

Abstract

This diploma thesis focuses on the evolution of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East. In order to assess the transformation of the approach pursued in foreign affairs and delineate the tools employed in this new emerging era, the first direct military involvement of Turkey in 2016, in the Syrian conflict, is discussed in details.

The current state of affairs in the region is of particular interest to all regional and international stakeholders. Turkey, since the beginning of Erdoğan's rule, has gained increased visibility and managed to heighten its image globally by employing a liberal approach. Tangible results in neighbouring states, from the employment of soft power, have been limited. The primary goal is to provide an examination of the evolution of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East and reasons attributed to a dramatic change and incline towards a realist approach. This thesis is expected to contribute to the existing research on Turkish foreign policy and to prepare the grounds for further inquiry of this topic in the light of new developments.

This work presents substantial historical background information of Turkish foreign policy, since the establishment of the modern republic, which provides the reader with a careful examination of its key features. Domestic dynamics and political developments, instruments and approaches to foreign policy are analysed in order to depict an overall picture and offer a broader understanding of the role of Turkey in global and regional affairs, an area of high interest to the international community. As such, this study analyses the stance of an important regional actor, which stands between the Eastern and Western worlds. The case study of intervention in Syria, considered a pivotal point, explores the first direct military involvement in conflict. This dissertation assesses the influence of internal politics and leadership on foreign policy outcomes.

This dissertation uses process tracing and qualitative methods of research to assess the case. The combination of realist and liberal approaches, with the careful exploration of the psychological model is used to discover the reasons behind the shift in Turkish foreign policy, especially in the region.