

## **Abstract**

This study analyses the strengths and limitations of Turkey on its way to becoming a regional power in the Middle East. Using the major theories of International Relations (Realism and Liberalism), the study presents the definition and main criteria of the term of regional power. The key purpose of this study is to examine if today's Turkey meets the requirements of being a recognized regional leader.

The paper examines the period under the governance of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) which has started in 2002 and continues since then. During these 17 years, Turkey has gone through 3 distinct stages; Recovery from the internal political and economic crisis, ascendancy to a regional power level in the Middle East region and the decline phase which came as a result of failures in internal and external affairs. In order to understand the position of Turkey in the region and its regional influence during this period Turkish economic and military power capabilities are thoroughly analyzed and compared to the same statistical indicators of other Middle East countries. Moreover, the paper also analyses the foreign policy of Turkey towards the regional actors and the level of its recognition as a major power by international players.

The study confirms that Turkey has lost its status as a regional power due to internal and external factors. Even though Turkey is still accepted as one of the major players of the region, the continued failure of democracy under the current regime, a weakened army and the "sick" economy have considerably affected its position. Furthermore, the deterioration of the relations with regional states and the failed foreign policy strategy made it less likely for Turkey to be accepted as a regional power.