

# **Neo-Ottomanism in Turkish Foreign Policy and Changes during the Erdoğan era**

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## **Abstract**

In November 2002, the new emerging Justice and Development Party (AKP) experienced a landmark electoral victory that significantly rewrote the prevailing domestic and foreign policy identity. The Islam-based AKP and its leaders Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül and Ahmet Davutoğlu initiated a massive transformation of the Turkish society imposing economic market-oriented reforms and emphasizing the role of democratic institutions and the potential EU membership. AKP establishment also adopted a new foreign policy identity - the neo-Ottomanism. The concept has a background in 1990's strategy of former President Turgut Özal who emphasized the historical, cultural and religious heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Based on domestic changing identity, AKP's neo-Ottomanism served as an ideological tool how to transform its foreign policy identity with using the Islamic narrative and soft power tools. The thesis analyses how the new establishment of 2000's redefined the role of Turkey regarding its geopolitical position in the Middle East. Turkey has been emphasizing its strategic role as a regional power on the crossroads of many cultures and geopolitical interests. The question is how and whether the AKP governments changed the foreign policy identity with the use of neo-Ottomanism and how this concept has been dealing with recent unfavourable domestic and international environment.