

Anti-Westernism in Turkey's Neo-Ottomanist Foreign Policy under Erdoğan

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Abstract

After 2013, Turkey's foreign policy has been noted for neo-Ottomanist rhetoric and anti-Western discourse, which resulted in the deterioration of relations with the West. To disclose the patterns of anti-Westernism in Turkish foreign policy, this paper analyzes official speeches of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan given at international meetings and events from 2014 to 2021. Based on critical constructivism, which underlines the co-constitutive relationship between identity and foreign policy, and the role of the Other in identity construction, this article demonstrates how the Western Other has been used by Erdoğan in building Turkish Ottoman identity. This article articulates the anti-Western notion of neo-Ottomanism and argues that Erdoğan's anti-Western discourse bears the Islamic undertone and relies on the delineation of the Turkish-Ottoman Self from the Western Self. Referring

to Turkish people in his speeches, Erdoğan invariably uses positive words like “justice,” “toleration” and “compassion,” while representing the West as “racist,” “imperialist,” “colonialist,” “xenophobic,” “Islam hating,” “anti-immigrant,” “unjust,” “supporting terrorism,” and “imposing double standards.”

Keywords: anti-Westernism, neo-Ottomanism, Turkey, the West, Islam, Erdoğan.

With the rise to power of the conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish foreign policy has undergone dramatic changes, including ideological transformation, reinterpretation of the Turkish identity based on the Ottoman-Islamic self-consciousness, and reorientation towards the former Ottoman space. Turkish politics under the AKP's and Erdoğan's rule has departed from Kemalist secular principles and West-oriented identity. In Turkish foreign policy, this turn was interpreted as a “shift of axis” and its ideology was defined as neo-Ottomanism (*Yeni Osmanlılık* or *Neo-Osmanlılık*).

During the first decade of the AKP rule, Turkey sought to become a “central country” (*merkez ülke*) between the West and the East with a pro-active and assertive policy (Davutoğlu, 2009; Davutoğlu, 2013). While on the one hand, Turkey pursued a multidimensional and pro-active policy over the former Ottoman geography, on the other hand, as a NATO member, it maintained good relations with the West (the U.S, the EU, European countries). Besides, EU membership was an anchor for Turkey for as long as until 2011. During the first decade of his rule, Erdoğan avoided anti-Western discourse. He frequently underlined the importance of EU membership for Turkey and spoke of its unifying role, that is, serving as a link between the West/EU and the East/Islamic states (*Türkiye Bülteni*, 2003; *Türkiye Bülteni*, 2005).

After 2013, Turkey's relations with the West deteriorated, especially following such crucial developments as the Gezi Park

protests of 2013, the Syria war, U.S. support of the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, the 15 July 2016 failed coup attempt, and Turkey's purchase of the S-400 anti-aircraft missile system from Russia. Those events were accompanied by the rise of an anti-Western discourse in Turkish foreign policy.

Anti-Westernism in Turkish foreign policy has been discussed by experts in different contexts (see, for example, Ovalı and Özdikmenli, 2020, pp. 105-126; Kaliber, 2019, pp. 1-16), but it has not been examined with respect to neo-Ottomanism. Specifically, scholars have not studied the role of the concept of the Western Other in building Turkish Ottoman identity. Also, Turkey's turning away from Europe has been interpreted as "de-Europeanization" (see, for example, Aydın-Düzgit, 2016, pp. 45-58). However, such conceptualization lacks the anti-Westernism dimension: it merely stresses negative representation of the European/EU Other in Turkish identity and analyzes the period of 2011-2014.

This article investigates Erdoğan's discourse with reference to Islam since neo-Ottomanism placed Islam at the core of the Ottoman identity. Dorroll defines "Erdoğanian neo-Ottomanism" as a cultural ideology that remembers the Ottoman past in the Sunni Muslim Turkish terms (Dorroll 2020). According to Torbakov (2017, pp. 125-145), the three key factors of neo-Ottomanism are the Ottoman historic legacy, the Sunni-Muslim identity, and the Ottoman geographic sphere. The definitions proposed by Dorroll and Torbakov regarding neo-Ottomanism are valuable in that they help understand the role of Islam and the Ottoman past in the construction of Turkish Ottoman identity. However, they do not discuss the anti-Western notion of neo-Ottomanism.

This study aims to disclose the patterns of anti-Westernism in neo-Ottoman Turkish foreign policy using the critical constructivism approach.

Critical constructivism underlines the inherent link and co-constitutive relationship between identity and foreign policy through discursive practices. According to critical constructivism, "realist concepts in international relations such as national interest are

discursively constituted by way of representations (of countries, peoples) and language (adjectives, metaphors, analogies)” (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 198). As legitimate voices of the state, officials construct foreign policy representations and reproduce the power of the state to define foreign policy issues (Weldes, 1998, pp. 217-221). Lene Hansen (2006, p. 10) writes that “there is no cause-effect relationship between identity and foreign policy, because identity and foreign policy are directly connected to each other via discourse.” In this regard, this article underlines the inherent and ontological link between Turkey’s identity representations and foreign policy and demonstrates how, through reinterpretation of Turkey’s historical heritage and geographical location, Ottoman identity has been constructed in Turkish foreign policy. Also, it shows how Turkey has been portrayed as a great representative of Islamic civilization in its neo-Ottomanist foreign policy discourse.

According to David Campbell (1998, p. 8), identity is built through the inscription of boundaries which serve to demarcate an ‘inside’ from an ‘outside,’ a ‘Self’ from an ‘Other,’ ‘domestic’ from ‘foreign.’ William Connolly (2002) emphasizes that any identity is established with respect to socially organized differences. Iver Neumann also indicates that “delineation of oneself from an Other plays a major role in identity” (Neumann, 1999, p. 35). Building on these foundations, this research paper shows how Erdoğan has delineated the Turkish Self from the Western Other, and how the Western Other has played a role in the construction of Turkish Ottoman identity.

This article presents a discourse analysis of President Erdoğan’s official speeches given at international meetings and events from 2014 to 2021 (the texts were borrowed from the website of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey (tccb.gov.tr)). All analyzed speeches directly relate to issues concerning the West, Europe, the U.S., Ottoman legacy, and Islam; special emphasis in the analysis has been placed on those speeches which reveal the Ottoman/West and Islam/West political or ideological dichotomies. The period of 2014-2021 was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, after 2013,

Turkish foreign policy acquired an anti-Western approach. Secondly, although before 2013, Erdoğan had held the high position of Prime Minister (from 2003 to 2014), his official stance became explicit after he was elected President in 2014. Having increased his authority as President, he became the strongest actor and voice in Turkish politics and remains as such today.

To understand Turkish foreign policy under Erdoğan, it is important to trace the ideological shift and identity transformation from Kemalism to neo-Ottomanism during the 2002-2013 period and see which elements of Turkish foreign policy continued or discontinued in the following period of 2013-2021.

IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: FROM KEMALISM TO NEO-OTTOMANISM AFTER 2002

Constructivists mostly view national identity as “imagined political community” (Anderson, 2006). “There are different ways to ‘imagine’ a nation. This means that there can be various competing interpretations of ‘the idea of nation’ in the same community” (Malinova, 2008, p. 41). In this respect, the distinct and competing models of Turkish identity from the past to today have been interpreted through different ideologies such as Ottomanism, Islamism, Turkism, Westernism, Kemalism, neo-Ottomanism. As different from (classical) Ottomanism and an anti-thesis of Kemalism, which had been the founding and hegemonic ideology in Turkey until 2002, neo-Ottomanism came to the fore among Turkish conservative and Islamic politicians and intellectuals with the rise of political Islam in Turkey and the world after 1980 (Üzgel and Yaramış, 2010). Neo-Ottomanism first manifested itself during the rule of conservative-liberal President Turgut Özal who “became a leading figure in perpetuating Ottomanism as the core of a political vision based on a new collective memory for a new form of Turkish foreign policy” (Çolak, 2006, pp. 591-592). However, Özal’s neo-Ottomanist approach and “attempts to implement the desired changes in the post-Cold War Turkish foreign policy strategy remained elusive in the early 1990s” (Tüysüzoğlu, 2014, pp. 90-91) due to political and economic

instability in the country, and Kemalists' opposing Özal's ambitious and revisionist policies. After Özal's death in 1993, Kemalist ideology, based upon the principles of modern Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, dominated Turkish politics throughout the 1990s due to the influence of the Kemalist-secular establishment consisting of military and bureaucratic elites. Except for a short period (1996-1997) of the rule of former Islamic and anti-Western Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, who introduced political Islam in Turkey and was Erdoğan's mentor, Turkey mostly pursued a pro-Western policy and sought to acquire full EU membership throughout the 1990s. So, neo-Ottomanism and Islamism were not engraved in Turkish politics up until Erdoğan's rise to power in 2002.

After 2002, with the AKP and Erdoğan—having strong Islamic roots—in power, there began an ideological shift in Turkish foreign policy. The process included the reinterpretation of Turkish identity in terms of the Ottoman-Islamic self-consciousness, reorientation towards the former Ottoman space, and reimagining of the glory days of the Ottoman Empire. Erdoğan also sought to Islamicize the state and society (Yavuz, 2020). On the other hand, during the first decade of his term of office he maintained good relations with the West (the U.S and the EU) and his foreign policy, though neo-Ottomanist in character, retained a pro-Western stance.

Under the AKP's rule, Turkey departed from Kemalist (ethnonational-secular) Turkish identity. Erdoğan and the AKP elite strongly attacked Kemalist ideology, viewing Kemalists-seculars as an internal Other for the Ottoman-Islamic identity. They accused Kemalists of attempts to push Turkey into Western civilization, of disregard for Turkish Islamic roots and identity, and of neglect of the Ottoman past and space. According to Erdoğan, the founders of the Kemalist ideology and Kemalist political elites of the one-party period in Turkish modern history (1923-1945) had broken the links of Turkish society with the Ottoman past and traditional values (Erdoğan, 2018b). Moreover, Erdoğan strongly criticized Turkish Westernization, which commenced in the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century and was accelerated by Atatürk's reforms (Erdoğan, 2016d).

One of the chief architects of neo-Ottomanist foreign policy is Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of Turkey in 2002-2016 and the author of the Strategic Depth conception (Davutoğlu, 2009). This conception asserts that Turkey holds responsibility for and leadership over the entire former Ottoman space and calls for the use of Turkey's cultural and religious affinities and common Ottoman history with the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East for promoting Turkey's influence (Yavuz, 2016, p. 461). Also, this conception promotes the construction of supranational (Ottoman) and civilizational (Islamic) identities based on Turkey's geopolitical legacy. Indirectly accusing the Kemalist realist foreign policy in the Middle East for its unidimensional and passive approach, Davutoğlu argued that Turkey's historical responsibility and geographical position required it to pursue a proactive policy over entire "Afro-Eurasia" and post-Ottoman hinterland (Davutoğlu, 2009).

Criticizing the traditional definition of Turkey as a "bridge country" between the West and the East, Davutoğlu assertively portrayed Turkey as a "central country" in "Afro-Eurasia" due to its geopolitical position, historical ties, and leverage. Furthermore, he viewed Turkey as a global actor and key player as well as the leader of a distinct Islamic civilization and the Muslim world (Davutoğlu, 2013). Many Turkish authors regard Davutoğlu's neo-Ottomanist foreign policy perspective as too assertive, expansionist and not realistic, some consider it romantic and improbable (Oran, 2013).

With the AKP in power, Turkey was for the first time bidding for religious leadership. In 2005, together with Spain, Turkey initiated the UN Alliance of Civilizations aimed at converging Western and Islamic civilizations. According to Balcı and Miş (2008, pp. 400-401), Turkey's undertaking the role of a spokesperson of the Islamic world under this global initiative can be seen as the "Middle Easternization of Turkish foreign policy" and a challenge to the secular Kemalist characteristic of Turkey since Atatürk had had no interest in pursuing an active foreign policy towards the Middle East in particular, and the Muslim world in general.

In the first decade of the AKP's rule with Erdoğan as prime minister and Davutoğlu as foreign minister, Turkey had largely good relations with the West and adhered to pro-Western and pro-European policies, although it had some controversies with the U.S., such as the “*tezkere krizi*” over the Iraq War in 2003. Thus, during the first decade of the AKP's rule, neo-Ottomanism was accompanied by a pro-Western rather than an anti-Western stance in Turkish foreign policy. Erdoğan and the AKP elites avoided anti-Western rhetoric, declared their aspiration to the EU membership and “did not put as much focus on the importance of Islam as Erbakan had done” (Ananicz, 2015, p. 13). Until 2011, full EU membership was also an anchor for Turkey. During this period, Turkey furthered the integration process with the EU (Baykal and Arat 2012, pp. 337-342) and Erdoğan often underlined that Turkey was part of Europe and EU membership was a major priority for it (Sunar, 2013, pp. 431-454). He frequently stated that as a Muslim country, Turkey's membership in the EU would be a response to the clash of civilizations thesis (Türkiye Bülteni, 2003, p. 47). He ascribed a unifying mission to Turkey as a link between the West/EU and the East/Islam. Furthermore, he argued that without Turkey the EU would be just a “Christian club” (*Hristiyan kulübü*) (Türkiye Bülteni, 2005, p. 8).

Many authors indicate that in order to implement the EU reforms and liberal democracy, it was important for the AKR and Erdoğan to gain support from the U.S. and the EU (Sipahioğlu, 2017). The pro-Western turn, following EU reforms and liberal policies enabled Erdoğan to eliminate the Kemalist-secular hegemonic status quo (military-judicial-bureaucratic establishment) and create his own circles and investment groups (Oran, 2013, p. 133). Turkey pursued a pro-active policy over “Afro-Eurasia” in harmony with the West. Pointing to the commonality of U.S. and Turkish interests, the U.S. encouraged Turkey to pursue neoliberal policies and an assertive foreign policy, and portray itself as a “model country” for the Middle East (Üzgel, 2013, pp. 259-265). Turkey's soft power and neo-Ottomanist policy seemed functional to the West for integrating the Middle East into a neo-liberal system (Üzgel and Yaramış, 2010,

p. 14). Specifically, during the Arab Spring, Western media and scholarship pointed to Turkey as the paragon of Western-oriented Muslim-majority democracy and to the AKP as an Islam-rooted but reformed and secular party for the region (Schanzer and Tahiroğlu, 2016). Thus, Turkey sought to take on the role of a “model country” for the Middle East (Yeşilyurt, 2017, pp. 65-83).

Davutoğlu’s “strategic depth” and “pro-active policy” concepts failed with the Arab Spring and the Syrian Civil War which initially were viewed by Erdoğan and Davutoğlu as an opportunity for realizing their neo-Ottomanist aspirations. The Arab Spring resulted in Turkey’s isolation in the Middle East and considerable changes in Turkish foreign policy. After the Arab Spring, Turkey turned from soft to hard power policy, intervening in the domestic wars in Syria and Libya. Also, after 2011, de-Europeanization of Turkish politics became more manifest, including in the discouragement of the Turkish government and public from EU membership and the “othering” of the EU and Europe (Sipahioğlu, 2017; Aydın-Düzgit, 2016). “In the post-2013 period, de-Europeanization in Turkish foreign policy discourse has been systematically replaced by vehement anti-Westernism” (Kaliber, 2019, p. 2).

ANTI-WESTERNISM IN TURKEY’S NEO-OTTOMANIST FOREIGN POLICY AFTER 2013

As mentioned above, following a series of crucial events, Turkey’s relations with the West deteriorated and starting from 2013 Turkish foreign policy has been marked by the rise of anti-Westernism (Kaliber, 2019; Taş, 2014). Erdoğan’s election as President in 2014, Prime Minister Davutoğlu’s resignation in 2016 (due to the worsening of his relationship with Erdoğan (see Hudson, 2016)), and Turkey’s transformation from the long-standing parliamentary system to a heavily centralized presidential system and the constitutional change in 2017 enabled Erdoğan to increase his authority. His growing authoritarianism and rhetoric aimed at legitimatizing his domestic policy converged with neo-Ottomanism (Wastnidge, 2019). Also, the formation of the People’s Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı) between

the ruling AKP party and Devlet Bahçeli's Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) in 2018 accelerated nationalist, populist, anti-Western discourse among the ruling elites. As a nationalist ally of Erdoğan, Bahçeli has frequently and sharply criticized the West and the United States (TRT Haber, 2021).

Erdoğan's growing anti-Western and Islamic rhetoric after 2013 marked a turn in Turkey's foreign policy discourse and its disengagement with the West. By glorifying Turkey's Ottoman past and Islamic roots while ascribing negative meanings to the West, he set off the Turkish Ottoman Self against the Western Other and the Islamic Self against the Western Other. Erdoğan argued that thanks to the values of "justice," "toleration," and "compassion" the Ottoman had ruled over different societies in peace for 600 years, while the West was ruling with oppression and massacre (Erdoğan, 2015; Erdoğan, 2018a). Moreover, he likened Islam to peace and argued that there had never been racism in the Islamic world unlike the one led by the U.S. and Europe (Erdoğan, 2014).

In terms of the ontological link between foreign policy and identity, Turkey's Ottoman heritage has been reinterpreted in Erdoğan's foreign policy discourse. In his speeches, he has often referred to the historical continuity from the Seljuk Empire to the Ottoman Empire and to modern Turkey. He has also highlighted the vast space of the Ottoman Empire and the involuntary loss of geographical land: "The Republic of Turkey is not our first state, let's not deceive ourselves. We are the heirs of a state that ruled over 22 million square kilometers of land on a global scale. We had a land of approximately 3 million square kilometers just before the foundation of the new Republic; shrinking from there, we are left with 780 thousand square kilometers of land" (Erdoğan, 2016b).

ERDOĞAN'S OTTOMANIST INTERPRETATION OF TURKISH IDENTITY

According to Erdoğan, Turkey, as the heir of the Ottoman Empire, is responsible for the problems of societies in the former Ottoman space and the Islamic world. At the 9th meeting of the Eurasian Islamic Council, he said that "holding experience in meeting the

West and the East and in the successor position of the Ottoman State, Turkey stands by the Eurasian Muslims in all issues. [...] In the territories which were under the administration of the Ottoman just a few centuries ago, there are 45 countries and 64 states now. In most of these lands, there are our cognates, brothers, and relative communities. Today, our brothers, 5.5 million people with Turkish roots, live in European countries. Therefore, it is not possible for us to remain indifferent to the developments taking place in Europe, North Africa, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Central Asia” (Erdoğan, 2019c).

As mentioned above, neo-Ottomanism places Islam at the core of the Ottoman identity in terms of both civilizational and national factors. Erdoğan predominantly points to the civilizational factor in his discourse. In his speeches, he uses phrases like “our ancient civilization (*kadim medeniyet*) to delineate Turkey from Western civilization. Regarding religion as the core of civilizations, he places Turkey in the center of Islamic civilization for its mission as its defender: “...in terms of Islamic criteria, the signs of civilization are ... help for all who need it, treating everyone, even stray animals with compassion. Western civilization directly focuses on the individual, Islamic civilization is based upon an understanding comprising each area of social life. [...] Islamic civilization, which was pioneered by Arabs, Persians, and Turks, made a mark in the world for 1,400 years. We can show all humanity the deep horizon of Islam only if we succeed in our civilization of honor” (Erdoğan 2017a).

Turkey’s Islamic identity has directly shaped Erdoğan’s foreign policy discourse. Erdoğan has been portraying Turkey as the voice of all Muslims in the world. In his speeches, he has pointed to the massacres committed against Muslims and the problems of Muslims in different regions—Kashmir, East Turkestan, Myanmar, and Palestine. He has frequently raised the Palestine problem and expressed Turkey’s full support for Palestinians. He has sharply criticized Israel and defined it as a terrorist state; and he has accused the West of supporting Israel (Erdoğan, 2019b; Erdoğan, 2020). He has called upon all Muslims to unite against common problems (Erdoğan, 2016c).

ERDOĞAN'S ANTI-WESTERN DISCOURSE

As mentioned above, critical constructivism underscores that the Other plays a significant role in building an identity. Erdoğan has constructed the Western Other with negative representations of the West in his foreign policy discourse. In terms of the Ottoman/West and Islam/West dichotomies, Erdoğan has referred to the Ottoman past and Islamic values in order to distinguish the Ottoman-Turkish Self from the Western Self, arguing that the Turks and the Ottomans have never been racist, colonialist and massacrists like the Westerners (Erdoğan, 2019d).

In his anti-Western discourse, Erdoğan most often identified the West with “*racism*.” Moreover, he has used the words “fascist” and “Nazi” for portraying the West as racist (Erdoğan 2019b; Erdoğan 2020b). He sometimes recalled the historical incidents of genocide to depict the West as a “genocider” and “massacrist.” At the 3rd African Muslim Religious Leaders Summit, Erdoğan stated: “Although centuries have passed, this view of the white man towards Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East has not changed. There is no decrease in the arrogance of Westerners based on the superiority of the white race. [...] I think you know better than me which colonial state was in the backstage of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The Western world and the UN just watched the brutal killings of 800,000 people in Rwanda over the course of three months” (Erdoğan, 2019d).

Another manifestation of Erdoğan's anti-Westernism is his frequent reference to the West as “*imperialist*” and “*colonialist*.” He has emphasized the West's colonial policies and argued that Turkey's approach towards Africa differed from that of the West: “Those who have exploited the resources of the continent for years and gained prosperity over the blood of oppressed African people, their souls, diamonds and oil could not bear the cooperation between Turkey and African people conducted on the basis of equality and mutual respect. They want African peoples to continue to be dependent on them. They want Africa's natural resources to enrich Western companies, Western states, not the continent. [...] Western weapon manufacturers

and oil companies are orchestrating a majority of the disturbances in the continent. Almost all of those who try to teach us rights, law and freedom today, certainly have a past of massacres, invasion, or had a stain of colonialism in their past. [...] Colonialism, which is claimed to have ceased to exist, is continued by using new methods and taking new forms” (Erdoğan, 2019d).

Erdoğan has frequently accused the West of being “*Islamophobic*.” In his speeches, he has frequently said that “the West is Islam hater.” Moreover, he views Turkey as a defender of Islam in the struggle against the Islamophobia of the West and its attempts to associate Islam with terrorism. In his speeches, he has also implied that terrorist organizations, such as Daesh or al-Qaeda holding Islamic references, were established by the West in order to damage Islam and to associate Islam with terrorism. “What is being done is obvious hostility towards Islam and hostility towards Muslims. Such as al-Qaida, ISIS, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, I believe such terrorist organizations are formed and supported by Islamaphobes to damage this sacred religion” (Erdoğan, 2016a).

Erdoğan has many times accused the West, and especially the U.S., of supporting terrorist organizations. He has frequently said that the U.S. backs the PKK and the YPG, which Turkey regards as terrorist organizations and big enemies. When tension escalated between Turkey and the U.S., Erdoğan said that Turkey might consider closing NATO bases located on its territory and used by the U.S. as the latter sided with the PKK and the YPG, not with Turkey (Erdoğan 2019g). “Were you [the USA] not supposed to stand against the PKK, the YPG? You clearly support them and stand behind them. ... If we are in NATO together, ... then you must be sincere with us. You must not stand by terrorists. If you do, then you cannot be on our side” (Erdoğan, 2021).

In addition, Erdoğan has often accused the West of “*inhuman treatment*” of immigrants and defined the West as “*anti-immigrant*.” He has portrayed the West and Europe as “*xenophobic*,” blaming Europe for a discriminatory approach towards immigrants and Muslims. He lambasted Western countries by saying: “Starting from racist parties, European political figures are intriguing for taking

seats over propagating refugee hostility. Those who lectured world democracy and human rights, now see the refugees as the biggest threat. Xenophobia and Islamophobia are spreading to European communities day by day like poisonous ivy. We are hearing news of fascist assaults on our citizens only because they're Muslims and Turkish" (Erdoğan, 2019a).

Furthermore, Erdoğan delineates Turkey from the West in that Turkey welcomes refugees, while the West demonstrates inhuman treatment of them: "We are currently hosting 3 million refugees from Syria and Iraq in our country. We have spent 26 billion dollars for the refugees. Unfortunately, neither the EU nor the UN Refugee Agency has kept their promises. In any case, we will continue to house those who are running from weapons and barrel bombs. We cannot do what the West is doing—closing their borders with barbed wires" (Erdoğan, 2017b).

Erdoğan has also accused Europe and the EU of applying "*double standards*" to human rights, democracy, and treatment of non-Western countries, including Turkey. According to him, the European Union demonstrates "double standards" in creating difficulties for Turkey's EU membership (Erdoğan, 2021b).

Another significant manifestation of Erdoğan's anti-Westernism is his critique of the West-dominated world order, which he considers "unjust" and causing global crises: "The Euro-American-centered global order, established after WWI and WWII, is getting further away from defending the rights of the rest of the world" (Erdoğan 2017d). One of the mottos of the post-2013 Turkish foreign policy, often pronounced by Erdoğan at international meetings, and particularly at the UN meetings, has been "The world is bigger than five." It refers to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S) which hold the veto power within the body and enjoy the right to make decisions regarding other countries (Erdoğan, 2018b). According to Erdoğan, this situation is unjust: non-representation of Muslim counties in the UN Security Council does not allow it to address the problems of Muslim regions. He also argues that the unicentric world order dominated by the West no longer exists; the world is now

multicentric. Therefore, the structure and body of the UN Security Council must be changed in order to match the new realities and involve other countries and continents (Erdoğan 2017e). Moreover, criticizing the West-dominated world system, he has argued that “if the Islamic principles ruled the world today, the crises would not have occurred” (Erdoğan, 2017a).

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Until 2002, Turkish foreign policy was based on Kemalism as a hegemonic ideology and Western-oriented, ethno-national, secular Turkish identity. After Erdoğan and his conservative political party (AKP) came to power in 2002 and until 2013, Turkish politics saw an ideological shift and reinterpretation of Turkish identity towards neo-Ottomanism. The AKP reoriented towards the former Ottoman territory, departed from Turkey’s Kemalist secular principles, and reimagined Turkish identity as Ottoman-Islamic. Erdoğan presented Turkey as heir to the Ottoman Empire. He promoted a pro-active policy over “Afro-Eurasia,” portraying Turkey as a “model country” for the Middle East, which was also encouraged by the West. In this respect, Turkey’s neo-Ottomanist foreign policy under Erdoğan and Davutoğlu as foreign minister had a pro-Western stance.

After 2013, Turkey’s neo-Ottomanist foreign policy acquired anti-Western discourse with an Islamic undertone. This development was accompanied by the rise of Erdoğan’s authority within the country and the deterioration of Turkish-Western relations. To consolidate Turkey’s Ottoman-Islamic identity, Erdoğan has been representing Turks as opposed to the Western Other in terms of the Ottoman/West and Islam/West dichotomies. Besides, in his foreign policy discourse he has delineated Turkey from Western civilization and placed Turkey with Islamic civilization. In this way, he portrays Turkey as the leader country in the vast former Ottoman territory and a great representative of Islamic civilization and the Muslim world.

While glorifying Turkey’s Ottoman legacy and ascribing positive meanings to Islam, Erdoğan negatively represents the West. Referring to the Ottoman legacy with notions of ‘justice,’ ‘toleration’ and

'compassion' and to Islam with 'peace,' he has been portraying the West as 'racist,' 'imperialist,' 'colonialist,' 'xenophobic,' 'imposing double standards,' and even 'supporting terrorism.' In Erdoğan's foreign policy discourse, the West-dominated world order is described as "unjust" and "causing global crises."

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