

The Power Projection of Turkey in Middle East: (From 2000-2020)

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Abstract: Turkey is an important power of Middle East and has a glorious past. On the basis of its victorious history, Turkey is aspiring to become a regional power of the region. In this regard, the domestic environment of Turkey (such as stable political system, democratic norms, economic development and political leadership) is playing significant role on one hand. On the other hand, the regional and global environment is also providing some opportunities and challenges to pursue its ambitions actively. Turkey's foreign policy in 21st century can be divided in two main phase; first decade of 21st century in which Turkey mostly relies on the use of soft power. However, in second decade, Turkey has used soft and hard power to gain its goals. Turkey's foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria are the key focus of this study. Previously, Turkey avoids supporting Iran and Saudi Arabia against each other. However, now Turkish leadership is actively trying to regain the historical influence of Turkey especially in Muslim world. Turkey's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia are revolving around cooperation Vs competition paradigm. On one hand, Turkey's support for Qatar (2017) and the killing of Jamal Khashoggi (October, 2018) has deteriorated the Saudi-Turkey's relations.

Key Words: Power, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Competition, Cooperation

Introduction

Post-cold war period also brought changes in the foreign policy of Turkey. During cold war, the foreign policy of Turkey was relatively static and can be characterized as status-quo. The international system was bipolar and the alternatives options for Turkey were also limited. During cold war period, the foreign policy of Turkey was pro-western and its role was designated by its capitalist western allies against communist bloc and Soviet Union. As a result, the foreign policy of Turkey was also revolving around western interests. The geostrategic position of Turkey has played a key role in it, as Turkey was a buffer-zone against Soviet Union. Since, the collapse of Soviet Union, many changes has occurred in international system. After the end of cold war, the communism was no more a major threat for West. International system was transferred from bi-polar to uni-polar world order. With the emergence of USA, as sole super power

the balance of power also got altered. The changes in international system also changed the foreign policy of many global and regional powers. Turkey is an important country and in post-cold war era, Turkey has expanded its foreign relations from Western Europe to Central Asia and from Balkans to the region of Middle East.

The foreign policy behaviour of Turkey is important to understand its role in regional and international affairs. In this regard, Turkey's historical past, geographical location and rich legacy in world politics are increasing the significance of Ankara, especially in the politics of Middle East. Turkey has successfully established a peaceful and stable environment at home and it is further helping to formulate a proactive foreign policy. For instance, Turkey has managed to balance between security and freedom at domestic level. It shows that policy makers in Turkey are

aware of the fact that stability cannot be achieved only on the basis of force.

In 1990s, the Turkish governments were failed to deal with the process of democratization and human rights at home ([Kirişci, K., & Sloat, A. 2019](#)). However, with the start of 21st century Turkey has fixed many of its domestic issues such as restructuring of domestic political institutions, democratization and human rights record. Moreover, the strong and visionary leadership also plays a role in the stability of Turkey. Therefore, now Turkey has a strong economy and stable political system. As a result, Turkey is now more confident about its role and position in regional and International affairs. Furthermore, Turkey is trying to strengthen its foreign policy towards neighbouring states, with which Turkey shares a common history. Turkey's foreign policy is multi-dimensional and based on constructive engagement with neighbouring countries.

The aim of this study is to explore the foreign policy behaviour of Turkey towards Middle Eastern countries such as; Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Syria. Turkey's foreign policy towards these states helps to analyse its future ambitions as well. This study also examines the power projection of Turkey in the region to deal with different opportunities and threats since 2000. Turkey is one of the key powers of the region and playing an active role in for the projection of its interest in the Middle Eastern region. This study also examines the role of AKP in the foreign policy of Turkey.

Different scholars have highlighted the shift in the foreign policy of Turkey under AKP. For instance; [Eligür \(2012\)](#) analyze the shift in foreign policy of Turkey under the government of AKP. The writer states that the role of ideology is dominant in the foreign policy of AKP government. The Islamist vision of Brotherhood of Muslim world is the key example of it. The Islamism is clearly manifest in the foreign policy of Turkey towards the region, especially in its relations with Israel ([Eligür, B. 2012](#)) Another scholar, ([Uzer 2013](#)) highlights the cultural and historical factors in Turkey's affinity towards the Arab world. He considers that Davutoglu's

strategic doctrine is the main reason behind the foreign policy of Turkey in Middle East ([Uzer, U. 2013](#)).

[Cerami \(2013\)](#) says that the unique combination of Islamism and secularism enable Turkey to use soft power in its foreign relations with Middle Eastern countries. The secular-Islamic model of Turkey is also becoming persuasive for the people of Arab world to aspire it. However, the slow process of reforms at domestic level and developments at regional level exposed the limitation of Turkey's use of soft power ([Cerami, C. 2013](#)).

Kirisci (2009) argues that economic factors are mainly shaping the foreign policy of Turkey since last few years ([Kirişci, K. 2009](#)) While ([Oğuzlu 2010](#)), analyzes the role of structural changes in the foreign policy of Turkey. The author mainly emphasizes on the role of Turkey in Palestine-Israel relations. He particularly highlights the security environment post 9/11, the role of Iran and security dilemma of Kurdish as main systematic variables in the foreign policy of Turkey towards Middle East ([Oğuzlu, T. 2010](#)). However, another scholar Tur (2012) argues that both domestic and structural factors plays key role in the foreign policy of Turkey. He says that ideology background of AKP and regional developments are mainly responsible for the deterioration of Turkey's relations with Israel ([Tür, Ö. 2012](#)).

The Analysis of Turkey's Foreign Policy towards Middle East through Neo-Classical Realism Paradigm

Neo-classical realism is theory of foreign policy ([Rose, G. 1998](#)). Like structural realism, Neo-classical realism also believes that states formulate their foreign policies according to threats and opportunities that emit from International system. All realist approaches agrees about the anarchical nature of international system. Therefore, a state has to keep an eye of all developments as a slight misstep could be resulted in major failures at foreign policy front especially during war. So, all states craft their foreign policies to secure their interest ([Ripsman, N. M.,](#)

[Taliaferro, J. W., & Lobell, S. E. 2016](#)). Classical realism highlights the role of domestic environment that mainly shapes the policies of a State. While structural realism pay more attention to the role of international system that affects the policies of states.

However, neo-classical realism bridges the gap between classical and structural realism, and addresses the role of both domestic environment and international system to understand and analyze the policies of a State. Neo-classical realists such as Wohlforth, Farid Zakaria and Schweller gave equal importance to domestic and structural environment. These scholars highlights that both, unit and system plays significant role in the formulation of policies of states. Baylis argues that, “foreign policy is the result of international structure, domestic influences and complex relations between the two” ([Baylis, J. 2020](#)).

Neo-classical realism helps to analyse the foreign policy of Turkey towards Middle Eastern region. Turkey’s foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, and Israel helps to understand its ambitions to become a regional power. On one hand, Turkey’s domestic environment such as role of leadership, culture, institutions, perceptions and decision making are influencing the foreign policy. On the other hand, the role of international and regional environment is affecting and shaping the foreign policy of Turkey. Gideon Rose states that, “the scope and ambition of a country’s foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative materiel power capabilities.” ([Baylis, J. 2020b](#))

According to Neo-classical realism, States are the primary unit in International system. ([Ripsman, N. M., Taliaferro, J. W., & Lobell, S. E. 2016](#)). Neo-classical realists also follow some assumptions of neo-realism about international system. Like Neo-classical realists also believes that International politics is struggle for power where states are uncertain about the intentions and capabilities of other states. The changing surrounding environment of Turkey shaped its foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel and Syria. Moreover, the AKP government is also

aspiring for a more active role of Turkey in regional politics. Therefore, President Erdogan is using both of and hard power to increase the influence of Turkey in the Middle Eastern region. In this regard, the combination of Islamism and liberalism at home is enhancing the attraction for general public in Arab countries, as authoritative form of government is common in all Arab countries. Turkey is making different dramas which are highlighting its glorious past. For instance; ‘*Diriliş: Ertuğrul*,’ series was watched by the audience of many Muslim countries. ([Azad, E. 2020](#)).

Furthermore, Turkey is concerned about the issues of Syrian refugees and Kurds. Turkey perceived the Kurds nationalism as a threat for its security and using military power to deal with this threat. Iran (having Shia religious ideology) and Saudi Arabia (Wahabi ideology) are unable to bring unity among Muslims. Consequently, such political, social environment is also paving a way for new leadership. Turkey, under the leadership of President Erdogan is trying to fill this vacuum. Turkey’s support for the people of Palestine is also increasing the perception that Turkey has the potential to lead the Muslim world. Furthermore, Turkey is managing its conflict and cooperation with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel to maximize its interests an emerging regional power of Muslim world.

Therefore, the domestic environment of Turkey, under the leadership of President Erdogan is also helping to gain its role. The Lausanne agreement ([Murat, S. 2018](#)). is going to be ended in 2023, and it will also enhance the opportunities for Turkey to revive its historical role. As once, Turkey played that role under Ottoman Empire. In 2020, President Erdogan has converted back Hague Sophia museum into Mosque and it was perceived as the revival of Ottoman history. AT the time, when Muslim world is divided and such policies of President Erdogan are increasing his popularity as emerging leader of Muslim world. In July 24, 2020 the Imam gave his first sermon (*Khutba*) after revival of mosque Hague Sophia while holding Ottoman sword in his hands ([Bangash, Y. K. 2020](#)). Despite the opposition of many countries, President

Erdogan took this daring step. All these actions and policies of Turkey, under President Erdogan are showing that Turkey has the potential, capability to become a regional power.

Foreign Policy of Turkey Post-2000 era

The foreign policy of Turkey can be divided in two main phases. First Phase is from 2000 till 2010 and second phase is from 2011-2020. During the first decade of 21st century, Turkey mainly focused on gaining more opportunities in the region and relies on the use of soft power and economic interdependence. While in the second phase Turkey used hard power to deal with regional threats. Since the Arab uprisings, the nature of Turkey's engagement got changed due to the new security environment of the region. The changing security regional environment further altered the nature of opportunities and threats in the regional. Therefore, the role of Turkey towards regional developments also got changed ([Cagaptay, S. 2019](#)).

Turkey's foreign policy can be divided in two main phases. First phase from 2000 till 2010, during this period Turkey mainly relies on the use of soft power via economic and political engagements in the region. During second period (2011-2020), Turkey mainly relies on the use of hard power to protect its interest. Since 2016 Ankara is using military power to gain its objectives, especially in Syria, as Ankara perceived it necessary to protect its national security. Turkey's good relations with Russia make possible to launch Euphrates Shield Operation in August, 2016. One of the main objectives of the operation was to push-back Daesh and Kurdish from the border of Turkey, and "form a wedge between the Kurds of Syria to avert any territorial connection between the cantons of Afrin and Kobane, thus ensuring the territorial continuity of Rojava" ([Sever, A. 2020](#)).

The Arab uprisings were foremost turning point for the entire region due to socio-political and economic instability. Turkey also found itself in a region which was going through civil wars, uprisings, protests, intensified violence and the military interference of regional and global

powers. Moreover, along with states, the non-state actors were also playing active role to gain their objectives. In such complex environment, the states and non-state actors were shifting their alliances. Besides this, Turkey's alliance with its traditional partners United States of America (USA) and Europe were getting weak.

Furthermore, the domestic environment of Turkey was also getting changed. For instance, the Kurdish peace process (2014-2015) got collapsed with the government of Justice and Development party (AKP) ([Plakoudas, S. 2018](#)). The failed coup attempt of 2016 also increased the security concerns for Turkey. Therefore, the adoption of new foreign policy becomes necessary for Turkey to protect its interest at home and abroad. The new foreign policy doctrine of Turkey is a product to deal according to its domestic and geographic changes. AKP party is well aware of the shift at home and abroad. Therefore, it is also reflecting in the policies of political elite of AKP.

Initially, Arab uprisings increased the expectation of Turkey due to different reasons. Firstly, Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan remained famous in 'Arab street' for some period and AKP has close links and supported the movements of Muslim Brotherhood. It was also expected that support for democratic governments in Arab world will increase opportunities for Turkey to establish closer ties with Arab countries. Therefore, Turkish government actively supported the uprisings especially in Tunisia and Egypt. Turkey has provided economic and political support to uprising in Tunisia and Egypt. Turkey offered Strategic partnership to Muhammad Morsi, who was a candidate of Muslim Brotherhood and won presidential elections in Egypt. However, it could not happen between Turkey and Egypt ([Shadid, A. 2011](#)). Despite many challenges, Turkey aspires to play an active role as a key regional power.

Turkey-Saudi Relations : From Cooperation to Competition

Till Arab uprisings, Turkey was playing a careful role while maintain relations with all neighbouring states. Turkey especially avoids

being a part of regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, Arab uprisings have altered the traditional role of Turkey as now Turkey was also in the race of power competition in the Middle Eastern region. Moreover, Turkey has supported the Muslim Brotherhood movements in the region and it also deteriorated the Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and United Arab Emirates (UAE) ([Yeşilyurt, N. 2018](#)). The power competition between Turkey and Saudi led axis (UAE, Egypt) is playing-out in different areas of the region particularly in Libya and Syria. Furthermore, Turkey's cooperation with Qatar and its role in Tunisia also enhanced the power competition between Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Both regional powers are using economic, social and political tools to increase their influence in the Middle Eastern region and in Horn of Africa ([Vertin, Z. 2019](#)). During the 1st decade of 21st century, AKP has developed friendly economic, political and strategic relations with Saudi Arabia and GCC. However, the relations of Turkey with Arab world got transformed with the passage of time. As a result, the differences between Saudi Arabia and Turkey become evident after Arab uprising. Though, initially this divergence of interest did not deteriorate the bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia ([Altunışık, M. B. 2020](#)).

Turkey-Saudi Arabia's relations has gone through many phases. The AKP government supported Saudi intervention and operation in Yemen. President Erdogan, openly criticised the expanding influence of Iran in the region. Moreover, in March, 2015 President Erdogan states that, Iran is extending its influence to dominate the region and it is annoying Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries as well. Iran's increasing role is not acceptable for Turkey ([Pamuk, H. 2015](#)). In 2016, the leadership of Riyadh and Ankara paid mutual visits and established a Strategic Cooperation Council. One of the key objectives of this council was to increase the cooperation and coordination between Ankara and Riyadh in Syria, especially against Iran and Daesh. Crown Prince Mohammad bin Nayef also visited to Turkey in September, 2016

and this was his second visit in the period of six months. Furthermore, the GCC security Dialogue was assembled in Riyadh in which they expressed their support for Turkish government. It shows improved economic and military relations between the two countries. In response, President Erdogan visited Saudi Arabia in February, 2017 and it was promoted as an example of 'intra-regional solidarity,' by the government of AKP ([Kalm, I. 2017](#)).

However, Saudi-Turkey relations started deteriorating soon after the Qatar crisis. The Qatar crisis was emerged in June, 2017 which affected the Ankara's relations with Riyadh. Thirteen point demands list was presented to Qatar by Saudi Arabia and UAE. One of the demands was to close the military base of Turkey and halt the joint military operations of Turkey and Qatar. In response, Turkey has advanced its ties with Qatar via expanding economic and military cooperation. Since then, both Saudi Arabia and UAE are openly criticising the AKP's government support for Muslim Brotherhood and depict Turkey as a destructive force in the region ([Barnes-Dacey, J., Geranmayeh, E., & Lovatt, H. 2018](#)).

Moreover, On October 2, 2018 Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashogi was brutally killed in the consulate of Istanbul and it further deteriorated the relations between Ankara and Riyadh. As Turkey blamed that the murder was planned by the highest authorities of Saudi Arabia. As a result, the geostrategic environment is revolving around Turkey-Saudi power competition on one hand. On the other hand, it is involving Turkey's interest conflict with Iran. It is showing that Turkey is actively projecting its interest throughout the region.

Turkey-Iran Relations: Cooperation or Competition

Turkey is actively trying to manage its influence in Middle East. On one hand, Turkey's competition and cooperation strategies with Saudi Arabia are extended throughout the region. On the other hand, Turkey is engaged in intense competition with Iran mainly in Syria and Iraq. However, the

power competition in Syria did not end the bilateral ties between Ankara and Tehran. Since 2016, many new areas of contention have emerged. For instance, Iran remains concerned about military operations of Turkey in Syria. While Iran's support for Bashar-al-Assad's regime and its support for militias group near to Turkey's border remains a key focus of concern for Turkey.

However, despite all these conflict of their interest, both Turkey and Iran were a part of 'Astana Process,' which was commenced by Russia in December, 2016. After suffering worst casualties in years, Turkey declared major offensive against the regime of Bashar-al Assad in Syria in 2020. As almost thirty-six Turkish soldiers were killed in Russian-Syrian artillery strikes. It was the first time when Turkey openly declared a war on Syria. However, it was not directly against Russia or Iran as they are the key allies of Assad in Syria. President Erdogan demanded the withdrawal of Syrian troops beyond the previously agreed boundaries ([Carlotta Gall, C. 2020](#)).

Turkey-Iran's relations are revolving around cooperation and competition paradigm. For instance, Iran and Turkey managed their competition in Iraq and avoids direct confrontation. Moreover, Turkey considers President Donald Trump's withdrawal of 2018 from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), 'an unfortunate step.' Despite American withdrawal from JCPOA, Turkey continued its dialogues with Iran. Therefore, despite the competition between Ankara and Tehran, the relationship between the two countries did not turn into a zero-sum game. Overall, Turkey is engaged in power competition with two main powers of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Iran. During this period, the only state with Turkey has developed friendly and close relations is Qatar. Post Arab-spring, both countries were supporting Muslim Brotherhood movements throughout region. In 2015, Turkey has established a military base in Qatar that shows the nature of their close relations.

In 2017 Saudi Arabia along with Gulf States imposed economic and political embargo against Qatar due to its relations with Iran and support

for Muslim Brotherhood. Consequently, Turkey's base in Qatar was considerably expanded after the crisis of Qatar. It further improves the relationship between Qatar and Turkey; in defence, trade and military exercise ([YESİLTAS, M. 2020](#)). Turkey's close relations intensified the security dilemma in the region. It also intensified the threat perception in Saudi Arabia and its regional ally UAE regarding the regional ambitions of Turkey.

The Power Projection of Turkey in Syria

Syria is another case which shows the power projection of Turkey in the region. Moreover, anti-Turkish groups always got support from Syria due to their fear of Turkish aggression. For instance, in 1970s, the Turkish Marxist groups got sanctuary in Syria. During 1980s, Syria got an opportunity to gain some leverage over Turkey via actively supporting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The PKK guerrillas were hosted and trained in the bases of Syria and Lebanon. Furthermore, the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan got refugee by Syrian government. Such incidents have increased the frustration in Turkey against Syria ([Bolukbasi, 1999](#)).

Since, 1980s Turkey is facing a rise in Kurds nationalism and insurgency is erupted in the South-eastern province of Turkey, where the Kurds are in majority. The rights of Kurds issue was converted into a serious conflict between the Turkish government and Kurds. The conflict got militarized when the Turkey's government refused to allow Kurdish identity in the political arena. As a result, the issues become a major threat for the national security of Turkey and threaten the national integrity of Turkey ([Yavuz, 1997](#)).

Syria is important because of two main reasons; firstly Turkey aspires to become a regional power. Secondly, due to Syrian Kurds as Turkey perceived them a threat. Therefore, Turkey wants to play an influential role in the politics of Syria. Moreover, Syrian refugees were mounting the domestic pressure on AKP government. Therefore, Turkey was not in the position to allow more Syrian refugees and it was a

major challenge for AKP government ([Altunışık, M. B. 2020](#)). Arab spring also brought a shift in Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria. Moreover, Arab uprising in Syria provides opportunity for Turkey to interfere in the politics of Syria. In this regard, the Syrian Kurds played a key role in Turkey's relations with Syria.

President Erdogan's main focus was to prevent the reestablishment of Kurds government in the north-west and north-east of Syria ([Seufert, G. 2020](#)). Initially, Turkey's main focus was to support the anti-Assad demonstrations but later on Kurds in Syria were emerged as a key threat for the security of Turkey. As a result, Turkey has launched many military operations against Kurds in Syria to eliminate the Kurds threats at the border of Turkey ([Kösebalaban, H. 2020](#)). On January 13, 2020, the Heads of the secret services of Turkey and Syria met in Russia and agreed to follow a common strategy against Kurds in Syria. Turkey also conceded that its presence in Syria is temporary. Although, Arab uprising in Syria could not help Turkey to bring like-minded groups such as Muslim Brotherhood in the political stream of Syria but Kurds threats enhanced the need of bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria.

Turkey's Support for Palestine: A Strategy to Project Power

Initially, Turkey tries to play a role of mediator in Israel-Palestine conflict. Turkey has good bilateral terms with Israel especially in economic, trade fields. Therefore, Turkey was interested to play the role of mediator not only in Israel-Palestine conflict but also in its conflicts with Iran, Iraq and Syria ([Erdurmaz, 2012](#)). A political clash between Israel and Turkey was erupted and was intensified with Gaza war of 2008. Many other issues such as the Davos crisis (2009), in 2012 the low chair incident and Mavi Marmara incidents (Sönmez, 2016). However, despite these tensions the economic relations between Turkey and Israel remains stable it shows that both countries have adopted pragmatic approach to manage their cooperation and conflict (Akgün & Gündoğar, 2011).

However, Turkey has improved its political and social relations with Palestine especially with Hamas after its victory in the elections of 2006 in Gaza. Despite the international pressure, Turkey supported Hamas as a legitimate actor and supported Hamas at regional and global forums ([Benjamin, 2016](#)). It is interesting to note that Turkey improved relations with Palestine were also a part of its ambitions and strategy to expand its influence in the region. Therefore, Turkey has supported Palestine at regional and global levels. Moreover, Turkey's growing tensions with Israel were also a part of its broader regional strategy. In this regard, AKP also plays a key role.

AKP government shares more solidarity with the people of Palestine as they see that Muslims in Palestine are suffering because of forceful occupation of Israel. All these policies of AKP government help to get the support of Arab public. It also turned the Arab public perception favourable towards Turkey. This positive perception further helps Turkey to play a more active role as regional power in Middle East (Akgün & Gündoğar, 2013). Turkey's support for Palestine and its clash also help to expand its influence in the geopolitics of Middle East ([Alsafawi, M. 2017](#)).

Findings, Recommendations, Conclusion Findings

From 2000 till 2016, the foreign policy of Turkey was mainly influenced by Ahmet Davutoglu doctrine. He has worked with AKP party under different capacities like from 200-2009 Davutoglu was the key foreign policy advisor of government. Later on he served as foreign minister from 2009 till 2014 and from 2014-2016 he served as Prime Minister of Turkey. Due to increasing criticism on his policies he resigned on May, 2016. After Davutoglu, there was a key shift in the foreign policy of Turkey according to the changing regional and global environment. With the emergence of multi-polar world order, now Turkey has modified its foreign policy towards regional and global powers. The new world order is providing opportunities and challenges as well.

However, President Erdogan is actively enhancing the regional opportunities to increase the influence and role of Turkey in the Middle Eastern region. Turkey's support for Palestine, Azerbaijan, and Kashmir is also a part of these strategies. Moreover, Turkey is managing its relations according to its interests with Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran. President Erdogan's pragmatic approach is helpful to increase the role of Turkey as emerging Muslim power. It is revealing the intention of President Erdogan that Turkey has the capability and will to lead the Muslim world.

Turkey is aspiring to become a power of Middle East. In Syria and Libya Bashar-al Assad and Moammar Gaddafi could not address the demands of their public, as people were demanding for socio-political reforms. Libya becomes a complicated case due to the interference of regional and global powers. However, Turkey always encouraged the diplomatic solutions of all issues particularly in Middle East. In Syria, President Assad used force against his public instead of reforms which converted the uprising into serious civil war, which later became regional phenomena. Initially, Turkey tried to convince the Bashar-al-Assad to bring reforms and stop the use of force. However, Turkey failed to convince the Assad administration for reforms. Moreover, the Kurds' nationalism issues also posed serious challenge for the security of Turkey. As a result Turkey launched military operations against Syrian Kurds. Besides this, Turkey's relations with Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran are based on its interest to promote Turkey as a leading Muslim power. Therefore, Turkey is actively supporting Muslim Brotherhood to gain its objectives. In this regard, Turkey's combination of soft and hard power is increasing the positive image of Turkey in the Muslim world.

Recommendations

Turkey's foreign policy brings many challenges and opportunities for Turkey at home and at the foreign front.

- At home, the general public is not much satisfied over the strict control of AKP on all political and economic institutions, freedom of expression. AKP should provide space for the criticism of public on government policies. Freedom of expression will increase the credibility of Turkish democracy at home and also at the regional level.
- Turkey's interference in Syria has resulted in a huge influx of Syrian refugees that is posing a challenge for the economic-social environment of Turkey at home. The return of Syrian refugees is important for peace at home and in the region.
- Turkey's military operations against Kurds are increasing the security challenges and threats. Therefore, Turkey should address the grievances of the Kurds' community through diplomacy and dialogue.
- Turkey should continue its new policy of not tying with great powers. Turkey rejected the previous pro-western policy and moved towards improving its relations with China, Iran and Russia. The continuation of this policy will help Turkey to gain its objectives at the foreign front.
- Due to the Syrian refugees crisis and the Syrian Kurds conflict, Turkey needs to continue its cooperation with Iran and Russia. Therefore, friendly and good terms with these countries will help Turkey to protect its security and focus of its ambitions of revival of its historical role in the region.
- Turkey should maintain friendly relations with neighbouring states as it will help to ensure its security along the borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria.
- The Gulf crisis, the Kurds conflict and the murder of Jamal Khashoggi has affected the Turkey-Saudi relations. In the Kurds issue, Saudi Arabia supported the rights of the Kurds and it further deteriorated the relations between the two. Therefore, Turkey should use diplomatic tools to find a way of its disagreements with Saudi Arabia. The good terms with Iran and Saudi Arabia will help Turkey to reduce the tensions at its

borders. Moreover, Turkey will get opportunities to extend its influence throughout the region if it has peace with the other key powers of the Middle East.

- Russia is playing an active role in the politics of Middle East. Therefore, it is important for policy makers in Turkey to increase the cooperation with Russia. It would not be easy without creating trust in Turkey-Russia relations. Russia is important for Turkey due to its energy resources, economy, defence capabilities and its role in Syrian conflict. Therefore, Turkey should balance its relations between Russia and USA.
- Turkey-Russia relations are mainly revolving around the personalities of President Putin and President Erdogan. There is need to strengthen the role of institution to extend the cooperation between Moscow and Ankara especially in the fields of economy, tourism, agriculture and energy.
- Turkey's good relations with neighbouring countries will enable to increase the attraction for Turkey's political system and its tolerance for human rights and freedom of expression at regional and global level.
- To become a regional power, Turkey needs to manage its relations with Russia and USA as well. Therefore, improved trustworthy relations with global powers will help Ankara to increase its influence

in Middle Eastern region. It will help Turkey to expand its influence at regional and global level.

Conclusion

Turkey is playing an active role and become a part of many conflicts such as in Syria, Libya, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Turkey has watched these conflicts carefully and used them to expand its influence. Turkey's support for the people of Kashmir, Palestine is also a part of its greater strategy. Turkey's foreign policy towards Muslim countries is giving an impression that under the leadership of President Erdogan, Turkey has the courage and potential to lead the Muslim world. Furthermore, President Erdogan's open support for Azerbaijan, Palestine and Kashmir is mainly based on Muslim brotherhood and it increases the popularity of Turkish president in Muslim world. Turkey's model of democracy and its emphasis on human rights throughout region has increased the inspiration among Arab public.

Post Arab spring, Turkey has supported the fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and speech of Arab public. Despite, American withdrawal from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Actions (JCPOA), Turkey supported its economic and trade relations with Iran and criticised USA sanctions against Tehran. Moreover, Covid-19 also provides an opportunity for Turkey to improve its image at regional and global level. Turkey has provided health and medical equipments to more than 150 countries.

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