

THE PERCEPTION OF “THE MIDDLE EAST” IN TURKEY:  
HOW DO TURKISH SCHOLARS OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES AND OTHER  
DISCIPLINES PERCEIVE THE AREA?

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## ABSTRACT

### THE PERCEPTION OF “THE MIDDLE EAST” IN TURKEY: HOW DO TURKISH SCHOLARS OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES AND OTHER DISCIPLINES PERCEIVE THE AREA?

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Where the Middle East is has been a very debatable issue since the construction of this terminology, not only due to its being a Eurocentric term but also because territories and characteristics attributed to the area can change dramatically. Thus, how Middle East is perceived is an important question to ask especially in Turkey: According to some it is included in the Middle East, whereas others argue that it is a European country, Euro-Asian country, a “bridge” between east and west, a European model to the Middle East and a country with strategical depth. Hence, this present thesis aims to depict how the Middle East is perceived and how Turkey is positioned in the Middle East by the experts of this area, i.e. Turkish scholars of the Middle East Studies; as well as by non-experts with similar cognitive/intellectual capacity, Turkish scholars from other disciplines. Besides, this qualitative study asks whether there is any difference between the perceptions of these two groups and in what ways they differ, if they do. Therefore, this thesis not only fills the gaps in terms of the question it asks, but also attempts to present new methodology to the Middle East Studies by its quasi-experimental qualitative design.

**Keywords:** Middle East, Turkey, Perception, Geopolitics, Middle Eastern Studies.

## ÖZ

### TÜRKİYE’DE “ORTA DOĞU” ALGISI: ORTA DOĞU ARAŞTIRMALARI ALANINDA ÇALIŞAN VE ÇALIŞMAYAN TÜRK UZMANLAR ALANI NASIL ALGILIYORLAR?

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Orta Doğu’nun nerede olduğu, bu kavramın oluşturulmasından bu yana, sadece Avrupa-merkezci bir kavram olması itibariyle değil, alanın sınırlarının ve alana yöneltile karakter atıflarının da dramatik bir şekilde değişmesinden dolayı oldukça tartışmalı bir konu olmuştur. Dolayısıyla, Orta Doğu’nun nasıl algılandığı, özellikle de Türkiye’de sorulması önemli bir sorudur: Bazılarına göre Orta Doğu’nun içine alınsa da, diğerleri için bir Avrupa ülkesi, Avrasya ülkesi, Doğu ve Batı arasında “köprü” ülke, Orta Doğu’ya Avrupalı bir model ve stratejik derinliği olan bir ülkedir. Bu bağlamda, elinizdeki bu tez, konunun uzmanları, yani Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında çalışan Türk uzmanlar kadar benzer bilişsel/entellektüel kapasiteye sahip ama konuda uzman olmayan, farklı alanlardaki Türk uzmanların Orta Doğu’nun nasıl algılandığını ve Türkiye’nin Orta Doğu’da nasıl konumlandırıldığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, bu nitel çalışma iki grup arasında bir farkın olup olmadığı, ve eğer fark varsa hangi şekillerde farklılaşmanın olduğunu da sorgulamaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu tez sadece sorduğu sorular anlamında literatürdeki boşluğu doldurmakla kalmamakla, aynı zamanda yarı-deneysel nitel bir tasarımla Orta Doğu Araştırmaları’na yeni metodolojileri de sunmaya niyetlenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Orta Doğu, Türkiye, Algı, Jeopolitika, Orta Doğu Araştırmaları

To My Parents

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Af-Pak	Afghanistan and Pakistan
ESODAM/MESACC	Eskişehir Osmangazi University Middle Eastern Studies and Cooperation Center
EU	European Union
GORAM	Gazi University Middle East and Central Asia Research Center
IR	International Relations
JDP	Justice and Development Party- Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi
KHU	Kadir Has University
ME	Middle East
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MES	Middle East Studies
METU	Middle East Technical University
ORMER	Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi-Sakarya University
ORSAM	Orta Doğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi
OSAM/MESRC	Zirve University Middle East Strategic Research Center
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SWANA	South-West Asia and North Africa
SETA	Foundation for Political Economic and Social Research
SAM	Center for Strategic Research
TA	Teaching Assistant
TESEV	Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı
UN	United Nations
vs	Versus
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

## LIST OF SYMBOLS

$df$	Degrees of Freedom-Statistics
$H_0$	Null hypothesis-Statistics
$H_1$	Alternative hypothesis-Statistics
$n$	Sample size- Statistics
$X^2$	Chi-square-Statistics

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Starting from the very first day I got academically interested in the Middle East, most people around -including some politicians, bureaucrats and think-tank coordinators I had chance to know- appreciated my research interest and my attempts to learn two of the most popular area languages; Arabic and Persian. Most of the time this was accompanied by a didactical speech on why more and more young academics should be interested in the Middle East, why Turkey is or is not a Middle Eastern country, what a tough job it would be to study an area “like that”, even though no one really explained what kind of area it was during these chats.

Popular-politics sections of the bookshops, news and political discussion programs on television, even these tiny references to “Middle East” in television series, social media and daily life got me to realize there might have been different perceptions of the Middle East and overall they are also a little bit different than the ones I got through my text-books, articles written by various academics of the field, language textbooks written by the natives of Arabic or Persian, Arab and Iranian media sections broadcasting for news or entertainment purposes, lectures and class discussions we have in my department, METU Middle East Studies. Thus the basics of the research question of this present thesis emerged: What if we take two groups of people almost in similar characteristics in terms of their academic and intellectual capacities and somehow the background, but one being “experts” of the area and got their knowledge mainly through the academic sources from and on the field, and the other just having the sources of information like media, social media, popular books and so forth as their primary source, would there be any difference (or similarities) in terms of how they perceive the area and the country they live in. For that query, the best method seemed as “asking them” where the Middle East is, whether Turkey is in

the Middle East or not and what are their sources of information and academic background related to the Middle East, in a semi-structured interview form; that would take around half an hour.

To begin with, “Where is the Middle East?” is an important question and many eminent scholars of the field discussed through this lines of that question in terms of its euro-centricity and stereotypical answers given by politicians and military geo-strategists. Roderic Davison’s (1960) article “Where is the Middle East?”, Albert Hourani’s (1991) piece “How should we write the history of the Middle East?”, Rashid Khalidi’s (1998) article “The ‘Middle East’ as a framework of analysis: re-mapping a region in the era of globalization” can be given as only a few of the names on that questioning process. Moreover, Turkish scholars like Davut Dursun (2004), Pınar Bilgin (2004a); Mustafa Öztürk (2003) are only a few of the names who directly got involved in the debate by trying to answer where the Middle East is and whose Middle East we are talking about. In general, all of these writings teach us one important lesson that the “Middle East” is not a mainly God-given territorial/geographical name but rather a construct that bases on subjective and centric perceptions and even the name itself signifies that it is a European and North American construct where both the geographical and cultural frontiers are defined in reference to those countries. Moreover, even though the term is rather an “occidental” definition of the area, it has some kind of legacy in the languages of the people of that region, as Turks, Arabs, Iranians and Israelis all use simply the translation of “Middle East” rather than their traditional definitions of different parts of that area, like Magreb, Mashraq, Anatolia-Mezapotamia, Levant, Arabia etc. Thus it seems that the whole nations in the “area” voluntarily or not had accepted and internalized the naming. Khalidi puts it as:

Even within the ‘Middle East’ itself, this term has great currency, with the standard designation in Arabic, ‘al-sharq al awsat’ being no more than a translation of the English term. [...] Sadly, al-sharq al awsat in Arabic, and analogous terms in other regional languages, indicate that an external perception of the region is prevalent in countries of the ‘Middle East’ itself. (Khalidi, 1998, p. 74)



Turkish academics were not ignorant to this naming issue, as in a 2003 conference on Middle East Studies (MES) organized by Fırat University, Elazığ, an article on the geographical construction on Turkey starts as “When the studies having “Middle East” concept in its title are examined, the very first point that strikes us is that the scope of this concept is different from one another and it is narrowed or enlarged in each different study.” (Dursun, 2004, p. 21). However, that mentioned article was not a perception-related discussion on the subject but rather an attempt to review the literature based on conceptualisation of the Middle East, i.e. the historical transformation of the areas’ naming by the West from Near East to Middle East.

Plus, another hotly debated issue is the Middle Easternness of Turkey or its exceptionalism which was rather signified as the analogy of “bridge” for a long time. Since early 2000s, it was even argued to somehow sit on the “center of the world” as the country having a “strategic depth”, which was introduced by Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu’s book “Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position.” first published in 2001 (Davutoğlu, 2011). Ahmet Davutoğlu was also the statesman who came to tailor the foreign policies of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) government in 2000s as an ambassador, advisor to the Prime Minister Erdoğan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and finally Prime Minister of Turkey since 2014. Even though it was not the same argument with the “bridge”, and despite positioning itself in the Middle East, Turkey in the 2000s did not give up its EU accession aim, and according to Yılmaz (2014) Turkish case can be interpreted as having a domain where both push factors of the EU and the pull factor from the society play important roles.

Nevertheless in the 2000s, this new foreign policy positioning itself also a part or model in the Middle East was perceived as a critical juncture for many Turkish academics questioning whether Turkish policy is turning its back to the West or not (İnalçık, 1998; Bozdaglıoğlu, 2008; Kalin, 2009; Cagaptay, 2009; Uslu, 2010; Şahin, 2010; Tol, 2012; Ayman, 2013; Engelbert, Bektasoglu & Brockmeier, 2013; Özdamar, Halistoprak & Sula, 2014). In addition to that JDP’s core cadre like Erdoğan, Davutoğlu and Gül had National View backgrounds and were somehow

more familiar to Islamic identity component of the Middle East than the traditional perspective of Turkey in terms of Turkish foreign policy, even though the competing ideas of traditional perspectives and the JDP's new policies continue to coexist together in Turkish foreign policy (Altunışık & Martin, 2011; Altunışık, 2009). Even though it was argued that there were also other important actors in Turkish foreign policy like Özal and İsmail Cem (Altunışık, 2009; Bilgin & Bilgiç, 2013), the trend in the academia seems like JDP's policies were the critical juncture. This new construction of the Middle East in relation to internal politics was covered in a number of other articles written by Turkish academics (Aras & Polat, 2007; Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008; Kalin, 2009; Cagaptay, 2009; Uslu, 2010; Sahin, 2010; Tol, 2012; Deniz, 2012; Ayman, 2013; Engelbert, Bektasoglu & Brockmeier, 2013; Yeşiltaş, Durgun and Bilgin, 2015 cited in Bardakçı, 2015; Uslu, 2010; Yeşiltaş, 2014; Ozdamar, Halistoprak & Sula, 2014).

In addition to that, the issue of “defining the Middle East” and “positioning Turkey” have also been covered in recent master's theses written and the most closely related ones can be argued as “Construction of the Middle East as a separate region” (Mecit, 2006) and “Imagining Turkey in a re(de)territorialized world: Turkey, the Orient and the Occident” (Çelik, 2010). The former one was written for a degree in Middle East Studies and questions the existence and historical construction of the “Middle East” from a geographical perspective in its interception with international relations, whereas the latter one, under the supervision of the same thesis advisor, Prof. Necati Polat, is rather an attempt to understand the geo-strategic position of Turkey in relation to East and West (EU and USA) and elaborates on the “bridge”-like analogies defining the Turkish geopolitics. Nevertheless both academic works are based on mainly the literature reviews. In other words, they do not really go to the field by gathering any field data based on the perceptions of the people studying the field and the ones who do not, as it was suggested in this present thesis. Thus, this present thesis is different not only in terms of the question it asks but also in terms of

the methodological tools it uses. In terms of doctoral studies, Ömür Atmaca's dissertation (2011) on how USA's geopolitical perception of Turkey shaped the USA-Turkey relationships attracts attention. Especially the parts she elaborated on USA-Turkey relations in relation to Middle East and Turkey's identity change from "bridge" to "model" and USA's role in it were significant to this present work. Nonetheless, the question that I am asking is different in many ways, and at best it can be another piece of the puzzle of understanding Turkey in relation to the Middle East.

As it was argued in the previous paragraphs, even though, the geographical construction of Turkey in relation to the Middle East has been studied, the question of whether Turkey is a Middle Eastern country or not, is not studied in terms of perspectives of the Turkish people. They are mainly studies of international relations questioning similar concerns in terms of foreign policy and International Relations literature, however any study directly asking people of Turkey "Where is the Middle East, and does it contain us?" have not been brought to our knowledge yet.

Another important debate can be formulated around the "relevance" and "significance" issues of this present academic work. Is it important to learn about people's perceptions of the Middle East or Middle Easternness? First of all, due to sharing borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria in Turkey's case MES is not only a study-area of a scientific curiosity but rather a part of everyday-politics conversation of lay people, as well as the experts of the MES. The second point that we should consider is after 9/11 and the rise of the fear of Islamic fundamentalism, starting with the American based institutes, there had been a hot debate on the gap between policy-making and area studies, which will be elaborated later in this introduction. Third issue is related to these "change of identity" debates mentioned above, and it covers the changing policies especially the ones netted around the "soft-power debate" as a way of having "the Arabs" love us in various ways. For instance, Gönül Tol (2012) mentions the "new image" of Turkey in the Middle East as a reconciliation of the historical enmities and distrust issues between the Arabs and Turkey in the Middle

East, after the rise of JDP, which changed the earlier Republican policies of “noninvolvement” by rejecting “anti-Islamic secularism and anti-Arab Westernism of the Kemalist elite, reconnected Turkey to its regional and Muslim past.” (Tol, 2012, p. 350). Within this new image and economic success of Turkey, its democratic EU reform packages, its act against Israel after Mavi Marmara incidence and becoming a candidate for the negotiator role in the Middle East and the role of Turkish soap operas as soft power are attributed as critical factors, nevertheless Turkey’s Syria policy seems to be a challenge to this pattern (Tol, 2012). Turkey’s intention to increase its soft power in its neighbour countries in the (Middle East and Balkans) as a part of Davutoğlu is and JDP’s “zero-problem with neighbours” policy enhancing its power due to the strategic depth was a very critical issue. Therefore, Turkey has employed this soft power with the soap operas, one of the most popular was Noor (Gümüş) or news channel like TRT-Arabic (TRT Al-Turkiyya) and Turkish universities, all of which were interpreted as a cautious step to minimize the military threats in the Middle East (Anas, 2010). The rise of the soft power of Turkey has attracted so much attention in the late 2000s and even during the Arab Spring until the Syrian civil war that Ayoob (2011) had concluded that Turkey and Iran, the countries who have a combination of hard and soft power in the Middle East would be the main actors in the region since it is evolving to a Turco-Iranian future. This increase was attributed to economic and democratic developments in Turkey appealing the Middle East along with its mediator role (Altunışık, 2008). Placing Turkey in the core of Middle East and attributing it a third party role was a very significant part of this new foreign policy and Davutoğlu himself wrote an article on the mediation role of Turkey in the Middle East (Davutoğlu 2013). However, this role was welcomed with some suspicion as Meliha Altunışık, one of the most eminent professors of the area argued:

Turkey has increasingly been involved in the management and resolution of conflicts in the Middle East and its role has been accepted by different regional and external actors. However, it is clear that Turkey needs to study and think more about its goals and the

suitability of its various methodologies. In doing so, Turkey must assess its own capabilities and connections to the conflicts, as there is a danger of having an expectations-abilities gap. (Altunışık, 2010, p. 160 Unisci Diss Papers)

On the other hand, another important research question that is derived from this soft-power agenda is “How Turkey is perceived by the Middle Eastern countries?”. This perception, especially by the Arab World has been an interesting one both for the academia and think-tank type research centers. Especially TESEV’s (2009-2013) report series entitled “Ortadoğu’da Türkiye Algısı (Perception of Turkey in the Middle East)” bases on the face to face and telephone surveys conducted in core seven countries Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq with over 2000 participants in each year. Moreover, in 2010 Iran and starting with 2011 study eight more Middle East countries were also added to the sample. The findings give us important information on Turkey’s mediation attempts, Turkey’s EU application, Turkey’s soft power and being a “model” for the ME; as well as other important issues cited by the Middle Eastern countries like economy, future expectations, collective movements, threat perception and so on (Akgün, Perçinoğlu & Gündoğar, 2010; Akgün, Gündoğar, Levack & Perçinoğlu, 2011; Akgün & Gündoğar, 2012a, 2012b, 2013). Report based on TESEV’s 2009 study written by Meliha Altunışık with commentaries of Mustafa Ellabbad from Egypt, was also another important piece letting Turkish academics of the field figure out that mentioned seven Arab countries’ perception of Turkey along with other countries and issues (Altunışık, 2010). Besides, not only Arabs’ perception of Turkey based on its actions in the ME, but also its relations with the Western world, especially the EU accession agenda of Turkish foreign affairs have been closely examined by the Middle East. Sadik J. Al-Azam in 2011 critiques Turkey’s secularism and EU affairs from a perspective of the Syrian intelligentsia and argues that both the election of the JDP and JDP’s eagerness to become a part of the EU stays as a puzzling and paradoxical issue for Damascus (Al-Azam, 2011). How Middle Eastern intellectuals from different countries perceive Turkish foreign policy was another interesting survey answering to many important questions related to core issues in the Turkish

foreign policy like its being a model or regional power, formation of a Kurdish state, or sectarian influences in Turkish foreign policy (Genç, 2013).

However the research question of this present thesis does not end up by simply asking the open-ended questions, “Where is the Middle East?” and “Does it contain us, our country, Turkey?”. The real intention of this study is to figure out whether the Turkish experts of the field and the non-experts share the same perception of the Middle East and Turkey. Does studying Middle East seem to be somewhat significant in differentiating the perception from someone of the same educational level but with no background except from everyday politics or news bombarded by the media? Thus, the role of education and information, which was operationalized as academically studying the Middle East either by taking classes or producing material in the area, is also examined along with the perception. Since academically studying the Middle East was another dimension addressed in this present thesis, the seminars and articles taken the issue into their scope were important to examine.

Studies on the question of how to study the Middle East and its methodologies from the disciplines other than International Relations are important part of the issue. For instance a conference article entitled “Methodology in Middle East Studies and the methods to utilize information sources” (Özdemir, 2004), the author argues that *monographical, deep studies utilizing the Ottoman archive documents with gathering all of the data available* are what he advises to the researchers from a historian’s perspective. Srebeny’s (2008) “The Analytic Challenges of Studying the Middle East and its Evolving Media Environment” article had taken the issue from *Media and Cultural Studies* perspective.

Besides, how to study the Middle East and how to teach area studies have been issues appealing to the scholars of the area who seem to be willing to exchange ideas in the seminars like “First Middle East Seminar: Concepts, Resources and Methodology 2003” organized by Fırat University, a university established in Elazığ, east side city in 1975. Mustafa Demirci, Rifat Özdemir and Naci Şahin were some of the presenters of papers on the concepts of the Middle East and the methodology.

Another significant example of the seminars where the issue is being debated is the 2011 conference on “International Studies Research and Education” which was organized by UİK (Uluslararası İlişkiler Konseyi-International Relations Council). In the session of “Area Studies in Turkey I”, headed by Özlem Tür; Meliha Altunışık from Metu had given a speech on “Middle East Studies in Turkey”. In the “Area Studies in Turkey II” session of the same event, from Zirve University, Bezen Balamir Coşkun & Halit Hakan Ediğ’s presentation on “Studying the Middle East on the borders of Middle East” was another example. Plus, in the sixth METU Conference on International Relations “Middle East in Global and Regional Perspectives” (2007) under Session 6-C: Debating Middle Eastern Studies, Serdar Palabıyık presented “A survey of Middle Eastern Studies Literature (2001-2006): Recent trends and transformations”. It was not only the Turkish scholars but also foreign academics who contributed to the Middle Eastern Studies in Turkey as Bahgat Korany’s keynote speech “Middle East Area Studies versus the International Relations Discipline? Experience of the Research Team on the Foreign Policies of Arab States” was presented in Session 4-A of 2009 METU Conference, Patterns of Change in the Global System. In addition to that, in *Middle East Studies* journal (*Orta Doğu Etütleri*) Brent Sasley (2011) had covered the same issue. Moreover, the 2011 METU Conference was also related to International Relations in terms of Theory and Practice and even if the presentations were not directly related to the question, the subjects were refreshing.

However, none of those studies and papers combined the issues of “perception of the Middle East” with its relation to the “education in the area of MES”; even though the stereotypes and misunderstanding related to the Middle East is attributed to lack of education and relevant knowledge on the area, so that we do not still know how the education got in the area of MES affects our construct of the Middle East, i.e. our perception of the Middle East; if it does have an effect. The academic search result on the thesis and dissertations written in the intersection of Middle East and education comes up with one relevant dissertation written on high school teacher’s selection of the Middle East related courses curriculum in the USA (Kaviani, 2007);

which can be at most perceived as in some respects inspiring for a little part of my research question. In other words, Kaviani was somehow interested in how current perception of the Middle East affected the teachers' "gatekeeper" role in curriculum selection. Another study based on semi-structured interviews with Middle East scholars in USA universities had come up with the conclusion that MES in the USA campuses are nationalized (Miller-Idriss & Anderson-Worden, 2010). In Turkey there are also studies conducted on issues related to MES, such as a 2009 survey on International Relations Scholars in Turkey having their descriptive studies in terms of the preferred theoretical and political stance, their preferences in terms of curriculum or academic writings (Aydın & Yazgan, 2009). Another interesting survey was Çiftçi & Ergutay (2011)'s study on university students' perception on Turkey's Middle East policy. Nevertheless these articles also do not give us any clue about the current answer to the question how the scholars of the Middle East from various disciplines perceive the area and how their perceptions of the Middle East are different from others?

Furthermore, as mentioned above, "how to study the Middle East" is not only an issue of pure methodological and educational discussions of the "scientists", but also an issue strongly related to the politics and the people who believe that MES is crucial for the security, like the geo-strategists and especially the military people who argue that Middle East is a chaotic war environment that needs to be analyzed as Turkey has a geo-strategic position in it. Thus, according to a mini-search I have conducted in May 2015, one third of the books (46 out of 136) listed under the "Middle East" label and written by Turkish people of various occupations like academics, retired diplomats, journalists or military people, in their "introductory bulletin" depict this "geo-strategic perspective" either by directly advocating it or by enhancing the perception of the Middle East as a *very chaotic environment always washed with blood and composed of very weak countries that are passively waiting for the Great Powers' decisions on their destinies. They also depict Turkey as an emerging or at least strategically valuable power that needs to be aware of those games played over its neighbours*, where the subjects are mainly post 9/11 period,



Greater Middle East project or Zionism. Thus, Pinar Bilgin's article "Only Strong States can Survive in Turkey's Geography: The uses of 'geopolitical truths' in Turkey" is an important piece in terms of understanding how this idea became popular and has been utilized by the military and statesmen (Bilgin, 2007). However, this is not only the case in Turkey, as in USA there have been hot debates on the MES after 9/11 as the people believing in the historical and geo-strategic importance of such area studies came to accuse the current MES (with its established and eminent scholars) for not producing good enough material to be benefitted by the US foreign policy-makers and being strong advocates of "Said's Orientalism" as blaming the West for all the bad (Kramer, 2001). An article critiquing Kramer's book "Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America" argues that this piece was advocated by especially the right-wing actors of both academia and the statesmen and resulted in a new higher education draft suggesting in order to receive state funding the intellectual productions of MES institutes in USA should be beneficial to USA foreign policy, which turned to issue to an "ideological battle" between pro-serving policies and anti-serving policies groups (Lockman, 2004). Criticizing the same book, Bilgin (2004) argues that what Kramer interpreted as a "failure" for the side of MESA like "not serving to US policy-making" can be interpreted rather as a "success" and she writes that Kramer himself could not understand what Said's Orientalism had attempted to do, and criticized Kramer in those lines arguing:

... the latter job is what the Orientalist tradition did best by providing knowledge for the imperial power. Viewed like this, Kramer's preferred vision for the Middle East Studies would involve restoring the links between scholarship and policy making established during the age of imperialism-those links that Said's Orientalism sought to shed light upon. (Bilgin, 2004, p. 429)

Another example for the relations between politics and MES might be Cangül Örnek's study in which she examines "Turkish Studies" in relations to US politics. In her 2012 article "From Analysis to Policy: Turkish Studies in the 1950s and the Diplomacy of Ideas", she argues that the establishment of Turkish Studies was a part

of a USA project: Due to the emerging necessity to know the area in order to tailor the best aid plan that would serve Turkey, which was perceived as an emerging role-model in the Middle East. She also argues that by that means, two institutions were established in the capital Ankara; TODAI (Türkiye Orta Doğu Amme İdaresi Enstitüsü) and METU. Both of these institutions were established in early to mid-1950s to educate bureaucrats and university students respectively, and the similar projects were also made in the Latin World with USA initiative. These Turkish institutions with Middle East in their names, however, indicate Turkey's being chosen as the headquarter to institutions in the Middle East (Örnek, 2012).

To sum up, even though there had been some academic works contributing to the query where the Middle East is, how the Middle East is constructed, how Turkey is constructed in the Middle East, how MES should be studied in Turkey and like, none of them seems to be interested in the similarities and differences between MES and non-MES scholars. Thus, the main intention of this present academic work is to understand how Turkish scholars of MES and the other Turkish scholars of the same educational level without any official or academic experience in the MES, construct and perceive the Middle East and Turkey in relation to the Middle East. Since there have not been enough academic work to interpret this link of Middle East perception in Turkey in relation to MES education, this study intends to fill this gap, with experimenting a new, interdisciplinary methodological approach.

For that purpose, in the following chapter entitled "Conceptualization of the Region", academic debates on where the Middle East is, how can we position Turkey in relation to the Middle East, MES in Turkey in terms of academic institutions, think-tanks and journals will be presented, along with exceptionalism, Orientalism and stereotyping concepts. Thus, Chapter 2 is designed as rather a warm up for the readers, to get them into the issues and concepts forming very core of this research. "Chapter 3: The Perception of Middle East: Findings from the Interview with Turkish MES and non-MES Scholars." is the part of this present thesis where the research design, operationalization of the concepts addressed in the research, semi-

structure interview form, nodes emerged from each question, the process of sampling and interviews, how the data would be analyzed, the chi-square calculations and its rationale, and lastly findings in terms of patterns presented as chi-square analysis and quotations is given. The last chapter, “Chapter 4: Conclusion” is consisted of a brief summary and discussion of the findings, along with limitations of the study and future research recommendations. With that structure, I hope this academic work would serve better to both newcomers and experts of the field interested in the perception of Middle East in Turkey.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE REGION

The research question of this present thesis was formulated basically as “How Middle East (ME) is perceived and Turkey is positioned in relation to ME by Turkish scholars of Middle East Studies (MES) and non-MES scholars and what are the similarities and differences between those two groups?”. Thus, to respond that question, as it was mentioned in the above Chapter 1, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with the participants. Even though the questions were simple open ended questions; pre-study for deciding on which questions to ask, how to frame those and how to analyze them at the end was needed. Thus, in this present chapter, I will introduce the basic concepts and discussions in the field in relation to the research question of this thesis, in order to understand ME perception of both MES scholars, as well as non-MES scholars. Hence, these are a few concepts addressed in the main body of the semi-structured interview worksheet that is used for data gathering. In other words, these key concepts and discussions of “*Where is the ME?*”, “*Exceptionalism of the ME*”, “*Positioning Turkey in the ME*” were the ones addressed in the main body of the semi-structure interview form, to figure out how the participants would geographically and politically locate the ME, whether they believe the “exceptionalism” of the ME or not, how they position Turkey in the ME, what they think about Turkey’s ME policy starting with early 1920s. The last concept was relation to the MES area, which was used in the second part of the interview form asked to MES scholars in a set of questions to get their story of entering into the field and their evaluations of the current situation for MES to better locate them within the sample in terms of their backgrounds, interests, sources of information and so forth. Therefore, in order to contextualize their responses better, the literature on these key concepts should be elaborated.

## 2.1. Where is the Middle East?

Roderic Davison, in his pioneering work asking the question “Where is the Middle East?” mentions a psychological mechanism of “schematization”, without naming it so, by simply indicating that many peoples of different regions somewhat label the others in a general even if they are not really a part of the same group, by providing the historical examples also from cases of Turks and Arabs:

...All civilizations, east and west, have stuck convenient labels on distant lands, and the west has not been alone in this practice. To the Turks, for instance, all Western Europe was for centuries simply *Frangistan*, “the land of the Franks” and even today Morocco is for Arabs the “far west”, *al-maghreb al-aksa*. But it has been western, not eastern, terminology that has girdled the globe, along with the spread of western civilisation and political influence. (Davison, 160, p. 666)”

What is primarily surprising is self-acceptance and internalization of this schema/label given by the ones from these “distant lands” by the ones who are being labelled, however this can be understood by Davison’s explanation of power-hierarchy and globalization patterns favouring the Western terminology. Hence, ME is also “Middle East” in the languages of the Arabs, Iranian, Israelis and Turks, as “*al-sharq al awsat*”, “*khavar-i mivanah*”, “*mizrab ha tikhon*” and “*Orta Doğu*” respectively (Kurzman, 2007, Khalidi, 1998). Even though for some the ridicules of this terminology led to the replacement of the term as it was in the India’s case (Davison, 1960); however how the term kept evolving in the ME itself did not show a similar pattern. Therefore, another issue addressed in this present thesis is whether this “naming” and “power and politics relations in this naming” questioned by the people interviewed.

In the literature another point that is addressed is the problem of “defining the ME” as a region, i.e. pointing out which countries, territories are in and which ones are out? Fawcett for instance in his book on ME and International Relations (IR) which is also recommended as a textbook in many IR departments in Turkey, points out the issue in the introduction, by claiming it is not unique to ME and many regions have

this difficulty of defining its territories and characteristics that make it as a composite unit of “region” (Fawcett, 2013). Similarly Khalidi (1998) points out the same ambivalence, “In spite of the widespread use of the term” and indicates that if “Fertile Crescent (Syria & Mesopotamia) and Arabian Peninsula” are regarded as the “core” of the ME, the periphery keeps changing from Afghanistan to North Africa, despite almost always including Egypt and Iran (p. 75). This notion of center and periphery of the ME is also used by others like Cantori and Spiegel or Ismael also arguing that the periphery mainly composed of non-Arab countries has a role in the conflicts and power struggles in region (Hinnebusch, 2003). This “Arab core” might also be the reason why Keddie (1973) argues many laypersons consider the Arab world as equivalent of the ME. However, even though Keddie (1973) also attracts attention to the fact that many of the Middle Eastern Christians are Arabs, neither Turks nor Iranians; but still the importance given to the “Muslim” nature of the ME is great. Moreover, some of those are backed up with Christian West-Muslim East dichotomy, which will be elaborated later in this chapter.

As mentioned above, defining the ME is not an easy task, since it changes throughout the time it first emerged and never got a real consensus over the countries composing it. Therefore, keeping a trace back to the different definitions of the area since the term was first introduced is important:

...the term was first brought into general use by political and military writers in order to refer to an area which might extend, according to circumstances, from Morocco to Afghanistan. It has gradually replaced the older and more precise term “Near East” which could be taken to refer to the countries lying around the eastern Mediterranean, and which had formed part of the Ottoman Empire. (Hourani, 1991, p.126).

The story is not something new for the MES, the term “Middle East” is coined by Alfred T. Mahan from the US naval force to designate the area between Singapore to Suez Canal when the main region of interest was the Far East (Kurzmann, 2007). Thus according to Keddie (1973) it was rather an “artificial nineteenth-century abstraction” with many limitations (p.257). In addition to that, this “military”

dimension in the term “Middle East” continued with 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine, where Mr. Dulles described it as a region whose territory is framed by Pakistan, Libya, Turkey and Arabian Peninsula; in addition to Sudan and Ethiopia, which according to Davison is somehow identical to Near East (Davison, 1960). However, when we ask whether these two terms are really identical or not; Keddie (1973) provides the answer that for 19th century Europeans, Balkans are in the Near East when Iran and Afghanistan was out; and today’s ME was used to be called as the Far East.

When we geographically trace back what is the region around the current ME has been called so far from ancient times to today, we come up with various namings like, “Mediterranean World, Front Asia, Front-West Asia, West Asia, South West Asia, Arabian Asia, Near East and Middle East.” (Elibüyük, 2003, 130). According to Kurzman (2007), 1970s are the turning points where North Americans went for the Middle East terminology whereas others continued with Arab States, West Asia, Southwest Asia like terms. Another critical juncture in terms of getting introduced to the new names and definitions of the area can be considered as 9/11, as the “terms like Greater Middle East, The Broader Middle East and Islamic Middle East has entered into the daily terminology.” (Özalp, 2011, p.5) Özalp also mentions about a new classification for the region Greater Middle East, almost including all of the Islamic world, like Arab East & West (Magreb & Mashreq), Gulf region, Egypt, Sudan, Turkey, Muslim Caucasus, Horn of Africa, Central Asia and Af-pak (Afghanistan & Pakistan) from South Asia (2011, p.19). Plus, today there are other namings of the region with some inclusions and exclusions such as MENA (Middle East and North Africa) or SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa). Even though the latter is less Eurocentric and may be recognised as more neutral, both terms are also studied in their relations to the West: While the first one, MENA, is considered in its relationship with the European countries and especially EU (Ehteshami, 2007), the latter one, SWANA of Lewis and Wilgen, according to Mecit (2006) is mainly the opposite of Huntington’s West.

Gause III, in his 1995 article on the ME claims that no one is able to come up with a common criterion for defining the Middle Eastern territories by given examples from many definitions of theoreticians like Walt, Barnett, Brown, Matar & Hilal. One of these definitions, indicating that ME is post Ottoman territories, is also discussed widely, as even some like Keddie (1973), Kumaraswamy (2003) put Ottoman nature as an important part of the ME. For instance, adding Arab nationalism and pan-Islamism to the ME, it comes to include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE and Yemen according to Kumaraswamy, whereas it should be pointed out that generally Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti from Africa; Pakistan and Muslim India as well as Turkic Central Asian Muslim countries from Asia were almost never included in ME, disregarding the hypothesis that ME somehow equals to the Muslim world for many cases. Nonetheless, some of these exclusions seem to be for practical reasons as the scholars of the area, despite the debates over including those countries into region, feel that addressing this would break the link between their earlier works and what they used to call as the ME. (Cleveland, 2009; Hourani 2010) Plus, once upon a time, predominantly Catholic Malta was in the domain of British's Middle East Command (Davison 1963, p.20 cited in Özalp, 2011, p.9). However, it is still to my surprise that Malta, a country arguing to have ancient links with the Phoenicians, the ancient Levant people, who colonised the island people and turned their language to a Semitic one, is considered as a European country; despite those deeper roots with the "core of the ME" and being included in WWII Middle East Command.

To sum up, the geographical boundaries of the ME roughly changes within the area in the intersection of Asia, Europe and Africa (Elibüyük, 2003). On the other hand, how these boundaries change is quite political, as being related to power and hierarchy relations, ideas and defense of the territories of interest (Fatemi, 1954; Owen, 2004; Choueriri, 2005; Fakhri, 2011). That must also be the reason why Choueriri in the very beginning of his book, indicated that a Middle Eastern specialists should be aware of the "scholarly, diplomatic or journalistic" aspects of



the region (2005, p. 1). Thus, how the people interviewed in this present thesis respond to the question “Where is the ME?” is important and will be analyzed along these lines.

## **2.2. On the “Exceptionalism” of the Middle East**

In the section above, one of the difficulties in defining the ME is given as the problem of coming up with a criterion which would help us to define which countries should be counted in and which ones should be excluded. Therefore, the question of “What are the characteristics of the ME” is important, and asked in this present thesis with the open ended question “What comes to your mind when we talk about ME?” The keywords of the answers gathered from the literature research can be listed as “East-anti West”, “Islamic”, “Backward”, “Underdeveloped”, “History of colonization”, “Oil”, “Despotic political culture”, “Problematic civil-military relations”, “Multiculturalism”, “Historical legacy of being the host for the earlier civilizations” and so on. However, it can also be seen that for some, these listed “characteristics” of the ME is used for explanation, and is given as the “internal characteristics” of the region that differentiates the ME from any other regions of the world, attributing “exceptionalism” to the region.

Lerna Yanik divides the political science literature on exceptionalism into two parts as the ones focusing on “cultural, religions, historical, strategic or societal” superiority, whereas the other one bases on “anomalies” that prevent us from generalizing the case according to different laws and theories (Yanik, 2011, p. 81). Therefore, it is important to recognise what characteristics are attributed to the ME in the literature.

East-West dichotomy is one of the first keywords we come across, which is more than a geographical division, along with the Eurocentric naming of the region, what is now called as “Middle East”. For instance Özalp (2011) puts this dichotomy as “thoughts, not geographical borders” and claims that it cannot be divorced from the history of Western imperialism over this area (p. 5) However, the most important

works mentioning this dichotomy can be cited as Said's "Orientalism" and Samuel Huntington's "Clash of civilizations". First one can be summarized as the work attempting to shed a light on the historical process of West's defining the East by otherizing it, i.e. taking every good characteristics to itself, to West and attributing every "other"/opposite to the East and simplifying defining it in a way as "anti-West" . This attempt of the imperialist powers was not only "otherize" the East but also to legitimate their excess of power over these territories by claiming the West is superior than the East (Said, 1979). The second one, Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" is another important work in terms of elaborating on this dichotomy through the lines of cultural curtains taking over the iron curtain of the Cold War period, by Western Europe and the East (including Orthodox Christians and Muslims). Huntington justifies the cultural difference along this border by claiming that:

...The peoples to the east and south of this line are Orthodox or Muslim; they historically belonged to the Ottoman or Tsarist empires and were only lightly touched by the shaping events in the rest of Europe; they are generally less advanced economically; they seem much less likely to develop stable democratic political systems...(Huntington, 1993, p. 30-31)

On the other hand, for some others, the reason that these old Ottoman and Tsarist territories were not as developed and democratic as the Western Europe has more to do with its predominantly "Islamic" nature and it has been highly criticised by the intellectuals of the region. For instance, Bilgin (2014) indicates that the European Union's post Cold War naming of the region as "Euro-Med Region" and "Muslim Middle East" is rather based on EU's understanding of Islam and security relations. It was not only EU somehow mentally pairing Islam and security issues, but also after 9/11, two of the three countries Bush accused of forming the "Axis of Evil" by supporting terror in his 2002 speech (Iraq and Iran) were Muslim Middle Eastern countries. Plus, his later solution to get democracy to the ME was based on the notion of Arab-Muslim region with lack of democracy was also the dominant characteristics of the region attributed by George W. Bush Administration in their

definition of “Greater Middle East”, which was now including some countries from West Africa and Southeast and Central Asia (Stewart, 2005). Thus, we can argue that the 9/11 played a bigger role in differentiating these two cultures (West and the Rest; East composing most of the Rest) than the torn of the Iron Curtain. Similarly, Jariour & Chahine indicates the 9/11 led to a “third millennium” by creating “the wars and struggles between West and the Orient under the pretext of world security and the suppression of terror.” (2007, p. 3). Moreover, even if “radical Islam and terror” is an issue that we cannot deny, the point generally ignored by others is the fact that making internal attributions to the society and utilizing a discourse simply meaning “ME is Islamic and therefore they are radicalists and terrorists” can be interpreted as another form of Orientalism. Thus, one Pakistani scholar Zahid Hussain points that fundamentalism can be in every society and criticises Palestinian scholar Muhammad Hafez for his book “Why Muslims Rebel?” by saying “as if Muslims are the only ones who rebel!” (Hussein, 2005, p. 337)

The non-democratic *nature* of the ME, its *intractable* civil-military relations and its *weak* civil society compose another set of attributions, utilised in order to explain the *underdevelopment* of the region. Moreover, some explanations for each and every of these *characteristics* are provided from an Orientalist stance that, the picture we need to grasp is more interrelated with most of other dynamics. For instance, Yahya Sadowski (1993) summarizes the answer provided by the Orientalists to the question of the weakness of civil society in the ME, which is Islam and specifically Islam’s favorism of “quietism” in the political domain also. Even some, like Pehlivanoglu who is an army veteran author attributing those as “bünyesel özellikler” (internal characteristics), take those almost as God-given characteristics/traits of the ME (2004, p. 41). Another explanation regarding the weakness of civil-society in the ME, is “etatist” models of the state, in which “the state controls the bulk of the economic, political and social domains, leaving little space for society to develop itself.” and even though the state has such a characteristics there are still civil society working on human rights activism and accountability of the governments (Bayat, 2002, p. 1-2). More interestingly, there is a number of others indicating that Islam

and religious groups are playing a role in establishment and empowerment of the civil society in the ME (Sadowski, 1993; Norton, 1993; Bayat, 2002) Thus, as Sadowski suggested, when the scholars started to change their statement that *ME has a weak civil society*, they started to search for other forms of civil society like “mafias, mobs, interest groups, solidarities and classes” (1993, p.16). Such debates seem to have gained more legitimacy after the Arab Spring.

Therefore, the question raised in terms of autocracy in the ME needs other explanations, rather than religion or civil society. It is especially important in the region, since the regime types and civil-military relations in the ME indicate that rentier states like Gulf states are tribal monarchies whereas Jordan and Morocco is civic monarchies; Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Palestine having autocratic political elites with mainly military backgrounds, Algeria, Sudan, Iran, Iraq and Libya listed in a category closer to military monarchies and lastly only Israel and Turkey is listed as democracies which are rather military democracies, with troublesome political backgrounds (Kamrava, 2000, p. 70-71). Hence, presenting monarchy as a tradition embedded in the culture of the region is also another form of “exceptionalism” argument and was rejected by Anderson in his 1991 article, claiming today’s monarchy in the modern sense is not something seen in the historical state tradition of these countries and even if it was, that falls short to explain the current success of the autocratic states-elites’ in terms of manipulating “social and political change” (Anderson, 1991, p. 2-3). In addition to that, the exceptionalist historically legacy of the autocracy and culture argument of the early modernists’ came to be defeated by historical sociological and institutionalist approaches which tried to explain how these regimes hold the resources to help them to adapt to the changes as well as what was the impact of being backed up by more powerful states, i.e. hegemon powers. (Hinnebusch, 2006) However, it should be kept in mind that the failure in the legitimacy in the orientalist, exceptionalist and modernizationist approaches owe much to the recent developments in the field, especially by the reformist/revisionist historians mentioned by Pappe (2010) who

revised the previous Middle Eastern History academic works. Thus, Norton in his 1993 article criticised the inner attributions to autocracy, and claimed:

...The evidence is still mixed, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the time has come to stop talking about Middle Eastern exceptionalism when we discuss global trends. (Norton, 1993, p. 216).

Therefore, we can argue that most of these exceptionalist explanations and orientalist stereotyping, including the stereotypes related to women as scholars like Abu-Lughod (2001) and Bolak (1996) demonstrated, are the distorted western images. Moreover, Abu-Lughod (2001) claims that changing these distorted images with non-distorted ones does not guarantee the end of Orientalist arguments, since its more related to “the production of knowledge in and for the West.” (p. 105) However, we can argue that who produces this knowledge is not only the scholars/intellectuals but also the media, especially with the growing impact of globalization. Thus, which images are used, what discourses are created from which ideological standpoints and what are the sources of these images should be covered. For this reason, Jarjour & Chahine (2007)’s work on Western media images and their argument of the cleavage between East and West, feeding itself with the earlier hostilities embedded in collective memories as well as current stereotypes is important. The observed features of western media images related to ME is inadequate context, especially the news coverage failing to answer to “why” and on “what background” the case had happened; usually claiming the situation is too tangled that can never be grasped, constant focus of chaos, war and bloodshed rather than developments; covering religious fundamentalism only with Islamic terrorist groups leading to connotation of radicalism with Islam, but hardly talk about other religious fundamentalist groups as if there are not any; and lastly taking biased views on Arab-Israeli conflict (Jarjour & Chahine, 2007, p. 4-5). However, it does not necessarily mean that Western journalists are full of hatred towards ME; but these stereotypes are rather the result of lack of adequate and unbiased knowledge in European political and cultural domains. However this seems to form a vicious circle

as, according to Shaheen (1985) “news correspondents’ misperceptions of Arabs permeate their reports” and this might also affect policy-makers and publics (p.160).

Lastly another form of “exceptionalism” should be covered since rather than those western-type exceptionalist and orientalist stereotypes; there are another “inner” exceptionalism arguments mentioning how “different”, “unique” and “superior” the ME is. The same arguments used by the Orientalists as “Islamic”, “traditional- not modern”, “chaotic” and so forth were defended by some, especially by the politicians claiming that Islamic nature is the reason for Western hostility: For that rationale, being Islamic is a good nature of the region, not being modern is conserving the values and beliefs that made our nations, regions and cultures and lastly, chaotic nature of the region despite its superiority is because of the geo-strategical importance and oil reserves of the region as well as the “games over the region” by Western powers. For instance one Turkish author claims:

...Today, Middle East which is very important in terms of oil reserves, becomes one of the most important, or even the most important, regions that attracts attention in the world, in terms of its civilizations from ancient times to today, science and culture as well as political environment and strategy and economy. (Elibüyük, 2003, p. 129)

To sum up, the literature on the “exceptionalism” debates related to the ME is intertwined with Orientalism and geopolitics debates over the area. Even though some might argue that the impact of these debates have been faded out for the world, it is still valid in Turkey, as a country literally in the intersection of two continents; which will be the topic for the discussion in the next section.

### **2.3 Positioning Turkey in the Middle East**

It is not only “the ME” which we have difficulty in defining geographically and culturally, but also positioning Turkey in this disputed region is also challenging. Moreover, it is somehow more complicated than the discussions like whether Israelis are Middle Eastern or not, due to their pre-migration countries and cultures; since as it was mentioned in the previous sections, some definitions of the ME concept, also

geographically exclude Turkey. What is more interesting is due to the geographical position of Turkey, we can see that researchers of different fields list it under different regions like Europe, Asia or ME. Hence, bringing up the difficulty in defining Turkey in terms of geopolitical fact that Turkey is in the intersection of three continents, Robins suggests “...Turkey does not fit into any neat geographical or linguistic categories, so is consistently and unjustifiably ignored by Europeanists, Sovietologists and Arabists alike.” (Robins, 1991, p.1). In other words, even if most historical geo-strategical perspectives would definitely put the Ottoman Empire as a great part of the “East”, especially due to its traditionalist and Muslim face which provides a deep cleavage; modern-day Republic of Turkey was dramatically different than its Ottoman history, with adoption of secularism, Western tradition and so on, and leads to both geographical and cultural confusion for some. Müftüler-Baç claims that this Ottoman history is what differentiates Turkey from other Euro-Mediterranean countries who were willing to enter to EU (2005). However, as mentioned before, what should be kept in mind is the fluid nature of these conceptualizations and understanding of geo-strategical discourses, as many authors working on this East-West dichotomy in relation to Turkey came up with many understanding of the country, which was in line with Atmaca’s groupings as “bridge”, “barrier”, “crossroad”, “energy corridor”, “model”, “ally”, “seam state”, “torn country”, “Western”, “Middle Eastern”, “Mediterranean” (2011, p. 159). Especially this “bridge” notion, which will be elaborated later, can be argued to involve some truth behind, not because in the years it was the valid discourse it tried to stitch up the two continents culturally, but because Turkey’s “transit country” nature have been an important topic in the migration literature. For instance, Elitok & Straubhaar (2011) after mentioning EU’s concerns about the management of Turkey’s migration and put Turkey “as a migration hub in the ME”, they gave historical legitimacy to its geography by stating:

...Located at the geographical intersection between East and West, with both Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts, Turkey has historically been a host country for important population movements... (p. 107).

On the other hand, there is another important point that even if we do not count Turkey as a Middle Eastern country, we cannot deny that it is affected by the politics and economy in this region, no matter it identifies themselves with those problems or not, due to the geographical proximity. In Kalın's statement "Willingly or unwillingly, Turkey is at center stage of the fault lines of Euro-Asian and Middle Eastern geo-politics." (2009, p. 86) It might have been argued that the impact of economic crisis, Arab Spring, Syrian mass migration which are critical issues in the Turkish collective memory for the last few years, might have been smaller if Turkey used to keep disengaging itself from the region, however, hypothesising that it would not be affected is beyond the limits of rationality. Nevertheless, it should not lead to the assumption that Turkey is negatively affected by the ME, as it had also presented some positive aspects. For instance, two articles written in 2003, by Arslan & Karakaş and Kuşçu & Çağlayan respectively, were indicating that this geographical position of Turkey could also be advantageous if we could gain the market in the ME and get benefit from the energy sources.

Positioning Turkey is not only related to geographical positioning of the country, but also culturally arguing where the country belongs to. As mentioned above, for the earlier geo-strategists, there was almost no doubt that Ottoman Empire was an Eastern state. It was even the reason of the Eastern Question when the emperor was mentioned as the "sick man of the Bosphorus". (Brouwn, 1984, p. 87-138; cited in Özalp, 2011 p. 8). Thus here the emerging question is "How much this historical connections with the Ottoman Empire plays a role in determining its current position?". Modern ME historian Roger Owen in 2003 preface to his book "State Power and Politics in the Making of Modern Middle East" justifies his choice of inclusion of Turkey as "Lastly, I have included Turkey as a Middle Eastern state partly on the grounds of its long historical connection with the region, partly because, during the 1990s, it forged a number of new connections with its non-European neighbours, notably Iraq and Israel." (Owen, 2004, p. x). This second part of his argument, as increasing connections with non-European neighbours was also important in shaping the new discourses on the Middle Easternness of the country as



well as being shaped by the perception of sharing the same history. For instance, a considerable number of scholars also argue that Turkey is a Middle Eastern country and should engage in relations with Middle Eastern neighbours due to this Ottoman past. For instance, three scholars from Fırat University, Öztürk, Bingöl and Muz, privately in their speeches mentioned the pre-Ottoman and Ottoman ties of Turkey to the ME and *undeniable* fact that Turks compose one of the elements in the ME, culturally, mentally, physically, politically and economically. (Bingöl, 2004; Öztürk 2004, Öztürk 2006, Muz 2008, Öztürk 2008).

Nevertheless, not all scholars, intellectuals or people in Turkey hold this idea that it should be counted as Middle Eastern country due to the historical or cultural ties and Ottoman or Islamic background. It is argued that Turkey, after the announcement of the Republic had a Western-orientation in its foreign policy priorities and positioned itself with the “official Western identity” in line with its “modernization project”, “despite its unique geographical and cultural position between East and the West.” (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008, p. 55). Such arguments will be elaborated later in this chapter; however, it can be argued that identifying country as Middle Eastern/Eastern or European/Western cannot be divorced from the political struggles between two different ideological stances in the domestic politics, as Kemalist vs Islamist ideologies. In line with this argument, Kushner (1997) argues, “For the Turks, belonging to Europe or the west is really belonging to the civilized world and it is the legacy of Kemal Atatürk.” (p. 232) On the other hand, İhsan Dağı, who is one of the most eminent professors of the MES in terms of Islam and Politics, stated this clash as “No doubt the Kemalist program, a secular experiment that marginalized Islam and Islamic groups, presented a break with the past that was heavily blended with Islam and its social authority.” (Dağı, 2005, p. 23).

Therefore, it is important to examine how this Westernization-modernization project started to emerge in Turkey’s political history. As Inalcık (1998) argues Turkish state tradition was more than the Islamic state culture and civilian and military bureaucrats in the Ottoman Empire were privileged in a way that they had experience with

Europe especially in the last century and decades of the empire. We may suggest that this dilemma of being Western or Eastern, having *alafranga* or *alaturca* styles, started with this process of getting a “European” model not in terms of state-regulations but also in terms of art, culture and science. This process leading to “modernization” of Turkey, especially later in the emergence of Turkish republic resulted in what Müftüler-Baç called as “a struggle between the Europe-oriented state elite and the conservative elements in Turkish society.” (2005, p. 17). Moreover, how one is being perceived is as much important as how it perceives itself. Therefore, as Andrew Mango, indicated, “Turks were Asiatics” for Europeans no matter how much geographical territory they gained in the West; and Ottoman Turks on the other had were somehow Europeanised in the eyes of Arabs (1968, p. 225).

Thus, when the republic was announced there was a dramatic cut off in the ties to Ottoman past, rejecting Arab components and blaming them for *betrayal* due to their cooperation with the British; and blaming the religious identity component of the Empire for becoming backward. (Robins, 1991; Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008; Nafi, 2009; Uslu 2010; Ayman 2013). For some, may be the reason why Turkey for most of its republican history did not identify itself with the Eastern/Middle Eastern countries. For instance, Uslu (2010) puts:

...Turkey has perceived the Middle East as a burden, threat-producer and a region that should be stayed away throughout the Republic. The idea that every relation formed with the region, every step taken for the region would harm Turkey’s “Western” character and result in its being perceived as a Middle Eastern country, leaded Turkish administrators stay away from the region as much as possible. (p. 147)

The relations with Turkey and the Arab Middle East had been uneasy, as the issues like reciprocal hostilities and accusations raised after the traumatic collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Krüger, 1931; Robins, 1991; Tol, 2012; Jung 2005). It was even to the point that early discourse of Turkish on Arabs’ betrayal was strongly criticised. For instance, Robins (1991) claimed that Turkey could not understand the fact that Britain and France were not the allies for Arabs, but “colonial powers” exploiting the

region and Arabs were in fact trying to gain back their independence (p. 25). However, we may argue that even if this discourse of betrayal still existed in the collective memories of the Turkish public, politically the policy towards the Arab Middle East changed in line with domestic and international conjunctures. Similarly, Arabs' perceptions of the Turkish Republic changed throughout time as Nafi (2009) put, "Ottoman past, the legacy of Mustafa Kemal, Cold War conflicts and alliances, and the recent rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) played a role in this change, which will be elaborated in the next section attributed to the policy towards ME (p. 64).

We can hypothesize that, for the lay people in Turkey, "identifying yourself with the ME" is rather accepting the commonalities between either the Arab world or with Iranian Shiisims and Political Islam. Thus, how these societies are perceived by Turkish people is another issue that is slightly touched in this present thesis. (We asked the perceptions of the ME, rather than directly asking their ideas and perceptions about these societies, and asked people with higher educations, from within and outside of the field; instead of asking the people in the street.) Since this particular question is outside of the limits of this present thesis, stating again the fact that there had been stereotypes embedded in the political discourse of these countries as mentioned above is important. Jung (2005) argues that this situation had also affected Turkey's mediation efforts between the region and the West. Even the neo-Ottoman discourses were utilized in this objective of mediator role in the "Greater Middle East Initiative". (Murinson, 2006, p. 953) This questioned success of these attempts to mediating the conflicts between East and West, can also be interpreted as Turkey's bridge role turns to be a passive one, in a way what Kalın calls as something "crossed over by others" (2009, p. 89). Despite the metaphors and "geopolitical imagination" of Turkey by the statesmen and intellectuals from different ideological stances, this "bridge" metaphor is something that embedded in other metaphors and imaginations, and can be attributed as a result of a geopolitical

and territorial anxiety; as well as it can be interpreted as a predictor of being in-between and not having any identity of its own, in line with Davutoğlu's rejection of the term (Yeşiltaş, 2014, p. 37).

However the image Turkey tailors itself for its role in the region was more than that, as the geopolitical discourses along with modernization discourses kept the idea that they need to be "a strong state" and "a role model for the Middle East." (Aras & Polat, 2007). Moreover, according to the geopolitical discourse introduced by the military people and adopted by the politicians "Only strong states can survive" in such a region where the relations are chaotic, interests over the resources are conflicted and Anatolian geography is strategically so important that it was somehow portrayed as an exception within this exception. (Bilgin, 2007).

Thus, Lerna Yanık, another scholar of Turkish Politics, criticizes all of these peacemakers, strong state, multicultural, intersection of different continents characteristics that were used to construct the "Turkish exceptionalism" and clarifies the psychological mechanisms behind by arguing:

...Pointing out or implying that a state and its features are "unique" and "exceptional" is one way of creating such a belief. In addition to highlighting a "unique" geography and history, elites can also construct "exceptionalism" through a series of discursive practices that shape the construction of Turkish "exceptionalism" in the post-Cold War period. (Yanık, 2011, p. 80)

Hence, these key concepts are also embedded in the Turkish foreign policy discourses and how the participants perceive those. Thus, another question along with how they position Turkey in the ME and Turkey's role in the ME will be asked to figure out how participants evaluate Turkish Foreign policy towards ME. By grasping participants' perceptions on their observed critical junctures in Turkish ME policy, how they believe these foreign policy is formulated and how different discourses led to different perceptions of the region throughout the history of Turkish Republic, will also be asked in the interview but will be discussed along lines of the arguments introduced in this section.

## **2.4 Middle East Studies in Turkey**

The last section of the key concepts is devoted to Middle East Studies (MES) in Turkey, in which I will provide a brief introduction to the current institutions and publications I came across during this thesis-work research. This is primarily important for providing the reader a context for MES in Turkey, and the information given will primarily base on their websites, as well as any informal interviews with the students/researchers/scholars of those institutions will be added. To begin with, we must be very cautious about the fact that not all of the scholars studying ME are working within the cadres of MES programs, departments, institutions and so forth. Especially within IR departments, sometimes in political science, history and sociology departments there are people for whom the ME corresponds to a good part of their “academic interest”. Plus, sometimes the ones ranked in the cadres of MES programs might be there, due to bureaucratic concerns such as the need to open a mandatory course or reach to the required number of scholars; resulting with enlisting the scholars who used to have an early academic interest on the subject but not currently working on the area or having a slight interest in the subject. That being so, this section should not be interpreted as an attempt to provide a complete list of the places which hold the right to educate or give job opportunities to MES scholars; but rather a short and recent story of how MES gained legitimacy in the Turkish academic life, in terms of institutional history.

The very first thing strikes our attention is despite the term “Middle East” started to exist in Turkish educational life with the establishment of TODAİ and METU in late 1950s, its finding a place to itself in area studies seems to have taken more than three decades. It can be seen that no department claiming to be specialised on the ME exists before 1990s, as the earlier examples are Marmara Üniversitesi Orta Doğu ve İslam Ülkeleri Araştırmaları Enstitüsü (Marmara University-Institute Research of Middle East and Islamic Countries), founded in 1992 in İstanbul offering graduate degrees both in masters and PhD level and Fırat Üniversitesi Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi (Middle East Research Center), established a year later in

Elazığ which does not grant any graduate degrees but rather had research on the intersection of the Middle East with other disciplines like history, culture, theology, literature and so on. After another decade, in 2003, MES Masters Program started to attract students from different disciplines as an interdisciplinary program in METU, Ankara. Not surprising, today there are many research centers in Ankara's well established universities some even with names including the term, to name a few we may mention about GORAM (Gazi University Middle East and Central Asia Research Center) and Ankara University Middle East Studies and Cooperation Center. However, back then, besides these three institutions/programs which were the pioneers to a number of other institutions and programs established later in 2010s, there were not really many institutions specialised in the ME, during 1990s and 2000s. According to a colleague interviewed, this might have been the result of the political conjunctures affecting the understandings of the geopolitics and where Turkey is in these geo-strategical constructs. The scholar also claims, there were many people willing to study "Euro-Asian Studies" in 1990s and early 2000s; where Russia, post-Soviet Turkic nations and Iran were much popular within the area-studies.

After 2010, the number of new institutions founded rapidly increased and the newcomers can be grouped as the "academic degree programs" like masters programs; "research centers" which do not currently grant any academic degree and "think-tanks" which can be considered as a sub-division of this latter category. Centers like Eskişehir Osmangazi University Middle Eastern Studies and Cooperation Center-MESACC (Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi-ESODAM); Zirve University Middle East Strategic Research Center- MESRC (Zirve Üniversitesi Orta Doğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi (OSAM) in Gaziantep; Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies ORSAM (Orta Doğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi) which is rather a think tank without any visible university link are only a few who provides publicly available information about their structure and establishment aim. In addition to those, most of

these search results listed as “MES research centers” lack the adequate or relevant information to figure out whether they are active or just in the establishment process, such as the two mentioned above (GORAM and Ankara University’s center), Harran Üniversitesi Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi (Harran University Middle East Studies Research and Cooperation Center) and Kastamonu Üniversitesi Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi (Kastamonu University Middle East Studies Research and Cooperation Center). There is also a Master’s degree programme announced by Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, as “Middle East Studies Masters Program” (Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Yüksek Lisans Programı) in Çanakkale and Fatih Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Çalışmaları (Tezli/Tezsiz) Yüksek Lisans in İstanbul which can be considered as another new institutions attracted to the glint of MES’ popularity. Besides, ME can be seen as a part of the general title as it was in Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Master of Arts Program in International Relations, Turkey, Europe and the Middle East, which is rather broad IR program.

However, there is also another institution which seems rather new but becomes very noticeable in the area due to the rapid increase of its fame: ORMER, Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi (Sakarya University Middle East Institute) an institute within Sakarya University in Kocaeli. ORMER both grants academic degrees in Masters and PhD levels and conducts academic research/publishes academic works thanks to its well established academic network which was formed as a group for publishing the “Middle East Yearbooks” since 2005, years before the institute was established. As it can be seen, there is a bunch of different institutions with various degrees of compatibility and academic activity, which also needs some close attention directed to the curriculums and publications based on the information publicly available on internet.

When the websites of these institutions are examined more thoroughly, it can be seen that almost half of these programs/institutions have provided information about their

courses, programs and/or aims. One of the earliest programs was Marmara Üniversitesi Orta Doğu ve İslam Ülkeleri Araştırmaları Enstitüsü (Institute Research of Middle East and Islamic Countries), which was founded with that name in 1992 in accordance with law 3837 replacing 2809. In 2002 “İslam Ülkeleri” (Islamic countries) name within its title was removed as a result of cabinet decree (Bakanlar Kurulu Kararı\_2002/3651) and in 2015, it was changed back to the original title by gaining “İslam Ülkeleri” back (2015/7723), however, in the website, no explanation was provided about the rationale of these changes. There are four departments within the institute, like the department of “Political History and IR of ME” (Ortadoğu Siyasi Tarihi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Anabilim Dalı), department of “Sociology and Anthropology of ME” (Ortadoğu Sosyolojisi ve Antropolojisi Anabilim Dalı), department of Geography of ME” (Ortadoğu Coğrafyası ve Jeopolitiği Anabilim Dalı, aka Ortadoğu Coğrafyası) and Economics of ME (Ortadoğu Ekonomi Politikası Anabilim Dalı aka Ortadoğu İktisadı) having both Masters and PhD degree programs. The courses listed as offered courses including both must and elective courses can be grouped as the ones related to *research methodology*, like courses on general research methods, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and specific-area research courses like “Methods and Sources in Middle East Countries Economic History Research”; *Geographical courses* on social, economic, physical, humanities and countries geographies of the ME; on natural sources, energy and geopolitics, as well as “Geographical relationship between Turkey and Middle Eastern Countries”; “*Economy-related courses* mainly on “Islamic Economy”, Arab economy and finance systems, economic history including the ones on Ottoman political economy, as well as current economic relations with Turkey; *Sociology courses* on villages and urbanization, family and women, media, cinema and popular culture, social movements, nationalism, Sufism etc, *IR and Political Science courses* on politics, political history and political thought in ME, conflicts and issues in ME, relations with Turkey, regional and international relations, and lastly *language courses* like Arabic, Persian, Ottoman and Hebrew courses. Thus, it can be argued that the courses offered are in line with the “mission” the institute undertook, which is:



...to educate experts and academics who are qualified with highest level knowledge of the Middle East; to develop scientific activities, to produce knowledge based on universal values, to make researches on international relations, economics, sociology, anthropology, geography and law of the Middle East.(Marmara University-Institute Research of Middle East and Islamic Countries, 2015)

The second older institute is Fırat Üniversitesi Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi, which was founded in 1993; with Official Gazette of Turkish Republic issue 21522 (Resmi Gazete 21522), and its new regulations were published in another official journal with issue number 28308; in 2012. According to this new regulations, the purpose of the center is *research and publishing* about ME “*history, geography, language and literature, sociology, folklore, economy and political sciences, communication*” where the territories of the ME is given as Egypt on the west, Iran on the east Iraq and Syria on the north and south of the Arabian peninsula as the lower territory. Plus, it has a range of activities including *archeological excavations, research and financial aid to such research, national and international academic meetings and publishment*, but granting an academic degree is not currently listed among those. (Fırat Üniversitesi Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2015). Thus, this one does not have any course curriculum, but has journals like “Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Dergisi”, proceedings book, and various other books on ME and MES.

The third oldest program and second oldest Master’s Program is “Middle East Studies” program in METU, which was founded in 2003. It offers the following subjects: Modern ME, its history and contemporary politics, political economy, geopolitics, culture, revolutions, religious developments, society, war and peace, Israel, Iran, language/identity; UN etc. In addition to those having basic language courses on one of the area languages is a must in order to get graduated from the program. Thus, it seems pretty consistent with its objectives published as:

...The basic objective of the program is to educate the graduate students in issues regarding the Arab World, Turkey, Iran and North Africa ... in the history and contemporary affairs of the region...(METU-Middle East Studies, 2015)

More than a decade after the foundation of METU Middle East Studies, Sakarya University Middle East Institute (Ortadoğu Enstitüsü/ORMER) was established, as a research center and institute which offers masters and PhD level degrees as well as publishing academic journals and books. As a “multidisciplinary” institution, ORMER try to conduct research on different areas, but one of its notions like “informing policy-makers and public alike.” might be discussed within the frame of the discussions initiated by Kramer’s “Ivory towards on sand” where the academics discussed along the lines, whether MES should serve policy making or not. However, it is also a well-known fact that “research centers” and “think-tanks” in Turkey as civil society has a vision to produce knowledge which can be used in policy making and politics, whether it is publicly announced or not.

On the other hand, when we examine the titles of the courses offered in ORMER, those can be grouped as *language courses* like Arabic and Persian; *Courses related to Islam* like Islamic studies, law, movements, Islam and state and ME, *Politics courses* like ME political history, Turkey’s policies towards ME, and theoretical approaches, regional foreign policy, EU’s and USA’s ME policies; history and thoughts, war, conflict and security and so on as well as *sociology-courses* like courses on religious sects, media, etc. Plus, ORMER has journals like “Perspective Series”, “Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies” and” Middle East Yearbooks”, which will be re-mentioned below.

Another graduate degree program whose curriculum is publicly available on internet is Fatih University Middle East Studies Master’s program, having *history and political science courses* on Middle Eastern History, Islam, politics, Turkish and Ottoman politics and political thought, politics of MES and MENA, many of which examine *Ottoman policy* like its institutions, rule, history, socio-economy, intellectual history and so on, as well as *methodology courses* like social research methodology, research for political science, etc. Like many MES programs it also has *language courses* on one of the languages of the region.

Lastly, another research center established by Zirve University in Gaziantep was “The Middle East Strategic Research Center (MESRC) another interdisciplinary program identifying the region in a way ORMER defines, and has a range of academic activities including academic meetings, lecture and activities offered to the public, research projects, policy briefs and analysis papers and internship programs. Even though it also has a mission like “granting degrees” in MES it currently does not seem to take any students.

In terms of the observations of the educational climate of these institutions, especially in the institutions where there are English lecturing opportunities, it can be seen that there are foreign students coming from different parts of the world to study Middle East. It was the case that one participant who was enrolled to one of the masters programs above exclaimed off-the-record, when I asked since it was “snowball sampling”, whether it is possible to help me with finding new participants from the same program; the reaction was “You mean from the students? I have more foreign classmates than Turkish ones. I was shocked when there were more foreigners like Arabs, Albanians, Americans but only a few Turkish students. I was like, why are they coming here, is Turkey a Middle Eastern country?” Similarly, a MES scholar having experience in teaching in another one of these institutions, said during the off-record feedback session “The foreign students, especially the ones coming from Western countries had more experience with critical thinking in terms of their education systems up until university and this multicultural environment in MES is something good to create a better learning environment.”

Therefore, we may conclude that there are different institutions in Turkey working on MES from various perspectives, which can be interpreted as a result of “increasing popularity” of the region and “increasing legitimacy of MES as an area study”; however, it should be kept in mind that there are many other scholars studying MES outside these institutions, thus, the MES scholars taken in this present thesis are not only limited to the ones working in these institutions.

Another concern of this present section is to provide some general information of via what sources the knowledge is accumulated and distributed in Turkish MES. The bulletins and reports of various think-tanks; television discussion programs where some of the “experts” on the ME, some of which are scholars of the MES while most others are think-tank researchers, journalists and former diplomats, are invited to discuss the current issues; popular and academic books and lastly academic journals. Taking MES as an academic interdisciplinary study area, I would like to focus more on academic publications, especially the academic journals published by Turkish initiatives (like the Turkish scholars or universities).

Despite appreciating the fact that not all of the journals in the category of “MES journals” comes up with “Middle East” in its title; I had started with the journal-results listed through a “Middle East” keyword search. Discluding the ones just taking the Middle East only as a specific name, like Orta Doğu Tıp Dergisi (Middle East Medical Journal), Büyük Ortadoğu’nun Sesi Dergisi (Voice of Great Middle East) having the term in their journal names just because of they were published by a private hospital named Büyük Ortadoğu Tıp Merkezi (Great Middle East Medical Center); or METU journals from different departments; most of the publications were international relations and area studies journals. Non-academic publications like business magazines (Ortadoğu Business) are also discluded, whereas the publications on MES, such as “Turkish Studies”, SETA’s “Insight Turkey” or SAM’s “Perceptions” is included no matter whether they were affiliated to a MES institution or not.

Hence, looking through the history of these journals, they can be chronologically listed as *Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Dergisi* (2003) published by Fırat University Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi, which is a refereed journal available to the scholars producing in Turkish, Arabic, English and French. *Turkish Studies* (2006), a peer-reviewed social science/Turcology journal under editorial of Mehmet Dursun Erdem from Nevşehir University and later Sibel Üst from Yıldırım Beyazıt University. Along with Turkish articles, academic works written in English, French, German and

Russian are also accepted to the journal. *Akademik Ortadoğu/The Academic Journal of the Middle East* (2007) is another peer-reviewed academic journal on the MES, whose editors are Gazi University scholars Türel Yılmaz and Mehmet Şahin. Articles to Akademik Ortadoğu are accepted either in Turkish language or in English, similar to *Orta Doğu Etütleri/Middle Eastern Studies* (2009) published by ORSAM under editorial of METU scholar, Özlem Tür along with ORSAM's monthly journal *Ortadoğu Analiz*. Ortadoğu Etütleri also has abstracts translated to Arabic and listed at the end of their journal. *Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi/Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2014) whose editors are Sakarya University-ORMER scholars Kemal İnat and Numan Telci is another bilingual (Turkish & English) refereed journal. In addition to that, the institute publishes a yearbook, which started to be published years before it turned out to be an institute as *Ortadoğu Yıllığı/Middle East Yearbook* since 2005, again co-edited by Kemal İnat along with Muhittin Ataman. Other academic journals as general IR and political science journals where ME is also addressed can be listed as *Perceptions* (1996) whose current editor-in-chef is Ali Resul Usul, and is published by SAM (Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi/Center for Strategic Research) a center established by Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* (2004) by Kadir Has University (KHU) editors Mithat Çelikpala and Serhat Güvenç from KHU; *Insight Turkey* (2008) by SETA (another well-established think tank in Turkey) whose editor-in-chef is again Muhittin Ataman, the general coordinator of the institution. Both *Perceptions* and *Insight Turkey* are published only in English, whereas *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* is also bilingual of English and Turkish.

Thus, we can argue that MES in Turkey is gaining more popularity and legitimacy, however divorcing the area from “Western” world and language does not seem to be quite possible.

Therefore, in this present chapter, we had first introduced the debate over defining the ME, its being a Eurocentric term and constructed concept as well as its relation to Orientalism and exceptionalism. The cultural explanations for non-democratic and

underdeveloped countries of the region, which were given by blaming Islam and Arab culture was argued to be problematic for two reasons: First, these characters are not really sui-generis and/or uniting characters of the region and second assuming Islam or Arabness would lead to autocracy and radicalism would be too stereotypical and prejudicious. Thus, both Orientalism and exceptionalism had been observed in different contexts and within different characteristics attributed to the ME changing from its being Muslim, autocratic and underdeveloped. The last discussion introduced in this chapter was about Turkey in the ME, in terms of its being positioned in the ME, its foreign policy towards ME and the MES in Turkey. Since having this East-West dichotomy resulted in an ideological dilemma in terms of both domestic and foreign policy issues; addressing debates over “Westernization projects”, “modernization”, “rise of Political Islam”, “turning its back to EU and West”, “being a regional leader”, “soft-power in the ME” was important. Lastly, how these concepts led to the open-ended questions of the form I have used during data collection will be elaborated in the next chapter on methodology and findings.

## CHAPTER 3

### **THE PERCEPTION OF MIDDLE EAST: FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS WITH TURKISH MES and NON-MES SCHOLARS**

In this chapter the research methodology, participants, tools and findings will be presented. As it was introduced in above chapters, the question was *How Middle East (ME) is perceived by Turkish scholars of the Middle East Studies (MES scholars), and scholars of other disciplines (non-MES scholars); and whether there are differences in those two groups.* Thus to define “MES” scholar the criteria of being academically interested in the area was operationalised as producing academic writings or offering courses on ME; or being affiliated with an institution (research center, Masters’ or PhD degree programme, etc) on ME, either as a student or a university professor.

#### **3.1. Methodology**

This study was designed as a qualitative study, with semi-structured interviews conducted via telephone. The methodological issues like sampling, participants, procedure, interview questions will be introduced in this section.

##### **3.1.1. Procedure and Participants**

The fieldwork of this thesis is based on 40 semi structured telephone interviews conducted with MES and non-MES scholars and students, within a six-month period starting with August 2015. Snowball sampling was chosen as the sampling methodology and the scholars whose names were identified were sent e-mails or text messages presenting the researcher, the topic, the research methodology, the average length of the interview and an invitation. This invitation part was rather an appointment request, if they are willing to join; since it asked whether we can agree on a date available for both the researcher and the participant. When a certain appointment was taken, on the appointment day, just before the interview a short

message reminding the appointment like “I will be calling in 15 min, half an hour etc.” was sent and when the response was confirmed by the participant, the call has started. After introduction and pre-interview information about the study and anonymity principles; they were warned that the recording process will start and continue until the end of the interview form, if they have anything to say off-the-record, they may ask to stop recording; and they will be given a post-interview feedback afterwards, which was not recorded either.

However, there were some people who were willing to participate but could not take part, since they were not reached on the particular date agreed on, mostly due to schedule conflicts. If any new date was not agreed upon or if they did not have any corresponding participant in the other group, those participants were not interviewed. Even if the scores were not matched for data analysis purposes, in order to control the intellectual level, during sampling and data collection each participant in MES was matched with another participant in non-MES in terms of their education level. However since two of the scholars who were selected to be a non-MES researcher (an anthropologist and a Latin-studies scholar) turned out to be academically interested in the ME as their secondary area of interest; in terms of taking courses, using chapters related to ME in their course materials, following academic publications on the ME and writing articles on the ME in relation to their core research topic, like image, religion and policy. Thus, the overall distribution of the participants is as the following: 22 of the 40 participants were MES scholars, whereas the remaining 18 were non-MES scholars.

In terms of their bachelor degrees both groups were very diverse: The disciplines involved in the first group (MES scholars) can be listed as international relations, political science, history, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, theology, literature, law, engineering; whereas the non-MES scholars group were similar as coming from, economics, sociology, history, literature, law, engineering, art history, administration and psychology. Another diverse nature of the sample was in terms of the universities they were affiliated, as there have been 16 different universities, 6 of



which were private universities, located in a range of different cities like two cities from Marmara region, including İstanbul; three from Central Anatolia, including Ankara, and two from Eastern Anatolia. Thus, I may argue that in terms of their disciplines and locations of the affiliated universities both groups were very diverse, and were almost equivalent to each other.

Another issue related to the nature of the sample was their level of academic work. In order to have both groups as equivalent as possible in terms of the possible confounds like gender, age, intellectual capacity, academic status and so on, I tried to control those across both groups as much as possible. For instance, in terms of gender, in both groups the gender ratio was similar as having 7/10 to 8/10 of the whole sample was consisted of women, in MES and non-MES scholars respectively. The mean age for each group (MES and non-MES scholars) are as 31.6 and 30.2 respectively, whereas the age range is from 23 to 42. Moreover, I tried to have two different experience groups within each group; like the ones who are at the process of defending their dissertations, also giving lectures as TA's (teaching assistants) or lecturers and above (PhDs, Assistant professor, associate professors, professors) is considered as "senior" scholars whereas the new masters students, new PhD students etc. were considered as junior academics. Thus the distribution was as following: 10 junior academics for both groups (MES and non-MES scholars) and 12 senior scholars for MES and 8 scholars for non-MES groups, due to the change occurred in terms of senior scholars of MES and non-MES groups mentioned above. Even though the sample showed those characteristics, it should be kept in mind that this one is rather a qualitative study, thus has no attempt or aim to "generalize" the results, but rather give us more detailed information and show some patterns are common to those groups.

As mentioned above, I had taken "semi-structured telephone interviews" whose questions will be given in the below section as my data collection methodology. The average interviews with junior MES scholars were 21minutes and 52 seconds long, whereas for junior non-MES scholars it was 10 minutes 84 seconds, which was close

to senior non-MES scholars' average which was 16 minutes 24 seconds. The longest interviews were with the MES senior scholars, 31 minutes 86 seconds on average. However, these differences between the length of the interviews might have resulted from the differences between the modules as the form asked to MES scholars had one additional questions in the second part as it can be seen in the below section. The difference between more experienced MES scholars (seniors) and newcomers (juniors) might have been due to the lengths of responses given to "experience in the MES" and "evaluation of the MES in Turkey" questions.

### **3.1.2. Semi-structured interviews with Turkish scholars of MES and non-MES**

In this section the semi-structured interview questions, the rationale behind the questions, the pre-interview and post-interview information giving parts; and the nodes (categories/patterns) found as a response to each question will be given. Thus, the followings were mainly translated by the author from the original Turkish form, which will be presented in the appendix A. Hence, before presenting the interview questions, the following information-consent part was read to the participants:

*First of all, I would like to thank you for accepting to participate in this present study. As I mentioned before, I am a Masters student in Middle East Technical University, Middle East Studies department masters program writing my thesis under supervision of Prof. Özlem Tür and this interview was designed as the data processing part of my thesis. Today, we will talk about Turkey, Middle East and Middle East in Turkey subjects as the time allows. There will be around 6-7 main open ended questions backed up with auxiliary questions asked if necessary. It takes around 20 minutes to 30 minutes usually, but you are the ones who decide whether your answer is comprehensive enough or not, if you feel you had mentioned enough you may stop earlier or you may extent the time. Even if some questions seem like "knowledge" questions, I am more interested in your perception, so you may answer as "what comes to your mind". I am going to take voice-record of these interviews but I am well aware of my ethical responsibility, so I will not going to share it with third parties, and they will be all anonymous. Thus it is different than the expert*

*interviews. The quotations used in the results section of the thesis would also be given in accordance with this ethical principle of anonymousness. Thus, if you still would like to join, and do not have any further questions, shall I start the recorder?*

After this information and consent part, the following questions were asked, starting with the “main module” which was addressed to all participants regardless of their groups, i.e. their being MES or non-MES scholars.

The first question was as the following: Q1: *When we mention about “Middle East”, how do you define the geographical territories of it, what comes to your mind? Which countries it involves?* This question was related to the literature covered in Chapter 2.1 *Where is the Middle East?*” and proceeding to the second question: Q2: *When we mention about “Middle East” region/geography etc, what kind of place/geography/region we are talking about culturally and politically? What are the first things comes to your mind related to political and cultural environment of this region?* This second questions had some auxiliary questions like *Do you think these characteristics are “specific” to Middle East? Can we argue that Middle East is an exception?* and *How do you position it in relation to other regions?* These three questions were based on the literature covered in “Chapter 2.2. On the exceptionalism of the Middle East”, and the attempt was to ask open-ended questions to the people based on the themes retrieved from the previous literature. Instead of directly asking whether they are familiar to exceptionalist theories or Orientalism and how they position themselves in terms of those, the questions were rather open-questions to let them talk about their schemas and perceptions.

The third and fourth questions are related to Turkey and the Middle East, whereas the third question “Q3: *How do you position Turkey in the Middle East? Do you think that it is inside the Middle East or outside of it? Why?*” and the auxiliary question “*Do you think that Turkey has a significant role in the Middle East? Is it an important actor or not?*” were important to analyze how the participants position Turkey in the Middle East, along with forth question “Q4: *If you were asked to*

*evaluate the Turkey's relations with the Middle East in terms of foreign policy, how would you bring this relations from 1920s to-day? What are the primary critical junctures for you and do you perceive any continuous or similar patterns or any differences across these terms?"* Thus, both questions were related to Chapter 2.3 entitled "Positioning Turkey in the Middle East". This first four questions were asked to both groups, and were used in the analyses part to see where the answers differentiate from each other, if they do.

The second module was more personal, just started with a check statement like *"Now I am going to ask more personal questions based on your own experiences. Is it ok?"* After receiving the approval, I start with the module which had two different versions: one shorter version asked to the non-MES scholars just checking whether they have any background on MES and what are the sources of their knowledge on the ME; and one longer version asked to MES scholars as the following: Q5: *How do you started to get interested in MES? When, how, where? How it continued? In short may I get your story of "entrance to the filed"?* After the participants told their stories, I asked: *You have mentioned about many different experiences, did they affect anything in your perceptions towards this area or studying this area?* By these questions, I would not only learn how their perceptions changed but also how their academic interests and stories shaped their perceptions. This one was proceeded by the sources question: Q6: *What are the sources of information for you on Middle East? How, where and from whom you learnt Middle East? What are the sources you are looking at when you are conducting your research or to increase your knowledge?* The last question was about their evaluation of the MES in Turkey as I asked: Q7: *When you were asked to evaluate the education given in the area of MES, the academic works written in Turkey on this area and your experience with think-tanks, how would you evaluate it?* These last module was rather related to the literature covered in the introduction and Chapter 2.4 Middle East Studies in Turkey and was used to learn more about my sample, in terms of their interest levels, experiences, academic backgrounds etc.

When all of the questions were finished, before providing feedback, I gave the following notification as:

*That was all of my questions, I sincerely thank you for participating and devoting some of your valuable time to those questions. If you don't have anything to add, I am going to close the sound-recorder function, so that we may speak more if you had anything to ask or say off-the-record and I am going to give you the feedback about what I tried to do, and what I observed so far before we say goodbye.*

Before starting to the analysis of the answers, a small portion of the data gathered was randomly selected for the content analysis to decide on the nodes. After selecting 10 interviews, 5 from each group; the following patterns were observed: In answers provided to Q1 about the geographical borders of the ME, there are two patterns as either *criticizing the terminology as a political and euro-centric one* or *taken it as God given*; the second pattern is how the participant defines the geographical territories, i.e. whether they take *the Arab Middle East*, *Arab Middle East plus Iran and Israel*; *MENA* or *Greater Middle East including Afghanistan*.

For the Q2 about what kind of political and cultural environment he/she thinks of when mentioning about the ME; *chaotic/war environment*, *backwardness*, *non-democratic environment and instability*, *multicultural/ancient multicultural*, *Islam*, *Being exploited by Western powers*. (East-West dichotomy) and *Undeveloped region, used by hegemonic developed countries (Political economic explanation)*. Plus whether the *Middle East is an exception* or *not* as inferred from the responses, will also be discussed in the following parts of this thesis.

The answers provided to Q3 about where Turkey is in relation to the ME, can be categorized as *in*, *out*, *both in and out* and *neither in nor out*, explaining the situation due to *cultural ties or cultural differences*; *geographical distance*; and *political ties or differences*. To the second part of this question, asking whether Turkey has an important role in the ME, the answers show the patterns as *yes*, *didn't have before but has now*, *used to have but don't have now* and *no*. The general explanations are

like Turkey is discluded from the ME, Superpowers prevent it, We have geopolitical importance, We are more powerful and we present a model, We started to have a significant role with JDP and lastly, We lost our significant power with Syrian crisis.

Q4 on how they elaborate on the foreign policy of Turkey in the ME comes up with the following answer-patterns emerged as: *There is no specific Turkish foreign policy towards the ME, In the early republican period the middle is used to be ignored, In the cold war era, we started to have an active ME policy/our ME policies started with Turgut Ozal, Our foreign policy is towards the West. Our foreign policy got differentiated from the previous policies with İsmail Cem/ with JDP government/ is still the same.*

These four questions were the ones asked to both MES and non-MES scholars, however the questions and responses to the second part was different, as it was designed differently for each group. In terms of the experience in the MES, the non-MES scholars indicated *no academic interest and education*, but as knowledgeable as they see from the *media sources*, as they follow especially the Turkish media or the popular books on the ME. The patterns observed in the responses of the MES scholars are as the following: In response to question about the “entrance to the MES” is due to *personal reasons* like observing movies, visiting the area for rather touristic reasons and so on or due to the *courses received in the university*. As they got involved in MES, especially with the field visits, mostly their perceptions of the ME change. In response to the question about the sources of information, even though a great proportion of the scholars claim that *learning one of the are languages* is necessary, mostly they are able to read the region from western resources or the works of the “Middle Eastern” intelligentsia and media which was produced in one of the western languages. Turkish resources are also within this debate, as the importance attributed to Turkish sources also varies. Thus, this debate is also embedded in the responses given to the last question, about the critique to the MES in Turkey, as it is one of the issues referred most frequently is the language

and the sources of knowledge problem. However, these themes emerged in last module was rather to define the individuals while quoting their responses and from the first module, the emerged patterns were coded in a data sheet in a way that it will allow us to count the numbers of participants who replied what (positive or negative; yes or no; one of the option patterns emerged and so forth).

Since the data is categorical and all I have is the proportion of our sample in each category, the tests I would use is the Pearson's chi-square tests of two types: The *chi-square test for goodness of fit* and the *chi-square test for independence*. The chi-square test for goodness of fit, as the name implies show us how good our data proportions fit to null hypothesis (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2010, p. 597). In statistics, *null hypothesis* basically means the hypothesis states us the results I have, like the distribution of scores in our case, is due to pure chance. In other words, there is no difference, nothing to interpret as a significant change or difference, and it would have been the other way around and it is just chance that made it turn the way it is. It is symbolized as  $H_0$  and in our chi squares it would be the hypothesis which claims us that I could not find any interpretable distribution, any change, any difference, any link, any significant result, any preference and so on. But since I am applying statistics, I cannot say it as 100% sure of myself, which means I have a critical level, a *significance level*, that I can state there is this chance that I might have been wrong, i.e. even though the results show us I am right in assuming that null hypothesis (or in the cases we reject the  $H_0$ ; the alternative hypothesis) is correct, I may also be wrong by that significance level. This significance level, which is symbolized with  $\alpha$  (alpha) is generally set to .1, .05 or .01 meaning I will announce our results as "significant" if I am 90% ; 95% or 99% confident of our results respectively. Here in this present thesis I set the significance level to  $\alpha=.05$ ; indicating that I will accept my results, if my probability of getting wrong is less than 5% probability. My probability of getting wrong is called calculated probability or *p value* and if it is less than our significance level,  $\alpha$ , I will reject the null hypothesis. In this case,  $p<.05$  is what I need to *reject the null hypothesis*, the claim that everything I see is a result of chance; and I may announce my results as significant ones, they are not due to

chance, I had found a *statistically significant* difference there. Thus, I will reject the null hypothesis, reject the chance factor, and claim there is really something in my distribution in that chi-square: I may interpret my results, I may read my table. In other words, I will not accept  $H_0$  but the *alternative hypothesis*, which is symbolized as  $H_1$ , and claims I will find a statistical significance there as an alternative to the null hypothesis as the name implies. If null hypothesis is bigger than my alpha level (significance level) which was .05 in my case; I will *fail to reject the null hypothesis*, i.e. I will accept that it was due to chance. Therefore, I should not spend my time in trying to interpret the *frequency distributions* (number of people in each cell) in my *contingency tables* (matrixes) as I had wanted to reject null hypothesis and tell my audience that I found something there, my table meant something, but I *failed* to reject the null hypothesis: I couldn't show it wrong. After this basic introduction of statistical concepts, I will proceed to calculations of chi-squares. First one is, as I mentioned before, is the "goodness of fit" chi square test, in which one has one group of people tested in different categories, to figure out whether their preferences or results (the distributions) is statistically significant or not. Here I may form my  $H_0$  in two ways depending on what I am trying to figure out: If I am trying to find whether my sample will fit to the known population -the preferences of which are already known-, I will form my  $H_0$  in accordance to this known population proportions. For instance if I had already known the distribution of the number of people who are dieting in either Dukan or Karatay and one year later I do want to check whether there is difference in their trends, I may use this one. *However, if I am trying to find whether my sample will show no difference, no preference within these categories I form, and I do not know anything about our population before related to their preferences, the  $H_0$  will be the numbers distributed equally to the cells in my table, which I will use in my case.* Borrowing and changing an example question from Gravetter & Wallnau (2010, p. 595) I will show the computation in simple terms: Suppose that I will test three soft drink brands X, Y, Z, with say, my 30 participant-sample ( $n=30$ ). There is not any known population proportions before, and also no reason for me to assume theoretically one will be more preferred than the other, i.e. if chance plays the role, they need to be equally distributed among these 3 brands.



Thus, my  $H_0$  states that there is no difference in terms of their preferences, thus, 10 participants would choose X, other 10 would choose Y and the remaining 10 would choose Z brand, which is my “*expected frequencies*”. Then I test my participants to taste the brands and ask them which one they would prefer, and get the response say like 15 for brand X, 10 for Brand Y, and 5 for Brand Z, the “*observed frequencies*.” One may assume that there would be a difference since there seems high preference trends for Brand X; however, I need to make the calculation by applying the formula,  $X^2(\text{Chi square}) = \text{sum of } ((\text{observed frequencies (minus) expected frequencies})^2 / \text{expected frequency})$ ; meaning for each cell we will subtract expected frequency (what our null hypothesis suggested for that particular cell) from our observed frequency (what our data shows) and after taking its square (because we are trying to get rid of any negative numbers) and divide it by our expected frequency). After doing it for each cell, we will sum these numbers we calculated which will show us our *chi-statistic*. After checking the chi-square table presented in Appendix B, for the appropriate significance level ( $\alpha=.05$  for my cases) and for the appropriate *df* (the number I calculate by subtracting 1 from the number of categories); I will find the critical chi-square result. In case the result is less than this critical result, it means I could not reach to that number, i.e. I fail to reject the null hypothesis; as my *p* would be bigger than 0.05. It would be listed as  $X^2(df, n=\text{sample size})=\text{my chi square result, significant or n.s (not significant)}$ . Therefore in this example; the table which shows the calculation would be as this:

*Table 1: Calculations of Matrix*

<b>Brands:</b>	<b>Brand X</b>	<b>Brand Y</b>	<b>Brand Z</b>
Expected frequencies for n=30 (What $H_0$ claims to be shown)	10	10	10
Observed frequencies for n=30 (What our participants said)	15	10	5
Observed frequencies (minus) expected frequencies	15-10=5	10-10=0	5-10=-5
Squares of (Observed frequencies (minus) expected frequencies)	5*5=25	0*0=0	5*5=25
(Squares of (Observed frequencies (minus) expected frequencies))/ expected frequencies	25/10=2.5	0/10=0	25/10=2.5

Then, I sum the numbers I have calculated in the last row of cells as  $2.5+0+2.5=5$ ; meaning my chi square statistic is 5. The df is the number I calculate as subtracting 1 from the number of categories I have, since I have 3 brands (categories), I have a  $df=2$ . When I check the chi-square table (see Appendix B) for alpha level 0.05 and  $df=2$ ; the critical chi square number is 5.99. Hence, I was pretty close to it, but could not reach that point, since  $5 < 5.99$ . I will announce my results as not significant, since I will need to accept what  $H_0$  told me before I do the testing, thus I would write it utilizing  $X^2(df, n=sample\ size)=our\ chi\ square\ result, significant\ or\ n.s\ (not\ significant)\ writing\ style\ as\ "X^2(2, n=30)=5, n.s\ as\ p>.05$  and I failed to reject the null hypothesis, indicating there is no significant preference of the participants among these three brands, it was distributed as such this time, it might be the other way around at another time.

The other type of chi square, chi-square for independence has similar mentality but here in the contingency tables I will have more than one group, since generally having tables of  $2 \times 2$ ,  $2 \times 3$ ,  $4 \times 2$  and so forth. The same mentality and formula will be applied, however to figure out expected frequencies, I will multiply the total number of people in each column and each row; and divide it by the total number of participants I have. Since calculating it requires just a little bit more mathematical operations, there are various java scripts written for that in the internet. Thus, in this present thesis, I utilized one of them for independence tests, chi-square test calculator, which only works for more than one groups, from the website "social science statistics" (<http://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/chisquare2/default2.aspx>) which seemed to show accurate results, after checking random contingency tables results I have calculated by hand. Thus, since these programs like SPSS and such calculators like the one I use may also calculate p values along with chi square statistics, I preferred to announce my results as  $X^2(df, n=sample\ size)=result\ n.s.\ at\ p < .05$  as  $p =$  calculated p value.

One important point to check is none of the *expected frequencies* in each cell should be less than 5, as it was put by Gravetter & Wallnau (2010, p. 615) as "A chi-square

test should not be performed when the expected frequency of any cell is less than 5.” Therefore, before doing the analysis I will calculate expected frequencies for each cell to figure out whether I can do the analysis at that level or should make an adjustment in the categories or groups by combining them into a super-category or group that would also make sense.

### **3.2. Findings from the Interviews**

In this present section, the findings from the interviews would be presented under two subsections, both qualitatively and quantitatively. A sample from the semi-structured interview data was analyzed for the patterns, in each subsection and the results and quotations are rather organized along with these patterns. The subsections are “The Middle East is..” in which the question of defining the geographical, political and cultural boundaries of the Middle East is discussed, “Turkey and the Middle East” in which the questions about positioning Turkey in the Middle East is replied.

#### **3.2.1. The Middle East is...**

Answers provided as a response to the first question of semi-structured interview form Q1: *When we mention about “Middle East”, how do you define the geographical territories of it, what comes to your mind? Which countries it involves?* is analyzed in this part. The frequency distribution matrix is as following in Table 2, indicating that out of 40 participants who replied this question, 2 non-MES scholars, one senior and one junior define ME in lines with the “Arab Middle East” definition, which takes only Arab countries as ME. In another form of narrow definition of the ME, the three non-Arab states (Israel, Iran and Turkey) is also included into the definition, which is told by 5 MES (2 junior, 3 senior) and 4 non-MES (3 Junior, 1 senior) scholars. For the broader definitions of ME, which was operationalized like ME and North Africa (MENA, including North African states) and Greater Middle East (adding Afghanistan and Pakistan “Af-Pak” to MENA). The frequencies are also as the following shown in the table:

*Table 2a: Frequencies of two narrow vs two broader definitions of the ME across 4 groups*

		Narrow Definitions of ME		Broader Definitions of ME	
Groups		“Arab Middle East”	“Arab ME” + 3 non-Arab states	MENA (Middle East and North Africa)	Greater Middle East (MENA+AfPak)
MES Scholars	Junior		2	3	5
	Senior		3	1	8
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	1	3	1	5
	Senior	1	1	2	4
Chi square		<b>Not possible to calculate</b>			
Significance					

However, as it was explained in the previous section about how to calculate chi squares, I observe that some cells have an expected frequency less than 5 which would disable me to conduct a chi-square test. For instance, if I calculate the expected frequency for the cell in the intersection of Arab ME and senior non-MES scholar in Table 2a, I will figure out I need to re-arrange it in broader categories. Since it is the first table an expected frequency will be calculated in an chi-square test for independence, I will show the calculation for expected frequencies: As mentioned before, we need to multiply column total and row total of that particular cell and divide the result to the total sample size. Thus, row-sum is 6 and column sum is 2 and when we multiply those we get 12. If this is divided by the total number of participants, our sample size,  $12/40 = .3$ , which disables us for running chi-square for that particular table. Thus, the following version of the distribution table is created:

*Table 2b: Frequencies of narrow vs broader definitions of the ME across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Narrow Definitions of ME	Broader Definitions of ME
MES Scholars	5	17
Non-MES Scholars	6	12
Chi square	0.5586	
Significance	p=.45484, n.s.	Not significant

As it can be seen in Table 2b, I had to re-categorize and re-group the frequency distribution table which turned out to be a contingency table with no expected value less than 5. Thus, I was able to run a statistical chi-square for independence test and the result was  $X^2(1, n=40) = .56$ , n.s. at  $p < .05$  as the calculated  $p = .45$ . Thus, I may argue that there is no statistical tendency across these groups' preferences of narrower or broader definitions. In other words, being a MES scholar or non-MES scholar does not make any difference in terms of preferences in definitions.

However, still when we check the basic frequency distribution table, Table 2a, we see a trend towards broader definitions, and especially to "Greater Middle East" concept, in both MES scholar and non-MES scholar groups, thus, I make the hand calculations for chi-square goodness of fit, to see whether my participants have any preference towards any of these definitions. Since the expected frequency for each cell will be 10 from sample size divided by number of categories, I may compute the chi-square for goodness of fit. Hence, for the frequency distribution of 2 participants saying Arab ME, 9 Arab ME+three non-Arab states, 7 participants MENA and 22 participant as Greater Middle East adding Af-Pak to MENA my calculations give:  $X^2(3, n=40) = 21.9$  and the critical value is 7.81 for that alpha level and df; thus since

21.9 > 7.81. Thus, I reject the null hypothesis and significantly conclude that there is a strong tendency towards defining ME in its broader sense like Greater Middle East rather than just taking it as the Arab Middle East and I may conclude that the distributions as 2, 9, 7 and 22 respectively to each category I mentioned is interpretable.

Another pattern emerged from Q1 was the observation and node as some participants criticized the conceptualization of ME and claimed that *it was problematic, Eurocentric, it is not a given territory; even though we define it in fact we should not take it as unchangeable* etc. Without being asked such a question, some participants started with criticizing the concept. Thus the following frequency table emerged in which the outlier junior MES scholars mean the junior MES scholars with an experience less than one year and a low interest in the ME, whereas the outlier senior non-MES scholars means the non-MES scholars who are with a high interest and some-academic knowledge on the ME despite they are not studying the ME. Thus the numbers given in Table 3a is the number of each participant in one of the groups responding the question either by mentioning its problems as a concept or did not mention about it at all.

*Table 3a: Frequencies of mentioning the ME as a problematic concept*

		Conceptualization of the ME problem	
Groups		Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	Outlier Junior	0	4
	Junior	5	1
	Senior	10	2
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	0	10
	Senior	1	5
	Outlier Senior	1	1
Chi square Significance	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		

Since again such a detailed matrix for a sample size  $n=40$  would turn out as a lower expected frequency in some cells, I re-grouped it, first by omitting outliers (outlier junior MES and outlier senior non-MES scholars) and then by adding those to junior MES and senior non-MES categories. However, still some turned out with an expectancy level less than 5, which would disable me to run these analysis. Therefore, I decided to group them into two categories to come up with a 2x2 contingency table and I had the table below in which two contingency tables are given together:

*Table 3b: Frequencies of mentioning the ME as a problematic concept across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Mentioned	Did not mention	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES	15	7	15	3
Non-MES	2	16	1	15
Chi square	13.1949		20.2023	
Significance	$p=.000281$	significant	$p=.00001$	Significant

Since in this case none of the expected frequencies in any cell is less than 5, we may compute the chi-square and as it is given in the Table 3b, in two version: In the first one outliers are added and in the second one they are being omitted, hence both results are statistically significant. ME as problematic or not mentioning about it which shows that even when they are grouped as MES vs non-MES scholars including the outliers, there is a significant preference for bringing up this conceptualization problem by MES scholars, whereas non-MES tend not to mention,  $X^2(1, n=40)=13.20$ , significant at  $p<.05$ . When the outliers are removed it turns to  $X^2(1, n=34)=20.20$ , significant at  $p<.05$ . Thus, when the outliers are gone, 15 out of 16 non-MES scholars and only 3 out of 18 MES scholars do not mention about such a conceptualization problem.

We may interpret two important findings from the contingency tables given above, as the first one is defining the ME as Arab Middle East, Arab Middle East plus non-Arab actors like Turkey, Iran and Israel, or defining it as MENA and Great Middle East does not seem to have any difference in terms of who defines it, i.e. whether they are MES or non-MES scholars. However, when we ask whether there is any preference in terms of these definitions, as the narrower one like old ME definitions including either only Arab countries or Arab countries plus the three non-Arab countries; and more recent ME definitions like MENA (Adding North Africa to the old one) and Great Middle East (Including Afghanistan etc) has shown a significant tendency for the newer definitions. The second one was however, the ME concept was significantly challenged by the MES scholars than the non-MES scholars. As it can be seen in the following explanations, the question “Where is the ME?” poked the questions “*Can we define the ME?*”, “*How can we define the ME?*”, “*What is the ME?*”, “*Who defines the ME?*” etc, in the minds of MES scholars mainly, rather than accepting it as given:

“First of all I am an anthropologist and this (geographical borders of the ME) is a very *debatable* issue for us. Even what we call as ME is *something constructed*. What we call as ME has been defined as only Arab world for a time, then some included Magreb in it, recently after this “Clash of Civilisations” debate had started, Afghanistan and Pakistan was included. Hence, some ask whether it contains Islamic countries or not? But I perceive the ME as one “*core*” and one “*periphery*”” (MES scholar, Senior, Anthropologist, Medium Interest on Middle East, more than 10 years experience, Participant ID: 20)

This notion of challenging ME as “something constructed and can be debated” is not only unique to anthropologists, as other participants from MES scholars group also rejected the idea that ME can be defined confidently, so they also attached annotations to the question “Where is the ME?” even though they were not directly asked about the debates in defining its borders, and the validity of the definitions given. Here, some of the answers may also be taken as the examples of path dependency perspective in the naming of the ME:



“We can answer it like that, *who was the first coining the term “Middle East?”*, who said as ME is this or that, thus, since we *were not having a say in defining the ME*, we take the ME as something given to us, prepared for us, thus there are people taking the ME to Afghanistan or to Morocco, but when we say the ME, the first thing comes to my mind is an area containing Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey; which can be called as Mezapotamia.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 9)

Another observation is, as it can be seen in the quotation above, even though being aware of the wider definition of the ME, they make a differentiation between “*how “they” define it personally in their own studies*”, “*what comes to their minds, what first connotes to the region*” and “*what they believe the region contains in the literature*” is different from each other. Here, the idea of studying the ME in terms of dividing it into more meaningful and historically more unified subregions is another solution proposed by the participants:

“Middle East is rather a *historical naming given to the region as it was in England’s way to India*. When it’s said ME, I like using it as sub-titles, subregions; *because ME has a great map; and a small map*. There are people including North Africa or Afghanistan. Thus, *while I am studying, I rather had subregions like Levant culture, Gulf region etc*, but since each region is interacted, *if you ask me to draw a picture of the ME, I will choose the Greater one, as even Pakistan and Afghanistan is related to it.*” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years of experience, Participant ID: 10)

Not only the participants were aware of the changes in the definitions but also they were making the point that these definitions change from time to time, mostly due to political conjunctures. Thus, what we now know as the ME, might have been different from what connotes for the older generations who were socialized with more classical definition of the region. This might also help us to explain why there was no significant difference were found between MES scholars and non-MES scholars in terms of their preference for a “broader definition” of the ME like MENA or Greater Middle East; over the smaller definitions, which can be argued as the

classical ones: The changes in the definitions might have been shaped by politics and politicians since it was not a territory defined by geographical landmarks and both academic literature and the media take it from this source. Therefore, the importance attributed to these recent political issues in defining the ME is also mentioned in their answers:

“As you also know ME has many definitions and in fact it has been a concept which changed from time to time. ... *Lastly, with Bush administration, with this Great Middle East era, they enlarged this definition and North Africa, Arab Peninsula and Afganistan-Pakistan was involved. Thus, it is something changes from the perspectives of the countries, world leaders.* But if you ask me, as a MES scholar, I am taking countries like North Africa and Arabian Peninsula, rather MENA.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 6)

Another similar quotation emphasising the importance of political conjunctures in defining the region, also puts that how much these political conjunctures and countries affect our own countries is also related to how we continue to interpret and study the area, despite what the literature says is quite well-known for the scholars of the area:

“That’s in fact a very good question and here we can see how this territory is being constructed. *Even if we have learnt it as MENA, I think we are, as Turkish academics, are studying the smaller version, in which Arab Middle East is the core and Turkey, Iran and Israel is on the peripheries of it. I feel we are not studying North Africa, but rather only taking Egypt from it. That must be because of Turkey’s not engaging in the North Africa much.* It is a region Afghanistan etc can also be included even if it is known mainly as West Asia, *but here the political conjunctures like invasion of Afghanistan and Arab Spring are also important.*” (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 15 years experience, Participant ID: 16)

After that much of criticisms of the question where the ME is, the question “*Why do we keep going with this problematic term?*” emerges and without even being asked, the following expert proposed an answer; besides summarizing what has been discussed above in the answers of the previous participants:

“As you know, ME is not a geographic definition, thus here emerges the difficulty to draw the geographical definition. *It is a region defined to be dominated by the Western powers, to be exploited, plus it is a very recent term and we perceive it such. Despite these, we are using the term because it is established as the time passed and it is a well-established concept.* Our perception of the ME is still shaped by the West, our perception changes based on how they change the definitions. *What I mean is, in the Bush era, where there was Great Middle East concept mentioned, and it was possible to enlarge this concept to the Central Asia even; in the classical definition of the ME where there were no Afghanistan, it started to be a very-core country in the region with the Afghan war. A more recent example is the inclusion of Magreb, maybe the Arab Spring also affected this situation but before, Magreb was not mentioned much in the Middle East and even time to time it was defined in other terms. (...)* Sometimes you will need to narrow the definition, and what we observe is Arab Middle East never changed. Thus, it is what people imagine when you mention the ME, hence, it is likely to mention a geography including Israel, Iran and Turkey. However, as I said before it is a definition in which the borders are constantly changing.” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Administration, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 19)

However, there are also different names given to the region, which was not as widespread as the definitions like MENA or Greater Middle East; thus was a little bit surprising for one of the senior MES scholars, as it was not expected for the participant to hear the region called like that:

“We call it “Middle East”, I was invited to a meeting in Asia (...), the title of the seminar was “*West Asia*” and I was shocked for a second or so, I was like ‘*Where should I talk about, didn’t they invite me to talk about the ME?*’ But as you see, from the Asia, it is West Asia. But when you look from Europe or the USA it is the ME. Due to this definitions, the ME has a position which changes from which region you look at it. *It is never possible to take the Middle East in an isolated fashion.*” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 15)

The only alternative to more popular names of the region we came across is not West Asia or SWANA (South West Asia and North Africa), but also due to its predominant Muslim population, it was argued for one participant to be used as

“Muslim geography” rather than accepting this Eurocentric term “Middle East”, despite appreciating the fact that ME is the general/most popular name:

“I do not like to use this term “Middle East”, personally I am taking the region where the Muslims live generally as the ME. *Muslim geography*, I would rather say, because ME is a European naming, it is the name the Westerners gave to the region by taking themselves as the center. (...) However, this naming is generally used today and if you ask where it is, it is region where the Muslims generally live and ethnically the Arabs predominantly live, I think.” (MES scholar, Senior, Literature (one of the Area languages), High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 12)

Not only the eastern versus western borders but also northern versus southern borders of the region was problematic to draw. The inclusion or exclusion of Turkey as the northern border will be given in more detail in the next section, thus here, the southern border will be discussed. Even if it is generally put as “North Africa”, when the “Muslim territories” argument is accepted, then it would have included sub-saharan Africa, including Mali, Niger, Chad, Djibouti, Somalia, where there are dominant Muslim population, as given:

“I take it from Morocco to Iran and Afghanistan; for the North we can take Turkey and for the south border *we may take the bottom lines of the Muslim-Africa*, including Chad, Djibouti, Sudan alike.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, less than 5 years experience, Participant ID: 8)

However, it seems to pose a problem, as even to include Sudan is debated, despite being cited as North African country by UN. Therefore, we may argue that, as some examples are provided, there is a tendency to exclude the “Black Africa.” from the definition:

“To me, the ME starts rather from the Mediterranean borders of the Africa, from Morocco to the east, including Arabian Peninsula and Turkey. But I do not agree that it can be expanded to the Afghanistan. On the south borders, I do not take the *Black Africa*; people say when you go to the southern borders of Egypt, the skin colour gets darker, thus I think *Egypt’s southern border is the border there.*” (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years experience, Participant ID: 14)

Another similar explanation is drawn by taking what generally is included by the MES literature:

“As you know it is an England-centered term and if you take England as the center and put China and Japan as the East on the other side, this region becomes the Middle of the East; there are people also including Afghanistan and Iran (...) A geography lets say from the beginning of Magreb, a region even going to Afghanistan, and in the *general literature* the southern border is considered as sub-Sahara region, thus we do not include the *Black Africa*. But, partially Sudan is included due to being Muslim and I also believe that it was affected from the rest.” (MES scholar, Senior, Philosophy, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 11)

To make a quick summary of these discussions given above, the below quotation provides a good frame, since instead of asking “where?”, the question can be asked as in the form of “what?”: The borders change from perception to perception, definition to definition, conjuncture to conjuncture thus by people who get into this area study, it is quite debatable:

“I would prefer to ask the question “*What is the ME?*” instead of asking “*Where is the ME?*” Despite being geographically defined as “Southwest Asia”, naming it as “Middle East” presents a problem from the very beginning. *It is East to whom? Middle to whom?* This is a term coined by the *politicians and academicians* of the England and later the USA. I would start with “What is the ME?” It is a geographical region that was named as Near East before, than borders can be drawn as including Turkey; North Africa; Arabian Peninsula and Mashreq. *But it also has an ideological naming.*” (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 17)

In fact this complexity in understanding the ME seems to be related to the experience and knowledge in the field. Even if not all of the MES scholars respond in lines with these discussions, there is a significant difference that we can argue that the people having the similar intellectual/cognitive capacities, but not studying MES, do not seem to pose many questions, as the contingency tables given at the beginning of the section also indicated. This might be about “knowing” the history of the region and

therefore having enough informational background to challenge what the media defines as the ME. Hence, as one of the participants claimed:

“If you ask it to someone who is not studying in this field, he/she may define it differently but as you also know the definitions of the ME is too many and different from each other.” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 10 years experience, Participant ID: 21)

Even though there is significant difference between challenging this terminology or not, in relation to which group you belong to, one non-MES scholar who claimed to be highly interested in the ME and sometimes even reading about the field if it is related to participant’s own study areas also a little bit similar to the reactions of the MES scholars:

“Rather than how I draw the geographical borders of the Middle East, I may say that any geography is drawn politically. If you ask me which countries I put into this category, it is something different. Sometimes I see MENA, sometimes Arab countries, sometimes Mediterranean countries, thus, what is the thing you call as the ME is shaped by the conjunctures, conditions of the day.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, High Interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 37)

However, most of the non-MES scholars start drawing the region as much as they know, in a changing complexity, accuracy and confidence in their answers:

“*Iran, Iraq, Syria.* Those countries and their neighbours.” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Literature, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 27)

“*Iraq, Syria, Iran, Arabian Peninsula.* Not North Africa but may be *Afghanistan.*” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Psychology, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 32)

“Palestine, Israel from the West, in the east, Iran; as far as I know Yemen in the south and on the north, Iran.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 40)

“Of course, *the southern border of Turkey, the east, the Arabian territories up until China.*” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 35)

*“What comes to my mind first are Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, the south of our country generally.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, Touristic interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 26)

There is a slight chance that, ME is perceived as a geographical region rather than a construct, since one of the non-MES scholars claimed that it was “there” in the ME, while talking about the geographical borders. This can also be interpreted as an observation parallel to “not challenging” the definition and geographical boundaries of the ME as a response to the question “Where is the ME?” : If it is something given, rather a geographical terminology; than there would not be any need to challenge it at all. Thus the following participants argued these countries are listed as Middle Eastern since “they are in the ME”:

*“As far as I know, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Morocco, I think Afghanistan and Pakistan were also included, the group composed of these countries. They are rather listed in this particular list since they are in the ME.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Business Administration, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 36)

However, some participants put that their perception might be different than the reality, but since they do not “know” it, and rather have some media-shaped images of the ME:

*“Well, let me think. Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, that must be all. (silence) Jordan, Lebanon, UAE, I will add those Arab countries too. I perceive it like that.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Art, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 23)

*“In my perception the ME always reminds me the East, the farther East even, the Eastern part of the World. But when I think geographically, Turkey, many parts of Russia, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Azarbaican, the L shape intersection between Russia and Turkey on the south, and having it on the southern region as Saudi Arabia, Lebanon etc.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Engineering, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 30)

*“When you say ME, even if it should not pop up, Turkey comes as the first thing in my mind. Because, I believe that Turkey geographically belongs to Europe, than, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and these countries. I would even count the Middle East*

*as the eastern border of Turkey, even up until America.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 29)

One participant with “more interest in the ME”, who is also treated as the outlier in the contingency table, tried to answer the question in more complexity, and claimed to have known the region by the specific interest on the region, language and Islam culture-related courses offered in the university:

*“The intersection of Old-World continents, Asia –Europe and Africa; I would say, partially taking Turkey, sometimes taking Iran on the north, taking Egypt and may be geographically Suez Cannel on West and within this horn, Arabic horn, Jordan, Lebanon etc, and at the core, Syria, Iraq, I said Jordan and Iraq. These are the countries. Saudi Arabia to Indian Ocean thus, I would not put a border on south at that region but in Africa, it is Egypt”.* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Engineering, Medium interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 33)

To sum up, the participants were offering different explanations to the first question “Where is the ME?” and were providing different geographical boundaries of the region which did not have any significant difference between by which group it was provided. However, as it was seen above the answers provided by the MES scholars were different than non-MES scholars in terms of their challenge of the attempts to define the region, their eagerness to put that this term has been long debated and is rather a Eurocentric one, the tendency to provide both the broader and narrower maps of the region and lastly, the political structures involved in “making” the region.

The second question of the semi-structured interview form was about the cultural and political environment in the Middle East, Q2: *When we mention about “Middle East” region/geography etc, what kind of place/geography/region we are talking about culturally and politically? What are the first things comes to your mind related to political and cultural environment of this region?* Here the participants were rather encouraged to respond as what are the things connote with the ME in their minds when they think of its politics and culture. As it was given in the previous Chapter



3.1.2. Semi-structured interviews with Turkish scholars of MES and non-MES, there were some patterns emerged on the content analysis from a randomly chosen sample from the data, prior to the analysis. Thus, the following contingency tables base on the categories emerged from this content analysis. The first one is about the notion that “*ME as a chaotic environment.*”

As I coded the responses as mentioning ME as a chaotic place and not mentioning of it as such, the following frequency distribution matrix was formed as we can see that from 4 outlier juniors (juniors with least experience and interests), 3 mentioned the place as a chaotic one , 4 junior MES scholars out of 6 mentioned the same, whereas it is only 3 out of 12 MES seniors and the table can be read accordingly.

*Table 4a: Frequencies of mentioning the ME as a “chaotic” place*

Groups		“ME is chaotic and conflictious place”	
		Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	Outlier Junior	3	1
	Junior	4	2
	Senior	3	9
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	5	5
	Senior	4	2
	Outlier Senior	2	0
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		
Significance			

However, since with this sample size, I cannot run a 6x2 matrix or its 4x2 version, since the expected frequencies for some cells turns as below 5, I re-grouped the participants in the following table as MES scholars and non-MES scholars, adding the outliers in the first one and omitting them in the second table.

*Table 4b: Frequencies of mentioning the ME as a “chaotic” place across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Mentioned	Did not mention	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	10	12	7	11
Non-MES Scholars	11	7	9	7
Chi square	0.9731		1.0248	
Significance	p=.323898	n.s. at p<.05	p=.311386,	n.s. at p<.05

Hence, in this combined table, Table 4b, results indicate that any significant preference was not observed both for the general groups, or when the outliers are removed from the groups, as the previous one is  $X^2(1, n=40)=0.97$ , n.s. at  $p < .05$  as  $p = .32$ ; whereas the latter one is  $X^2(1, n=34)=1.02$ , n.s. at  $p < .05$  as  $p = .31$ . As it can be interpreted from these chi square results, there seems to be no significant difference in whether they mentioned the ME as a chaotic place; or did not mention about chaos at all and/or claimed it is the opposite. However, when senior MES scholars are compared with anybody else in the sample, here comes a significant difference:

*Table 4c: Frequencies of mentioning the ME is a “chaotic” place across senior MES scholars vs all others*

“ME is chaotic and conflictious place”		
Groups	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Senior Scholars	3	9
All others	18	10
Chi square	5.1987, p=.022604	
Significance	significant at p<.05	

Above, Table 4c indicates that there is a significant preference as most senior MES scholars did not mention about ME as being a chaotic place for anyone else in the sample the percentage of mentioning about ME in terms of chaos and conflict is more than the non-mentioning case.  $X^2(1, n=40)=5.20$ , significant at  $p < .05$  as  $p = .02$ . Thus, the quotations in which ME is claimed to be chaotic place should be examined more thoroughly:

“A very *bloody region* comes to my mind. (...)Bombs come to my mind. More than the borders, *wars and bloodshed* comes to my mind.” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 24)

“When you say ME, a *very big chaos*, *wars* and most probably Islam are the things that comes to my mind.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 35)

“In terms of these *recent events and the news* about the foreign policy of our country *a very chaotic place, a war environment*.” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Literature, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 27)

As it can be seen above, the region is defined as a bloody war environment full of conflicts and chaos is the first reactions of some non-MES scholars, both juniors and seniors. This might also be related to what they see on the media, since these participants claim that their first and foremost information source is news reports about the ME. However, here even though chaos and conflict is observed to be used interchangeably by the participants, there are also other participants who take chaos as a result of variety:

“Politically, *it is a chaos, tens of different languages, tens of different ethnicities, I would say different political systems but, politically a complete chaos*.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Engineering, Medium interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 33)

Thus, in terms of differentiating this chaos due to variety in the ME, one participant who has been recently involved in the MES puts it as “good chaos”:

“... Before it used to be very mysterious and now is also mysterious, thus *there were always a chaos but it used to be a good chaos before*. But for me its exceptionalist nature lies because the

civilizations started there first. ME is essential (for the world). This situation of the ME also shows its essentialism; and the situation in the world also shows its essentialism, like the countries producing policies over this region. *For me especially if a place is too chaotic, it means it is too important.*” (MES scholar, Junior, Engineering, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 5)

Attributing such an exceptionalism to the region will be discussed later in this section, however, the idea that there is a positive correlation between chaos and importance given to the region seems to be an important idea to draw attention. Claiming chaos is created by these cultural varieties however, does not necessary bring “exceptionalism”:

*“Complex, chaotic. It was always like that, it was the area that the humanity started. Politically, culturally, there isn’t only Arabs, there are also people like Jews who belong to a religion but turns out to be a nation. This variety also creates chaos. Politically there are everywhere chaos, it is not unique to the ME.”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 4)

One non-MES participant on the other hand claims that this variety in culture, which is put as “richness” was demolished by the political culture which is very chaotic:

*“Politically chaotic, as many conflicts and revolutions took place there, culturally, I think it is different then ours, even if we are also considered as ME, they have a different culture, thus due to this difference I think it is richness. Now I think it is being demolished, due to these chaos. Historically, this geographical location has been the place many important events happened, thus it is the richness.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, Touristic interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 26)

Another similar argument provided by another non-MES participant, this time by a senior scholar, argues that the political culture of terror and conflicts in fact oppressed the cultural differences. This seems to be a very good way of looking at how they perceive the ME, as we may suggest that the more they came to hear about the region in the context of war and conflict, especially in the media, the more

tendency they might be having to put those countries into the box of “bloody places which is dangerous to go” schema:

*“The first thing comes to my mind in terms of political environment is conflicts, always conflicts, always bloody events, culturally I think each and every country have their own deep cultures but, this political environment is so dominant that their own cultures don’t even show themselves. The most prominent characteristic of this region might be this political environment. Conflicts and terrorist events dominating this political environment is the most specific characteristics of the region right now.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Engineering, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 34)

As it can be seen in the contingency table given above, the ones who perceive the ME as a chaotic and conflictious place is not only the non-MES scholars, but also MES junior scholars somehow seems to have a tendency to argue for it. However, the conflicts are rather understood as a problem created by political problems related to overall political culture of the region. Thus, for the MES scholars, the attribution is not internal to the characteristics of the ME states and societies, but rather an external attribution to the late nation-state building and not having a consolidated democracy is introduced:

*“These countries, as being states founded after WWII, they are new states and nation-state building is very recent for these countries, thus, there is something like not having a well-established system, a working system. Thus, politically we cannot mention about democratic systems, there is something like in-betweenness, still old monarchies and modern era ruling systems coexists, and there is a kind of in-betweenness. I may name it as political gaps, as chaos. Thus, because of this reason we observe many war and conflicts, ethnic conflicts. Ethnic conflicts are also a recent concept emerged nowadays, before that there used to be sectarian wars. (...) Despite being geographically very close to each other, even sharing the same borders, since there is a continuing conflict environment, it is really hard to mention about an amity.”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 6)

*“Politically, the places where democracy is not that much, where there is much instability and there is also many conflicts, and generally it is Muslim, and again having lots of religious and*

*sectarian conflicts*” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, less than 5 years experience, Participant ID: 8)

However, according to one non-MES junior scholar, the reason is not the structural problems in the political system but rather external actors are the reason for it and the politicians of the ME are trying to protect their lands, which results in chaos. This idea seems to be consistent with the popular geostrategical arguments that there are always games played over these territories:

*“Politically, speaking it has always reminded me the chaos, unfortunately. Thus always a chaos and conflict. Of course there are lots of different factors involved in it, in terms of media, the events, we always see it as an environment of conflict and chaos. This is the first thing comes to my mind, but on the other hand, a region where there is strong nations. A region where the peoples and politicians are strong as they are protecting their territories. Thus, maybe because of this I believe there is the chaos, but it is not because of this politicians who are trying to demand justice, seek their rights; but at the same time for a second factor due to the problems presented by Europe and USA, is a place when I observe it politically and culturally.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Engineering, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 30)

Here, one senior MES scholar again emphasises the role of media and the impact of popular arguments and books depicting the place as an environment where is nothing but chaos:

*“Political instability, late nation-statehood, not consolidated democracies and a region where there is sad events and problems are observed. But, I am not perceiving it as a pure chaos and I am getting angry when I see these things like “Middle East the Boiling Cauldron”, “Middle East the Witch’s Cauldron” etc. It is always depicted like that and I think the more it is depicted like that, the more likely of us to perceive it as such.”* (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 15 years experience, Participant ID: 16)

Thus the only non-exceptionalist participants who claim that this chaos is not a characteristic unique to the ME is the outlier non-MES scholars. The following one argues that the reason might be Turkey is interacted more with this region and thus

the impact and saliency of these news coverages might have been reinforcing the stereotypes we used to have about ME's war-like environment as the most-important characteristic of it:

*"... claiming the ME to be the most complicated, most chaotic region of the world is very wrong. As people living it Turkey, it reflects to us very differently. The things happening in Latin America reflects less to us, on the other hand since the other, ME, is closer to Turkey, and plus it has most of the time been shaped by the political changes in which Turkey is also involved. Or is being affected by the political dynamics that also effects Turkey, we know it better. But say China, Japan, Africa, we do not have many information about it, but we cannot say that the inner parts of the Africa is less problematic than the ME."* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, High Interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 37)

Therefore, another related node is instability in the political environment, ME's "non-democratic" and/or "autocratic" political culture, the frequencies of which is given in the below contingency table, Table 5a. Again the numbers in each cell indicates how many participants from each group mentioned or did not mention ME as having an unstable political environment.

*Table 5a: Frequencies of mentioning the ME has an "unstable" political environment*

		unstable and autocratic/non-democratic	
Groups		Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	Outlier Junior	4	0
	Junior	2	4
	Senior	7	5
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	8	2
	Senior	6	0
	Outlier Senior	2	0
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		
Significance			

Even though it seems as there is a tendency towards mentioning ME as a chaotic place and more from the non-MES scholars, I needed to create the below 2X2 tables, the first one by adding outliers and in the second one omitting the outliers, from the table given above. Thus, for each and every cell expected frequency will be more than 5, enabling us to calculate the chi-square statistics:

*Table 5b: Frequencies of mentioning the ME has an “unstable” political environment across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Mentioned	Did not mention	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	13	9	9	9
Non-MES Scholars	16	2	14	2
Chi square	4.409		5.4427	
Significance	p=.03575	significant	p=.01965	significant

As it can be seen from the table above, Table 5b, both chi-square statistics show significant results, meaning that the preference to mention ME political environment as unstable (including non-democratic and autocratic) cannot be explained just by chance, both for the general groups, or when the outliers are removed from the groups, as the previous one is  $X^2(1, n=40)=4.41$ , significant at  $p < .05$  as  $p = .35$ ; whereas the latter one is  $X^2(1, n=34)=5.44$ , significant at  $p < .05$  as  $p = .02$ . Hence, as it can be interpreted from the chi square results, both MES and non-MES scholars perceive the political environment of the area negatively, which is rather put into terms like “unstable”, “non-democratic”, “autocratic” and so forth:

*“Politically, the places where democracy is not that much, where there is much instability and there is also many conflicts, and generally it is Muslim, and again having lots of religious and sectarian conflicts.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, less than 5 years experience, Participant ID: 8)*



However, the inference that the region is rather “non-democratic” base on different sources as non-MES scholars like the following one, in one way or the other put that their perception of the region as non-democratic is parallel to what they came to observe from the media and news coverages:

“Especially I know as much as *I have observed in the media* in the recent years, especially Syria, newly Iran and Iraq, *they have more repressive ruling systems, how can I say more, I know that they are not very democratic countries*, besides their development levels are not really high.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Business Administration, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 36)

Especially in the non-MES scholars group, the participants tried to support their interference of the regions’ *unstable, non-democratic political culture*, in terms of their own academic interests, which might suggest us that they have been cognitively involved in these arguments, rather than parroting what it was suggested by the media. One participant from law department put it into the form of human rights and demands for rights:

“*Politically a region which is not accustomed to democratic culture, and is having to be ruled by one leader and being governed so*, but culturally a region where people are more gathered together with more warmth and passion, more helpful but less educated, *so naive that do not even challenge how they are being ruled and ask for human rights, but interestingly the ones who needs to ask for human rights more*. ME, due to many political reasons, is a place where the Western countries want to dominate, *in terms of political culture they have more emotional connections with their leaders and ask less about their rights*.” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 29)

But as it can be seen above the attribution is rather to the people, claiming that the people are rather naive that they did not ask for it. However, another participant from the same group, frame the negative political climate as something the society is also not happy with, in the suggestion that we can observe lack of “social capital”:

“... in the middle east as far as I see, the human capital, social capital is also needed to develop in the ME. *By social capital I mean trust*

*between people, peoples' trust to the state, and such things, and especially in welfare it also has an important role and I believe even in Turkey, the social capital is very low...*" (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 40)

Another challenge to the argument that people are emotionally bounded to their leaders and they did not ask for their rights come from a junior MES scholar who attracts our attention back to the Arab Spring. Here, again we can also observe the hesitation to generalize the characteristics attributed to the region which MES scholars were significantly more cautious about:

*"Generally we may talk about a region where we cannot observe democracies, in terms of political regimes. A political system, rather authoritarian systems are observed. It was of course tried to be changed with the Arab Spring but except from Tunisia we could not see any success. In terms of politics, there are Turkey and Israel which are different than those other countries. When we compare those to the West, of course there might be some problems but, when we compare it to the other Middle Eastern countries, I see that they are worse than Turkey and Israel."* (MES scholar, Junior, Political Science and International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 7)

A similar argument about political instability and non-democratic character of the ME, despite its people is given as a gap between the societies expectations and the rulers' interests. Putting the rulers interests and relationships with other countries should have been shaped by the society itself, the unhealthy relationships between ME countries and superpowers along with this "bringing democracy to the ME" debate which we kept hearing after 9/11, especially during Afghanistan and Iraq wars were challenged:

*"Politically, we see that the ME is politically unstable region, generally the authoritarian regimes are dominant, however, we cannot define the region as a single characteristics. One of the issue is this, defining the region in terms of democratization and instability politically but I hesitate to generalize the ME....We observe that there is huge differences between peoples and the rulers; one of the*

most problematic situation is this, since *there are not rulers who can reflect on the demands of the societies* and the relationships are formed over these rulers. ... There is *not a healthy relationship mechanisms shaped by the societies, and if they were shaped by the society, then it would have been possible to have healthier relationships*. But the West perceive the region rather as a energy reserve and thus, we should look why West wants the democratization of this region. When we look where and when they want democracy, it is when they are disturbed by the *dictatorship in that region*, if the regime has some problems with the West, *they want to change the regime under the name democratization*. With *Saudi Arabia or with Mobarrak it managed to form very good relations* for many many years.” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Administration, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 19)

Another explanation for the autocratic regimes was related to another characteristic attributed to the region: “underdevelopment”. As the participant warned that we should not attribute the non-democratic characteristics to the region as a sui-generis one emerging because of its’ being the ME, puts:

“Politically, *generally we may argue that it is a region where the totalitarian regimes are widespread but this is also related to underdevelopment*. Southeast Asia also have similarities in terms of *authoritarian regimes and in fact the democracies are squashed into a very small area*. Thus, there are also varieties ranging from kingdoms to Islamic democracies, from totalitarian structures like Ba’ath to semi-democracies.” (MES scholar, Senior, Philosophy, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 11)

Therefore, it is important to proceed to “underdevelopment” attributions to the region. As it can be seen in the contingency table given below, the non-MES scholars seems to have more tendency to mention about “underdevelopment” whereas it is not that common among MES scholars:

Table 6a: Frequencies of mentioning “underdevelopment” in relation to the ME

		“ME is underdeveloped/backward.”	
Groups		Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	Outlier Junior	2	2
	Junior	1	5
	Senior	2	10
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	9	1
	Senior	5	1
	Outlier Senior	0	2
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		
Significance			

From the frequency table above, we can see that the ratio of mentioned to not-mentioned in MES seniors and MES juniors (without outliers) are the same as 1:5 and 2:10; indicating a trend towards not mentioning underdevelopment as one of the properties of the area. Two outlier senior non-MES scholar has the same trend; however for other non-MES scholars it is generally mentioned as underdeveloped or even sometimes backward, since 9 out of 10 Juniors and 5 out of 6 Seniors refer to the area with words that can be categorized as underdeveloped. Thus, in order to engage in chi-square test of independence, I regrouped them as MES scholars and non-MES scholars as it was done in the previous combined tables of 2X2 matrixes:

Table 6b: Frequencies of mentioning “underdevelopment” in relation to the ME across MES vs non-MES scholars

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Mentioned	Did not mention	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	5	17	3	15
Non-MES Scholars	14	4	14	2
Chi square	12.0311		17	
Significance	p=.000523	significant	p=.000037	significant

Table 6b indicates that, both for general and for the condition that outliers are removed the chi square results are significant,  $X^2(1, n=40)=12.03$ , significant at  $p < .05$ ; whereas the latter one is  $X^2(1, n=34)=17$ , significant at  $p < .05$  respectively. Thus we may argue that non-MES scholars have a strong preference to mention the ME as an underdeveloped area, whereas it is the other way around for the MES scholars: Only 5 out of 22 MES scholars and 14 out of 18 non-MES scholar mentioned that. In order to figure out how this concept of underdevelopment is put in the interviews we need to check the contexts in which they are argued. First the similarity between the media images of the ME and the perception of the ME is mentioned by a non-MES participant:

*“I don’t know whether it is because of how media depicts it, but as much as I see the area is underdeveloped mainly. The place which is Muslims predominantly live, plus not being developed, being poor etc is what comes to my mind, I do not know how true they are but.”*  
(Non-MES scholar, Junior, Literature, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 27)

Some of this “underdevelopment” attributions are given as cultural issues, opposite to what can be observed in the previous quotation, as being “poor”. Even though this participant whose quotation is given below hesitates to use “backward” which was the first word comes to the mind, claims that culturally this region is “less modern”:

“I do not really think that there are very huge differences between Middle Eastern countries and other countries but, culturally as I believe it is more oppressive it might be what differentiates the area. *I do not really want to say “backward” as I do not want to use this word, but less modern.*” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 25)

There are also what we may call as “Orientalist” views, one of which is provided by this junior MES scholar, who has been counted as one of the outliers :

*“The ME is the opposite of what the West is. The picture in my mind is, what comes to mind if we say Europe; it is history, good architectural buildings etc, the ME is the opposite. A very primitive image is in my mind. Like İstanbul’s Eminönü, it is a picture that confirms we are a Middle Eastern country. Both economically and culturally. In terms of art, for instance, they are having beautiful architecture in Europe but in the ME it seems as if the people said “let’s built something and sit inside”, it is completely lower level-type. Also scientifically it is underdeveloped .... excluding Iran and Turkey for others I may say not developed, I guess. Syrian cinema, Syrian literature, Lebanon something, I did not hear things like that, ... if it was developped I would have heard it.”* (MES scholar, Junior, Sociology, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 1)

Thus we may suggest that the explanations can be grouped as either in the “*cultural explanations*” category or in “*economic explanations*” category. In this respect, the frequencies of “cultural explanations”, which is operationalized as claiming ME is underdeveloped since it is the ME, is given in the table below:

*Table 6c: Frequencies of providing “cultural explanations” for “underdevelopment” in the ME*

		ME is “underdeveloped”/exploited since it is ME	
Groups		Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	Outlier Junior	1	3
	Junior	1	5
	Senior	4	8
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	4	6
	Senior	3	3
	Outlier Senior	0	2
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		
Significance			

As the table shows there seems to be a tendency towards not giving cultural explanations to the underdevelopment in general, as in both groups, “did not mention” category outnumbers the “mentioned” category. Outlier junior MES scholars are similar to MES scholars in general since only 1 out of 4 outlier juniors, 1 out of 6, 4 out of 12 seniors from MES scholars category mentioned cultural explanations. Again we should be careful that we cannot calculate chi squares from this table and in order to figure out whether this “it seems so” tendencies are statistically significant, I created the table below:

*Table 6d: Frequencies of providing “cultural explanations” for “underdevelopment” in the ME across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Mentioned	Did not mention	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES	6	16	5	13
Non-MES	7	11	7	9
Chi square	0.6089		0.9462	
Significance	p=.435188	n.s at p <.05	p=.33068	n.s at p <.05

As it can be observed in Table 6d, both for general and for the condition that outliers are removed the chi square results are not significant,  $X^2(1, n=40)=0.61$ , not significant at  $p < .05$  as  $p=.44$ ; and the latter one is  $X^2(1, n=34)=0.95$ , not significant at  $p < .05$  as  $p=.33$  respectively. Thus, results are indicating that the distribution should be attributed to pure chance, and it means no difference across being MES or non-MES scholars. Hence there is no need to interpret the distributions across this two groups. However, since we had also observed that there is a tendency for not providing cultural explanations in both groups, I calculate the chi-square goodness of fit for a sample size of 40 participants; 13 of which mentioned and 27 did not mention. Thus, the hand calculations gave the results as  $X^2(1, n=40)=4.9$  when the critical chi-square for  $df=1$  and alpha 0.05 is 3.84, thus the result of goodness of fit is significant indicating that participants have a strong tendency for not mentioning cultural explanations. Here, we need to examine the explanations more thoroughly as it might be both negative or positive. For instance, an explanation like *“Since ME is so multicultural in terms of culture, different ethno-religious groups have conflicting interests disabling them to develop”* would also be a cultural explanation, however more positive than the explanation like *“ME is a place where human life is not valued and Middle Eastern people are like that”* as this one was given in the following quotation:

*“It is also related to the value given to the humanity, human rights, and democracy, in the regions where the humans are not valued, we cannot think of developing the human capitals, infrastructures, education and health. I think the characteristic of the ME own comes from this. ...”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 40)

On the other hand, the cultural explanations are attributed to the external sources, as being “deprived”, “drawn back” by the external powers, as the region has geo-strategical importance:

*“Middle East is an underdeveloped region, not even developing. Russia on the one hand, and America on the other hand try to invade*



the ME. It seems to me as a region which is *especially deprived by the imperialist powers*, just to invade them. Because invading the ME means capturing whole world. I think, also Atatürk says something like that, because ME is important in terms of geopolitics.” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 24)

Another similar arguments are provided as the oil reserves and fertile soils in the ME is the reason for attracting the superpowers which disable those regions to develop:

“ME is a very critical region, it has been very important plus it is an *oil-rich region*, a region has been the focus of the imperialist countries, center of attraction, however, *I believe those (imperialist) countries could not directly keep their power in the region but somehow prevented this region to develop and a region could not use its sources and could not develop itself.*” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, Touristic interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 26)

“*Technologically underdeveloped/backward but having fertile lands, and attractive in terms of its oil reserves. In terms of people it has not been developed much, not a kind of place where people can present their cultural factors and having better living conditions, but rather a place which is always ready to be exploited...*Sometimes America, sometimes Russia or any other state comes and takes the region.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Art history, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 38)

Hence, another group of explanations of the underdevelopment of the ME is given as not sui-generis to the region, but something observed in every region where there is economic deprivation:

*Table 6e: Frequencies of providing “economic explanations” for “underdevelopment” in the ME*

		“ME is underdeveloped/exploited like many other	
Groups		Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	Outlier Junior	1	3
	Junior	1	5
	Senior	5	7
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	1	9
	Senior	1	5
	Outlier Senior	0	2
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		
Significance			

As it was argued before, with our sample size such a 6x2 table might have been too sensitive and we need to re-group the categories in a meaningful way. Thus since we perceive there is a tendency towards not mentioning economic reasons for underdevelopment I regrouped them into MES and non-MES scholars category. The following table, Table 6f shows the mentioning frequencies of economic explanations for underdevelopment for MES vs non-MES scholars. As it can be seen around one third of the MES scholars in both cases (outliers added vs omitted) mention economic explanation as the reason for underdevelopment whereas the ratio of mentioned to not mentioned for non-MES scholars for the same groups are 1:8 and 1:7 respectively. However, we need to conduct chi-square test for independence in order to figure out whether there is an interpretable difference between these groups, i.e. being a MES vs non-MES scholar effects the trend significantly.

*Table 6f: Frequencies of providing “economic explanations” for “underdevelopment” in the ME across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Mentioned	Did not mention	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	7	15	6	12
Non-MES Scholars	2	16	2	14
Chi square	<b>Not computable</b>			
Significance				

However, this table still does not fulfil our requirement of having an expected frequency of at least 5 in each cell, since the intersection between non-MES scholar group and “mentioned” category turns out 4.05 and 3.76 as expected values in the tables when outliers are added and omitted respectively. Since I could not get rid of that by combining groups as MES vs non-MES scholars due to these low expected frequencies and my tables are 2X2 tables, for this time, I am checking the results for Fisher Exact Test, another test used for seeing the relationship between these variables, which turns “not-significant” results for my tables. Thus, we need to conclude that our results cannot be interpreted as a relation between being MES or non-MES scholar and preference towards mentioning and not mentioning economic reasons. However, here I am going to ask another query for my data, as it is any different than my previous “cultural explanations” category, thus this time I am going to use Chi-Square Goodness of Fit for checking the difference between these two categories mentioning and not-mentioning in my overall data, combining all participants in one group. As it can be observed from the previous table, Table, 6d, for the outliers added version with a sample size of 40 individuals 13 mention cultural explanations whereas 27 do not mention. Thus, my null hypothesis state that

it would be the same, as there would be no difference between cultural explanations vs economic explanations for underdevelopment conditions. Thus, I make the hand calculations for  $n=40$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $\alpha=.05$  and the expected frequencies as 13 and 27; and observed frequencies as 9 and 31 for mentioned and not-mentioned respectively. Here, my results turns as  $X^2(1, n=40)=1.82$  and since critical chi square is 3.84, I fail to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there is not any significant difference between the trends towards cultural explanations and economic explanations. Thus, for a better understanding of the data, we need to examine the quotations, and similarly to cultural explanations, media as the main source of information by the non-MES scholars, its effect in this perceptions is also questioned by participant themselves:

*“I perceive the ME as an integrated unity of states supporting each other, especially economically. I think there was something like European Union, in addition to that they have a unity based on their religious belief, thus it is also embedded in their cultures, for me it also symbolises underdevelopment, it can be what Media depicts, but, not very technologic, not in line with global agenda, not having very good education level of the people, we used to think, I don’t know why, I believe it is not developed economically, a unity that is not able to use its rich sources it has.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, Touristic interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 26)

However again, the MES scholars seems to defeat exceptionalism arguments again, and attribute the “underdevelopment” as a characteristic resulting from external reasons, and which can be observed in any region in the world:

*“I believe that comparative studies might provide better results, I do not consider the political and cultural structures in the region, in terms of exceptionalism arguments. I believe we may perceive the problems of the ME from the perspective of underdevelopment and modernization issue. The problems that the political system and societal structures come across is not sui-generis to the ME, or to the Islam or to Arabness or Turkishness or Kurdishness. These are generally observed in Africa, in Asia, before in Latin America and even before in the Europe, they were also lived there and sometimes continues to be lived. Conflicts, identity conflicts, authoritarianism, economic welfare problems, but at the end, I still think it is basically the problems when the modernity was introduced to the region. What I mean is rather modern nation-state building processes and the problems related to those, including economic problems. Thus, from this perspective we may have a framework for analysis in the Africa, for South-East Asia we might also have something like that, and at*

the end we may understand that in the all underdeveloped regions we are dealing with similar problems.” (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 13)

“While debating over the ME, there are two things we need to avoid is old orientalism discussions, ... and the other is exceptionalism, the idea that the ME is a completely different region than other parts of the World, the ME also like other parts of the world, *it is a region having similar problems and can be understood with similar class-analysis like other regions*. In fact we can understand the ME like that, *like how we understand the Latin America*.” (MES scholar, Senior, Philosophy, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 11)

Thus, by these exceptionalism and generalizability discussions, another pattern is introduced: multiculturalism of the ME. As there seems to be a tendency to depict the region as a multicultural one by both groups, we can argue that it is some kind of fact which is appreciated by both groups however MES scholars can be argued to mention more about the multicultural characteristic of the ME:

*Table 7a: Frequencies of mentioning the ME having a “multicultural” cultural environment*

		“ME has a multicultural/multi-religious/multifactorial cultural environment	
Groups		Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	Outlier Junior	2	2
	Junior	5	1
	Senior	11	1
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	6	4
	Senior	3	3
	Outlier Senior	2	0
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		
Significance			

As it can be seen from Table 7a, senior MES scholars hold one of the highest ratio for preference for mentioning ME as a multicultural environment as 11 out of 12 individuals' answers fall to this category. Outlier junior MES scholars and senior non-MES scholars ratio is 1:1 but overall there seems to be tendency towards mentioning ME as a multicultural environment. However since the expected values for some cells turns out as lower than 5 disabling the computation, I regrouped it as the following 2X2 tables, to figure out whether I may compute the Pearsons' chi-square statistics.

*Table 7b: Frequencies of mentioning the ME having a “multicultural” cultural environment across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Mentioned	Did not mention	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES Scholars	18	4	16	2
Non-MES Scholars	11	7	9	7
Chi square	2.1291		not computable	
Significance	p=.144523	n.s. at p<.05	Fisher shows not-significant results	

Table 7b shows no significant preference in the condition of all participants are counted in as  $X^2(1, n=40)=2.13$ , not significant at  $p < .05$ . When the outliers are omitted since non-MES scholars who did not mention multiculturalism in the outliers are omitted case shows an expected value of 4.25; I apply Fisher test instead and it also shows not-significant results. Hence we may argue that being a MES or non-MES scholars does not make any difference for that preference and as use Chi-square Goodness of Fit statistics for figuring out the tendency, it shows a tendency towards mentioning multiculturalism in all participants.  $X^2(1, n=40)=8.1$  which is over critical chi-square value for these values 3.84; indicating we reject the null hypothesis and claim there is a tendency in my sample towards mentioning ME is a

multicultural place. Thus, I examine the quotations to figure out which patterns are emerging from the data, and as geostrategy of the ME is also regarded as a reason for multi-cultural characteristic of the ME, as it is perceived as an area being affected by different cultures in different continents:

*“A multi-factoral environment comes to my mind, first of all. What else I may say? ...There are countries like Pakistan, on the one hand; the mediterranean culture; on the other hand, I mean North Africa, as I say a multi-factoral culture.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Art, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 23)

The importance given to geological position of the ME is not given only in the form of its “intercontinental” position’s effect on the culture of the region, but also history of migration is presented as a reason for multiculturalism by another non-MES scholar:

*“...if we were to speak about Russia, I would say its culture is unique to Russia and distant from others, because it is a little bit more isolated, since it haven’t lived a big migration in its history but the ME is definitely not a place like that. In the ME, there are parts from each and every different culture, thus, it is possible to see what we see in the ME, in other regions of the worlds. For instance, to see the same social life of India in the Middle East should not be surprising. There are Muslims, Christians, Arabs, Assyrians, there are other belief-systems except from Abrahamic religions.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Engineering, Medium interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 33)

However appreciating the fact that ME is a multicultural place does not necessary break the generalization of a similar/shared culture in the ME, which is indicated as an Arabian and Iranian region:

*“Even though I am not sure whether it is right or wrong, in my mind, as much as I learnt from the media, even though I know it is multicultural, predominantly Arabian culture, Arabo-Persian mix comes to my mind. They have a similar culture.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Psychology, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 32)

Nonetheless, MES scholars are again more cautious in their depiction of the region and many try to avoid generalizations, even in the form of generalizing the heterogeneity or multiculturalism and hesitate to present it as an exceptionalistic character of the region.:

“We cannot mention about “an” *environment*, they have a *multi-factoral environment but it is not also unique/sui-generis to the ME*, in all other regions that we define as region, might be Africa or Asia, *there are also heterogeneity both in terms of culture and politics.*” (MES scholar, Senior, Area Studies, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 18)

Even the uniting characteristics like language, political environment, religion is also challenged by taking attention to the limits of these “uniting forces.” Thus, we may argue that if you go for a Middle Eastern identity, to distinguish who is an in-group member and who is not; asking directly to the people whether they are Middle Eastern or not, and why seems to be a better choice. In other words, against the common sense, one should be aware of the fact that not every single person who is a Middle Eastern would not necessarily be an Arab-Muslim coming from a non-democratic political environment:

“...It is really too difficult to mention a general culture of the ME. If we say something like that we would assume Saudi Arabia and Syria has a common culture but *in fact they only have a common language, rather the most widespread language and claiming “the widespread language is the common one” is also wrong.* When you consider Israel and Iran you realize the language is not also common. Plus you realize that even an Egyptian Arab cannot understand say the Libian Arab most of the time, having difficulty in communicating with the Syrian Arab in terms of Street Arabic... *Thus, I think culturally this unification is also limited.*” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Administration, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 19)”

“In the ME, *we cannot talk about only one single characteristic that may unite them*; even for the Arab countries we cannot talk about a single characteristic. *The countries in the ME are different from each other both in terms of sects, politics and morality.* In Iraq and Syria there is Ba’ath Party and its socialist nature is dominant, in other places sharia rule is much emphasised.” (MES scholar, Senior,



Political Science and Public Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 10 years experience, Participant ID: 21)

“... ME is always considered as a Muslim and Arab geography, however there is *an incredible variety*. The oldest Christians also live there, their Christian tradition is like 2000 years old or something, also the Jews and Muslims. *There is a huge historical depth and variety there.*” (MES scholar, Senior, Anthropologist, Medium Interest on Middle East, more than 10 years experience, Participant ID: 20)

Therefore, challenging the idea that ME is an Islamic place is also necessary. One point that we should make here is, accepting the region is predominantly Muslim does not necessarily mean that there is one Islam, which is an “umbrella” identity for all in the region. Thus, I checked the connotations in which Islam is mentioned and tried to examine the results thoroughly in the qualitative part, by examining how the quotations and explanations are framed.

*Table 8a: Frequencies of mentioning Islam connotes the ME*

		“ME is (predominantly) Muslim, Islam comes to mind when we mention about the ME”	
Groups		Mentioned	Did not mention
	Outlier Junior	3	1
MES Scholars	Junior	3	3
	Senior	8	4
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	7	3
	Senior	5	1
	Outlier Senior	1	1
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		
Significance			

As it can be seen from the table above, Table 8a, there again seems to be tendency of mentioning ME is a predominantly Muslim place, Islam comes to mind when we mention ME, i.e. Islam connotes ME as a response again to *Q2: When we mention about “Middle East” region/geography etc, what kind of place/geography/region we are talking about culturally and politically? What are the first things comes to your mind related to political and cultural environment of this region?* In order to convert the frequency table to a computable one for Pearson’s Chi Square, I created the following table by regrouping them as MES vs non-MES scholars:

*Table 8b: Frequencies of mentioning Islam connotes the ME across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Mentioned	Did not mention	Mentioned	Did not mention
MES	14	8	11	7
Non-MES	13	5	12	4
Chi square	0.3327		0.7466	
Significance	p=.56409	n.s. at p<.05	p=.387556	n.s. at p<.05

The frequencies shown in Table 8b, both for general and for the condition that outliers are removed, do not show any significant result that can lead us to interpret on how the participants in different groups show a preference in terms of their answers, since the results are  $X^2(1, n=40)=0.33$ , not significant at  $p < .05$ ; and the latter one is  $X^2(1, n=34)=0.75$ , not significant at  $p < .05$  respectively. Thus the context should be examined and as it can be seen in the following quotation from a junior MES scholar, there is a difference between accepting the fact that Islam is the most predominant religion there and claiming Islam is a unique characteristics that differentiates the ME. Making this point is important as the previous one is rather sharing an observation whereas the latter one may lead to essentialist arguments that simplifies ME culture to Islam:

*“...Then Islam’s being a predominant culture is a characteristics but it does not mean Islam is unique to the ME. ...”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years of experience, Participant ID: 10)

This time, a senior MES scholar, makes a similar point claiming that such characteristics and the dynamics affect the region should not presented as if they were internal characteristics of the people living there by making generalizations like “Middle Eastern people are like so and so.”:

*“Oil and Islam also had affected the region, but I prefer to talk about these historical similarities, instead of saying “the people of this region are people like that.” Cause the later one would be more simplistic and will be a bit like essentialist perspective.”* (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 17)

Another point made is such generalizations which go beyond appreciating the fact, might sound orientalist, might lead to a kind of pressure over the minorities, or lead to a simplistic idea that Islam presents the same culture, which is challenged as:

*“I will say that Islam is one of the main predictors in the ME, but by saying it we should not be Orientalist. It in fact somehow became a self-fulfilling prophecy, because most minorities which were out-Islam tradition started to gain an Islamic identity and most others have migrated from the region, like Lebanese Christians or were forced to migrate like the Armenians, thus culturally it is a region dominated by Muslims but it does not also mean that Islam is a homogenous unity, as not all Muslims are the same Muslims.”* (MES scholar, Senior, Philosophy, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 11)

As it can be seen with these participants’ points, what generally differentiates MES scholars from non-MES is this differentiation from accepting a fact about the Middle East and presenting it as a stereotype. However, in any means, we cannot interpret that MES scholars are more intelligent, sensitive or humanistic than non-MES scholars. This can be related to something they get during their academic educational

process, specifically related to their specific interest and knowledge on the field. This might be related to their raising some kind of consciousness about these debates as a results of the academic discussions, about Orientalism, exceptionalism, etc. It may also be case that MES scholars are aware of the fact that what the media and other sources which covers the ME basically and in a very simplistic manner presents a ME that is different from what they read, observe or live. The reason may also be the psychological mechanism of the “stereotyping” as they does not necessarily fit to the reality, but rather help us to give meanings to an “unknown.” They are beneficial as long as they successfully serve us. Thus, as the more these short-cuts are being challenged, or seen as not fitting to the reality; the less likely the people keep utilising them:

“When we say Middle East, for most of us it reminds an Arab geography, a Muslim geography in which Arabic is spoken, even though there is Sunni and Shia distinctions, a Muslim geography comes to my mind. But *when you go deeper in this area study and the more you get into it, this superficial understanding changes. Slowly, we came to understand the internal dynamics of Syria. Not only the layperson but also the researchers of the field came to realize their generalization biases and superficial understandings.*”  
...(MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 15)

On the other hand, we should keep in mind that regarding Islam as a uniting identity for the region does not always derive from pure “lack of knowledge of the differences in the region.”, as one can still regard Islam as a common cultural fact, and instead of focusing on the differences, may focus on the similarities. Hence, it will be claimed that Islam consolidated the Middle Eastern (Mesopotamian culture) which has always been there:

“As everybody knows, the boundaries are drawn after WWI, and these people were separated from each other as if they had never lived together. For instance, in its very simple terms, Nevrouz does exist in this geography as all the peoples in the region celebrate it from ancient times. *Even Islam itself had created a common culture. ... As we look in fact there was only one culture and as Islam came,*

*this culture came to be consolidated.*” (MES scholar, Senior, Literature (one of the Area languages), High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 12)

Moreover, especially in terms of generalizations, it can be either negative attributions as the “dark side” of Islam, or more positive and emphatic one like a “pitiful side” of Muslims as being exploited by non-Muslims:

“I believe the reason for those (backwardness and economic difficulties) is it is a *closed society*, *it is not open to new things*, and I believe it is *because that the Islam’s dark side; in the Islam framework they form, they had formed societies that are closed to novelty, as Middle Eastern countries*. And up until today, they had lost their ability to do something new, something different.... And when the issue is economy, even though this geography is defined as a Muslim society, in terms of trade, halal or haram is not even considered, and thus you may see Saudi Arabia is closer to America, than Turkey. I perceive it rather as a pawn in the global world.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 40)

Another interesting observation is that, both MES and non-MES scholars mention about different sects, religions along with Islam and the conflicts over religious identity based groups:

“The very first thing is multi-religious characteristics. Even though the ME is defined as a Muslim area, when you examine it thoroughly, you may see that there are very different small groups, there are little different sects in these small groups. Thus, when we compare it with Europe, I think there are more religions here.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 6)

“Culturally it has Islamic, religious effects. Islam itself is very distinct from each other, we can see that the Sunni-Shia conflict and plus there are other religions...” (MES scholar, Junior, Law, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 2)

“Of course we may form some assumptions, most probably, I still think of it as a place where the wars on religion, holy-wars, continues. It could not get rid of this.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 35)

Lastly, the arguments again leads to the exceptionalism debate, which is put as one senior MES scholar who summarizes the discussion in terms of Islamic exceptionalism:

“The most exceptionalist one is as you know Arab exceptionalism. Another theory is the exceptionalism based on its being Muslim, or its history, mostly they are cultural explanations, the ones working on this region knows that the empirical studies of this region show that these are mainly Orientalist ideas that was refuted. ... Thus, the facts like lower education level, the position of women etc is frequently mentioned especially as the barriers for democratization of these countries, but as you examine the Eastern block countries, post-Soviet countries in which the education level and women status is way better but this did not lead these countries to be democratize. Thus there are a lot of different factors involved and a combination of these factors are depicted as something sui-generis to the ME, however, when you look at ME exceptionalism, there are not recent phenomena and the ME were not always like that. The region is neither got underdeveloped since it became Muslim nor got underdeveloped since it became Arab; there is some times in history where the ME was way better than the West, there is something like the golden age of Islam, thus what are you going to do with it?” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Administration, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 19)

As I have mentioned this much about exceptionalism debates, I felt the necessity to get the frequencies and chi-squares of the arguments for and against ME's being/presenting an exception. Thus the question was the auxiliary question of Q2, as Q2b: *Do you think these characteristics are “specific” to Middle East? Can we argue that Middle East is an exception ? and How do you position it in relation to other regions?* Here the frequency table indicates that out of 38 who replied this question, outlier junior MES and outlier senior non-MES scholars seem to have a different trend than their own groups in terms of being MES and non-MES. MES scholars seem to put ME as more like a non-exception, whereas for the non-MES it seems like the other way around.

Table 9a: Frequencies of perceptions about whether ME is an exception or not

		“ME is not an exception and we cannot generalize	
Groups		ME is an exception	ME is NOT an exception
	Outlier Junior	4	0
MES Scholars	Junior	1	5
	Senior	4	8
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	6	2
	Senior	5	1
	Outlier Senior	0	2
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>		
Significance			

Therefore, in order to test the trends observed, as is there any dependence of these variables of being MES or non-MES scholar and arguing ME is an exception or not, I did the following table:

Table 9b: Frequencies of perceptions about whether ME is an exception or not across MES vs non-MES scholars

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	Exception	Not Exception	Exception	Not Exception
MES Scholars	9	13	5	13
Non-MES Scholars	11	5	11	3
Chi square	2.88		8.12	
Significance	p=.089687	n.s. at p<.05	p=.004361,	significant

Table 9b indicates no significant link generally,  $X^2(1, n=38)=2.88$ , not significant at  $p < .05$ ; however as we had already seen the outliers' in both groups being different than the general trend, checking it for the condition which outliers were omitted is

necessary. Therefore, when the outliers are removed, it shows significant results,  $X^2(1, n=32)=8.12$ , significant at  $p<.05$ . This can be interpreted as the participants have significant preferences about being for or against exceptionalist arguments depending which group they belong to. While more than 70% of the MES scholars given in the second condition table (13 out of 18) put ME as “not an exception”, this is only around 20% of the non-MES scholars, when the outliers are omitted. When we examine the interviews, especially the arguments provided by MES scholars, both for and against exceptionalism is important to show. The first type of exceptionalism is the argument that ME is superior, unique and distinct that it cannot be compared with any other region in the world:

“But there are culturally many differences, *the place which is holy for three monotheistic, abrahamic religions is situated in the region, thus it makes it unique*, especially in terms of religions and religion also creates cultures. ... Besides that, they have similarities with other world regions, but *this emergence of religions there makes it unique*.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 4)

“The *sui-generis* characteristic here is its being the cradle of the religions, it is the region that christianity, judaism and islam was born. In terms of culture it has an archaic nature. And here before this geography was politically defined, the people were living together, and were similar to each other in many ways including how they eat, and dress.” (MES scholar, Senior, Literature (one of the Area languages), High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 12)

“As an exception we may accept the *ME as the place where the civilizations were born. First civilizations of humankind is in the ME*, we can say that, at least they are close to the ME or neighbour for the ME, even if it is not directly.” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 10 years experience, Participant ID: 21)

However, there is also anti-exceptionalism arguments provided by MES scholars to the argument that ME is an exception in a negative and Orientalist sense and in fact it is the most conflictious place in the world:



“...ME do not depict itself as an exception but foreign interventions depict ME as if it was an exception. They are putting it into schemas, they is a generalization. ME is like this, it is Muslim, Muslims are terrorists, they fight with each other, is a kind of generalization paradigm they put the ME in, and then ME is shown as if an exception. Similar ethnic and religious mosaic exists also in Asia, in Europe, in Africa and in America, but this is served as something making the Middle East an exception.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 9)

Lastly, the anti-exceptionalist arguments can be categorized as the ones accepting a region might also have characteristics that are unique to itself, that are generalizable or that are different from others; but in fact taking it to the “extreme” and claiming no comparative analysis can be made is more simplistic:

“... All of the regions have characteristics that are specific to the region and the ones which are not, which are rather related to whole World system. Thus, I believe region studies are important to understand this regional dynamics like speaking Arabic, Islam’s being dominant culture and so on, *but taking it to the extreme and claiming that the ME is an exception, it has such characteristics that you cannot compare it with any other state undermines the value of scientific studies...*” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years of experience, Participant ID: 10)

“I am against this exceptionalism theories’ being popular that much, yes, even if every case has sui-generis characteristics, I do not like to exaggerate it as we cannot compare ME. Even though ME has an essence, we should not take it in the form of essentialism.” (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 15 years experience, Participant ID: 16)”

To sum up, both MES and non-MES scholars define region in more broader terms, MES scholar has significantly more tendency to question the conceptualization of the ME, there is only a significant difference between MES scholars and all others in terms of not mentioning ME as a “chaotic” place, political instability and autocracies are significantly mentioned more and non-MES scholars tend to connate the region more with this negative political culture, significantly non-MES scholars perceive

the region as underdeveloped and backward, whereas the MES scholars mention less about it; and in terms of any potential explanation to the ME's political culture, in terms of attributing the reason to the "Easternness" of the ME, and "economic" issues like any third world countries do not seem to show any difference between MES and non-MES groups. MES scholars seem to mention that the area as a multicultural area, significantly more than the non-MES scholars, but in terms of mentioning Islam there is no difference observed. For the exceptionalism theories, MES scholars more likely to take an position against these arguments whereas the non-MES scholars seems to go for it, arguing ME is unique, has internal characteristics that prevents generalization. However, the most important of all is how these are framed show different patterns which was mentioned in this present section. Hence, in the following section, the question whether there is any difference in terms of positioning Turkey in the ME will be discussed.

### **3.2.1. Turkey and the Middle East...**

In this chapter, the responses given by the participants who were asked questions about Turkey and the ME, like how they position Turkey in relation to the ME, the reasons they argue for that and whether they think Turkey has an important role in the ME or not (Q3) as well as how they perceive Turkey's ME policy throughout Turkish Republic. (Q4) will be elaborated again both quantitatively and qualitatively. Thus the first question related to this section was "Q3: *How do you position Turkey in the Middle East? Do you think that it is inside the Middle East or outside of it? Why?*" and as a response to first part of that three patterns emerged as putting Turkey in the ME, in the intersection of Europe and ME, and outside of ME. The ones whose responses were categorized under saying "*Turkey is in the ME*", were the ones responding like "*Turkey is in the ME*", "*We should agree that Turkey is in the ME*", "*Absolutely we are Middle Easterners*", "*We are not Europeans, we are Middle Easterners.*" As it can be seen in the table below overall 16 of MES scholars (6 out of 10 junior MES scholars and 10 out of 12 MES scholars) provided answers falling

to this category. For the non-MES scholars it was 4 out of 18 participants who thought Turkey is a ME country. The second answer, “*intersection of the Europe and ME*” was the combination of answers like “*Turkey is like a bridge, between Europe and ME*”, “*it is both European and Middle Eastern.*” “*East parts of Turkey is Middle Eastern but West parts of the country is European*” and so forth. As it can be seen in the Table 10a and 10b provided below 6 out of 22 MES scholars made the point that Turkey is both Middle Eastern and European and one of them were using the bridge metaphor. For the non-MES scholars it is 7 participants, (equivalent to almost 40 %), equal to the ones claiming Turkey is not a Middle Eastern country in that group, whereas non of the MES scholars in both levels provided such a response.

*Table 10a: Frequencies of perceptions about where Turkey is in relation to the ME*

		Where do you position Turkey in the ME?		
Groups		In the	Intersection of	Outside of ME
MES Scholars	Outlier Junior	1	3	0
	Junior	5	1	0
	Senior	10	2	0
Non-MES Scholars	Junior	2	6	2
	Senior	1	1	4
	Outlier Senior	1	0	1
Chi square	<b>Not possible to calculate</b>			
Significance				

Again, since analyzing the data we have with a 6X3 or 4X3 matrix due to falling some cells short of prerequisite number of 5 in the expected value, again the table was decided to be as 2X3 matrix, with two categories like MES vs non-MES scholars and three categorical answers given. However, since again some cells were with an expected value less than 5, I also had to combine the two categories

indicating ME as “in between” and “outside” of the ME, since the more detailed frequency matrix given in Table 10a indicates the trend is rather like MES scholars both juniors and seniors perceive Turkey in the ME whereas 6 out of 10 junior non-MES scholar and 5 out of 8 senior non-MES scholars claim it as outside of the ME. Hence the following table, Table 10b, is created as the following.

*Table 10b: Frequencies of perceptions about where Turkey is in relation to the ME across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Table when outliers are added		Table when outliers are omitted	
	In the ME	Outside ME + intersection of ME and Erupe	In the ME	Outside ME + intersection of ME and Erupe
MES Scholars	16	6	15	3
Non-MES Scholars	4	14	3	13
Chi square	10.101		14.1814	
Significance	p=.001482	significant	p=.000166	significant

As the statistical results given in Table 10b depicts the chi square results give significant results when the answers were coded into 2 categories given for the MES scholars and non-MES scholars level, as  $X^2(1, n=40)=10.10$ ,  $p < .05$  as  $p=.001$ . In that analysis neither the outliers were omitted nor the data is divided into its subcategories as junior vs senior. Hence we can interpret this significance as out of 22 MES scholars 16 pointed that Turkey is in the ME whereas only 4 out of 18 non-MES scholars agree that statement. It seems even more powerful when the outliers are omitted as it gives  $X^2(1, n=34)=14.18$   $p < .05$  as  $p=.000$ . This can be interpreted as the participants have significant preferences about where they position Turkey in relation to the ME and this preference would change depending on their being MES or non-MES scholars. Therefore, the contexts in which these answers were given should be provided for a deeper understanding of the issue. For instance the basic

observation among the ones who said Turkey is a Middle Eastern country, the ones who are either non-MES scholars or outlier juniors MES scholars made points about the theme of connoting ME with some negative terms as it was mentioned in the previous section under underdevelopment, backwardness characteristics especially. Thus, forming the ME over Europe and having an orientalist stance can be depicted as:

*“It is very much in it, really in it. If I would say Turkey is not in it, I would have contradicted myself. Especially sometimes I believe that we are really a real Middle East country. Unfortunately.”* (MES scholar, Junior, Sociology, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 1)

This fear of being connoted with the negative aspects of the ME is also explained by a senior non-MES scholar as:

*“Suppose that we are from the Middle East, we have some fears as not being accepted by the societies around us even including Georgia; as being excluded by these countries. Does it make sense? I think it does, none of the countries in the world would be willing to be the neighbour of this region. If Turkey is the neighbour to the Middle East, but for me it is not neighbour, it is a part of the Middle East, but no one wants to be neighbour to the Middle East, by accepting it. But for historical reasons Turkey is definitely in the Middle East. No one can say Turkey stays outside of the Middle East, no one can say it. added to that. In the west while people are voting for their economic interests, here these are rather identity, nationalism sentiments, either Turkish nationalism or Kurdish.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Engineering, Medium interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 33)

Hence, this might be the reason why one of the junior non-MES scholar perceiving Turkey as being pushed to the ME by external powers: Since for this participant the region is rather chaotic and conflictual, thus “turning to a ME country” is also an unwanted result for this particular participant:

*“I think now Turkey is in the Middle East, due to this oil reserves and games, they are trying to get Turkey involve in the Middle East. However, we cannot say Turkey was a complete Middle East country. They are trying to convert Turkey to a Middle Eastern*

*country by these games. It is tried to be in the condition to plenty divide and conquer.” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 24)*

Nevertheless, we should be also note that this fear might be deriving from a “eurocentric” perspective as well as the image of ME as a chaotic place, as one of the MES scholars put:

*“On the one hand sharing borders with Europe and Asia, it has many ties with various regions but how it shapes this tie, in terms of Europe, in Turkey’s applications to European Union, EU’s getting a border in the ME was a very frightening idea for them. ... Especially after this current issues and things like ISIS war, became a factor also moving Turkey away from the region. For Europe, the ME has always been a very problematic area.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, less than 5 years experience, Participant ID: 8)*

However, the main reasons for being included in the ME for MES scholars seems to be Turkey’s cultural and historical similarities and politically being affected by the Middle Eastern affairs. Again, defining Turkey’s Middle Eastern character over its similarities and differences to the Europe; but in a rather positive frame can be observed as:

*“... I do believe that we are culturally close to ME. We are not like a European country, I had gone to Europe with an academic exchange program, I have seen there and our thoughts and how we think is close to Middle Eastern people. When I went there most of my friends were either Arabs or Greeks. Ottoman power there is important, there is a unity comes with historical ties, thus I think we are Middle Eastern...” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 4)*

As mentioned before both historical, cultural and political ties are perceived as a reason to belong to the ME; and in fact this “model country” concept was also presented in this answer:

*“First it has a muslim identity and it uses this functional dynamic, it also even has this model country role. Before and during the Arab Spring, as an moderate Islam country it had the role. At the time the*

journalists etc got education in Turkey, I mean, *Turkey has been in the ME. It has these cultural and historical ties*, thus I regard it in the ME, due to these ties and *the relations it formed today.*” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, less than 5 years experience, Participant ID: 8)

However, being in the ME is not always associated with being culturally similar to ME or different from Europe; but as a conjunctural concept and can be presented as because of being “directly affected” by the affairs occurring within this system:

*“In the very middle of the ME. Many cleavages in the ME did not target Turkey, there is no cleavage say like Sunni and Shia, cos in Turkey there is only minority groups, so minor that we should cannot even count, for instance the cleavage of Alevism-Sunnism is not something like Middle Eastern cleavage its more Anatolian... but we cannot say that it is not related to the ME, since for instance one of the problems in the ME is Kurdish problem and Turkey is one of the cradles of this problem in the ME. ...It (Being inside or outside) is a conjunctural thing, related to the contemporary situation. There is a Ottoman tradition, thus many regions of the ME has lived at least a 200-300 years under its rule, ... Turkey is affected from the ideological import of the ME like Salafism etc, Iranian revoltution had also affects like that, it is a huge issue and even a doctoral dissertation might be written on it.”* (MES scholar, Senior, Philosophy, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 11)

This conjunctural thing theme is also observed in different answers where losing an identity or getting a new identity is also mentioned:

*“... It is impossible for Turkey for not be listed in the ME after 2010, all social and political dynamics in the ME affect Turkey directly, after Syrian War, right now about 2 million Syrians are in Turkey, we have a terrorism problem arousing from that, a regime change in Egypt does not stay as such only, but interests Turkey’s relations with Egypt and its collaborators in the region. ... Turkey right now has lost its “buffer zone” characteristic...”* (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 15)

However, one important point needs to be made here as claiming Turkey is “*in the ME*” and not mentioning/emphasizing its position as “*both Middle Eastern and European*” does not necessarily mean to reject the Western characteristics of the

country but here rather being a Middle Eastern country despite its transitional position is emphasized by one of the senior MES scholar:

*“Turkey is definitely a ME country, we need to come to terms, we need to accept it at once. But this does not mean that Turkey is not a country also related to other regions; saying we are both Eastern and Western has a value in some aspects but we need to know its limits too. This is also related to how we are perceived, Turkey has a transitional position but we need to also say that Turkey is a country directly affected by the events happening in the ME, and if you are that much directly affected, it is not possible to say I am not a country in that area.”* (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Administration, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 19)

Thus among the ones claiming Turkey as a country in the intersection of ME and Europe, used the bridge metaphor as one of the reoccurring themes:

*“In fact Turkey is not a country at the center of the ME. If you ask why not, Turkey is rather a bridge between ME and the West.”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 3)

In other words, it is the “classical” metaphor among non-MES scholars, that seems to help the participants to defeat this central ME country perspective and emphasize the European characteristic of the country:

*“I do not name Turkey as the “big brother of the ME” as it was named in us. It may be similar in terms of religion and society, but since Turkey is a country having people coming from such a culture but having the envy to live with Western culture, I think it is a bridge, like Istanbul.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 29)

*“I do not perceive Turkey as a ME country, I mean, fully a ME country. Turkey is in between these two. I see it as a bridge uniting ME and Europe, it may be a little bit classical but, it is a synthesis place, our east side resembles ME a little bit more, our west side is indifferent to ME.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 40)

Another participant argues that this might be related to non-acceptance, as a reaction as not accepting the foreign description of Turkey as a ME country and utilizes the



bridge metaphor again arguing that we are not like “them”, emphasizing our differences and may be our Eastern parts might be in the ME:

“The ones who are not living in Turkey, for instance the Europeans perceive it inside the ME. *The reason why I do not perceive it in the ME is, when you say ME a different region comes to my mind. Maybe it is a non-acceptance.* Thus, I may argue that east of Turkey is in the ME, but I cannot put it into ME all together. *In this our laicism is important, the Kemalist revolutions are important, people’s living in a more free environment, a more free environment regards to other ME countries, an environment in which the women have more rights.* Turkey is rather a bridge between Europe and ME. It consists both types of people (*Middle Eastern and European*). We may say rather a unity composed of their mix. In terms of appearance, behaviour and cognition. Neither fully traditional, nor like a European country.” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Physics, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 31)

On the other hand, this popularity of bridge metaphor was directly criticized by some participants, like the following MES scholar who argues bridge is too passive to describe Turkey’s stance in relation to ME:

“*What we used to say, a bridge? But when we say bridge it means it is static;* but I think somehow there are something transfered from us to that region. *We are not only bridge, we are also doing something. We are more active.*” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 4)

This difference made between “east side of Turkey” (Eastern Anatolia) and “West side of Turkey” was another pattern we come across as a reason why Turkey is “in between” Europe and the ME. As it was put by many, East was more Middle Eastern than Western Anatolia:

“Turkey is considered as a part of the ME, especially in the foreign countries, they perceive it like that, *but I neither put it in the ME, nor outside.* It is being affected by the ME but I cannot say that we are completely a Middle Eastern country. I think we also have a European nature not only in terms of being in that continent. *In my mind the country is divided into two, one part, the Eastern part, is more Middle Eastern than the other, the Western part.*” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, Touristic interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 26)

“We may somehow be appreciate that this showing both Middle Eastern and European characteristics are also observed in Turkey’s geography.... One cannot argue that Middle Easternness of İzmir and Kars might have been the same.” (MES scholar, Senior, Public Administration, Medium interest on ME, almost 10 years of experience, Participant ID: 22)

Thus, here the concept of “at least West of Turkey does not resemble ME” is an important one, since it is used as an explanation by the participants to the perceived differences we have with other ME countries:

*“Due to the geographical position I counted Turkey in the Middle East, even if I know that it is in-between; and also I think it has a close culture. But I think our country is different than the others, at least the Western parts of it, thus, I say it is in between.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 25)

Sometimes this “in-between”ness is rather related to being “trapped” culturally as especially our political culture’s being different from the ones in the ME was the argument:

*“I had mentioned a concept of being “trapped” and I perceive Turkey as a part of this being trapped. Something trapped between east and west. A country which could not decide yet whether it is east or west, whether it has the western culture of modernity, laicism, secularism or the culture of the East, and thus being trapped, I perceive Turkey as such. I believe it is in the ME from one perspective and it is not from the other perspective. About not being in it, because the ME does not have the general climate of the ME. Both in terms of political regime and in terms of society, people, it does not have the general characteristics of the ME. There is an idea like that: no matter where you are, you may perceive the ones who are in your East, the ones in your South may perceive a little worse than you. I think Turkey perceives the ME like this. We are more to the West, we are Western, we are not really Middle Eastern, it argues. But in fact it is Middle Eastern from one point and it is not from the other.”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 9)

It is not only restricted to MES scholars since cultural dissimilarity to the ME is provided as one of the reasons also by junior non-MES participant in the following quotation:

*“I may say partially. Due to its geography, it is a Middle Eastern country. But politically and culturally I cannot say that Turkey is a Middle Eastern country.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Art, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 23)

In addition to that, “learning” might be an important reason for that as one participant argues:

*“I have the tendency to put this intersection of Europe and Asia, Turkey, as in the centre of the world, as it was taught to us before, in our primary-secondary school education. ... I believe there is a huge difference between being a European and Middle Eastern....Turkey is neither in the ME, nor outside of the ME, it is in between, even culturally it is so.”* (MES scholar, Junior, Law, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 2)

Perception of the country as a multi-regional one and positioning it in terms of policies as well as geographical proximity was important:

*“In fact I perceive Turkey as multi-regional. I mean, at the same time I think it is in Europe, it is in Asia and in Balkans. Also in the ME. If we assume that it is not in it, then it will be the border, even in such situation, it is one of the most important actors in the ME. Since it cannot be divorced from ME policies and at the same time it is geographically being in the same place or in the border, I still think it is again in the ME.”* (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years experience, Participant ID: 14)

One last quotation from a MES Senior, in a way summarizes these answers by indicating the history of this dilemma, criticizing the bridge metaphor and how it was introduced to the Turkish public and how these images change from time to time with the conjunctural changes, and the perceptions of other actors:

*“Turkey is a country which lived this dualism since the Ottoman times. It has both similarities and differences. If we mention about Turkish Republic, it is a state founded with a more Western mentality, its ruling regime, laicism, all of the institutes and institutions, the mentality forming the state is a Western one and it’s the same since Tanzimat era. However, this dualism in Turkey, makes it as something in between. I don’t like to use this “bridge” metaphor but we cannot count Turkey completely European, and not completely Middle Eastern. Now it is in the system of the ME, but it*

*changes from time to time.* In the cold war era we were not talking much about Turkey's Middle Easternness, because Turkey was at that time imagined as a NATO member, secular, Western and democratic country. After cold war ended bridge metaphor was started to be used. And as much as how we define it, it is important to see how others define it too, but after 9/11 Turkey started to be defined in the ME more, and the people in Turkey started to define themselves more in the ME, and I ask it to the students each year, how do you feel yourself, Western or the Middle Eastern? Our educational system and the way we were grown up is pretty Western, our aim and direction is European Union, however, somehow by contemporary policies and world conjuncture, especially after 9/11 pushed us more to the ME.” (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 17)

The ones putting Turkey outside of the ME were all non-MES scholars as it was indicated in Table 9 above; therefore, rather the patterns and participants' reasons will be provided. One of those patterns is Turkey's being “the neighbour” to the ME:

“It is definite that *we are neighbours*, it is also definite that *they have close relations with the ME*. ... *Turkey is having relations with the ME, as it is also having relations with other parts of the World*. But as I said before, *due to its geographical proximity it is the one shaping and being affected by the events*, but if you are asking it like a question how close it is to the ME culturally, it is a really nonsensical question then.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, High Interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 37)

Having interactions is not only related to being a neighbour to the ME as both geographical proximity and political interactions are presented as the characteristics, despite being a non-ME country:

“Turkey has a cultural and geographical position to make it be involved in the ME. *I do not think that we are a part of this unity, of the Middle East, but we are always in relationship with it*. Even, it is not only geographical, but also economic, cultural, and social relationships it has to form, especially close relations.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Psychology, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 32)

As it is another thing we can observe from this quotation above “*the perception of a unity which Turkey is not a part*” is also given as the reason for categorizing it as

outside of the ME. *“Not being part of that”* as well as *“not resembling”* ME despite being connected can be argued as similar patterns. Thus, in the following participant’s words, we are not Middle Eastern despite all these interactions and ties since our political culture is different than general MES atmosphere:

*“I think to say we are concentric is better for this case, we are not in it, but we have many relations. We have these interactions, because we share a common history, Iraq and Syria have been Ottoman territories for centuries. Both culturally and economically we have such a connection, for centuries, and these types of relationships are hard to end, plus since being geographically close we still have relationships, thus I think we are concentric. But I said we are not in the ME, since we are not in this political environment shared by the ME. If there were no such environment, we would have been a ME country.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Engineering, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 34)

Again, appreciating the similarities does not necessarily lead to presenting Turkey as a ME country, as politically being more powerful and less chaotic in terms of political environment is what differentiates ME and Turkey. Moreover, along with the participants’ answer to the first question of defining the ME, we may argue that here the notion of defining “the” ME, rather than “a” ME is important, since it is claimed that “regionally” we are not in the ME:

*“Regionally it is outside of the ME but very close to it. And since Turkey is more powerful than others, it is in a position that can not be defeated easily, plus, politically it is a very powerful country and I guess because political chaos is more common in others, all of a sudden everything might change.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Art history, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 38)”

In fact, we should be cautious about the case that the reasoning process can be both bottom up and top down, meaning, the reasons can be shaped by the perceptions or they may lead to the conclusion, i.e. the answer. Therefore, we may argue that the reasons might be shaped by already reached conclusion like Turkey is not a ME country thus, we do not resemble them. Since it was not asked as a direct question, we cannot be sure about it but all we can do is to appreciate the fact that perceiving ME as similar or different is also a very personal decision, as this participant indicates:

*“Personally I do not think that we may be counted in the ME countries, that’s my opinion. We are in any ways different from them. Our culture are different, our histories are different , and newly our economy is different, I mean, for these reasons I do not think that we are involved in the ME.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Business Administration, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 36)

Being in the “buffer zone” is another concept especially related to belonging neither to ME nor to Europe, which may also be related to a small version of exceptionalism for Turkey:

*“I don’t think that Turkey is in the ME, I rather think of it as a buffer zone. But I do not think of it as European also, I believe it has a unique (sui generis) condition. Of course, Turkey both in the Middle East and in Europe has a very important role. It is a buffer zone, it has unique characteristics, thanks to Atatürk it has different judiciary systems etc are very European, but due to its geographical closeness and Islamic closeness to the ME, but anyway, thus I cannot say Turkey is a Middle Eastern country and I am so happy that we cannot say that.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 35)

In response to this “Q3: *How do you position Turkey in the Middle East? Do you think that it is inside the Middle East or outside of it? Why?*” the why part came resulted in three different type of explanation patterns as “cultural explanations” like indicating our culture is either similar or different than ME; geographical explanations as either we are in that geography or not, and political explanations like whether we are politically involved in the area in a way that will make us a part of this system or being politically different than the ME. Hence as it can be seen the issue is not whether they position Turkey inside or outside of the ME, but what types of rationalities they had asserted. Thus, the data is coded in terms of mentioning or not mentioning about the explanations in each category. The three 2x2 chi-squares given in Table 11; is done individually for each category, to indicate whether this distribution of answers, like 15 out of 22 MES scholars mentioned about cultural explanations whereas it was 13 out of 18 non-MES scholars is significant or not, i.e. whether there is any significant link between giving cultural explanations and being a MES or non-MES scholar.

*Table 11: Frequencies of perceptions about where Turkey is in relation to the ME*

Why do you position Turkey inside or outside ?						
Groups	Cultural explanations		Geographical explanations		Political explanations	
	Mentioned	Did not	Mentioned	Did not	Mentioned	Did not
MES Scholars	15	7	10	12	19	3
Non-MES Scholars	13	5	16	2	11	7
Chi square	0,077		8,2096		3,367	
Significance	p=.78146	N.S.	p=.004167	Sig.	p=.066515	N.S.

As the chi-square results given in Table 11 indicate, for cultural explanations and political explanations there were not any significant difference between two groups (MES scholars vs non-MES scholars), as their results are  $X^2(1, n=40)=0.08$ ,  $p>.05$  as  $p=.78$  and  $X^2(1, n=40)=3.367$ ,  $p>.05$  as  $p=.07$  respectively. This means the differences in the distribution is rather by chance, thus, we should not try to interpret these distributions as a significant result. However, for geographical explanations, the results are significant as  $X^2(1, n=40)=8.21$ ,  $p<.05$  as  $p=.004$ ; meaning that the difference in the distribution of mentioning geographical explanations by MES and non-MES scholars is a significant one. Therefore, as it can be seen from the table, non-MES scholars had a much higher tendency to give geographical explanations of Turkey's being in the ME, as 16 out of 18 participants' answers had a dimension falling to this category. However, for MES scholars the preference to mention or not mention about geography is quite close as 10 out of 22 mentioned whereas 12 out of 22 did not.

The helping question of Q3 was Q3b: “Do you think that Turkey has a significant role in the Middle East? Is it an important actor or not?” and overall 38 participants replied this question, whereas there is one missing in each group of MES vs non-MES scholars. As it can be seen in the table below, among the ones who replied this question; 20 out of 21 MES Scholars (corresponding to 95 % of MES scholars who replied) and 70 % of non-MES scholars (12 out of 17) claim it has an important role. To figure out whether this difference between two groups (MES vs non-MES scholars) is statistically significant or not, we need to apply chi-square analysis as it was shown in the Table 12:

*Table 12: Frequencies of perceptions about whether Turkey has a significant role in the ME?*

Groups	It has a significant role	
	It has	It does not have
MES Scholars	20	1
Non-MES Scholars	12	5
Chi square	<b>Not computable</b>	
Significance		

Since the intersection between MES scholars and saying it does not have a significant role , the cell with an observed value of 1 has an expected value of 3.32 and the cell below it with an observed value of 5 has an expected value of 2.68; I decide to utilize Fisher’s test instead by computing it on computer. The results of Fisher test turns out a  $p=.07$  probability level when the alpha level was .05; despite being close to the critical level; I fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we may argue that indicating Turkey has a significant role holds the trend for both groups and does not change by which group you belong to. Besides, as its chi-square goodness of fit is calculated, our participants have a strong tendency to attributing significance to Turkey in the ME, as  $X^2(1, n=38)=17.79$ ;  $p<.05$  since it is so larger than the



critical chi square value 3.84 for a df=1 and alpha=.05 case. In that analysis we can argue that most of the participants attribute a significant role to Turkey in the ME. Here, I also feel the necessity to have a deeper look to the context in which this role is attributed:

“About whether we have an effect in the Middle East, I *cannot say good or bad, but somehow we have the voice*. I don’t know whether they are good or bad, we will understand it as time passes, *but the relations continue, they are not stuck.... We are active*.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 4)

Thus, as it can be seen in the quotation above, having a role, a voice or an active stance does not always mean that the participants “approve” the notion of having a significant role in the ME. This MES scholar argues that time will show whether such active policies were appropriate or not, but there are others more critical of the significant role Turkey takes/ tries to take in the ME:

“First of all these *neo-Ottoman idea of the recent years is funny for me,...* I believe that *we are important to the region, we are an important actor. I think we should not perceive the issue with our emotions, like protecting, being a “big brother” for the Middle East,* but rather we should behave like a state which does whatever is required in terms of its interests.” *But as far as see, the current situation is never like that.* (MES scholar, Junior, Law, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 2)

In addition to that, especially MES scholars seems to be feeling the necessity to make a difference between having a significant role and being “the leader” in the ME:

“*I think Turkey is one of the regional powers in the Middle East. I mean, since Turkey is one of the middle-scale powers in the World, since in the Middle East it is one of the main actors. In the Middle East, when we exclude USA and Russia, it is one of the biggest powers in the Middle East. Thus, I believe it has an effect, but the impacts of these effects change in relation to the other countries’ attitudes and actions. The only power/leader is not Turkey of course*”. (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years experience, Participant ID: 14)

Plus, as it is shown in the quotation below, there is also criticisms about this perception of being an important country by the country itself; by claiming Turkey has a significant role but less importance than how it claims to possess :

“It represents the cultural modernity and as much as it represents it, it has the role in the Middle East. ... *However I do not think that it is a country as important as it thinks of itself for today.* ...” (MES scholar, Senior, Philosophy, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 11)

This significant role is sometimes put as the role of “negotiator”, “mediator” for both MES and non-MES scholars:

“With Davutoglu, a *central state concept* was introduced but I do not think that it is very functional. No matter it can be an aim in the foreign politics, today when I look, *the important part is this*: when a political treaty is signed *how effective you are in it*. Or for instance about Syria, there is a meeting, right? In that meeting are you a decision maker? *These should be the criteria and I think it Turkey, is of course an important partner but not a leader. It always stays as a partner. I perceive it as an intermediary. negotiator. (...)* Turkey has stayed always as a mediator.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 6)

“Yes, there is. Of course there is. I will not say all of these countries in the ME, but most of them are Muslim states. Due to their being Muslim states, we at least have a tie with them and we also have relations. We have bilateral relations also... *In the ME countries opening out to Europe, we may have the role of a coordinator, like a mediator, may be...*” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Business Administration, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 36)

On the one hand, there is another, more optimistic and less critical point of view about this “importance” of the role Turkey has, by both MES and non-MES scholars:

“Up until this last 5-10 years, it was not a very important actor and in fact Turkey was like a country which is unable to protect itself well enough. But now it is like playing a more active role, maybe it cannot wage war to the people much, to the external powers etc but, *I believe it has an important role, in some places it is inhibiting and I believe in some points she puts herself in the front and says “we are thinking like that!” ....* In some points she directly tells the mistakes

*of these external powers. As a political actor, I think it is in the game, taking active role.” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Art history, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 38)”*

*“When we look at the historical context, its being an important actor is not even questionable. But with the nation-state making Turkey tried to define itself as externally to the ME. And I think we struggled for that but we could not manage in domains other than military domains. In the last ten-fifteen years, with JDP, we again started to perceive ourselves as more affective in the ME and more important in the Middle East, we started to be active again. This also has some specific problems but, with time passing we are going to overcome those too.” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 10 years experience, Participant ID: 21)*

Whereas, on the other hand, there is a notion that Turkey is not an important actor, as it does not use the potential it might have:

*“Turkey may have an important role in the Middle East but by now, I do not think that it has an effective role and plays it effectively.(...)” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Engineering, Medium interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 33)*

*“I do not think that it is an active actor and has such a power right now. But I believe it has the potential to be an active actor and an important power. With its geopolitical situation, economic situation, laiciest, modern and secular structure, I perceive it as a country which can be a model and an effective power. But for now, I don’t believe that it is like this.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 9)*

In response to this question 3b; the importance of Turkey in the ME, explanations provided as the rationale behind evaluating Turkey as important or not is important. Thus, among 5 different patterns emerged in this study, like “We are being excluded by ME countries”, “Turkey is better/more powerful than ME countries”, “We lost our importance due to our Syrian policy.”, “Superpowers prevent Turkey’s taking an important role” , “Turkey’s importance derive from its geopolitical position,” only the last two showed significant results in terms of MES vs non-MES analysis of the distributions. Hence we can see in Table 13a, 3 MES scholar and 8 non-MES scholar

mentioned superpowers' interference to region and as an direct of indirect result of this to Turkish ME policy as a reason in their evaluation to Turkey's importance in the ME. Therefore, what we observe is MES scholars are far less likely to mentioning about Superpower's preventing Turkey's role; as well as geopolitical position as a source of importance. For "Turkey's importance derive from its geopolitical position" answer only 7 out of 21, 33% of MES scholars mention it whereas it about 75% (13 out of 17) of the non-MES scholars responding to the question:

*Table 13a: Frequencies of explanations about participants' evaluations of Turkey's role in the ME*

Groups	Categories of patterns of explanations... (Significant ones)			
	Superpowers prevent Turkey's taking an important role		Turkey's importance derives from its geopolitical position	
	Mentioned	Did not	Mentioned	Did not
MES Scholars	3	18	7	14
Non-MES Scholars	8	9	13	4
Chi-square	4.906		7.01	
Significance	p=.026763, significant		p=.008096, significant	

As it is shown in the Table, both results are significant and therefore we can interpret the distribution in this present table is significant since for the first category of answers, superpowers prevent Turkey's taking an important role; is  $X^2(1, n=38)=4.91$   $p < .05$  as  $p=.03$ . The other one, Turkey's importance derives from its geopolitical position gives the again significant results since  $X^2(1, n=38)=7.01$  as  $p=.01$ . Thus, the role of these superpowers in terms of West is put by a non-MES scholar as:

*“I think Turkey will always be a buffer zone, the intervention of Europe and USA is too much even for us, thus, while they try to interfere there and due to the Turkey’s being in the location that the refugees are fleeing from their countries, I can see that they also want to seize us as a buffer zone. If we don’t stay as a buffer zone, and get involved in the Middle East, our political and judiciary systems would not be appropriate for that of course. Thus, no one will want us to be involved in the Middle east...”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 35)

However, not all references to superpowers of the region like USA and Russia is not coded under this category, since here the criteria is whether they argue our role has changed due to their policies, if the participant believes we did not counted these countries, it is not evaluated under this category:

*“In terms of the role of Turkey in the ME, I do not think that right calculations are made, ... I think it stretched its arms further than its sleeves might reach; it perceived itself as very important, the rulers though that they were seriously were determinant, significant actors in the ME, nevertheless in the algebra of the ME, there are many different things they did not count ... for instance in Syria there is Russia, America, in this algebra there are other actors that we should count on...”* (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 17)

For the second category of answers like “Turkey’s importance derives from its geopolitical position”, the statistics is as  $X^2(1, n=36)=7.02$ ;  $p < .05$  as  $p=.007$ . Hence we can interpret the table as non-MES scholars having a better tendency to mentioning that. Therefore, how they mention about the relationship they form with Turkey’s importance and its geopolitical position is as the following:

*“Of course we have a relations with the Middle East, we are being effected if something happens, for instance people are coming to us, we are going there. I believe we have a role. I think it is one level more important than other countries, due to the geological position as being in between Europe and the Middle East.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 25)

As it is argued, being in the intersection of ME and Europe is an important one and a similar argument is made by a junior MES scholar who believes, our “geographical proximity” is getting some kind of fame for us in the Western international organizations:

*“Others are not as close as we are to the UN and other international organizations. Maybe, there is a concept “geographical proximity”, may be in these international organizations we are known better. (...)Turkey has stayed always as a mediator”.* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 6)

“Geographically being in the intersection is not the only way this geographical arguments are made, as it can be observed from the following quotation, the reason we are asked for support is also related to “geographical closeness” for this junior non-MES scholar:

*“I think that it is a very very important actor, of course I am not able to analyse the political factors much, but as I see, Turkey is being at the focus by non-Middle Eastern countries, and the ME countries due to the geographical closeness, from time to time ask for support, as it was in this migration issue.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, Touristic interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 26)

Other themes derived from the interviews is as “We are being excluded by the ME countries” meaning our claim of the role as an important actor is not accepted by other regional powers or Arab-states or we are directly being excluded from this system since we are not “one of them”; “Turkey is better, more powerful than ME countries” is consisted of emphasizes to our Ottoman heritage as a source of power; our being more developed or more Western and our attempts to be a model; and lastly, “We lost importance due to our Syrian policy”. claiming that after Arab Spring the importance we gained in the region up until 2010s was diminished due to our “wrong policies” related to Syrian uprising, civil war and refugee crises. However as it can be seen the results which was divided into MES scholars and non-MES scholars groups were not significant, meaning that we cannot infer the numbers in the table as a significant difference between these two groups.

*Table 13b: Frequencies of explanations about participants' evaluations of Turkey's role in the ME*

Groups	Categories of patterns of explanations... (Not significant ones)					
	We are being excluded by ME countries		Turkey is better/more powerful than ME countries		We lost importance due to our Syrian policy	
	Mentioned	Did not	Mentioned	Did not	Mentioned	Did not
MES Scholars	4	16	14	6	3	17
Non-MES Scholars	3	15	12	6	6	12
Chi square	Not computable		0.0487		Not computable	
Significance			p-value: .825309			

As it can be seen in the table above, Table 13b, first and third category statements given in the table of three 2X2 matrixes are not computable for basic chi square since 2 cells in the first one and one cell in the third one is lower than 5. In addition to that applied Fisher test gives non-significant results for these two categories. Besides we may observe that for the second category-statement table, "Turkey is better/more powerful than ME countries"  $X^2(1, n=38)=.05$ , not significant since  $p>.05$  as  $p=.83$ ; indicating there is no difference in mentioning or not mentioning "Turkey is better/more powerful than ME countries" in terms of being MES or non-MES scholar. Therefore a second table is created as taking all participants as one, and examining the difference between mentioning and not mentioning about these explanation categories, due to the results of hand calculated chi-squares for goodness of fits: The following table, Table 13c, indicates that among all participants only 7 of those mentioned Turkey's being excluded from ME by the regional countries, and again the number of the ones mentioning we lost our importance due to Syrian conflict and our related policies was also 9. However, the strongest theme seems to be Turkey is better, more powerful than ME countries theme as around 68 % of the responses, 26 participants, mentioned that.

*Table 13c: Frequencies of explanations about participants' evaluations of Turkey's role in the ME; mentioning and not-mentioning*

Groups	Categories of patterns of explanations...		
	We are being excluded by ME countries	Turkey is better /more powerful than ME countries	We lost importance due to our Syrian policy
Mentioned	7	26	9
Not mentioned	31	12	29
Chi square	15.16	5.16	10.52
Significance	3.84		

In this table above, it seems there is a great tendency for not mentioning any statement that might fall into the category of “We are being excluded by ME countries”, as only 7 out of 38 who replied that question argue a statement like that for Turkey’s role in the ME. For the second category statement that Turkey is better/more powerful than ME countries, 26 out of 38 mention a statement like that, and only 9 out of 38 mentioned we had lost our importance due to Syrian policy. Again, we may have the chi-square goodness of fit calculations for the values given in the tables in each category. For the first category,  $X^2(1, n=38)=15.2$ ; and since critical chi-square value for  $df=1$  and  $\alpha$  level=.05 is 3.84; and since our calculated chi-square is more than our critical chi-square value, we reject the null hypothesis. This basically means we may argue that there is a significantly low tendency of mentioning “We are being excluded by ME countries.” The chi-square goodness of fit analysis for the second category also gives statistically significant results as  $X^2(1, n=38)=5.16$ , which is also bigger than 3.84 and leads us to reject the null hypothesis. In other words, significantly there is twice more people in my sample, arguing Turkey is better and more powerful than other ME countries as a reason for Turkey’s role and importance in region. Last category is mentioning we had lost our importance due to Syrian war and again similar to the first category only



9 out of 38 participants mention this, and the results are significant and interpretable since  $\chi^2(1, n=38)=10.52$  and we reject the null hypothesis. Since the significantly more mentioned category is the second one, the quotations on the “Turkey is better more powerful than ME countries” should be examined. There, it can be divided into different subcategories. For instance, being like Europe, is one pattern shown for being more important, especially for the non-MES and outlier junior MES scholars:

“I think Turkey has an important role in the ME because it is *the closest one to the Europe among ME countries*. Turkey is *more developed in respect to other countries*. It is like *a door opening to Europe*. On the other hand *it is really in the ME*. Thus has an important role. It is *more important than before, before as a country it was not so interested in the ME* but today it is more different.” (MES scholar, Junior, Sociology, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 1)

“I think Turkey is an *important actor* because *it is one step more Western, and in the West, it has more voice*. Plus I believe, they (the Middle Eastern countries) *would have taken Turkey more as a model rather than West*, if USA and Europe did not control the region.” (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 29)

Being like Europe is not the only reason why Turkey is thought as a more privileged position for the participants, there are also explanations about how relations with EU can work for maintaining the importance in the ME.:

“...Thus, yes Turkey has also democratization problems like many of the regional powers but respectively it is the country in which formal democracy institutions operate best, elections are done and the winning party can form the government, *it has the most insititualized relations with the EU, taking these advantages the development of economic relations, and facilitating the communication with the region and European Union, by facilitating I mean, helping Europe and other Western states' relations with the regional states...*” (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 13)

Having an active role and being important in the ME, for this following participant is also related to being “more developed” especially in terms of technology and education.:

*“Because I think we are one step ahead of them in every aspect. May be, we can also help the ME in some ways which can be technology, can be information related to universities, I mean a tie like that.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Business Administration, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 36)

On the one hand, some prefer to take “Ottoman heritage” as a stance in their reasoning of Turkey’s importance to the region, from a perspective which might be regarded as a neo-Ottomanist one:

*“First of all, it is an important actor and the reason of its being an important actor is its being a which had already been the master in the region for centuries, it is an inheritor of an empire. With the establishment of the Republic and claiming that we are now a new country, we cannot cut this tie. Because Turks are the people who ruled this region, who had power in this region for centuries, who had voice here. ...”* (MES scholar, Senior, Literature (one of the Area languages), High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 12)

On the other hand, some criticise this “Ottoman heritage” explanations as putting that it is perceived negatively by the other ME countries in that region, as the Ottoman heritage might not be something they are also willing to inherit.:

*“Turkey had these liberal revolutions many years before other ME countries, thus it perceives itself as a leader but it is perceived by the other countries as Turkey is a country who perceives itself as a Ottoman inheritor and try to dominate us. Thus, the relations are more historical here.”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years of experience, Participant ID: 10)

Despite we may argue that “Ottoman heritage” might be a dangerous card to play in the region based on the quotation above, still there seems to be the possibility to use the historical common ties with the other countries in the regions to have a better role, as argued:

*“Turkey, within these ME countries, especially in terms of being a democratic country and continuing its cultural ties with others, I believe it has a very important role. Different than any Western country or any non-arab country of the region, like Israel and Iran,*

*it has more cultural ties. Have more roots that it can build on with these countries, especially with Egypt, it would have formed a better relationship, but for now, both due to the radicalism of the region and both the foreign policy problems of Turkey, I do not think that Turkey has any impact on the ME now. But it does not mean that it will never have, again, it may, if we try to complete somethings by examining some issues. ... Thus, Turkey may have a better role, due to its cultural common roots, and its relations with the West, but the capacity and the human sources should be developed.”* (MES scholar, Junior, Political Science and International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 7)

Here also the notion of being a role model due to being more democratic etc is also applied, however, government was criticized for that by this following non-MES scholar who perceives Turkey’s position in 2003 invasion of Iraq as a wrong policy:

*“In fact I think that Turkey can be a role-model for the ME, however, due to wrong policies we made in this JDP government after Iraq war, we lost our power, I believe. If not, as a good democratic country we might have been a model for the ME, in my opinion.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Engineering, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 34)

Last but not least, the notion of excessing soft-power to the region and the end of a warmer climate in the ME after 2011, Arab Spring and Syrian Uprising, is shown as an event where Turkey tried to push its limits but did not succeed:

*“... We may claim that with soft power Turkey had a good image in the region and been affective there but after 2011 it changed a lot, and it turned to an identity politics afterwards, by supporting some opponent powers to get the regime and thus expanding its orbit. But this for me is an initiative pushing the limits and sources of Turkey, Turkey has not been able to solve much of these problems by itself, thus having such an adventure and designing the regional systems in the ME, these are not the things Turkey may do as a regional actor.”* (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 13)

For the last question in the main part, the one asked to both MES and non-MES scholars, was “Q4: *If you were asked to evaluate the Turkey’s relations with Middle East in terms of foreign policy, how would you bring this relations from 1920s to-*

day? What are the primary critical junctures for you and do you perceive any continuous or similar patterns or any differences across these terms?” The aim in this question was by having the participants to recite the Turkish ME policy history as much as they know, how they attribute certain patterns and ideas to this policy and where they think the changes occurred if they can think of any. Thus, not the events but their overall evaluation of this foreign policy area and history was important. The patterns emerged was as the following: “Early years of republic is ignorance for ME”, “In cold war years there was also ME foreign policy”, “Our foreign policy is generally/was towards West”, and “our policy changed with the rise of JDP, with Ismail Cem, and did not change at all”. The first three patterns were put in Table 14a and Table 14b, whereas Table 15 is for the last pattern of when the Turkish foreign policy towards ME changed.

*Table 14a: Frequencies of attributions to Turkish foreign policy towards ME throughout the history of Turkish Republic across MES vs non-MES scholars*

Groups	Categories of patterns of characteristics attributed to Turkish Middle East Policy throughout the history of Turkish Republic...					
	Early years of the Republic is years of ignorance for ME		In cold war years there was also ME foreign policy		Our foreign policy is towards West	
	It was	Was not	Had	Did not	It is	It is not
MES Scholars	11	7	7	9	16	2
Non-MES Scholars	9	3	3	5	8	5
Chi square	Not computable		Not computable		Not computable	
Significance	n.s. in Fisher chi		n.s. in Fisher chi		n.s. in Fisher chi	

As it can be observed from the table above Table 14a, which is a combined table for three 2x2, each again calculated separately, none of the chi-square for independence would be computed since there are expected valued less than 5. Thus, Fisher test was

applied and as a result of it, all the 2X2 matrixes in Table 14a gives non-significant results, indicating that being a MES or non-MES scholar does not make any difference in terms of choosing one of these arguments. Therefore, since we cannot interpret from this table, following Table 14b is created as dividing the data into one group and checks the condition of agreeing and disagreeing with the statements in each category for the ones who mention about the statement:

*Table 14b: Frequencies of attributions to Turkish foreign policy towards ME throughout the history of Turkish Republic in terms of agreement and disagreement*

Groups	Categories of patterns of explanations...		
	Early years of the Republic is years of ignorance for ME	In cold war years there was also ME foreign policy	Our foreign policy is towards West
Agree	20	10	24
Disagree	10	14	7
Chi square	3.33	.67	9.32
Significance	3.84		

Therefore, the table above can be analyzed with three different chi-square goodness of fit calculations. For instance for the first category “Early years of the Republic is years of ignorance for ME.” was mentioned by 30 participants; 20 of which indicated statements in line with the statement in this category title whereas the remaining 10 seems to be rejecting the idea. When chi square for goodness of fit hand calculations are made, the results indicate non-significance, as  $X^2(1, n=30)=3.33$  and the critical chi-square for  $df=1$  and an alpha level of .05 is 3.84; thus we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore this difference between mentioning of the early years of the republic as ignorance years or claiming that they are not ignorance years and there was somehow relations at that time is due to pure chance, hence the participants do not seem to show any significant tendency towards one or the other. For the second category statement “In cold war years there was also ME foreign policy,” there

seems a slight tendency towards disagreement as 14 out of 24 disagreed with the statement. However, hand calculations  $X^2(1, n=24)=.67$  and the critical chi-square for  $df=1$  and  $\alpha .05$  was 3.84 as it was mentioned above, thus we again fail to reject the null hypothesis. Thus the seeming tendency is due to pure chance. For the third category “Our foreign policy is towards West” is agreed by 77% of the participants who mentioned about this issue. Thus, the calculations can be reported as  $X^2(1, n=31)=9.32$  and since it is bigger than our critical chi square level 3.84; we reject the null hypothesis. Thus, our there is a significant tendency towards showing statements in with the claim “our foreign policy is towards West”. In order to examine these patterns more thoroughly we need to check the quotations:

*“When the state is first established there always been the aim to go to the level of developed countries; the policy whose lines were drawn by Atatürk has been along lines of West...”* (MES scholar, Junior, Law, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 2)

*“For many long years, we had turned our back to the ME, we used to have the aim to increase our level to the Western countries, developed nations. There used to be issues related to Greek like Cyprus issue considered in 1970s. Plus, after republic was announced, Turkey for a long time tried to get itself fulfilled. For a long time its foreign policy was a balance politics, to balance Russia, to balance USA, at that time Turkey was a bridge.”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 4)

*“Since the beginning of the Republic, there have always been indirect relations formed with the ME. This is because of our aim to be more Western and turning our faces to the West. The phases which we turned our back to the East consists a big part of these 90 year old republican history”. (MES scholar, Junior, Political Science and International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 7)*

*“With the last years of the Ottoman Empire and throughout the early years of Turkish republic, among the reasons of backwardness, being Eastern and Middle Eastern was counted. ... Thus, most of our intelligentia and state-elites turned their faces to the West, and the people who has grown up with this process up untill very recent always lived with a perception of being Western. They never had the*

*idea that let's improve our relations with the Eastern people, whom had been our partners; because we are westerners, being western improves people and makes them civilized and modern in terms of technology and science etc, perception lived up until today.... For instance as you know, Turkey had to choose a side in the Cold War period, and thus we became Western obligatorily, due to security reasons etc, but in this process we lost our identity, by that I mean we forgot where we were from, and despite being geographically an Asian state, we perceived ourselves as a European state, like a state in the West. But what I mean is our feelings and thoughts are an Eastern one..... Before people in Iran used to think Turkey was a very far country for them..." (MES scholar, Senior, Literature (one of the Area languages), High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 12)*

One of the themes as it can be caught from the quotations above, is due to our Westernization project and with the perception that being western means being modern and developed, Turkey neglected the ME and/or turned its back to the region. However, even though the explanations can be attributed as the Western mindset of the state elites who formed the republic is very popular among participants, there are other explanations especially provided by senior MES scholars, like the reason why we formed relations with West but not with East, might have resulted from infrastructural difficulties, since they lacked the democratic system or such:

*"In Turkey's project of unification with the West, getting close to the Europe, we may argue that it got away from the ME and did not try to use this Middle Eastern identity. At the same time, there were close relations with Iran and Afghanistan. Turkey's disengagement with the ME is rather than these countries being Middle Eastern and being itself a European country; even though it also has a role, might be because there is a difference between being democratic and anti-democratic. Because in many regions there were one-man states, Iran revolution etc. Hence, we can argue that it was not that easy to form healthy relations with these countries, we may argue that, I think." (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years experience, Participant ID: 14)*

*"Turkey in its very first years had a completely introverted politics, as a recovery politics. Not only with ME but also with Europe and other global actors it had a distanced policy for a time.... Especially after Turkey's membership to NATO, it became an international actor, since there was the need to make a choice in that bipolar*

*world system and Turkey had chosen a side and started an active foreign policy with that.*” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 15)

“... In fact always the westernization project of the republic is blamed regarding to Republic’s ME policy. However when we look at the first years of the Turkish republic, we see that Turkey does not have an active ME policy. I mean, *it did not have relations much not only with ME but also other places too... Moreover, if we look at these countries in the ME, there used to be mandate states, thus there is not any ME that can be formed relationships.*” (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Administration, High Interest on Middle East, around 20 years experience, Participant ID: 19)

Another classic explanation is provided by a non-MES scholar, emphasizing the discourse of Ottoman trauma of collapse by blaming the Arab collaboration with Western powers of that time by saying:

“... In the first years of republic, after WWI and Independence War, when we started to loose our lands in the ME, *Turkey was stabbed in the back by Arab states*, last times of Ataturk and after Ataturk died, *in the first years of the Republic, I know as we did not have any relationship with the ME. ....*” (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 40)

The pro-West policies are not only seen as being more interested in the Western blocks but relations with the ME was shaped within the framework that is drawn by Western powers, some argue:

*“In 1970s, 80s an 90s we have always shaped our relations with ME, always in accordance to our relations with the West. Thus, with the Kurdish issue, Cyprus conflict, in all of these, we took the ME into our agendas in terms of having the ME be at our back when we needed. Besides that we did not bother to have common cooperations with the countries in these regions, in the name of developing something related to the region, not much studies are made, and not any foreign policy was made. Thus, as I said before, the relations were constructed in terms of our relations with the West and in terms of its side-effects, we formed relations with the ME.”* (MES scholar, Junior, Political Science and International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 7)



But this picture of ignoring ME and going for pro-West policies seems to have changed especially in “the last 10 years.”, since back then neither society nor political elites were interested in ME:

*“I think, Turkey in 1920s was less interested in the ME with regard to this last 10 years. Before that about the affairs happening in the ME, neither people nor rulers were this much interested in the ME. Atatürk and his successors both in presidency and prime ministry were having policies towards Europe, to the novelties. Since they were not interested, people were not interested in the ME either.”*  
(Non-MES scholar, Junior, Physics, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 31)

However, this change is not always perceived as something negative:

*“I think it was a little disconnected with the region in old times. Up until last 5-10 years, it was disconnected from the ME, since I believe a country which wants to be a Western, European one thinks little of the ME. But in the recent years not only with the ME, but also with Europe and the world, Turkey is having better relations as a more important actor. Some of the international relations might have gone wrong from time to time, it might have gone bad with Syria when it was pretty good. Nevertheless, I believe any more, Turkey is not a country which has no voice in the ME, willing to be integrated to the West. But it has developed its relations with many countries from all over the world. Now I think it is more related to the ME, and its relations is better. (...) Generally I believe in the republic history when we came towards today it is getting better.”*  
(Non-MES scholar, Senior, Art history, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 38)

Since there are references to this change in the general tendency of Turkish foreign policy, I categorized the explanations into three categories as the general ME policies of Turkish Republic changed during JDP period, during İsmail Cem period or did not change at all. In the first category, there are 14 MES and 10 non-MES scholars who claims it had changed in JDP period, either saying directly it changed with the rise of JDP or indirectly claiming after 2000s, especially after 2002 or in the last few years it had changed. In the last category of answers like foreign policy did not change at all, there are arguments like similar attempts to engage with the Middle East was

done from time to time throughout the republic history like in Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal era so it is in the general trend; or despite it seems that we are engaging more to the ME, in fact we are still ignorant to the region and general policy tendencies did not change. As it can be seen only 2 MES scholars claimed the change occurred in İsmail Cem period, and for the last category there was 4 MES and 3 non-MES answers.

*Table 15: Frequencies of preference for the critical juncture that changed general ME policy trend of Turkey*

Groups	When do you think the general ME policy of Turkey changed, if it did...		
	JDP period	İsmail Cem period	Did not change at all
MES	14	2	4
Non-MES	10	0	3
Chi square	1.3118		
Significance	p=.518974	N.S.	

Table 15 shows the frequency distributions of these three different patterns of answers across MES and non-MES groups but since some of the cells come up with expected frequency values less than 5, I computed Fisher test which turned a non-significant statistical result as  $X^2(2, n=33)=0.71$ ,  $p > .05$  and we may interpret it as we fail to reject the null hypothesis, thus need to accept that there is no significant difference between MES and non-MES groups in terms of these three categories. Therefore, newer statistical analysis was utilized to get whether the observed preference towards the idea that policies changed during JDP period is significant or not, and I group all participants as one group and calculate the preference with chi square for goodness of fit, as 24 participant under first category, 2 participant in the second one claiming the change happened in İsmail Cem period, and 7 participants in the category of “no change in ME policies.”. The results show significant results since  $X^2(1, n=33)=24.18$  which is bigger than the critical chi-square value for  $df:2$

and alpha .05 which was 5.99; thus we can interpret that there is a tendency to agree that with JDP period Turkish ME policy changed. However, we should keep in mind that it does not mean that this changed is perceived as positive or negative, and for deeper analysis of the data, like the answer patterns, we need to examine how they framed their responses:

*“I see that it changed after 2000s, and more active role is tried to have in the Middle East, even if it was not that successful, we try to have more active policies. But I do not think that we were active before that.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, History, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 28)

*“But with the JDP era, of course in the Middle East, there happened some developments. Both people got interested more to the events there, both the rulers, they started to comment, in fact not very recently but now it seems as if they comment more.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Physics, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 31)

These quotations above from non-MES scholars give us the idea that JDP era is perceived as a critical juncture in terms of increasing interest in the ME and having a more active policy towards it. Similar arguments are also made by both MES and Non-MES scholars by emphasizing this era not only got more interested in the ME, but also changed our policies towards West:

*“It changed with especially JDP governments policies towards the ME, instead of working on the relationships with Europe...”* (MES scholar, Senior, Anthropologist, Medium Interest on Middle East, more than 10 years experience, Participant ID: 20)

*“I think up until last 20 years, since the beginning of the formation of the Turkish republic, we have always turning our faces to the West, and an example to this might be given as even though it is an Islamic country, more of the laws were taken from Western countries. More interestingly, civil law is the one regulates the family, divorce, heritage etc and especially the European laws were tailored for Christian societies, Turkey tried to apply it here, which was obviously showing this turning the faces to the West. And I believe with the change of the government, (rise of JDP), the wind is now in the other way.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 29)

Attributing the change directly to the rise of JDP is also perceived as something challenging the perception of Middle Eastern countries and Islamic states as a threat for the rise of political Islam in Turkey:

*“With the rise of JDP, in fact it is very assertive to say we are the big brother of the ME, but in terms of playing active role and producing new ideas and experimenting on what we do would be better is with the rise of JDP. It was dead for us up until JDP, especially Iran was perceived as a threat, since being an Islamic state. We feared to become like Iran, were afraid of political Islam.”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 year of experience, Participant ID: 4)

Positive perceptions of policy changes in the Turkish foreign policy towards ME with the rise of JDP is put by the following MES scholar as “coming to know the place” which was connected to us historically but was rediscovered with this policy change:

*“... but in this 10-15 years period, with exchanges, politicians’ visiting the country, academician’s visiting the countries etc, now people understood that they were not foreigners but similar people... People tried to get interested in what was happening in the ME and they realized that these are affecting them also... (MES scholar, Senior, Literature (one of the Area languages), High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 12)*

However, there is also another idea that even though the relations with ME increased in the recent years, the idea of being ignorant to the ME was not that valid as:

*“...Turkey had relations with the ME even before JDP, but within the framework of the Western states’ interests, but it is today even more than it used to be before.”* (MES scholar, Senior, Philosophy, High Interest on Middle East, around 15 years experience, Participant ID: 11)

Thus, another reoccurring pattern was Turkey’s attempt to be the regional leader, which was challenged by the participants in the questions mentioned in the previous sections. Thus, here becoming the leader and in its more popular way of framing “becoming the big brother” of the ME was questioned along with the success of these new policy aims:

*“Later, there was an attempt to seek leadership in the ME which started especially starting in pre-JDP period but rising with JDP. It happened as defining the groups in the ME in terms of their countries and ethnic identities and taking the Sunni leadership and challenging the Shia ones, and at the same time having more active policies to channel the Kurdish issue as preferred.”* (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years of experience, Participant ID: 10)

*“However, when we came to 2000s we realized that it is not like that, in 2002, 2005 there is an axis shift in the state policy is mentioned, and I believe it is true... But since bureaucratic institutions have their own memories, you cannot say that we are not going to be Western any more, everything is finished we are the Middle Eastern big brother is something we cannot say.”* (MES scholar, Junior, Law, Low Interest on Middle East, around 1 year of experience, Participant ID: 2)

Having a well-institutionalized bureaucratic system with their own memories and interests, that might conflict with these new policies in terms of East-West dichotomy, is not argued to be the only reason for the unsuccessful attempts of the policy. Here, a non-MES scholar argues that the external actors, superpowers are the ones who dominate the relations and the area, preventing Turkey to make a move to the ME with these peaceful policy goals like “Zero problem policy.”:

*“The only thing I remember is in this last years, after JDP period, we tried to form our relations a little bit, we tried to pursue a “zero problem policy” in the ME, I think it was because the ME states were Muslim countries, I mean, Turkey perceived the ME as a unity of Muslim countries, but its sincerity is questionable I guess because on the one hand it was trying to be a member of the EU, in the very recent past, on the other hand it tried to form good relations with the ME and the zero problem policy was not successful because whenever Turkey tried to make a move in the ME, it was dominated as I see...”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Economy, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 40)

The idea that Turkey has lost power due to its policies regarding Syrian civil war which resulted in mass migration of many Syrians. Turkey, being one of the destinations for the migrants, faced with this issue as a problem in its domestic politics and the notion of losing power was mentioned even though it was not a very

powerful theme in terms of its frequency, as it was mentioned in Table 12c. Similarly, this policy change which was thought as positive after 2000s up until the Syrian-car related migration problems arose in domestic politics:

*“Before this last crisis (immigrant crisis) it was very positive, but in 1920s I do not see anything that I may say as positive or negative. Especially in those times of Arab Spring, I think there used to political and economic interaction, excluding these last events. I don’t know how Turkey perceived this tragedy, but Turkish people did not perceive it as something good. It used to be good but now I think it is going worse.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Psychology, Touristic interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 26)

*“Afghanistan is the first country recognising Turkey, thus, since very beginning this policy was warm and good but due to the policies of last ten and more years, now we are in the position to come almost to the war with our neighbours. Especially due to this mass-migration from Syria to Turkey many people started to hate Syrians. It seems like a perception-policy is tried to be made. I think we are getting worse, to the time to a hatred policy.”* (Non-MES scholar, Junior, Law, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 24)

In the quotation above, what attracts our attention is not only change due to Syrian policy of recent years but also the idea that Turkey has always had warm and good relations before it started to get wrong with the rise of JDP. Checking the participants answer to definition of the ME question which was a definition of ME as a chaotic, conflictious place, more active involvement might have meant more trouble. Similar arguments of continuously good relations with ME is made by another non-MES scholar who claimed we started to have problems after Syrian uprising and in fact it was rather a problem lived with that single person, not with the country:

*“As far as I know, we never had problems with any country, in the ME. Especially to the Palestine, and there was a time there were problems in Algeria and Tunisia, I recall something as we helped them. We did not have any bad relations with them, up until the Syria event took part. But in fact it is not a problem we live with the country but with a single individual, Bashar Asad, and I do not think that we were problematic neither in the early republican period nor today.”* (Non-MES scholar, Senior, Business Administration, No specific interest on Middle East, Participant ID: 36)

There are also other attributions rather than attributing the change to JDP or post 2000 period; which in fact criticizes this attribution to JDP directly as it is shown in the following two quotations:

“...Multicultural, multi-actoral politics was even present in Ismail Cem era, we should not attribute it to Davutoğlu, at that time also we were able to talk to all parties...” (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 15 years experience, Participant ID: 16)

“I think it has changed, yes. *From Ataturk to not JDP era but the era when Ismail Cem became the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was the time Turkey said, don't intervene much in the ME, don't mess into ME's internal dynamics and it should not also intervene our affairs.* Thus, I believe in Turkish Foreign policy, for some time we were distanced. *But with Ismail Cem, there are people thinking it was due to JDP, but in fact its theoretician was Ismail Cem, and with Ismail Cem, collaborated with the Middle East with soft power. Hence I divide it as the era before Cem and after Cem.* JDP at first took Cem period as model but then this Neo-Ottomanist policies were taken by the JDP, I believe.” (MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 9)

Nevertheless İsmail Cem was not the only political actor mentioned in response to this question, as there had been other arguments like other right-wing political leaders like Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal are important figures in terms of Turkey's ME policy:

“*An era similar to these recent years, I think was Menderes era, since Menderes was also having an active policy perspective in the ME, and tried to shape the ME. We see the same in the JDP era, and JDP has been criticized as it got away from EU, it distanced itself to the EU, and always gets interested in the ME politics like, we perceive the same in the Menderes era. One of the foreign policy aspects of the Menderes era is also always on Middle East....*”(MES scholar, Junior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 5 years of experience, Participant ID: 6)

“But again at the times when the Turkey had problems with the West, European Union, there the idea of getting close to the ME emerges. And again the ME gains importance.... I believe Özal had a big effect there, his policies which are open to world, and wanting

Turkey to play bigger games and be more effective made the effect. His personality, perception of the foreign relations and liberalization of Turkey's economy affected those. Also other countries' being more open and integrated also has an effect. I do not think that it is something that can happen with a single party's initiative." (MES scholar, Senior, International Relations, Medium Interest on Middle East, around 10 years experience, Participant ID: 14)

"Politically I say this, we used to have some ties with the ME but it was rather putting a mission: Turkey was a region that was presented as a model by the West to educate the ME. In the Ozal era there was similar events, but in the last years a new intelligentsia emerged claiming that we should read the ME more realistically." (MES scholar, Senior, Political Science and Public Relations, High Interest on Middle East, more than 10 years experience, Participant ID: 21)

Thus, as it can be observed in this present chapter there are both similarities and differences in terms of MES and non-MES scholars about how they perceive Turkey in relation to the ME. This might also be about Turkey's being a better known issue for both groups of participants, or the questions of "positioning Turkey and evaluations of the policies" cannot be divorced from other factors like own ideological stance, own preference in the wanted policy goals, being in the same age groups and being raised with similar discourses and so on. However, it was also important to examine how these were framed to see the general picture, which will be given in the next chapter, Conclusions.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this present thesis, the following questions as “How Middle East is perceived by Turkish MES and non-MES scholars”, “How Turkey was positioned in the Middle East by these two groups?” and “Is there any difference and similarities between these groups and if they have, what are those?” were answered in the previous chapter on findings. To conclude, I may have a quick summary of what the findings indicated and how I interpret them.

First of all, there were some significant differences between MES and non-MES scholars, which made me to perceive it as a result of “being insider” of this particular area studies: The first issue was “conceptualization problem” which came out just as a reaction to the very first question of semi-structured interview, asking the participants to define the Middle East. Here, excluding the outliers, around 90% of the MES scholars had mentioned the conceptualization problems, like difficulty in defining the ME in terms of its borders and characteristics; the terms’ being a Eurocentric one, and the changes occurred in this definition throughout history in terms of its borders etc. During the interviews, it was mainly the point they start answering the question, without even attempting to drive a geographical border. Thus, the academic debates over the term, seems so much embedded in the MES scholars’ conceptualization of the region, they feel the necessity to shed light on this debate without making any point about the borders and characteristics. However to those, who are not aware of these discussions, along with the history of the region like the earlier definitions of the ME, how ME came to be defined, geopolitical history of Europe, how each and every peoples of the region have different and diverse cultures even if they are grouped in broader categories like Arabs, Persians, Turks, Kurds and so on; ME is rather a given territory, a place which had always been there. It is also visible in the answers provided by the non-MES scholars, in

both levels, juniors and seniors, who try to answer the question as “accurate” as they can, justifies their preference to list a particular country as Middle Eastern as “it is within the borders of the region” or “it is known to belong in” and their direct reference to the geographical borders without even challenging the term. Similarly, in response to drawing the borders, while MES scholars mentioned a great definition of the ME, they also made the point that since this is rather a political construct, the broad definitions of MENA and Great Middle East are also different than the previous definitions, it might change for some, and their own study interest is diverse from this broader definitions. They argue, they are either studying “smaller definitions and subregions” despite defining the borders in its great map. On the other hand, non-MES scholars generally define the region, as if there is only one geographical border making the ME, and they need to be accurate in defining it. Thus, here, the education in MES, in terms of being exposed to these debates over conceptualization of the region and diversity in the region, seems to raise an awareness about the terms and creates important reflections by MES scholars. That also seems to explain why outlier MES scholars, the ones with very low levels of education in MES and very little interest in the region; show similar patterns with the non-MES scholars.

The second issue emerging in relation to MES and non-MES scholars difference is the characteristics attributed to the region. As it was discussed in the exceptionalism and Orientalism debates in the literature, ME was argued to be different than the other regions, especially from Western world. Here, the East-West dichotomy, the role of Islam, generally being composed of Arab-speaking nations and so forth have been given as cultural explanations for ME’s being the way it is now: as underdeveloped, not-modern and chaotic. Thus, the question about what kind of political and cultural environment they think of the ME, came out with many references in relation to these debates. First of all, the senior MES scholars have much less attributions to ME’s being a chaotic place, than other participants in this study. In other words, having a chaotic environment, is not mentioned as a

characteristics of ME's political or cultural environment by the group members who have the most education and interest in MES. Therefore, we may first hypothesize that this difference might have resulted from the age difference between seniors and juniors, and the time they have been socialized they were exposed to a different phase of the ME; however we may defeat this argument by three reasons: First, if this assumption of the age difference is right, why senior non-MES scholars did not show the same patterns with senior MES scholars? Second, if again age difference is the key, here, does it really make a huge difference between being a high school student in 1990s or 2000s, since the age range is 23-42? Third, can we assume that ME in 1980s and 1990s were much less chaotic than 1990s and 2000s, so that during forming their images of the ME, these different levels of age groups were exposed to a different face of the region? Thus, another explanation here is necessary and it may be the role of education and expertise, as the more they know the region, its history as well as other regions, they became less tended to stereotype the region as chaotic. Keeping in mind that region is mainly depicted as chaotic by the western media most, a critical thinking as a result of reading and reflecting more on the region might be what differentiates senior MES scholars from other groups. One senior MES scholar had criticized such attributions explicitly reflecting on the "witch's cauldron" type ME definitions. Moreover, when we go deep into the quotations, some participants, especially junior MES scholars seems to be reflecting on the diversity of the region as chaotic, which is different than the negative perceptions of the non-MES scholars' notion of what is chaotic: conflictious, warlike and bloody. Thus, in relation to the sources of information question asked for gaining the background information, I may assume that for the ones who are not deep into the region to appreciate other characteristics of the ME, the ME is rather what the media depicts, and here it is most of the time covered in terms of war and terror. But for the senior MES scholars who had opportunities to look at other aspects of these countries, who had personal observations of these countries other than the wars like

visiting pre-war Syria or post-revolution Iran; attributes other characteristics to the ME, had enough intellectual package to challenge these stereotypes depicted by the media.

Similar patterns emerge for the instability of the ME query: for MES scholars and mainly the ones indicated that chaos is everywhere, ME is newly founded and during these establishment periods such instabilities happen, but it should not be attributed to cultural explanations, most of which were “proved wrong.”. For instability in the ME, especially when the outliers were omitted from the data, half of the MES scholars group participants define the political environment as unstable and autocratic, however, for the non-MES scholars group, it is almost 90% mentioned the region in terms of unstable and autocratic political environment. In terms of providing explanations for underdevelopment of the region, in the overall sample, providing cultural and economic explanations did not differ from each other significantly. However, again from the quotations the tendency to attribute the reasons, either cultural or economic, to the internal sources of the region was more related to earlier stereotypes that were mentioned. Therefore, again MES scholars seemed to have a tendency to defeat Orientalist, stereotypical and exceptionalism arguments of underdevelopment and attribute the situation to external reasons also by making the point that underdevelopment is also everywhere in the world. In other words, the more educated and interested people about the subject, i.e. the ME in this case, the less they make internal attributions to negative situations, and have less correspondence bias.

While another theme emerged was cultural characteristics of the ME, the multicultural nature of the region and its predominantly being Muslim were the two patterns which groups did not seem to differ much. However, when the interviews were examined, it is parallel to earlier findings of the difference emerging between these two groups: While MES scholars make the point that, being predominantly Muslim should not be generalized to a form that it could explain everything or an Orientalist image of the region; the non-MES scholars were the opposite. Even

though non-MES scholars also seem to mention about diversity and multiculturality, they either make more emphasis on the similarities of the peoples of ME, or the sectarian or Arabo-Persian conflicts. In addition to that, the problems emerging from “the dark side of Islam” and people’s being underdeveloped due to not carrying western values were important for non-MES scholars. Here, the emphasis made by a MES scholar by claiming “Islam is not the same everywhere” is important in explaining the fallacy of generalizing the similarities and under-emphasize the multiculturality.

As it was also visible in the quotations and the patterns provided by MES scholars answers, an important difference between these two groups were about the “exceptionalism” arguments. As mentioned before, in the outliers omitted version of our analysis more than 70% of the MES scholars indicate that ME is not an exception whereas it is just around 20% for the non-MES scholars. Moreover, the reasons for exceptionalism for the MES scholars base on mainly “superiority” and “uniqueness” of the region, mainly mentioning that the region is either strategically or historically/religiously important to the whole world. Thus, disregarding superiority type exceptionalism arguments which might have resulted from over-emphasizing the importance of the region, a reaction to stereotypes or negative characteristics attributed to the region, or maybe ideological stance like attributing superiority to the Muslim or Turkic world; the “anomalities” type of superiority arguments were strongly criticized by the MES scholars. This might have derived from having a comparative perspective, i.e. knowing both the diversity in the region as well as other broader concepts in economy and world politics; having a background information of how these countries also went through modernization processes, and the anomalies are based on the structural and environmental factors like late democratization, late modernization, late industrialization and so on. Here, latin world and post-soviet Turkic world as well as the golden ages of the Arab world and Islam are presented as the explanations why exceptionalism and cultural explanations should not work. Again, related to education and interest, we may argue

that most of these notions are gained through learning more about the region: the general rule of the psychological mechanism of stereotyping is it seems to break as more detailed information we gain, emphasizing what the characteristics in our categories are false. Thus, the more our cognitive schemas fail to serve us to understand the region, less likely we came to use these arguments and generalizing schemas.

In the questions about Turkey and the ME, there were also quite few differences between MES and non-MES scholars group, in terms of the tendencies to put Turkey inside or outside of the ME. Significantly MES scholars were more likely to put the country in the ME, whereas for non-MES scholars it was either in Europe or in “in the intersection of Europe and ME”. Moreover, no matter which definition was taken by MES scholars, again the difficulty in defining a country as insider or outsider of such a politically conceptualized region was mentioned. Making the point that simplistic arguments should be avoided, most of them also argued that these definitions change by time and conjunctures, different than non-MES scholars. The bridge metaphor is the one mainly used by the ones who argue for this intersection, which might have been resulting its being the most popular discourse related to the geography of Turkey at the time these people learned about Turkey, during middle and high schools etc. Moreover, providing geographical explanations was changing significantly as non-MES scholars were more likely to mention those geographical explanations: Here we should remind that most non-MES scholars had taken Turkey as “in between” like a “bridge”, and geographical explanation seems to be more valid for that option since most of the time this preference was accompanied by “we are also geographically in Asia and Europe” discourse.

Another important point was “East of Turkey is Eastern, West of Turkey is Western” division, which is argued by both some MES and non-MES scholars. This argument again seems to have derived from the idea that east is underdeveloped and backward, whereas west is more modern and educated. Keeping in mind despite the greater internal mobility; especially in terms of early inhabitants of the cities some regions

connotes different ethnicities: For instance, Western Anatolia; Marmara, Aegean and West Mediterranean regions, are considered as the places where Turkomans, Turkoman-Alevites, Greek Rums, Balkan Turks, some Jews live whereas the east-Mediterranean has dominant Arab-ethnicity and culture, and East side of the country has Lazikis, Caucasians and Kurds as dominant culture and ethnicity. Thus, this might also be related to this “ethnicity-related thinking” as one of the MES scholars claimed “Kurds do not have problem with being a Middle Eastern but Turks of Turkey does not consider themselves as such.” However, since this question is not asked, and it is not related to MES-non-MES difference; it should be considered just as a discussion-led speculation.

There were also similarities between these two groups we compare. As it was discussed, in terms of definitions of ME, both groups were similarly mentioning broad definitions like MENA or Great Middle East. However, the similarities were more obvious when the relation between Turkey and ME was asked. In both groups, MES and non-MES scholars, the participants had rather attributed significance to Turkey claiming Turkey has an important role in the ME. About their evaluations of this important role, it was argued to be a model, a middle scale country also with soft power and a negotiator; whereas the annotations were mainly to these strengths should not be taken as being the leader or the bigger brother in the region. However, again within this similar point there were some significant differences: For instance, patterns of explanation for Turkey’s role in the ME, “Superpowers prevent Turkey’s taking an important role”, and “Turkey’s importance derive from its geopolitical position,” produced different results across MES and non-MES scholars. The trend is rather not mentioning something like superpowers preventing Turkey’s role for MES scholars’ case, whereas for the non-MES scholars it is more than 50% of them. For the second one, Turkey’s importance being derived from its geographical position around only 30% of MES but more than 75% of Non-MES scholar attribute that to the role of Turkey in the ME. Here geographically being at the intersection, having a strategic importance due to this geopolitical positioning, geographical proximity to Europe and so forth can be cited as important patterns.

As response to the role and importance of Turkey in the ME, other explanations like “being excluded by ME countries” and “losing importance due to Syrian war” were less likely to be mentioned by both groups. It had again showed similar patterns, but rather by not mentioning those much. Whereas for “Turkey’s being better, more powerful than other ME countries”, in a range of patterns changing from arguing we had gained our independence and done our democratic revolutions some 20-30 years before them to Turkey’s being more developed and more European, around 68% of the participants responding to that question argues for it, and there seems to be no difference between MES and non-MES scholars. Arguments like “Early years of the Republic were years of ignorance for ME” and “in the cold war years there was no ME foreign policy” did not produce significant results between agreements and disagreements. In other words, these arguments were defeated as strongly as it was advocated by some. This difference might be related to individual differences of participants in terms of their perceptions of what counts as an active or passive policy, as well as reading from a different canon, since these are not generally addressed in general public educational system. However “Our foreign policy is towards West” was the most significant one as around 80% of the participants formed statements agreeing with the idea, making the point that up until sometime, generally Turkish foreign policy can be named as a foreign policy towards West. Here, a similar explanation like the official canon of readings or history courses offering the idea that with the establishment of Turkish Republic, the Ottoman Empire was buried to history and we thus became a European and civilized country. Finally, when the question, “When was this critical juncture changing this general trend in ME foreign policy of Turkey?” was addressed, it was argued to be some time in the JDP period, especially starting with the rise of JDP. Thus, a new mentality that perceives ME as rather a group that Turkey may confidently be identified with is argued to raise with JDP. On the other hand, there were other names like Özal and Cem, as well as arguing there was not such a change in the politics were also given as answers. However, even though this change is generally attributed to JDP period, it does not mean that every participant take it as something



positive, as some, especially from non-MES scholars claim we should have developed our relations with the Europe rather than spending time and energy to the ME. Moreover, while others no matter whether they perceive this change as positive or negative, challenge Turkey's role, importance and policies by claiming it is like a "will to be big brother of the region" which was "neither appropriate for our relations nor feasible goal considering the other actors inside and outside the region". Thus, no matter whether they perceive these last two concepts of "having a Western oriented foreign policy" and "identifying itself with ME in JDP period" negative or positive, the participants observe these generally as "facts."

In terms of limitations of the study, even though we can report general observations like both experience and interest seems to make a difference in terms of perception, especially leading to less stereotyping and more external attributions to negative aspects of the region, less orientalism and exceptionalism in most experienced high level of interest people from MES scholars, we cannot put it statistically due to a low sample size for quantitative analyze. In other words, since number of data was limited for doing such an analysis in terms of re-grouping people with both interest and experience levels, we cannot claim it as a statistical fact but rather a general observation. However, for a future study a survey based on the patterns and options emerged from this present study might be developed to get more data that would lead to more statistical analysis.

Other limitation of this present study can be seen as the age group of the participants as interviewing scholars over their 40s, who were rather also engaged in administrative positions like the deans, coordinators of the centers, institution general directorates, was almost impossible due to their tight schedules; and the turnout rates were quite low with them. Keeping in mind that this thesis is rather a 6 months project in terms of data collection or analysis of a masters' students who had to study full time in a governmental office, visiting them to meet in person and then getting the appointment for a face-to-face interview which might have been more preferable for this particular group, was not feasible. However, in the further studies on the same line this might be taken as a suggestion.

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## Appendix A: Original Interview Form- Turkish

Öncelikle çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz için teşekkür ederim. Daha önce de bahsetmiş olduğum üzere ODTÜ Orta Doğu Araştırmaları Bölümü Master programında tez dönemindeyim ve bu derinlemesine görüşmeyi de Özlem Tür Hocamızın danışmanlığında gerçekleştirmekte olduğum tez çalışmamın bir parçası olarak planladık. Bugün sizinle zamanınız elverdiğince Türkiye, Orta Doğu ve Türkiye’de Orta Doğu konularında konuşalım istiyorum. 6-7 tane uçlu sorumuz olacak, ana sorularımız, bunların dışında gerektiğinde yardımcı sorularla sizi daha net anlamaya çalışacağım. Genellikle 20-30 dakikalık görüşmeler oluyor ama cevaplarınızın yeterli olup olmadığına karar verecek olan sizlersiniz, eğer soruyu yeterince cevapladığınızı düşünürseniz daha erken bitirebilir ya da bu süreyi aşabilirsiniz. Bazı sorular “bilgi sorusu” gibi görülebilir ama ben daha çok sizin nasıl algıladığınızla ilgiliyim. Dolayısıyla aklınıza ne geliyorsa o şekilde cevaplayabilirsiniz. Mülakat sırasında ses kaydı alacağım ama etik sorumluluğum gereği bu görüşmeler anonim olacak ve üçüncü şahıslarla paylaşılmayacak. Bu açıdan uzman mülakatlarından daha farklı bir yapısı var. Tezin bulgular kısmında kullanılacak alıntılarda da bu anonimlik prensibine uygun hareket edilecek. Hâlâ kararınız katılmak yönündeyse ve buraya kadar sormak istediğiniz bir soru yoksa ses kaydını başlatabilir miyim?

### **SORULAR-ANA SORU FORMU: (Her iki gruba da sorulacak...)**

- 1) “Orta Doğu” dediğimizde, siz bunun coğrafi sınırlarını nasıl çiziyorsunuz, aklınıza neler geliyor? Hangi ülkeleri içeriyor?
- 2) Sizce, “Orta Doğu” bölgesi/coğrafyası dediğimizde kültürel ve siyasi olarak nasıl bir alandan/coğrafyadan/bölgeden bahsediyoruz? Bu bölgenin siyasi ve kültürel ortamına ilişkin aklınıza ilk gelen şeyler nelerdir?
  - a. Bu özelliklerin “Orta Doğu”ya özel olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Bunlar Orta Doğu’nun nevi şahsına münhasır özellikleri midir?



- b. Orta Doğu'nun bir istisnalığı olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Onu diğer ülkelerle kıyaslanamaz yapan bir yapısı?
  - c. "Orta Doğu"yu bir bölge olarak dünya üzerinde nasıl konumlandırıyorsunuz? Bu bölgedeki ülkelerin birbirleriyle, diğer bölgelerle, ülkelerle ilişkileri konusunda neler söylersiniz?
- 3) Türkiye'yi Orta Doğu'nun neresinde konumlandırıyorsunuz? Sizce Orta Doğu'nun içinde mi, dışında mı? İçindeyse neden içinde, dışındaysa neden dışında?
- a. Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'da önemli bir rolü olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Önemli bir aktör mü, değil mi?
- 4) Türkiye'nin bu bölgedeki ülkelerle olan ilişkisini dış politika açısından değerlendirecek olursanız, 1920'lerden bugüne bu ilişkiyi nasıl okuyabiliriz? Sizin için bu dış politika tarihindeki kritik olaylar nelerdir? Dönemler arasında belirli başlı devam eden örüntüler/ benzerlikler, farklılıklar görüyor musunuz?

**SORULAR-EĞİTİMLE İLGİLİ KISIM (Orta Doğu Uzmanlarına sorulacak...)**

Şimdi sizlere daha kişisel sorular yönelteceğim, kendi deneyimlerinize ilgili. Sizin için uygun mudur?

- 5) Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanına ilginiz nasıl başladı? Ne zaman, nerede, nasıl? Nasıl devam etti? Kısaca sizin alana giriş hikâyenizi alabilir miyim?
- a. Farklı deneyimlerden bahsettiniz, bunlar sizin alana ya da bu alanı çalışmaya ilişkin algılarınızda herhangi bir değişikliğe sebep oldu mu?

- 6) Orta Doğu hakkındaki bilgi kaynaklarınız nelerdir? Orta Doğu'yu nasıl, nerede ve kimlerden öğrendiniz? Herhangi bir araştırma yaparken ya da bilginizi arttırmak için baktığınız kaynaklar nelerdir?
- 7) Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında verilen eğitimi değerlendirmeniz gerekse, Türkiye'de bu alanda yapılan akademik çalışmaları, düşünce kuruluşları ile ilgili deneyimlerinizi, enstitüleri de göz önüne alarak nasıl bir değerlendirme yaparsınız?

**SORULAR-EĞİTİMLE İLGİLİ KISIM (Orta Doğu Uzmanı olmayanlara sorulacak...)**

Şimdi sizlere daha kişisel sorular yönelteceğim, kendi deneyimlerinize ilgili. Sizin için uygun mudur?

- 5) Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanına herhangi bir özel ilginiz var mı? Akademik anlamda bir çalışmanız, aldığınız herhangi bir ders bulunmakta mı?
- 6) Orta Doğu hakkındaki bilgi kaynaklarınız nelerdir? Orta Doğu'yu nasıl, nerede ve kimlerden öğrendiniz, öğreniyorsunuz? Bu konudaki bilginizi arttırmak için baktığınız kaynaklar nelerdir?

Sorularımın hepsi bu kadardı. Katılımınız ve bu sorulara vakitinizi ayırdığınız için çok teşekkür ederim. Ekleme istediğiniz herhangi birşey yoksa, ses kaydı opsiyonunu kapatıyorum, böylece kayıt dışında sormak istediğiniz ya da söylemek istediğiniz şeyler olursa onlar hakkında konuşabiliriz. Çünkü size hoşçakal demeden önce, bu çalışmada ne yapmaya çalıştığım ve şimdiye kadarki gözlemlerim hakkında kısa bir geribildirimde bulunmak istiyorum.

## Appendix B: Chi-Square Distribution Table

Only the ones for the 0.05 alpha level and up to  $df=10$  will be presented, since they are enough for understanding the chi-square results presented in this particular thesis. The values in the table is taken from Gravetter and Wallnau (2013) book, even though the original reference is Pearson & Hartley's 1966 book "Biometrika Tables for Statisticians".

<i>df</i>	<i>Critical chi-square value for alpha 0.05</i>
1	3.84
2	5.99
3	7.81
4	9.49
5	11.07
6	12.59
7	14.07
8	15.51
9	16.92
10	18.31

## Appendix C: Turkish Summary

“Orta Doğu” coğrafi keşifleri müteakip, Avrupalı askeri yöneticiler, jeo-stratejistler ve politikacılar tarafından büyük ilgi görmüş; Alfred Mahan’ın “Orta Doğu”yu bir kavram olarak ortaya atıp, tanımlamaya yönelik adımları sonraki dönemlerde de akademik camiaya önemli bir konu olan “Orta Doğu Neresidir?” sorusunu tanıtmıştır. Yapılan çalışmaların sonunda “Orta Doğu”nun Avrupa merkezci bir kavram olduğu sıklıkla vurgulansa da, Türkçe, Arapça, Farsça, İbranice gibi bölge dillerinde de kavramın İngilizce karşılığının birebir çevirisinin kullanılması son derece dikkate değerdir. Dolayısıyla, bu normalde daha uzak olan bir bölgeyi ve o bölgedeki “öteki”leri tanımlamak için kullanılan şemaların dildeki karşılığı olarak algılanabilir. Dahası, Orta Doğu’yu tanımlamaktaki psikolojik şemalar stereo-tipik, önyargılı görüşler şeklinde de kendini göstermekte, Orta Doğu’nun kötü, geri kalmış, kültürleri ve toplumlarının içsel özellikleri sebebiyle gelişmemiş, Batı olamamış bir yer olduğu düşüncesi ve buna eşlik eden basitleştirme ve genellemelerle dışa vurulmuştur. Edward Said’in şarkiyatçılık argümanlarında da bahsedilen ve politik-hiyerarşik bir altyapıya oturtulan bu durum, bölgeye ilişkin kültürel açıklamalar şeklinde de karşımıza çıkabilmektedir. Bölgenin diğer bölgelerle kıyaslanamaz, nev-i şahsına münhasır ve bir istisna oluşturan bir yapıda olduğu argümanı, bu çalışmada da ortaya koyulduğu üzere, bazen bölgenin anomalilerine dikkat çekerek; bazen de bölgeyi diğer bölgelerden üstün gösterecek özelliklerine vurgu yaparak savunulmaktadır. Orta Doğu’ya ilişkin şarkiyatçı ve/veya istisnacı bakış açılarını yine de bölgeye ilişkin basitleşmiş genellemeler olarak ele almak mümkün olmaktadır. Bu genellemelerin özellikle medya kanalları ile beslendiği ve özellikle Batı’daki medya kanallarının bu basitleştirmeye hizmet edecek şekilde haberlerini çerçeveledikleri literatürde yer almaktadır. Dolayısıyla, “Orta Doğu” denildiğinde nereden bahsedildiği, nasıl bir ortamdan bahsedildiği ve bundan bahsederken kendimizi nerede konumlandığımız da “Orta Doğu neresidir?” sorusunun önemli

bileşenlerindendir. Bu çalışmada da Orta Doğu'ya ilişkin sorular Türkiye-Orta Doğu ilişkisi ve Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'nun neresinde konumlandırıldığı ile de ilgilidir denebilir.

Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'ya göre konumlandırılması, sadece uluslararası ilişkiler açısından iç politika ve jeo-politika açısından da önemli bir konudur. Bazen Orta Doğu ülkeleri arasında düşünülse de Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'nun neresinde olduğu sorusu, siyasi konjonktüre göre de değişen cevaplar sunmaktadır: Orta Doğu ülkesi, köprü ülke, model ülke, Avrupalı ülke v.b. Dolayısıyla, bu tezin etrafında şekillendiği “Orta Doğu neresidir? Nasıl bir yerdir? Türkiye Orta Doğu'nun neresindedir?” sorularına Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında çalışan ve çalışmayan Türk uzmanların nasıl cevap verdiği de önemli bir karşılaştırma sorusudur. 40 kişi ile yarı yapılandırılmış telefon mülakatları yapılarak hazırlanan bu çalışmada, örneklem seçimi ve araştırma prosedürü ile bulgular aşağıda özetlenecektir.

### **Örneklem Seçimi ve Araştırma Prosedürü**

Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında çalışan ve çalışmayan Türk Uzmanlarca Orta Doğu nasıl algılanmakta ve Türkiye Orta Doğu'ya göre nerede konumlandırılmaktadır; bu açıdan iki grup arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar nelerdir?” şeklinde belirlenen araştırma sorusunda operasyonel tanımının yapılması gereken kavramlar bulunmaktadır: Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında çalışmak -ki çalışmanın orijinalinde MES scholar olarak geçmiştir- ve Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında çalışmamak -çalışmanın orijinalinde non-MES scholar- ile neyin kastedildiği; grupların nasıl oluşturulduğu, örneklemin nasıl seçildiği, Orta Doğu algısı ile ilgili olarak nelerin sorulduğu araştırma tasarımı açısından önemli konulardır. Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında çalışan uzman olarak, ya da kısaca MES scholar, olarak tanımlanmak; akademik olarak Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanı ile ilgili olmak, bir Orta Doğu Araştırmaları programında öğrenci ya da öğretmen pozisyonunda yer almak, sivil toplum ve düşünce kuruluşlarının Orta Doğu masalarında çalışmak, Orta Doğuya ilişkin dersler vermek gibi özelliklerden bir veya

birkaçını göstermeyi gerektirmektedir. Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında çalışmayan uzman (non-MES scholar) olarak tanımlanan kişiler ise alan ile akademik olarak ilgilenmemiş olan, ders almamış ya da vermemiş olan, Orta Doğu Araştırmaları alanında herhangi bir entellektüel üretimde bulunmayan kişiler şeklinde belirlenmiştir. Mezun oldukları bölümler, eğitim düzeyleri, yaşları, cinsiyetleri açısından iki gruptaki katılımcıları eşlemeye çalışmanın altındaki temel prensip ise mümkün olduğunca kirletici değişken etkisini azaltmaktır. Aynı zamanda, aynı grup içinde dahi katılımcılar arasında farklılıklar olabileceği öngörüsü ile, alanda daha az deneyimi ve eğitimi olanlar “Junior”, daha eğitilmiş ve deneyimli olanlar ise “Senior” olarak nitelenmiştir. Bu ayrım yapılırken de, akademik hayatlarında doktora yeterlilik sınavından önceki dönemde bulunanlar Junior olarak nitelendirilmiş; doktora yeterliliğini vermiş, tezlerinin bitimine yakın olan ve ders asistanı olarak derslere girmekte olan doktora öğrencileri ile yardımcı doçent, doçent, profesör ünvanlarına sahip olanlar ise Senior kategorisinde değerlendirilmiştir. Yaş aralığı 23-42; kadın erkek oranı 7:3 ve 8:2 olan gruplardaki katılımcı dağılımı ise şu şekildedir: Junior MES ve non-MES katılımcılar 10’ar kişi, senior MES katılımcı 12, senior non-MES katılımcı ise 8 kişidir. Kartopu örneklem yönteminin kullanıldığı araştırmada 6’sı özel olmak üzere 16 farklı üniversiteden ve 3 bölgeden toplam 7 farklı şehirden katılımcıya ulaşılmıştır. Önceden mülakat için randevu alınması amacıyla atılan mail ya da mesajda araştırmacı kendini tanıtmış ve kişinin rızasının olup olmadığını sormuştur. Telefon mülakatları ortalama yarım saat olacak şekilde planlanmış, mülakatta 4 açık uçlu sorunun bulunduğu ana bölüme ek olarak 2-3 tane de kişisel geçmiş bilgisi sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Katılımcılara çalışmanın başında araştırmaya ilişkin bilgilendirme yapılmış, ses kayıt cihazına izin verip vermedikleri ve hâlâ araştırmaya katılmayı isteyip istemedikleri sorulmuştur. Çalışmada kimlik bilgilerinin gizli tutulacağı, herhangi bir şekilde 3. şahıslarla paylaşılmayacağı, çalışmada anonimliğe uygun alıntılama yapılacağı anlatılmıştır. (Bknz. Ekler B: Türkçe Mülakat formu). Mülakat bitiminde katılımcıya teşekkür edilmiş ve

bilgilendirme aşamasında kaydın dışında söylemek ya da sormak istedikleri birşeyin olup olmadığı sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Ayrıca, katılımcılarla o güne kadar edilinen bulgular da paylaşılmıştır.

Araştırmadaki mülakat kayıtları deşifre edildikten sonra her iki gruptan rastlantısal olarak 5 örnek çekilmiş ve içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Sorulara ilişkin çıkan temalar araştırmanın tamamında kullanılacak tabloyu oluşturmak için tanımlanmış, bu şekilde mülakattan sayısal çıktılar elde edilmiştir. Bu çıktılar, verilerin kategorik olması sebebiyle chi-kare ( $X^2$ ) istatistiki testlerine tabi tutularak yorumlanmıştır. Chi-kare yorumlamalarına ek olarak, aynı temanın farklı gruplarda nasıl kullanıldığını ve özellikle de junior ile senior gruplar arasında deneyim ve eğitim derinliklerinden kaynaklanan çeşitli örüntü farklarını göstermek için, de alıntılamalara yer verilmiştir.

## **Bulgular**

Araştırma bulgularını incelerken sorulan soruların sırasında gidilecektir. Hatırlanacağı üzere yarı-yapılandırılmış telefon mülakatı formumuzdaki ilk sorumuz, katılımcıların “Orta Doğu”nun coğrafi sınırlarını nasıl çizdiğini ele almaktaydı. Bu soru ile ilişkili olarak verilen tanımlamalar, ikisi daha dar ve diğer ikisi daha geniş olmak üzere dört temel başlık altında sınıflandırılabilir: Sadece Arap ülkelerinin yer aldığı “Arap Orta Doğusu”, Arap Orta Doğu’suna ek olarak üç büyük Arap olmayan devletin, İran, Türkiye ve İsrail’in alındığı “Arap Orta Doğusu + 3 Arap olmayan devlet” kategorisi, ingilizcede MENA olarak kalıplanmış ve Kuzey Afrika ülkelerinin de yer aldığı “Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika”, ve son olarak 11 Eylül’den sonra sıklıkla gündeme gelen, MENA tanımına sıklıkla Afganistan, Pakistan gibi Asya ülkelerinin de katılmasıyla elde edilen “Büyük Ortadoğu” tanımı. MES scholar katılımcılarından 5’i ilk iki tanımı yani daha dar kategorileri tercih ederken, 17’si daha geniş tanımlar olan MENA ve Büyük Ortadoğu tanımlarını almıştır. Bu noktada non-MES scholar grubundan bir ayrımın olmadığı, bu ikinci grubun da dar tanımlamalarının geniş tanımlamalarına oranının

1:2 (6 kiři ve 12 kiři) olduđu gör÷lmektedir. Dolayısıyla buradan çıkarabileceğimiz sonuç, ister MES ister non-MES scholars grubunda olsun, katılımcıların Orta Dođu'nun coğrafi sınırlarını çizirken daha geniş tanımlamaları zikrettikleridir ki bunda son dönemdeki siyasi konjektürün ve özellikle Amerika menşeli tanımların “Büyük Orta Dođu” tanımının popülerliğinin arttırması ile Arap Baharı'nın Kuzey Afrika ülkelerinde başlamış olmasının etkili olduđu düşün÷lebilir. Bu soruya ilişkin en dikkat çekici bulgu ise Orta Dođu'nun coğrafi sınırlarının çizilmesi sorusuna MES katılımcıların verdiği tepkidir. MES katılımcılar bu tanımlamaya öncelikle “Orta Dođu” tanımının problemleri ile başlamakta, bu tanımın coğrafi bir tanım olmadığı, Avrupa-merkezci bir tanım olduđu, koyulmasında vakti zamanında İngiltere siyasetinin rol oynadığı, tanımın siyasi ve tarihsel olayların etkisi ile değıştiğı ve genişlediğı şeklinde bir eleştiri ile başlamış, bu bölgenin daha çok bir kurgu olduğunu bilmek gereksiniminden dem vurmışlardır. Non-MES scholars grubu ile olan fark ise  $X^2(1, n=40)=13.19$  olup, .05 kritik deđerinde istatistiki olarak anlamlıdır. Bir başka ifade ile, MES scholar grubundaki katılımcıların çođu bölgenin tanımlanmasındaki problemlere değinerek, hatta bu problemlerle başlayarak soruyu cevaplarken, non-MES katılımcılarda ise durum tersinedir, çoğunlukla Orta Dođu tanımının probleminden bahsedilmediğı gibi Orta Dođu sınırları belli, kesin, ve bilinen bir alanmış gibi ifade edilmiştir. Problematik olan bir tanımın bu kadar popüler olması ve sıklıkla kullanılmasına ilişkin bir senior-MES scholar'ın ifadesi önemlidir:

“Buna rağmen biz bu tanımlı kullanıyoruz, çünkü oluşturulmasının üstünden uzun yıllar geçmiş ve artık oturmuş bir tanım, ve hâlâ da bizim Orta Dođu algımızı Batı şekillendiriyor, bizim algımız, Batı'nın tanımlı nasıl değıştirdiğine bağılı olarak değışiyor.”  
(Katılımcı no:19)

Bölgenin farklı şekillerde isimlendirilebileceğine, ama alışılmış olanın “Orta Dođu” olmasından kaynaklanan bir durumun olduđuna dikkat çeken bir diğerkatılımcı (Katılımcı no: 15) Hindistan'da Orta Dođu konusunda vereceğı konferansta oturum başlığının “SWANA” (Güneybatı Asya ve Kuzey Afrika) olmasının kendisini bir



süreliğine de olsa şaşırttığını belirtmiştir. Bölgenin isimlendirilmesinde Avrupa'nın referans noktası alındığına da başka bir senior-MES scholar şu şekilde dikkat çekmektedir:

“Coğrafik olarak Güneybatı asya diye tanımlansa da buna Orta Doğu demek baştan problemli. Kime göre Doğu? Kime göre Orta? Başta İngiltere'nin sonra da Amerika'nın politikacılarının ve akademisyenlerinin isimlendirmesi bu.” (Katılımcı no:17)

Öte yandan, non-MES scholars grubundaki katılımcılar senior veya junior ayrımı olmaksızın bölgeyi “Bildiğim kadarıyla buralar” (Katılımcı no: 40), “Elbette Türkiye'nin Güneyi” (Katılımcı no: 35), “Aklıma gelenler bunlar” (Katılımcı no:26) şeklinde ülkeler üzerinden tanımlamışlardır.

Bu tartışmalar sırasında MES scholar grubu katılımcılarından biri (Katılımcı no:17) sorulması gereken sorunun belki de “Orta Doğu neresidir?” yerine “Orta Doğu nedir?” olması gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Öyle ki bu araştırmada da 2. sorumuz katılımcıların Orta Doğu'nun siyasi ve kültürel ortamda nasıl bir yer olduğunu düşündüklerini irdelemektedir. Daha önceki içerik analizinden çıkan temalara göre yapılan istatistiki analizler, ilk tema olan bölgeyi kaotik bir alan olarak tanımlama noktasında senior MES scholar grubundaki daha deneyimli ve eğitilmiş Orta Doğu Araştırmacılarının bölgeyi çok daha az kaotik olarak gördükleri ve bu konuda diğer tüm katılımcılardan istatistiki önem arz edecek şekilde ayrıştıklarını göstermektedir,  $X^2(1, n=40)=5.20$ . Bu durumda her ne kadar ilk akla gelen tez daha deneyimli gruptaki kişilerin daha yaşlı olacağı ve Orta Doğu'nun daha farklı bir dönemine tanıklık ederek sosyalleşmiş olacakları şeklinde olsa da, hem yaş aralıklarının darlığı, ve yaş gruplarının yakınlığı hem de 1980-2000 arasında bölgeyi etkileyen olayların sürekliliği düşünüldüğünde, bu fark daha çok bir eğitim ve deneyim farkı olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Non-MES scholar grubu bölgeyi daha çok “kaotik bir ortam”, “kanlı bir alan”, “çatışmaların olduğu bir alan”, olarak tanımlarken; senior MES scholar ise Orta Doğu'yu tanımladıkları özelliklerin arasında genellikle kaosu saymamış, bazıları ise kaosu her yerde var olduğunu, Orta Doğu'da kaosu dışında

da şeyler olduğunu, bunu bölgenin bir özelliği gibi göstermenin doğru olmayacağını vurgulamışlardır. Örneğin bir senior MES scholar bu konudaki görüşlerini şu şekilde ortaya koymuştur:

“Fakat ben bölgeyi salt bir kaos ortamı olarak görmüyorum, ve ne zaman bu “Kaynayan Kazan Orta Doğu”, “Orta Doğu Cadı Kazanı” gibi şeyleri görsem sinirleniyorum. Hep Orta Doğu böyle gösteriliyor ve zannımca böyle gösterildikçe de biz onu daha çok böyle algılıyoruz.” (Katılımcı no:16).

Diğer bir tema ise Orta Doğu’nun politik olarak istikrarsız ve otokratik bir yapısının olmasıdır. Burada da istatistiki olarak anlamlı olacak şekilde non-MES scholar grubunun MES scholar grubundan daha çok bu durumdan bahsettiğini görmekteyiz. Çalışmanın orijinalinde “Outlier” olarak tanımlanmış olan, ilgi ve akademik alaka olarak kendi gruplarının daha dışında bir yapı gösteren katılımcılar çıkarıldığında ise durum daha da netlik kazanmaktadır. MES scholar grubundan Orta Doğu’yu istikrarsız ve otoriter bulanlar yarı-yarıyken, non-MES scholar grubundakilerin %88’e yakını bu durumu bölgeyi tanımlamakta kullanmıştır. İki grup arasında dikkat çeken bir diğer nokta ise MES grubunun daha çok bu durumun farklı bölgelerde de var olduğuna yaptıkları vurgudur. Bu durumla ilişkili olarak da sıklıkla değinilen geri-kalmışlık açıklamaları ise iki farklı örüntü ile karşımıza çıkmaktadır: “Ekonomik sebeplerle geri-kalmışlık” ve “Kültürel sebeplerle geri-kalmışlık.” Orta Doğu’yu gelişmemiş, az gelişmiş, geri kalmış bir bölge olarak tanımlayanların yine istatistiki olarak anlamlı olacak şekilde non-MES scholar grubundaki katılımcılar oldukları görülmektedir. MES scholar grubundaki 22 katılımcıdan sadece 5’i böyle bir noktaya değinirken, 18 non-MES scholar katılımcısının 14’ü bölgenin az gelişmişliğinden ve geri-kalmışlığından bahsetmiştir,  $X^2(1, n=40)=12.03$ . Ayrıca, bu ifadenin nasıl kullanıldığı da son derece önemlidir, non-MES katılımcılardan ve outlier junior MES grubundan bir kısmı bölgenin bu özelliğine ilişkin yorumlarını açıklarken “Medyanın gösterdiğine göre” gibi ifadeler kullanırken, bir kısmı da fakir olmaları, Avrupalı olmamaları gibi daha içsel ve kültürel atıflarda bulunmuşlardır. Ortadoğu’da insana verilen değerin az olması, daha güçlü devletlerce geri bırakılmaları, daha güçlü devletlerin Orta Doğu kaynaklarında hakimiyet kurma amacıyla bölge üzerinde

oyunlar oynamaları gibi çeşitli temalar da bu soruya verilen cevaplar arasında görülmektedir. Geri-kalmışlığa ve az gelişmişliğe dair MES scholar grubu katılımcılarının verdiği açıklamalarda bunun geç modernleşme, kapitalist ekonomiye geç eklemleşme, geç özgürlük kazanma gibi daha yapısal ve bölgenin karakteristiği olmayan özellikleri olduğuna değinilmiştir.

Çalışmada ortaya çıkan bir diğer tema ise “çok kültürlülük”tür. Bölgenin çok kültürlü olduğuna değinme açısından MES ve non-MES scholar grupları arasında anlamlı bir fark gözlemlenmemektedir. Bir diğer ifade ile, katılımcılar Orta Doğu alanında uzmanlaşma kıstasından bağımsız olarak da, bölgeyi çok kültürlü olarak görmekte ve anlamlı bir oranda bundan bahsetmektedirler,  $X^2(1, n=40)=8.1$ . Yine de bu çok kültürlülük açıklaması bölgede İslam’ın yaygınlığına yapılan atıflarla ters düşmemektedir. Her iki grupta da İslam ve Orta Doğu’nun birbirlerini çağrıştıran terimler olduğuna ilişkin atıflar sıklıkla yer almıştır. Yalnız bu noktada özellikle MES scholar grubu katılımcıların ifadelerinin daha fazla ayrıntıyı barındırdığı, farklı noktalara değindiği de gözden kaçırılmamalıdır: “Orta Doğu’daki en baskın kültür İslam kültürüdür ama bu İslam Orta Doğu’ya özgüdür şeklinde bir çıkarıma götürmemeli.” (Katılımcı no:10), derken bir diğer MES scholar grubu katılımcısı ise bu ifadeyi başka bir şekilde ortaya koymuştur:

“İslam Orta Doğu’daki ana göstergelerden biridir ama bunu derken de Oryantalist olmayalım. Yani aslında bu biraz da kendini doğrulayan kehanet oldu, oradaki İslam dışı azınlıklar ya İslami bir kimlik kazandı ya da göç ettiler,...,yalnız İslam baskındır derken de burada homojen bir topluluktan bahsetmiyoruz. Tüm Müslümanlar da aynı müslüman değil.” (Katılımcı no:11)

Bu kısmın son analizi ise çoğu zaman karşılaştırılabilirlik, nevi-şahsına münhasırlık ve istisnai olup olmadığı üzerinden bir alan sorgulamasına gidilen Orta Doğu İstisnacılığı teorilerine ilişkindir. Orta Doğu İstisnacılığı “Outlier” olarak belirtilen ve tam da zıt grubun özelliğini belirten katılımcılar analizden çıkarıldığında istatistiki anlamlı bir yapı gösteren  $X^2(1, n=32)=8.12$  bir sorgudur: MES scholar grubundakiler çoğunlukla Orta Doğu istisnacılığının aksi yönünde argümanlar sunarken, non-MES

scholar grubu katılımcıları ise Orta Doğu'nun ya pozitif anlamda ya da negatif ve daha Oryantalist bir bakış açısıyla bir istisna olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. İstisna saymadaki temel etkenler, “Medeniyetlerin beşiği olması, dolayısıyla başka yerlerin benzemesi” olduğu gibi bazen de Avrupa olmamaktan kaynaklanan oradaki toplumlara dair, ya da Orta Doğu’da Batılı güçlerin “oynadığı oyunlara” dair bir yapı göstermiştir. İstisnacılığa karşı çıkma noktasında MES scholar grubu katılımcıları, “Orta Doğu kendini bir istisna olarak göstermiyor ama yabancı müdahaleler onu sanki Orta Doğu bir istisnaymış gibi ifade ediyor.” (Katılımcı no: 9). Bir başka katılımcı ise şu şekilde bir ifadede bulunmuştur:

“Her bölgenin kendine özgü olan ve olmayan karakteristikleri olur,..., bölge çalışmaları açısından önemli bir takım ortak özellikleri olsa da bunu Orta Doğu istisnacılığı noktasına götürmek, ..., akademik araştırmanın değerini azımsamaktır.” (Katılımcı no: 10)

Mülakat formunun Türkiye ile ilgili kısmında ise Türkiye’nin Orta Doğu’nun neresinde konumlandırıldığı, bu konumlandırmanın sebeplerinin neler olduğu, Türkiye’nin Orta Doğu’daki rolü ve katılımcıların Türkiye’nin Orta Doğu’ya ilişkin dış politikamıza yönelik değerlendirmeleri yer almaktadır. Eleştirilse dahi, köprü metaforunun hâlâ popülarlığını koruduğu cevaplarda, Türkiye “tam bir Orta Doğu ülkesidir diyemem”, “köprü bir ülke”, “Orta Doğu ve Avrupa arasında”, “doğusu Orta Doğu olabilir ama batısı Avrupa” gibi tanımlamalarla sıklıkla karşılaşılmış, bir kısım ise “Avrupa ülkesi” olduğumuz ve Orta Doğu’ya sadece komşu olduğumuz şeklinde açıklama yapmıştır. “Türkiye Ortadoğu’dadır” diyenler ve “Ortadoğunun dışında ya da Avrupa ile kesişimindedir” diyenler arasındaki farklılaşmaya baktığımızda ise MES scholar grubundakilerin %70’den fazlasının non-MES grubundakilerin ise %25’den azının Türkiye’yi Orta Doğu’da konumlandıkları görülmektedir ve bu fark anlamlıdır,  $X^2(1, 40)=10.10$ . Her iki grup içinde kültürel ve politik açıklamalar sıklıkla bahsedilmişse de, jeopolitik açıklamalar sunma noktasında gruplar farklılaşmaktadır: Non-MES scholar grubu katılımcılarının %90’a yakını jeo-stratejik açıklamalar sunarken, bu oran MES scholar grubunda yarıdan azdır. Bu durum daha önce bahsedilen, MES katılımcıların Orta Doğu’nun coğrafi

sınırlarının problemlerine vurgu yapması ama non-MES katılımcıların bölgeyi bir kurgudan ziyade, o şekilde varolagelmiş bir coğrafi yapı şeklinde algıladıkları çıkarımımızla örtüşmektedir.

Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'da önemli bir rolü olup olmadığına ilişkin sorgulamada ise istatistiki olarak anlamlı olacak bir şekilde çoğu katılımcının Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'da önemli bir rolü olduğunu söylediği,  $X^2(1, n=38)=17.79$ , lakin alıntılara bakıldığında ise büyük bir çoğunluğun, bu role ilişkin "Bölgenin abisi Türkiye" şeklindeki ifadelerle katılmadığı, sistemde farklı iç ve dış aktörlerin de bulunduğu ve bunların herbirinin önemli rolleri olduğunu ifade etmektedir. Non-MES scholar grubu katılımcılarından %50'ye yakını "Süpergüçlerin Türkiye'nin rolünü engellediği" şeklinde ifadelerde bulunurken bu görüşü savunanlar MES scholar grubunda sadece %10'dan biraz fazladır. Daha önceki jeo-politika ile ilgili temalara benzer şekilde, Türkiye'nin öneminin jeopolitik konumundan kaynaklandığından bahsedenler non-MES grupta istatistiki anlam arz edecek şekilde fazladır. Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu ülkeleri tarafından dışlandığı ve Suriye politikamızın önemimizi kaybetmemize sebep olduğu yönündeki atıflar genel olarak azken, Türkiye'nin diğer Orta Doğu ülkelerine göre daha güçlü ve daha iyi durumda olduğuna ilişkin ifade, non-MES scholar grubunca daha çok zikredilmekle beraber, iki grupta da sık bahsedilen ifadelerdendir. Yine iki grup arasında fark bulunmamasına rağmen, Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu politikasının genellikle Batı odaklı olduğu ve Cumhuriyetin erken dönemlerinde Orta Doğu'yu görmezden geldiği yönündeki görüşlere çoğunluk katılmıştır. Yine de bu görüşleri eleştirenler ve Cumhuriyetin ilk döneminde Orta Doğu'da muhattap bulma güçlüğünden ve o dönemde başlı başına bir aktif politika olmayışından bahsedenler de bulunmaktadır. Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu politikasının pek değişmediğini ya da İsmail Cem döneminde daha çok-sistemli bir yapıya geçtiği şeklinde açıklamalar bulunmaktaysa da, çoğunluk AKP döneminde bir dış politika değişikliğinin olduğunu belirtmiştir. Genellikle "Orta Doğu'ya verilen önemin artması" şeklinde özetlenen bu değişikliğin olumlu ya da olumsuz algılanması ise katılımcıdan katılımcıya grubundan bağımsız

olarak deęişiklik göstermektedir. Bu durum, özellikle Türkiye ile ilgili sorularda iki grup arasında pek ayrışmanın yakalanmaması ile de birlikte, Türkiye'nin yorumlanmasında siyasi görüşün ve öğrenim hayatı boyunca sunulan siyasi söylemin etkisi olarak düşünülebilir.

Sonuç olarak, Orta Doęu Araştırmaları alanında alınan eğitim ve bu alandaki uzmanlaşma, Orta Doęu tanımının sorunsallaştırılması, tanımın Avrupa-merkezci ve problemli bir kurgu olduğuna değinilmesi açısından bir farkındalık oluşturmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu alanda uzun süre eğitim almış ve deneyime sahip olan katılımcılar, daha az stereo-tipik algılamalarda bulunmakta; alanın kaotik, siyasi olarak istikrarsız ve az-gelişmiş olmasına ilişkin genellemelere ve Oryantalist bakış açısından anomilere odaklanan bir istisnacılık anlayışına daha mesafeli durmaktadırlar. Söz konusu Türkiye ve Orta Doęu ilişkisi olduğunda ise, Türkiye'nin Orta Doęu politikasının daha Batıcı, Cumhuriyetin ilk dönemlerinde özellikle Orta Doęu'yu göz ardı edici olduğu ve bu durumun 2000'lerin sonunda ve AKP döneminde değıştięi genel kanı olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Benzer şekilde her ne kadar Türkiye'nin "Orta Doęu'nun patronu ve abisi" olduğuna ilişkin, dięer aktörleri yok sayarcasına ifadeleri bulunan söylemler eleştirilse de genel olarak Türkiye'nin dięer Orta Doęu ülkelerine nazaran daha gelişmiş ve daha güçlü olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Bunun dışında Türkiye ve Orta Doęu'ya ilişkin ifadelerde MES ve non-MES scholar gruplarının farklılaştığı en önemli nokta yine jeopolitik konuma atfedilen önem olarak düşünülebilir. MES scholar grubu katılımcılarının aksine, non-MES grup daha çok bu jeostratejik konumdan bahsetmiştir: Türkiye'yi Avrupa ve Orta Doęu arasında bir köprü olarak tanımlayan bu anlayış, iki grubun bilgi kaynakları irdelendiğinde, jeo-politięe önem veren resmi-askeri-siyasi söylemin uzun yıllar Türk eğitim sisteminde okutulan dersler ve medyadaki yansımalarının bu duruma sebep olduğu düşünülebilir.

## Appendix D: Tez Fotokopisi İzin Formu

### ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enformatik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>

### YAZARIN

Soyadı : GÖKYAR  
Adı : MERYEM  
Bölümü : ORTA DOĞU ARAŞTIRMALARI

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : THE PERCEPTION OF “THE MIDDLE EAST”  
IN TURKEY: HOW DO TURKISH SCHOLAR OF MIDDLE EAST STUD-  
IES AND OTHER DISCIPLINES PERCEIVE THE AREA?

**TEZİN TÜRÜ** : Yüksek Lisans ☒ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ☒

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ:**