur Suhas, *Analyzing Strategic Rivalries in World Politics.* Singapore: Springer, 2022.
[68] Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Brandon C. Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (2004): 937–61.
[69] Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." 937.
[70] Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." 937.

opportunity-rich environments have more opportunities for diversionary uses of force.[71] They argue that rivalry is one condition that creates an opportunity-rich environment, thus focusing on rivalry offers an appropriate environmental setting to test diversionary theory predictions.[72]

Mitchell and Prins' purpose is to investigate the relationship between the use of force and domestic turmoil, taking the potential environment of rivalry into account. To do that, they use the Correlates of War militarized interstate dispute (MID) dataset, and the world development indicators provided by the World Bank. Then, they construct a basic directed-dyadic data set for the years from 1960 to 2001, using EUGene. To measure the domestic unrest, they use the consumer price index. Moreover, they merge the conflict, polity and capability data provided by EUGene with the World Bank data. The authors employ a general estimating equation (GEE) to control for the potential cross-unit and cross-time correlations. In their GEE models, the dependent variable is annual militarized interstate dispute initiation, and the independent variables are differenced consumer price index (natural log), relative capabilities, peace years, distance (natural log), and joint democracy.

The authors find that a state involved in an enduring rivalry is more likely to initiate militarized disputes in any given year, meaning that (enduring) rival states are more likely to use military force as the inflation rate increases.[73]

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[71] Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." 938.
[72] Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." 938.
[73] Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." 951.

Results from Mitchell and Prins' Analysis on Enduring Rivalry

Full GEE Model Results for Directed-Dyadic MID Initiation,
Politically Relevant Dyads, and Cubic Splines as Temporal Control

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error
Enduring rival dyad	2.005***	.151
ln-differenced CPI	−0.040***	.015
Rivalry-differenced CPI interaction	0.078***	.025
Relative capabilities	0.533***	.176
Peace years	−0.020***	.007
ln distance	−0.379***	.047
Joint democracy	−0.626***	.167
Constant	−0.884**	.359

NOTE: $n = 37,589$; GEE = general estimating equation; MID = militarized interstate dispute; CPI = consumer price index. Wald $\chi^2(10) = 810.55$ ($p = .0000$). Dependent variable is directed-dyadic MID initiation. Spline coefficients not shown.
**$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

[74]

The authors explain that they only focus on enduring rivalries, excluding proto and isolated rivalries because they believe that states involved in enduring rivalries can more easily justify the use of force when domestic turmoil is high.[75] They use this definition for enduring rivalry: "a pair of states that have fought a minimum of six militarized disputes over a time period of 20 or more years.".[76]

Mitchell and Prins contribute to the diversionary literature by demonstrating that enduring rivalries create opportunity-rich environments for states to engage in diversionary use of force. However, considering many historical cases, I also expect strategic rivalries to create opportunity-rich environments for states. I observed that there are many cases in which states in dyad are strategic rivals when they are not enduring rivals, therefore it is important to consider the effects of strategic rivalries on diversionary uses of force. Decision makers and political elites can justify their controversial foreign policies and use of force abroad by pointing at their strategic rivalries.

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[74] Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." 952.
[75] Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." 938.
[76] Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." 948.

This takes us back to *Hypothesis 2*.[77] To test it, I coded strategic rivalries for 91,665 observations, for every country pair for the specific years. To do that, I used the strategic rivalry data from the book *Analyzing Strategic Rivalries in World Politics* by William R. Thompson, Kentaro Sakuwa and Prashant Hosur Suhas.[78] Considering all the factors, I expected the impact of strategic rivalry on MID initiation to be significant.

As seen in Table 1, the strategic rivalry variable is in the predicted positive direction and highly significant as expected; meaning that a state involved in a strategic rivalry is more likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes. This result is crucial because it suggests that the many observations in which the state pair is not in enduring rivalry but in strategic rivalry also indicates an environment conducive to diversionary use of force. Moreover, it establishes that strategic rivalries may significantly affect foreign policymaking.

The quantitative literature on diversionary foreign policy and use of force has found positive, negative and no relationship between domestic politics and external conflict.[79] Thus, the validity of the scapegoat hypothesis has been questioned as there is a gap between quantitative studies and historical case studies.[80] Levy points to this gap and explains that the discrepancy is a result of the flaws in the quantitative literature because the supporting evidence from the theoretical literature is plausible enough.[81] Since the findings are very diverse, quantitative analyses on this issue need to be supported with appropriate theoretical mechanisms and historical approaches.

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[77] *Hypothesis 2:* States that experience domestic problems are more likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes in environments of strategic rivalry.

[78] Thompson, Sakuwa, and Suhas, *Analyzing Strategic Rivalries in World Politics.*

[79] Brett Ashley Leeds and David R. Davis, "Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 6 (December 1997): 814–34, 815.

[80] Jack S. Levy, "The diversionary theory of war: A critique." In Handbook of war studies, edited by Manus I. Midlarsky, 259-88, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989, 265.

[81] Levy, "The diversionary theory of war: A critique," 265.

Even though the aggregate models used in this paper establish the relationship between diversionary uses of force and domestic turmoil, switching from enduring rivalries to strategic rivalries is not enough to illustrate my argument. To see the relevance of the argument, one needs to look deeper at country specific behavior. Looking at the enduring rivalry model and strategic rivalry model, both analyses seem to be generating similar results. However, there is a conceptual difference. The difference cannot be identified quantitatively, but it can be identified qualitatively. Since aggregate quantitative analyses fall short of explaining the different mechanisms regarding enduring rivalries and strategic rivalries, I conduct a case study to scrutinize the theoretical mechanisms.

Table 1: Results for Directed-Dyadic MID Initiation in Environments of Strategic Rivalry		
Variable	*Unstandardized Beta*	*Standard Error*
Strategic rival dyad	1.550***	0.119
In-differenced CPI	-0.0259**	0.0121
Rivalry-differenced CPI interaction	-0.0136	0.02
Relative capabilities	0.452***	0.149
Peace years	-0.0194***	0.00516
In distance	-0.236***	0.041
Joint democracy	-0.581***	0.139
Constant	-1.588***	0.325
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$		

Case Study on Turkey

Turkey is a middle power which is traditionally embedded in the western alliance. With its recent authoritarian turn and more aggressive foreign policy, it constitutes a good case to study middle power activism. I am going to conduct a descriptive and historical case study on Turkey. It is going to focus on three different phases to illustrate that Turkey's aspiration to become a

middle power has significantly affected its foreign policy, and to show the cycles and change in its middle power activism.

Immediate Post-World War II

After the WWI and the Turkish War of Independence, the newly established Turkish state's priority was to avoid war as it was relatively small and militarily backward. Under the leadership of İsmet İnönü, with a combination of careful balancing and luck, Turkey was able to stay neutral during WWII, despite the pressure from Germany and the Allies to join the war. This balancing act is a striking example of a small state exercising agency in a time of global struggle.

After the end of the war, Turkey's policy options were limited due to bipolarity. It could no longer maintain the policy of balancing or neutrality due to the Soviet threat. Thus, Turkey sought to position itself with the western alliance. Hale points out that "the nature of the ideological divide did have an important effect on Turkey's foreign policy options, in that the western alliance paid reasonable respect to the independence of small or medium sized states, whereas Soviet communism did not."[82] Even though there were discussions about a bilateral defense agreement with the US, it failed due to limitations regarding US defense spending. Thus, Turkey's only viable option was to seek full membership of the Atlantic alliance, both for security reasons and affiliation with western nations. Initially, Turkey was left out of the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO), which was signed in 1949. It applied for membership in 1950, however that was not successful.

With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and the increased US defense budget, there was room to include Turkey and Greece into NATO. Also, Turkey had a one-party system since the establishment of the new state, and the Republican People's Party (CHP) had been in power.

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[82] William M. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000* (London: Routledge, 2013), 79.

The country switched to a multi-party system with the electoral victory of Democrat Party in 1950, and Adnan Menderes became the Prime Minister. The new government under Menderes decided to send troops to Korea. Menderes suggested that Turkey should not turn a blind eye to the aggression against South Korea if it wants to receive help in the case of a Soviet attack. The Korean War created a window of opportunity for Turkey to show loyalty to the west and gain admission to NATO. Moreover, the US wanted to improve Turkey's military capabilities so it could fight in case a conflict erupted, so the US had been investing in that through the assistance under Truman Doctrine.[83] Initially, the US officials hoped to use Turkey's geographical location without promising to fight for Turkey's territorial integrity, but later found out that strategic gains would not be possible unless they made binding commitments by accepting Turkey into NATO.[84] Eisenhower acknowledged Turkey's strategic importance, thus US was vital in convincing the other members and easing the British concerns over Middle East.[85] As a result of long discussions, Turkey became a NATO member in 1952, and reached its primary post-WWII goal.

Turkey's story of accession to NATO provides good insights regarding the activist elements in its foreign policy behavior during the Cold War. Moreover, the rivalry between the US and the USSR created new coalition opportunities. Considering the context in 1950s, Turkey was strategically important to superpowers because it controlled the straits and was an important western ally due to its geographical proximity to the USSR and the Middle East, thus the regional context was one of the factors affecting the activist behavior. The domestic political conditions such as the change in the party system and government also should not be ignored. The DP government and Adnan Menderes took the decision to send troops without consulting the Turkish

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[83] Melvyn P. Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952." *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 4 (1985): 807–25, 808.
[84] Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952," 808.
[85] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 86.

Parliament, and despite it was criticized by the CHP. The decision is crucial because it was the first time troops had been sent abroad, outside Turkish borders. Thus, Turkey in the immediate post-Cold War setting is a perfect example of an aspirant state punching above its weight in accordance with its aspirations.

Cold War

The Turkish – Greek rapprochement, which started in the 1930s, was still ongoing in the post-WWII period thanks to the common Soviet threat and both countries' campaigns to join NATO. After the Tito – Stalin split, worried about the possible invasion of Yugoslavia, the US encouraged Turkey and Greece to begin discussions with Yugoslavia for a cooperation agreement. These discussions led to the Balkan Pact, a political treaty was signed in 1953 and a military treaty was signed in 1954. However, Stalin died in 1953, and Khrushchev made peace with Tito, so the pact was dead from the start. Nevertheless, considering Turkey and Greece were NATO members at the time, if the pact was carried through it would bring Yugoslavia under the NATO umbrella without actually becoming a member.[86] This again shows that the foreign policy activism of small and middle states can have big impacts on international order.

In 1959, the Eisenhower administration and the Menderes government agreed to install Jupiter intermediate range missiles with nuclear warheads on Turkish territory. Then, the Menderes government was overthrown with a military coup d'état in 1960. Khrushchev wrote a letter to Cemal Gürsel, the head of the military junta, and proposed Turkey to be neutral, which meant that the Soviet policy had shifted from demanding Turkey's conversion into a satellite state.[87] Gürsel did not respond because he was trying to show that the regime change did not alter

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[86] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 91.
[87] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 89.

Turkey's commitment to the western alliance. Later, a coalition government under İnönü was formed in 1961. The new government also wanted to confirm its royalty to NATO, and they believed that the installation of the warheads would also signal the western alliance's willingness to protect Turkey against Soviet attacks. Khrushchev protested this move, and his decision to install Soviet missiles in Cuba might have been motivated by his desire to retaliate. In the meantime, the administrations of Eisenhower and Kennedy had acknowledged that the Jupiters would be outdated by the Polaris submarine-launched system, and Kennedy asked for the decision to be reviewed.[88] The US Secretary of State Dean Rusk discussed the issue with Turkish Foreign Minister Selim Sarper, but Sarper refused to withdraw the decision on the grounds that the parliament had just approved the decision and it would be very embarrassing to tell them the Jupiters would be taken out.[89]

These led to the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Initially, Khrushchev agreed to withdraw the Soviet missiles if the US agreed not to attack and lift its blockade in Cuba.[90] However, on October 26, 1962, in a second letter to Kennedy, Khrushchev wrote, "I think that one could rapidly eliminate the conflict and normalize the situation. Then people would heave a sigh of relief, considering that the statesmen who bear the responsibility have sober minds, an awareness of their responsibility, and an ability to solve complicated problems and not allow matters to slide to the disaster of war. This is why I make this proposal; We agree to remove those weapons from Cuba which you regard as offensive weapons. We agree to do this and to state this commitment in the United Nations. Your representatives will make a statement to the effect that the United States, on its part, bearing in mind the anxiety and concern of the Soviet state, will

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[88] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 99.
[89] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 99.
[90] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 99.

evacuate its analogous weapons from Turkey. Let us reach an understanding on what time you and we need to put this into effect."[91] This proposal would not be the best outcome for the US since it could set a precedent for Khrushchev to make more demands and Turkey would resent the decision. Turgut Menemencioğlu, Turkish Ambassador to the US, indicated that Turkey resented being equated "with a country in the Caribbean, run by a bearded pirate who had turned his island into a base for aggression against the free world".[92] This indicates Turkey wanted to be treated differently than other states it deemed less powerful, just like Canada did after 1945. Kennedy ignored the second letter, and accepted the terms of the first proposal.[93] Khrushchev agreed, and the crisis was settled. During the crisis, Turkey ran the risk of being a target of a nuclear war between the US and USSR, even though it was irrelevant to Turkey's immediate interests. Thus, Turkish officials realized the danger being a NATO member brought. This suggested that Turkey had to be more cautious regarding its foreign policy than it had been during the immediate post-WWII era. Furthermore, Robert Kennedy's memoir shows that he had met with Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador to Washington, and made commitments to him about the removal of the Jupiters, as the Turkish officials suspected.[94] This suspicion was a signal that the US would consider its own interests at the expense of Turkish interests, and pushed Turkey to adopt more flexible stances towards the superpowers. The removal of Jupiters also created room for better Soviet – Turkish relations.

After 1962, relations between the two superpowers were more relaxed. The focus of the conflict shifted from Europe to Africa and east Asia, and Turkey's fear of military threat from the

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[91] Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1961), 164.
[92] Süleyman Seydi, "Turkish–American Relations and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1957–63" *Middle Eastern Studies* 46:3 (2010): 433-455, 443.
[93] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 100.
[94] Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 65.

USSR was declined.[95] Thus, Turkey could improve its relations with the USSR and the non-aligned states without risking its national security. This provided Turkey with more diverse foreign policy options compared to the earlier phase of Cold War.[96]

Between 1964 and 1980, Turkey's relationship with the US saw its most tense period during the Cold War, which drove Turkey to adapt a less monocentric foreign policy.[97] Turkey's domestic political conditions were also unstable during that time. The 1960 coup had created a more liberal environment. Ideological views such as Islamism and socialism came to the political discourse. There was a growth in the number of leftist parties and union activity.[98] These led to greater plurality in the party system. As Adamson argues, these new groups could not be integrated into the political process due to the absence of strong democratic institutions.[99] In the elections that were held during the 1970s, none of the parties won overall majority, leading to unstable coalition governments. The widening of the political spectrum under these circumstances led to an increase in political violence.[100]

The issue of Cyprus was a key foreign policy issue for Turkey during the Cold War. On June 5, 1964, Prime Minister Ismet Inönü received a letter from President Lyndon Johnson.[101] In the letter, Johnson said, "I hope you will understand that your NATO allies have not had a chance to consider whether they have an obligation to protect Turkey against the Soviet Union if Turkey takes a step which results in Soviet intervention without the full consent and understanding of its NATO allies.".[102] The letter greatly affected Turkish foreign policy. For the Turkish public, the

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[95] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 104.
[96] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 104.
[97] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 104.
[98] Fiona B. Adamson, "Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis." *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 2 (2001): 277–303, 281.
[99] Adamson, "Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis," 282.
[100] Adamson, "Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis," 282.
[101] Suha Bölükbaşı, "The Johnson Letter Revisited. " *Middle Eastern Studies* 29, no. 3 (1993): 505–25, 505.
[102] Bölükbaşı, "The Johnson Letter Revisited," 517.

letter was an indication that the US controlled everything about Turkey, including foreign policy.[103] According to a public opinion poll conducted in 1965, eighty four percent of the people who were questioned said "the activities of the United States in regard to the Cyprus dispute negatively affected their feelings toward that country".[104] As a response to the letter, Bülent Ecevit, who was the CHP's Secretary General at the time, said, "We realized that our one-dimensional national security approach did not cover all contingencies. We began to discuss whether Turkey's membership in NATO contributed to Turkish security or actually increased dangers. We also realized that [NATO's commitment to our security] would be useless if our friends changed their minds [and did not stand up to their commitments] ... We also realized how isolated we were. Because of the [international] isolation, we faced enormous difficulties [in convincing other states] that our cause was just".[105] The growing anti-American sentiment had a long-lasting effect on Turkish foreign policy as the subsequent governments tried to distance themselves from close association with the US, in accordance with the public attitude, and sought better relations with the USSR and the non-aligned states in order to be more independent in its foreign policy.[106]

The Soviets had been supporting the Makarios government in Cyprus, so Johnson's threat was not empty.[107] Since a possible conflict with the USSR over Cyprus rendered Turkey vulnerable to American pressure, Turkey took the offer that the Soviets had been offering for a long time, leading to rapprochement with the USSR.[108] Turkey received significant Soviet economic assistance during the 1970s, but more importantly, the USSR shifted its policy regarding Cyprus,

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[103] Bölükbaşı, "The Johnson Letter Revisited," 505.
[104] Bölükbaşı, "The Johnson Letter Revisited," 506.
[105] Bölükbaşı, "The Johnson Letter Revisited," 506.
[106] Bölükbaşı, "The Johnson Letter Revisited," 522.
[107] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 107.
[108] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 108.

deciding that trying to accommodate Turks would be more beneficial compared to giving unconditional support to Greece.[109]

Despite the aid from the Soviets, Turkey was still reliant on western aid. Considering the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the fact that leaving NATO would weaken Turkey in terms of its conflict with Greece rendered staying in NATO more beneficial than leaving it. Even though Turkey stayed in the alliance, it decided to protect its national interest within NATO.[110]

After Makarios was overthrown with the Greek coup in 1974, there was reason to believe that the Turkish Cypriots were in danger.[111] The US could not take a strong action since it was preoccupied with the Watergate Scandal and the Arab – Israeli War, thus Turkey became the "sole regional power that was likely to take a strong stand".[112] The USSR gave clear signals that it would not intervene, strengthening Turkey's hand against the US.[113] Thus, the Turkish government decided to launch military operations with strong support from the public. Beyond the national security concerns and regional power balancing, Turkey "could also be seen as manipulating a changing balance of power at the level of the international system" as the Soviet – US détente had created a window of opportunity for Turkey because it could exploit the opening to gain more power within the western alliance.[114] Furthermore, in 1975, the US Congress banned aid and military sales to Turkey. In 1978, Bülent Ecevit, the Prime Minister at the time, indicated that if the embargo were not lifted, Turkey might pull out of NATO, which was a concern for the US.[115] Even though this did not happen, Turkey adopted a more diversified foreign policy. Turkey's

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[109] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 108.
[110] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 109.
[111] Adamson, "Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis," 288.
[112] Adamson, "Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis," 112.
[113] Adamson, "Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis," 296.
[114] Adamson, "Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis," 296.
[115] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 117.

foreign policy in this era can be seen as a balancing strategy to strengthen itself and to reach its goals under the bipolar order.

The military intervention in 1980 ended the polarization in the country at the expense of democracy.[116] The military government sought to eliminate the communist threat by a doctrine of Turkish – Islamic synthesis. The coup also created an environment conducive to neoliberalization. Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioğlu explain that the coup d'état of 1980 and the following three year long military regime "signified the oppressive means to ensure the undisturbed working of the neoliberal frame."[117] Bugra points out that "conservatization through Islamization has been in conformity with the neoliberal dismissal of social justice and its preference to replace concerns for it with charity deeds".[118] In the 1980s, Turkey was able to ameliorate its relationships with both the US and the USSR. These years also saw significant economic growth.

Post-Cold War & AKP era

As discussed, the international context of the Cold War significantly limited foreign policy options of middle states. The dramatic global power shift following the collapse of the USSR ended the bipolar Cold War system, creating a new international order that was dominated by the US. Under the new order, the superpower rivalry and the security concerns it created had been removed. This provided middle powers with more room to maneuver.

Collapse of the USSR affected Turkey's international, regional and domestic environments. It removed the national security concerns, and created new trade opportunities,

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[116] Z. Y. Gündüz, "The Women's Movement in Turkey: From Tanzimat towards European Union Membership. " *Journal of International Affairs* 9 (2004): 115-134, 117.

[117] Simten Coşar and İnci Özkan-Kerestecioğlu. "Feminist Politics in Contemporary Turkey: Neoliberal Attacks, Feminist Claims to the Public. " *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 38:2, (2017): 151-174, 154.

[118] Ayşe Buğra, "Kapitalizm, Yoksulluk ve Türkiye'de Sosyal Politika. " İstanbul: *İletişim*, 2008, 234.

mainly with Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Moreover, collapse of communism eliminated deep ideological conflicts in Turkey's domestic politics, rendering further democratization possible.[119]

Similar to the case of Denmark, Turkey also conducted a passive foreign policy during the Cold War, but at the same time it was possible to observe elements of activism in its behavior. During the 1990s, Turkey shifted to an activist foreign policy, with the formulation of long-reaching strategies to gain more international influence. It started to emerge as a regional power. During this period, Turkey's foreign policy activism was benign as it was acting like a "good international citizen" and "stabilizer".

Öniş explains that, in the immediate post-Cold War era, Turkey's ability to benefit from the new opportunities the power shift had created was contingent on its domestic conditions, specifically economic performance and political development.[120] This also holds true for any middle power because what they can achieve within the framework of world politics is highly dependent on their domestic performances.

In the first decade of the 2000s, the EU accession process and a more determined elite consensus for democratic reform created a process of democratization in Turkey.[121] There was a reform process to meet the EU criteria. There is a sharp change in AKP's policies over time, from commitment to democratization and EU membership to increasing authoritarianism. Thus, if the AKP was truly committed to democratization and EU membership is questionable. In the second decade of the 2000s, it is possible to observe an authoritarian turn in the country. The consolidation of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) power through repeated electoral victories and its

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[119] Ziya Öniş, "Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era: In Search of Identity." *Middle East Journal* 49, no. 1 (1995): 48–68, 49.
[120] Öniş, "Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era: In Search of Identity," 52.
[121] Özlem Kaygusuz, "Authoritarian Neoliberalism and Regime Security in Turkey: Moving to an 'Exceptional State' under AKP. " *South European Society and Politics* 23:2 (2018): 281-302, 281.

dominance over the military and the judicial system provided a conducive environment to the authoritarian turn.[122] With its turn to authoritarianism from electoral democracy, and the transition to a hyper-centralized presidential system in 2018, Turkey became a striking example of the contemporary right wing populist wave, under its charismatic president Erdoğan.[123]

The foreign policy of *zero conflict* under Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was the Minister of Foreign affairs between 2009 and 2014, emphasized that Turkey should be a problem solver, contributing to regional and global peace.[124] Davutoğlu said, "We don't want to be on the agenda of the international community as one item of crisis. We want to be in the international community to solve the crisis.".[125] However, the AKP government did not always stick to its own declared policies.[126] Moreover, unexpected developments such as the Arab Spring created a tension between domestic politics and external realities.[127]

In the 2010s, the degree of the Turkish foreign policy activism started to change significantly as offensive policies were adopted. Prior to Arab upheavals, Turkey had no interest in interfering with its neighbors' sovereign space. [128] Aktürk points to the unwillingness of the EU to continue the accession process with Turkey after 2005 and explains that under those conditions the Arab Spring was an opportunity for the country to present itself as the "leading advocate of democracy across the middle East".[129] Turkey's foreign policy became increasingly interventionist, launching military operations in its region, including Nagorno Karabakh, Syria and Libya.[130] Öniş and Kutlay demonstrate that steps taken by the government in this time frame have

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[122] Kaygusuz, "Authoritarian Neoliberalism and Regime Security in Turkey: Moving to an 'Exceptional State' under AKP," 281.
[123] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.
[124] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 137.
[125] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 138.
[126] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 138.
[127] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 138.
[128] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 5.
[129] Şener Aktürk, "Turkey's Role in the Arab Spring and the Syrian Conflict." *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 15:4 (2017): 87–96.
[130] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 5.

stretched far beyond Turkey's material capabilities and obvious security concerns.[131] These illustrate the changing, more assertive nature of Turkish foreign policy in the past two decades.

The dislocations in the liberal international order have significantly affected Turkey.[132] With its turn to authoritarianism from electoral democracy, and the transition to a hyper-centralized presidential system in 2018, Turkey became a striking example of the contemporary right wing populist wave.[133] This populist-authoritarian turn was enabled by the declining liberal international order.[134] Erdoğan has a vision for Turkey's position in the changing international order, for example membership in the Shanghai Cooperation organization constitutes an alternative to EU membership.[135] However, the government tries to maintain its relationship with the EU on transactionalist terms since the EU remains Turkey's main source of foreign direct investment.[136] Moreover, despite its increasing cooperation with Russia, Turkey does not intend to leave the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[137] With an inconsistent strategy in foreign policy, Turkey constantly tries to balance global powers against one another.[138]

The leadership/government change in 2002, which brought the AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in power, was a very important turning point for Turkish politics. The degree of the foreign policy activism significantly changed since then. Thus, understanding how Erdoğan's and his government's ideology and vision affected domestic politics provides insights regarding the country's foreign policy.

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[131] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.
[132] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.
[133] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.
[134] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.
[135] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.
[136] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.
[137] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.
[138] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 6.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan does not come from an elite, wealthy family, which constructs the base of his populist politics. His family migrated to Istanbul from a conservative town, and he grew up in Kasımpaşa, which is a working-class neighborhood in Istanbul. He said he would sell snacks on the street as a child to help his family. Erdoğan's family was strictly attached to their faith and his father chose to send him to a state-created clerical (imam hatip) school which taught Islamic studies. Having been born and raised in a secular Turkey, he faced social exclusion at a young age because of his Islamic piety and conservative views.[139] That shaped his ideas of Turkey's westernized, rich, secular elites. Thus, his later political actions were motivated by his deep-rooted animosity.[140] He has always claimed to understand the ordinary people.

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, there was a reform process to modernize the country. The nationalist ideology adopted during this time emphasized secularism to avoid basing the new state on religious grounds. The reforms also aimed to break the cultural connection with the Ottoman past. However, there have always been segments in the society that consider secularism as a threat to their religion. Thus, certain policies of the secularist state, such as the banning of Islamist-rooted parties, caused resenments. Erdoğan also experienced this himself. He started his political career in an Islamist party, which was later closed down due to its activities that were in contrast with secularism. In 1998, Erdoğan was the mayor of Istanbul, and he had to step down from his duty because he went to jail for reciting a controversial poem: "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets, and the faithful our soldiers".[141] This also caused a ban from politics. That event boosted his popularity among conservative segments of the society since they were not happy with the secularist state.[142] After

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[139] Soner Çağaptay, *The New Sultan : Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury, 2020, 9.
[140] Çağaptay, *The New Sultan : Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, 9.
[141] Çağaptay, *The New Sultan : Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, 4.
[142] Çağaptay, *The New Sultan : Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, 4.

he became the prime minister in the first decade of the 2000s, his government's success in economic issues helped to consolidate his power. Nevertheless, his attempts at dissolving the republican public sphere faced many obstacles because of the secularist ideology and institutions of the state.

To reach his goals, Erdoğan had to overcome those obstacles. One of the allies in this struggle was Fethullah Gülen, an imam, Islamic preacher, and the leader of the Gülen movement. The Gülen Movement and the ruling AKP unofficially supported each other.[143] Their common ground was the resistance to the Kemalist secularist ideas which pushed religion into the private sphere and eliminated it from the public life. After the AKP came to power in 2002, Gülen supported the party via its media arms and extensive networks against secularist threats, and in return, the AKP government helped Gülenists to infiltrate the ranks of the police force and the judicial system.[144] However, this changed in 2013, and the era of cooperation which characterized the movement's rapid expansion was over.[145] They disagreed on several issues and started to target each other. Both of them thought they did not need each other anymore.[146] These led to the coup attempt of 2016.

Hintz argues that the institutional reforms that were taken to meet EU membership criteria removed domestic institutional barriers.[147] For example, the State Security Court, which had sentenced Erdoğan, was abolished by using EU-mandated reforms.[148] Thus, the EU-oriented foreign policy was an important factor in overcoming domestic barriers and enabled AKP to spread

[143] Caroline Tee, *The Gülen Movement in Turkey: The Politics of Islam and Modernity,* (London: 2016), 1-227, 163.
[144] Çağaptay, *The New Sultan : Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, 147.
[145] Tee, *The Gülen Movement in Turkey: The Politics of Islam and Modernity*, 164.
[146] Çağaptay, *The New Sultan : Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, 172.
[147] Lisel Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena." *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 2 (June 2016): 335–61.
[148] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 350.

its national identity proposal.[149] Throughout the AKP rule, the Ottoman Islamism has been emphasized as the primary identity component.[150] Ottoman Islamism's membership criteria are "being a pious Muslim and revering the glory of the Ottoman Empire".[151] Its social purposes are to bring Islam into the domestic public sphere and to act in solidarity with Turkey's international Muslim brothers.[152] This worldview considers Turkey as the "legitimate inheritor of the Ottoman legacy".[153] Ahmet Davutoglu's book *Strategic Depth,* which discusses Turkey's international status, provides an intellectual basis for Ottoman Islamist desires such as the desire for Turkey to "recapture its lost position".[154] This views stress that "Turkey must be respected, admired, and even feared as a regional power".[155] As Hintz points out, the AKP elite viewed foreign policy "arena for identity contestation" to remove the obstacles in the way of spreading their own proposal for national identity.[156]

After removing the obstacles, AKP was able to realize its desired foreign policy formula. The new foreign policy goals includes increasing engagement with Muslim states and former territories of the Ottoman Empire. Davutoğlu claimed that once the security threats in Turkey's region are removed, Turkey could benefit from the geo-cultural legacy that it has inherited.[157]

The center-periphery cleavage in Turkey, and the grievances the conservative Muslims held against the secularist state were addressed by Erdoğan. His traumas were shared by a large segment of the society. Erdoğan was able to activate his charisma by appealing to those grievances. After he came to power, conservative Muslims felt that their voices were being heard again, and

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[149] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 337.
[150] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 346.
[151] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 346.
[152] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 346.
[153] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 347.
[154] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 347.
[155] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 347.
[156] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 338.
[157] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 351.

the more power he accumulated the more they enjoyed the process. Here, the term *charismatic participation* is relevant. As Mazzarella explains, "Charismatic participation involves an elated experience of shared bodily substance. In that sense, a charismatic relationship always involves an experience of immediacy, of direct and substantial relationship in which the lines between the participants blurs or even dissolves".[158] This *participatory charismatic enjoyment* can be observed between Erdoğan and his followers as the followers feel that Erdoğan's victory means they also win, his power means they are also powerful, and his critics are their critics.

Erdoğan's hard stance against Israel and his support for the removal of the headscarf ban in public administration facilities also boosted his popularity among conservative segments. One month after Israel's Prime Minister Peres' assault on Gaza, in January 2009, Erdoğan was cut short as he was trying to respond to Peres at the World Economic Forum.[159] He said to Peres, "When it comes to killing you know very well how to kill. I know very well how you killed children on the beaches.".[160] After his speech, he left the conference hall saying he will not ever come back, and he told the reporters, "President Peres was speaking to the prime minister of Turkey -- I am not just some leader of some group or tribe, so he should have addressed me accordingly,".[161] This incident consolidated Erdoğan's legitimacy in Turkey as "defender of Turkey's Muslim brothers".[162] It is still remembered to this day in Turkey and its footage is still being used in Erdoğan's campaigns, even though Turkey has pragmatic and transactionist relationships with Israel. He is seen as the savior of Muslims in the whole world by his supporters. Moreover, he

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[158] William Mazzarella. "Charisma in the Age of Trumpism." 9.
[159] "Turkish PM storms out of heated Mideast debate". *Reuters,* 01.29.2009. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-davos-Erdoğan-israel-idUSTRE50S6RH20090129
[160] "Turkish PM storms out of heated Mideast debate". *Reuters,* 01.29.2009. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-davos-Erdoğan-israel-idUSTRE50S6RH20090129
[161] "Turkish PM storms out of heated Mideast debate". *Reuters,* 01.29.2009. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-davos-Erdoğan-israel-idUSTRE50S6RH20090129
[162] Hintz, "'Take It Outside!' National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena," 351.

keeps himself visible and on the agenda by such behavior. His visions for Turkey as a global player also appeals to the segments who are still attracted to the idea of the glorious Ottoman. Erdoğan also likes this image of himself, building huge mosques and palaces as the 'new Sultan'. His aggressive foreign policy punches above Turkey's weight, but is still very appreciated by his supporters. He said at the United Nations General Assembly that the world is bigger than five, referring to the permanent members of the UN Security Council, underscoring middle powers' importance in the international system.[163] His image as a competent leader moving his country forward by not playing by the books and addressing things that need to be changed further boosts his charisma among citizens who believe Turkey deserves more.

Turkey's revisionist foreign policy activism can be observed in its actions, and reactions to recent and current world developments. It has been increasingly investing in its defense industry. Turkish TB2 drones have been used by the Turkish military against PKK and YPG targets in Syria and Iraq. Moreover, they have been sold to other countries. For example, the drones were used by Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, and by Ukraine during the 2022 Russian invasion.

During the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Turkey positioned itself as a diplomatic mediator. Since it has important economic relations with both Ukraine and Russia, it has been pursuing an activist foreign policy of balancing. While expressing support for Ukraine and supplying its military with drones, it is also trying to keep its economic relations with Russia. Its critical geopolitical status, and the fact that it has relations with both Russia and Ukraine, give Turkey international leverages.

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[163] "The world is bigger than 5". *Daily Sabah,* 09.28.2016. https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/beril-dedeoglu/2016/09/28/the-world-is-bigger-than-5

Turkey's recent objection to Sweden's and Finland's NATO accession is another example of its high degree of foreign policy activism. While showing how a middle power can affect the internal politics of a major international organization, it was also able to address its resentments against NATO.

Currently, the Turkish economy is in a deep state of crisis. The rising inflation and unemployment rates affect the livelihoods of millions of citizens. Erdoğan's refusal to raise interest rates is grounded in Islamic principles. Since Turkish voters will probably punish the AKP, the party and its supporters have been working on preventing that. On June 5, 2022 Erdoğan said, "Anyone who is attacking this brother (meaning himself) is actually attacking Turkey. Anyone who is speaking ill of the AKP and the Cumhur alliance (the alliance AKP has with the Nationalist Action Party) is actually targeting Turkey".[164] He is trying to equate the nation with himself, and suggesting that Turkey cannot exist without him. The government controlled Turkish media frequently underscores this notion, and how Erdoğan's leadership is increasing Turkey's international power. Recently, a Turkish sociologist has claimed that the current crisis related to NATO can only be solved by "Erdoğan's charismatic leadership".[165]

Recent threats of military action against Greece, beyond the long history of the conflict, could also be seen as a diversionary policy. Greece is a long-time strategic rival, thus a conflict with it definitely has the potential to create the rally round the flag effect in Turkey. Moreover, since Syria is currently a strategic rival for Turkey, launching military operations in Syria creates the same effect. The diversionary policy can also be observed in officials' remarks that identify

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[164] "Erdoğan: Bana saldırmak Türkiye'ye saldırmaktır". *Kronos,* 06.05.2022.
https://kronos35.news/tr/Erdoğan-bana-saldirmak-turkiyeye-saldirmaktir/
[165] "Sosyolog Palabıyık: "NATO krizi ancak Erdoğan'ın karizmatik liderliği ile aşılabilir" ". *Haber Turk,* 05.18.2022.
https://www.haberturk.com/bitlis-haberleri/97354327-sosyolog-palabiyik-nato-krizi-ancak-Erdoğanin-karizmatik-liderligi-ile-asilabilir

internal and external enemies, since those remarks affect the perceptions of the voters. Thus, the AKP uses its foreign policy, and Turkey's historical and strategic rivalries, as tools to increase its domestic power.

Public Opinion and Foreign Policy

To comprehend how Turkey is able to use diversionary foreign policy, taking a closer look at the relationship between foreign policy and public opinion is necessary. As seen from the literature on public opinion and foreign policy, the relationship can take many forms. Thus, to interpret the relationship in country specific contexts, it is crucial to know the public's priorities regarding foreign policy issues, if the voting age population is informed about the foreign policy of their countries, if they follow the foreign affairs developments, and what kind of events affect their perception. Moreover, one should also investigate if public perception of foreign affairs is shaped by a top-down process, or if foreign policy is conducted by a bottom-up process where decision makers are influenced by public.

The voting age population in Turkey does not consider foreign affairs as one of the most important issues.[166] For more than 70% of the population the most important concern is consumer price inflation, economic stability in the country and their economic wellbeing.[167] In the country, there are several foreign policy issues which have stayed on the political agenda for a long time. These can be listed as Turkey's relations with NATO, EU, and the US; rivalry with Greece over the issues of Aegean and the territorial waters, Cyprus, and East Mediterranean. Relations with Syria and Israel and the Syrian refugees are major foreign policy issues which have been affecting public perception regarding Turkey's foreign affairs recently, as Turkey has started to play a more

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[166] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 365.

[167] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 365.

active role in the Middle East. The issue of Syrian refugees also created tensions in Turkey – EU relations as EU member countries were anxious about the refugees using Turkey as a gateway to get into the EU borders. Following that, the imposition of the state of emergency rule for almost two years after the coup attempt of 2016 exacerbated the tensions as the EU started criticizing the measures the Turkish government had taken. Moreover, the EU criticized the AKP government following the developments occurred after the referendum in 2017, which changed the country's regime to a presidential system. The tensions between the EU and Turkey was one of the reasons explaining Turkey's flirty relationship with Russia.

The terror campaign of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), the Kurdish nationalist demands and the developments in the southeastern region have gained significant attention from the voters in Turkey. Several Turkish politicians have criticized US military aid to the PKK, which also caused anti-US sentiments among the electorate.[168] Furthermore, even though the EU considers the PKK as a terrorist organization, its presence in Europe created grievances among the public against the EU.[169]

Turkey's foreign policy towards its neighbors, the EU, US, NATO and Israel have not been consistent. Turkey's lack of a clear foreign policy formula can be explained by the changes in its domestic politics and the international political and economic environment. As the environment in which the country operates changes, Turkey acts accordingly to its goals or to the wishes of the decision makers. Since there are no clear policies, balancing between the east and the west has been the most consistent aspect of Turkey's foreign policy, especially after 2000. Furthermore, it

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[168] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 367.
[169] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 368.

is not easy for the public to keep track of the variations in foreign policy, which is one of the reasons why the public does not focus on foreign policy issues.[170]

Kalaycıoğlu and Çarkoğlu use several survey data in order to investigate the relationship between Turkish foreign policy and public opinion, and explain that it is possible to record opinions regarding foreign policy matters from the Turkish public even though they have no understanding or knowledge about the issues.[171] Since they state opinions even when they are not well informed about an issue, their opinions may not be formed based on an understanding of the facts, which is why the opinions can be easily shaped by the influence of political elites or the media.[172] Kalaycıoğlu and Çarkoğlu explain that "political party identification and leaders whose allure or charisma that move the people are likely to have such an effect on how people orient themselves to most issues on the political agenda, particularly on which their interests are rather remote, hard to calculate or too abstract for them to analyze. Then, it becomes safer, efficient, and easy for them to follow the lead of a trusted political leader, party, media, press, elite, or the like"[173] In this context, it is very easy to lead public opinion for the political elite. Thus, even a short period of propaganda would suffice to create the desired public opinion.[174] Moreover, partisanship is another factor affecting this equation because voters in Turkey tend to identify with a party and form their opinions according to the stance of that party. For example, Kalaycıoğlu and Çarkoğlu show the oscillations in survey responses regarding public opinion on EU membership and explain that the responses are in line with the "sayings and doings of the political leaders of the main political parties of the system".[175] The relations with the EU has been an important foreign policy

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[170] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 368.
[171] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 369.
[172] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 370.
[173] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 370.
[174] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 371.
[175] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 379.

issue for a long time, so the fact that the political elite has a big impact on public opinion even on this issue means that their impact would be more decisive on less prominent foreign matters. As Kertzer and Zeitzoff put it, "if public opinion is driven from the top down, the public's ability to constrain its leaders in the manner anticipated by audience cost theory, for example, is limited, as members of the public are simply likely to swallow whatever their elite cue-givers feed them".[176] A good example to show how the elites can shift public opinion is Turkey's involvement in the Syrian civil war. Several public opinion polls published in 2012 indicated that the majority of the Turkish population did not want Turkey to be involved in the Syrian civil war and they wanted the continuation of friendly relations with Syria.[177] At that time, there was an ongoing peace process between the PKK and Turkey. The peace process had failed in 2015 and Turkey's relationship with Kurdish nationalists deteriorated. Since Syria was not able to manage the borders, the Turkish political elite presented the Kurdish forces in Syria as an extension of the PKK problem and a national security problem, hence justifying Turkey's involvement in Syria and shifting the public opinion.

Analysis

During the Cold War, Turkey was a front-line state. Western powers, such as Britain and the US, saw Turkey as an essential component of their security policies due to Turkey's geopolitical importance and its regional power. Turkey's governments during this period were anti-communist, however they desired to align with the west not only because of ideological factors, but because of territorial concerns and the aspiration to gain more international power.[178]

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[176] J. D. Kertzer and T. Zeitzoff, "A Bottom-Up Theory of Public Opinion about Foreign Policy." *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 61, no. 3 (2017): 543–58, 545.
[177] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, 380.
[178] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*, 102.

The Soviet threat and the fact that Turkey's national interests were not in contrast with those of the western powers had pushed Turkey to seek a place in the western alliance.

Turkey, by getting involved in the Korean War, proved its loyalty to the west in the immediate post-World War II era. This made the accession to NATO, which was highly desired by the decision makers in the immediate post-World War II era, possible. In the domestic sphere, the switch to the multi-party system allowed the decision to send the troops to be taken even though the Republican People's Party, which had been in power since the establishment of the republic, was against it. Furthermore, Turkey's strategic regional location, the fact that it controlled the straits, and proximity to the USSR made it a front-line state. In that period, Turkey was also the most powerful state in its region in terms of material capabilities. Thus, it was strategically important for the western powers, it could engage in middle power-like behavior such as coalition building, and it could aspire to gain more international influence. Since Turkey pursued an activist foreign policy to gain accession to NATO, this period is an example to the employment of activist elements in its foreign policy during the Cold War.

During the Cold War, Turkey's regional coalition building efforts, such as the one with Greece and Yugoslavia, were important in terms of international security, and this underscores the importance of small and middle states in world politics once again. Turkish officials' remarks during the Cuban Missile crisis shows that they desired to gain a better place in the international order. The country's foreign policy in this period was limited by the systemic constraints and domestic politics since it had to balance the demands from both environments. The United States' approach to the Cyprus conflict caused strong anti-American sentiments, and thus Turkey sought a better relationship with the USSR, accepting the offer the Soviets had been proposing. Even though Turkey questioned its NATO membership during this time, the decision makers decided

that staying in the alliance was more beneficial. Nevertheless, Turkey adopted a more diversified foreign policy to decrease its reliance on the US and NATO. The chaotic domestic political conditions and the pressures of the international system only allowed a passive foreign policy. After the 1980 military coup d'état, which was a backlash against democracy, the neoliberalization process that followed replaced the concerns for social justice with charity deeds through the promotion of Islamist and conservatist values. That had a huge impact on Turkey's domestic politics in the following decades.

The end of the Cold War provided Turkey with more diverse foreign policy options. The passive foreign policy of the Cold War was abandoned, and Turkey pursued a benign activist foreign policy in the 1990s. The AKP's first two terms also followed this pattern. However, the party's third term brought a revisionist foreign policy activism.

The rise of China has created more policy options for Turkey. Its relationship with China has definitely helped the country to consolidate its middle power status. The option to form deeper relationships with the Russia and China axis provided an alternative to the west. Thus, the foreign policy shift of Turkey was enabled by the international power shift. Domestically, Erdoğan's and AKP's vision for the "new Turkey", the new presidency system, autocratic regime, and identity politics affected the country's foreign policy to a great extent because they used foreign policy as a tool to reach their domestic political goals. As the degree of the activism increased, they also frequently engaged in diversionary foreign policies to deal with the persistent domestic problems. This behavior has been enabled by the international environment and strategic rivalries. In this regard, its strategic rivalries have created an opportunity-rich environment for diversionary policies. For example, since Greece has been a historical strategic rival of Turkey, picking up fights with it has been easily justified, and united the people.

Even though some argue that Turkey's revisionist foreign policy activism can be explained by the growing security problems in its region, such as the Syrian Civil War, a closer look in Turkey shows that the Turkish elites already had a vision regarding Turkey's identity and its international status. Also, regional security concerns alone cannot explain the increasingly assertive behavior. As established in the theory and in the case study, for an increase to occur in the degree of activism, a combination of international, regional and domestic factors have to exist. These security-based explanations ignore the domestic variables. Since growing regional security concerns alone are not enough to explain the increasingly assertive Turkish foreign policy, Öniş and Kutlay explain that the political-economic challenges the AKP government faced were the main drivers of assertive foreign policy behavior as the government employed diversionary foreign policy and it sought to capitalize on populist dividends.[179]

The Turkish case shows the potential importance of small and middle states for international politics. It also demonstrates how foreign policy activism's framework is set by the international order and how the activism is conditioned by domestic political factors. The cycles of foreign policy activism align with the power shifts, and the degree of activism increases when the country is experiencing domestic political and economic problems.

As the demands of the international environment sets the boundaries for Turkey's foreign policy, leadership & government change and the regime type along with the domestic political institutions have been the most important domestic independent variables affecting foreign policy activism. Moreover, leaders' and governments' ability to lead public opinion constitutes an

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[179] Kutlay and Öniş, "Understanding oscillations in Turkish foreign policy: pathways to unusual middle power activism," 3.

important domestic intervening variable. It has been easy for the Turkish government to shift public opinion on critical foreign policy issues.

Turkey has aspired to gain a better position in the international order since the immediate post-Cold War era. Its geographical location is an advantage in the sense that it can serve as a bridge between the west and the east, but it is also located in a turbulent region. Also, there have been dramatic changes in its domestic political conditions. Therefore, Turkey's foreign policy, aspirations and middle power activism cannot be comprehended without considering the regional political & economic conditions and security threats. The international context and global power shifts are also essential because they change the policy options and threats that Turkey is facing. Moreover, the impact of domestic structure & issues, different governments and leaders should not be ignored, as they have significantly affected Turkey's foreign policy in different ways. The Turkish case demonstrates that the domestic economic and political hardships it has faced during global power shifts made its foreign policy more aggressive.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrated how international power shifts and domestic variables affect middle powers' foreign policy activism. The international environment sets the boundaries for their foreign policies; however it is not possible to understand what determines foreign policy without considering the domestic variables. Also, states have to create a balance between their international and domestic environments, so their foreign policies must address both. International power shifts change the dynamics of world politics, and thus change the boundaries. This affects the available foreign policy options for middle powers.

The complex and demanding international order during the Cold War significantly limited the room for maneuver for middle powers. So, even though activist elements in middle states' foreign policies are observed, they had to pursue passive foreign policies most of the time. I argued that the middle power activism that was observed during the Cold War is different in kind from the activism observed in the post-Cold War era because of the dramatic change in the systemic constraints.

The removal of the security concerns and the pressures of the bipolar order in the post-Cold War era allowed middle powers to pursue more activist policies. As they started to pursue more activist foreign policies, significant differences in their activist behaviors began to occur. While some middle powers such as Canada pursued benign middle power activism, some others such as Turkey pursued revisionist activism. I argued that these activisms are different in degree, and the difference can be explained by domestic factors. Moreover, middle powers and small states that are aspirant to middle power status are more likely to take on more offensive foreign policies if they are experiencing domestic political and economic challenges at the time of a power shift. This way, they benefit from the change in the boundaries in order to better address the domestic problems. In some cases, this increase in the degree of activism can lead to diversionary foreign policy. Since strategic rivalries create an opportunity-rich environment for diversionary foreign policy, I conducted an empirical analysis. It established that states which experience domestic problems are more likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes in environments of strategic rivalry.

I identified the most important domestic independent variables affecting middle power activism as regime type and government & leadership change. Leader and government perceptions of national interests, their desire to remain in power, and the political legacy they want to create

determine their foreign policy choices. They may also use foreign policy as a tool to reach their political goals. Regime type sets the limits regarding how much power leaders and governments can accumulate in their hands, affects the structure of the political institutions, and determines the checks and balances. These primary domestic variables, along with other intervening domestic variables, affect foreign policy activism.

The case study on Turkey focused on three different time frames and discussed how external and internal factors affected foreign policy activism in each of the time frames. It demonstrated that Turkish foreign policy during Cold War was passive. Nevertheless, activist elements in its foreign policy can be observed during this time, such as the foreign policy it pursued to gain accession to NATO. With the end of the Cold War and the removal of certain systemic constraints, Turkey could pursue an activist foreign policy. During the 1990s and 2000s, the activism was benign. In the 2010s, it shifted to a revisionist foreign policy activism. I argued that the opportunities provided by the China-Russia axis constituted alternatives to the west, and this was combined with Erdoğan's and the AKP's domestic politics, causing an increase in the degree of Turkish foreign policy activism. Moreover, to show the effects of public opinion on foreign policy in the Turkish context, I discussed the issue in detail, showing that the Turkish government can easily shift public opinion.

This study has created an analytical framework to explain middle power behavior during international power shifts. It has also underscored the importance of middle powers in world politics. Further research involves a deeper look into how the degree of activism translates into foreign policy formulas. Moreover, revisiting states' foreign policies to detect cycles of activism would enable us to see what other intervening variables affect foreign policy activism, which would be a valuable contribution to the framework created in this study.

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