ROLE CONCEPTIONS OF TURKEY IN NEW ERA OF THE MIDDLE EAST: ISRAEL AND SAUDI ARABIA CASES

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ABSTRACT

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This master's thesis examines the role performances of Turkey in the Middle East with the focus on 2011-2022 period, particularly in its bilateral relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia, within the conceptual framework provided by the role theory of foreign policy analysis. The study focuses on the ideational and material sources of Turkey's national role conceptions, and aims to explain Turkey's foreign policy choices. The findings suggest that Turkey's national role conceptions are under transition after Arab uprisings due to its limited material capacity, and that Turkey is undergoing a complex and ongoing strategic adaptation process driven by its role sources with the focus on material factors. Despite the tensions and contradictions in its foreign policy, Turkey's role as an economic partner, regional leader and possible as a mediator and regional security provider has the potential to enhance its influence in the Middle East.

Keywords: Turkish Foreign Policy, Role Theory, National Role Conceptions, Role Performances, Middle East

ÖZ

ORTA DOĞU'NUN YENİ DÖNEMİNDE TÜRKİYE'NİN ROL KONSEPTİ:
İSRAİL VE SUUDİ ARABİSTAN ÖRNEKLERİ

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Bu yüksek lisans tezi, Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu'daki rol performanslarını (2011-2022), özellikle İsrail ve Suudi Arabistan ile ilişkilerinde, dış politika analizinin rol teorisinin sağladığı kavramsal çerçeve içinde incelemektedir. Çalışma, Türkiye'nin rol konseptlerinin fikirsel ve maddi kaynaklarına odaklanmakta ve Türkiye'nin dış politika tercihlerindeki değişimleri açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bulgular, Türkiye'nin sınırlı maddi kapasitesi nedeniyle Arap ayaklanmalarından sonra rol konseptlerinin değişim sürecinde olduğunu ve Türkiye'nin maddi faktörlere odaklanan rol kaynaklarının yönlendirdiği devam eden bir stratejik uyum sürecinden geçtiğini göstermektedir. Dış politikasındaki gerilim ve çelişkilere rağmen, Türkiye ekonomik ortak, bölgesel lider rolü ve olası bir arabulucu, bölgesel güvenlik sağlayıcı gibi rol konseptleri ile Ortadoğu'daki etkisini arttırma potansiyeline sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Dış Politikası, Rol Teori, Rol Konseptleri, Rol Performansları, Ortadoğu

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LIST OF SYMBOLS/ ABBREVIATIONS

EEZs: Exclusive Economic Zones

EU: European Union

FPA: Foreign Policy Analysis

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

HD: Humanitarian Diplomacy

IR: International Relations

JDP: Justice and Development Party

OIC: Organization of Islamic Cooperation

OPEC: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party

UAE: United Arab Emirates

US: United States

YPG: People's Protection Units

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Between the period between 2011-2022, Turkey's foreign policy underwent a transformation due to global, regional, and domestic changes. After the Justice and Development Party (JDP) took power, JDP leaders wanted closer ties with Middle Eastern countries and interested in enacting several new roles. Therefore, when the Arab uprisings were a significant turning point for the whole region, it initially increased hopes in Ankara for the possibility of extending Turkey's influence in the region (Altunışık, 2020, p. 4). The structural uncertainty created a space to perform Turkey's new role conceptions in the region. However, post-uprisings developments exposed Turkey's limitations in its quest for regional leadership and its ability to influence events to its liking (Altunışık, 2020, p. 5). Therefore, after ten years of Arab uprisings, Turkey found itself in problematic relations with regional countries except for Qatar (Tür, 2019). Following the Arab uprisings, Turkey's relations with Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) severely deteriorated (Habibi, 2023). Therefore several challenges that Turkey faced during and after the Arab uprisings have led a change of roles conceptions of Turkish policy-makers.

The transformation of Turkey's roles between 2011 and 2022 can be track by ideational and material sources of national role conceptions. These changes reflected Turkey's history of regional ambitions and its evolving strategic priorities and opportunities. The changes were complex and dynamic in nature. The period during Arab uprising and afterwards witnessed ongoing new role construction processes due to Turkey's ideational and material sources. This new role construction has included Turkey's

ideational sources include historical and cultural ties to the Middle East due to its imperial past and its emphasis on Islamic values and principles (Altunışık, 2022, p. 5). For a long time, Turkey overlooked its relations with the Middle East past and its Islamic identity; however, these factors have shaped Turkey's regional ambitions and desire to play a more active and influential role in the Middle East after the 1980s, with the Özal administration. An example of this was during the Turgut Özal years (1983-1989 as Prime Minister and 1989-1993 as President), where there was a clear objective of improving trade and investment with the Middle East while being involved in the Gulf Crisis of 1990-1991 (Altunışık, 2009, p. 171). In 1997, the Welfare Party came to power and initiated a policy that prioritized relations with the Middle East and the Islamic world at the expense of Turkey's ties with the West (Altunışık & Martin, 2011, p. 570).

However, under the JDP, Turkey's involvement in the Middle East has become more comprehensive, multi-faceted, and more profound than in previous examples (Altunışık & Martin, 2011, p. 570). With former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2009-2014) and later Prime Minister (2014-2016) Davutoğlu's idea of "neo-ottomanism", the JDP administration reshaped Turkey's approach of the Middle East countries, with a special emphasis on its Ottoman past and Islamic identity. Turkey's recognition of its historical and cultural roots in the neighboring regions is leading to a new understanding of these areas. This is due to a new geographic imagination that is being promoted, as argued by former minister of Foreign Affairs and former Prime Minister, Davutoglu in his book, Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik) (Aras, 2009, p. 131). For example, in Strategic Depth, he made an argument about the conflict over Jerusalem and he claims that the Ottoman archives are necessary to solve any political problem in the region, which includes the Middle East peace process (Davutoglu, 2011, p. 333.) He aims to bring Turkey's Ottoman past into play to support its position in the process (Aras, 2009, p. 131) and became one of an important architects for Turkey's new ideational sources.

However, accordingly to Akbaba and Özdamar (2019), with the Arab uprisings, Turkish policy-makers realized the vast discrepancy between state's elite's ambitious

role conceptualization and the country's military, economic, and political capabilities. Thies (2010, p. 690) mentioned that "material factors of roles selected by states are conditioned by their capabilities. The empirical analysis demonstrates that the choice of roles and socialization activity regarding roles is heavily conditioned by material capabilities."

Turkey's material capabilities, its geopolitical, security, and economic interests therefore, became more visible after 2019 period. One of the reasons of these limitations are changing global and regional system. The Middle East sub-regional system has experienced a transformation process due to recent changes in world politics, including Chinese and Russian influence, US strategies, and the willingness of regional countries to seek new agendas to redefine their roles. Between 1990 and 2005, during the so-called "American Period in the Middle East," the majority of MENA states and extra-regional actors with regional interests defined their responsibilities per the roles established by the US (Hazbun, 2018, p.4). Moreover, since the end of the Cold War, the US has served as a significant security producer and traditionally the most extensive power broker in the region, as seen in the Gulf Wars and its hostility against Iran's rising influence.

Nevertheless, the US has rescaled its engagement with the region over the last few years. The claim was that the US should rethink its many roles in regional security structures, trade relations, and diplomacy as a result of the developing bipolarity in world politics brought on by China's ascent (Darwich, 2019, p. 23). However, the rethinking does not mean for the US to completely cut ties with the Middle East. The US is shifting toward a more indirect role in dealing with Middle East crises rather than actively influencing regional affairs (Lynch & Jamal, 2018, p. 3). The changes in the US role in various regional crises, such as the Syrian civil war, has given China and other extra-regional actors like Russia a chance to expand their influence there and position themselves as potential allies (Lynch & Jamal, 2018).

Furthermore, this does not mean China is willing or capable of replacing the US in the Middle East (Hale, 2023). China's successful mediation efforts between Saudi Arabia

and Iran may show Beijing's declaration that it is willing to arbitrate conflicts on a bigger scale than in the past. However, for now, China may gain from increased diplomatic and economic clout while letting the US continue taking the lead on regional security issues (Hale, 2023). For another critical extra-regional actor Russia, despite the close relationship with China, both countries tend to stay out of the Middle East (Ramani, 2023). Russia sees China's recent diplomatic efforts in the region as a positive development towards a multipolar regional order. However, Russia is concerned about being overshadowed by China as a potential conflict mediator (Ramani, 2023). Although they agree on opposing unilateral sanctions and democratic uprisings in the region, China does not always share Russia's views on regional crises and its power projection strategy.

Regional powers have responded to this changing external and regional environment and China-Russia alternative to the influence of the US. The changes in the region are not a new phenomenon; they can be traced back to the US's invasion of Iraq in 2003. By invading Iraq, the US changed the power structure of the Middle East by diminishing Iraq's regional role as a balancer to Iran (Gause, 2017, p. 672). The invasion of Iraq resulted in the rising influence of non-Arab states. Then the Arab uprisings and civil wars changed the regional roles of the major Arab regional powers, Egypt and Syria (Hazbun, 2018, p. 5). The elimination of the traditional Arab powers led Saudi Arabia and, at some level, Egypt to represent the Arab side of the region. Their behavior experienced significant uncertainty due to how they believed external actors' roles had changed. Therefore, regional powers' attitudes changed towards external actors and among themselves, such; external actors, the last OPEC decisions (Reuters, 2023), choosing China/Russia mediation over the US's (Yazdanshenas and Saleh, 2023), and regional actors, the GCC countries pursuing normalization with Israel (Al Jazeera, 2022); Saudi Arabia, and Iran opened new diplomatic process with China's mediation (Yazdanshenas and Saleh, 2023); Syria and Turkey are seeking normalization (Lister, 2023); new dialogues between Turkey and Israel (Cook, 2022); and efforts initiated by Syria to reclaim its position in the Arab League (Al Jazeera, 2023) might be indicated a new era and new role conceptions in Middle East politics. New dialogues have been formed recently, and it is essential to ask about the dynamics behind the relations between Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey since the Arab uprisings.

Furthermore, the interaction between their foreign policy choices and new roles they had to pursue or/and were willing to pursue gains significance.

Also, with the withdrawal decision and several disagreements with Turkey due to the US Middle East policies, the relations between Turkey and the US have weakened (Akbaba, Özdamar, 2019). Ankara has also sought to expand its influence by developing closer relations with key regional and extra-regional actors such as Qatar and Russia, buying Russia's S-400 missile defense system and establishing military bases in Qatar are important examples (Oğuzlu, 2020, p. 137). These efforts have been driven partly by a desire to counterbalance the influence of other regional powers. Moreover, Turkey used to be a trusted mediator in the Middle East's long-term conflicts, such as Syria and Israel or Iran and Western states; however, with the decline in relations with Israel since 2009 and worsening relations with Syria, mediation efforts stopped. (Halistoprak et al., 2014, p. 105) . Turkey's militarized foreign policy, combined with regional isolation, has become unsustainable domestically. Moreover, the economic costs of Turkish activism and geopolitical tensions have added to an already fragile economic situation, fueled by Ankara's weak national currency and high inflation rate. As a result, Turkey's foreign policy has become more pragmatic, with a focus on regaining regional and global prestige (Talbot, 2022).

Ankara tried to maintain its influence in the Middle East within the 2011-2019 period and to establish itself as a *regional leader* (Akbaba, et al., 2019) and while the rivalry between Israel and Turkey started before the Arab uprisings (see "One Minute" 2009, Mavi Marmara flotilla 2010), Saudi-Turkish competition started during Arab uprisings. Turkey's ruling party, the JDP, has roots in political Islam and has emphasized Turkey's role as a *leader of the Muslim world* (Akbaba, et al., 2019). The national role conception of the leader of the Muslim world has an effect, particularly in its relations with Saudi Arabia, which is also a key player in the Islamic world, and Israel, a long-standing regional "foe" for the majorly Muslim Middle East. Furthermore, Turkey's Islamic identity and its major support made Ankara the "champion of Palestinian conflict" by undermining its relations with Israel (Mansoor, 2022). These two ideational sources as rhetoric also shaped Turkey's other role as a

protector of the oppressed (Davutoğlu, 2012). Davutoğlu directly announced this understanding of foreign policy in "The Arab Awakening and Peace in the New Middle East: Muslim and Christian Perspectives" conference in 2012. The Turkish leaders' perception of their nation's role as protector of the oppressed is based on their commitment towards Muslim people globally and their responsibility to manage situations related to Muslim countries (Kara, Sözen, 2016, p. 61), therefore deeply connected with the role of the Muslim leader. During the OIC conference in August 2014, Davutoğlu emphasized the Islamic world's responsibility to defend the Palestinian people's rights against Israeli aggression and the need to provide humanitarian aid to Gaza (Kara, Sözen, 2016, p. 61). Moreover, the JDP claims that Turkey has a responsibility to the people living in areas that the Ottoman Empire once controlled, and the reason behind this claim is that the Ottoman Empire is considered the perfect example of an Islamic state, given its vast territory and nearly nine centuries of existence (Altunışık, 2022, p. 5). Therefore, the JDP argues that Turkey's "deep-rooted past," along with the values derived from Islamic identity, gives Turkey a responsibility (Altunışık, 2022, p. 5).

However, the Arab uprising process came with significant challenges and led to changes in Turkish foreign policy performances once again. The changes first shown in Turkey's encouraging rapprochement signals from Turkey's President Erdoğan were sent to some of the target nations starting in 2019. However, the real action in this regard did not start until 2021 with a number of high-level diplomatic visits (Habibi, 2023, p. 5). Since 2021, Ankara has taken the initiative to normalize its relations with the Middle Eastern countries, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt, to overcome regional isolation and bad economic conditions (Habibi, 2023, p. 1). After two diplomatic missions from the UAE to Ankara in August and November 2021, Erdoğan traveled there in February 2022 to try to mend strained ties that had developed between the two nations since the Arab uprisings as a result of Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, its aid to Qatar during the blockade, and its actions in Syria (Al Jazeera, 2022). Turkey also signed a normalization agreement with Israel in 2022. Morover, Turkey is under the diplomatic reconciliation process in Syria with the mediation of China and Iran since the end of 2022 (Yildiz, 2023), shows Turkey's

effort to reconsider its foreign policy roles accordingly to Ankara's ideational and material sources.

While pursuing this research, it is important to ask the question, "What are the ideational and material sources of Turkey's national role conception?'' The purpose of this master's thesis is to explain Turkey's foreign policy choices by its bilateral relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia with the conceptual framework provided by the role theory of foreign policy analysis to offer an understanding of the transformation of Turkish foreign policy, as well as changes in the Middle East regional structure. While doing that, it is hoped that this research could contribute to the literature on role theory, foreign policy analysis, Middle East Studies, and International Relations. To pursue this analyses, four methodological tools have been adopted; case study, secondary data, literature analysis, and content analysis. By analyzing the role performances of Ankara throughout the Arab uprisings (2011-2019), the ideational sources of Turkish foreign policy might be categorized into two main factors, historical/cultural identity, and Islamic identity. Material sources of Turkish foreign policy could be found in Turkey's growing economic and military power, as well as the constantly changing regional balance of power in the Middle East. This master's thesis uses an interactionist approach to the role theory in Turkish foreign policy analysis in order to determine the ideological and material sources of Turkey's national role conception. Role theory acts at various levels of analysis, connecting agency and structures, and offers a conceptual toolkit for understanding intricate social processes (Darwich; Kaarbo, 2020, p. 235). Another important aspect of role theory is that it allows the investigation of intra- and inter-conflicts in different foreign policy choices (Thies, 2009; Altunışık, 2022).

Role theory posits that actors in international politics are not fixed entities with predetermined identities and interests. Instead, their identities and interests are constructed through social interaction with other actors. This means that actors can actively shape their identities and interests by interacting with others (Breuning, 2023). Ultimately, with insights into interactionist approaches of the role theory, foreign

policy analysts can gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the political changes happening in the Middle East.

According to role theory, the foreign policy actions of a state can be attributed to the foreign policy role conceptions of the ruling elites (Özdamar et al., 2014, p. 93). This suggests that the roles that individuals in positions of power perceive their state to have in the international community can influence the decisions made in foreign policy. Understanding the foreign policy role conceptions of ruling elites, comprehending the motivations behind a state's foreign policy actions, and potentially predicting future changes in foreign policy behaviors. Role theory provides a useful framework for analyzing and explaining changes in actors' foreign policy behaviors.

Therefore, Turkey is an important country to analyze in order to understand changes in the Middle East regional structure, and its role has been significantly impacted by the changes and developments that have occurred in the region. Prior to the Arab uprisings, Turkey enjoyed strong relationships with Arab regimes, which were based on economic and social ties (Barkey, 2011). These links included cross-border trade, foreign investment, and foreign aid, as well as Turkish soap operas, education, and religion (Barkey, 2011). However, the Arab uprisings have brought about significant changes that have weakened some of these relationships. Despite this, Turkey has increased its sphere of influence in the region, as it has worked hard to improve its relations with the governments and people of the area (Özdamar et al., 2014, p. 94). As a result, Turkey has been able to maintain its position as one of the key players in the Middle East. Understanding Turkish foreign policy also offers a broader approach to changes in the Middle East.

Moreover, according to role theory, foreign policy behavior is shaped by the material sources of the states' in the system in which they operate, such as opportunities to act, material capacities of the state, and the ideational sources of the decision makers' perceive for the state, such as identity, and cultural heritage (Breuning, 2011). Therefore states manifest their identity and interests accordingly to their role conceptions as their place in international relations (Altunışık, 2022, p. 3). Role theory,

with its focus on the interaction between ideational and material factors, is a comprehensive approach that integrates both domestic politics and decision-making, making it a valuable perspective in Foreign Policy Analysis (Darwich & Kaarbo, 2020, p. 236). Therefore, this master's thesis will analyze Turkey's role sources by covering the domestic, regional, and international level analysis, as well as the foreign policy decision-makers' understanding of Turkey's position under the role theory framework to understand the national role contestation and foreign policy behavior of Ankara's in transforming Middle East. In this conjuncture, it is essential to analyze Turkey's role orientations and foreign policy as a regional power in order to understand changes in the Middle East.

Role theory is useful for understanding Turkish foreign policy and the changing dynamics in the Middle East. The current international and regional composition is in transition, with the rise of China transforming the global structure into a more multi-lateral state. This shift has led to the US withdrawing from the Middle East, providing more space for middle powers like Turkey to assert themselves (Kamrava, 2018, p. 2). The region is defined as a multipolar system without norms, institutions, or mechanisms to balance to constrain conflict and the use of force (Hazbun, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, regional powers attempted to achieve regional hegemon objectives by building new regional connections and coalitions while also exploiting the complete or near disintegration of central power in a number of Middle Eastern nations following 2011 (Kamrava, 2018, p. 2). Furthermore, Turkish domestic politics have undergone significant changes since the start of the Arab uprisings, which has impacted its foreign policy decisions, particularly with severe economic crises caused by international power shifts and an illiberal domestic realm (Öniş, Kutlay, 2021, p. 500).

Foreign policy analysis is a crucial component of understanding global affairs. It seeks to understand and explore the behaviors of global actors in order to describe and analyze international phenomena (Kara, Sözen, 2016, p. 48). By applying the role theory framework to the case of Turkish foreign policy during the Arab uprisings period and afterward, we can better understand any changes that may have occurred,

specifically by examining national role conceptions (NRCs) to see if they have shifted over time. Role theory also helps us identify role sources and how they gain or lose priority in response to domestic and international constraints. By applying these concepts, one can better understand the complex forces that shape foreign policy decisions. Overall, the role theory approach is a valuable tool for comprehending Turkish foreign policy's complex and evolving dynamics in the Middle East.

By analyzing the recent role performances of Turkey with Israel and Saudi Arabia and focusing on the ideational and material role sources of Turkish foreign policy, the findings of this master's thesis are; Turkey's national role conceptions under transition after Arab uprisings due to its limited material capacity and some of the new and/or old national role conceptions are; Turkey is undergoing a complex and ongoing strategic adaptation process driven by both ideational and material factors, which is reflected in its changing roles in the Middle East. Despite the tensions and contradictions in its foreign policy, Turkey's roles as an *economic partner* and *regional power,* and some aspired roles as a *mediator* and *regional security provider* has the potential to enhance its influence in the Middle East. However, in order to achieve these national role conceptions, Turkey needs to carefully balance its ideational and material sources to ensure that its foreign policy is aligned with its interests and values. The future of Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East will depend on how it navigates these challenges and adapts to the changing regional landscape while also seeking to maintain its regional influence and position.

This master's thesis will begin with an in-depth examination of the conceptual framework and literature review of role theory approaches. By doing so, a better understanding of the theoretical foundation of the framework can be gained, and the different approaches used in previous research can be identified. The second part of the thesis will provide background information on the complex and often volatile relations between Turkey-Israel, and Turkey-Saudi Arabia. This section will explore the historical, political, and economic factors that have influenced the dynamics of these relationships over time. Finally, the thesis will investigate the Israeli-Turkish and Turkish-Saudi relations by analyzing them within the framework of role theory.

Specifically, the roles of Turkey will be examined to understand how they have evolved over time and how this has impacted their interactions with one another. Through this analysis, a deeper understanding of the role theory framework and its applications in the context of international relations and foreign policy analysis can be achieved.

CHAPTER 2

ROLE THEORY IN FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

2.1. The Foreign Policy Analysis in the Middle East

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the political changes happening in the Middle East, one can turn to the field of Foreign Policy Analysis. The interaction of the environment surrounding the states, as well as the behavior of the states themselves, plays a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of the region. According to the structuralist approach to International Relations, states operate within the limits of the structures in which they exist. However, the interactionist tradition argues that the opposite is also true: international politics is formed by what states make of it (Wendt, 1992). This means that states have agency, and they are not simply passive actors within a given structure. Instead, they can actively shape and influence their environment through their decisions and actions. Therefore, focusing on the agency (states), what decision-makers perceive, and how they act is important, according to foreign policy analysts and International Relations scholars. Role theory is also inherently constructivist, and it agrees with the assumption of Wendt (1992) (Breuning, 2023, p. 193).

2.2. What is role theory?

Role theory is the conceptual understanding the foreign policy analysis that seeks to explain foreign policy behavior with a focus on decision-makers' (agents') perspectives

without overlooking the systems (structures) they are in. Consequently, role theory recognizes behavioral IR's fundamental traits, which call attention to the cognitive constraints on human decision-makers, their limited ability to process information, and the different biases and heuristics that influence their reasoning (Breuning, 2019, p. 1). Social psychology, anthropology, and sociology originated the role theory (Harnisch, 2011). Two branches of role theory characterize scholarship in these fields: structural role theory and symbolic interactionism. Both approaches stress the necessity to examine social phenomena from the viewpoints of those involved in social processes, but their emphasis is different. Symbolic interactionism places more emphasis on how people interpret and reinvent their roles than structural role theory does on how people are socialized in pre-existing roles. (McGuire, et al., 1985).

The essential tenet of role theory in foreign policy analysis is that every state has a particular role within the international system in which it functions. In IR foreign policy analysis, it is common to categorize a state's foreign policy, such as "non-aligned," "bloc-leader," or "balancer". These classifications aid in explaining more diverse diplomatic behavior and are widely applied to comprehend Cold War-era systems. Role theory's involvement in IR and FPA in this sense can be traced back to the seminal work of Holtsi. He contends that perceptions of national roles show how decision-makers frame the commitments and actions they see fitting for their state's foreign policy. The origins of the national role conception include Alter's prescriptions (the "others") for the national role and policy-makers' views (the "ego") of that role. Position affects how well a nation executes its foreign policy objectives (Holtsi, 1970, p. 245). Holtsi's research on completing a content analysis of all of the leaders' utterances from January 1965 to December 1967, Holsti assigned 17 roles for foreign policy. Thies (2009) contends that studying foreign policy behavior, in addition to the statements of foreign policy elites, is a credible method of identifying roles.

2.3. The Role Conflict

Role theory offers a framework for examining nations as actors in foreign policy. Such actors may play not only a single role but also hold several different roles, which may

cause role conflicts (Holtsi, 1970). A state could participate in the system in several ways. A state might be a bloc leader in a subregional system while non-aligned globally also could hold more than one role in the same system. Holsti (1970) claims that this condition leads to “inter-role conflict.” The question is how agents handle this strain and tension, given that states frequently have many role conceptions and that other entities may have role expectations for these states incompatible with ego definitions (Thies, 2009). Role conflict is typically defined in one of three ways: as a conflict between nationally defined roles and internationally accepted expectations for those roles, as a dispute between two prescriptions for the same roles, or as a conflict between aspects of the same role (Thies, 2009). Barnett (1993) theorizes the roots of conflict in the Middle East before 1967, and he suggests the conflict lies in the struggle between the roles of those emphasizing sovereignty and those emphasizing pan-Arabism is an example of inter-role conflict. When roles conflict, the actor must decide which one to play, which could alter how they view that role and how it influences how they behave in foreign policy (Barnett, 1993, p. 288). As Thies (2013) mentioned, the new role construction usually stresses existing roles, especially if the material resources of states do not meet the needs of a new role. Under this situation, the actors of the international structure (mostly great powers) force states to form appropriate roles (Thies, 2009).

Another significant question was highlighted by Cantir and Kaarbo (2016) in their seminal work. The assumption that all domestic political players share ruling elite groups' expectations of what role they should play on the international stage persists. To put it another way, most role analyses tend to "anthropomorphize" the state (Harnisch, 2012, p. 52). In their book *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations*, Cartir, and Kaarbo (2016) investigate the effects of internal role disputes on states' foreign policy procedures and behaviors as well as the domestic contestation of national roles. They list the current work in the field of foreign policy analysis as well as the vertical (elites vs. the public) and horizontal (elites vs. elites) potential sites of role contestation within states, and they offer preliminary suggestions for contributions that could be made by fusing the work in foreign policy analysis with role theory. They contend that role theory analysis needs to take into account the domestic political system while attempting to comprehend and

explain a nation's foreign policy, and the book analyzes nine different foreign policy cases under the domestic contestations approach. Brummer and Thies (2015) also discuss the role of government and opposition party interactions in defining and performing national role conceptions in parliamentary democracies, using the Federal Republic of Germany as a case study. The evidence supports the proposition that opposition parties would attempt to substitute or modify a government national role conception, but there was little conflict within the cabinet based on differences in party ideology of the coalition parties (Brummer & Thies, 2015). Individual cabinet members' beliefs and their bureaucratic interests affected national role contestation, and individual personalities within the cabinet were key with respect to the management, contestation, and selection of the Federal Republic of Germany's national role conceptions.

2.4. Master Roles and Auxiliary Roles

As mentioned, states typically have multiple roles that vary in overall importance (centrality) and according to the situation (salience) (Chafetz 1996–1997, p. 664). The ideas of master roles and auxiliary roles were developed by Thies (2013) in an effort to understand further that a state's many functions may differ in importance. A master role is important in every circumstance, while an auxiliary function only matters in some contexts or in particular interactions with other states. According to Thies' hypothesis, auxiliary roles will either be "consistent with their master roles or will be subject to socializing pressure to abandon those auxiliary roles or transition to a different master status." (2013, p. 46).

2.5. The Role Learning

Role theory contributes to FPA's primary goal of bridging the gap between theory and practice (Walker, 2010). Walker (2010) claims that role theory's focus on role placement can help reduce the uncertainty in grand theories. According to his research (Walker, 2010), role theory is conceptualized as social enough to take into account how actors interact with one another within complex adaptive systems, which leads to

the development of plausible and systemic explanations for particular courses of foreign policy behavior under specific circumstances. Harnisch (2011) also poses the question of how the “roles nation play” can aid in our comprehension of foreign policy-making procedures. He argues that by engaging in conversation on role theory and foreign policy learning, they can complement each other and assist in addressing some of their flaws. In particular, Harnisch introduces a Meadian conceptualization of foreign policy role learning, which emphasizes that, in order to have an impact on the social structure of international relations, as-if-role taking of new roles must be complemented by respective counter-role taking, for instance, through practice rather than rhetoric (2011, p. 48). The origins of role learning that arise from the interaction of agent and structure have been neglected by the methodological individualism and structuralism of role theory. Foreign policy decision-making can be better understood by integrating role theory and foreign policy learning to connect structure and agency. This integration, along with Mead's interactionist approach, can provide more analytical clarity to the study of foreign policy learning (Harnisch, 2012, p. 47). According to Harnisch (2012), role theory explains the impact of individual or organizational learning on a community by accounting for various forms of "role taking". Additionally, a role theory interpretation that incorporates "role making" reveals that learning is a combination of individual creativity and societal expectation in the process of "as-if role taking". Therefore, by considering both "role taking" and "role making", we can further understand foreign policy learning (Harnisch, 2012). This approach provides an analytical framework that can be used to analyze the dynamic interaction between structure and agency in foreign policy decision-making therefore contributing to the Foreign Policy Analysis literature. According to Walker, role theory is a valuable approach to foreign policy analysis due to its descriptive concepts and potential to bridge different levels of analysis (Walker, 1987). It also offers advantages in terms of explanation and can help integrate foreign policy analysis and international relations, particularly through constructivist meta-theory (Thies, 2010).

2.6. Foreign Policy Behaviour

Role theory has become a valuable theoretical framework for understanding foreign policy behavior. Therefore, one of the most important contributions of role theory to FPA is that role theory focuses on decision-makers' perspectives to analyze foreign policy behavior without ignoring the system in which they operate. In other words, the patterns of how state's decision-makers perceive several potential actions with the concern of the international environment they are in is a strength of role theory (Breuning, 2023, p. 187). By doing so, role theory offers a more nuanced understanding of foreign policy behavior by recognizing the complexity of the decision-making process. Moreover, role theory might serve as a unified stand between the structuralist legacy of IR and the agency-oriented tradition of FPA (Thies & Breuning, 2011).

2.7. The Agent-Structure Debate

According to Harnisch (2011), a role theory approach adds value by providing a conceptual vocabulary for understanding how one or more actors interact with the system. One can look at ego and alter role expectancies, role conflict, or the role location process to try to understand the relative strengths of each. The potential of role theory to close the gap between agency and structure and its capacity to take into account both ideational and material aspects in explaining state behavior has received particular attention. Thies and Breuning (2012) contend that, albeit from slightly different angles, both IR theory and FPA focus on the "agent-structure debate." The authors contend that role theory has the potential to serve as the unification point between the structure-oriented analytical legacy of IR and the individual-oriented analytical tradition of FPA. Breuning (2011, p. 16) asserts that role theory merits better integration with norms and identity scholarship because it not only establishes the connection between identity and behavior but also offers the tools necessary for a systematic empirical investigation of the relative weight of agent and structure as determinants of foreign policy behavior. Harnisch (2012) suggests that role theory and foreign policy learning can be effective in explaining foreign policy decision-making

if they are integrated together to bridge the gap between structure and agency. By incorporating Mead's interactionist approach, role theory can bring more analytical clarity to the study of foreign policy learning (Harnisch, 2012, p. 47).

Roles investigate how leaders' views of their nation's global standing interact with ideational and material restraints from beyond its borders by combining ideational and material considerations (Breuning, 2011). From this focal point, recent efforts have adopted a more sociological and symbolic interactionalist approach in which roles are not "sets of rights and duties attached to particular social positions" prior to interaction (Breuning, 2011). Early role theory research was largely structurally focused, examining how roles were distributed in the international system and how they constrained agents (McCourt, 2012, p. 376) in an orderly with the structural approach of the role theory research. In the 21st century, instead, the emphasis is placed on "how individuals acquire and apply the assumptions that create roles within interaction" (McCourt, 2012, p. 376). According to Grossman, Schortgen, and Friedrichs (2022), uncertainty arises whenever a state's shifting international status necessitates developing and implementing new auxiliary roles, putting existing role relationships in jeopardy as they necessitate acceptance through comparable counter-roles. They contend that when the relative material standing of great powers changes, uncertainty is especially high, which encourages (or intimidates) other states to alter their roles (Grossman et al., 2022). They contend that the degree of internal and external pressure that states in the international system are subjected to in the form of role expectations influences their motivation and strategies for responding to the uncertain environment (Grossman et al., 2022, p. 7).

2.8. Ideational and Material Sources

The study on role theory distinguishes between ideational and material sources of national roles. Ideational variables have to perform with a country's history, cultural heritage, and sense of national identity versus material considerations, which are concerned with a country's age, size, location, economic situation (including developmental status), alliances, and resulting relative influence in the international

system (Akbaba, Özdamar, p. 5, 2019). In their book on role theory in the MENA region, Akbaba and Özdamar (2019) examine the foreign policies of Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, as competing powers for regional leadership, and they employ the "cognitive model of the agent-structure relationship" developed by Breuning (2011). The model (Breuning, 2011) focuses on how national role concepts are influenced by ideational variables and material components of international relations and how these concepts help nations explain their foreign policy behavior by focusing on the decision maker's understanding of states' sources. The model distinguishes between national role conceptions and actual foreign policy behavior in accordance with Holsti's (1970) initial definition of national role conception.

Nevertheless, religion is not explicitly mentioned in the ideational conceptual underpinnings of the model. Therefore, Akbaba and Özdamar (2019) integrate religion into role theory as an ideational source. They contend that situating religion in a broad theoretical framework is possible through comprehending the function of religion in foreign policy analysis through faith-based role conceptions.

Role theory also offers a significant analytical tool in order to understand different foreign policy performances and roles. Aras and Gorener (2010) apply the role theory's ideational bases in order to analyze Turkey's foreign policy activism. The authors (2010) have discovered that an agent-centered foreign policy approach, exemplified by the concept of national role conceptions, provides the most convincing reason for the altered rhetoric and policy instruments used by Turkish foreign policy since 2002 (Aras, Gorener, 2010, p. 90). By defining the national concepts of the ruling elite, they have been able to identify the ideational foundations of Turkey's policy engagement in the Middle East. Moreover, Ovalı (2013) analyzed Turkish foreign policy roles by examining the domestic and external bases of Turkey's activism in the Middle East. He argues that Turkey's role in the Middle East has evolved from its previous stance and now includes positions as a regional leader, protector, defender of Islam, bridge, model, mediator, and liberalizer. These roles are largely shaped by the self-perceptions of the JDP leadership as well as feedback from external actors (Ovalı, 2013, p. 16). Altunışık (2022) uses the role theory framework to explain Turkey's Humanitarian

Diplomacy (HD). In her research, Altunışık (2022) argues that analyzing human development (HD) as a role conception can help connect it with foreign policy, explaining how to bring together humanitarianism and interest and examine its ideational and material sources. Thus, the study aims to fill this gap by applying role theory to analyze Turkey's HD as a foreign policy. Turkey has used HD to bridge the norm of humanitarianism and interest, making it both a role conception and role performance for the JDP (Altunışık, 2022, p. 2). Role theory provides three sets of conceptual tools to analyze Turkey's HD: tracing the links between JDP's ideology and its HD role conception, linking the foreign policy role conception with domestic politics, and analyzing the intra- and inter-role conflicts HD as foreign policy creates. Analyzing role conflicts and the state's strategies to deal with them helps understand the utility of HD as a role conception and the challenges JDP faces.

As mentioned above, the role theory scholarship had a transition in recent years. While the first generation focused on the structural explanations and looked for the existing role conceptions, the second generation has an interactionist approach (Breuning, 2023). They often look for explanations for role learning and interaction between how states perceived their roles in the structure and how the structure is shaped by the agency's understanding of their roles. The new scholarship in role theory is focused on decision-makers, leaders or elites, and individual levels of analysis without overlooking the social reality they are functioning (Breuning, 2023). On the other hand, IR has recently rediscovered the significance of state- and individual-level analysis, having previously shunned it in favor of the system-level analysis's bird's-eye perspective (Breuning, 2023; Hafner-Burton, 2017, et al.). To pursue the research by using the role theory, different methods are used. Content analysis, narrative analysis, and case studies are the popular methodologies to analyze state's roles in socialization in the international system and learning processes (Breuning, 2023).

2.9. Interactionist Approach of Role Theory

Recent scholarship on role theory, the interactionist approach, has focused on explaining role learning and the interaction between the way states perceive their roles

in the structure and how the structure is shaped by agency's understanding of their roles (Breuning, 2023). Therefore the ideational and material sources are composed of structure and agency, and according to role theory, these sources lead to national role conceptions and foreign policy behavior (Breuning, 2011, p. 26). The way states define their national role and how they act on the world stage is influenced by both systemic factors and individual actors. According to Thies (2014), a symbolic interactionist approach to role theory emphasizes the ability of individuals to act independently and the idea that structures can be modified by actors, which sets it apart from other versions of role theory that tend to treat structures as concrete and unchanging. By taking into account both the structure and agency, role theory provides a more comprehensive understanding of foreign policy behavior. In addition, role theory contributes to Foreign Policy Analysis by providing conceptual vocabulary for how different actors in the international system interact with each other (Harnisch, 2011). This is a valuable contribution because it allows for a more nuanced analysis of the international system by taking into account the various actors and their roles.

Role theory provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the impact of global and domestic level changes on regional dynamics of cooperation and conflict. According to Darwich (2018, p. 24), this theory can help explain how transformations at the global level can affect regional dynamics, while Breuning (2023, p. 193) notes that it can also illuminate the impact of the perceptions of state decision-makers about their roles. Applying role theory to the analysis of Turkish foreign policy can lead to a deeper understanding of the country's behavior and motives. By integrating different levels of analysis, such as global and domestic factors, this theoretical lens can provide a comprehensive perspective on the dynamics of cooperation and conflict in the region.

CHAPTER 3

CHANGES IN TURKISH FP: A SHORT BACKGROUND

In this chapter of the master's thesis, the background and literature review on relations between Turkey-Israel and Saudi Arabia-Turkey will be given. The chapter provides a broader understanding towards the changing approaches in Turkish Foreign Policy. The chapter is divided into International Relations approaches, constructivism, neo-realism, and role theory in order to explore how IR and FPA scholar applied this theories into understanding these relations. Different factors have played in the development of bilateral relations, economic concerns, security problems, ideological/cultural differences, and evolving international and regional environment are important. The aim is to provide a comprehensive overview of the political, economic, and historical context surrounding the relations between Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey.

3.1. Turkey's Bilateral Relations with Israel

Turkey was the first country with a Muslim majority to recognize Israel's independence, Turkey and Israel established full diplomatic relations in 1992 after the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the 1993 Oslo Accords, which eliminated barriers to Turkey's ability to enhance relations with Israel and cleared the way for their strategic partnership in the 1990s and early 2000s (Cohen, Freilich, 2014, p. 40). Turkish-Israeli relations have gone through several stages, and in the 1990s, they not only became more open but also more in-depth in all areas. Cooperation between Turkey and Israel, which was initially limited to the economic sector, has developed

into a strong military bond (Aykan, 1999). This mutually beneficial cooperation allows Turkey to acquire weapons that are not available in its own country and provides Israel with profitable customers for its military industry (Kanat, 2013). Moreover, both considered themselves as outsiders in the region, pro-Western, democratic, and secular, as well as isolated (Inbar, 2005). Strong relationships, however, started deteriorating once the JDP won office in November 2002. Prime Minister Erdoğan started to use anti-Israel sentiments as part of the JDP's political agenda (Zacky et al., 2022, p. 15). Therefore, the redefinition of Turkey's foreign policy priorities throughout the 2000s also affected Turkish-Israeli relations between cooperation and conflict. Turkey's relations with Israel confirm the case according to role theory since Turkey's ideational and material sources are quite visible in its role conceptions and performances in relation to Israel. Moreover, Turkey's changed perception and role performances were the first example in the transform of Turkish national role conceptions (Breuning, 2023). The Israeli-Turkish relations have included economic, geostrategic, and diplomatic aspects affected by international, regional, and domestic levels. Furthermore, the recent reconciliation process between Turkey and Israel shows Turkey's role conflict, which Turkey does not possess the material needs to pursue the Islamic leader, regional leader, and protector of the oppressed in the region.

Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, several events resulted in the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations, such as the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident (BBC, 2016) in 2010 and the 2018 Gaza protest against the US decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Efron, 2018). Firstly, After Israel's Operation Cast Lead in 2008, which aimed to stop rocket fire from Gaza (Tür, 2012, p. 62), Turkey's relationship with Israel deteriorated significantly. Turkey openly supported Hamas and even considered cutting ties with Israel (Cohen, Freilich, 2014, p. 42). In 2009, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Erdoğan expressed his anger by berating Peres, a supporter of peace, before leaving the stage (Inbar, 2011). Erdoğan, during the forum, accused Peres, and said "When it comes to killing, you know well how to kill." (The New York Times, 2009).

Relations between Turkey and Israel were also severely strained after the Mavi Marmara incident, a ship of Turkish humanitarian volunteers who are members of the İnsani Yardım Vakfı (IHH) organization, in which Israeli commandos raided a Turkish aid ship bound for Gaza (Tür, 2012, p. 62). Israel blocks many types of goods from entering Gaza as a tactic to pressure Hamas, the group that controls the area (BBC, 2016). In this incident, ten Turkish civilians were killed by direct fire on essential targets in 2010 (BBC, 2016). After the *Mavi Marmara* attack, Turkey summoned its ambassador to Israel and requested that the UNSC investigate the event. A year later, Turkey removed the Israeli ambassador to Turkey, Gabby Leby, along with other top Israeli diplomats; only "low-level authorities" officers are permitted to stay in Turkey (CNN, 2011). Turkish and Israeli relations soured into a heated rivalry after the Mavi Marmara incident. However, Turkey and Israel began to improve their relations, with Turkey apologizing for the Mavi Marmara incident and Israel agreeing to pay compensation to the families of the victims. Therefore, the two countries also agreed to normalize diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors with the mediation of the US (Sherwood, 2013).

Nevertheless, in 2018, tensions between Turkey and Israel rose again after the US recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved its embassy to the city (Efron, 2018, p. 1). Moreover, Turkey expelled the Israeli ambassador following violent demonstrations in the Gaza Strip in 2018, resulting in scores of Palestinian deaths and 2,000 injuries. Israel expelled the Turkish consul from Jerusalem (Efron, 2018, p. 1). Tensions between Turkey and Israel continued to simmer, with Turkey criticizing Israel's policies toward Palestinians and supporting international efforts to boycott Israel (Erbay, 2018). Erdoğan showed its reaction by saying;

> *"We find the U.S. decision unfortunate, and reject it once more. We reject this decision, which violates international law and UN resolutions, once more,... We have always said that the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian state that includes the borders of 1967 and has East Jerusalem as its capital is the only way for a permanent peace settlement in the region." (Çelik, 2018).*

The scholars of Turkish foreign policy often have theoretical approaches, such as; neo-realist and/or constructivist. The literature on Turkish foreign policy towards Israel also has different understandings. Uzer (2016), for instance, provides a constructivist explanation for Turkey's evolving foreign policy towards Israel. He claims that (2016) once the JDP took office, Turkey's identity shifted from Turkish secular to Muslim and pro-Ottoman allegiance from secular and pro-Western stance and that this identity transformation is what caused the deterioration of relations between Israel and Turkey. The JDP, throughout its early years in office, upheld the previous governments' neutral position toward Israel and Palestine as the trustworthy mediator it has been for decades. Turkey and Israel established mutually beneficial relations even though the majority of the time, notably in the 1990s, the pendulum swung in favor of the Palestinians (Uzer, 2021, p. 16). Therefore, Turkey is more supportive of the Palestinian case than most Arab countries, including the UAE and Bahrain under the Abraham Accords (2020), and the policy of Turkey cannot but be explained by affinities of religion and history; hence they are part of constructivism in International Relations theory (Uzer, 2021, p. 17).

Moreover, Özpek and Yaşar (2018) point out that Erdoğan and the elites of the ruling JDP have a populist character, which has a significant impact on Turkey's foreign policy with Israel. With the JDP winning 50% of the vote in the 2011 national elections, the military's influence over politics fading after the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases, and the Arab revolutions creating a window of opportunity for Turkey, this revisionist tone in foreign policy has been more apparent. Particularly after the Arab uprisings had rekindled neo-Ottomanist aspirations, his example speeches helped the JDP win popular support at home and maintain its dominant party position. However, the potential impact of Erdoğan on Ramallah, Gaza, and Jerusalem strained relations between Turkey and Israel (Özpek, Yaşar, 2018, p. 199). Similarly, Öniş (2014) claims that Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and rhetoric against Israel, rather than Islam per se, garnered the praise of the Arab street. Based on this claim, Park (2014) states that the JDP's political Islamist, majoritarian, populist, and authoritarian attitudes have all become more pronounced since the military and bureaucrats were sidelined. JDP populism is reflected in Turkey's foreign policy agenda. Park adds that rather than considering the needs of the state, Turkey's

foreign policy reflects the ideological preferences of a few sets of politically strong individuals.

For the realist approach, Cohen et al. (2014), the JDP has clearly tried to promote a relatively moderate form of Islamism. For example, his support for the Palestinians and the choice of allies such as Hamas reflect this identity. When the JDP first came to power, many analysts predicted that it would downgrade ties with Israel due to its Islamist orientation. While relations did deteriorate somewhat, Erdogan pledged to maintain good relations with Israel, in part to demonstrate that the JDP was different from previous Islamist parties in its orientation toward the West (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 45). Despite this explanation, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey's national security focus shifted to the Middle East, and it aligned with Israel. However, when the JDP came to power, it shifted away from the Kemalist policy and promoted a "zero problems with neighbors" approach. Turkey's relations with Syria and Iran improved, while its ties with Israel lessened in importance due to changing regional dynamics and the 2003 Iraq War (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 44). Moreover, Cohen (2014) argues domestic power changes and Turkish public opinion are also important in understanding the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations.

For the recent developments in the Israel-Turkey relations, Zacky, Yunanto, and Faisal (2022) use Morgenthau's fundamental political theory, which contends that political realism does not require moral justification but rather a sharp distinction between expectations and what is achievable anywhere and anytime, as well as Waltz's Balancing Strategy, which emphasizes the principle of self-help, the article on bilateral relations attempts to understand the explanation for Turkey's policy of fostering relations with Israel in recent years. They contend that Turkey's motivations are based on its own interests and the realization of the Middle East's power balance. Because of the worsening of the economic crisis, Turkey is stepping up its tourism industry to support economic stability. The tourist industry is 13% of the Turkish economy's overall income (Zacky et al., 2022). For Israelis, Turkey is one of the top travel destinations. The end of 2016 witnessed 293,988 Israeli visitors arrive in Turkey (Eisenbud, 2017). This number increased with Israel and Turkey's reconciliation in

2015–2016. Beyond tourism, improving ties between Israel and Turkey will lead to mutually beneficial energy sector cooperation. Turkey is heavily reliant on gas imports from Iran and Russia. Turkey's reliance on Russia and Iran would be lessened by pipeline gas from Israel to Turkey, albeit the amount of gas imported through Israel would not be as significant as that from Russia (Zacky et al., 2022). Turkey's decision to maintain positive ties with Israel was made at the expense of moral principles to further its pragmatic and logical objectives regarding Turkey's internal interests.

Moreover, Zacky, Yunanto, and Faisal (2022) assert that the balancing approach represents another element influencing Turkish-Israeli relations. Israel and Turkey are both interested in finding a solution to the Syrian conflict. The upheaval in Syria poses security dangers to them both. The Kurdish People's Defense Unit, in particular, poses a threat to Turkey's borders, while Israel is concerned about the security implications of Iranian presence in Syrian land. Turkey agreed to normalize its relations with Israel as part of a strategy to counterbalance the influence of the UAE in the area (Zacky et al., 2022). In particular, as mediators, Turkey and the UAE sought to establish themselves as regional leaders.

In this regard, Cagaptay (2019) asserts that the improvement in Turkish-Israeli ties is due to the security climate in which both countries find themselves. In 2010, Erdoğan could count on the support of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and even Iran's partner Hezbollah in Lebanon. They all, more or less, shared a favorable opinion of Ankara's position as a nation that opposes US foreign policy and Israeli policies. Erdoğan, however, had lost favor in Cairo and Damascus by 2013. He started to be seen as a geopolitical threat by the Saudis (Cagaptay, 2019). As a result of Ankara's support for anti-Assad rebels opposing Iran and its allies, including Hezbollah's own soldiers in Syria, Hezbollah has also developed a bitter view of Turkey. Erdoğan opted to normalize relations with Israel because he could not afford to fight everyone in the Levant (Cagaptay, 2019, p. 206). Israel had its own justifications for normalization as well. With the exception of its northern border with Lebanon and Gaza, Israel enjoyed a generally secure neighborhood until 2010, when its relations with Turkey deteriorated. Israel's sense of security changed in 2016 due to the deployment of

Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, and other Iranian proxies across its border with Syria. Netanyahu also began to believe that by speaking with his Turkish counterpart once more, he could influence some of his policies (Cagaptay, 2019, p. 206). Ulusoy (2020) also examines the alliance politics in the region, as Russia, China, and the EU have begun to question the absolute position and influence of the US. He mentions that the American efforts to ease the tension between Israel and Turkey after the Mavi Marmara and their different strategic choices to navigate the Arab uprisings and Syrian crises were further aggravated because of the geopolitical changes arising from the discovery of large natural gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean (Ulusoy, 2020, p. 426). He contends that neither Israel nor the Arab nations are ready to accept Turkey as an essential component of the regional political and alliance system. In addition to upending the balance of power, Turkey's democratic activism puts authoritarian governments in danger. The Arab uprisings, however, demonstrated that historical roots and connections still exist and have the potential to become more robust when confronted with an appealing social and political model that is presented rationally (Ulusoy, 2020, p. 427).

Demiryol (2019) also analyzed the Eastern Mediterranean conflict between Israel and Turkey by comparing realist and liberal approaches to energy cooperation. He asks, “Can natural resources facilitate regional cooperation?” The case study's main finding is that, to varied degrees, Turkey's views reflect both security and economic considerations. The substantial security risks associated with developing and exploring natural resources encourage Ankara to choose a confrontational approach to handling political conflicts, even though Turkey has much to gain from cooperation with regional adversaries. (Demiryol, 2019, p. 456). The politics surrounding Mediterranean gas thus hints that security factors, instead of financial incentives, primarily influence state inclinations for collaboration. States will likely continue to raise tensions when security is prioritized over prosperity, and the perceived stakes are high, even if doing so results in the loss of anticipated benefits from collaboration (Demiryol, 2019, p. 457).

The JDP leadership also envisioned Turkey's foreign policy role orientation changing under a different strategy (Baser, 2015, p. 291). Özdamar (2014) analyzes two distinct eras of Turkish foreign policy to demonstrate how role orientation changes through time. "Mediator" was one of the most frequently used roles in the JDP's early foreign policy. Until 2009, Turkey continued to play this role in the Syrian-Israeli conflict and relations between the two countries (Özdamar, 2014, p. 105). The second phase of Israeli-Turkish ties, according to Özdamar, began with the so-called "One Minute" crisis in 2009, proceeded with more visits by Hamas officials to Ankara, and ended with the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010 (BBC, 2016). These events harmed Turkish-Israeli relations and showed Turkey's rapprochement with Arab-Muslim countries. These actions conveyed to Turkey's domestic supporters that Turkey acted as a "protector of the oppressed" in the region (Özdamar, 2014, p. 101). Similarly, Ovah (2013) contends that the JDP's specific foreign policy results from its steadfastness in accepting a new position for Turkey. This is a break from the past because the JDP's foreign policy doctrine's guiding principle criticizes Kemalism, which for the party's top leaders, resulted in an unquestioningly Western-leaning Turkish foreign policy (Ovah, 2013, p. 4).

3.2. Turkey's Bilateral Relations with Saudi Arabia

To better understand the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Turkey, role theory can be used as a framework for analysis. In the case of Turkey, its foreign policy has been shaped by its changing role conceptions and the combination of different role sources. Turkey has performed the role of a regional leader, the Muslim leader, and a protector of the oppressed in its relations with Saudi Arabia over the period from 2011-2019. These roles have been influenced by various domestic and international factors, including Turkey's desire to be seen as a key player in the region and its aspirations to be a leader of the Muslim world. However, Turkey's changing role conceptions have also led to role conflicts in its foreign policy. This is especially relevant given the changing regional order and the limitations of Turkey's material resources. As Turkey has sought to assert its influence in the region, it has found itself competing with other key players such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel. This has led to tensions and conflicts

in the region, which have further complicated the Saudi-Turkish relationship. The use of role theory provides a useful lens through which to understand the evolving nature of Saudi-Turkish relations.

From the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 and the Republic of Turkey in 1923, respectively, the ties between the two nations have been greatly influenced by the regional conditions in the Middle East and the perceptions and responses of each nation to those conditions (Pourebrahim, 2015, p. 3). Only in the middle of the 1960s was little effort made to advance the bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey because of divergent approaches to foreign policy, ideologies, and political systems (Sharma, 2016). Due to a number of events, including Turkish migration to work on Saudi infrastructure projects, Turgut Özal's economic liberalization program in the 1980s, and new economic ties with Saudi Arabia, due to the economic rapprochement new Islamic NGOs, and an increase in pro-Islamic business people and politicians in Turkey (widely known in Turkey by the followers), the relations started to improve in the 1970s (Koni, 2012, p. 98). The domestic changes and emergence of Islamic-based political leaders in the middle of the 1980s preceded the changes in Turkish foreign policy, which encouraged Saudi Arabia to invest in the Turkish market. Turkey's relationship with the Arab-Muslim world between 1980 and 2000 was tumultuous. Turgut Özal, during his time in office, utilized Islam as a tool for foreign policy and formed friendly ties with the Islamic world, specifically with countries in the Middle East (Ovah, 2013, p. 5; Aral, 2001, p. 76). The relations did, however, experience a cooling at the end of the 1990s because of the deterioration of Turkish-Syrian relations over Syria's support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and issues with the use of the Euphrates River, where Saudi Arabia lobbied against Turkey's request for a loan from the World Bank to finance the construction of dams on the Euphrates River, which runs from Turkey to Syria (Altunışık, 2012).

Turkish-Saudi relations started gaining momentum in 2003 as a result of the American invasion of Iraq, the establishment of the pro-Islamic JDP, and its new Middle East strategy (Pourebrahim, 2015, p. 3). After 2003, the bilateral relationship between the two nations reached historical milestones for the number of high-level visits, bilateral

agreements, trade balance, amount of investment, sales of arms, and, more crucially, for the improvement in Saudi Arabia's and Turkey's perceptions of each other (Pourebrahim, 2015, p. 3). On September 2, 2008, the GCC declared Turkey as a strategic partner, which was a historic milestone in their relations (Başkan, 2019, p. 88). This declaration was the first of its kind by the GCC towards any country In response to this event, the former Turkish Foreign Minister, Babacan (2007-2009), expressed his endorsement during a press conference, emphasizing the benefits of institutionalizing the relationship between Turkey and the GCC:

> *"Turkey believes that institutionalizing our relations with the council will serve our common interests and open new horizons for our cooperation,… Today, there is a belt of crises in the Middle East, and it is unfortunately in an area between Turkey in the north and the Gulf in the south," he said. (Al Hakeem, 2008).*

Additionally, the GCC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Turkey, which established annual meetings for High-Level Strategic Dialogue to discuss various topics such as political, economic, defense, security, and cultural matters (Başkan, 2019, p. 88).

Relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia were strained over their differing approaches to the Arab uprisings. Turkey and Saudi Arabia cooperated in supporting opposition groups in Syria, but tensions arose over their differing goals and tactics (Başkan, 2019a). Turkey supported Islamist groups, while Saudi Arabia favored more secular opposition forces. In 2016, tensions between Turkey and Saudi Arabia rose after the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Turkey accused Saudi Arabia of ordering the killing and launched an investigation, while Saudi Arabia denied any involvement (Gall, 2018). Tensions between Turkey and Saudi Arabia continued to simmer, with Turkey criticizing Saudi Arabia's policies towards Qatar and the war in Yemen. In addition, Turkey supported Qatar during its diplomatic crisis with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states (Başkan, 2019a).

From a constructivist perspective, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Turkey is shaped by their shared cultural and religious identities as Muslim-majority countries,

as well as their perceptions of each other's identities in the regional and global order. The Islamic conservative and Arabism worldviews have a more significant impact on how Saudis regard Turkey. According to Pourebrahim (2015), Wahhabism holds that secularism is a non-Islamic viewpoint and that the Turkish government is not Islamic. According to an Arabist perspective, Saudi Arabia disagreed with Turkey's stance against Syria in the water conflicts as well as Ankara's high profile of cooperation with Israel in the late 1990s. However, religious identities are not the only identities these two countries have.

According to Gause (2017), governing systems and shared ideologies also matter besides sectarian identities. He mentions that from the pure balance of power perspective, Turkey and Saudi Arabia should form an alliance against Iran's rising influence in the region (Gause, 2017). Therefore, there has not been any sign of a Sunni regional alliance that would include Egypt, Jordan, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Instead, he uses Haas's (2014) regional "underbalancing" framework to explain the situation in the Middle East. According to him, the Sunni states' alliance patterns are more influenced by shared ideologies and governing systems. Saudi Arabia is strongly allied with other monarchies and with Sissi's anti-Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt. Under Shaykh Hamad, when Doha was more actively supporting Muslim Brotherhood causes, Turkey forged closer ties with Qatar and Egypt under the brief Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohamed Morsi and the Hamas authority in Gaza (Gause, 2017, p. 18). Saudi Arabia backs Egyptian leaders who oppose democratic Islamist populism and other rulers. Turkish officials continue to be concerned about Kurdish identity politics within their own country, which makes them see Syrian Kurds as an equal threat to the Islamic State. The apparent "natural" alliance between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, predicted by both strict balance of power logic and sectarian understandings of regional politics, has not materialized because the two states are wary of the tensions inherent in their respective domestic legitimation systems—democratic Islamist populism vs. Salafi monarchism (Gause, 2017, p. 19).

Moreover, according to El Berni (2023), Saudi Arabia's view of Turkey has been strategic and uncertain throughout history, depending on whether they could agree on shared security policies. The Arab uprisings caused Saudi Arabia to view Turkey as a threat, but the Al-Ula Accords in January 2021 paved the way for a new relationship among Gulf countries based on diplomacy, tolerance, and respect for each other's sovereignty. This has allowed for the gradual de-securitization of Turkey in Saudi foreign policy, with economic and investment cooperation. However, it will take time for Saudi decision-makers to regain confidence, and the kingdom's cautious approach reflects the personal relationships between its decision-makers and Turkey.

Başkan and Pala (2020) also discuss Turkey's initial support to Qatar during the Gulf crises. Their article analyzes the reasons behind Turkey's pro-Qatar stance during the 2017 Gulf crisis, which risked damaging its relationships with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt. By offering a constructivist approach to the question, they argue that Turkey and Qatar had already aligned their foreign policies before and during the Arab uprisings, with both countries being friendly towards the transnational Muslim Brotherhood movement (Başkan, Pala, 2020).

According to the realist approach, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Turkey has been characterized by tensions and rivalry as they compete for regional influence and leadership in the Middle East. In line with the shifts in Turkey's general Middle East policy, Turkey's relations with the Gulf have also been transformed in recent years. After the Arab uprisings, divergences began to emerge between the position of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, yet this did not initially lead to the deterioration of bilateral relations. The two countries have been involved in several proxy conflicts, supporting opposing sides in the Syrian civil war, the Yemeni conflict, and the Qatar blockade. As soon as the Qatar crisis broke out in June 2017, relations between Ankara and Riyadh worsened swiftly (Altunışık, 2020, pp. 16–17). Closing the Turkish military facility and stopping joint military operations inside Qatar was part of the 13-point list made by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In reaction to the crisis, Turkey improved relations with Qatar by fostering stronger commercial and military connections. Since Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist who had opposed changes in Saudi Arabia's

policies under the leadership of Mohammad bin Salman, was killed at the Saudi General Consulate in Istanbul in October 2018, there has been an agitated atmosphere between the two countries.

Zarras (2018) claims that Turkey and Saudi Arabia interact in a Middle Eastern state system characterized by fluctuating alliances and wars. The "axis of resistance" led by Iran against Israel and Western penetration, the Sunni-Shi'a rift where Saudi Arabia plays a crucial role in opposing Iranian hegemonic aspirations, and the intra-Sunni rift between pro-status quo states (i.e., Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Jordan) against Qatar and Turkey who are supporting groups and leaders linked to the Muslim Brotherhood are the three main interconnected power struggles. Turkish-Saudi ties have become tenser as a result of the intra-Sunni rift, one of the three regional clashes that have defined the geopolitical landscape since the Arab uprising began (Gresh, 2014, as cited in Zarras, 2018). Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine are examples of the intra-Gulf divide between Riyadh and Doha, which significantly impacts Ankara's regional policies. The influential GCC member Saudi Arabia opposes Qatar's desire to establish an independent foreign policy. With the regime changes that followed the wave of Arab uprisings in 2011, the Gulf has become further. Once Hosni Mubarak's regime was overthrown, Saudi Arabia expressed alarm and developed mistrust for Qatar due to its pivotal role in promoting regional change and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.

Saudi Arabia saw the fall of the democratically elected government of Mohamed Morsi positively in this context and has provided significant support for the newly installed administration of al-Sisi. A source of friction between the two countries was the Al-Jazeera television network, which has its headquarters in Qatar and covers the Egyptian conflict. When the Saudi monarchy classified the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates as a "terrorist organization" in January 2014, the disagreement over the group resulted in a deadlock (Zarras, 2018, p. 123). The JDP's ideological ties to the Muslim Brotherhood movement have influenced Ankara's regional policy. Compared to other regional powers, Turkey appeared to be best positioned to exert its influence in the Middle East and North Africa during the Morsi interregnum. However, the

alignment of Ankara with Qatari policy over the Muslim Brotherhood agenda was not well greeted in Riyadh (Zarras, 2018). Turkey's foreign policy has suffered as a result of the coup in Egypt and Saudi Arabia's efforts to isolate Qatar and weaken the Muslim Brotherhood through diplomatic means. Relations between Turkey and Egypt are at an all-time low, with Cairo accusing Ankara of interfering in its domestic affairs. In this setting, the Turkish government alienated not just Cairo but also Damascus, Tel Aviv, and Baghdad while also experiencing a deterioration in its relations with Abu Dhabi. Tür (2019) also emphasizes the Muslim Brotherhood's stance on Turkish foreign policy in relations with the Gulf states, specifically Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Her argument is that Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood has put it at odds with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, pushing it closer to Iran. This shift in Turkey's foreign policy has complicated its relations with the US and its allies in the region, who view Iran as a destabilizing force in the Middle East. Moreover, according to Tür (2019), Turkey's involvement in the Syrian civil war has also led to strained relations with the US and its NATO allies, who have supported the Kurdish forces in Syria. As a result, Turkey has shifted towards the Iranian/Russian axis, which has supported the Assad regime in Syria. Turkey's relations with Russia have improved significantly in recent years, despite their conflicting interests in Syria, due to their mutual concerns about the US and its allies in the region. Turkey has also improved its relations with Iran, which has been a key supporter of the Assad regime in Syria (Tür, 2019).

Recent relations between the two countries are improving due to Turkey’s rapprochement initiative with the region after 2019. President Erdoğan visited Saudi Arabia in May 2022 and adopted a diplomatic strategy to strengthen Turkey's ties with Saudi Arabia. In advance of this trip, Turkey consented to have the Khashoggi murder trial held in Saudi Arabia. This enormous concession to the Saudi governing government effectively ended the prosecution of Saudi agents deployed to Istanbul to commit this crime. According to Habibi (2023), the US' ongoing effort to withdraw from the Middle East has encouraged Saudi Arabia and the UAE to make efforts to ease tensions with regional adversaries like Turkey. The relevance of another element that had contributed to Saudi Arabia and the UAE's criticism against Turkey, which supported Qatar, also diminished as a result of the gradual easing of Qatar's tensions with them beginning in 2020 (Habibi, 2023, p. 5). However, the normalization of

relations shows another side of Turkey’s foreign policy. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Turkey, began an ambitious reproached effort to mend ties with Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in the early months of 2020 (Habibi, 2023). To end Turkey's isolation and draw in capital to ease the nation's protracted economic problems, Erdoğan launched this approach out of necessity.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TURKEY'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

This chapter analyzes the role of Turkey in its relations with Saudi Arabia and Israel. Each section is divided into ideational and material sources, followed by a discussion on the recent normalization processes. The key argument of this chapter is that Turkey needed to reconstruct its national role conceptions as its material sources limited significant changes during the Arab uprisings and beyond, and changes in the Middle East also underwent Turkey's role performances which have limited its ideational sources.

The case of Turkish foreign policy is a valuable one for role theory, as it demonstrates the visible discrepancy between material and ideational sources, particularly for smaller states, new states, and states experiencing significant transformations in their material capacities, such as emerging or rising powers (Breuning, 2019). The analysis in this chapter brings to light the complex and evolving nature of Turkey's role in the region, highlighting the importance of a nuanced understanding of the interplay between ideational and material sources in shaping foreign policy.

Moreover, the chapter also underscores the need for states to adapt to changing circumstances and develop national role conceptions that accurately reflect their material sources (Thies, 2010). The discussion in this chapter is particularly relevant given the ongoing shifts in the global political landscape, which have the potential to significantly alter the balance of power and necessitate a rethinking of national role conceptions. Therefore, this chapter provides an analysis of Turkey's role

performances in its relations with Saudi Arabia and Israel, highlighting the importance of considering both ideational and material sources in shaping foreign policy. Israel and Saudi Arabia are chosen for the study since their relations with Turkey during the Arab uprising show that middle powers have limited influence, particularly when acting unilaterally (Ayoob, 2012). This is especially true in a region where global powers like the US, Russia, and China, as well as regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel, have a strong presence and where politics is complicated not only by rivalries among different states but also by deep ethnic and sectarian divisions (Öniş, 2014, p. 205).

The ideational sources in this chapter are Turkey's cultural/historical identity and Islamic identity under the JDP leadership. Given the recent trend of conservatism and renewed interest in the Ottoman past in Turkish politics, it was likely that Turkish foreign policy would become focused on the Muslim world, especially the Arab world. This was driven by shared economic interests and cultural affinity (Öniş, 2014). Therefore, JDP's policy-makers perceived identity for Turkey combined the Ottoman history and Islamic identity. For the material sources, Turkey's economic crisis, security concerns, and changing geopolitical conjuncture of the Middle East will be focal points.

4.1. Turkey and Israel Case

Turkey's ideational and material role sources are visible in its relations with Israel between 2011 and 2022. Due to their shared commitment to democracy and a free market, Israel and Turkey played similar roles in the Middle East until the middle of the 2000s. Turkey and Israel became strategic allies in 1990s because they both represented the Western value system as outsiders in the region and because their perceptions of their respective national roles overlapped (Ovalı, 2013, p. 15). However, accordingly, to Akbaba and Özdamar's analysis (2020), Turkey soon came to see that the conditions of the Turkish-Israeli alliance were irreconcilable with those of the regional leader, defender of the oppressed, and leader of the Muslim world. Turkey eventually grew distinct from Israel as a result. The process that began with

the infamous "One Minute" crisis was the Mavi Marmara (BBC, 2016) incident even before the Arab uprisings. In a press statement given in 2011, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Davutoğlu, directly stated:

> *"Turkey's stance against this unlawful act of Israel from the first moment has been very clear and principled. Our demands are known. Our relations with Israel will not be normalized until these conditions are met. At this juncture, Israel has wasted all the opportunities it was presented with. Now, the Government of Israel must face the consequences of its unlawful acts, which it considers above the law and are in full disregard of the conscience of humanity. The time has come for it to pay a price for its actions. This price is, above all, deprivation of Turkey's friendship. (Davutoğlu, 2011)."*

These incidents not only strained ties with Israel, but they also represented Turkey's warming ties to the Arab-Muslim region of the Middle East—a course of action that conventional Turkish foreign policy had generally avoided. Davutoğlu, in its interview with Reuters in 2014, directly stated:

> *"(Netanyahu) himself killed, his army killed children in the playground. They killed our citizens and an American citizen in international waters. This is terrorism, ... Nobody can argue about Israeli aggression in Jerusalem in the al-Aqsa mosque, ...These provocations create frustration in the Muslim world and are becoming one of the reasons why these radical trends are emerging (Reuters, 2011)."*

Therefore, the relations with Israel show the first indications of Turkey's changing national role conceptions. During this period, Turkey's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Eastern Mediterranean gas, and the recent normalization agreement between the two countries will be discussed in this chapter accordingly to Turkey's ideational and material role resources.

4.1.1 The Ideational Sources

To the important events between Israel and Turkey throughout 2011-2018, for the ideational sources of Turkey's foreign policy, the Muslim identity and its cultural affiliation with the Arab Middle East are essential sources in its relations with Israel.

The identity shift of Turkey from secular to Muslim and neo-Ottoman (Davutoğlu, 2011) during the JDP administration (Uzer, 2016), Israeli-Turkish relations deteriorated.

In 2018, Turkey strongly condemned the US's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved its embassy to the city. Accordingly to this move, Turkey called for an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and also supported international efforts to boycott Israel (Reuters, 2018). Moreover, the JDP's neo-Ottomanist and Islamic ideology also reflected its populist identity and leadership aspirations in the Middle East (Özpek, Yaşar, 2018). Its direct implication to the Palestinian case created popular support in both Turkish society at home and Arab society in the Middle East. When discussions started over the incident in 2017, Erdoğan expressed the potential repercussions at the forum in Istanbul, stating: "God willing, we will never allow the silencing of azan (call to prayers) in the skies of Jerusalem." (The New Arab, 2017).

Morover in 2018 Erdoğan repeated his claim affirming: "East Jerusalem is the capital city of Palestine" and will one day be home to an embassy serving Turkey's interests in a Palestinian state (Anderson, et al., 2018).

Therefore, its support opened space to increase Turkey's cultural ties with the region. Turkey somehow became a "champion of the Palestinian case" (Mansoor, 2022). Turkey's democratic activism towards the oppressed group in the Middle East threatens authoritarian governments as well as Israel's Palestine policies.

Turkey, rather than considering the needs and limits of the state, its foreign policy reflects the ideological preferences of the regime (Park, 2014). Defending the Palestinian issue is not only considered a humanitarian policy but also means contesting Turkey's new role conceptions. This policy might be considered part of the JDP's long-term strategy for more deliberate inroads into Middle Eastern politics (Ulusoy, 2020). Turkey, hitherto denied this both by Israel and the Arab states, found

a way of intervening in the regional security complex by ‘stealing a role’- defending Palestinians- from other countries such as Syria, Iran, and Egypt (Ulusoy, 2020).

4.1.2 Material Sources

Turkey’s needs and limitations become more visible with its material sources. These material sources are the reason why Turkey adopt more neutral instruments to conduct foreign policy, such as diplomacy rather than direct intervention, after 2019 in the region. Turkey has several reasons to seek reconciliation with Israel: regional stability, energy cooperation, economic interests, and geostrategic realities. With the end of the Arab uprisings, Turkey and Israel both found themselves in a different Middle East.

At the beginning of the uprising, Turkey had credible alliances in the region, such as Syria, Egypt, and the US. However, changing geopolitical structure and Ankara’s more assertive and independent policies during the Arab uprisings pushed Turkey more isolate. Turkey shifted its focus from roles built on soft power instruments to harsher roles needing material capabilities (Özdamar et al., 2014, p. 93). Turkey has conducted two military operations in northern Iraq and four in Syria (Altunışık, 2020). Turkey engaged the Middle East through the use of soft power, economic interdependence, third-party roles, and soft balancing in the first decade of the 2000s. However, in the post-2011 era, it started identifying more threats. It showed a greater propensity to use military means to deal with them, becoming a part of the material and ideational regional polarization (Altunışık, 2020, p. 3). Turkey's role conceptions have evolved over time, particularly under the JDP government. Initially, Turkey positioned itself as a champion of Palestinian rights (Mansoor, 2022), aligning its foreign policy with the broader Muslim world. This role conception led to a deterioration of relations with Israel (Mansoor, 2022).

However, the material needs of Turkey’s role conception between 2011-2019 did not meet the roles' material capacities. The role theory perspective emphasizes how a state's perception of its role in the international system shapes its behavior and foreign policy choices (Breuning, 2023). According to Thies’s argument (2010), during the

Arab uprisings, Turkey's perception of its roles was forced to change due to material capacities and the new international, regional environment shaped by the post-Arab uprisings developments.

4.1.3 The Normalization Process of Turkey and Israel: Roles under transformation

Turkey's decision to normalize relations with Israel in 2020 and the subsequent announcement of a normalization deal in 2022 reflected a recalibration of its identity and a broader recognition of its national interests. In 2022, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapin's office announced the normalization agreement, which contains the return of the ambassadors and consuls to Tel Aviv and Ankara (Mansoor, 2022). As a regional power, Turkey seeks to prioritize economic, strategic, and security considerations over ideological differences, signaling a potential identity and role conception shift. Normalizing relations with Israel could serve as a means to assert its influence and position itself as a key broker in the Eastern Mediterranean (Cook, 2022). Turkey's attempts to mediate between Israel and Palestine during the peace negotiations and efforts to normalize relations with Israel without abandoning the Palestinian case show that Turkey could potentially enhance its role as a mediator, working towards conflict resolution and regional stability (Cook, 2022). In 2022, Turkey's minister of foreign affairs showed Turkey's willingness towards conflict resolution by saying that the normalisation of ties between Turkey and Israel will have a "positive impact" for a "peaceful" resolution to the Palestinian conflict (Reuters, 2022). Cooperation with Israel on security-related issues has a potential to bolster Turkey's aspired role as a *regional security provider* as well as a *mediator.*

Therefore, the role theory recognizes that identities are not static and can evolve. The enormous disparity between the aspirational role conceptualization of the state elite and the country's political and military capabilities has been recognized by Turkish policy-makers. Therefore, Turkey is reviewing its material and ideational sources, constructing new roles, and keeping some of the previous ones for the post-Arab uprising Middle East (Özdamar, 2019).

One of the reasons Israel and Turkey engaged in negotiations to reach a normalization agreement was driven by shared concerns over regional stability and cooperation on energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Eastern Mediterranean is rich in natural resources, including offshore hydrocarbon reserves. Several countries, including Turkey and Israel, have overlapping maritime claims and have been involved in resource exploration activities, and this has led to disputes over exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and the delimitation of maritime boundaries (Demiryol, 2018). Turkey has strongly opposed unilateral exploration activities conducted by Israel and other countries without the involvement of Turkish Cypriots in Northern Cyprus, whom Turkey recognizes. However, the development of these fields has been affected by disputes over the delineation of maritime boundaries and competing claims from neighboring countries, including Turkey (Demiryol, 2018). Tensions in the region, including maritime disputes, geopolitical rivalries, and resource exploration, have had implications for multiple countries' security and economic interests. By reducing tensions with Egypt and Israel, Erdoğan will be in a better position to end Turkey's exclusion from multilateral, regional agreements for developing and exporting East Mediterranean natural gas; serving as a regional energy hub for oil and natural gas is an important component of Turkey's long-term development strategy (Habibi, 2023, p. 6). The Eastern Mediterranean region holds significant resources; cooperation on energy-related issues could provide mutual benefits (Demiryol, 2018). Israel's gas discoveries, coupled with Turkey's aspirations for energy security, could have driven both countries to explore opportunities for collaboration in the energy sector (Demiryol, 2018). Cooperation on energy resources, such as gas pipelines or joint exploration ventures, could serve as an incentive for normalizing relations.

Moreover, Turkey has acknowledged the evolving geopolitical landscape and recalibrated its foreign policy priorities. As Iran and Saudi Arabia negotiated to end their rivalry in the region, the UAE and Bahrain signed Abraham Accords with Israel (Al Jazeera, 2023), and Syria's President Assad is about to back his seat in the Arab League (Al Jazeera, 2023), Turkey also reassess its strategic interests. Normalizing relations with Israel could be a reflection of Turkey's desire to engage with a key regional player and avoid further isolation in the international arena (Habibi, 2023).

Therefore, Turkey is reconsidering its foreign policy priorities, ideational and material sources, and roles after 2019.

According to the recent role performances of Ankara, Turkey's attempts to mediate between Israel and Palestine during the peace negotiations and efforts to normalize relations with Israel without abandoning the Palestinian case (Cook, 2022) show that Turkey could potentially enhance its role as a *mediator*, working towards conflict resolution and regional stability. Moreover, normalizing relations with Israel could serve as a means to assert its influence and position itself as a key broker in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey already has aspired to be a *regional power* and play a significant role in regional dynamics. By engaging with Israel, Turkey may seek to leverage its connections and regional standing to play a more active role in addressing shared challenges and shaping regional developments. Turkey has aimed to position itself as a *regional security provider*, contributing to stability and addressing security challenges. By normalizing relations with Israel, Turkey could potentially enhance its role in addressing common security concerns, such as counterterrorism efforts, managing migration flows, or maintaining stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and Syria (Al Jazeera, 2022). Cooperation with Israel on security-related issues could bolster Turkey as a *regional security provider* in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Therefore, possible Eastern Mediterranean cooperation shows Turkey's role performance as an *economic partner* could be a driving factor in its considerations for normalization. Following the Arab uprisings, Turkey's relations with Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE deteriorated. As a result, Turkey was excluded from several regional multi-country agreements. The East Mediterranean, natural gas cooperation agreements were an example of this isolation (Habibi, 2023, p. 3). Since Turkey is significantly dependent on imports of several commodities, including oil, natural gas, and many others, the falling value of the lira increased the price of these imports. It caused a sharp rise in inflation (Habibi, 2023). Most Turkish residents' earnings and incomes have not kept up with this high inflation, which has caused a

significant drop in many people's purchasing power and standard of living (Habibi, 2023).

Additionally, Turkey experienced a decline in the volume of bilateral trade and foreign investment with some of its main Middle Eastern trading partners. Due to major credit rating agencies downgrading Turkey's creditworthiness in 2018 and 2019, the country's economic situation worsened and severely undermined investor confidence (Habibi, 2023). Since the presidential election scheduled for 2023 and the country is currently experiencing inflation at a rate of over 70%, the government is seeking to draw investment from neighboring nations (Al Jazeera, 2022). The worsening economic difficulties and Turkey's growing isolation from regional agreements persuaded Erdoğan to change Turkey's aggressive foreign policy and mend fences with nations that might most help Turkey with these problems. (Habibi, 2023, p. 4).

As mentioned, Israel and Turkey engaged in numerous conflicts between 2011 and 2022. Thus, in Turkey's interactions with Israel, the causes of its ideational and material roles became apparent. Israel and Turkey, until the middle of the 2000s, played similar roles in the Middle East due to their shared dedication to democracy and a free market. Because they both represented the Western value system as outsiders in the region and because their ideas of their separate national roles matched, Israel and Turkey came to be considered strategic partners. However, Turkey quickly realized that the terms of the Turkish-Israeli alliance were incompatible with those of becoming the dominant nation in the area, a champion of the underdogs, and the supreme leader of the Muslim world.

Nevertheless, it became apparent that Turkey needed to possess the material sources to pursue its ambitious role in the region (Thies, 2010). Therefore Turkey and Israel attempted to mend tensions and reestablish diplomatic relations in 2020. The normalization deal, which includes the return of the ambassadors and consuls to Tel Aviv and Ankara, was announced by Israel and Turkey in 2022 (Mansoor, 2022). A re-evaluation of Turkey's identity and a deeper appreciation of its national interests may be reflected in the country's determination to normalize relations. It attempts to

put economic, strategic, and security concerns ahead of ideological ones, indicating a possible identity and role conception shift. Turkish officials have acknowledged the stark discrepancy between the aspirational role conceptualization of the state elite and the nation's political/cultural, economic, and military capabilities (Akbaba, Özdamar, 2020). Turkey is therefore reevaluating its ideational and material resources, creating new roles while retaining some of the old ones for the Middle East following the Arab uprisings.

4.2. Turkey and Saudi Arabia Case

This case study explores the ideational and material sources of Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia between 2011 and 2022 and uses the role theory approach to examine their interactions. Turkey's role conceptions of the *regional leader*, the *Muslim leader, mediator*, and the *protector of the oppressed* (Davutoğlu, 2012; Akbaba, et al., 2020) are visible in its relations with Saudi Arabia. Turkey and Saudi Arabia experienced both cooperation and tensions throughout this period, shaped by historical ties, ideological differences, regional conflicts, and geopolitical dynamics. The changing landscape of the Middle East and their respective roles within it influenced the trajectory of their bilateral relations. Therefore Turkey's ideational sources; cultural/historical identity, and Islamic identity is crucial in its relations with Saudi Arabia, as well as material sources; military capability, strategic capability, and economic capability. There are several conflicting areas between the two countries in 2011-2022, and the most notable ones are the Arab uprising, most specifically the Syrian civil war, the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and the Qatar crisis.

4.2.1 Ideational Sources

After the JDP came to power in Turkey in 2002 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the government pursued a more assertive and ambitious foreign policy in the Middle East, emphasizing regional influence and political Islam. The political Islam understanding of the JDP has close links with the Muslim Brotherhood movement throughout the Middle East (Ibish, 2023), which is identified as a terrorist organization

by Saudi Arabia. This shift had implications for Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia. The first episode of the JDP leadership built good relations with Saudi Arabia. 2008 was a milestone in Turkey-GCC relations since Turkey became the first non-member strategic ally. (Ibish, 2023) However, the Arab uprisings that began in 2011 presented a significant turning point in regional dynamics. Under an ideational stance, Turkey, under the JDP government, sought to project itself as a regional power with a neo-Ottomanist vision, promoting political Islam and engaging with Muslim-majority countries. Therefore, Saudi Arabia perceived Turkey as a rival third camp (Sunni Islamist camp) or a potential balancer against Iran (Ibish, 2018).

In the early years of the Syrian conflict, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have closely cooperated in supporting Syrian opposition groups against the regime of Bashar al-Assad (Başkan, 2019a). The common objective of overthrowing Assad created an opportunity for the countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey to handle their differences, and this cooperation persisted until the first half of 2013 (Habibi, 2019, p. 2). They provided financial, logistical, and political support, aiming to remove Assad from power and establish a Sunni-dominated government. Despite their differences in the military coup in Egypt in 2013 and their approaches to the Muslim Brotherhood, Morsi's leadership, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey continued to collaborate in Syria, even allying with rebel groups called Jaish al-Fatah (Başkan, 2019a). This alliance achieved significant victories against the Syrian regime, leading to Russia's direct military intervention in September 2015 (Başkan, 2019b, p. 87). Russia's intervention changed the dynamics of the conflict, causing Saudi Arabia to lose interest in toppling the Assad regime and Turkey to shift its focus to the growing presence of the YPG in northern Syria (Başkan, 2019a). This shared objective brought them together, reflecting their role as the *protector of the oppressed* in the early stages of the Arab uprisings and the Syrian case. However, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have different regional aspirations and ideological orientations. The ideological differences, competing influences, geopolitical realities, and regional rivalries created tensions and contradictions in their relations.

In addition to the Syria crisis, the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018 strained Turkey-Saudi relations (Gall, 2018). Saudi Arabia was the accused party in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. At first, Saudi Arabia denied any involvement but eventually admitted that Khashoggi was murdered inside the consulate (BBC, 2021). The Turkish authorities initiated an inquiry into the incident, exposing details about the murder via media leaks (Gall, 2018). Turkey was critical in drawing international attention, especially the US, to the situation and putting pressure on Saudi Arabia to respond (Gall, 2018). Turkey condemned the killing and used it as an opportunity to challenge Saudi Arabia's regional leadership role, positioning itself as a defender of human rights and press freedom, which is in line with its role of protector of the oppressed. Moreover, during the investigation of the murder, Erdoğan emphasized international law, as well as Islamic law; therefore, Turkey's Islamic leadership role also became visible during the process. After the incident President Erdoğan gave a speech and said;

> *"It is very important for such a critical investigation to be carried out by objective, fair teams with no relations to the murder. Since this is a political murder, then any other culprits and accomplices in other countries, if there are any, must be included in the investigation as well. I believe this is what is required in international law, in Islamic law and in Saudi law."* (Al Jazeera, 2018).

Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations' critical turning point occurred in June 2019. At that time, Saudi Arabia, along with Egypt, the UAE, and Bahrain (the Quartet), cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed a complete blockade on the emirate as a punitive measure (Başkan, 2019a). This event created tension in the region and forced countries to choose sides. Turkey initially stood by Qatar, and the two countries share similar political ideologies. Turkey's support for Qatar during the crisis can be viewed through its role as a regional power and a protector of the Muslim Brotherhood, a group with close ties to Qatar (Başkan, 2019a). Recep Tayyip Erdoğan described the Quartet's efforts to isolate Qatar as "inhumane" and "un-Islamic" (BBC News, 2017) and dispatched planes and shipments of food to Qatar shortly after the crisis broke out to mitigate the blockade's adverse effects. More importantly, the Turkish parliament passed a law allowing the government to send troops to Qatar. (Başkan, 2019a) This

action can be seen as a way of fulfilling Turkey's role as a regional leader and protecting its interests in the region. Moreover, the speech of Erdogan in parliament on June 2017 shows Turkey's ideational source of Islamic identity and the role conception of the leader of the Muslim world; "A very grave mistake is being made in Qatar, isolating a nation in all areas is inhumane and against Islamic values. It's as if a death penalty decision has been taken for Qatar," he said (BBC, 2017).

The crisis deepened with a meeting between Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and the YPG, the Syrian branch of the PKK, a Kurdish separatist organization that Turkey considers a terrorist group (Başkan; Pala, 2019, p. 66). Turkey's main goal in Syria changed as the YPG gained strength and control over more areas. As a result, Turkey's military has carried out multiple extensive military campaigns in northern Syria and northern Iraq against the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, the Islamic State, and the banned PKK throughout 2016 (Reuters, 2022). The emerging relations between the Quartet and the YPG highlight how Turkey's pro-Qatar stance during the 2017 crisis was not without risk. Moreover, Saudi Arabia and the UAE had much more significant financial resources than Qatar, making it challenging for Turkey to maintain its pro-Qatar stance (Başkan, Pala, 2020, p. 66). In 2017, Saudi Arabia's sovereign fund had USD 514 billion in assets, Abu Dhabi's USD 828 billion, and Qatar's sovereign fund had USD 320 billion (Ellyatt & Bishop, 2017). Additionally, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt have larger populations and are more significant markets. Despite these challenges, Turkey continued to support Qatar, fulfilling its role as a regional power and protector of Turkey's interpretation of Muslim leaders. Turkey is so quick to sideline Qatar because of JDP's understanding of political Islam, which has close ties with Qatar's Muslim Brotherhood (Başkan, Pala, 2019, p. 74).

4.2.2 Material Sources

Turkey's foreign policy is driven by a range of material sources, including security interests, economic interests, and geostrategic realities. During the Arab uprisings period, Turkey was isolated from almost every country in the region except Qatar (Tür, 2019). Turkey's exclusion from several regional multilateral agreements, similar to the

Israeli case, further weakened its position in the region (Habibi, 2019, p. 6). This isolation was particularly challenging given Turkey's earlier efforts to mediate regional conflicts and position itself as a regional leader.

Another factor is that Turkey is an important actor in the Ukraine war with its relations with sides such as; Ukraine, the EU, and Russia. Therefore, the Ukraine war that started in 2021 resulted in Turkey's foreign policy's attention to reconsider its priorities in different parts of the world and normalize its relations with the Gulf countries as well (Ibish, 2023). Moreover, in 2021, the Gulf states decided to restore diplomatic relations with Qatar and ended a 3-year boycott with an agreement (Ulrichsen, 2021). The reconciliation process between Saudi Arabia and its allies and Qatar, the al-Ula agreement also helped Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations and transformed Turkey's perception towards Saudi Arabia (Ibish, 2023). On the other hand, with the coup in Egypt, Sisi's victory against Morsi, and afterward, the Muslim Brotherhood campaign of Qatar and Turkey mostly failed in the Middle East (Ibish, 2023). Turkey's regional ambitions became less threatening in the previous period when the Muslim Brotherhood lost its influence, and this may change how Saudi Arabia views Turkey from a threat to a potential ally.

Turkey's economic crises also limit its role as a regional leader, forcing it to seek good relations with economically strong countries such as Saudi Arabia to attract trusted investments (Ibish, 2023). The economic crisis has highlighted the importance of Turkey's economic interests in shaping its foreign policy priorities. As a result, Turkey has sought to diversify its economic relationships and trade agreements, further emphasizing its need for strong relations with key economic partners such as Saudi Arabia (Ibish, 2023). Therefore, in 2021, the UAE started a 10-billion-dollar investment program in Turkey (Kozok, 2021). Saudi Arabia gave the Turkish central bank 5 billion dollars in deposits as foreign aid during the 2023 presidential elections period (Reuters, 2023). President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he intends to express gratitude to them after the presidential election (Middle East Eye, 2023).

Regional stability is also a major concern for Turkey, especially given the violent transformation that occurred in the Middle East during the Arab uprisings period. The military capabilities of Turkey give opportunity to position itself as a significant military power and possible *regional stability provider*. To pursue this role Turkey Baykar, a Turkish defense company, has reportedly provided 20 armed drones to the UAE and could sell more, according to two Turkish sources in 2021 (Coşkun, 2022). The former regional rivals are now enjoying a diplomatic detente and have expanded their relationship into military contracts. The UAE and Saudi Arabia hope to utilize their improved relationship with Turkey to counter a growing security threat from Iran and its proxy forces (Coşkun, 2022). Both Gulf Arab oil states have been targeted by drone attacks on their cities and oil facilities, which they have blamed on Houthi fighters in Yemen aligned with Iran. Therefore, both sides' changing conjuncture and material needs are why Turkey abandoned its ideological politics in the Saudi case (Coşkun, 2022). Morover, in 2022, after a meeting with King Salman of Saudi Arabia, Erdoğan posted in Twitter.by saying;

> *"We express on every occasion that we attach as much importance to the stability and security of our brothers in the Gulf region as our own,… We underline that we are against all forms of terrorism and that we attach importance to cooperation with the countries in our region against terrorism (Daily Sabah, 2022)."*

4.2.3 Normalization Process of Saudi Arabia and Turkey: The complex transformation

Saudi Arabia and Turkey can be seen as occupying different roles in the regional order, with different expectations and responsibilities. States like Saudi Arabia and Israel have recently created counter-alliances to balance different rising powers. This has led Turkey to seek new alliances and partnerships in the region in order to increase its leverage and influence (Altunışık, 2021). Economic cooperation has played a role in the normalization process between Saudi Arabia and Turkey, as policies based on hard power, proxy wars, and confrontations are expensive and difficult to sustain over time. This is especially evident considering COVID-19's severe socioeconomic impact and the drop in oil prices, both of which have exacerbated pre-existing problems

(Altunışık, 2021). However, Turkey's economic crisis since 2018 has limited its ability to sustain its assertive regional foreign policy performances, which may hinder its ability to effectively challenge the existing regional order and fulfill its perceived role as a rising regional power. The Saudi point of view towards Turkey contained two factors. Firstly, Turkey can be a balancer towards Iran's influence (Ibish, 2018). Another is that Turkey is a rival country and might form a third camp (Sunni Islamist) in the Middle East in addition to the pro-Saudi and pro-Iranian camps (Ibish, 2018). Therefore Turkey can be a potential hegemon in the region. This third camp could contain the countries that are potentially ruled by Muslim Brotherhood parties, Qatar and Turkey (Ibish, 2018). However, Turkey became increasingly isolated throughout the region with the Muslim Brotherhood's failure (Ibish, 2023). This has made it more difficult for Turkey to reach out to other regional powers, including Saudi Arabia, and engage in a more substantial normalization process (Ibish, 2023).

Therefore the relationship between Turkey and Saudi Arabia between 2011 and 2022 was shaped by a complex case for ideational and material sources of Turkish foreign policy. From the onset of the Arab uprisings in 2011, they both backed opposition groups in Syria (Başkan, 2019b), seeking to reshape the regional order according to their interests and ideological preferences. However, ideological differences, competing influences, and regional rivalries have played a dominant role in shaping the dynamics between the two countries. Turkey's role conceptions of the *regional leader, Muslim leader, mediator, protector of the oppressed*, and *economic partner* are visible in its relations with Saudi Arabia until 2020. While Saudi Arabia aimed to maintain its role as a leader in the Muslim world, its regional leader is further strengthened by its position as a major oil producer and exporter, which gives it significant economic and political leverage over other states in the region.

The murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018 strained Turkey-Saudi relations (Gall, 2018). Turkey condemned the killing and used it as an opportunity to challenge Saudi Arabia's regional leader role, positioning itself as a defender of human rights and press freedom, which is in line with its role of protector of the oppressed. Moreover, Turkey's support for Qatar during the crisis can

be viewed through its role as a regional power and a protector of the Muslim Brotherhood, a group with close ties to Qatar (Başkan, Pala, 2019, p. 74).

The evolving regional dynamics and shifting alliances in the Middle East also impact the normalization process. Economic cooperation has played a role in the normalization process between Saudi Arabia and Turkey, as policies based on hard power, proxy wars, and confrontations are expensive and difficult to sustain over time. However, Turkey's economic crisis since 2018 has limited its ability to sustain its assertive regional foreign policy performances (Habibi, 2019), which may hinder its ability to effectively challenge the existing regional order and fulfill its perceived role as a rising regional power (Thies, 2010). In recent years, Turkey has found itself in a position of regional isolation, as other states have created counter alliances to balance its rising power. This has led Turkey to seek new alliances and partnerships in the region in order to increase its leverage and influence.

From 2020 onwards, Turkey's role conceptions also transformed Saudi Arabia relations. With the economic crises (Habibi, 2019), the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ibish, 2023), and its very divided foreign policy concerns (Ibish, 2013), Turkey probably will return to its more soft and cooperative roles in the region, such as mediator and regional security provider, since the material sources are not compatible with its previous more ambitions as protector of the oppressed and the leader of the Islamic world. However, giving up on its regional leader's claim seems unlikely for Turkey and JDP government. In 2022 Erdoğan paid a visit to Saudi Arabia with the invitation of Saudi King Salman, and it was President Erdoğan’s and the crown prince of Saudi Arabia’s first meeting since the 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi caused tension between the two countries. After the meeting, Erdoğan posted a statement via Twitter and said; "As two brotherly countries with historical, cultural and human ties, we are striving to increase all kinds of political, military and economic relations between us and to start a new era,"

Erdoğan stated that it would be beneficial for both countries to enhance collaboration with Saudi Arabia in a variety of areas, including health, energy, food security,

agriculture, defense industry, and finance. He also highlighted the potential for significant cooperation in renewable and clean energy technologies between the two countries.

Therefore, understanding the ideational and material sources that underpin the relationship is essential to grasp the dynamics of the bilateral relationship. While tensions remain high over their differing approaches to regional issues, there is still room for both countries to find areas of cooperation and work together to address shared challenges in the region.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Turkey's changing role conceptions in the Middle East have been driven by a mix of ideational and material sources, and the country's evolving role conceptions reflect a complex and ongoing strategic adaptation process. Turkey's foreign policy decisions have been influenced by its historical and cultural ties to the Middle East, as well as its emphasis on Islamic values and principles. These ideational sources have contributed to Turkey's desire to maintain its influence in the Middle East and to establish itself as a regional leader (Akbaba, et al., 2019). Turkey's ruling party, the JDP, has roots in political Islam and has emphasized Turkey's role as a leader of the Islamic world and protector of the oppressed (Davutoğlu, 2012). The ideational sources of Turkey's foreign policy, such as its Muslim identity and cultural affiliation with the Arab Middle East, have created both cooperation and tension in its relations with these countries.

Additionally, Turkey's material and ideational sources, including its geostrategic location in the region, its military capability, and its economic interests, have shaped its foreign policy decisions and its relations with other countries. These contributions have influenced Turkey's foreign policy decisions, including its support for Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and political parties in the Middle East and North Africa (Ibish, 2023). The JDP government's shift towards a more assertive and ambitious foreign policy has had significant implications for Turkey's relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Therefore, the role conflict of Turkey's foreign policy is also visible in the normalization process between Turkey-Israel and Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations. Constructing new roles is often challenged with role conflict, which has been found in different role contestations of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's new role performances face international, regional, and domestic limitations. According to role theory literature, constructing new roles is often challenged with role conflict, in Turkey's case, a conflict between nationally defined roles and internationally and regionally accepted expectations for those roles (Thies, 2013), as well as Turkey's economic and ideological limitations. When a state seeks to construct a new role in the international system, it emphasizes its existing roles rather than trying to create entirely new ones. This is especially true when the state's material resources are insufficient to meet the new role's demands (Akbaba, Özdamar, 2019). Accordingly, the major roles of Turkey between 2011-2019 can be analyzed as a regional power, protector of the oppressed, and Islamist leader (Akbaba, Özdamar, 2019). Therefore, most of these roles faced conflict within themselves and were forced to transform into more suitable roles for Turkey's current material sources.

5.1. Normalization Process and Findings

Turkey's role conceptions have evolved over time, particularly under the JDP government. Initially, Turkey positioned itself as a champion of Palestinian rights (Mansoor, 2022), aligning its foreign policy with the broader Muslim world. This role conception led to deteriorating relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia. However, Turkey's decision to normalize relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia in 2021 (Habibi, 2023, p. 5) and the subsequent announcement of a normalization agreement with Israel in 2022 (Al Jazeera, 2023) reflected a recalibration of its identity and a broader recognition of its national interests as well as Saudi's financial investments (Ibish, 2023). Turkey's evolving role performances as a regional power, and economic partner and potential and aspired roles as mediator and regional security provider reflect a complex and ongoing strategic adaptation process driven by ideational and material factors.

Turkey's recalibration of its identity and a broader recognition of its national interests demonstrate the evolution of its role conception. Turkey's attempts to mediate between Israel and Palestine during the peace negotiations and efforts to normalize relations with Israel without abandoning the Palestinian case show that Turkey could potentially enhance its role as a *mediator*, working towards conflict resolution and regional stability (Cook, 2022). Normalizing relations with Israel could serve as a means to assert its influence and position itself as a key broker in the Eastern Mediterranean (Cook, 2022).

Turkey's role performance as an *economic partn*er could also play a driving factor in its considerations for normalization. Turkey needs foreign investments from regional countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, to pursue its role as a regional leader and to eliminate its economic limitations. The isolated location in the Middle East (Tür, 2019) certainly does not serve Turkey's regional ambitions. Following the Arab uprisings, Turkey's relations with Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE deteriorated. As a result, Turkey was excluded from several regional multi-country agreements. The East Mediterranean natural gas cooperation agreements, were a clear example of this isolation (Habibi, 2019, p. 6). A combination of poor monetary decisions and the economic crisis since 2018 has limited its ability to sustain its assertive regional foreign policy performances (Habibi, 2019, p. 6), which may hinder its ability to effectively challenge the existing regional order and fulfill its perceived role as a rising *regional power* (Thies, 2010). Therefore, Turkey is reconsidering its foreign policy priorities, ideational and material sources, and roles after 2019.

Turkey has been striving to become a *regional security provider* by addressing common security concerns such as counterterrorism efforts, managing migration flows, and maintaining stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the broader Middle East. Normalizing relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia could potentially help Turkey enhance its role in this regard since Turkey is already a very important regional military power. Cooperation with Israel and Saudi Arabia on security-related issues could also boost Turkey's position as a regional security provider.

In conclusion, Turkey's changing roles in the Middle East reflect a complex and ongoing strategic adaptation process driven by ideational and material factors. By analyzing Turkey's foreign policy decisions through the lens of role theory, one can better understand how the country's perception of its role in the international system shapes its behavior and foreign policy choices (Breuning, 2023). Despite the tensions and contradictions in its foreign policy, Turkey's role as an economic partner, and regional leader and possible roles as mediator and regional security provider could potentially enhance its role in the Middle East. Understanding the ideational and material sources that underpin Turkey's relations with other countries in the region is crucial to grasping the dynamics of the bilateral relationships. While tensions remain high over their differing approaches to regional issues, Turkey still has room to find areas of cooperation and work together with other countries in the region to address shared challenges. However, to achieve this, Turkey must carefully balance its ideational and material sources to ensure that its foreign policy aligns with its interests and values and does not create further tension and instability in the region.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

2011-2022 yılları arasında Türkiye'nin dış politikası, küresel, bölgesel ve yerel değişimlere bağlı olarak önemli bir dönüşüm geçirmiştir. Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin (AK Parti) iktidara gelmesinin ardından, AK Parti liderleri Orta Doğu ülkeleriyle daha yakın ilişkiler kurmayı ve Türkiye'nin bölgedeki etkisini artırmayı hedeflemişlerdir. Bu nedenle, Arap ayaklanmaları Türkiye'nin bölgedeki nüfuzunu genişletme umutlarını artıran önemli bir dönüm noktası olmuştur (Altunışık, 2020, s. 4). Ancak, ayaklanmalar sonrasında ortaya çıkan gelişmeler, Türkiye'nin bölgesel liderlik arayışındaki sınırlamalarını ve istediği şekilde olayları etkileme kapasitesini ortaya koymuştur (Altunışık, 2020, s. 5). Bu nedenle, Arap ayaklanmaları sırasında ve sonrasında Türkiye, Mısır, İsrail, Suudi Arabistan ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri gibi bölge ülkeleriyle zorlu ilişkiler yaşamıştır (Habibi, 2023; Tür, 2019). Türkiye'nin rollerindeki dönüşüm, ulusal rol anlayışının düşünsel ve maddi kaynaklarıyla izlenebilir.

AK Parti döneminde Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'ya müdahalesi daha kapsamlı, çok yönlü ve derin olmuştur (Altunışık ve Martin, 2011, s. 570). Özellikle eski Dışişleri Bakanı ve Başbakan Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun "neo-osmanlıcılık" fikri, Türkiye'nin Osmanlı geçmişine özel bir vurgu yaparak Orta Doğu ülkeleriyle ilişkilerini yeniden şekillendirmiştir. İslami kimlik vurgusu da önemli olmuştur. Türkiye'nin tarihi ve kültürel bağlarının fark edilmesi, yeni bir anlayışın doğmasına neden olmuştur (Altunışık, 2022, s. 5; Aras, 2009, s. 131; Davutoğlu, 2011, s. 333).

Ancak Arap ayaklanmalarıyla birlikte Türk politika yapıcılar, Türkiye'nin iddialı rol kavramsallaştırması ile askeri, ekonomik ve siyasi kapasitesi arasındaki büyük tutarsızlığı fark etmişlerdir (Akbaba ve Özdamar, 2019; Thies, 2010, s. 690). Türkiye'nin maddi kaynakları, jeopolitik, güvenlik ve ekonomik çıkarları nedeniyle sınırlıdır. Ayrıca, küresel ve bölgesel sistemdeki değişiklikler de Türkiye'nin rolünü etkilemiştir. ABD'nin Orta Doğu politikalarındaki değişimler, Türkiye'nin bölgedeki pozisyonunu yeniden değerlendirme gerekliliğini ortaya çıkarmıştır (Darwich, 2019; Lynch ve Jamal, 2018).

Orta Doğu alt-bölgesel sistemi, Arap ayaklanmaları süreciyle birlikte, özellikle Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin (ABD) bölgedeki angajmanını yeniden ölçeklendirmesi ve Çin ile Rusya'nın artan nüfuzu dahil olmak üzere küresel siyaset nedeniyle önemli değişiklikler yaşanmaktadır. Bu değişim, bölgesel güçlerin rollerini yeniden tanımlamak ve bölgedeki etkilerini sürdürmek için yeni gündemler aramasına neden olmaktadır.

Ancak angajmanın yeniden ölçeklendirilmesi, ABD'nin Orta Doğu ile bağlarını tamamen kesmesi anlamına gelmemektedir. ABD, bölgesel meseleleri aktif olarak ele almak yerine Orta Doğu krizleriyle başa çıkmada daha dolaylı rollere doğru kaymaktadır (Lynch & Jamal, 2018, s. 3). Suriye iç savaşı gibi çeşitli bölgesel krizlerde ABD'nin rolündeki değişiklik, Çin ve Rusya gibi diğer bölge dışı aktörlere oradaki etkilerini genişletme ve kendilerini potansiyel müttefikler olarak konumlandırma şansı vermektedir (Lynch & Jamal, 2018).

Ancak bu durum Çin'in Orta Doğu'da ABD'nin yerini almaya istekli veya yeterli olduğu anlamına gelmemektedir (Hale, 2023). Çin'in Suudi Arabistan ile İran arasındaki başarılı arabuluculuk çabaları, Pekin'in geçmişte olduğundan daha büyük ölçekli çatışmalarda arabuluculuk yapmaya istekli olduğunu göstermektedir. Ancak şimdilik Çin, ABD'nin bölgesel güvenlik meselelerinde liderliği sürdürmesine izin verirken artan diplomatik ve ekonomik nüfuzdan kazanç sağlayabilir (Hale, 2023). Bir diğer kritik bölge dışı aktör Rusya, Çin'in bölgedeki son diplomatik çabalarını çok kutuplu bir bölgesel düzene yönelik olumlu bir gelişme olarak görmektedir. Ancak

Rusya, potansiyel bir çatışma arabulucusu olarak Çin'in gölgesinde kalmaktan endişe duymaktadır (Ramani, 2023).

Bölgesel güçler değişen bu uluslararası ortama, ABD'nin değişen rolüne ve Çin-Rusya'nın bölgedeki artan etkisine, cevap vermektedirler. Arap ayaklanmaları ve iç savaşlar, başlıca Arap bölgesel güçleri olan Mısır ve Suriye'nin bölgesel rollerini değiştirmiştir (Hazbun, 2018, s. 5). Ayrıca Ortadoğu'daki Arap olmayan ülkelerin; İran, Türkiye, İsrail, etki alanını büyük ölçüde arttırmıştır. Geleneksel Arap güçlerinin azalan etkisi, körfez Arap ülkelerini özellikle Suudi Arabistan'ı ve bir ölçüde Mısır'ı bölgenin Arap tarafını temsil etmeye yöneltmiştir. Dolayısıyla bölgesel güçlerin dış aktörlere karşı tutumlarında değişiklik yaşanmıştır. Bu durum, son OPEC kararları (Reuters, 2023) ve ABD yerine Çin/Rusya arabuluculuğunun tercih edilmesinde (Yazdanhenas ve Saleh, 2023) belirgindir. Aynı zamanda bölgesel aktörlerin kendi aralarındaki tutumlarında da değişiklik olmuştur. Bu tutum değişiklikleri; İsrail ile normalleşme kararı alan Körfez İşbirliği Teşkilatı ülkeleri (Al Jazeera, 2022); Suudi Arabistan ve İran arasında, Çin'in arabuluculuğuyla yeni diplomatik süreç başlatması (Yazdanshenas ve Saleh, 2023); Suriye ve Türkiye normalleşme arayışları (Lister, 2023); Türkiye ile İsrail arasında yeni diyaloglar (Cook, 2022); ve Suriye'nin Arap Ligi'ndeki konumunu geri almak için başlattığı çabalar (Al Jazeera, 2023) şeklinde görülmektedir. Bölge devletlerinin rol performanslarındaki değişiklikler Orta Doğu siyasetinde yeni bir dönemin ve yeni rol anlayışlarının habercisi olabilir. Son zamanlarda yeni diyaloglar oluşması ile birlikte Arap ayaklanmalarından bu yana Suudi Arabistan, İsrail ve Türkiye arasındaki ilişkilerin arkasındaki dinamikler önem arz etmektedir. Ayrıca dış politika tercihleri ile üstlenmek zorunda oldukları ve/veya üstlenmeye istekli oldukları yeni roller arasındaki etkileşim önem kazanmaktadır.

Ayrıca, ABD'nin Orta Doğu politikalarındaki değişiklikler ve Türkiye ile yaşanan anlaşmazlıklar nedeniyle Türkiye ile ABD arasındaki ilişkiler zayıflamıştır (Akbaba ve Özdamar, 2019). Türkiye, önemli bölgesel ve bölge dışı aktörlerle yakın ilişkiler geliştirerek etkisini genişletmeye çalışmıştır, örneğin Rusya'dan S-400 füze savunma sistemini satın alarak ve Katar'da askeri üsler kurarak (Oğuzlu, 2020, s. 137). Bu çabalar, diğer bölgesel güçlerin etkisini dengeleme arzusuyla yönlendirilmiştir.

Ancak, Türkiye'nin bölgedeki arabuluculuk çabaları, İsrail ile ilişkilerin gerilmesi ve Suriye ile ilişkilerin bozulmasıyla durmuştur (Halistoprak ve diğerleri, 2014, s. 105). Türkiye'nin militarize dış politikası ve bölgesel izolasyonu, ekonomik zorluklarla birleştiğinde sürdürülemez hale gelmiştir. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye'nin dış politikası daha pragmatik bir yaklaşımla bölgesel ve küresel prestijini yeniden kazanmaya odaklanmıştır (Talbot, 2022).

Küresel ve bölgesel değişimlerin yanı sıra, AKP'nin iktidara gelmesinin ardından AKP liderleri, Orta Doğu ülkeleriyle daha yakın ilişkiler kurmak istemiştir ve yeni roller arayışına girmişlerdir. Bu roller "bölge lideri", "ezilenlerin koruyucusu", "İslam dünyasının lideri", "yönetici" ve "merkez ülke" olarak sınıflandırılabilir (Özdamar, 2016, s. 94). Bölgedeki yapısal belirsizlik, Türkiye'nin bölgedeki yeni rol tasavvurlarını gerçekleştirmesi için bir alan yaratmıştır. Ancak ayaklanma sonrası gelişmeler, Türkiye'nin bölgesel liderlik arayışındaki rol kaynaklarının limitlerini ve olayları istediği gibi etkilemekteki sınırlarını ortaya çıkarmıştır (Altunışık, 2020, s. 5). Bu nedenle on yıllık Arap ayaklanmalarının ardından Türkiye, kendisini Katar dışındaki bölge ülkeleriyle sorunlu ilişkiler içinde bulmuştur (Tür, 2019). Arap ayaklanmalarının ardından Türkiye'nin Mısır, İsrail, Suudi Arabistan ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri ile ilişkileri sistematik olarak kötüleşmiştir ve bunun sonucunda Türkiye birçok bölgesel çok taraflı anlaşmanın dışında bırakılmıştır (Habibi, 2023). Bu izolasyon özellikle Doğu Akdeniz Doğal Gaz İşbirliği Anlaşmalarında belirgindir. Türkiye'nin yeni bölgesel anlaşmalara dahil edilmeyeceğinin bir başka göstergesi de İsrail ile Körfez Arap Devletleri arasında 2020'de imzalanan Abraham Anlaşması'nın duyurulmasıdır.

Arap ayaklanması süreci, Türk dış politikasında önemli zorluklara neden olmuştur. Başlangıçta, Erdoğan'dan gelen cesaret verici yakınlaşma sinyalleri 2019'dan itibaren bazı hedef ülkelere yönlendirildi. Ancak asıl eylem, 2021 yılına kadar bir dizi üst düzey diplomatik ziyaretle başlamadı (Habibi, 2023, s.5). 2021'den itibaren Ankara, Orta Doğu ülkeleriyle ilişkilerini normalleştirme girişiminde bulunarak bölgesel izolasyonu ve kötü ekonomik koşulları aşmaya çalıştı. Bu çerçevede Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri (BAE), Suudi Arabistan, İsrail ve Mısır ile ilişkilerini düzeltmeye çalıştı

(Habibi, 2023, s. 1). Ağustos ve Kasım 2021'de gerçekleşen iki diplomatik misyonun ardından Erdoğan, Türkiye'nin Müslüman Kardeşler'e verdiği desteğin bir sonucu olarak Arap ayaklanmaları döneminden bu yana iki ülke arasındaki gergin bağları onarmak için Şubat 2022'de BAE yetkililerini Ankara'ya davet etti. Ayrıca, Katar'a yardım ve Suriye'deki eylemler gibi konular da ele alındı (Al Jazeera, 2022). Türkiye ayrıca 2022'de İsrail ile normalleşme anlaşması imzaladı. Ayrıca, Türkiye'nin 2022'nin sonundan bu yana Çin ve İran'ın arabuluculuğunda Suriye'de diplomatik uzlaşma sürecinde yer alması (Yıldız, 2023), Türkiye'nin dış politika rollerini yeniden değerlendirmeye çalıştığını göstermektedir. Ankara'nın düşünsel ve maddi kaynaklarına odaklanmak gerekmektedir.

Türkiye gibi birçok aktör de ayaklanmalar bağlamında ve sonrasında Orta Doğu siyasetine ilişkin görüşlerini ve rollerini yeniden değerlendirmek zorunda kalmıştır. Bazı devletler mevcut poziyonunu korurken, bazıları da yeni oluşan statükoya dayalı yeni dış politika perspektifleri geliştirmiştir (Özdamar vd., 2014, s. 94).

Bu araştırmada, "Türkiye'nin ulusal rol anlayışının düşünsel ve maddi kaynakları nelerdir?" sorusu önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Bu yüksek lisans tezi, Türkiye'nin dış politika tercihlerini İsrail ve Suudi Arabistan ile ikili ilişkileri üzerinden açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Arabistan'ın dış politika analizi sağladığı kavramsal çerçeve ile birlikte Türk dış politikasındaki dönüşümü ve Orta Doğu bölgesel yapısındaki değişimleri anlamaya yönelik analizler yapmakta ve bu araştırmanın Türkiye'ye katkı sağlayacağı umulmaktadır. Rol teorisi, dış politika analizi, Orta Doğu Çalışmaları ve Uluslararası İlişkiler üzerine literatürü kapsamaktadır. Bu analizleri gerçekleştirmek için dört metodolojik araç benimsenmiştir: vaka çalışması, ikincil veriler, literatür analizi ve içerik analizi. Türkiye'nin rol performansları, Arap ayaklanmaları dönemi boyunca (2011-2019) incelenerek Türk dış politikasının düşünsel kaynakları, tarihsel/kültürel kimlik ve İslami kimlik olmak üzere iki ana faktöre ayrıştırılmıştır. Türk dış politikasının maddi kaynakları ise Türkiye'nin artan ekonomik ve askeri gücü ile Ortadoğu'da sürekli değişen bölgesel güç dengelerinde bulunabilir. Bu yüksek lisans tezi, Türk dış politika analizinde etkileşimci bir yaklaşım olan rol teorisi

çerçevesinde Türkiye'nin ulusal rol anlayışının ideolojik ve maddi kaynaklarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Orta Doğu bölgesindeki siyasi değişimleri daha derinlemesine anlamak için, Dış Politika Analizi alanına başvurulabilir. Devletlerin çevreleriyle etkileşimleri ve kendi davranışları, bölgenin siyasi manzarasını şekillendirmede önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Uluslararası İlişkiler'in yapısal yaklaşımına göre, devletler konumlandırıldıkları yapıların sınırları içinde faaliyet gösterirler. Ancak etkileşimci gelenek, tersinin de geçerli olduğunu savunur; uluslararası politika, devletlerin nasıl algıladığına bağlı olarak şekillenir (Wendt, 1992). Bu, devletlerin yalnızca belirli bir yapıya göre hareket eden pasif aktörler olmadıkları, aksine kararları ve eylemleriyle çevrelerini etkin bir şekilde şekillendirebilecekleri anlamına gelir. Bu nedenle dış politika analistleri ve Uluslararası İlişkiler akademisyenleri ajansa (devletlere), karar vericilerin ne algıladığına ve nasıl hareket ettiklerine odaklanmalıdır.

Rol teorisi doğasında yapısalcı bir teori olup Wendt'in (1992) varsayımıyla uyumludur (Breuning, 2023, s. 193). Rol teorisi, uluslararası politika aktörlerinin önceden belirlenmiş kimliklere ve çıkarlara sahip sabit varlıklar olmadıklarını varsayar. Bunun yerine, kimlikleri ve çıkarları diğer aktörlerle sosyal etkileşim yoluyla oluşturulur. Bu, aktörlerin diğerleriyle etkileşime girerek kimliklerini ve çıkarlarını etkin bir şekilde şekillendirebilecekleri anlamına gelir (Breuning, 2023). Sonuç olarak, rol teorisinin etkileşimci yaklaşımı, Ortadoğu'da meydana gelen siyasi değişiklikler hakkında dış politika analistlerine daha detaylı ve kapsamlı bir anlayış sağlayabilir.

Rol teorisine göre, bir devletin dış politika eylemleri, karar alıcı elitlerinin dış politika rol algılarına atfedilebilir (Özdamar vd., 2014, s. 93). Bu durum, karar alıcı pozisyonunda bulunan bireylerin, uluslararası toplumda devletlerinin sahip olduğu rolleri algıladıkları şekilde dış politika kararlarını etkileyebileceğini gösterir. Karar alıcı elitlerinin dış politika rol algılarını anlamak, bir devletin dış politika eylemlerinin motivasyonlarını kavramaya ve potansiyel olarak gelecekteki dış politika davranışlarını tahmin etmeye yardımcı olabilir. Rol teorisi dış politika analistlerinin,

aktörlerin dış politika davranışlarındaki değişiklikleri analiz etmek ve açıklamak için kullanabilecekleri kullanışlı bir çerçeve sağlar.

Türkiye, bölgedeki sahip olduğu önemli konum sebebiyle Orta Doğu'daki değişimleri açıklamak için dış politika rol performansları analiz edilmesi gereken bir ülkedir. Türkiye'nin rol tasavvufları bölgedeki değişiklikler ve gelişmeler tarafından önemli ölçüde etkilenmiştir. Arap ayaklanmalarından önce, Türkiye Arap rejimleriyle güçlü ekonomik ve sosyal bağlara sahipti (Barkey, 2011). Bu bağlantılar; sınır ötesi ticaret, yabancı yatırım ve yardımın yanı sıra Türk dizilerini, eğitimi ve dini de içermektedir (Barkey, 2011). Ayrıca, Türkiye, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu geçmişi nedeniyle bölge ile tarihi ve kültürel bağlara sahiptir. Ankara, ideolojik kaynaklarını dış politika söylemi ve performansında aktif olarak kullanmış ve AKP ile Osmanlı geçmişi ve İslami kimliğine vurgu yapmıştır. Türkiye'nin İslam dünyasında liderlik iddiası, AK Parti'nin siyasi İslam kökenlerinden kaynaklanır ve Müslüman dünyasında lider olarak rolünü vurgular (Akbaba ve diğerleri, 2019). Türkiye'nin İslami kimliği ve İsrail ile ilişkileri üzerindeki rekabet, Türkiye'yi "Filistin çatışmasının savunucusu" olarak konumlandırmıştır (Mansoor, 2022). Türkiye'nin İslami liderlik rolü, İslam dünyasının durumlarını yönetme sorumluluğunu içerir (Kara ve Sözen, 2016, s. 61). AK Parti, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun tarihiyle birlikte Türkiye'nin İslam devleti olarak mükemmel bir örnek olduğunu savunur (Altunışık, 2022, s. 5). Bu nedenle, Türkiye'nin İslami kimliği ve tarihi geçmişi, Türkiye'ye İslam dünyasının mazlumlarının koruyucusu olarak bir sorumluluk yüklediğini öne sürer (Altunışık, 2022, s. 5).

Ancak Arap ayaklanmaları, bu ilişkilerden bazılarını zayıflatan önemli değişiklikler getirmiştir. Buna rağmen Türkiye, ilişkileri kötüleşse bile bölgedeki hükümetler ve halklarla ilişkilerini iyileştirmek için büyük çaba göstererek bölgedeki etki alanını artırmıştır ve bölgesel bir güç haline gelmiştir. (Özdamar vd., 2014, s. 94). Sonuç olarak Türkiye, Orta Doğu'nun önemli oyuncularından biri olarak konumunu korumayı başarmıştır. Bu sebeple Türk dış politikasını anlamak, Orta Doğu'da meydana gelen değişikliklere daha geniş bir yaklaşım sağlar.

Türkiye'nin dış politikasındaki rol çatışmaları, Türkiye-İsrail ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan ilişkilerindeki normalleşme sürecinde görülmektedir. Türkiye'nin Arap ayaklanmaları süresince yönettiği rol performansları uluslararası, bölgesel ve yerel sınırlamalarla karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Rol teorisi literatürüne göre, yeni roller inşa etmek genellikle rol çatışmasıyla sonuçlanır. Türkiye örneğinde ise, ulusal olarak tanımlanmış roller ile bu roller için uluslararası ve bölgesel olarak kabul edilen beklentiler arasındaki çatışmayla sınırlanmaktadır (Thies, 2013). Bu durum özellikle devletin maddi kaynakları yeni rolün taleplerini karşılamakta yetersiz kaldığında geçerlidir (Akbaba, Özdamar, 2019). 2011-2019 yılları arasında Türkiye'nin üstlendiği önemli roller, *bölgesel güç, ezilenlerin koruyucusu* ve *İslam dünyasının lideri* olarak incelenebilir (Akbaba, Özdamar, 2019). Ancak Arap ayaklanmaları sırasında yaşanan rol çatışması dolayısıyla bu rollerin çoğu kendi içinde çelişkilerle karşı karşıya kalmış ve Türkiye'nin mevcut maddi kaynaklarına daha uygun rollere dönüşmesi ile sonuçlanmıştır.

Bu yüksek lisans tezi; Türk dış politikasını, fikirsel kaynaklar olarak Orta Doğu ile tarihsel-kültürel bağlar, İslami değer ve ilkelere yapılan vurgu ile incelerken, maddi kaynaklarını ise ekonomik çıkarlar, güvenlik çıkarları ve jeopolitik çıkarlar olarak incelemektedir. Bu çalışma Türkiye'nin Suudi Arabistan ve İsrail ile olan ilişkilerini baz almaktadır. Bu rol kaynakları, Türkiye'nin bölgesel hedeflerini ve Ortadoğu'da daha aktif ve etkili bir rol oynama arzusunu şekillendirmiştir. Türkiye, bölgesel izolasyonu ve ekonomik kriz süresinde ortaya çıkan kötü ekonomik koşulları aşmak için 2019 sonrası Orta Doğu ülkeleriyle ilişkilerini normalleştirmeye başlamıştır. Ankara, Arap ayaklanması sırasında ve sonrasında Orta Doğu'daki nüfuzunu korumaya ve bölgesel bir lider konumuna getirmeye çalışmıştır. *Ekonomik ortak* ve *bölgesel lider* rollerinin yanı sıra *bölgesel güvenlik sağlayıc*ı ve *arabulucu* gibi kazanılmak istenilen rolleriyle Ankara, Orta Doğu'daki etkisini artırma potansiyeline sahiptir, ancak dış politikasının çıkarlarıyla uyumlu olmasını sağlamak için fikirsel ve maddi kaynaklarını dikkatli bir şekilde dengelemesi gerekmektedir.

Türkiye'nin kimliğini yeniden ayarlaması ve ulusal çıkarlarının daha geniş bir şekilde tanınması, rol anlayışının evrimini göstermektedir. Türkiye'nin barış müzakereleri

sırasında İsrail ile Filistin arasında arabuluculuk yapma girişimleri ve Filistin davasından vazgeçmeden İsrail ile ilişkileri normalleştirme çabaları, Türkiye'nin çatışma çözümü ve bölgesel istikrar için çalışan bir arabulucu rolünü potansiyel olarak geliştirebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır. (Cook, 2022). İsrail ile ilişkileri normalleştirmek, Türkiye'nin etkisini ortaya koyması ve kendisini Doğu Akdeniz'de önemli bir arabulucu olarak konumlandırması için bir araç olabilir (Cook, 2022).

Türkiye'nin ekonomik bir ortak olarak gösterdiği rol performansı da Ankara'nın normalleşmeye yönelik değerlendirmelerinde itici bir faktör olabilir. Türkiye'nin bölgesel lider rolünü sürdürmek ve ekonomik sınırlamalarını ortadan kaldırmak için Suudi Arabistan ve İsrail gibi bölge ülkelerinden yabancı yatırımlara ihtiyacı vardır. Orta Doğu'daki izole konum (Tür, 2019) kesinlikle Türkiye'nin bölgesel emellerine hizmet etmemektedir. 2018'den bu yana yaşanan sorunlu ekonomik kararlar ve ekonomik krizin birleşimi, bölgesel dış politika performanslarını sürdürme kabiliyetini sınırlamıştır (Habibi, 2019, s. 6), bu da mevcut bölgesel düzene etkili bir şekilde meydan okuma ve algılanan hedeflerini gerçekleştirme kabiliyetini engellemektedir. Türkiye, İsrail ve Suudi Arabistan ile ilişkilerini normalleştirerek yabancı yatırımların önünü açmak ve ekonomik limitlerinin önüne geçmek istemektedir. Sert güce, vekâlet savaşlarına ve çatışmalara dayalı politikaların pahalı ve zaman içinde sürdürülmesinin zorluğu sebebiyle ekonomik işbirliği özellikle Suudi Arabistan ve diğer Körfez ülkeleri ile Türkiye arasındaki normalleşme sürecinde önemli rol oynamıştır. Bu durum, özellikle önceden var olan sorunları daha da kötüleştiren COVID-19'un ciddi sosyoekonomik etkisi ve petrol fiyatlarındaki düşüş dikkate alındığında daha belirgindir (Altunışık, 2021). Ayrıca Türkiye İsrail ile ilişkilerini güçlendirerek en önemli ticaret ortaklarından biri olan Tel Aviv'in ekonomik işbirliğini de sağlamaya çalışmaktadır.

Türkiye'nin askeri kapasitesi, ülkenin kendisini önemli bir askeri güç ve bölgesel istikrar sağlayıcı olarak konumlandırmasına yol açmıştır. İsrail ve Suudi Arabistan ile ilişkilerin normalleştirilmesi, Türkiye'nin zaten çok önemli bir bölgesel askeri güç olması nedeniyle Ankara'nın bu konudaki rolünü artırmasına potansiyel olarak yardımcı olabilir. Güvenlikle ilgili konularda İsrail ve Suudi Arabistan ile işbirliği,

Türkiye'nin bölgesel bir güvenlik sağlayıcısı olarak konumunu da güçlendirebilir. Özellikle Arap ayaklanmaları döneminde Orta Doğu'da meydana gelen ciddi dönüşüm göz önüne alındığında, bölgesel istikrar Türkiye için de önemli bir endişe kaynağıdır. Bu rolü sürdürmek için bir Türk savunma şirketi olan Baykar'ın Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri'ne 20 silahlı insansız hava aracı sağladığı ve 2021'de daha fazlasını satabileceği bildirilmiştir (Coşkun, 2022). Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri ve Suudi Arabistan, İran'ın artan etkisine karşı koymak için Türkiye ile gelişmiş ilişkilerini kullanmayı ummaktadır (Coşkun, 2022). Türkiye, İsrail ile ilişkilerini normalleştirerek, terörle mücadele çabaları, göç akışlarını yönetme veya Doğu Akdeniz'de istikrarı sağlama gibi ortak güvenlik endişelerini ele almadaki rolünü potansiyel olarak arttırabilir. Güvenlikle ilgili konularda İsrail ile işbirliği, Türkiye'nin bölgesel bir güvenlik sağlayıcısı olarak rolünü güçlendirebilir.

2020'den itibaren Türkiye'nin rol anlayışları Suudi Arabistan ve İsrail ile olan ilişkilerini de dönüştürmüştür. Ekonomik kriz (Habibi, 2019), Müslüman Kardeşler'in başarısızlığı (Ibish, 2023) ve bölünmüş dış politika kaygıları (Ibish, 2013) ile Türkiye muhtemelen bölgedeki daha yumuşak ve işbirlikçi rollerine geri dönecektir. Türkiye'nin maddi kaynakları ezilenlerin koruyucusu ve İslam dünyasının lideri gibi rolleriyle bağdaşmadığı için arabulucu ve bölgesel güvenlik sağlayıcı gibi rollere geri dönüş sağlanacaktır.

Bu tez, Türk dış politikasının fikirsel ve maddi kaynaklarını belirlemek ve ülkenin ulusal rol algısını analiz etmek için etkileşimci rol teoriyi kullanmaktadır. Rol teorisi, aktörler ve yapılar arasında bağlantıları olan çeşitli analiz seviyelerinde çalışır ve karmaşık sosyal süreçleri anlamak için kavramsal bir araç takımı sağlar (Darwich; Kaarbo, 2020, s.235). Rol teorisinin önemli bir diğer yönü de, farklı dış politika tercihlerindeki domestik ve uluslararası çatışmaların araştırılmasına olanak tanımasıdır (Thies, 2009; Altunışık, 2022).

Orta Doğu'da meydana gelen siyasi değişimleri analiz etmek, sadece Türkiye'nin dış politikasını anlamak için değil, aynı zamanda bölgedeki diğer ülkelerin dış politikalarını da anlamak için önemlidir. Örneğin, Suudi Arabistan'ın bölgedeki gücü

ve İsrail'in bölgedeki rolleri de bu değişimlerle birlikte önemli ölçüde dönüşmüştür. Suudi Arabistan da bölgesel lider olma hedefi doğrultusunda, bölgesel çatışmalara müdahale etme ve bölgesel işbirliği girişimleri başlatma gibi bir dizi adım atmaktadır. İsrail ise, Arap dünyasıyla olan ilişkilerini normalleştirme çabalarında bulunmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, Orta Doğu bölgesindeki siyasi değişimler ve Türkiye'nin bölgedeki rolü, bölgenin ve Türkiye'nin uluslararası politikada nasıl konumlandığına dair önemli bir bakış açısı sağlar. Türkiye'nin bölgesel politikaları, bölgedeki diğer ülkelerle olan ilişkileri, güvenlik konularını ve diğer önemli faktörleri içermektedir. Türkiye'nin bölgedeki güçlü liderlerden biri olarak konumunu koruması ve bölgede etkili bir politika izlemesi için, bölgedeki siyasi değişimleri anlamak ve analiz etmek önemlidir.

Bu yüksek lisans tezi, Türkiye'nin son dönemde İsrail ve Suudi Arabistan ile oynadığı rol performanslarını analiz ederek ve Türk dış politikasının düşünsel ve maddi rol kaynaklarına odaklanarak bulgular ortaya koymuştur. Arap ayaklanmaları sonrasında Türkiye'nin sınırlı maddi kapasitesi nedeniyle geçiş sürecindeki ulusal rol anlayışları ve bazı yeni ve/veya eski ulusal rol anlayışları tespit edilmiştir. Türkiye, Orta Doğu'daki değişen rollerine yansıyan karmaşık ve devam eden bir stratejik uyum sürecinden geçmektedir. Dış politikadaki gerilimlere rağmen, Türkiye'nin ekonomik ortak ve bölgesel güç olarak oynadığı roller ile arabuluculuk ve bölgesel güvenlik sağlayıcılığı gibi arzu edilen bazı roller, Orta Doğu'daki etkisini artırma potansiyeline sahiptir. Ancak, bu ulusal rol anlayışlarına ulaşmak için Türkiye'nin dış politikasının kendi çıkarları ve değerleriyle uyumlu olmasını sağlamak için düşünsel ve maddi kaynaklarını dikkatli bir şekilde dengelemesi gerekmektedir. Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'daki dış politika geleceği, bölgesel etkisini ve konumunu koruma çabalarıyla birlikte, değişen bölgesel manzaraya nasıl uyum sağladığına bağlı olacaktır.

Bu yüksek lisans tezi, rol teorisi yaklaşımlarının kavramsal çerçevesini ve literatür taramasını derinlemesine inceleyerek başlamaktadır. Bu sayede, çerçevenin teorik temeli daha iyi anlaşılabilir ve önceki araştırmalarda kullanılan farklı yaklaşımlar belirlenebilir. Tezin ikinci kısmı, Türkiye-İsrail ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan arasındaki karmaşık ve genellikle değişken ilişkiler hakkında arka plan bilgisi

sağlamaktadır. Bu bölüm, zaman içinde bu ilişkilerin dinamiklerini etkileyen tarihsel, politik ve ekonomik faktörleri keşfetmektedir. Son olarak, tez İsrail-Türkiye ve Türkiye-Suudi ilişkilerini rol teorisi çerçevesinde inceleyerek incelenmektedir. Özellikle, Türkiye'nin rolleri, zaman içinde nasıl geliştiklerini ve bunların birbirleriyle olan etkileşimlerini nasıl etkilediğini anlamak için analiz edilmektedir. Bu analiz sayesinde, uluslararası ilişkiler ve dış politika analizi bağlamında rol teorisi çerçevesi ve uygulamaları hakkında daha derin bir anlayış elde edilebilmektedir.

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