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TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY AND THE MIDDLE EAST: NEW CHALLENGES & NEW APPROACHES

Abstract:

In the post-cold war era, Turkey has been attempting to redefine its place in the international system. Middle East plays a central role for Turkey in this context in terms of politics, economy, security and history. Almost every crisis or event in the region influences Turkey in a direct or indirect way. Political authorities in Turkey generally cannot remain indifferent to the developments in the region although the approaches may change from time to time. The ruling AKP, which is in office for about twelve years, has a “proactive” foreign policy. Turkish Foreign Policy has been based on some other discourses such as “normalization of history” and “civilization” which increase the capabilities of Turkey to struggle against political and security problems in Middle East. However, the IS (so-called Islamic State) terrorism, erupted in Iraq and Syria, has dramatically decreased the capabilities of Turkey. Especially during the hostage crisis in Mosul, Turkey’s choosy and reluctant declarations was pointed out by all the world. After the hostage crisis ended up, Turkey took a deep breath and now Turkey may imply more effective policies against the challenges from the region such as Syrian Civil War or the IS. The changes in Turkish political life in recent times may also influence its foreign policy. Ahmet Davutoglu, who is believed to have constructed the intellectual background of Turkish foreign policy, has become the new prime minister. His government supports international initiatives against the problems of the region and that’s why Turkey has clearly supported the US attack on the IS. The inception of negotiations between the United Kingdom and Iran on terrorism in the region and the IS threat should be seen as an important step in supporting Turkey’s approach. In this study, after making a general evaluation of the recent developments in the Middle East, the attitude of Turkish foreign policy against these developments will be discussed.

Keywords:

Turkish foreign policy, Middle East, IS, terrorism, hostage crisis

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