

ARTICLES

Hüsrev Tabak*

MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAM IN TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY: ISLAMIC INTERNATIONALISM AND TURKISH ISLAM

ABSTRACT

The incumbent government of the Justice and Development Party (Turkish – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP) has often been accused of pursuing an Islamic agenda, particularly in its foreign policy, due to its concern shown for restoring Turkey's bonds with the Muslim countries broken off by the Kemalist regime. The post-Arab spring political developments in the neighbouring countries and Turkey embarking on religious discourse in approaching them, particularly in the cases of Egypt, Palestine, and recently Syria, have further solidified such arguments. Keeping these debates in mind, this paper aims to elaborate the actual weight Islam carries in Turkey's AKP era of foreign policy and what such policy entails. This paper argues that Turkey's confident use of religion in foreign policy cannot be simply defined as an "Islamic foreign policy", and neither can its foreign policy be disassociated from religion's constitutive role. From the Turkish perspective, Islam manifests itself as two distinct but partly overlapping and sometimes contradictory practices, namely Islamic Internationalism and Turkish Islam. While the former refers to Turkey's responsibility towards Muslim communities on the basis of the *ummah*, the latter refers to promoting the performance of Ottoman/Turkish Islamic practices

* Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Recep Tayyip Erdogan University, Turkey, e-mail: husrevtabak@gmail.com

abroad against the expansion of extremist ideology. In the first instance, Turkey is blamed for supporting religious extremists, yet in the second Turkey fights against extremism. Therefore, “Islamic foreign policy” being used to equally describe these two distinct policies is not helpful but rather blurs the issue and is based on a biased position.

Key words

Turkey foreign policy, Islam, Islamic internationalism, Turkish Islam

Introduction

By many, Turkey is believed to be pursuing an “Islamic” foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule, while many others reject this idea. Those who accuse Turkey of upholding an Islamic foreign policy maintain that ‘Islamic concerns constitute the basic nature of the AK Party’s understanding of foreign policy’ (Özcan & Usul, 2011, p. 169; see also Criss, 2010, p. 46; Yesilada & Rubin, 2010, p. 3; Yesilada & Noordjik, 2010, pp. 24–5). However, others disassociate Turkish foreign policy from Islam and argue that Turkey follows economic and political benefits and national interests in its relations with Muslim countries and communities, and in the case of any conflict of interest, it is argued that Turkey is ready to abandon them (Aydın, 2003; Ayoob 2012; Duran 2013; Güner, 2012; Tuğal, 2007). The debate therefore is grouped around arguments of accusations and disassociation. Whether or not Turkey’s foreign policy is “Islamic”, both approaches have intrinsically associated Islam as having a prominent role in its foreign policy with pejorative connotations and meanings. The author refrains from taking a position in this biased reasoning but rather suggests that, to better understand Islam’s role in Turkish foreign policy, the focus should be shifted from perceiving Islam as an ideology determining foreign policy that is either embraced or abstained from by the AKP government, to seeing Islam as a vernacular practice having multiple, yet contradictory representations and manifestations in foreign policy.

Accordingly, we argue that Turkey does apply Islam ideology in foreign policy, but such acts do not have a uniform manifestation. Two forms of distinct, yet partly overlapping and at times conflicting practices and expressions of Islam can be recognized in the context of Turkey’s foreign policy, namely its Islamic Internationalist posture and its Turkish Islamic stance. While the former refers to Turkey’s self-attained responsibility towards Muslim communities on the

basis of the idea of *ummah* ("community"), the latter refers to promoting the performance of Ottoman and Turkish Islamic religio-cultural practices abroad against the expansion of extremist religious streams. Islamic Internationalism surfaces in the form of solidarity with deprived and conflicting Muslim countries and communities. On the other hand, Turkish Islam is based on the presumption that the form of Islam practiced in Turkey is for example superior to Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia¹, which in turn suggests that the two forms of Islam are competing with one another in the Balkans, Central Asia or even Africa. In the first instance, Turkey is blamed for supporting religious extremists; however, as clearly seen in the second instance, Turkey is involved in a fight against religious extremism. Obviously, the use of the term "Islamic foreign policy" to jointly describe these two distinct policies is not helpful but rather blurs the issue and is based on a biased position. In light of this, the following is an analysis of how Turkey connects with its foreign policy.

1. Islamic Internationalism

Restoring the bonds between Muslim countries and communities which were broken by the Kemalist regime right after the Turkish nation-state was established, has long been a primary goal of political Islamists in Turkey. This aim has most of the time been observed in relation to Turkey's perceived responsibility toward Muslim countries and communities outside its borders, called the *ummah*, and has been put forth as a critique to the Kemalist regime's changing of the religious-minded and acting communities of Anatolia into a national-minded and acting nation by which the long-standing idea of the unity of *ummah* will have lost its practical importance in people's minds. The national borders have therefore not only broken political relations with other Islamic countries but also changed the people's way of thinking from the idea of supporting the *ummah* to supporting national interests. Until Necmettin Erbakan and his Milli Görüş (National View) organization became the flag bearer of political religious concerns including the nation's bonds to the *ummah* during the 1970s and onward, the concerns regarding *ummah* had politically been abandoned (see Toprak, 1984, p. 127; Dilligil, 1994). Some relations with Middle Eastern countries such

¹ In conventional understanding, although with a negative connotation, this practice is mostly called Wahhabism or Salafism. The adherents of it use the name Muwahhidun (the Unitarians) to identify themselves.

as the Baghdad and Sadabad Pacts were formed regarding secular causes such as economic cooperation or overcoming oil crises. Likewise, the concern for *ummah* was absent in building relations with Israel, a country against which the *ummah* was mostly reified. Israel had long been considered as the only country with which Turkey can have reliable and stable relations in the Middle East (Kanat, 2010, p. 209).

The *ummah* concern was attached to foreign policy agenda during the 1990s, particularly when Erbakan became the Prime Minister of the Kemalist republic in 1995. During his Prime Ministry, the *ummah* concern was very evident. For instance, he bilaterally developed relations with such countries as Iran, Nigeria, Libya and Qatar, and multilaterally advocated building an Islamic United Nations, Islamic NATO, Islamic UNESCO, Islamic Common Market, and a common Islamic currency (Robins, 1997, pp. 89–95). Although none of these multilateral institutions were established, except the Developing-8² (D-8), such institutions were suggested as a cure to the needs of the *ummah* suffering from instability, war, and economic and social destruction. For instance, the ethnic cleansing of the Bosnian Muslims was the drive behind the desire for building a NATO-like joint Islamic military organization capable of intervening into such incidents on time. The establishment of D-8 and efforts to increase the Islamic Development Bank's area of involvement were aimed to encourage economic and multilateral cooperation (Robins, 1997, p. 94).

Apparently, while the initial *ummah* focus on foreign policy was initiated by Erbakan, his approach was confined to state-level engagement. Civil society had a minor and uncalled role in reification of such bond. When it comes to the Justice and Development Party government, from 2002 onwards dealing with Muslim communities abroad began to be handled with a different governing perspective in mind.

In the first instance, the hitherto politically confined relations with the Muslim countries and communities have been extended to societal and cultural domains (Dağı, 2005, p. 30; Kösebalaban, 2005, p. 31). Such relations required utilization of Islamic civilization and Ottomanist discourses and unity calls, which reminded the foreign audience that Turkey is a proud member of the Islamic community. Turkey holding the presidency of the Organization of the Islamic Conference for the first time between 2004 and 2014 has facilitated such efforts. The claims of “safeguarding the *ummah*'s interests”, “ownership of the

² Member states are Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey.

Palestinian cause” or involvement in Muslim affairs in the countries from Somalia to Myanmar “as part of its civilizational duty” all reified Turkey’s identity as part of the *ummah* or even as a candidate to lead the *ummah* (Duran, 2013, p. 94; Warning and Kardaş, 2011, p. 128). This identity claim has indeed been well received, and Turkey has often been called the “leader of the Islamic world” and positioned at “the heart of the ummah after (...) more than a century of walking history’s margins” (Duran, 2013, p. 94).

Secondly, this extension required some tools to engage with communities on the ground. It was in this scope that the geography of involvement of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and Presidency for Religious Affairs (Diyanet) has been expanded and new institutions such as Yunus Emre Institute or Presidency for Turks Abroad and Relative Communities (YTB) have been established following the mission of cherishing relations with kindred Muslim communities abroad. By these public diplomacy institutions, Turkey has gained the required tools to directly get in touch with Muslim communities on their home grounds. Such interrelationships have been well illustrated by Turkey’s activist policies towards Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Chad, Niger, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (the list can be extended).

Thirdly, throughout these regions, Turkey did not merely rely on inter-governmental relations; its policies have been heavily backed by non-governmental and humanitarian initiatives. This is indeed the distinguishing character of the AKP’s Islamic internationalism because in its reification, both religious groups and humanitarian aid organizations have acted as stakeholders along with government institutions. As a result of this involvement, along with diplomatic and official aid institutions, Turkey’s non-governmental humanitarian aid organizations operate in over 100 countries worldwide today. Therefore, the Erbakan era *ummah*-focus was extended beyond state-centrism and inter-state relations.

Fourthly, since most Muslim countries and communities are underdeveloped and in need of assistance of all kinds, in most instances it was humanitarian or developmental aid programs that paved the way for Turkey building relations with foreign Muslim nations and communities. In relation to this, the *ummah*-focus has turned to a broader humanitarian outlook towards Islamic internationalism, with stronger state and civil society involvement and a robust and confident Muslim identity. In this sense, the idea of *ummah* has been replaced by an Islamic internationalism that suggests having cross-border humanitarian engagement as a reflection of Islamic religious identity, yet without

having a focus exclusively on Muslims (Tabak, 2014). In this scope, the virtue of providing aid has even shifted from “to-the-cause-of-*ummah*” to “for-and-beyond-the-*ummah*” (ibid). Therefore, by the AKP era, not only state centrism had been replaced by non-governmental and humanitarian diplomacy, but the recipients of Turkey’s humanitarian efforts had multiplied. Previously, Muslim communities were almost the sole beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance; during the AKP era, deprived communities of all confessions (Muslims and non-Muslims) in zones of conflict, war and poverty have been extended a helping hand, yet one with a confident Muslim identity. It was in this perspective that Turkey has gradually become one of the most generous donor states³ (*Global Humanitarian Assistance Report*, 2013, p. 6). On these grounds, the AKP has confidently declared worldwide “solidarity with fellow Muslims” and called for “empathy with Muslims” in foreign policy (Çağaptay 2012).

All these became possible by the de-securitization of religion itself. The Kemalist state had always been cautious about mobilization based on religion in the country and was consistently oppressive towards religious groups. Erbakan’s succession to the prime ministry caused fierce anxiety among the Kemalist establishment, which ended with Erbakan being toppled by a coup in February 28, 1997, and unprecedented measures were taken against anything religious. The coup was accordingly followed by further security measures taken against religion, as *irtica* (religious reactionism) was named as the principal national security threat; religious clothing was banned in public spaces, which included all public buildings as well as schools and courts; financial sanctions were imposed on Islamic capital groups; many Quranic schools were closed; and religious groups were put under surveillance. With the AKP’s coming to power, all these pressures were relieved and religion and religious mobilization have been de-securitized. The religious groups, including the faith-based humanitarian organizations, now act freely, run schools and do charitable works both at home and abroad with more confidence than ever. Moreover, their financial conditions and operational capabilities have expanded, and religiously motivated cross-border engagements have peaked (Tabak, 2014). Accordingly, while previously only a handful of groups were capable of running international missions, under the AKP almost all religious groups have overseas missions⁴. They

³ In 2012 Turkey was the 4th largest donor state.

⁴ These groups include, but are not limited to, Gülen Movement, Milli Görüş, Süleymanîcîs, İsmailağa, Aziz Mahmut Hüdai, İskender Paşa, Sheihk Nazimi and Yeni Asyacılar.

have therefore joined and claimed a part in Turkey's international humanitarian activism, and confidently and willingly acted within the constraints of Turkey's Muslim state identity (Gurowitz, 2006, p. 311). For example, the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) works with Turkey hosting 1.6 million Syrian refugees and has run humanitarian works including sheltering, medical and educational assistances for internally displaced people in several camps within Syria such as in Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Humus and Idlib, where clashes still continue (Sönmez, 2015). Similar emergency assistances have also been provided and other similar efforts have been undertaken by Deniz Feneri, Cansuyu, Kimse Yok Mu, and Mahmut Hüdayi associations in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen (Cevik, 2013).

This entire interrelationship has caused Islamic internationalist humanitarian organizations to guide the foreign policy agenda of Turkey. The *Mavi Marmara* initiative of the IHH, an attempt to break Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip in Palestine in 2010, resulted in the killing of ten civilians by Israeli commandos in their raid on the civilian flotilla in international waters, which is a prime example. As a consequence of Israel's harsh and violent response to IHH's humanitarian effort, Turkey's diplomatic relations with Israel were almost broken off entirely. Turkey's government took the raid as a personal attack on Turkey and the President at the time, Abdullah Gül, stated that Israel "will suffer the consequences for its mistake against Turkey" ("Turkey President:", 2010). Although the lawsuit still continues in international courts, Turkey's insistence on the case caused Israel to publish an official apology and pay compensation in 2013 (MacAskill & Sherwood, 2013).

The second example of this kind is the mediatory role IHH has played so far. A prime example of this was IHH taking part in the organization and running of the peace talks between the Philippines government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to end the decades long war; this was successful and a peace treaty was signed between the parties in late March 2014. IHH's contribution to such a delicate process and its ability to conclusively utilize humanitarian diplomacy have been very appreciated, which has caused it to be considered as "an important model for other NGOs in the Muslim World" ("Turkey's rise", 2014). IHH was not alone in this mission. In this respect, Turkey backed the talks through appointing a diplomat as a mediator to monitor and assist the disarmament of the MILF in accordance with the peace plan. Moreover, Turkey closely monitored the talks and supported the active participation of states, regional organizations, and international non-governmental organizations in the mediation process (Karagöz, 2014). In this respect, Turkey worked closely

with IHH ('IHH contributes', 2014). A similar mediatory role was assumed by IHH in 2013 to end the conflict in Yemen (Cevik, 2013).

This joint international concern was generated by a motivation for Turkey to be the cure to problems of Muslims worldwide and to keep the *ummah* self-sufficient. Support of such an idea led President Erdoğan to argue during an address to the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) in Istanbul that

[o]nly we can solve our problems... The only condition to overcome the crisis in the Islamic world is unity, solidarity and alliance. Believe me, we can resolve every problem as long as we are united. Islamic countries, which have developed economically recently, have been experiencing the biggest humanitarian and political crisis in their history simultaneously... If we act together, we will end the loneliness of Palestine which has continued for nearly one century... It is possible to end the bloodshed in Iraq and killing of Syrian children if we unite ('Foreigners don't like', 2014)

The speech may sound similar to the Erbakan era *ummah*-focused promises, yet the tools utilized, the actors involved, and the vocabulary by which such unity is attempted to be achieved are all different. The AKP's Islamic internationalism is more based on humanitarian diplomacy and tools, heavily backed and guided by non-governmental initiatives, and focused more on societal and cultural level engagement coupled with intense state level relations with Muslim countries.

2. Turkish Islam

The second context in which Islam has played an imperative role is Turkey's favouritism towards and promotion of Turkish/Ottoman religio-cultural practices abroad. Despite the Kemalist restructuring, the way Islam is practiced in Turkey has always been considered as an authentic practice by both religious and secular circles (see Mardin, 2005). For religiously devoted people, such authenticity has been claimed through sustaining the religious heritage of the Ottoman Empire although the caliphate was abolished by the Turkish Parliament in 1924. For example, the Sheikh Nazim branch of Naqshbandi *tariqah* confidently acts as the sole successor of the Ottoman religious tradition and claims to maintain "the lifestyle, discipline, and arts that are the heritage of the Caliphate of the Ottoman (Osmanlı) Empire" (naksibendi.org; also see ottoman.us and saltanat.org). With a similar motive in mind, political Islamists have long been nostalgic of Ottoman Islamic civilization and considered embracing and sustaining

Ottoman religious practices as a return to self-identity. In a similar fashion, Diyanet has occasionally acted as the official authority that took over Ottoman Sheikh ul-Islam's mission of running and determining the religious affairs of the people in the Ottoman hinterland⁵.

For religious groups, the authenticity of the Turkish way of practicing Islam is rooted in its being a continuation of the Ottoman religio-cultural practices. For the Kemalist secularists, on the other hand, the authenticity is rooted in Turkish Islam being a secular practice which emanated from bigots and fanatics, thanks to Atatürk's severe restructuring of the religious affairs in the country. The official closure of the *tekkes*, ban on *tariqahs*, and the establishment of the Diyanet, a centralized and absolute religious authority under the watch of Kemalist establishment, secured their efforts to harness religious practice. Yet it is also argued that what makes Turkish Islam authentic goes far before the establishment of the Kemalist Republic, when the Ottoman intellectual elite promoted a synthesis between Islam and modernity, hence interpenetrating secularism and Islam (Mardin, 2005, p. 148). This makes Turkish Islam retrospectively apt for a secular order and modern world.

Regardless of the differences in justification, both Ottoman religious atavists and Kemalists agree that Turkish Islam is the most appropriate practice and superior to other cultural practices of Islam. Jenny White, a social anthropologist, observed that "Turks of every political persuasion with almost one voice proclaim Turkish Islam different from and superior to other forms of Islam, particularly that practiced in the Arab world" (White, 2013, p. 188). The underlying logic is that while Turkish Islam is imagined as moderate, tolerant and modern, and for instance the Saudi Arabian Islamic experience (mostly called as Wahhabi Islam) represents radicalism, fanaticism, extremism and intolerance (Aras and Caha,

⁵ For instance, for the first time in its history, in 1953, Diyanet published a fatwa upon the dispute in Cyprus within the Turkish speaking Muslim community regarding whether the Quran might be written in Latinized Turkish letters. In its fatwa, Diyanet held that the Quran could not be written in the Turkish scripts but should remain in Arabic (Özdemir 1999, p. 198). By the same token, by and after the 1980s, Diyanet commenced sending temporary and permanent imams to outside Turkish communities residing in the former Ottoman hinterland to provide Ottoman remnant Muslim communities with religious services (Nevzat & Hatay, 2009, p. 922–3). In tandem with these, Diyanet works as an arbitrator body for countries in the Balkans between Muslim minorities and states. Accordingly, it is legislatively accepted by some countries, for instance in Montenegro, that when a domestic Islamic authority is unable to offer a solution on religious issues, Diyanet's solution will be embraced (Unal, 2012, p. 25).

2000, p. 32; Çitak, 2010, p. 620; Özdalga, 2006, p. 552; Tepe, 2000, p. 59; White, 2013, p. 101).

For example, it was with these thoughts in mind that led former PM Tansu Çiller to say in Sarajevo in 1995: '[i]n the Islamic World, there is the Turkey model and the radical Islam model. The Islamic world and the Balkans should adopt the Turkey model' (quoted in Solberg, 2007, p. 429). Similarly, at the Eurasian Islamic Meetings in 1998 and 2000 respectively, a former President of Diyanet Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz said that 'there are some streams, some movements mass propagating such as Bahaism, Kadiyanism, Ahmedijja, Moonism, Wahhabism... we have to take measures about this' or 'today it is impossible to implement the Badawi Arab lifestyle based economic ideas Ahmet bin Hanbel put forth a thousand years ago to the Anatolian people or to the people of any place on earth' (Eurasian Islamic Meeting Report, 1998; 2000).

Similarly, the same ideas led the Sheikh Nazimi group and the Milli Görüş movement to argue that the radical streams contaminate the image of Islam in the West and fuel Islamophobia. For the Sheikh Nazimi group, 'Wahhabis constitute the "internal" enemy of Islam' because 'they are showing Islam as a cruel religion' and thus are responsible for the worldwide decay of Muslims (Atay, 1994, p. 244–5). The Milli Görüş movement similarly feels discomfort about the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam and condemns it as an extreme and poor reading that manifests itself as fanaticism, radicalism and terror⁶ (Yeneroğlu, 2013ab). Having been headquartered in Turkey, these two organizations have widespread operations in Europe with the Sheikh Nazimi group being very active in the UK, while Milli Görüş conducts extensive religio-political services throughout continental Europe. Both groups have experienced and suffered from Islamophobia flamed by radical Islamic groups.

This interrelationship has made Islamophobia and the extreme groups as the principal agenda topic of Turkey in its relations with Muslim communities in Europe. The imprints of this are very well reflected in the activities of the New Dawn Party (YTB) as it has forged a fierce fight against Islamophobia and the radical streams feeding intolerant and anti-Islamic stances among people in Europe (see Altınok, 2012, p. 4; Turkey's Deputy PM Numan Kurtulmuş speaks

⁶ It should be noted that Mustafa Yeneroğlu, the secretary general of the Islamic Community Milli Görüş (IGMG), argues as well that radicalisation of Muslims in Europe is also fuelled by the securitization policies of the European states on Islam, Wahhabi streams therefore are not the sole cause of such a stand (Yeneroğlu, 2013a, p. 8).

on Islamophobia, 2014). The AKP government has an absolute backing in such policy, as seen recently in Turkey's responses to the Charlie Hebdo shooting by radical Islamic groups in 2015 in Paris which resulted in the killing of 12 people. Just following the attack, former President Abdullah Gül expressed that '[t]he perpetrators of this barbaric act not only betrayed and tainted Islamic values and principles, but also targeted millions of European Muslims who have nowhere else to live other than Europe' and invited 'the Islamic world and all Muslims' to 'clearly denounce this inhuman attack and demonstrate solidarity with the people of France against religious extremism' (Yetkin, 2015). The incumbent Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, while urging the "Muslim Turks" in Europe to 'walk tall against Islamophobia', admitted that the 'barbarism such as the Parisian murders led to terrorism and terrorism in turn paved the way for racism and xenophobia [Islamophobia]' ('Turkish PM calls', 2015). The fight against radicalism, and in relation to it, against Islamophobia is one of the reflections of Turkey's Islamic policy.

However, for Turkey, the adverse effects of the radical streams manifest themselves most often as antagonism towards Ottoman/Turkish religio-cultural heritage from the former Ottoman hinterland. Onur Öymen, a notable Kemalist and vice-president of CHP, in this fashion once stated in a parliamentary speech:

[Our] cultural heritage in Kosovo was blasted (...) by the Saudi Wahhabi Aid Agency (...) [T]he examinations show that during the restoration works the idea of restoring the Ottoman artefacts to its original condition was left aside and these historical buildings were re-erected according to Wahhabi culture, and some Ottoman artefacts were simply blasted, the graveyards were blasted, the mosques were blasted (...) [W]e should not allow a Wahhabi institution of Saudi Arabia (...) to blast our cultural heritage in there (Öymen, 2005, pp. 246–8).

The same concern was stated by İbrahim Özdoğan of the Motherland Party in a parliamentary speech in 2007:

[t]he co-national countries surrounding us drifted with the tide of different streams because we did not provide the relevant religious services on time. My dear friends the Saudi associations and organizations have held the religious services in these countries. The Ottoman mosques in these countries were restored and open to service according to Saudi culture, and Saudi religious official[s] were given positions [in these mosques]. This is, indeed, a sad state of affairs. For this reason, it is very, very necessary for Diyanet to provide effective religious services abroad, this is very, very significant for our both nation and state (İbrahim Özdoğan, 2007, p. 135).

This is, however, a shared concern and Diyanet, with the backing of TİKA, has long been quietly fighting against the perceived Wahhabi destruction abroad, particularly in the Balkans (see Öktem, 2012, p. 43). The initial fight is over, opening more room for the performance of Turkish Islam. In this sense, Turkey has received students from the Balkan countries to be educated in *imam-hatib* schools and theology faculties in Turkey. These students have been functioning as a bridge for channelling Turkish Islamic practices and discourses to the Balkans, such as for example Lutfi Balik, the Mufti of Prizren, Kosovo. A Turkish graduate, he has worked very closely with the Diyanet Kosovo office in fighting against Wahhabi influences, in encouraging Turkish graduates to get positions in the mosques as imams, and in urging people to get religious education in Turkey.

The second method of promoting Turkish Islam internationally is by fighting against the radical streams, particularly in the Balkans, which has been conducted through sending temporary and permanent religious officials to the countries with Muslim minority/majority populations. In the meantime, Diyanet has translated its religious books into almost all Balkan languages and sent free copies to be used by the Diyanet coordination offices, mosques and Quranic schools to introduce Ottoman/Turkish Islamic practices to the local communities. In 2008 alone, Diyanet sent more than a million copies of religious publications abroad (Korkut, 2010, p. 133).

Thirdly, in a similar vein, to make Ottoman/Turkish Islamic history more visible to the Balkan countries, Turkey decided to build the largest mosque of Kosovo in Pristina, and the biggest mosque of the Balkans in Tirana, Albania ('Priştine'de yeni', 2014; 'Balkanların', 2014). This is the part of the project of building Ottoman architectural style mosques throughout the former Ottoman hinterland and Turkish Muslim world, announced by Diyanet in 1995 (*Eurasian Islamic Meeting Report*, 1995, p. 54). In addition to building mosques, Turkey (more precisely, TİKA), restores and rebuilds historical Ottoman mosques throughout these regions, which helps save the historical heritage and makes the Ottoman Islamic character of the countries more discernible.

In this fashion, Diyanet's Turkish Islamic activities extend far beyond Turkey's immediate surroundings. Similar to Turkey's and Diyanet's simultaneous opening to Central Asia from the 1990s onwards, Diyanet has intensified its activities in Africa concomitant to Turkey's diplomatic opening to the continent. For instance, it began to organize the Religious Leaders Meeting of African Continent Muslim Countries and Societies and hosted the first two in Istanbul in 2006 and 2011 (Özkan, 2013, p. 48). The final declarations of both meetings

invited Turkey to have a greater role in religious affairs in Africa through, for instance, offering 'opportunities to meet the urgent need for well raised and educated human resources, particularly in the area of religion, in Africa countries' ('Africa seeks', 2011). At this juncture, Turkish Islam was presented to and approached by the African religious authorities as 'a test case for a synthesis of Islam and democracy (...) [and] a model for the Islamic world' (Dere 2008, p. 299). Accordingly, Turkish Islam has stood as an alternative to and a way out from the radical streams which create more misery and instability in the region.

Conclusion

This paper has examined Turkey's approach to Islam in foreign policy and unfolded two distinct yet contradictory and at the same time overlapping manifestations and expressions of Islam in Turkey's foreign policy. Through refraining from attributing pejorative meanings to Islam playing constitutive role in foreign policy, this research has demonstrated that Turkey confidently and constitutively deploys religious causes and discourses in foreign policy. To a similar extent it has also been shown that Turkey's relation with Islam in foreign policy is not in the scope of theopolitics, confirming Duran and Yilmaz's observation (2013). The relationship is rather in line with Turkey's Turkish Islamic exceptionalism (Mardin 2005) that suggests that Turkey's Islamic experience is an authentic practice and existentially suitable to modern life, and that the imperial role the Ottomans and formerly "Turkish" states played in the building and sustaining of the Islamic civilization endows Turkey with responsibility towards its fellow Muslims worldwide. In this respect, in Turkey's foreign policy, Islam manifests itself both as an internationalist appeal for Muslim solidarity and an international competition against radical teachings and practices.

Islamic internationalism suggests building and deepening relations with Muslims worldwide, and keeping the *ummah* self-sufficient. The level of relationship extends beyond inter-governmental relations to societal and cultural domains, yet again with strong governmental backing. The non-governmental humanitarian organizations and Turkey's public diplomacy instruments have well facilitated such a relationship. The more relations have intensified, the more Turkey has been accused of following an Islamic foreign policy and supporting extremist Islamists. The AKP government is not the sole subject of this accusation, as allegations have also targeted non-governmental humanitarian organizations who have been blamed alike for supporting extremists. Israel, for

instance, declared the IHH as an outlawed organization with affiliations with terrorist organizations after the civilian Gaza flotilla incident (see Hartman, 2010).

On the other hand, Turkish Islam informs that the way Islam is approached in Turkey is an authentic and superior practice; thus it is believed to represent a synthesis between tradition and modernity and stands as an antidote to radicalism and extremism. For example, through utilizing Turkish Islamic discourse, Turkey fights against extreme groups in Europe as a way to campaign against intolerance towards Islam and Muslims. Utilization of similar discourse has led to an international competition throughout the former Ottoman hinterland for preserving the Ottoman/Turkish religio-cultural heritage and safeguarding it from the perceptively hostile attitudes of, particularly, the Saudi Arabian Islamic groups. The restored or newly built (or planned to be built) mosques visibly make the Turkish Islamic and Ottoman identity more salient, while the religious officials and materials sent from Turkey make the Turkish Islamic message vocally heard. Turkish Islam is and will continue to be promoted beyond the Ottoman hinterland towards Central Asia and Africa, and President Erdoğan's declaration of the decision to build a mosque in Cuba as the first place of worship for the Muslim islanders signals that such internationalism will not stop soon (for an account of Turkey's mosque-building diplomacy, see Seibert, 2015).

Islamic internationalism serves to portray Turkey as the defender of the Islamic cause worldwide, which facilitates its embarking on justifiable Turkish Islamic practices. On the other hand, Turkish Islamic practices provide a way out for the deprived Muslim communities and countries from the rule of extremists, therefore offering people a way to confidently act as Muslims while simultaneously aligning with non-Muslims against Islamic radicals. However, Turkish Islam's claims of superiority deepen the sectarian division within the *ummah*, hence rendering the Islamic internationalist message dysfunctional in the long run. What Turkey does with Islam coincides with this interrelationship with mutually overlapping and contradictory conclusions.

REFERENCES

- Africa seeks Turkish Islamic education. (2011, November 24). *Hurriyet Daily*. Retrieved on November 7, 2014 from <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/africa-seeks-turkish-islamic-education.aspx?pageID=238&nID=7725&NewsCatID=338>
- Altınok, M. (2012). Interview with President Abdullah Gül (Cumhurbaşkanı Abdullah Gül ile Röportaj), *Artı90*, April, 4–9.
- Aras, B. & Caha O. (2000). Fethullah Gülen and His Liberal “Turkish Islam” Movement. *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 4(4), 30–42.
- Atay, T. (1994). *Naqshbandi Sufis in a Western Setting*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
- Aydın, M. (2003). Twenty Years Before, Twenty Years After: Turkish Foreign Policy at the Threshold of the 21st Century. In T. Y. Ismael & M. Aydın (eds.), *Turkish Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A Changing Role in World Politics*. Burlington: Ashgate.
- Ayoob, M. (2012). Turkey's relations with the West and the Muslim World: A fine balancing. *Qantara.de*. Retrieved on June 2, 2014 from <http://en.qantara.de/content/turkeys-relations-with-the-west-and-the-muslim-world-a-fine-balancing-act>
- Balkanların en büyük camisi yapılıyor. (2014, December 16). *Sabah*. Retrieved on January 23, 2015 from <http://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2014/12/16/balkanlarin-en-buyuk-camisi-yapiliyor>
- Çağaptay, S. (2012, April 30). How Does the New Turkey Think? *Hürriyet Daily News*. Retrieved on November 20, 2014 from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-does-the-new-turkey-think>
- Cevik, S. (2013, Dec 11). Turkey's Humanitarian Assistance: The Fourth Largest Donor State. *Center on Public Diplomacy*. Retrieved on November 21, 2014 from <http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/turkey%E2%80%99s-humanitarian-assistance-fourth-largest-donor-state>
- Çitak, Z. (2010). Between ‘Turkish Islam’ and ‘French Islam’: The Role of the *Diyanet* in the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(4), 619–634.
- Criss, N. B. (2010). Dismantling Turkey: The will of the people? *Turkish Studies*, 11(1), 45–58.
- Dagi, I. (2005). Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization. *Turkish Studies*, 6(1), 21–37.
- Dere, A. (2008). The PRA of Turkey: The Emergence, Evolution and Perception of its Religious Services Outside of Turkey. *The Muslim World*. 98, 291–301.
- Dilligil, T. (1994). *Erbakancılık ve Erbakan*. Ankara: Onur.
- Duran, B. (2013). Understanding the AK Party's Identity Politics: A Civilizational Discourse and its Limitations. *Insight Turkey*, 15(1), 9–109.

- Duran, B. (2014, August 5). The role of Islam in Turkish foreign policy. *Daily Sabah*. Retrieved on August 30, 2014 from <http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/duran-burhanettin/2014/08/05/the-role-of-islam-in-turkish-foreign-policy>
- Duran, B. & Yilmaz, N. (2013). Islam, Models and the Middle East: The New Balance of Power following the Arab Spring. *Perceptions*, 18(4), 139–170. Retrieved on November 19, 2014 from http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Duran_Yilmaz.pdf
- Eurasian Islamic Meeting Report (1995) The First Eurasian Islamic Meeting held in Ankara, Turkey on 23–26 October 1995. Retrieved on November 20, 2014 from diyanet.gov.tr
- Eurasian Islamic Meeting Report (1998). The Third Eurasian Islamic Meeting held in Ankara, Turkey on 25–29 May 1998. Retrieved on November 20, 2014 from diyanet.gov.tr
- Eurasian Islamic Meeting Report (2000). The Fourth Eurasian Islamic Meeting held in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina on 25–28 July 2000. Retrieved on November 20, 2014 from diyanet.gov.tr
- Foreigners don't like Muslims, only their money: Turkish President Erdoğan. (2014, November 27). *Hurriyet Daily*. Retrieved on November 27, 2014 from <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/foreigners-dont-like-muslims-only-their-money-turkish-president-erdogan.aspx?PageID=238&NID=74893&NewsCatID=338>
- Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013. Retrieved on November 21, 2014 from <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/GHA-Report-2013.pdf>
- Güner, Ş. S. (2012). Religion and Preferences: A Decision theoretic Explanation of Turkey's New Foreign Policy. *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8, 217–230.
- Gurowitz, A. (2006). The Diffusion of International Norms: Why Identity Matters. *International Politics* 43, 305–341.
- Hartman, B. (2010, January 6). What is the IHH? *The Jerusalem Post*. Retrieved on November 20, 2014 from <http://www.jpost.com/middle-east/what-is-the-ihh>
- IHH contributes to peace in the Philippines. (2014, April 07). *Turkey Agenda*. Retrieved on August 29, 2014 from <http://www.turkeyagenda.com/ihh-contributes-to-peace-in-the-philippines-524.html>
- Jung, D. (2012). The Domestic Context of New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy: Does Religion Matter? *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 67, 23–38.
- Kanat, K. B. (2010). AK Party's Foreign Policy: Is Turkey Turning Away from the West? *Insight Turkey* 12(1), 205–225.
- Karagöz, S. (2014, November 17). Davutoğlu stresses Turkey's full support in Philippine peace process. *Daily Sabah*. Retrieved on November 20, 2014 from <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/11/17/turkey-pledges-to-support-philippine-peace-process>
- Korkut, Ş. (2010). The Diyanet of Turkey and Its Activities in Eurasia after the Cold War. *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 28, 117–139

- Kösebalaban, H. (2005). The Impact of Globalization on Islamic Political Identity: The Case of Turkey. *World Affairs* 168(1), 27–37.
- MacAskill, E. & Sherwood, H. (2013, March 22). Netanyahu apologises to Turkish PM for Israeli role in Gaza flotilla raid. *The Guardian*. Retrieved on March 7, 2014 from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/22/israel-apologises-turkey-gaza-flotilla-deaths>
- Mardin, Ş. (2005). Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture and Reconstruction in Operational Codes. *Turkish Studies* 6(2), 145–165.
- Nevzat, A. & Hatay, M. (2009). Politics, Society, and the Decline of Islam in Cyprus: From Ottoman Era to the Twenty-First Century. *Middle Eastern Studies* 45(6), 911–933.
- Öktem, K. (2012). Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks: Turkey's New Presence in the Balkans. *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 2012(1), 27–58.
- Öymen, O. (2005, June 1). TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, Birleşim 106, 245–249.
- Özcan, M. & Usul, A.R. (2011). Understanding the 'New' Turkish Foreign Policy: Changes within Continuity: Is Turkey Departing from the West? *USAK Yearbook of International Politics and Law* 4, 159–185.
- Özdalga, M.E. (2006). The Hidden Arab: A Critical Reading of the Notion of 'Turkish Islam'. *Middle Eastern Studies* 42(4), 551–570.
- Özdemir, S. (1999). *Atatürk Devriminin Diğer Ülkeler Üzerindeki Etkileri*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılapları Enstitüsü.
- Özdoğan, I. (2007, May 30). A parliamentary speech, TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, Birleşim 117, 133–136.
- Özkan, M. (2013). Turkey's Religious and Socio-Political Depth in Africa, Emerging Powers in Africa. *LSE IDEAS Special Report* 16, 45–50. Retrieved on 30 August 2014 from <http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR016/SR-016-Ozkan.pdf>
- Priştine'de yeni caminin yapımı görüşüldü. (2014, June 21). *Kosova Port*. Retrieved on August 15, 2014 from <http://www.kosovaport.com/pristinede-yeni-caminin-yapimi-gorusuldu/>
- Robins, P. (2007). Turkish Foreign Policy since 2002: between a 'Post-Islamist' Government and a Kemalist State. *International Affairs* 83(1), 289–304.
- Seilbert, T. (2015, February 13). Turkey's mosque-building diplomacy. *Al Monitor*. Retrieved on March 3, 2015 from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/turkey-mosque-building-soft-power.html#>
- Solberg, A.R. (2007). Balkan Muslims and Islam in Europe. *SudostEuropa* 55(4), 429–462.
- Sönmez, Z. (2015). A Life on the Edge: Syrian IDPs. *Caucasus International*, 5(1).
- Spencer, R. (2014, September 8). Obama and Turkey's Erdoğan discuss the importance of "combating the scourge of anti-Semitism". *Jihad Watch*. Retrieved on November 20, 2014 from <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2014/09/obama-and-turkeys-Erdoğan-discuss-the-importance-of-combating-the-scurge-of-anti-semitism>

- Tabak, H. (2014, November 20). Nongovernmental Humanitarianism in Turkey: The Quest for Internationalist Virtue. *Daily Sabah*. Retrieved on November 20, 2014 from <http://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/2014/11/20/nongovernmental-humanitarianism-in-turkey-the-quest-for-internationalist-virtue>
- Tepe, S. (2000). A Kemalist-Islamist movement? The nationalist action party. *Turkish Studies* 1(2), 59–72.
- Toprak, B. (1984). Politicization of Islam in a Secular State: The National Salvation Party in Turkey. In S. A. Arjomand (ed.), *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Tuğal, C. (2007). NATO's Islamists: Hegemony and Americanization in Turkey. *New Left Review* 44, 5–34. Retrieved on January 15, 2015 from <http://sociology.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/faculty/tugal/NATO's%20Islamists.pdf>
- Turkey president: Israel will suffer consequences for Gaza flotilla 'mistake'. (2010, June 8). *Haaretz*. Retrieved on August 29, 2014, from <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/turkey-president-israel-will-suffer-consequences-for-gaza-flotilla-mistake-1.294960>
- Turkey's Deputy PM Numan Kurtulmuş speaks on Islamophobia. (2014, November 8). *Daily Sabah*. Retrieved on November 17, 2014 from <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/11/08/turkeys-deputy-pm-numan-kurtulmus-spoke-on-islamophobia>
- Turkey's rise as a peace mediator will continue under Davutoğlu. (2014, August 29). *Turkey Agenda*. Retrieved on August 29, 2014 from <http://www.turkeyagenda.com/turkeys-rise-as-a-peace-mediator-will-continue-under-Davutoğlu-1089.html>
- Turkish PM calls on 'Muslim Turks' to walk tall against Islamophobia. (2015, January 8). *Anadolu Agency*. Retrieved on January 17, 2015 from <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/news/447364--turkish-pm-calls-on-muslim-turks-to-hold-head-high>
- Unal, S. (2012). Montenegro and the Muslims: Interview with President of the Islamic Religious Authority Rifat Fejzic. *Arti90*, April, 24–25.
- Warning, M. & Kardaş, T. (2011). The Impact of Changing Islamic Identity on Turkey's New Foreign Policy. *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 10(2–3), 123–140.
- White, J. (2013). *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Yeneroğlu, M. (2013a) "Orta Kesimin Aşırılığı" Neden Güvenlik Tedbirleri Kapsamına Alınmıyor? *Perspektif Dergisi* 19(219), 8–9. Retrieved on August 30, 2014 from http://www.igmg.org/fileadmin/magazine/perspektif/2013/2013-03/files/perspektif_mart_2013.pdf
- Yeneroğlu, M. (2013b) Çağdaş Selefizm Çıkmazı. *Perspektif Dergisi* 19(219). Retrieved on August 30, 2014 from http://www.igmg.org/fileadmin/magazine/perspektif/2013/2013-03/files/perspektif_mart_2013.pdf
- Yesilada, B. & Noordjik, P. (2010). Changing Values in Turkey: Religiosity and Tolerance in Comparative Perspective *Turkish Studies* 11(1), 9–27.

Yesilada, B. & Rubin, B. (2010) Introduction. *Turkish Studies* 11(1), 3–7.

Yetkin, M. (2015, January 10). Turkey should be constructive in countering radicalism. *Hurriyet Daily*. Retrieved on January 17, 2015 from <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-should-be-constructive-in-countering-radicalism-.aspx?PageID=238&NID=76750&NewsCatID=409>

ottoman.us

naksibendi.org

saltanat.org