

TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS IN THE POST-ARAB SPRING PERIOD: A
HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGICAL/FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS IN THE POST-ARAB SPRING PERIOD: A HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGICAL/FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

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This thesis offers a Historical-Sociological (HS) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) of the development of Iranian-Turkish relations in the post-Arab Spring period from 2011-2016. This thesis seeks to explore the changes and continuities that have affected Turkish-Iranian relations by looking through the prism of Historical Sociology and Foreign Policy Analysis. Firstly, this thesis will explore the background to the Turkey-Iran relationship from 1979-2011 and outline the historical path dependencies that have shaped this relationship including political, economic, trade, energy, regional and strategic. Following this, this thesis will apply the HS/FPA framework in the analysis of two case studies: 1) the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis from 2011-2016 and 2) the Iranian nuclear issue from 2006-2015. Through an analysis of these two case studies, this thesis will identify how historical continuities, domestic considerations as well as regional and international influences affect the relationship between Iran and Turkey. From an analysis of these two case studies, it will establish that such an approach provides a more detailed and sophisticated understanding of Turkish-Iranian relations beyond the already established scholarly discourse.

Keywords: Turkey, Iran, Syrian Crisis, Iran Nuclear Issue, Historical Sociology

ÖZ

ARAP BAHARI SONRASINDA TÜRKİYE-İRAN İLİŞKİLERİ: BİR TARİHSEL- SOSYOLOJİ VE DIŞ POLİTİKA ANALİZİ

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Türkiye-İran ilişkilerindeki gelişmeleri Tarihsel-Sosyoloji ve Dış Politika Analizi bağlamlarında irdeleyen bu çalışma, Arap Baharı sonrasındaki (2011-2016 yılları arasında) ikili ilişkileri şekillendiren değişimleri ve süreklilikleri ele almaktadır. Tezde öncelikli olarak, 1979-2011 yılları arasında Türkiye-İran ilişkileri incelenmektedir. Bu çerçevede iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin seyrini şekillendiren tarihsel faktörler (siyaset, ekonomi, ticaret, enerji, bölgesel politikalar ve stratejik politikalar) analiz edilerek yakın döneme ilişkin genel bir arka plan sunulmaktadır. Bu bölümü takiben, yine Tarihsel-Sosyoloji ve Dış Politika Analizi bağlamlarında detaylandırılan iki örnek durum çalışması sunulacaktır: 1) Arap Baharı ve 2011-2016 yılları arasında Suriye Krizi, ve 2) 2006-2015 yılları arasında İran Nükleer Programı. Bu örnek durum çalışmaları ışığında tarihsel devamlılıkların, iç siyasetin ve bölgesel ya da uluslararası faktörlerin ikili ilişkileri nasıl etkilediği ortaya konacaktır. Bu analizler, söz konusu yaklaşımın, Türkiye-İran ilişkilerine dair halihazırdaki akademik söylemin ötesine geçecek daha detaylı ve derin bir kavrayış olanağı sunduğunu gösterecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, İran, Suriye Krizi, İran Nükleer Programı, Tarihsel-Sosyoloji

To My Old Man and Sisters...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
BCM	Billion Cubic Metres
BPD	Barrels Per Day
CSCO	Caspian Sea Cooperation Organisation
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FM	Foreign Minister
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HDP	People's Democratic Party
HS	Historical Sociology
HSIR	Historical Sociology in International Relations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IHH	Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief
ILSA	Iran-Libya Sanctions Act
IR	International Relations
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISIS/IS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JEC	Joint Economic Commission
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party
KNC	Kurdish National Council
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MES	Middle East Studies
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPs	Middle Power states

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NPT	Nuclear Proliferation Treaty
NWFZ	Nuclear Weapons Free Zone
PJAK	Kurdistan Free Life Party
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PM	Prime Minister
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD	Democratic Union Party
RCD	Regional Cooperation for Development
TAV	Tepe Akfen Vie Airport Holding
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
TRR	Tehran Research Reactor
UN	United Nations
UNAOC	United Nations Alliance of Civilisations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
YPG	People's Protection Units

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Turkey and Iran are both key actors and regional players in the Middle East and wider Eurasian geography. Both countries have common ‘geopolitical locations, historical heritages, populations and rich cultures’.¹ The history between them however has been marred by differences in their security priorities, ideological and political confrontation, and economic cooperation and trade. Despite the differences mentioned above, the relationship between the states has been cordial, with each state emphasising their territorial sovereignty and legitimacy while maintaining civil relations. It is important to study Turkey and Iran’s relations because both states are key and essential actors within the region and greater Middle East. However, they stand apart from their Arab neighbours due to different cultural, linguistic and historical heritages.

Iran and Turkey have been both affected by the same forces and ruptures which have influenced the currents of change within the Middle East over the last hundred years. Each state has once been a great empire but now jostle for power within their respective regions, yet are not part of any. However, these two countries have a profound effect on the domestic, regional and international machinations of the Middle East, Eurasia, Central Asia and the global arena. In studying the relations between Turkey and Iran, one can observe and garner a greater understanding of the micro and macro historical and geopolitical processes that have shifted and shaped the region, as well as Turkey and Iran themselves.

The study of Turkey and Iranian relations is not new to the field of International Relations (IR) and Middle East Studies (MES). Many scholars have framed the relationship between these two significant actors in the Middle East as a ‘grand civilizational’ rivalry that stretches back to the days of the great empires of earlier

¹Süleyman Elik, *Iran-Turkey Relations 1979-2011: Conceptualising the dynamics of politics, religion and security in the middle-power states* (London: Routledge, 2012), 1.

generations. From the Turko-Persian alliance that buttressed the assimilation of Anatolia and Persia from Arabic assimilation to the historical rivalry between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, scholars have tried to demonstrate the continuities and conflicts that have occurred in the past as a reason for the continued legacy of relations in modern times. With the rise of the nation state and the study of IR, scholars have aimed to present the relationship between Iran and Turkey as one that is conflictual, due to its ancient historical and geopolitical concerns, as well as its religious differences originating from the Shia/Sunni divide. These approaches provide a shallow and lackadaisical analysis to understanding the complexity of the Turkish-Iranian relationship. Instead of looking towards the ancient past, the relationship must be analysed from the birth of both countries as nation-states especially since the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Dominant IR theories such as Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism have provided sound analysis of Turkish-Iranian relations. These theories have been applied to understanding the complex relationship between these two non-Arab countries in the region. While these theories have provided a solid understanding of the key indicators of explaining conflict and cooperation in Turkey-Iran relations, they are constrained by their own theoretical boundaries. There is too much focus on security, or economics, or norms but neither can bring a more rounded approach to understanding this complex relationship. This thesis seeks to go beyond the scope of these traditional IR theories in the study of the Turkish-Iranian relationship and explore other factors which influence and affect these relations. The question this thesis proposes is: how can the application of Historical Sociology add to the academic discourse and understanding of Turkish-Iranian relations in the post-Arab Spring period?

This thesis seeks to explore and discover the changes and continuities that have affected Turkish-Iranian relations by looking through the prism of Historical Sociology and Foreign Policy Analysis. However, applying this framework to the whole of Turkish-Iranian relations is beyond the scope of this thesis, so it will focus the analysis on two case studies: 1) the Arab Spring and Syrian crisis, and 2) the

Iranian Nuclear Issue. Through an analysis of these two case studies, this thesis will identify whether there are historical continuities, domestic considerations as well as regional and international influences that affect the relationship between Iran and Turkey. Several sub-questions will seek to further interrogate how the prism of Historical Sociology and Foreign Policy Analysis (from now on known throughout this thesis as HS/FPA) can help our understanding of Turkish-Iranian relations:

1. What are the historical continuities and historical path dependencies in the Turkey-Iranian relationship?
2. To what extent does domestic considerations affect the foreign policy of Turkey and Iran in their respective spheres of influence, as well as in terms of their bilateral relationship?
3. How does the interaction of regional and international events/changes/relationships affect Turkish-Iranian bilateral ties?
4. How does the interaction of history, domestic, regional and the international, constrain or enable Turkish-Iranian relations?
5. How does HS explain the 'how' and the 'why' of the complexity of Turkish-Iranian relations?

The application of the HS/FPA framework to the main thesis question and sub-questions will provide a succinct analysis of Turkish-Iranian relations in the post-Arab Spring period and further develop the academic discourse on this topic. This chapter will firstly provide a literature review of the main academic and theoretical discussions of Turkey-Iranian relations from 1979 to the present day. Secondly, it will outline and discuss the theoretical framework of HS/FPA that this thesis will apply in the study of Turkish-Iranian relations and to the two case studies. Thirdly, there will be a discussion of the methodology of this thesis and finally, an outline of how the thesis will be structured.

1.1. Literature Review

Since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Turkish-Iranian relations have been in a state of flux- moving between cooperation and/or competition. There are however consistent themes and issues that run through the discussion of this relationship. Due to the highly specific nature of the subject matter that this thesis seeks to investigate,

a discussion of the theoretical and empirical arguments surrounding the issues in Turkish-Iranian relations in the Middle East and surrounding neighbourhood will be analysed. This literature review will be broken down into five main topics spanning from 1979 to 2011. These topics are *International Politics*, *Ideology*, *Regional Politics*, *Energy Politics* and *the Kurdish Issue*. By exploring each of these five topics and how the academic discourse frames these relations, a greater understanding of the complexities of the Turkish-Iranian relationship will be illustrated. This literature review, however, does not seek to explore every discussion regarding Turkish-Iranian relations. By analysing key theoretical discourses within these topics in Turkish-Iranian relations from 1979 to 2011, this literature review hopes to discover the larger narrative on these relations and how the outcome of this thesis will fit into the wider academic discourse.

1.1.1. International Politics - Middle Power States and Omni-Balancing

The literature around Turkey and Iran's role in the international system originates from the discussion of several theoretical frameworks that centre around the discipline of International Relations.² Most of the academic discourse focuses a Neorealist approach to understanding Turkey and Iran's place in the anarchic system of the Middle East. Rather than looking at the greater literature on realism, client-patron relationships and negative balancing theory³ for understanding this dynamic, two key theoretical approaches are discussed in the literature which seek to give a greater understanding of Turkish-Iranian relations and the global system in the post-1979 period. The first is the concept of Middle Power states (MPs) and secondly the idea of Omni-balancing.⁴ MPs according to Elik, have 'neither been formally nor

² For more information on these theoretical discussions see Philip Robins, "The Foreign Policy of Turkey," in *The Foreign Policy of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "The Foreign Policy of Iran," in *The Foreign Policy of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014).

³ Negative balancing refers to a state's strategies or diplomatic efforts aiming to undermine a rival's power. See Elik, 73.

⁴ Eduard Jordaán, "The concept of a middle power in international relations: distinguishing between emerging and traditional middle powers," *Politkon* 30, no. 2 (2003); Raymond Hinnebusch and

explicitly evaluated within the concept of the international power structure'.⁵ Elik emphasises that the use of Middle Power framework can help characterise the unique place of Turkey and Iran in the Middle East and the global order. MPs are characterised by their own 'systemic, regional and domestic sentiment [and] they possess some commonalities that distinguish them from great power and small power behaviour.'⁶ Hinnebusch and Ehteshami agree with this approach stating that MPs in the Middle East 'may rank as no more than middle powers in the global system but are key actors in their regional systems,'⁷ however, are still determined by similar systemic rules in the international system.

Middle Eastern MPs exhibit common trends and differences dissimilar to smaller powers in the region and the Eurasian security complexes. Six primary attributes define MPs behaviour:

- 1) *MPs act as key actors in the region*
- 2) *MPs organise the regional polarity system in their sphere of influence/history*
- 3) *MPs are able to play the role of regional balancer*
- 4) *MPs have the ability to resist superpower intervention or make bargains with the balance of power*
- 5) *MPs are not able to entrench a coalition*
- 6) *Balance of Power is able to contain MPs revolution in the region.*⁸

They are also characterised by their use of niche diplomacy.⁹ Such use of this framework can help decipher Turkish-Iranian relations as well as relations with other

Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a penetrated regional system* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁵ Elik, 22.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Raymond Hinnebusch, "Foreign Policy in the Middle East," in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2014), 7.

⁸ Elik, 23-26.

⁹ Andrew F. Cooper, "Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview," in *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War*, ed. Andrew F Cooper (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1997), 6-7.

great powers or superpowers. Elik argues, Turkey and Iran have 'no economic or institutional capacity to expand their influence in the region, because superpowers and great powers do not allow middle-power states any hegemonic expansion in the regional system.'¹⁰ One example is the US insistence on economic sanctions to stop the possibility of Iran's nuclear program and contain its influence in other regions of the Middle East.

According to this logic, MPs only have two options to maintain their sovereignty in the international community- they either end up as a client state or a negative balancer. MPs, however, can maintain a semblance of independent foreign policy by playing off other powers to promote their own power. Turkey's 'zero problems with neighbours'¹¹ policy in its relations with Iran (despite US sanctions) illustrates this. While this MPs framework provides an excellent analysis of the international situation, it still perceives the state as the sole entity in deciding relations. Although domestic politics and state-society relations are discussed by Elik, it only deals with how each state contains social movements within these states and inevitably fails to address how state-society relations shape foreign relations between Iran and Turkey. It does not thoroughly expand the way that international and domestic politics affects these relations.¹² Adopting a Historical Sociological approach allows for a more robust analysis.

Contrary to this, is the concept of Omni-balancing. Unlike looking through the lens of a Neo- realist framework where Iranian and Turkish relations are defined by

¹⁰ Elik, 178.

¹¹ Burak Cop and Özge Zihnioğlu, "Turkish Foreign Policy under AKP Rule: Making Sense of the Turbulence," *Political Studies Review* (2015); Laura Batalla Adam, "Turkey's Foreign Policy in the AKP Era: Has there been a shift in the axis?," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (2012); Özlem Demirtas-Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP's Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur," *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 1 (2014); Meliha B. Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East under AKP," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011).

¹² Elik, 180-81.

power politics,¹³ Omni-balancing seeks to analyse international and regional relations by bridging both domestic politics and realist models. Steven David's model of Omni-balancing posits that weak states are more likely in the process of 'defending their sovereignty, [will] often [seek] protection by band wagoning with an external power'.¹⁴ In the case of Turkey, its alliance with NATO (and as an extension the US) has been used to maintain regime stability from external threats.¹⁵ Omni-balancing theory interweaves three international relations theories: 'rational actor', 'irrational actor' and 'capital accumulator'.¹⁶ While Omni-balancing accentuates the domestic roots of foreign policy, David concedes 'that elites in Third World countries must balance both internal and external threats, and it logically follows that in regimes where external threats are significant and internal ones manageable, the priorities shaping foreign policy may tilt towards coping with the external area'.¹⁷ However, the opposite also applies.

Hinnebusch and Ehteshami look further into this by saying that David's 'Omni-balancing theory' represents the three underlying 'system survival requisites' which shape foreign policy. These being 'geopolitically shaped national interests (ambitions) and external threats, domestic politics and internal ideological legitimization needs; and economic needs'.¹⁸ This does not mean that decisions in foreign policy are either rational or irrational, but threats to either of the above-mentioned requisites are dominant in decision makers calculations for their engagement in the regional and international political sphere. Hinnebusch and Ehteshami's work looks mainly at the relations between Syria and Iran, but Robert

¹³ For more information on Iranian power politics and Neo-classical Realist interpretations of Iranian foreign policy see Thomas Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

¹⁴ Steven David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 233-35.

¹⁵ During the Cold War, Soviet expansionism was seen a major external threat to Turkish territorial integrity.

¹⁶ Robert Olson, *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions* (California: Mazda Publishers Inc., 2001), 203.

¹⁷ Hinnebusch and Ehteshami, 19.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Olson argues that Omni-balancing offers the most appropriate explanation for understanding Turkish-Iranian relations.¹⁹

Olson contests that geopolitical and geostrategic concerns of Turkey and Iran in the 1990s and 2000s are clearly associated with their economic needs. This, therefore, means that compromise must be sought in dealing with the internationalisation of their domestic issues (i.e. Kurdish, Islamist or internal dissidence), or their position as states in the regional and international system could be weakened.²⁰ This is also a consistent theoretical framework for understanding that the threat of Kurdish separatism outweighs any external threat that perhaps Iran could pose with nuclear weapons.²¹ Both these theoretical frameworks provide a strong understanding of how Turkish-Iranian relations fit in International Relations but fail to address why there is such a flux in the relationship between cooperation and conflict between the two powers. This also originates from Neo-realism's inability to divert away from the notion of the 'rational unitary state' and address other forces that change and mould foreign policy relations.

1.1.2. Ideology- The Ideological Battle between Islamism and Secularism in Turkish-Iranian Relations

Rather than focusing on Constructivism, this section will focus solely on ideology and how it is discussed in Turkey-Iranian relations. Ideology plays an intrinsic part in understanding the complexity between these two neighbours. It must be remembered that with the 1979 Iranian revolution, the region and balance that had existed was fundamentally altered. Ideology would play an essential part in how Iran conducted its relations with the region and the world. Several key books on Iranian foreign policy outline the critical linkages that occurred in Iranian foreign policy

¹⁹ See Robert Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics* (California: Mazda Publishers Inc., 2004).

²⁰ *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*, 74-75.

²¹ Tolga Demiryol, "The Limits to Cooperation Between Rivals: Turkish-Iranian Relations since 2002," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 4, no. 2 (2013): 123.

after the revolution in terms of ideology and Iran's outlook in the region.²² Ramazani points out that ideology played an essential part in Iranian foreign policy conception in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. This originates from Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas of 'neither West, nor East, but the Islamic Republic' and how the concept of 'independence' and 'Islamic universalism' took priority over Iran as a 'nation-state'.²³ Iranian political and foreign policy identity in this period originates from what Maloney points out as a combination of 'Persian nationalism, Islamism and anti-imperialism'²⁴ which adds complexity to its relationship with the region and the international order. Iran's revolutionary discourse would therefore try to be exported around the region mainly in terms of its ideological underpinnings.²⁵ Despite its importance as a critical theme, the literature remains quite sparse on discussing ideology in relations between Turkey and Iran immediately after the Iranian Revolution.

Several articles and books have critiqued and reviewed ideology around this period but these texts rarely highlight the importance of ideology in how relations were conducted in the 1980s. The key theme that runs throughout this literature is the growing fear of Islamism within Turkish society and how this affects the relationship between the two states. According to Robert Olson in his book *Turkey-Iran Relations, 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*, Turkey's major concern (other than Kurdish Nationalism) in the post-Iranian revolution period, derives from the idea that the Iranian revolution and its subsequent Islamist currents

²² For more information on Iranian foreign policy and revolutionary ideology see Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921: The Pahlavis and After* (Essex: Pearson Education, 2003); Ali Akbar. Rezaei, "Foreign Policy Theories: Implications for the Foreign Policy Analysis of Iran," in *Iran's Foreign Policy: From Khatami to Ahmadinejad*, ed. Mahjoob Zweri and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 2008); Ehteshami; K.L. Afrasiabi, *After Khomeini: New Directions in Iran's Foreign Policy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

²³ R.K Ramazani, *Independence Without Freedom: Iran's Foreign Policy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 79; Imad Salamey and Zanoobia Othman, "Shia Revival and *Welayat Al-Faqih* in the Making of Iranian Foreign Policy," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 12, no. 2 (2011).

²⁴ Suzanne Maloney, "Identity and Change in Iran's Foreign Policy," in *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, ed. Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 102.

²⁵ Ibid.

would infect the body politic of Turkey.²⁶ This fear of increasing Islamism within Turkey, Bulent Aras argues, comes from one of the main tenants of Iranian foreign policy which entails 'exporting the Islamic revolution in Turkey by all possible means at its disposal, including support of illegal "overly Islamist Groups."'²⁷

Nilüfer Narli describes the post-Iranian revolutionary period as having important sociological implications for the Muslim population in Turkey. Essentially, she states that the 'revolution has a dramatic impact on the nascent Turkish Islamist movement... provid[ing] it with a comprehensive blueprint, a political theory and radical Islamist underpinnings.'²⁸ The revolutionary character of Islam purposed by Khomeini raised the hopes of many Islamists in Turkey. H. Akın Ünver explains this by stating that the ideology of political Islam was thought to 'blur the nationalist differences between the two countries, acting as a common ground for Turkish and Iranian Islamists to address the problems of their society and the Muslim world in general.'²⁹ The idealistic approach to monolithic pan-Islamism is one approach that lost support between Turkish and Iranian Islamists as the radicalism and excesses of the Iranian regime grew, especially during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88. Inevitably, this led to 'ideological confrontation' not just between pro-Khomeini and anti-Khomeini groups in Turkey but also a growing divide between Sunni fundamentalists and Shiite radical groups (such as Turkish Hezbollah).³⁰

This ideological confrontation is not the only barrier to preventing more linkages between both Turkish and Iranian Islamists. Both sides are also limited in terms of

²⁶ Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*, 1.

²⁷ Bülent Aras, "Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Iran: Ideology and Foreign Policy in Flux," *Journal of Third World Studies* 28, no. 1 (2001): 107; Nilüfer Narli, "Cooperation or competition in the Islamic world : Turkish-Iranian relations from the Islamic Revolution to the Gulf war and beyond," *Cemoti* 15, no. 1 (1993): 273.

²⁸ 267.

²⁹ H. Akın Ünver, "How Turkey's Islamists Fell out of Love With Iran," *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 4 (2012): 104.

³⁰ Kylie Baxter and Shahram Akbarzadeh, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East : the roots of anti-Americanism* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Özgür Üşenmez, "Islamic Movements and the Idea of Revolution: Comparison of Egypt, Iran and Turkey," *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 66 (2015).

the Sunni-Shia divide. Despite the Islamist discourse being ‘fluid’ and ‘pan-Islamic’, in times of controversy between the two countries, each state ‘revert[s] to their historical symbolisms’ seeing it as an opportunity to enhance the Sunni-Shia status quo.³¹ This is also due to the way how Shi’ism and its utilisation of Islamic ideology in Iranian foreign policy ‘is by nature political and tends to attach much importance to gaining and maintaining power’.³² In the case of Iran, this is emphasised more often than not through Iranian support of Shia groups and political parties throughout the region against what it is deemed a ‘Sunni’ controlled region.³³ Turkish and Iranian Islamists also have to contend with differing ideological understandings in the way they have been shaped by historical processes and regional/global alliance networks. The anti-Americanism of Iranian Islamists and their activities has at times directly contradicted those of Turkish Islamists, who have utilised US support to push their political agenda in Kemalist Turkey as we see later with the rise of the Erbakan and Erdoğan governments.³⁴

Ünver explains this point further arguing that since Turkey had ‘long been a bastion of secularism in the Muslim World...such credentials had rendered Kemalism the natural ideological nemesis of post-revolutionary Iran’.³⁵ Suleyman Elik reinforces the ideological differences between Iran and Turkey but points out that both Ataturk and Khomeini’s ‘alternative regime myths’ both represent a ‘new imaginary state identity’ against Western imperialism.³⁶ Khomeini’s alternative regime myth, however, challenges the Kemalist model of secularist modernisation for Islamic

³¹ Akin Ünver, 107.

³² Mahmood Monshipouri, "Iran's foreign policy and Islamic ideology," in *Iran's Foreign Policy Since 2001: Alone in the World*, ed. Sam Razavi and Thomas Juneau (London: Routledge, 2013), 67.

³³ Maaïke Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 117-18.

³⁴ See Cihan Tuğal, *Passive revolution: absorbing the Islamic challenge to capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); *The fall of the Turkish model: how the Arab uprisings brought down Islamic liberalism* (London: Verso, 2016); Yıldız Atasoy, *Turkey, Islamists and Democracy: Transition and Globalization in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).

³⁵ Despite this ideological clash, three days after the Islamic revolution’s ‘Victory Day’, Turkey recognised the new Islamic republic. See Akin Ünver, 103.

³⁶ Elik, 40.

countries in the Middle East. Elik emphasises that this alternative regime theory makes 'relations complicated in the Middle East political system'.³⁷

For the secular and military establishment in Turkey, post-revolution Iran became synonymous with 'backwardness and religious reactionism.'³⁸ In addition, Aras argues that the Turkish establishments' representation of Iran is mainly tainted due to its aims to legitimise itself by opposing external and internal 'others'.³⁹ As a consequence, this has led to abnormal foreign policy behaviour where non-material aspects and ideological orientations take priority in bilateral relations between Iran and Turkey.⁴⁰ This portrayal of the 'other' plays well for domestic politics but leads to the ideological confrontation that many scholars argue is the crux of this relationship.

Although the imperative for ideological confrontation was strong, Bayram Sinkaya illustrates that despite the ideological fragmentation between these two states, the Iran-Iraq War from 1980-1988 diverted Iran's 'revolutionary energy' to Iraq, Lebanon and the Gulf. This meant that inevitably Turkish-Iranian relations became pragmatic in the 1980s as each side would be driven primarily by economic ties rather than ideological confrontation.⁴¹ Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar dispute this claim, arguing that towards the late 1980s there was increasing ideological confrontation between the two states, leading to accusations of involvement by Iran in Turkish domestic politics (a common accusation throughout Turkish-Iranian relations).⁴² The literature does not discuss at length the role of ideology in the early

³⁷ Ibid., 41.

³⁸ Akın Ünver, 104.

³⁹ Aras, 118-19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 119.

⁴¹ Bayram Sinkaya, "Turkey-Iran Relations in the 1990s and the Role of Ideology," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2005): 2.

⁴² High-level Iranian officials continuously protested the secularist policies of the Kemalist establishment in this early period. The Turkish establishment saw these protests as continued interference in its domestic politics. Tension were exacerbated by a series of diplomatic crises between 1988-1990 including the expulsion of diplomats and the Salman Rushdie affair. For more

part of Turkish-Iranian ties, despite the importance of explaining how ideology played an essential part in Iranian foreign policy after the revolution in the whole region. The literature however does provide a necessary background to understand the beginning of how Islamism and its role in Turkish politics and society affected the Turkish-Iranian narrative in the 1990s.

Such an analysis based on ideology, however, is too simplified when understanding the complexity of Turkish-Iranian relations. Both Turkey and Iran are very convoluted in their way of constructing relations with each other, the region and international community. This ideological approach to understanding relations fails to consider the pragmatism and geopolitical understanding of the relationship. By prioritising ideology, it fails to give agency to other actors within each state. An ideological focus neglects how the relationship is constructed through bureaucratic processes (such as the factions and institutions within the Iranian and Turkish establishments), social and domestic underpinnings, and through the prism of security and ‘national interest’.⁴³

The 1990s brought the issue of Islamic fundamentalism to the forefront of the political discourse, and many scholars argue that this period is where we see ideology come into play within the Turkish-Iranian relationship. Sinkaya points out that the ‘ascendency of political and radical Islam emerged as a negative factor for relations between Turkey and Iran’⁴⁴ and ideological confrontation reached its peak between the two countries. The literature focusing on this period emphasises the importance of internal developments within Turkey and Iran that influenced the role of Islamism within each state and how it was perceived as a ‘threat’.⁴⁵ Of course, the

information on this discussion see Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, "Uneasy Neighbors-Turkish-Iranian Relations Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution" *Middle East Policy* 27, no. 3 (2010): 106.

⁴³ Ramazani, 160.

⁴⁴ Sinkaya, 4.

⁴⁵ For Turkey, these threats included the rise of ‘sharia’ and the sponsorship of Islamist groups by Iran. On the other hand, Iran’s perceived threat of Turkey originated from an increase in Turkish Nationalism that spawned fears of possible Pan-Turkism in Iranian sovereign territory.

culmination of the perceived threat perception of Iran's influence on Islamist groups shifted the Turkish government's stance towards them. Özden Zeynep Oktav argues that with the advent of the *Refah* (Welfare) Party this ideological divide between the two states showed signs of being bridged.⁴⁶ Developments such as the *Sincan*⁴⁷ incident however, brought a clear divide between the ideological orientation of the Turkish military and the Turkish government of the time inevitably leading to the 1997 'post-modern'⁴⁸ coup and the downfall of the Islamist government of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. It is apparent to see how the question of Islamism is at the forefront of the academic discourse in the discussion of Turkish-Iranian relations as a primary cause for conflict between Turkey and Iran in the 1990s.

The election of President Hashemi Rafsanjani in Iran saw a shift away from the focus on ideology in the way relations were conducted. Ramazani argues that during Rafsanjani's presidency and his liberal opening of Iran's economy, Khomeini's transnational Islamic worldview was downplayed and as such more importance was given to Iran's integration into the world economy and political system.⁴⁹ This shift of balance of influence between 'ideology and pragmatic considerations in favour of the latter' was mostly influenced by the end of, and devastation caused by, the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-88.⁵⁰ With the 1999 election of President Seyed Mohammad Khatami, the balance shifted further towards pragmatism. Sinkaya points out though

⁴⁶ Özden Zeynep Oktav, "Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations," *Perceptions* 9, no. 3 (2004): 104-05.

⁴⁷ On the weekend of 31st of January to the 2nd of February of 1997, *Sincan* staged a 'Jerusalem Memorial Night' or 'Quds night'. *Sincan's* mayor Bekir Yıldız told the crowd to not be afraid to be radical and support sharia. The Turkish Armed forces saw this as an attack on the secular values of the Turkish Republic. On the 4th of February, tanks rolled down the main Atatürk Boulevard in the centre of the town. It would signal the start of the 1997 'post-modern coup' and the end of the Erbakan government. The Turkish Armed Forces accused PM Erbakan of aligning himself with the mullahs in Iran and allowing Iranian influence in Turkish politics.

⁴⁸ It was defined as the 'post-modern coup' due to the government being forced out without dissolving the parliament or suspending the constitution.

⁴⁹ R.K Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Independence, Freedom and the Islamic Republic," in *Iran's Foreign Policy: From Khatami to Ahmadinejad*, ed. Mahjoob Zweri and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 2008), 9; John L. Esposito, "Introduction: From Khomeini to Khatami," in *Iran at the Crossroads*, ed. John L. Esposito and R.K Ramazani (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 10.

⁵⁰ Ramazani, *Independence Without Freedom: Iran's Foreign Policy*, 166.

that due to the ascendancy in politics of this pragmatist/reformist wing in Iran under President Khatami and the Iranian revolution reaching its ‘Thermidor’ period, a much more moderate approach was supported between the two states.⁵¹

At this stage there was indeed a rationalisation of politics between the two states away from the previous ideological discord observed in the 1990s. Sinkaya adds that Khatami’s concepts of ‘détente with neighbours’ and his ‘Dialogue among Civilizations’⁵² effectively aimed to soften Iran’s image in the international community and tone down Iran’s revolutionary rhetoric ‘that challenged the legitimacy of the ruling regimes [in the Middle East] and the regional status quo’.⁵³ By modulating the ideological aspects in this relationship, there was an effective passivity between the two states. With the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, pragmatism would still exist between the two states including Iran’s Nuclear Issue⁵⁴ until they ‘soured as a consequence of the Syrian Civil War’⁵⁵ and the ideological and geopolitical difference between the two states in 2011.

The literature in the 2000 period onwards argues a very different position from previous periods. Scholars are quick to claim that with the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, there is a fundamental shift in the relationship between Turkey and Iran.⁵⁶ Due to the AKP’s obvious Islamist leanings and

⁵¹ Despite accusations of Iranian funding to radical Islamist groups and suspicions of covert activities in Turkey, the Demirel administration pursued a more pragmatic and moderate approach to Turkish-Iranian relations. See Sinkaya, 7.

⁵² Ghoncheh Tazmini, *Khatami's Iran: The Islamic Republic and the Turbulent Path to Reform* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2009), 83; Warnaar, 127.

⁵³ Bayram Sinkaya, "Rationalization of Turkey-Iran Relations: Prospects and Limits," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 2 (2012): 139.

⁵⁴ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweri, "Iran under Ahmadinejad: When Crisis becomes a Pattern," in *Iran's Foreign Policy: From Khatami to Ahmadinejad*, ed. Mahjoob Zweri and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 2008), 143.

⁵⁵ Warnaar, 125.

⁵⁶ See E Fuat Keyman and Onur Sazak, "Turkey and Iran: The Two Modes of Engagement in the Middle East," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 17, no. 3 (2015); Yasin Kaya, "'Turkey's Turn to the East' and the Intra-Class Contradictions in Turkey," *Global Discourse* 2, no. 2 (2013); Galip Dalay and Dov Friedman, "The AK Party and the Evolution of Turkish Political Islam's Foreign Policy," *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 2 (2013).

ideological similarities, it is easy to place ideology at the centre of the rapprochement between the two states in this period. Sinkaya indicates that it was quite the opposite, and argues that from 2002 both Turkey and Iran decided to sideline their ideological differences and focus on economic and cultural interactions. As such there was a 'rationalisation' of relations.⁵⁷ Stein and Bleek state that with the onset of the AKP's 'zero problems with neighbours'⁵⁸ foreign policy, economic interdependence and soft power relations took priority over presenting Iran as the 'other', therefore a decrease in viewing the relationship through the prism of ideology.⁵⁹ The discourse focuses on how Turkey under the AKP in the first two terms of their government adopted a much more flexible and less ideological approach to its relations with Iran.

This same discourse continues until the Arab Spring of 2011 where it is highlighted that there is another ideological schism between the two states (and Islamist groups within each state). Consequently, the sectarian discourse between Sunni-Shia becomes an issue in relations between the two Islamist dominated governments in their bilateral relations.⁶⁰ One of the major flaws of this literature lies in the fact that a majority of academic sources review the ideological concerns of the relationship only from the Turkish side rather than addressing the Iranian aspect of the discourse as well. What is keenly established is that the role of ideology over the last 40 years somewhat influenced how relations were conducted but as will be discussed in the chapter two of the thesis, Turkish-Iranian relations never reached a critical breaking point. In the post-2011 period, we can see the strain on this relationship when

⁵⁷ Sinkaya, "Rationalization of Turkey-Iran Relations: Prospects and Limits," 139.

⁵⁸ This policy is the corner stone of the AKP's foreign policy doctrine and was created by former PM Ahmet Davutoğlu. Davutoğlu was also chief foreign policy advisor of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan before he was appointed foreign minister in 2009. As an academic, he outlined his foreign policy doctrine in several writings, most important of which is his book *Strategic Depth*. His doctrine argues that Turkey has 'strategic depth' because of its unique history and geographical position in the world. In terms of 'zero problems with neighbours', his doctrine calls for resolving all bilateral issues between Turkey's neighbours and seek soft power approaches to regain trust and its position as a 'central power' in the international community.

⁵⁹ Aaron Stein and Philip C. Bleek, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: From "Friends with Benefits" to "It's Complicated"," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 4 (2012): 139.

⁶⁰ Akın Ünver, 107.

ideology is again apparent in the way politics is conducted by both Turkey and Iran particularly, when it comes to influence within the Middle East.⁶¹ Despite its importance in the literature, we must remember that ideological concerns are not the sole motivator of conflict or cooperation in this relationship.

1.1.3. Regional Politics - Regional Hegemony, Threat Perceptions and Economic Interdependence

Regional politics plays a significant role in how each state identifies itself and secures its interests in the Middle East region and Eurasia. Each state faces parallel concerns as 'they inhabit what they perceive to be a hostile region where real and imaginary enemies abound.'⁶² The literature that surrounds the debate on Iran and Turkey relations in terms of regional politics focuses on three key themes- *Regional Hegemony, Threat Perception* and *Economic Interdependence*. Firstly, the argument around hegemony and the hegemonic system in the discussion of International Relations, centres on the concepts of leadership and dominance in which Gilpin describes as 'an unequivocal hierarchy of power and an unchallenged dominant or hegemonic power.'⁶³ Power dynamics are enforced through a state's capability to dominate through military and economic superiority. Regarding the Middle East region, Hennesbuch postulates from a Neorealist perspective that 'MENA states operate in a particularly anarchic regional system, with broader conflicts and irredentism built in at its formation.'⁶⁴

⁶¹ E. Fuat Keyman, "Turkish foreign policy in the post-Arab Spring era: from proactive to buffer state," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 12 (2016); Elizabeth Monier, "The Arabness of Middle East regionalism: the Arab Spring and competition for discursive hegemony between Egypt, Iran and Turkey," *Contemporary Politics* 20, no. 4 (2014); Fred Dallmayr, "Radical Changes in the Muslim World: Turkey, Iran, Egypt," *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (2011).

⁶² Henri J. Barkey, "Iran and Turkey: Confrontation across the Ideological Divide," in *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey, and Iran*, ed. Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Oles M. Smolansky (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 147.

⁶³ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 144-45.

⁶⁴ Hennesbusch, 17.

S. Gülден Ayman asserts that regional hegemons (although sharing the main traits of global hegemons) are dominant states in regional subsystems who 'possess power sufficient to dominate subordinate states'.⁶⁵ Meliha Benli Altunışık offers a more concise understanding of how in the Middle East, this quest for regional hegemony is and has been apparent for some time. She argues, Turkey and Iran are just two of several regional powers in the Middle East who continue to compete for power and influence. Regional powers are not characterised solely by their power capabilities in terms of hard and soft power but also 'with respect to their willingness to act as a regional power and, more significantly, their acceptance in the region.'⁶⁶ Altunışık emphasises that none of the regional powers in the Middle East has possessed the above attributes for a sufficient period to secure regional hegemony. Therefore, each power competes to limit the rise of other regional powers emerging as regional hegemons, while at the same time enhancing and protecting their positions.⁶⁷

Ayman argues that in the case of Iran and Turkey both tend to confront hegemonic tendencies with the Middle East by engaging with neighbours through common security perspectives.⁶⁸ These perspectives outline a very realist understanding of Turkish-Iranian relations in the 1980s and post-Cold War period, particularly regarding the newly formed former Soviet Republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. This geographical and geo-economically strategic area is debated in the literature to be a ground where Iran and Turkey vied for ideological, political and economic influence in the post-Cold War era without much success. Their regional competition in the area has led to renewed tension between Turkey and Iran particularly in its dealings with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ S Gülден Ayman, "Regional Aspirations and Limits of Power: Turkish-Iranian Relations in the New Middle East," *Etudes helléniques/ Hellenic Studies* 20, no. 1 (2012): 87.

⁶⁶ Meliha B. Altunışık, "Regional Powers in a Transforming Middle East," in *IEMeD Conferences* (Barcelona: IEMeD, 2014), 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gülден Ayman, 102.

⁶⁹ Ertan Efeğil and Leonard A. Stone, "Iran and Turkey in Central Asia: Opportunities for Rapprochement in the Post-Cold War Era," *Journal of Third World Studies* 20, no. 1 (2003); Robert

Differing from the previous realist understandings, Süleyman Elik explores the concept of threat perceptions between Turkey and Iran which influence their regional policy. Elik looks at how in geopolitical terms Turkey and Iran fit within the greater region. Although Turkey borders the frontiers of Europe, it is also part of the Middle East through shared borders, historical traditions and political and cultural conditions.⁷⁰ This has led to strong relations with neighbouring Arab states and Israel. Iran also shares its borders with the Gulf States and the Caspian Sea but also has strong relations with countries in the Levant.

Elik argues that each state has mutual threat perceptions both internal and external that shape their regional policy. Both Iran and Turkey perceive each other 'as the source of internal threat, whereby opposite standings enhance the continuity of the distrustful relationship'.⁷¹ For Turkey, its perception of the Iranian threat stems from two major factors: 1) If Iran becomes domestically unstable, the sovereignty of Iran and domestic stability must be maintained at all costs and 2) Iranian attempts to interfere in regional affairs and issues (therefore destabilising the region) will not be accepted.⁷² The second problem is quite important in understanding Turkish-Iranian confrontation in the Syrian Civil War which will be discussed further in this thesis.

Iran's threat perceptions and distrust in regional politics towards Turkey originates from Turkey's 'Euro-Atlantic vision and quasi-alliance relationship with Israel and Azerbaijan'.⁷³ Regarding regional alliance networks, Elik outlines that there are two key types of regional security alignment for Turkey and Iran in the Middle East and Eurasia: aligning with less threatening powers in the region or establishing a

Olson, "The 'Azeri' question and Turkey-Iran relations, 2000–2002," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, no. 4 (2007).

⁷⁰ Elik, 67.

⁷¹ Ibid., 65.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

collective security arrangement with superpowers.⁷⁴ Domestic politics within Turkey and Iran play a significant part in securitising threat perceptions. When each state securitises these threat perceptions for domestic gain, it influences changes in regional policy between these two countries and the region.

Aras and Karakaya draw on securitisation theory arguing that domestic threat perceptions (such as Kurdish nationalism and Islamism) are successfully externalised when securitised. When these issues are securitised, however, there is a conflict between the two states. The de-securitisation of these threat perceptions has allowed more flexibility in terms of both Turkey and Iran's regional policy.⁷⁵ This has been argued to have occurred more often during the governance of the AKP where there has been a de-securitisation of the main domestic issues, therefore, bringing down regional hostility between Turkey, Iran and other Middle Eastern states.

One of the other thematic trends in the discussion of regional politics and Turkey-Iran relations is the concept of economic interdependence. The literature focuses on the liberal political economy argument, that despite the ideological and regional confrontations between Turkey and Iran, economic cooperation between the two states has remained pragmatic since the Islamic Revolution. Regional economic conditions have influenced Turkey and Iran to work together in terms of economic advancement.⁷⁶ This argument highlights that even during periods of crisis such as the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War and the two Gulf Wars, Turkey and Iran have found ways to maintain economic relations, even bolster them. Since the AKP has come to power, there has been a significant increase in economic ties and trade. With Iran's

⁷⁴ Some examples are the Turkey-Israel alignment, Iran-Syria alignment and the US-Turkey strategic relationship.

⁷⁵ Bülent Aras and R. Karakaya Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 5 (2008): 495.

⁷⁶ Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Iran: From Engagement to Containment," in *America's Challenges in the Greater Middle East: The Obama Administration's Policies*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Nilüfer Karacasulu and Irem Aşkar Karakır, "Iran-Turkey Relations in the 2000s-Pragmatic Rapprochement," *Ege Akademik Bakış/ Ege Academic Review* 1 (2011); Gawdat Bahgat, "Iran-Turkey Energy Cooperation: Strategic Implications," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 4 (2014); "Geopolitics of Energy: Iran, Turkey, and Europe," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2015).

isolation from the international order, Turkey has acted as a major trade route for Iran since sanctions were implemented.⁷⁷

This argument argues that increased economic cooperation will inevitably lead to more political cooperation. The literature discusses at length the benefits of former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's "strategic depth" and "zero problems with neighbours" regional policy.⁷⁸ The political economy argument is a typically liberal understanding of relations and has many flaws. Serhan Ünäl and Eyüp Ersoy argue that the focus on bilateral relations between Turkey and Iran always explore the implications of the geopolitical problems rather than geo-economics, and this leads to difficulties in understanding the full scope of relations. Despite the push for greater economic relations, there are three key 'asymmetries' in relations between Turkey and Iran: the primacy of geopolitics, primacy in energy relations and primacy in natural gas. These three asymmetries mean that while economic relations will continue to be used to their advantages, due to these asymmetries and continuing distrust, political relations will remain cordial.⁷⁹ Overall the arguments that are presented in the literature around regional policy stem from the ideas of power relations and threat perceptions.

Although Turkey and Iran seek greater economic cooperation in the region, geopolitics and the securitisation of domestic threat perceptions inevitably lead to friction in bilateral relations. In addition, there are further barriers that make it difficult for Iran to engage economically with Turkey. Iran's isolation from the international economic order, particularly in regard to its continuing use of its nuclear program as a tool of diplomacy has frustrated this process.⁸⁰ Since 2005

⁷⁷ Özlem Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East Under the AKP—Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighboring Zones," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011): 596.

⁷⁸ Bülent Aras, "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy Revisited," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 4 (2014).

⁷⁹ Ünäl Serhan and Eyüp Ersoy, "Political Economy of Turkish-Iranian Relations: Three Asymmetries," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 5, no. 2 (2014): 143-44.

⁸⁰ See Juneau, 197-202.

under the Ahmadinejad administration, the Iranian economy has suffered a lack of investment, ageing industrial capabilities in its aviation and oil & gas industries, as well as rampant corruption.⁸¹ These factors convey that the Iranian economy and its infrastructure is difficult to navigate for Turkish companies.⁸²

1.1.4. Energy Politics - Dependency and Imbalance

Another theme that this literature review explores is the discussion around energy politics between Turkey, Iran and the neighbouring region. Economic dependency between the different states of the region entails that the ‘major function of foreign policy must be to secure resource flows from external sources.’⁸³ In the case of Turkey and Iran, energy politics is observed in the academic discussion predominately in the post-Cold War period, particularly regarding relations in the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea neighbourhood.⁸⁴

According to Elik, ‘the Great Game between the great powers and regional powers has also been played out in pipeline politics and their relative gain in the oil and natural gas consortium in Caspian Sea management’.⁸⁵ Turkey has sought to promote itself as an energy hub and corridor for gas outflows to Europe from the region, as the EU aims to wean itself off Russian gas.⁸⁶ Iran, conversely, has searched for reliable markets for its resource industry which has been crippled by US and UN sanctions. Turkey’s push for influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus has not only alienated Iran but also brought it into contention with Russia. Despite this, in Central Asia and the Caucasus ‘Turkey, Iran and Russia are engaged in a

⁸¹ Warnaar, 55-56.

⁸² Juneau, 67-69.

⁸³ Hinnebusch, 5.

⁸⁴ See for more information Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order* (California: Praeger, 2010).

⁸⁵ Elik, 129.

⁸⁶ Please refer to Elin Kinnander, *The Turkish-Iran Gas Relationship: Politically Successful, Commercially Problematic* (Oxford: Oxford Energy Institute, 2010).

competition that requires crisscrossing alliances⁸⁷ where each try to counteract the other's influence on the region. Energy cooperation, however, looks to fall within the parameters of a win-win process of relative gains.

In terms of bilateral relations, Turkey's limited oil and gas deposits and increasing demand for energy means that it is primarily an importer of energy resources. Turkey's strategic place between Europe and the gas/oil rich areas of the Caspian Sea, however, makes it a possible energy hub. Iran's wealth of hydrocarbon resources makes an attractive partner for energy cooperation for Turkey as it seeks to secure stable oil and gas supplies. The relationship, however, has not run smoothly. Omid Shokri Kalehsar argues that even since the signing of the first energy agreement between the two states under PM Erbakan, the relationship has been marred by mistrust and periodical disputes. Turkey has charged Iran 'with bad faith due to hiking prices and cutting off the flow during winter'⁸⁸ (in effect meaning that Iran is an unreliable partner). The imbalance in trade and energy dependency between Turkey and Iran leads to this being an unequal relationship.

A lack of security measures of pipelines (which mostly run through active Kurdistan separatist territory), instabilities in the Strait of Hormuz and the international sanctions regime against Iran only adds to this tension. What should be a win-win and positive sum for both states is marred by continuing mistrust and unreliability.⁸⁹ Although the literature states that this is the biggest arena for mutual cooperation between the two states, it is once again beholden to geopolitical, security and ideological whims of either state. A lack of reforms for market liberalisation within the two countries and an increasing democratic deficit means that energy relations may be the sole factor for cooperation between Turkey and Iran in the near future.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Barkey, 165-66.

⁸⁸ Omid Shokri Kalehsar, "Energy Factor in Iran-Turkey Relations," *Energy & Environment* 26, no. 5 (2015): 784.

⁸⁹ Serhan and Ersoy, 151.

⁹⁰ Kalehsar, 787.

1.1.5. The Kurdish Issue - The Securitisation and Externalisation of Domestic Politics

The issue of Kurdish nationalism has shaped and changed the dynamics of both Turkey and Iran's foreign and domestic policy since the end of the First World War. It is very complex, showing at times conflict and cooperation on the issue. The Kurdish issue has been framed as a security issue for Turkey and Iran both internally and externally. In the post-Iranian revolutionary period, Kurdish politics are a fundamental issue for both Iran and Turkey.⁹¹ According to Ünver, in the immediate post-Islamic Revolution period, Iran 'actively tried to destabilise Turkey's secular regime by arming and supporting the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), hoping to soften Turkey's secularist resistance to the ideals of the Islamic Revolution'⁹². To the Turkish establishment, however, the threat of an unstable Iran also drew the possibility of an increase in Kurdish nationalism.

An agreement signed in 1984, prohibiting any activity within their borders which was detrimental to the security of the other state, inhibited the use of Iranian territory for border operations by PKK insurgents. According to Olson, towards the end of the 1990s, the primacy of economic concerns by both Turkey and Iran meant that the saliency of the Kurdish question had diminished.⁹³ The emergence of an autonomous Kurdish region in Northern Iraq in 1991 gave both countries the opportunity to cooperate on stopping the possibility of a Kurdish State forming on their borders. The summary of the literature looks predominately at how Turkey-Iran bilateral ties have been focused primarily through the prism of security regarding the Kurdish Issue, internally and externally. A majority of the literature is rather descriptive

⁹¹ For more information on Kurdish groups in the wider region and Turkey-Iranian defence spending see Rodi Hevian, "The Main Kurdish Political Parties in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey: A Research Guide," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 17, no. 2 (2013); Sertaç Hopoğlu and Serkan Künü, "Türkiye Ve İran: İkili Ticaret Ve Savunma Harcamaları Temelinde Bir Analiz," *Kafkas Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 7, no. 12 (2016).

⁹² Akın Ünver, 103.

⁹³ Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*, 8.

(such as Robert Olson's three books on the Kurdish issue between Iran and Turkey spanning from World War I to 2004).⁹⁴

The main body of the literature, however, centres on Turkey and Iran's role in Northern Iraq particularly with the onset of the First Gulf War in 1991. Aras argues the issues between Turkey and Iran regarding the Kurdish issue are not considered important in terms of Turkey's national interest but are in fact the result of internal disputes and domestic security problems within Turkey.⁹⁵ The resurgence of Kurdish cultural identity in the 1990s represented to the Turkish state and its official ideology 'an enemy within'.⁹⁶ This led to the Turkish ruling elite playing upon nationalist tendencies within the population to frame the 'other' and blame the ills of society on external countries such as Iran. Iran is usually accused of assisting the Kurds to undermine the 'oneness' of Turkish society.⁹⁷

Aras argues that the ruling elite within Turkey has traditionally held hostage foreign policy by securitising domestic politics.⁹⁸ In the AKP period, there was a cooling of tensions and de-securitisation of the Kurdish issue towards more economic engagement with the region. The capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 and the change in the discourse away from addressing it as a terror/regional development issue to a cultural identity issue assisted the de-securitisation of the Kurdish issue.⁹⁹ Throughout the 2000s, Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) made progress in bolstering economic potential and combatting PKK fighters in the Qandil

⁹⁴ Olson uses his Omni-balancing theory to explain Turkey-Iranian relations in terms of the Kurdish issue which was explored earlier in this literature review. See *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*; *Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*; "Relations among Turkey, Iraq, Kurdistan-Iraq, the Wider Middle East, and Iran," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (2006); *The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations* (California: Mazda Publishing Inc., 1998).

⁹⁵ Aras, "Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Iran: Ideology and Foreign Policy in Flux," 111.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Robins, 316.

⁹⁸ Aras and Karakaya Polat, 499-500.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 499.

mountains. Though as we will see later from 2011 onwards, the Kurdish issue can once again be securitised domestically and exported externally into regional politics.¹⁰⁰

This literature review has explored the five main thematic topics discussed in Turkey-Iranian relations. Much of the literature is descriptive particularly in regards to the economic ties and discussion around the Kurdish issue. There is however a wider range of theoretical discussions when we explore broader concepts such as domestic politics, ideology, regional and international politics. One of the many criticisms of the literature around bilateral relations is that there is a focus on IR related theoretical frameworks to justify how to analyse the changing relationship between these states but not a focus on ‘how states and states systems mutually constitute each other over time.’¹⁰¹ A Historical Sociological approach to these relations could cover some of the gaps in the discourse and will be explored further in this thesis.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

A combined theoretical framework of Historical Sociology (from now on known as HS) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) will be explored in this thesis to unravel the complexity and shifting dynamics of Turkish-Iranian relations. The use of this combined theoretical approach allows for a more elaborate framework to discuss other important factors that affect the relationship between states, and that legitimate foreign policy decisions (such as the role of domestic agency, the state, the ‘international’, ideology and religion, conflict, movements and transnational actors). Approaching state-based relations from a HS/FPA perspective allows us to move away from the already established theorisations of Turkish-Iranian relations that were discussed in the literature review of this chapter. Using this HS/FPA combined

¹⁰⁰ Rabia Karakaya Polat "The Kurdish Issue: Can the AK Party Escape Securitization?," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 3 (2008); Pinar Bilgin, "Making Turkey's Transformation Possible: Claiming 'Security-speak'—not Desecuritization!," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 7, no. 4 (2007).

¹⁰¹ Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policy of Middle East States* (Boulder: Lynne-Reinner, 2014), 352.

framework, this thesis hopes to discover new aspects in this relationship in the post-Arab Spring period between Turkey and Iran that can add to the discourse. This section will explain each separate theoretical framework and after that explain how the bridge between these frameworks of HS and FPA will best explain the hypothesis of this thesis and its contribution to International Relations and Middle East Studies.

The study of International Relations and state relations has been dominated for many decades through the lens of Waltzian Neorealism, where states have been viewed as ‘unitary’ actors in a consistent and unchanging ‘anarchic system’.¹⁰² With the onset of a ‘sociological turn’ in IR, Neorealism has been criticised for its ‘*chrono-fetishism*’ and ‘*tempocentrism*’¹⁰³, due to its inability to consider that both the ‘domestic and international realms are thoroughly interpenetrated and mutually constituted’.¹⁰⁴ Historical Sociology aims to ‘unravel the complexity that lies behind the interaction between social action and social structures’¹⁰⁵ and is a reaction to Neorealism and general IR theory’s ‘ahistoricism’.¹⁰⁶ Hobson and Lawson state that:

¹⁰² For more information on the ‘anarchic system’ and the fundamentals of Neorealism please refer to Waltz, 66.

¹⁰³ ‘Chrono-fetishism’ is a form of ahistoricism in which the present is thought to be explainable by looking at only present variables while, ‘tempocentrism’ is a mode of ahistoricism which conveys the illusion that all international systems are equivalent (isomorphic). See John M. Hobson, "What's at stake in 'bringing historical sociology back into international relations'? Transcending 'chronofetishism' and 'tempocentrism' in international relations," in *Historical Sociology of International Relations*, ed. Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12-13.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰⁵ John M. Hobson, George Lawson, and Justin Rosenberg, "Historical Sociology," in *The International Studies Encyclopaedia*, ed. Robert A. Denemark (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 5.

¹⁰⁶ For a more in-depth look at the discussions of Critical Theory and Historical Sociology in IR see Andrew Linklater, "Towards a critical historical sociology of transnational harm," in *Historical Sociology of International Relations*, ed. Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John M. Hobson, "The historical sociology of the state and the state of historical sociology in international relations," *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998); Fred Halliday, "For an international sociology," in *Historical Sociology of International Relations*, ed. Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John M. Hobson, "For a 'second wave' Weberian historical sociology in international relations: a reply to Halperin and Shaw," *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998); Justin Rosenberg, "Why is There No International Historical Sociology," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006); Richard Lachmann, *What is Historical Sociology?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013); Sandra Halperin, "Shadowboxing: Weberian historical sociology vs state-centric international

*International factors are juxtaposed, conjoined and interrelated with domestic processes with the aim of finding patterns that explain important historical processes including the general and regional crises that provoke wars, processes of state formation, varieties of capitalist development, forms of imperialism and so on.*¹⁰⁷

HS allows us to engage with non-state forces and problematize the basic moral, spatial and institutional forms of IR. Mabee argues that Historical Sociology can be ‘a boon to IR by both adding in the grand forces of modernity developed in classical social theory and by providing a rich approach to history not in terms of the provision of universal laws, but in unravelling the dynamic relationship between processes of continuity and change.’¹⁰⁸ Not only this, but the combination of historical and theoretical analysis allows scholars of IR to examine the ‘production, reproduction and transformation of social forces and institutions over time’.¹⁰⁹ This allows us to direct analysis away from the ‘static, snap-shot approaches to a more vibrant account that can make sense of dynamism of social action and social change’.¹¹⁰ HS has opened the IR discipline, allowing history to become an effective tool kit in understanding the changing socio-historical forces in the international

relations theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998); George Lawson, "The Promise of Historical Sociology in International Relations," *International Studies Review* 8, no. 3 (2006); Stephen Hobden, *International Relations and Historical Sociology: Breaking down boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1998); Martin Shaw, "The historical sociology of the future," *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998); George Lawson, "Historical Sociology in International Relations: Open Society, Research Programme and Vocation," *International Politics* 44 (2007); Hedrik Spruyt, "Historical sociology and systems theory in international relations," *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998); Stanley H. Hoffmann, "International Relations: The Long Road to Theory," *World Politics* 11, no. 3 (1959); Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1990); Fred Halliday, "Three Concepts of Internationalism," *International Affairs* 64, no. 2 (1988); "The great anomaly," *Review of International Studies* 27 (2001); Gurinder K. Bhambra, "Historical sociology, international relations and connected histories," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2010).

¹⁰⁷ Hobson, Lawson, and Rosenberg, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Bryan Mabee, "Levels and Agents, States and People: Micro-Historical Sociological Analysis and International Relations," *International Politics* 44 (2007): 432.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Lawson, "The Promise of Historical Sociology in International Relations," 414.

system and how each state has been affected by the forces of modernity, institutions and ‘uneven and combined development.’¹¹¹

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) on the other hand has also grown out of a reaction to the dominance of Neorealism and its analysis of the ‘state’. FPA allows scholars to study the ‘conduct and practice of relations between different actors, primarily states in the international system’.¹¹² Through understanding ‘diplomacy, intelligence, trade negotiations and cultural exchanges’ which form the foundations of the relations between states and international actors, FPA seeks to give more credence to human agency rather than structural factors. FPA (although still a field of enquiry within the IR discipline) focuses more on foreign policy process and state conduct rather than foreign policy outcomes.¹¹³ This means scrutinising the structures of decision making, its actors, their motivations and the broader context of both domestic and international politics.¹¹⁴ By bringing in sub-national actors and highlighting the role of human agency within the domestic and international realms, FPA has enhanced how foreign policy is analysed and how decisions are made.

Unlike its Neorealist cousin, Classical FPA methodology and its subsequent literature fails to address its own conception of the ‘state’ - ‘reduc[ing] it to nothing more than the various actors responsible for foreign policy making.’¹¹⁵ Instead FPA

¹¹¹ See Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008).

¹¹² Amnon Aran and Chris Alden, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1.

¹¹³ Ibid., 1-2.

¹¹⁴ For more detailed analysis of Classical FPA literature see Bruce E. Moon, "The State in Foreign and Domestic Policy," in *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in Its Second Generation*, ed. Laura Neack, Jeanne A.K. Hey, and Patrick J. Haney (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995); Stephen G. Walker, "The Intergration of Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations," in *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders, and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations*, ed. Stephen G. Walker, Akan Malici, and Mark Schafer (Oxon: Routledge, 2011); Jeanne A.K. Hey, "Foreign Policy in Dependent States," in *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in Its Second Generation*, ed. Laura Neack, Jeanne A.K. Hey, and Patrick J. Haney (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995); Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2007); Marijke Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹¹⁵ Aran and Alden, 9.

becomes too focused on leadership and becomes preoccupied with domestic politics in its analysis, failing to address the historical role of the ‘international’ in forming policy decisions. This has meant that the state has been equated as an ‘arena’ and not an ‘actor’ within the system. FPA’s inability to address this lack of a ‘theory of the state’ means that in analysing foreign policy ‘the state is no more than the sum of the pressures exerted by external and domestic forces.’¹¹⁶

While each of these two theoretical approaches aids our understanding of the complex relations between states, bridging these two methods of HS and FPA to our analysis can address the theoretical gaps. Therefore, a combined theoretical framework to analysing foreign policy between Turkey and Iran will be addressed in this thesis. Combining these two approaches is not a new concept, and many scholars have helped coalesce these two differing methods into one connected theory. Teschke and Cemgil seek to address this divide by arguing that by using dialectical thinking from the Marxist tradition between the two disciplines, one can ‘bridge the gap by incorporating foreign policy as a crucial site for the active drawing together of and re-articulation of multiple influences from the domestic and the foreign into a Historical Sociology of International Relations (HSIR).’¹¹⁷

Shannon Brincat promotes the merits of using a social-dialectical approach to emphasise the role of human-agency and understand change within multi-level social conditions.¹¹⁸ Ayla Göl has focused this more in terms of Turkish development and its historical processes throughout its history. She argues that this combined framework must be developed away from ‘either the level of the individual leader or domestic politics.’¹¹⁹ In understanding the complex historical processes associated with foreign policy making in states in the Middle East particularly Turkey, ‘critical

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹¹⁷ Benno Teschke and Can Cemgil, "The Dialectic of the Concrete: Reconsidering Dialectic for IR and Foreign Policy Analysis," *Globalizations* 11, no. 5 (2014): 605.

¹¹⁸ Shannon Brincat, "Towards a social-relational dialectic for world politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 4 (2010): 680.

¹¹⁹ Ayla Göl, *Turkey facing east: Islam, modernity and foreign policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 8-9.

theory on historical change, the international political theory on nationalism and historical sociology about behaviours of states'¹²⁰ should be taken into consideration.

Fred Halliday has put forward the best attempt to bridge the gap between these two approaches when looking at the Middle East. He argues that such an approach is very useful in understanding foreign policy in the Middle East and redefining the conception of the 'state'. According to Halliday this 'analysis of foreign policy is often a matter not so much of reducing or qualifying the role of the state, as of seeing the state as an actor which, through its influence on society, creates the context for the formation of foreign policy and which establishes and implements that policy'.¹²¹ Rather than addressing the notion that the 'state' is a unitary entity, this combined approach allows us to see the state as an 'institution of coercion and appropriation which operates on two levels, the internal state-society dimension and the external state-state dimension.'¹²²

Historical Sociology therefore provides a more constructive means of analysing the state and foreign policy that comes forth from it. Foreign policy is therefore a product of bureaucratic, personal processes but also the interests and clashes of class and the state.¹²³ Not only this but the nation-state is the most prominent form of political modernity which shapes the political identity of countries. State's decisions in foreign policy are understood to 'represent the temporary equilibrium of the interplay of social agents that are situated in different spatial and temporal contexts

¹²⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹²¹ Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 36.

¹²² Ibid., 37.

¹²³ Ibid.

with diverse motivations'.¹²⁴ It is essential that in understanding foreign policy that the 'state' must be placed in a wider historical context and structure.¹²⁵

What is important about this framework and how it allows us to understand international relations of the Middle East comes down to its ability to create a 'theory for the state' that is fluid and addresses how foreign policy from within the state is formed due to internal and external influences. The Middle East has been shaped by a combination of its historical legacy, structure, and agency of its pre-colonial, colonialist and modernist eras. The interaction of these factors means that its political identity within the international system is shaped by its historical processes. In addition, foreign policy is also an expression of political identity. In the Middle East region, a HS 'theory of the state' demonstrates that 'states' (although wielding considerable autonomy) are not '100 percent free in pursuing policy'.¹²⁶

Halliday argues that this state autonomy lies at the heart of foreign policy conduct because it gives states in the Middle East 'room for manoeuvre with regard both to the societies over which they rule and to other states'.¹²⁷ States in the Middle East are an expression and reflection of the 'character of the regional states themselves, of their responses to global powers and structural processes, and of their real, if restricted, room for manoeuvre in the international context'.¹²⁸ It also provides a tool-kit in analysing a host of other issues that are commonplace in Middle Eastern states such as 'conflict and its causes, the role of ideology and religion, transnational actors and movements [and] the role of domestic change within society'.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Clemens Hoffmann and Can Cemgil, "The (un)making of the Pax Turca in the Middle East: understanding the social-historical roots of foreign policy," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (2016): 3.

¹²⁵ Göl, 46.

¹²⁶ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 42.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 37.

Foreign policy analysis adds to HS because it recognises that the state is somewhat autonomous from external actors and the society it rules over. Alden states that this is important when looking at Middle Eastern states because they embody the notion of the ‘institutional state’ particularly since the 1950s in the post-colonial period. Institutional states in their foreign policy implementation ‘rely primarily on the foreign policy tools that accompanied the rise of the modern state: modern diplomacy, embodied by the institution of [an] ambassador; exertion of military force by modern armies; economic instruments to consolidate inter-state relations or impose sanction[s]; balancing power and its dynamics via systems of alliances.’¹³⁰ These demonstrate the foreign policy tools used in FPA in combination with HS. These however allow scholars to also illustrate that despite the appearance of independence in the forming of foreign policy decisions in the international system (such as alliance forming or declaring war), that in fact, their choices are shaped and framed by both the domestic and international environments.¹³¹ For example, supreme national interest and security are powerful paradigms which allow the expression of ‘autonomy’ by Middle Eastern states, but the foreign policy role played by the coercive apparatus (i.e. the military and internal security services) is the chief embodiment of this autonomy of the ‘state’.¹³²

In terms of Turkish-Iranian relations, the use of this combined theoretical framework can assist to decipher the nature of ‘why’ and ‘how’ foreign policy decisions are constructed in a historical context. Hoffman and Cemgil use HS in terms of understanding Turkish foreign policy in the AKP period. Through their analysis they argue that the Turkish state, which is the primary ‘locus’ of Turkish foreign policy making, is not a ‘unitary agent, above and beyond the reach of social forces, domestic and international.’¹³³ In fact state decisions and foreign policy are

¹³⁰ Aran and Alden, 73.

¹³¹ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 42-43.

¹³² Aran and Alden, 74.

¹³³ Hoffmann and Cemgil, 3.

understood as ‘long-term consequences of the inter-subjective formation, consolidation, contestation and re-formation of a thus understood complex, spatio-temporally specific strategy of social reproduction.’¹³⁴

By exploring not just the historical and international forces but the contradictory social relations that generate Turkish foreign policy, Hoffman and Cemgil provide an appropriate guideline of how to approach understanding the complexity of Turkish foreign policy. This is particularly true as the Turkish government has ‘chang[ed its] strategies of reproduction... in response to perceived challenges both within and outside Turkey’¹³⁵ since the beginnings of the Arab Spring. This framework and analysis can be applied to understanding the complexities of Iranian foreign policy in the region, as well as bilateral relations with Turkey in the post-Arab Spring period.

In terms of applying this HS/FPA framework to the analysis of Turkish-Iranian relations to our two case studies, a variety of concepts and dichotomies will be used to help establish how the relationship is far more complex than the already dominant narratives in the academic discourse. In analysing the research question through the HS/FPA framework, this thesis shall explore three main overarching concepts which will add to the analytical framework when reviewing the two case studies. With the application of this analytical and theoretical framework, this thesis will analyse and evaluate the intersections of the *Historical*, *Domestic Considerations* and the *Regional & International* on the two case studies.

First, providing a historical analysis is important in understanding the interactions between Iran and Turkey because this mainly focuses on diplomatic and state activity. It is important to analyse the history of Turkey and Iran because ‘history is necessary to explain why countries act as they do, and equally, to provide a basis for analysing how states, and their opponents, claim to use, select and falsify history to

¹³⁴ Ibid., 4.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 20.

justify what they do.’¹³⁶ Thus using a HS framework can help analyse the historical formation of Turkey and Iran as a way of establishing those *historical continuities, agency vs structure debates, state-society relations and path dependencies* that help shape domestic, foreign and regional policy.¹³⁷

In addition, FPA provides an avenue for the discussion of domestic considerations and their influence on Turkish and Iranian foreign policy. The examination of domestic politics and the role it plays in foreign policy formation in Turkey and Iran can help us explore in further detail the conversation on agency vs structure, state-society and state-state relations. Thus, the study of these concepts within the domestic framework can formulate our understandings of the constraining and enabling factors within each state on their regional and foreign policy in the Middle East, Eurasia and in bilateral relations. Finally, the intersection of the regional and the international provides a further depth of analysis as we can ‘reflect on how the “international” as a domain, structures state and state-society relations and how the state through its foreign policy in return exerts agency to shape regional and international structures in conjunction with its domestic transformation’.¹³⁸

The tools that the HS/FPA framework provides therefore gives us a more balanced analysis of the ‘interaction of international, regional and national/subnational levels’ and aims to show ‘the *formative* influence of each upon the others, which leads to structural changes that crystallise in time and both constrain and enable different agents within the state.’¹³⁹ It is from this varied toolbox that HS/FPA provides that helps our understanding and analysis further in comprehending the complexities in the relationship in the post-Arab Spring period. It will also assist in providing a much more profound and detailed analysis than the existing academic narratives and discourse on Turkish-Iranian ties.

¹³⁶ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 40.

¹³⁷ See James Mahoney, "Path dependence in historical sociology," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000).

¹³⁸ Gülriz Şen, "Post-Revolutionary Iran's Foreign Policy Towards the United States: A Historical Sociological Analysis of State Transformation and Foreign Policy " (PhD, Middle East Technical University, 2013), 33.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

1.3. Methodology

To achieve the answers to the research question and sub questions raised in the thesis, it has employed a qualitative analysis in gathering and analysing the appropriate data. This study relies on data derived from primary and secondary sources and makes extensive use of reports from Turkish, Iranian, European and American research institutions as well as an extensive literature of academic books, journal articles and Iranian, Turkish and international English language newspapers. The chapters also rely on government documents as well as economic and data reports from government institutions in Turkey, Iran and the United States. Due to the changing globalised world and the evolution of Information Communication Technology, English language sources have been used to conduct research on Turkey and Iran where lack of language proficiency in either Turkish or Farsi has proven difficult to ascertain individual journals, print editions and media sources. This thesis in its analysis has mainly used English language based source material but has aspired to use Turkish sources whenever possible and translations when needed. Extensive literature produced by scholars of Iranian and Turkish origin in English has compensated for the limited access to Turkish and Farsi resources.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one of this thesis has introduced the HS/FPA theoretical framework and provided an overview of the main theoretical approaches and discussions in the academic discourse surrounding Turkish-Iranian relations from 1979 to the present day. Chapter two will provide an empirical background of the Turkish-Iranian relationship over the period of 1979-2011. Chapter two is divided into key topics that have been areas of competition and/or cooperation over the last 40 years. These include a discussion of the overarching themes of political, economic and security relations as well as regional and strategic relations. The political relations section examines the history of ideological competition, domestic developments and the election of the AKP and reengagement between Turkey and Iran. In the economic relations section, bilateral economic, trade and energy politics between Turkey and Iran will be discussed. The security relations topic will provide a history of the

Kurdish issue for both Turkey and Iran, as well as a discussion on the 1991 and 2003 Gulf Wars. Finally, the regional and strategic relations section will explore Turkey-Iran's historical relations with the Caucuses and Central Asia, as well as explore Israel's role in the relationship.

Chapter three is the first of our two case studies in this thesis. This chapter applies the HS/FPA theoretical framework to the events of the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis from 2010 to 2016. It will provide a historical background to these events for both Turkey and Iran. This chapter will firstly explore the empirical facts of the case study and then follow it with an analysis. Due to the complexity of the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis, the analysis of this chapter will explore and analyse two continuities that are found in this case study: Ideological competition and the Kurdish issue and subsequently examine how the intersections of the historical, domestic considerations, the regional and the international, have affected each of them and the wider Turkey-Iranian relationship.

Chapter four is the second of the two case studies. This chapter also applies the HS/FPA framework to the Iranian Nuclear Issue from 2002 to 2015 by providing firstly the empirical facts of the case study. Secondly it will then proceed to analyse this singular case study by exploring the intersections of history, domestic, the regional and international, and how these have affected and shaped Turkish-Iranian relations. Chapter five will be the concluding chapter which will demonstrate the findings of this thesis as well as establish how the HS/FPA framework has provided a much more succinct analysis of the complexity of Turkish-Iranian relations beyond the existing academic narratives and discourse. This chapter will conclude with the prospects for Turkish-Iranian relations beyond 2016 and the challenges that both states face in the future of their respective domestic, regional and international environments.

As will be expressed in greater discussion in the proceeding chapters, this thesis intends to move beyond the dominant academic narratives and sub-narratives in describing Turkish-Iranian relations. It will in fact attend to a deeper understanding

of the complexity within Turkish-Iranian relations by examining the interactions and intersections of the *Historical, Domestic, Regional & International* on the relationship. This will be applied to the two case studies of the Arab Spring/Syrian Crisis and the Iranian Nuclear Issue. Through the application of Historical Sociological and Foreign Policy Analysis (HS/FPA), the chapters will also reflect the dichotomies and concepts that both enable and constrain the forces in the relationship while reflecting on how agency, structure, state-society relations and historical path dependencies play an essential role in Turkish-Iranian relations. It is the goal of this thesis to demonstrate that by using HS/FPA, a greater understanding of the complexity of the Turkish-Iranian relationship will be discovered. This thesis hopes to add further discussion and fill the gaps in the already established academic literature on Turkey-Iranian ties over the last 40 years. It is this researcher's desire that the outcomes of this thesis will add a valuable contribution to both Middle East Studies and International Relations, and provide a bridge for the two varied, yet intertwined disciplines.

CHAPTER 2

TURKEY-IRAN RELATIONS FROM 1979-2011

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the complex dimensions of the Turkish-Iranian relationship and provide a historical background from 1979 to 2011 of the main issues that have shaped bilateral relations between these two states. The relationship between these two states is extremely multidimensional, so only three primary themes will be examined that will outline the history of Turkish-Iranian relations. Each theme will outline the key subthemes and events that have shaped the cooperation and/or competition between these two states in the Middle East and International community. The three themes that will be explored are: *Political and Economic Relations*, *Security Relations*, and *Regional and Strategic Relations*. An overview of these themes and events will provide a greater awareness of the history of Turkish-Iranian relations, which will help develop our understanding and analysis in the post-2011 period.

2.1. Political Relations

2.1.1. Ideological Confrontation

Political relations between Turkey and Iran can be defined as a relationship that is continually driven by ideological, religious and regime differences. Both countries share geographic proximity, shared cultural and political history and a preference for stability. Both Turkey and Iran seek to make sure that there is a ‘probability of the two countries political independence and territorial integrity [being maintained] without any significant probability of becoming engaged in a ‘war of survival’.¹⁴⁰ Despite the closeness of both historical and cultural attributes, one of the major obstacles that impedes full-fledged cooperation is that of ideological factors. Relations between these two neighbours has been one where ideological confrontation has taken the forefront of political relations. In this respect, the 1979

¹⁴⁰ S Gülden Ayman, "Turkey and Iran: Between Friendly Competition and Fierce Rivalry," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2014): 7.

Iranian Revolution and its subsequent policies marked a rupture in each countries' policies towards the other.

The Iranian Revolution thus 'introduced a new form of political governance that [would] clash consistently with the Kemalist and Secularist principles of the Turkish regime.'¹⁴¹ Khomeini continually criticised Turkey for its modernist policies saying that secularism was imposed and held onto power through the use of force. The Iranian regime on the other hand was perceived by the Turkish establishment as continuously interfering in domestic politics, participating in assassination attempts against Turkish intellectuals and destabilising the secularist narrative in Turkey.¹⁴² This perception of political and ideological mistrust would continue throughout the relationship up until the election of the AKP in 2002.

In the early stages of the Turkish-Iranian relationship and in the immediate aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, there were general fears from the Turkish establishment that the 'export' of the Islamic Revolution could embolden Islamist groups within Turkey, inevitably undermining the Secularist and Western outlook of the country.¹⁴³ The Iranian revolution had changed the narrative of the revolutionary discourse and presented a new alternative regime framework which could incorporate Islam into governing practices. The exportation of the revolution and its ideology was a key foreign policy platform of the new Islamic Iranian regime. It presented an existential threat to Turkey and the possibility of it gaining traction within Turkey's majority conservative society was a major concern of the Turkish establishment.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Elik, 35.

¹⁴² Barkey, 157.

¹⁴³ During this early period in political relations, Turkey had also gone through the 1980's coup, allowing the secular military establishment to assume power again. See for more information Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*, 1.

¹⁴⁴ For more detail on the importance of the 'export' of the revolution by Iran to Turkey and the threat it posed see Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Independence, Freedom and the Islamic Republic."

Despite these fears, Turkey did not take a reactionary policy against the Islamic regime, rather the Turkish government recognised its legitimacy within the first twenty-four hours of its establishment. Turkey's relations towards Iran in the early period were geared around three main policies: to coexist with Iran, to maintain strict neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war and to take advantage of the war to expand its economic ties with Iran.¹⁴⁵ When Iranian students seized the US embassy in Tehran, Süleyman Demirel's coalition government in Turkey subsequently condemned the actions of the Iranian regime but did not follow the United States in imposing sanctions. This position did not alter at onset of the Iran-Iraq war, as Iran and Turkey continued to pursue pragmatic policies towards each other to spur economic necessity and growth.

Iran's revolutionary zeal was entirely directed against Iraq from 1980-88 and spreading its revolution to Lebanon and the Gulf. Ayatollah Khomeini's aim to export the revolution did not specifically affect Turkey, although Iran did support 'small groups whose personal connections did not have a concrete place in Turkish society'.¹⁴⁶ Although relations were cordial at this time, it was necessary for Iran to remain pragmatic in its relations with Turkey, as the country was vital for its economic stability. However, the contrast of state ideologies soon began to destabilise relations between the two.

With the death of Khomeini in 1989, Iranian foreign policy entered its 'thermidor',¹⁴⁷ period with the election of President Rafsanjani. Ideology would gradually decrease as a means of conducting relations with other states in the international and regional order, and a more pragmatic approach to foreign diplomacy would be sought. In

¹⁴⁵ Süha Bölükbaşı, "Turkey Copes with Revolutionary Iran," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 8, no. 1&2 (1989): 95. Tschanguiz H. Pahlavan, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: An Iranian View," in *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East*, ed. Henri J. Barkey (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1996).

¹⁴⁶ Elik, 38.

¹⁴⁷ 'Thermidor' is a reaction of moderates following a revolution, such as that which occurred in Paris on 9 Thermidor (27 July 1794) and resulted in the fall of Robespierre. In the Iranian case the election of President Rafsanjani ushered in beginning of the 'thermidor' period, after the intensity of the revolution over the previous decade. See for a more historical reading Ansari.

1997, the election of President Mohammad Khatami with his 'Dialogue amongst Civilisations' and 'détente with neighbours' was perceived as a positive change by the Turkish regime, as Khatami sought to engage in a more liberal approach to conducting relations.¹⁴⁸

On the Turkish side, the 1995 election of the conservative and outwardly religious Necmettin Erbakan and his subsequent coalition government would be looked favourably upon by Iranian officials. Erbakan had been known to be an ardent supporter of the Islamic regime in Iran and was pushing a foreign policy platform to engage more with Islamic countries and move away from Turkey's dependence on the United States and Europe.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, Erbakan sought to establish greater and stronger relations with Iran as a means of increasing trade and security cooperation. However, this did not last long. Erbakan's Islamist policies drew the ire of the military and with the events of 'Quds Night',¹⁵⁰ subsequently, his coalition government with Tansu Çiller, was forced from power in June 1997 in what was termed as a "post-modern" coup.

The following administration led by the Mesut Yılmaz administration would be tasked to readjusting the relationship with Iran but border clashes¹⁵¹, security and geopolitical issues would further stymie any progress. Ismail Cem (the then Foreign Minister) called for Turkey to adopt a new approach in dealing with its neighbours. He moved to replace the security based approach with one based on an economic perspective that was built on Turkey's historical, cultural and economic assets. This

¹⁴⁸ Sinkaya, "Rationalization of Turkey-Iran Relations: Prospects and Limits," 139.

¹⁴⁹ Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ "Quds night" was an event that took place on the 31st January 1997 when protests were arranged by the Sincan municipality in Ankara against alleged Israeli human rights violations. The building in which the event took place was plastered with posters of Hamas and Hezbollah. The event set in motion the planning for the 'post-modern' coup which would oust the Erbakan government and replace it with one led by Mesut Yılmaz.

¹⁵¹ William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 315.

in turn saw the settlement of bilateral disagreements through dialogue and enhancing political, economic and cultural cooperation with Iran.¹⁵²

2.1.2. Domestic Developments in the 1990s

Internal developments within each state influenced relations and prevented dialogue between the two countries. In the 1990s there was an increase in radical Islamist violence in Turkey- allegedly in collaboration with Iranian intelligence.¹⁵³ The 1990s saw the rise of Islamist politics in Turkey. The secular establishment in Turkey perceived the rise of Islamist politics as a possible means of applying ‘*shariah*’ by the ballot.¹⁵⁴ Therefore the dual threat of both radical and political Islam emerged as a primary adverse factor in bilateral relations.

During this period, diplomatic tensions reached critical points on two separate occasions. One of those was in 1989 when the Salman Rushdie incident became a factor in Turkish-Iranian relations.¹⁵⁵ Manouchehr Mottaki criticisms and distribution of Iranian propaganda against Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* combined with the ‘Turban affair’ (or headscarf issue) in April 1989 made Mottaki a *persona non grata*. He was subsequently expelled and called back to Iran. The headscarf issue would reappear as a point of contention between Iran and Turkey when in April

¹⁵² Sinkaya, "Rationalization of Turkey-Iran Relations: Prospects and Limits," 140.

¹⁵³ Unlike Lebanese Hezbollah, Turkish Hezbollah (or in Turkey - Kurdish Hezbollah or just Hezbollah) is a Sunni-Kurdish Islamist organisation. They are known for their violent militant actions against the PKK and the Turkish Government in the 1990s. Iran was accused of supporting Hezbollah militancy in the 1980s. In the 1990s Hezbollah targeted the Kurdish nationalist movement as well as people who they deemed had low morals. They also targeted and assassinated Turkish journalists who had written about the connections and support of the Turkish state to Hezbollah’s fight against the PKK. In the early 2000s, most of its militant activities were curtailed through successful counter-terrorism operations.

¹⁵⁴ Sinkaya, "Turkey-Iran Relations in the 1990s and the Role of Ideology," 3.

¹⁵⁵ Manouchehr Mottaki is the former Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs. At the time of the Rushdie incident, Mottaki was the Iranian Ambassador to Turkey. In a speech in Konya in 1988, expressed dissatisfaction with Turkey’s lack of a firm stance against the publication of Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* and called for the book to be banned. The Iranian council in Erzurum had given copies of Khomeini’s fatwa to the town’s muftis for dissemination in the town’s Alevi communities. However, it was discovered that the fatwa had come into Turkey in the form of a diplomatic pamphlet on the 15th March 1989. See Elik, 42.

1999, Merve Kavakcı an elected deputy from the Virtue Party (*Saadet Partisi*) wore a headscarf at the swearing of MPs in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM). She was forced to withdraw from the assembly and was subsequently stripped of her Turkish citizenship.¹⁵⁶ This incident led to protests in Iran where students shouted slogans in support of Kavakcı. PM Bulent Ecevit criticised Iran's support and accused them of meddling in Turkish politics. The second diplomatic incident occurred in 1997 with the Sincan affair, which would not only see the expulsion of Iran's ambassador Mohammad Reza Baqueri but also the 1997 postmodern coup overthrowing PM Erbakan and his *Refah* Party.

From the Iranian side, there was a perception that Turkish nationalism could spread to the 25-million Turkic speaking minorities of Iran. This perception further fuelled Iran's distrust of Turkey.¹⁵⁷ The end of the Iraq-Iran war had also fundamentally shifted politics within Iran as both reformists competed with radicals/conservatives for influence in the country. While the reformist candidates had control of the government under Rafsanjani and Khatami, the radical/conservative factions had control of the judiciary, Guardian Council and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The radical/conservative factions still maintained the revolutionary zeal of the Khomeini era, operating against Turkey and opponents of the Iranian regime. This led to allegations of political assassinations of key Iranian dissidents by Islamist militants with reports of connections to the IRGC.¹⁵⁸ This dual headed approach to foreign policy meant that Iranian foreign policy towards Turkey and the region remained unclear and lacked coherence. Turkey however maintained a manageable and moderate attitude towards Iran with PM Demirel calling for a 'cool headed' approach to bilateral relations. Although allegations were widely dispersed amongst

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 45.

¹⁵⁷ Sinkaya, "Turkey-Iran Relations in the 1990s and the Role of Ideology," 4.

¹⁵⁸ On the September 17th 1992, Iranian-Kurdish opposition dissidents Sadegh Sharafkandi, Fattah Abdoli, Homayoun Ardalan and their translator Nouri Dehkordi were assassinated by Iranian intelligence agents in the Greek Mykonos restaurant in Wilmersdorf, Berlin during the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDP) insurgency. This incident would signal an end to the impasse by European intelligence officials to Iran's extrajudicial killings in European territory against dissidents. For more information please refer to Olson, *The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations*, 67-68.

the Turkish public and pressure grew for outright criticism, Turkish Foreign Ministry officials refrained from directly accusing Iran of being involved in these illegal activities.¹⁵⁹

2.1.3. The Election of the AKP and Re-Engagement

The election in 2002 of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), turned over a new leaf in Turkish-Iranian relations. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP would intensify relations with Iran. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu would champion Turkey's place in the Middle East, which pursued a more assertive role in engagement with its neighbours. His 'zero problems with neighbours' foreign policy strategy would emphasise 'state to state cooperation, initiating free trade zones, lessening visa restrictions, further integrating infrastructure and offering mediation services'.¹⁶⁰ In addition, the AKP in line with its attempt to join the EU, focused on changing and disempowering the military-secular establishment within the political process and developing stronger civilian-military relations.¹⁶¹ This saw a reduction in the ideological confrontation between Turkey and Iran. The AKP's pro-Islamic discourse resonated better with Iran as it sought to re-establish ties with the region. Within the scope of this change in foreign and regional policy direction and a growing détente between the two countries, there was greater cooperation occurring in areas such as economic engagement, energy, security and the nuclear issue.

However, the relationship with Iran was not at the top of the AKP's foreign policy agenda between 2003-2005.¹⁶² Throughout this period, the AKP government largely focused its efforts on EU membership, as well as being a 'reliable frontline state

¹⁵⁹ Sinkaya, "Turkey-Iran Relations in the 1990s and the Role of Ideology," 8.

¹⁶⁰ Stein and Bleek, 139.

¹⁶¹ For more information on the complexity of the Civil-Military relationship in Turkey particularly during the tenure of the AKP government see Zeynep Cıvcık, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel and Turkey: A Comparative Study on Military Interventions Volume 1 of 2" (PhD, Brandeis University, 2015).

¹⁶² Oktav, 111-12.

involved in a solution to the problems with countries such as Iran'.¹⁶³ The AKP prioritised Turkey's 'bridge role'¹⁶⁴ between itself and the rest of the region. The 'bridge' narrative has existed before in Turkish foreign and domestic policy due to its 'cusp' position between two regions, the 'West' and 'East' yet being neither part of them. Throughout the Cold War there was an obvious orientation towards the West as Turkey was caught in the prism of the bipolar political order and its effect on the region.

The 'spectre of civilizational conflict between the Muslim and Western worlds' in the post 9/11 period caused increasing concern within the Turkish domestic and foreign establishment.¹⁶⁵ Turkey saw itself caught between these two worlds or as Huntington argued 'the most obvious and prototypical torn country, straddling these two [West and East] apparently contending civilisations'.¹⁶⁶ The victory of the AKP government emphasised the status of Turkey as both a democratic but socially conservative/Islamic society that could emerge as an interlocutor or a bridge between these two groups. The geopolitical and strategic incentive that the United States and other countries saw that this 'bridge role' could play meant that this narrative also fitted into well into the AKP's vision to become more attentive to its Middle Eastern neighbours including Iran. The AKP would present itself as a 'Muslim democratic' society rather than a 'Muslim, secular, democratic' state much to the chagrin of the established secular military establishment.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ "Regionalism or Shift of Axis? Turkish-Syrian-Iranian Relations," in *Turkey in the 21st Century: Quest for a New Foreign Policy*, ed. Özden Zeynep. Oktav (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), 82-83.

¹⁶⁴ The 'bridge' narrative comes from the idea that it must have two sides which meet. For the Turkish discourse and the AKP, one side meets Europe while the other side is the Middle East. This justifies their approach to the Middle Eastern region.

¹⁶⁵ Bill Park, *Modern Turkey: People, state and foreign policy in a globalized world* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 123-24.

¹⁶⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 41.

¹⁶⁷ Meliha B. Altunışık, "Geopolitical representation of Turkey's cusps: Discourse and practice," in *The Role, Position, and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations*, ed. Marc Herzog and Philip Robins (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 36-37.

This helped spearhead the concept of the ‘Turkish model’ throughout the region and its role as a ‘mediator’, due to Turkey’s ‘geo-cultural and geopolitical position, an asset rendered to it by its unique location and history’.¹⁶⁸ This identity creation would be further facilitated by its participation in the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in 2005, using the initiative as a means of promoting ‘intercultural dialogue’.¹⁶⁹ Turkey’s role in the region would be strengthened by acting as a facilitator in bolstering intercultural dialogue. Such an approach would theoretically demonstrate the AKP’s policy role in the international arena as well as it being a ‘co-sponsor’ of the Islamic world.¹⁷⁰

From 2005 onwards however, its ‘bridge role’ rhetoric was increased in its relationship with the Middle East as economic and trade relations with Iran and the region grew. During this period, the political narrative seemed to shift to a more conciliatory approach to Iran’s concerns in the region. PM Erdoğan stated for example on an official visit to Tehran that ‘there is no doubt he [President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad] is our friend.... We have had no difficulty at all’.¹⁷¹ This was perceived as a shift eastward in terms of Turkey’s strategic orientation and manifested itself further with the Iranian Nuclear Issue. Turkey reengaged its ‘bridge-role’ by discontinuing support for the US containment policy of Iran, engaging in independent diplomacy while maintaining economic relations with Iran

¹⁶⁸ See Park, 123-24; Altunışık, "Geopolitical representation of Turkey's cuspness: Discourse and practice," 38.

¹⁶⁹ The UNAOC was an initiative proposed by the then President of Spain José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero at the 59th UN General Assembly in 2005. It was co-sponsored by Prime Minister Erdoğan. Similar in vein to Khatami’s ‘Dialogue among Civilizations’ the AOC seeks to inspire international action against extremism through the forging of intercultural, international and interreligious dialogue and cooperation. It seeks to defuse the tensions and mistrust between the Western and Islamic ‘civilizations’ of the globe.

¹⁷⁰ Altunışık, "Geopolitical representation of Turkey's cuspness: Discourse and practice," 37-38; Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Süleyman Elik, "Turkey's Growing Relations with Iran and Arab Middle East," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011); Nilüfer Karacasulu, "Interpreting Turkey's Middle East Policy in the Last Decade," *All Azimuth* 4, no. 1 (2015).

¹⁷¹ Robert Tait, "Iran is our friend, says Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan," *The Guardian*, 26 October 2009, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/26/turkey-iran1.

despite the sanctions regime.¹⁷² PM Erdoğan even questioned the concept of Iranian nuclear capability and whether further sanctions were needed.

The threat perception towards Iran had shifted under the AKP. Iran was no longer considered to be an external ‘other’ and a source of domestic problems within Turkey and this added to Turkey’s push to develop and deepen relations.¹⁷³ The increase in political relations provided the necessary capital to allow Turkey to become a facilitator in the Iranian nuclear deal from 2006 onward. During this period, there was also no policy based on sectarian division within the region particularly in Iraq. President Ahmadinejad and PM Erdoğan in their relationship never openly stated that ‘the formation of a Shia Crescent by Iran was a threat itself’.¹⁷⁴

2.2. Economics and Energy Relations

2.2.1. Bilateral Economic and Trade Relations

Turkish and Iranian bilateral economic relations have played a fundamental and important role in facilitating the expansion of their relationship. Turkey and Iran have been prone to using each other’s mutual dependence and economic benefits as a facilitating factor in their pursuit for deepening their relationship. Both states have complementary resources which have facilitated the growth of both diplomatic and economic relations. Iran’s vast supply of hydrocarbon resources makes it a net exporter of oil and gas, something that Turkey is entirely dependent on. International sanctions such as the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) have isolated Iran in the international economy, meaning that Turkey provides an ‘energy bridge’ to European markets as well as an arena for investment and trade in non-resource based goods and services.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Oktav, "Regionalism or Shift of Axis? Turkish-Syrian-Iranian Relations," 82.

¹⁷³ Aras and Karakaya Polat, 508.

¹⁷⁴ Oktav, "Regionalism or Shift of Axis? Turkish-Syrian-Iranian Relations," 83.

¹⁷⁵ Naber Habibi, "Turkey and Iran: Growing Economic Relations Despite Western Sanctions," in *Middle East Brief* (Brandeis University: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, 2012), 3.

This concept of being an 'energy bridge' precedes the tenure of the AKP and was promoted in Turkey's energy policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the post-Cold War period.¹⁷⁶ The AKP continued the relationship emphasising Turkey's role as a 'transit energy corridor' and 'energy hub centre', and letting energy become a centrepiece of its foreign policy with the wider region and specifically Iran. While this concept serves to highlight that Turkey lacks its own energy needs, it does fit quite well into its narrative of Turkey's geopolitical standing of lying 'between the East and West.'¹⁷⁷

The relationship has been damaged by a general mistrust between the two states due to reliability in their economic relationship. This is further burdened by a lack of infrastructure to further develop economic interdependence with each other. In the immediate post-revolution period, both Turkey and Iran experienced periods of revolutionary upheaval and rising political violence. While the new revolutionary regime in Iran sought to export its revolution, Turkey pursued a pragmatic policy based on economic engagement with Iran, as it sought to revive the economy in the post-1980 coup period. This led to Turkey under PM Turgut Özal, abandoning its long-term import-substitution policies for a more export orientated growth policy after 1980.¹⁷⁸ As a consequence of this economic direction, Turkey did not join the sanctions regime implemented by the United States due to the motivation of promised future economic cooperation with Iran.¹⁷⁹

With the Iran-Iraq war in 1980-88, economic relations between the two states flourished. Turkey became a 'reliable supplier of goods and a transit route for

¹⁷⁶ The bridge metaphor began in the 1970s when Turkish foreign policy makers began to argue that Turkey was a bridge between the Middle East and the West. See Altunışık, "Geopolitical representation of Turkey's cuspness: Discourse and practice," 31.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁷⁸ Hopoğlu and Künü, 112.

¹⁷⁹ Sanctions were implemented against the Iranian regime by the US government for the events of the US embassy hostage crisis in Tehran from November 4th 1979 to January 20th, 1981.

imports from Europe and elsewhere'¹⁸⁰ for both Iraq and Iran. This was due to Ankara's policy of active neutral politics and the refusal of Ankara to use Incirlik airbases for 'military operations and economic sanctions against Iran'.¹⁸¹ Turkish exports to Iran from 1979-1983/84 grew exponentially from USD \$45 million to USD \$2.3 billion.¹⁸² But, as oil prices declined in the face of continued conflict coupled with a growing mistrust developed over suspicions of Turkish middle-men overcharging Iranian customers, Iran decreased its imports from Turkey. After the end of the Iran-Iraq war, ideological issues and diplomatic crises would result in a decrease in bilateral trade in 1989. By 1987 exports from Turkey to Iran decreased to USD \$400 million only to further decrease after 1993.¹⁸³

Despite this decrease in trade relations, two important economic forums were created to help facilitate economic relations between Turkey and Iran. In 1983, Iran's admittance to the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) with Turkey would lead to twenty-one Iranian-Turkish JEC Protocols being signed facilitating the economic dialogue between the two countries. In 1985, Turkey and Iran decided to 'revive the Regional Cooperation and Development (RCD) organization and rename it the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)'.¹⁸⁴ This organisation aimed to increase cooperation in numerous economic and technical fields including agriculture, industry, science, education and culture. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of these organisations was diminished and curtailed by other overarching geopolitical considerations of the period.

¹⁸⁰ Turkey would use the Iran-Iraq war to increase its necessary foreign exchange reserves to implement economic reforms and turnaround the economy after years of economic mismanagement. See Barkey, 153.

¹⁸¹ Elik, 163.

¹⁸² Barkey, 153; Mustafa Aydın and Damla Aras, "Political Conditionality of Economic Relations between Paternalist States: Turkey's Interaction with Iran, Iraq and Syria," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1&2 (2005): 24.

¹⁸³ Barkey, 153; Narli, 277-78.

¹⁸⁴ Aydın and Aras, 25.

The post-Cold War era witnessed different economic and political priorities develop between Turkey and Iran. After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, a new economic opening for the Iranian economy developed when President Rafsanjani was elected. His economic program was aimed at increasing productivity in key industrial and economic centres, promoting Iran's non-oil based export sector and revitalising the petroleum and gas sectors.¹⁸⁵ In Turkey, two economic crises in 1994 and 2001 (due to economic mismanagement as well as prioritisation of security issues) meant that Turkish economic issues became a major concern. However, the election of the AKP government in 2002, ensured economic relations in terms of bilateral trade and energy increased exponentially. Turkey's foreign policy approach under the AKP based on 'strategic depth' and 'zero problems with neighbours' prioritised economic relations with net trade climbing to nearly USD\$6 billion with other countries in the Middle East. As a result, Turkish influence increased in the region, as it showed itself to be more of a growing economic power, which also helped shape its image as a 'trading state' in the Middle East.¹⁸⁶

Table.1 Turkey's Trade Volume with Selected Middle East Countries (Million Dollars)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Egypt	516	513	444	535	728	954	1.101	1.582	2.369	3.259	3.187
Iran	1.051	1.200	1.254	2.394	2.775	4.382	6.693	8.056	10.229	5.430	10.687
Iraq	-	-	-	941	2.288	3.208	2.965	3.490	5.238	6.078	7.398
Israel	1.155	1.334	1.405	1.542	2.029	2.271	2.311	2.739	3.383	2.598	3.443
Lebanon	151	209	229	219	381	340	367	509	843	794	848
Syria	729	744	773	824	752	823	795	1.174	1.751	1.753	2.511

Source: Directorate of Foreign Trade cited in Özlem Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East Under the AKP—Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighboring Zones." *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011): 595.

Iran's growing domestic market and hydrocarbon resources fitted well into Turkey's economic aims. In 2003 alone, trade between Iran and Turkey increased by 90% to a

¹⁸⁵ Elik, 165.

¹⁸⁶ Ali Özcan and Özdamar, 111.

value of USD\$2.4 billion.¹⁸⁷ Iran became Turkey's biggest trade partner in the region with it constituting around 18% of Turkey's total trade in the Middle East. By the end of 2011 trade between Turkey and Iran reached around USD\$22 billion.¹⁸⁸ Turkish exports included steel, textiles, industrial goods and gold.¹⁸⁹ On the Iranian side it has mainly been gas, oil, coal, electricity, pistachios and fertilizers. In addition, the Turkish construction industry alone has undertaken projects of around USD\$1.92 billion in infrastructure and housing projects in Iran.¹⁹⁰ Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) between Turkey and Iran have risen to USD\$123 million by Turkish investors in Iran and USD\$101 million invested by Iranian investors in Turkey.¹⁹¹ The cancellation of Turkcell and TAV contracts in Iran however created distrust in the reliability of investing in the Iranian economy.¹⁹²

2.2.2. Energy Relations

The 1990s marked a new period of economic cooperation in terms of the export and import of natural gas. The dissolution of the Soviet Union opened new corridors for gas and energy trade with not just Iran but also Central Asia and the Caucasus. Due to the increasing demand for reliable energy resources and Turkey's dependence on importing its energy, Iran was marked as a country that could provide a reliable source of gas for domestic energy consumption. Both countries signed petrol,

¹⁸⁷ Elik, 168; Demiryol, 117.

¹⁸⁸ TMoE, "Iran Country Report 2012," (Ankara: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Economy (TMoE), 2013), 3.

¹⁸⁹ Around USD\$12 billion in gold was shipped directly to Iran or indirectly through Dubai to loophole sanctions law to pay for oil and gas transactions. For more information see Serhan and Ersoy, 148; Kalehsar, 785.

¹⁹⁰ Serhan and Ersoy, 149.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 150.

¹⁹² In 2004, the IRGC and conservative hardliners cancelled the contracts of Turkcell and TAV Airport holdings due to perceived security reasons. In the Turkcell case, the agreed license (which would be worth around USD\$3 billion over 15 years) was declared by hardliners as a threat to national security as it would 'enable Turkey to eavesdrop on Iranian mobile calls.' For TAV, the newly built Imam Khomeini airport was nationalised by the IRGC due to the accusation that the consortium was associated with Israel. These two cases demonstrate the complexity of how factionalism is a determinant factor in bilateral trade between Turkey and Iran. For more information on these two incidents see Elik, 168-69.

natural gas, industrial, electricity, border crossing trade and transportation agreements in 1993 under ECO regulations.¹⁹³ An agreement was signed in 1995 by former PM Çiller with PM Erbakan in 1996 concluding the '23 billion dollar natural gas supply contract and gas pipeline construction scheme with Iran, as well as a pledge to increase bilateral merchandise trade to an annual value of 2.6 billion dollars.'¹⁹⁴ The deal was made despite being in breach of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), which forbade foreign companies investing in Iran's energy sector over USD\$40 million a year. Although this was not done to defy the US, Turkish energy dependence meant that it was necessary to diversify its natural gas imports from countries other than Russia.

Despite the 1997 coup against PM Erbakan's government, Iran under President Khatami managed to establish economic relations with Turkey once again. In 2001, the agreed Tabriz-Ankara pipeline began operations with a capacity of 16bcm per year. Several problems arose in the subsequent years due to technical problems and Turkey's demand against the agreed contracts 'take it or pay it'¹⁹⁵ clause. Iran was portrayed as an unreliable partner because of its 'weak infrastructure and a distorting system of energy subsidies that results in extreme [Iranian] domestic consumption'¹⁹⁶. Throughout the 1990s, development in terms of energy politics increased but trade suffered as Iran diversified its economy and 80 percent of its trade came from Asia rather than Turkey. The signing of two Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) in 2007 and 2008 by both countries made Iran Turkey's major energy partner.¹⁹⁷ In 2009, Iran became one of Turkey's main oil suppliers.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 166.

¹⁹⁴ Daphne McCurdy, "Turkish-Iranian relations: when opposites attract," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (2008): 89.

¹⁹⁵ 'Take it or pay it' is a condition that requires Turkey to import predetermined amounts of natural gas - 10 bcm per year - per a gas deal signed in August 1996 which was valid for 25 years. This has led to Turkey taking the Iranian government to international arbitration for what is perceived as excessive price hikes for Iranian gas imports.

¹⁹⁶ McCurdy, 89.

¹⁹⁷ In 2007, the first of two MOU's was signed making Iran Turkey's major energy partner. In this MOU signed by PM Erdoğan and President Ahmadinejad, natural gas from the South Pars field was to be transported through Turkey to the European market. Turkey agreed that it would invest

By 2012 however due to economic sanctions, Turkey was forced to lower its intake of Iranian crude to 41 percent of its original importing amount. However, the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan¹⁹⁸ pipeline was built to bypass Iran and provide direct access to Caspian oil from Azerbaijan.

As a result of certain developments, the economic relationship between the countries has been marred with political mistrust and periodical disputes. On numerous occasions the supply was cut off from disagreements on pricing and cold weather.¹⁹⁹ This led to Turkey taking Iran to international arbitration over what it deemed price hikes for poor quality gas. The economic relationship has also suffered from other problems. From 2002 to 2011, balance of trade between Iran and Turkey has been lopsided due to Turkey's demand of continuous energy supplies. In 2011, Turkey's deficit in its trade with Iran 'climbed up to \$9 billion'.²⁰⁰ The primacy of energy in the relationship and the problems this entails means that Turkish-Iranian economic relations have been tarnished by a lack in trust. Both actors 'are prone to pay attention to short-term benefits rather than to more long-term benefits like reciprocal direct investments.'²⁰¹

2.3. Security Relations

2.3.1. The Kurdish Issue

Security is a paramount factor in the relations between Turkey and Iran. Security policy plays a key part in the domestic strategies for both Turkey and Iran and how

significant money into the development and exploration of the field. The 2008 MOU entailed a further agreement on natural gas extraction and export, however due to continuing issues on prices these MOU's did not come into fruition. For more information see Kalehsar, 782-83.

¹⁹⁸ The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline is a crude oil pipeline that runs from the Chirag-Guneshli oil field in the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Turkish PM Süleyman Demirel proposed that the pipeline run through Turkey in 1992. After the signing of the Ankara Declaration in 1998 the project gained momentum. It was completed in May 2006 and transports up to 10 million bpd of crude oil.

¹⁹⁹ Kinnander.

²⁰⁰ TMOE, 3.

²⁰¹ Serhan and Ersoy, 159-60.

each engages each other in the regional context. The issue of Kurdish nationalism has shaped and changed the dynamics of both Turkey and Iran's foreign and domestic policy since the end of the First World War. It is a very complex issue, at times being the key source of conflict and cooperation. In the post-Iranian revolutionary period, Kurdish politics became a fundamental issue for both Iran and Turkey. It is important to understand that the Kurdish Issue is one that has primarily been driven by domestic politics in both countries but has been externalised in Turkey and Iran's regional, and international policies.

Since the beginnings of the Kurdish insurgency in 1984, Turkey over the last 32 years has been engaged in a military conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the country's south east. The PKK's military campaign in South East Turkey and Northern Iraq has aimed to establish a federalist structure in a Kurdish state between Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The PKK have pursued their goals through guerrilla insurgency and terrorist acts. The ascent of the Kurdish guerrilla insurgency allowed the PKK to become a 'regional subgroup player' and 'reshuffle the regional balance'.²⁰² The PKK has presented Turkey with its number one security dilemma in the region, as it has fought to subdue Kurdish irredentism and calls for autonomy.

During the revolution, Iranian Kurds had actively supported the uprising against the Shah with Kurdish groups working with Iranian revolutionaries. However, the nascent Kurdish movement was crushed as Khomeini secured further power and undermined opposition groups. In the immediate post-Islamic Revolution period, Iran 'actively tried to destabilise Turkey's secular regime by arming and supporting the separatist PKK, hoping to soften Turkey's secularist resistance to the ideals of the Islamic Revolution'.²⁰³ In the immediate phase during the Iranian Revolution, there were two main concerns for the Turkish establishment: the spreading of Kurdish nationalism and the sovereignty of Iran. The first concern stemmed from the solidarity between Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish nationalist groups and Iranian guerrilla

²⁰² Elik, 71.

²⁰³ Akin Ünver, 103.

groups.²⁰⁴ Secondly, the threat of an unstable Iran also drew the possibility of an increase in Kurdish nationalism. Iran, however was no stranger in 'exploiting and containing Kurdish Nationalism' in its tactics against Saddam Hussein's Iraq²⁰⁵ and was accused by Turkey of allowing PKK groups to coordinate attacks from its territory.

Despite this, the treatment of Kurds in each respective country is not the major concern in terms of bilateral relations. An agreement signed in 1984, prohibiting any activity within their borders which was detrimental to the security of the other state, slowed down the use of Iranian territory for border operations by PKK insurgents. As PKK attacks increased, Turkey conducted raids into Northern Iraq and the Qandil mountains to pursue the militants. According the Turkish authorities, its operations in Northern Iraq were in line with international law and were only for 'hot pursuit'.²⁰⁶ Major military excursions would occur in 1992, 1995 and 1997 (with several minor incursions occurring in the 2000s). Iran protested such incursions into Iraqi sovereign territory and were suspicious of Turkey's intentions due to their alliance with US-allied led forces from the time of the 1991 Gulf War.²⁰⁷

After the 1992 incursion by Turkish forces, Turkey and Iran engaged in a series of security protocols with Syria 'to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq and to prevent Kurdish nationalist movements in the Middle East and Europe from threatening their respective regimes'.²⁰⁸ In 1994, President Demirel and President Rafsanjani announced that Turkey and Iran had agreed to cooperate against

²⁰⁴ For more information on the complexity of Kurdish political parties See Hevian, 96-100.

²⁰⁵ John Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 1 (1998): 88.

²⁰⁶ Ali Özcan and Özdamar, 106.

²⁰⁷ Olson, *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*, 14.

²⁰⁸ *Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*, 14.

the PKK.²⁰⁹ In return for Iranian cooperation against PKK targets inside Iran, Turkish authorities would target the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* opposition that was based inside Turkey. The national security agreements after the 1991 Gulf War indicated that the Kurdish issue was an area of cooperation because of the challenges that Kurdish nationalism posed to Iran and Turkey. Therefore, close coordination was needed to prevent the emergence of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq.²¹⁰

The main area of tension between Turkey and Iran regarding the Kurdish issue in the post-Cold War period, comes from both countries regional competition over northern Iraq. There are three main security issues that arose from this competition: Turkish military incursions into Northern Iraq, the Kurdish refugee crisis and the Kirkuk issue.²¹¹ Saddam Hussein's Operation *Anfar* caused a large refugee influx to occur in both Turkey and Iran. Turkey accepted around 60,000 refugees but 17,000 were voluntarily transferred in October 1988.²¹² This number would substantially increase with the US invasion of Iraq in 1991. The emergence of safe havens and an autonomous Kurdish region in Northern Iraq in 1991 gave both countries a chance to cooperate on stopping the possibility of an independent Kurdish state forming on their borders. In the post 1991 Gulf War Iraq however, neither state 'wanted the Kurds to become so weak that Saddam Hussein would be able to manipulate them to his advantage'.²¹³

²⁰⁹ *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*, 14.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹¹ The 'Kirkuk' issue has been a thorn in side of both the Iraqi central government and the KRG. Both sides believe that they have sovereignty over the oil-rich region in Northern Iraq. Turkey also claimed historical and kinship right on the area leading to further problems in finding a peaceful solution Elik, 83.

²¹² Operation *Anfar* was a campaign against the Kurdish region in Northern Iraq by the Saddam Hussein regime towards the end of the Iran-Iraq War. Thousands of civilians were killed. The operation has been said to be a 'genocide' due to the systemic killing of civilians using ground offensives, aerial bombings, firing squads, mass deportations and chemical warfare. See *ibid.*, 84.

²¹³ Olson, *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*, 14.

Coupled with increasing interest by Western powers as the Kurdish issue became internationalised and a growing US-Kurdish alliance in Northern Iraq, Turkey and Iran subsequently improved their security relations against the PKK and the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK).²¹⁴ There was continued competition between Turkey and Iran however over who could control and influence the Kurdish movement in Northern Iraq. In 1994 and 1995, the two largest Kurdish nationalist groups: The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan or PUK (led by Jalal Talabani) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party or KDP (led by Masoud Barzani) drew closer to Iran and Turkey respectively due to increased internal disputes and fighting. Therefore, PUK controlled territory became more politically and economically aligned with Iran while the KDP would come under Turkey's sphere of economic and political influence. In KDP controlled territory, Turkish military excursions as well as KDP fighters (*Persmerga*) would fight against PKK positions.²¹⁵

Towards the end of the 1990s, the predominance of economic concerns by both Turkey and Iran meant that the saliency of the Kurdish question had diminished.²¹⁶ However in 1998, Turkey placed further pressure on Syria (and therefore Iran, due to the strength of the Iran-Syrian axis) to expel the leader of the PKK Abdullah Öcalan. Iran mediated between Syria and Turkey to stop a war brewing over the expulsion of Öcalan.²¹⁷ Syria accepted the PKK as a terrorist organisation and removed all its activities within Syrian controlled territory. Increasing demonstrations and unrest in Kurdish populated areas region wide spurred Iran to decrease and cut off all relations with the PKK.²¹⁸ With the rise of the AKP in 2002, a desecuritisation of the Kurdish Issue internally placed the focus solely on the PKK insurgency coming from Northern Iraq. The 2003 Iraq War posed a significant problem for Turkey because

²¹⁴ Elik, 84.

²¹⁵ Majid Rafizadeh, "Odd Bedfellows: Turkey and Iran," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2016): 110-11.

²¹⁶ Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*, 8.

²¹⁷ Abdullah Öcalan would be expelled from Damascus in 1998 and captured by Turkish special forces in 1999. For more information on the Turkey-Syria crisis over Öcalan please refer Elik, 85.

²¹⁸ Ali Özcan and Özdamar, 110.

from its perspective, the idea of an ethnic federation in Northern Iraq and the Iraqi Kurd's annexation of Kirkuk was an unacceptable consequence of US policy in the region. This paved the way for a strategic realignment between Turkey and Iran on the possibility of an independent Kurdistan and the subsequent insurgency.

In 2004, the PKK became an issue for Iran and produced a 'bonding effect between the two countries'.²¹⁹ When the PKK recommenced attacks after ending a five-year ceasefire, Turkey and Iran signed a security cooperation agreement in 2004 that labelled the PKK as a terrorist organisation. This was also because Iran had been dealing with a Kurdish insurgency from the PJAK continuously for some time and defeating both these organisations became a unitary cause for both countries. Such was the level of coordination that in 2007, when Turkish troops entered Northern Iraq to eradicate PKK positions, Iran was silent on the issue.²²⁰ Iran demonstrated its sympathies with Turkey in 2008 by reinforcing the border, when Turkey launched an 8-day border incursion to destroy PKK bases and communication infrastructure. PM Ahmadinejad expressed that he understood the concerns of Turkey but reiterated respecting Iraq's sovereignty and called for dialogue between Iraq's Kurdish leadership and Turkey.²²¹ There has been continued sharing of intelligence between Turkey and Iran as well as coordinated military operations against PKK and PJAK positions in each other's respective territory.

2.3.2. The 1991 and 2003 Gulf Wars

Both the 1991 and 2003 invasions of Iraq had profound effects on the region and particularly on the relationship between Iran and Turkey. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 opened the door for foreign penetration into the Middle East in the post-Cold War period. Turkey participated actively in the Gulf War in 1991 when coalition forces liberated Kuwait and attacked Iraq. Iran on the other hand, remained neutral against Iraq, having just come out of the bloody Iran–Iraq war from

²¹⁹ Oktav, "Regionalism or Shift of Axis? Turkish-Syrian-Iranian Relations," 83.

²²⁰ McCurdy, 98.

²²¹ Ibid.

1980-88 and seeing this as a chance to upend a potential hostile regime that was against Iranian interests in the region.²²² The United States 'dual containment'²²³ policy weakened Iraq and its continuing presence in the Gulf as well as aimed to contain Iranian expansion through UN sanctions and international isolation. Neither Turkey or Iran wished for a hegemon (like the US) in the regional order and Gulf security complex.²²⁴

As mentioned in the previous section, the 1991 Gulf war had opened Northern Iraq to both Turkish and Iranian influence. Operation *Provide Comfort* (which provided protection to Kurds fleeing their homes and transferred humanitarian aid) sat uneasy with Iran. Iran believed that this operation provided a 'vehicle which the United States [could] maintain troops and military equipment close to its borders'.²²⁵ It also represented a dangerous precedent for Iranian Kurds who could call for US assistance if they felt persecuted by the Iranian government. Turkey was also uneasy about foreign troops in its territory. Without these US forces however, the mass Kurdish refugee flow that could have precipitated it could have led to the PKK growing stronger.²²⁶ The geospatial gains in Northern Iraq had gone in favour of Ankara in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, but by 1995 Iran had expanded its presence there substantially.²²⁷ However, whatever gains and influence were made by either of these countries were significantly altered with the September 11 attacks and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

²²² Elik, 69.

²²³ The 'Dual containment' policy was an official United States foreign policy aimed at containing Iraq and Iran, Israel's and the United States' two most important strategic adversaries in the Middle East.

²²⁴ Elik, 69.

²²⁵ Barkey, 160.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Olson, *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*, 26.

The September 11 attacks were a 'rupture' in the global system and had a huge effect on the Middle East. The fallout from them led to the NATO invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq invasion in 2003. Despite Iran's initial condemnation of the terrorist attacks in the United States, the Bush administration included Iran in its list of countries that made up the 'Axis of Evil'.²²⁸ Threats of pre-emption and accusations of harbouring Al-Qaeda terrorists only increased Iranian insecurity in the region. The 2003 invasion of Iraq did 'inadvertently create an environment conducive to a security rapprochement between Turkey and Iran'.²²⁹ Iran and Turkey sought to counterbalance the United States influence in Iraq, especially in regards to Iraqi sovereignty and the creation of an independent Kurdistan in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) controlled region of Northern Iraq.²³⁰ Both Iran and Turkey's relative publics were against the invasion of Iraq by US and coalition forces.

In March 2003, Turkey's parliament voted against providing access to its bases in Turkish territory for the US Airforce. The presence of US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan meant that Iran was geo-strategically trapped between two spheres of US influence. Although two of Iran's biggest security threats (the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Hussein regime) had been toppled by US forces, a US-allied state in Iraq could present an immediate threat to the Iranian regime. While Iran seeks a stable Iraq, it has attempted at all costs to counterbalance the United States efforts within the country. This has led to financing, media support and mediation for Iraqi Shiite factions and militias while also seeking to develop strong ties with the Iraqi Kurdish population.²³¹

For Turkey, the 2003 War in Iraq created a whole new range of security risks. It was believed that the overthrow of the central government in Iraq could allow an

²²⁸ Oktav, "Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations," 111.

²²⁹ Demiryol, 121.

²³⁰ Ali Özcan and Özdamar, 112.

²³¹ Gülден Ayman, "Regional Aspirations and Limits of Power: Turkish-Iranian Relations in the New Middle East," 93.

‘independent Kurdish state that would carve out territory from both Turkey and Iran as a plausible scenario’²³² Due to its refusal to allow US troops to use Turkish airspace, Turkey had now lost its foothold in Northern Iraq. As US-Iraqi Kurdish groups grew closer, Turkey sought to develop relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours to ‘soft balance’ against undesirable US policy in Iraq. Such measures would ‘complicate and increase the costs of using American power’.²³³

Turkey and Iran both engaged with ethnic and religious groups which led to growing ties in Northern Iraq and the Shiite controlled south respectively.²³⁴ Due to the large Shia majority that resides in Iraq, Iran welcomed attempts at electoral democracy. Iran however also supported militia groups but the tactics of asymmetric war from 2005-2008 led much of the Iraqi population to lose confidence in Iran and its place within Iraq.²³⁵ While Tehran sought to build relations with Shiite factions, Ankara consolidated favour with ethnic Turkmen groups and prioritised their rights over Mosul and Kirkuk. This gave Turkey some leverage and ability to prevent the foundation of an independent Kurdish state.

There has been accelerated cooperation between Iran and Turkey due to similar security concerns but there have been times when competition has spilled into the politics of Iraq. Iranian backed Iraqi parties had initially taken control of the political process in which PM Nouri al-Maliki had taken power. By 2009, those parties had been replaced by secularist parties. In the 2010 Iraqi elections, Turkey ‘openly opposed a bid for al-Maliki for a second term’, however he brokered his re-election with the help of Iranian support.²³⁶ Both states wish to see a stable Iraq and to solve the Iraq crisis regionally and safely rather than through US preponderance. Although

²³² Demiryol, 121.

²³³ Gülden Ayman, "Regional Aspirations and Limits of Power: Turkish-Iranian Relations in the New Middle East," 96.

²³⁴ Iran formed relationships with Shia political groups. Turkey on the other hand found affinity and influence through Iraqi Turkmen and Sunni political parties. See *ibid.*, 96-98.

²³⁵ "Turkey and Iran: Between Friendly Competition and Fierce Rivalry," 14.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

each state has different priorities in terms of strategy for the future of Iraq, both states have since 2006 managed to implement policies that do not antagonise the other.

2.4. Regional and Strategic Relations

2.4.1. The Caucuses and Central Asia

The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union was a massive systematic change to Turkish-Iranian relations. Turkish-Iranian competition in Central Asia and the Caucuses would reach a zenith and be the most prominent conflict between the two neighbours in the post-Cold War period. The rivalry however was subdued with some points of difficulty along the way. The core of the political rivalry originated from the assumption that ‘secular Turkey would intervene economically and culturally to block “fundamentalist Iran’s” advances.’²³⁷ According to US policy makers, Turkish advances in the region would hinder Iran’s influence on the newly formed republics and keep Iranian expansion in Central Asia and the Caucasus’s to a minimum.²³⁸ Iran and Turkey sought to engage and establish political and economic relations with these newly formed and landlocked states to provide some form of strategic depth. Through shared historical, cultural and ethnic connections each state aimed to create viable political, economic and security projects where they could construct their own spheres of influence.²³⁹

Both Iran and Turkey tried to promote themselves as a model for the newly formed states as a means of developing and restructuring the region. For Iran, establishing links with the newly formed states in Central Asia and the Caucuses presented a chance to break the international isolation that the country had felt due to its revolutionary policies in the region and pariah status in the international system. The

²³⁷ Barkey, 161.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ 4 out of the 5 states in Central Asia are culturally and linguistically Turkic (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan), while 1 state (Tajikistan) has cultural and language similarities to Persian.

‘Iranian model’ that was geared towards the Central Asian Turkic Republics promoted ‘Islamic ideology, support[ed] Islamist movements and develop[ed] some economic relations through shared trade’.²⁴⁰ The relatively underdeveloped markets of Central Asia provided an avenue to absorb the cheaper and unsophisticated products of the Iranian market. Iran’s proximity to transport networks in the Persian Gulf was also a key economic feature for power projection.²⁴¹

Turkey on the other hand believed that by gaining a foothold in the region, it could in fact ‘regain its strategic importance to the West’.²⁴² The ‘Turkish model’ was presented favourably to the Central Asian states due to Turkey’s more integrated economy, access to Western markets, and political influence in the post-Cold War order. Turkey’s large industrial firms could also engage in construction and engineering projects in these yet undeveloped markets.²⁴³ Turkish-Iranian competition arose mostly in terms of rights of transit. However, this remained very low key. Both regimes tried to build regional groupings that have excluded each other including the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone and the Caspian Sea Cooperation Organisation (CSCO).²⁴⁴

In the Caucuses, the newly formed states of Azerbaijan and Armenia became a key flashpoint in Turkey-Iranian relations. The newly formed Republic of Azerbaijan posed both a problem for Iran and an opportunity for Turkey. Azerbaijan is culturally, linguistically and ethnically close to Turkey. Azerbaijan’s importance for Iran stems from the large population of Azeri’s that inhabit North Western Iran. The formation of the Azeri republic suggested the possibility of irredentist conflict and a separatist movement arising, posing a security challenge for Iran’s sovereign

²⁴⁰ Ali Özcan and Özdamar, 107.

²⁴¹ Barkey, 161.

²⁴² Sinkaya, "Turkey-Iran Relations in the 1990s and the Role of Ideology," 11.

²⁴³ Ibid., 13-14.

²⁴⁴ The Iranian government has called for the establishment of the CSCO, however still to this day the organisation has failed to be created.

integrity.²⁴⁵ The threat of Turk-Azeri intervention in Iran's domestic affairs and sovereignty posed another dilemma in Iranian policy makers thinking.

Azerbaijan's continued conflict with Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region added another dimension to the complexity of the Caucasus in Turkish-Iranian strategic relations. Armenia and Turkey relations have remained relatively frosty due to historical issues such as discussions of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Turkey has supported Azerbaijan in its efforts in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict while Iran has used Armenia as a counterweight. Energy transport from the Caspian crosses this flashpoint meaning that competition over Azerbaijan has manifested itself into economic and geopolitical conflict over gas transportation and oil/gas production.²⁴⁶

Both countries found that their influence was limited in the region as Russia still maintained great influence in the Central Asian republics and the Caucasus. In the Central Asian case, four out of the five republics had former communist officials as head of state. Russia continued to exercise its influence in the region both economically and militarily, as neither Turkey and Iran had the capacity to fill the vacuum left by the Soviet Union. Alliance networks between the three states are complex. Both Turkey and Iran share the same concern over a resurgent Russia. Iran and Russia share common security interests in Central Asia against Turkey's Western leaning positions and Pan-Turkic nationalist discourse. Russia and Turkey however, have concerns towards the spread of Iranian 'Islamic fundamentalism' to the region.²⁴⁷ Despite Iran and Turkey's efforts to maintain a sphere of influence in Central Asia, these relations have been cordial at best and mostly aimed around economic cooperation. In terms of the Caucasus, support for Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh will remain a flashpoint between the two countries for the foreseeable future.

²⁴⁵ See Olson, "The 'Azeri' question and Turkey-Iran relations, 2000-2002," 64-65.

²⁴⁶ Sinkaya, "Turkey-Iran Relations in the 1990s and the Role of Ideology," 13.

²⁴⁷ Barkey, 164-65.

2.4.2. Israel

The issue of the Turkish-Israeli alliance is a key problem for security relations between Turkey and Iran. Iran was concerned with developing relations between Israel and Turkey, interpreting it within the framework of a Western coalition against them. The Turkey-Israel alliance provided a challenge to the Syrian-Iranian regional axis and was important in leveraging Syria over the Öcalan and PKK issues. Controversy over Turkey's relationship with Israel reached its zenith with the election of PM Ahmadinejad in 2005 and his fiery denial of Israel's right to exist. In terms of Turkey-Iranian relations, Israel's role in establishing diplomatic ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan exacerbated the feelings of misgiving and lack of trust between the two neighbours.²⁴⁸

With conflict over the differences between water rights of the Tigris-Euphrates basin and security issues over the PKK, the relationship between Syria and Turkey had reached an impasse. The Turkey-Israel alliance emerged as a means 'to achieve "balance" in its relations between Israel and the Arab countries.'²⁴⁹ After the signing of a secret military agreement on terrorism in March 1994 as well as a military training agreement in February 1996, the Turkey-Israel relationship developed into a strategic partnership.²⁵⁰ These agreements provided for 'joint air and naval exercises, access to port facilities and the opportunity for the Israeli air force to train over the Anatolian plateau'²⁵¹ while also providing an avenue for cooperation against terrorism. There was further engagement and consolidation of ties in 1997, with deeper intelligence and military cooperation.²⁵² An agreement reached over missile

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 155.

²⁴⁹ Olson, *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*, 125.

²⁵⁰ Elik, 84.

²⁵¹ Alain Gresh, "Turkish-Israeli-Syrian Relations and their Impact on the Middle East," *The Middle East Journal* 52, no. 2 (1998): 189.

²⁵² In 1998, Israel-Turkish-American vessels took part in Operation *Reliant Mermaid* in the East Mediterranean causing diplomatic issues with Arab states within the region.

production and technological cooperation led Syria and Iran to call Turkey-Israel ties 'a satanic alliance'.²⁵³

Throughout the AKP's time in power, the relationship between Israel and Turkey has been contentious. This has played well for Iran who has used this opportunity to expand relations with its neighbour. The AKP has viewed the Israeli-Turkish alliance as more of a hindrance in its rapprochement with the Arab Middle East. Israel's support for an independent Kurdistan did not do it any favours within the halls of Ankara. The deterioration of relations was also aided by the rise of 'Ariel Sharon's administration, the death of the Oslo Peace Accords, and subsequent bloodshed of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, combined with the 2006 occupation of South Lebanon'.²⁵⁴ A combination of these events further fomented anti-Israeli discourse within the Turkish public and the AKP dominated political establishment.

Although this deterioration of the alliance between Israel and Turkey has been used by Iran as an opportunity to deepen relations with Turkey, there have been moments where the Turkey-Israel alliance has impeded potential economic gain and investment in Iran. One such example was the cancellation of a TAV contract at the newly developed Imam Khomeini Airport in Tehran which was cancelled due to 'Zionist links of Turkish companies'. In terms of regional issues including the Palestinian issue, a policy of supporting Hamas was adopted by the AKP government to springboard Turkey back into the Levant region. The AKP has systematically condemned the Israeli operations in Gaza (2008) as well as the infamous Davos (2009) incident²⁵⁵ and the relationship has strained further due to growing anti-western feelings which came to a climax with the Gaza embargo and

²⁵³ Elik, 86.

²⁵⁴ Harriet Fildes, "International Fluctuations and Domestic Limitations: Turkish-Israeli Relations in the New Millenium," in *Turkish Foreign Policy in the New Millenium*, ed. Hüseyin Iskıkıl and Ozan Örmeci (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2015), 135.

²⁵⁵ The World Economic Forum is a Swiss non-profit foundation that holds its annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. It brings together the world's biggest business leaders as well as heads of state. In 2009, PM Erdoğan stormed off the stage at the World Economic Forum after a heated debate on Gaza with the Israeli President Shimon Peres.

the *Mavi Mamara* incident in 2010.²⁵⁶ This incident led to ambassadors being withdrawn and a freezing of relations. Consequently, this did harden Turkey's stance in its promotion of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) and changed its perception of the Iranian nuclear program.²⁵⁷

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a historical overview of the main themes that have shaped bilateral relations between Turkey and Iran from 1979-2011. We can see that the relationship is one that is complex and incredibly multidimensional, both regarding their geopolitical and strategic relationships but also in their ideological, economic and security issues. Both Turkey and Iran have faced competition and cooperation at different periods in their historical relations. The key themes that this chapter has explored such as the *Political and Economic Relations*, *Security Relations* and *Regional and Strategic Relations* gives us an overview of the importance that key issues have played in relations between the two states. From examining this historical context, we can see the importance of the continuities and consistencies in the dynamics of bilateral ties that have arisen since the relationship began in 1979 between the Islamic Republic and Turkey.

These continuities and consistencies provide us with a starting point for our analysis using HS/FPA in the post-2011 period. By exploring the historical context of the relations between Turkey and Iran, it allows us to examine further what historical themes are present in today's relationship. This includes analysing narratives, state-society dynamics, domestic politics and the roles of agency vs. structure. The key themes and continuities that this background chapter has explored such as ideological competition, 'domestic' considerations, energy and economic politics,

²⁵⁶ The *Mavi Mamara* incident caused a fracture in Turkey-Israel relations. The military operation by Israel against six civilian ships of the "Gaza Freedom Flotilla" on 31 May 2010 in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea led to nine activists being killed. The flotilla, organized by the Free Gaza Movement and the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH), was carrying humanitarian aid to try and break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

²⁵⁷ Stein and Bleek, 143.

the Kurdish Issue as well as the role of the regional and international help provide a framework for the use of a HS/FPA analysis in the post- 2011 period.

By exploring these historical continuities and the consistencies as well as narrative and domestic politics through a HS/FPA lens, we can establish the prominent patterns that permeate the Turkish-Iranian relationship not just in the post-2011 period but over the span of their relations from 1979 to the current day. Such an approach establishes the importance of how using an HS/FPA framework can provide deeper examination and further insight into the dynamics of the Turkish-Iranian relationship than just the usual theoretical approaches discussed in the literature review of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

THE ARAB SPRING AND THE SYRIAN CRISIS

By presenting a historical background of relations between the two states from 1979 to 2011, the previous chapter provided valuable context for the continuation of the analysis of this thesis. Chapter three seeks to use the HS/FPA theoretical framework discussed previously in analysing Turkish-Iranian relations in the post-Arab Spring period with specific regard to the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis. This chapter will firstly provide an empirical understanding of the Arab Spring and the Syrian Crisis as a case study by outlining each countries approach to the uprisings and subsequent policies. From there, this chapter will use a HS/FPA analysis towards the case study. Due to the complexity of the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis, the analysis of this case study will be divided in two main continuities: *Ideological Competition* and *The Kurdish Issue*.

Each continuity will be analysed by examining the intersection of the *Historical*, *Domestic Considerations* and the *Regional & International*. Within this analysis, this chapter will explore how historical processes, domestic enablers and constraints, and the regional and the international have affected the policies of both Turkey and Iran. It will explore in its analysis the continuities, changes and constraints that have affected both Turkey and Iran as each state has reacted to the events unfolding in the region. Furthermore, this chapter will demonstrate how HS/FPA can provide a fundamentally new approach to understanding the complexity of Turkish-Iranian relations compared with the dominant theoretical conceptions outlined in chapter one of this thesis. This chapter will analyse the period from the beginning of the Arab Spring in Tunisia on the 17th of December 2010, until the Turkish invasion of Jarabulus, Syria under Operation *Euphrates Shield* on the 24th of August 2016.

3.1. Empirical Background of the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis

3.1.1. The Arab Spring as a ‘Rupture’

The Arab Spring²⁵⁸ in 2010 presented a significant ‘rupture’ in the political fabric and status quo of the Middle East. The initial uprisings that occurred in Egypt and Tunisia created a wave of democratic political awakening throughout the Middle East region. The demand for change, ‘the search for democratic representation, the fight for political integrity and opposition to crony capitalism’²⁵⁹ provided a new dynamic in challenging the existing structures of power and authority in the Middle East and North Africa. The Arab Spring ‘rupture’ exposed the belief that Middle Eastern authoritarianism was persistent and stable. The Arab Republics, proved vulnerable to the uprisings due a shared formula of building ‘power and legitimacy on a distinctive populist formula that they subsequently abandoned.’²⁶⁰ The collapse of the established structure led to a shift in the political, social and economic dimensions of state-society relations. Aras and Falk argue that ‘the Arab nation-state system and non-state actors had been accustomed to coexisting in parallel realms of engagement, although with a certain degree of separateness.’²⁶¹ However, the Arab Spring put an end to this alienation within the state-society dynamic leading to changes in regime, or in other cases civil war.

²⁵⁸ The term ‘Arab Spring’ and ‘Arab Uprising’ will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter. There has been much dispute over the term ‘Spring’ because of its historical comparison to those revolutions that occurred in Eastern Europe with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, for this thesis ‘Spring’ and ‘Uprising’ will be used because of their common usage in the academic discourse. For more information Laurence Whitehead, "On the 'Arab Spring': Democratization and Related Political Seasons," in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*, ed. Larbi Sadiki (London: Routledge, 2015).

²⁵⁹ Bülent Aras and Richard Falk, "Authoritarian ‘geopolitics’ of survival in the Arab Spring," *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2015): 322.

²⁶⁰ These regimes were contingent on the appeal and charisma of their leaders in which legitimacy was enforced through a social contract that accorded welfare and jobs to certain constituencies rather than traditional or electoral legitimacy. In addition, mass surveillance and networks of privilege allowed control of social forces within each country. For more information see Raymond Hinnebusch, "Towards a Historical Sociology of the Arab Uprising: Beyond Democratization and Post-Democratization," in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*, ed. Larbi Sadiki (London: Routledge, 2015).

²⁶¹ Aras and Falk, 323.

The events of the Arab Spring impacted and spread to other countries in the Middle East region including Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria with much less success. By the end of 2011, the Arab 'Spring' has entered its 'autumn' or even 'winter' phases. Besides Tunisia, the countries mentioned above have all dealt with shifting and somewhat brutal changes in state-society relations including civil war, which has led to immeasurable political and human cost. The uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa have not only shifted the internal dynamics of each country involved but has also had consequences on regional and international geopolitics, political systems, national interests, alliances and rivalries within regimes.²⁶² It is fair to say that the rupture of the Arab Spring has challenged not just the status quo of Middle Eastern authoritarianism but has altered the preconceived notions of political and economic relations within the greater Middle East. This applies to both Arab and non-Arab states in the region which have acted to direct or curb the fallout that the uprisings have had on their states and the region.

3.1.1. Turkish and Iranian policies towards the Arab Spring

The Arab Uprising would present challenges and opportunities for Turkey and Iran as it unfolded. In its aftermath, it allowed both countries greater range for influence in the region. For Turkey, its engagement with the Arab Uprising was based around its willingness to lead the change that was occurring in the region rather than resisting it or ignoring it, envisaging itself in a key stakeholder role in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.²⁶³ Turkey's policy would rest upon three pillars: humanitarian protection, security and regional diplomacy.²⁶⁴ From the Turkish perspective and vision, the post-Arab Uprising period saw the orientation of Middle Eastern countries towards democratic tradition. The 'Turkish model' or Turkish democratic model was invoked (mostly by Turkish policy makers) leading to the perception that

²⁶² Özüm S. Uzun, "The "Arab Spring" and Its Effect on Turkish-Iranian Relations," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 4, no. 2 (2013): 149.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ See Bülent Aras and Emirhan Yorulmazlar, "Turkey and Iran after the Arab Spring: Finding a Middle Ground," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 4 (2014): 144.

Turkey provided a positive image or example for other states to become an economically and politically successful Muslim democratic country. Due to its supposed foreign policy transformation that has been a feature of AKP foreign policy since 2003, Turkey was 'eager to use its "soft power" in the new processes of democratisation in the expectation of augmenting its regional influence'.²⁶⁵

AKP policy up until then had been based on asserting the need to initiate reforms in Islamic countries in the region as well as accept change in the governance of their societies.²⁶⁶ However, the Arab Uprisings gave an opportunity to 'naturalise Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern States'.²⁶⁷ PM Davutoğlu at the time called on the region to 'naturalise the flow of history' and undo the two 'abnormalities'²⁶⁸ that had divided the natural links 'between tribes and communities'.²⁶⁹ Turkey as a regional leader was very much implied in his argument. Despite its rhetoric of well-intentioned action, its responses to the uprisings were filled with contradictions and showed a concrete lack of understanding of the processes in the region from within. Even though the AKP had stressed democracy and freedom for the region, it had until the Arab Uprisings 'been cosyng up to authoritarian powers with little apparent regard for regional "democracy"'.²⁷⁰ This was part of its plan on maintaining its

²⁶⁵ Derya Göçer Akder and Marc Herzog, "Turkey and the Arab Uprisings," in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*, ed. Larbi Sadiki (London: Routledge 2015), 503.

²⁶⁶ Mirghasem Banihashemi, "Understanding the AKP's Regional Policy: An Iranian Perspective," *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly* 10, no. 3-4 (2012); Özgür Özdamar, B. Toygar Halistoprak, and İ Erkam Sula, "From *Good Neighbor* to *Model*: Turkey's Changing Roles in the Middle East in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 11, no. 42 (2014).

²⁶⁷ Shahram Akbarzadeh and James Barry, "Iran and Turkey: not quite enemies but less than friends," *Third World Quarterly* (2016): 5.

²⁶⁸ Ahmet Davutoğlu argued that the two abnormalities that were affected the Middle East were 1) colonialism and 2) the Cold War. See for more detail Ahmet Davutoğlu, "We in Turkey and the Middle East have replaced humiliation with dignity," *The Guardian*, 15 March 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/15/middle-east-dignity-common-destiny>.

²⁶⁹ "Winds of Change in the Arab World," *Al-Jazeera*, March 11 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/03/20113131351569612.html>.

²⁷⁰ See Scott Peterson, "Turkey's rising clout leaves Iran fuming on sidelines of Arab Spring," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2 November 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/1102/Turkey-s-rising-clout-leaves-Iran-fuming-on-sidelines-of-Arab-Spring>; Henri J. Barkey, "Turkish-Iranian Competition after the Arab Spring," *Survival* 54, no. 6 (2012): 150.

delicate balance between its economic interests and its 'vision' of democracy for the region.²⁷¹ Derya Göcer Akder and Marc Herzog state very succinctly in Turkey's strategy towards the uprisings that 'Turkey has, at heart, acted to secure its security, economic and general strategic interests.'²⁷²

The Iranian approach to the Arab Spring differs from the Turkish approach. In the Iranian discourse, the Arab Spring was by large an extension and outcome of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. To Iran, the Arab Uprisings were an 'Arab Islamic Awakening'²⁷³ where the revolutionary ideals expounded in 1979 had been successfully exported. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei presented the uprisings as evidence of the desire amongst the Muslims of the Middle East to overthrow the 'Western puppet-leaders in the same way as the Iranians had [done] with the Shah in 1979'.²⁷⁴ However, Iran was much more cautious than Turkey in its support for the Arab Spring. President Ahmadinejad saw that such protests were the work of Western forces to cause instability in the Arab world.²⁷⁵ Continued accusations of conspiring behind the scenes by the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia, as well as Iran's previous experience with the 2009 popular protests, fuelled mistrust of the uprisings within the Iranian establishment.²⁷⁶ The Iranian discourse in terms of relations with Arab countries had been dominated by what Maaïke Warnaar describes as 'moral

²⁷¹ Please refer to Mohammed Ayoob, "Beyond the Democratic Wave- A Turko-Persian Future?," *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 2 (2011); Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Arab Spring- Between Ethics and Self-Interest," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 3 (2012); Nuh Yılmaz, "New Turkey and the Arab Spring." SETA, 20 April 2011, <http://www.setav.org/en/new-turkey-and-the-arab-spring/>; Burak Bilgehan Özpek and Yelda Demirağ, "Turkish foreign policy after the 'Arab Spring': from agenda-setter state to agenda-entrepreneur state," *Israel Affairs* 20, no. 3 (2014).

²⁷² Göcer Akder and Herzog, 504.

²⁷³ "Khamenei hails 'Islamic uprisings'," *Al-Jazeera*, 4 February 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/02/201124101233510493.html>.

²⁷⁴ Akbarzadeh and Barry, 5.

²⁷⁵ See for more details on Iran's approach to the Arab Spring, Naysan Rafati, "After the Arab Spring: power shift in the Middle East?: Iran and the Arab Spring," in *IDEAS reports-special reports*, ed. Nicholas Kitchen (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012); Shabnam J. Holliday, "Iran's Own Popular Uprising and the Arab Spring," in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*, ed. Larbi Sadiki (London: Routledge, 2015); Mohammad-Reza Djalili and Thierry Kellner, "Iran's Syria policy in the wake of the 'Arab Springs'," *Turkish Review* 4, no. 4 (2014).

²⁷⁶ Akbarzadeh and Barry, 4; Aras and Falk, 329.

superiority'.²⁷⁷ Shaped in its anti-Western and 'resistance' discourse, Iranian leaders had criticised the Arab world for remaining silent on the Palestinian and Lebanese issues, portraying their cooperation with the West as a betrayal and humiliation against the wider Muslim community.

It is important to frame and understand the Arab Spring for Iran through the lens of the popular protests in 2009 or the 'Green movement'. The Green movement had arisen out of popular protests to what was perceived as electoral rigging in the presidential elections in 2009 by factions within the regime. The Green movement was a combination of a series of 'democratic movements that [had] erupted in Iran during the last decade'.²⁷⁸ The protests and their subsequent repression by forces associated with the Islamic regime fundamentally displayed the shortcomings of the Islamic Republic and questioned its Islamic theocratic foundation of *Velayat-e Faqih*.

The regime's response demonstrated that the Islamic regime was extremely inflexible and hostile to any major reform. Such moves ended the myth of 'meliorability' that had permeated since the Khatami period in which it was believed that change could occur from within, moving from theocracy to political pluralism.²⁷⁹ In the Green movements pursuit for some form of civil society, a social schism between reformists and hardliners emerged. It broke the uneasy alliance that had occurred within the Iranian elite, leading to a 'hardening process' which saw the regime become more 'despotic, less consensual, more isolated and only supported by a fraction of its former supporters in Iran.'²⁸⁰ This elite schism would inevitably affected how domestic and foreign policy was conducted in the future.

²⁷⁷ Warnaar, 123.

²⁷⁸ Farhad Khosrokhavar, "The Green Movement," in *Navigating Contemporary Iran: Challenging Economic, Social and Political Perceptions*, ed. Eric Hooglund and Leif Stenberg (London: Routledge, 2012), 181.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 180-81.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 181.

Even though the Green movement did not achieve its aims, its pursuit of democratic traditions and civil society are an organic process which has historical experiences leading back to the 1979 Iranian Revolution.²⁸¹ In terms of Iran's position towards the Arab Spring, the regime's response to the Green Movement created scepticism toward the Arab Uprisings and questioned the discourse around the so-called 'Spring'. The effect of the Green Movement had hardened Iran's responses to popular protests. It had undermined the regime's moral authority and legitimacy, hence the shaping of the discourse in terms of its 'Islamic revolutionary rhetoric' rather than a 'secular democratic revolution'.²⁸²

Regime change was welcomed by the Iranian regime in other Arab countries except Syria. Despite the rhetoric that the 'Arab Islamic Awakening' was in fact evidence of resistance to Western dominance and dictatorial regimes, the Arab Uprisings did not lead to more positive views of Iran.²⁸³ In the post-Arab Spring period, it became obvious that the renewed brand of Arab nationalism mixed with calls for universal rights, liberties and good governance posed a challenge to Iran's concept of the 'Islamic awakening'. The Iranian establishment inevitably distanced itself and started to interpret the uprisings as a conspiracy against Iran. Moreover, due to continuing mistrust of Saudi Arabia, Iran emphasised the sectarian dimensions of Sunni extremism within the uprisings.²⁸⁴ When the Syrian protests broke out, this discursive change presented the uprisings as 'terrorist movements and uprisings [and] inviting civil wars in the Arab Spring countries'.²⁸⁵ In its responses towards the Arab Uprisings, Iran's primary aim however, was to preserve its authoritarian system and status in the region against real and imagined challenges. Such policies aimed to

²⁸¹ Some scholars have argued that this historic process goes even further back to the 1906 Constitutional Revolution and the state formation period. See Kamran Matin, *Recasting Iranian modernity: International relations and social change* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

²⁸² Hamid Ahmadi, "Iran and the Arab Spring- Why Haven't Iranians Followed the Arabs in Waging Revolution?," *Asian Politics & Policy* 5, no. 3 (2013): 411.

²⁸³ Warnaar, 123.

²⁸⁴ Aras and Falk, 329-30.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 329.

avoid the negative transformative affects that had arisen due to the changes in the status quo in the Middle East.

3.1.2. The Syrian Crisis

The uprisings in Syria had a transformative effect on the region. The initial protests have now in 2016 transformed into a civil war in which transnational and international actors including Turkey and Iran have become dominant within the conflict. The Syrian uprising was an unwelcome intrusion for both Turkey and Iran, presenting a fundamental challenge to both states' pursuit for regional influence. The Syrian Crisis exposed the fault lines in the Turkey-Iran relationship and marked a dramatic shift in relations as each state found itself on opposite sides of the conflict. From what had been perceived as a period of rapprochement between the two countries in the mid-2000s, much has changed since then. Moreover, Turkish-Iranian relations have deteriorated over the Syrian Crisis. It has also exposed the inherent relation and constant interaction between international, regional, national and sub-national politics.

As the number of actors has increased in the conflict and it has become more internationalised, this has ultimately influenced and shaped regional and domestic policy as each country has responded to the crisis. The Kurdish Issue has become a complication which has affected and been affected by the region's inherent relations and interactions. The Syrian Crisis has dominated the discourse surrounding Turkey and Iran relations, and with both providing support to contrasting actors, the two countries have thus appeared as prominent rivals and indirect adversaries.²⁸⁶ It is

²⁸⁶ Mohammad Ali Dastmali, "The Case of Syria and Future Outlook of Tehran-Ankara Relations." *Iran Review*, 11 January 2016, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/The-Case-of-Syria-and-Future-Outlook-of-Tehran-Ankara-Relations.htm>; Hamid Ahmadi and Fahimeh Ghorbani, "The Impact of Syrian Crisis on Iran-Turkey Relations," *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* 4, no. 1 (2014); Behzad Khoshandam, "Iran and Turkey in 2015." *Iran Review*, 22 January 2016, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran-and-Turkey-in-2015.htm>; K.L. Afrasiabi, "Turkey-Iran Relations and the Syrian Quagmire." *Iran Review*, 21 February 2016, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Turkey-Iran-Relations-and-the-Syrian-Quagmire.htm>; Nematollah Mozaffarpour, "The Vicious Circle of Middle East: Why Iran-Turkey Cooperation is Important?", *Iran Review*, 20 May 2016, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/The-Vicious-Circle-of-Middle-East-Why-Iran-Turkey-Cooperation-Is-Important-.htm>.

thus important to explore the two countries approaches to the Syrian Crisis and demonstrate the stark differences in geopolitical understandings and strategies.

3.1.3. Turkish and Iranian policies toward the Syrian Crisis

Turkey's policy towards the Syrian Crisis has been one of inconsistencies and contradictions. The Turkish-Syrian relationship had become the 'jewel in the crown' of Davutoğlu's foreign policy objectives. The 'zero problems with neighbours' policy had seen rapid development in ties between the two countries in terms of economic engagement.²⁸⁷ Both President Bashir Al-Assad and PM Erdoğan established a close relationship, with joint cabinet meetings held between the two statesmen in effect characterising their relationship as 'two people's, one government'.²⁸⁸ Unlike other states in the region, Turkey believed that due to its increased economic and political ties with Syria that it could exert leverage over the Assad government.

In the beginnings of the Syrian uprising, the Turkish government focused on persuading the Syrian regime to stop its crackdown on opposition protests and to make reforms to the political system (even if only superficially). Such was the confidence in the bilateral relationship that Erdoğan 'rely[ed] on his close friendship with the Syrian president, fully expect[ing] that Damascus would heed his advice.'²⁸⁹ Despite numerous attempts and dispatches of high officials, Turkey's suggestions for a political reform process fell on deaf ears. After government initiated violence against protesters during Ramadan in 2011 and the clear disinterest the Assad regime had shown in Turkey's political reform process, Erdoğan and Turkey officially declared that it would interfere in the Syrian conflict.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ Meliha B. Altunışık, "Explaining the Transformation of Turkish-Syrian Relations: A Regionalist Approach," in *Turkey-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Özlem Tür (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013).

²⁸⁸ Barkey, "Turkish–Iranian Competition after the Arab Spring," 151.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Raymond Hinnebusch, "Back to Enmity: Turkey-Syria Relations Since the Syrian Uprising," *Orient-Hamburg Then Berlin* 1 (2015): 14-15.

Turkey moved from its traditional policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighbouring states and effectively empowered the Syrian opposition movement to instil regime change. The AKP government stipulated that ‘a political transition from the Assad regime was essential to resolving the conflict.’²⁹¹ Turkey aimed to strangle the Syrian economy by freezing assets of officials, banning all military sales and suspending its ties with the Syrian central bank. At the same time, officials in Ankara forged a ‘Friends of Syria’ coalition and formally endorsed the Free Syrian Army (FSA). This led to Turkish territory being used ‘for the transfer of funds, weapons and recruits to bolster the anti-Assad rebellion’.²⁹²

The AKP government continued insistence on the removal of Assad from political power has been frustrated by US apathy and NATO inactivity towards the issue. Turkey, until 2016, had ruled out any intervention in Syria, instead seeking diplomatic channels with Russia, Iran and China.²⁹³ Ankara has however, continued its policy of supporting the Syrian opposition and FSA. Its open border policy of allowing the movement of militants to cross from Turkey into Syria has led to many regional and internal issues including violence and terrorist attacks from jihadist groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS or IS) and Jabhat Al-Nusra within Syria and Turkey.²⁹⁴

There has also been the issue of the internationalisation of the empowered Kurdish movement in Northern Syria which had gained international recognition for its

²⁹¹ Özden Zeynep Oktav, "The Syrian Civil War and Turkey-Syria-Iran Relations," *Syria Studies* 7, no. 2 (2015): 5.

²⁹² Tensions rose to a climax with the shooting down of a Turkish jet in Syria and a Syrian government helicopter in 2012. For more details see Akbarzadeh and Barry, 6; Cenap Çakmak, "Turkish–Syrian relations in the wake of the Syrian conflict: back to securitization?," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2016); Birgül Demirtaş, "Turkish-Syrian Relations: From Friend “Esad” to Enemy “Esed”,” *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 1 (2013).

²⁹³ Oktav, "The Syrian Civil War and Turkey-Syria-Iran Relations," 6-7.

²⁹⁴ For the Turkish perspective refer to Fahrettin Altun, "Turkey's Recalculation on Syrian Issue." *SETA*, 12 March 2015, <http://www.setav.org/en/turkeys-recalculation-on-syrian-issue/>; "Turkey's Syria Policy." *SETA*, 17 February 2016, <http://www.setav.org/en/turkeys-syria-policy/>; "What Will Turkey's Syria Strategy Be?" *SETA*, 12 February 2016, <http://www.setav.org/en/what-will-turkeys-syria-strategy-be/>; "Where Are We in the Syrian Crisis?" *SETA*, 23 October 2015, <http://www.setav.org/en/where-are-we-in-the-syrian-crisis/>.

efforts as an effective fighting force against ISIS gains in Iraq and Syria.²⁹⁵ This has caused Turkey to re-evaluate its motives in relation to the conflict as well as reconsider its policies towards the Kurdish Issue at home. The Kurdish movement in Turkey has also repositioned itself considering the rise of Kurdish politics in Northern Syria. It is important to understand that with the rise of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) Kurdish dominated cantons on Turkey's border and their ideological affinity with the PKK, the Kurdish presence in Syria has become a reality and an existential threat to Turkey. In effect, the Kurdish movement in Turkey has shifted its priorities and staked its future with its political partners, the PYD in Syria. Such was the extent of this shift that the People's Democratic Party (HDP)²⁹⁶ (a predominately Kurdish-orientated party) reiterated its call for autonomy endorsing some of the PKK's aspirations for Turkey and Syria.²⁹⁷

Increased pressure from the PKK on the HDP has jeopardised the party's plan to become an all-encompassing political party and has alienated itself from the Turkish electorate. The discourse between the AKP and HDP has become more inflammatory as a solution to the Kurdish Issue has not been discovered and previous attempts have failed. The tentative peace between the PKK and the AKP government started to unravel in 2014 with a reengagement of full blown conflict in 2015. This was tested by Turkey's failure to engage in Kobane when the city was besieged by ISIS.²⁹⁸ The PYD gained further international legitimacy as it increased

²⁹⁵ Aylin Ünver Noi, "The Arab Spring, its effects on the Kurds, and the approaches of Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq on the Kurdish Question," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2012); Marianna Charountaki, "The Effect of the Arab Uprising(s) on the Kurds," *ORSAM*, 15 July 2015, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4464?c=orsam%7Cenglish>.

²⁹⁶ The HDP held 60 seats in the Turkish Grand Assembly in the November 2015 election down from the 80 it had gathered in the June 2015 election.

²⁹⁷ Ebubekir Isik, "Syrian Kurds and Turkey's Kurdish question," *Al-Jazeera*, 13 February 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/02/syrian-kurds-turkey-kurdish-question-160208132220317.html>; "Turkey Kurds demand autonomy as clashes continues in southeast," *KurdPress*, 28 December 2015, <http://www.kurdpress.com/En/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=12191>.

²⁹⁸ Heather Saul, "Erdogan warns Kobani is 'about to fall to ISIS' as militants advance on Syria-Turkey border town," *The Independent*, 6 October 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-fighters-in-kobani-civilians-flee-as-militants-enter-syria-turkey-border-town-9778770.html>.

its political standing through support from both Russia and the US as well as opening political offices in Moscow, Berlin and Stockholm.²⁹⁹

Turkey's policy to the PYD has tested its alliance with the United States, as the former has been actively supporting People's Protection Units (YPG) fighters in their battle with ISIS in Syria. This has caused much confusion and anger within the Turkish political establishment. Changing realities on the ground in Syria will affect how Turkey will continue to deal with its Kurdish issue. Turkey's strict opposition to any formation of any Kurdish political formation in Northern Syria and the PYD's increasing international legitimacy will inevitably effect how relations will be conducted domestically in how it deals with the PKK and the Kurdish Issue in general.³⁰⁰ However, the continuing mistrust and securitisation of the Kurdish movement by the AKP government means that the possibility of a resolution of this issue is extremely unlikely in the near future.

Iran's approach to the Syrian uprisings has been more pragmatic and less erratic than Turkey's. It is important to note that the relationship between Ba'athist Syria and Iran is one of the longest alliances in the Middle East and has been a persistent feature in the geopolitics of the region for more than three decades. The Iran-Syria alliance has been one that has been entrenched by geopolitical concerns, however, the relationship is very multidimensional with both economic and security ties blossoming over their thirty-year alliance. Although these interests do not always converge, both states have found ways to resolve their differences through continuous consultations and coordination. Ideology does not play an intrinsic part of this relationship even though the staunch secular Arab Nationalism of Ba'athist Syria is diametrically opposite to that of Iran's revolutionary pan-Islamism. Both

²⁹⁹ Roland Oliphant, "Syrian Kurds open diplomatic mission in Moscow," *The Telegraph*, 10 February 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/12150692/Syrian-Kurds-open-diplomatic-mission-in-Moscow.html>; Rudaw, "Turkey urges European capitals not to allow opening of PYD offices," *Rudaw*, 27 May 2016, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/27052016>.

³⁰⁰ Oral Çalışlar, "Why does Turkey say PYD is more dangerous than IS?", *Al-Monitor*, 22 June 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2015/06/turkey-syria-pyd-more-dangerous-isis.html>.

countries see themselves as part of the 'resistance axis'³⁰¹ and link themselves to the larger Levant region through their alliance. Due to the authoritarian nature of both states, regime survival and territorial sovereignty are the primary foreign policy objectives for both Iran and Syria as they shape their policies within the region.³⁰²

Both states have found themselves with an array of reciprocal foreign policy priorities and interests on issues that have affected the region. These include 'the future of Lebanon, maintaining a front of resistance against Israeli regional ambitions, and limiting Western influence in the Middle East.'³⁰³ The alliance however is primarily defensive in nature. In addition, what also makes this a strong relationship has been that both Iran and Syria have learnt to coordinate their policies and further their own interests through collaboration in their spheres of influence.³⁰⁴ For Iran, their cooperation with Syria allows them to facilitate their regional power projection through their use of proxy groups. Syria's proximity to Israel helps Iran assist in funnelling aid, weapons and advisors to groups such as Hezbollah.³⁰⁵

With the Syrian uprisings, Iran's relationship with Syria was significantly tested. Although the Assad regime believed that they were secure due to the powerful nature of their *Mukhabarat* state,³⁰⁶ as the protests grew and became an armed struggle, the nature of the Syrian uprising took on a more sectarian dimension. This was mainly due to the opposition being dominated by Sunni rebels who have continued fighting

³⁰¹ Refer to Erik Mohns and Andre Bank, "Syrian Revolt Fallout- End of the Resistance Axis?," *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 3 (2012).

³⁰² Jubin M. Goodarzi, "Syria and Iran- Alliance Cooperation in a Changing Regional Environment," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 4, no. 2 (2013): 38.

³⁰³ W. Andrew Terrill, "Iran's Strategy for Saving Asad," *The Middle East Journal* 69, no. 2 (2015): 223.

³⁰⁴ For further information on the complexities of this alliance see Goodarzi, 36.

³⁰⁵ Mariano V. Ospina, "Syria, Iran, and Hizballah-A Strategic Alliance," *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014).

³⁰⁶ *Mukhabarat* is the Arabic word for intelligence and throughout the Middle East refers to secret intelligence and police departments that are used to coerce citizens. A '*Mukhabarat*' State is therefore a state that has a very strong and powerful intelligence apparatus that is used by the government to control dissent.

against the minority Alawite controlled military and government.³⁰⁷ In Iranian strategic thinking, the fall of the Assad regime could have led to a Sunni-dominated replacement which would have been backed by its Gulf rivals. This would have lost Iranian power projection to its proxy groups such as Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamist groups in the Levant. Such was the support in the Iranian-Syrian alliance that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei stated in 2012 that 'Iran supports the Syrian regime because Syria is a crucial component of the 'axis of resistance' against Israel.³⁰⁸

Iran is against 'any kind of interference in Syria by Western forces'.³⁰⁹ While initially supporting the Assad regime, Iran started to believe it may have been on the 'wrong side of history' and reached out to opposition groups, however this led to no substantial outcomes.³¹⁰ As the Syrian Crisis become more protracted and violent, other international and regional actors began to engage in the conflict by supporting the opposition. Consequently, Iran and Hezbollah threw their full support behind the Assad regime, leading to the strategic decision to provide arms, oil and financial aid to maintain the regime. Such was the financial and military support for the Assad regime, that 'if it had not been for Iranian support we [the Syrian regime] could not have survived the crisis.'³¹¹ This has also led to Iran sending in officers of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) elite Quds force (led by Qassem Soleimani) to coordinate with Syrian intelligence.³¹² In early 2013, 5000 to 7000

³⁰⁷ Terrill, 224.

³⁰⁸ Alireza Nader, "Why Iran Is Trying to Save the Syrian Regime." *RAND Corporation*, 25 April 2013, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2013/04/why-iran-is-trying-to-save-the-syrian-regime.html>.

³⁰⁹ "Justification of Iran's Support for Syria: We Are Against Whatever Plan the US Has Designed for Syria," *Raja News*, 29 March 2012.

³¹⁰ Goodarzi, 51.

³¹¹ Shahram Akbarzadeh and Dara Conduit, "Charting a New Course? Testing Rouhani's Foreign Policy Agenda in the Iran-Syria Relationship," in *Iran in the World: President Rouhani's Foreign Policy*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Dara Conduit (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 136; Bayram Sinkaya, *Revolutionary Guards in Iranian Politics: Elites and shifting relations* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 174.

³¹² "Iran's Revolutionary Guards Commander Says Its Troops in Syria," *Today's Zaman*, 16 September 2012; Babak Dehghanpisheh, "Elite Iranian unit's commander says his forces are in Syria," *Washington Post*, 17 September 2012,

Lebanese Hezbollah troops entered the Syrian Crisis. Hezbollah's move into Syria 'indicated that Tehran perceived the Syrian war [as] a serious threat, as they risk Hezbollah's prized domestic reputation in Lebanon', emphasising the fact that this decision was sanctioned at the highest level.³¹³

It is important to note the IRGC's³¹⁴ stake in the Syrian crisis. The IRGC has been rumoured to be the one who determines Iran's foreign policy towards the Middle East particularly in regards to its dealings in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Israel/Palestine.³¹⁵ Under Ahmadinejad, the IRGC had enjoyed unprecedented power ingraining itself into the Iranian economic and political process. This led to it pursuing a proactive and pragmatic approach to politics and especially foreign policy. The Syrian Crisis has enhanced the IRGC's influence over foreign policy allowing it to pursue its own mandate 'beyond formal channels in the Syrian conflict by using Shi'a militias as well as Hezbollah'.³¹⁶ As Akbarzadeh and Conduit indicate, 'it is unlikely that the IRGC could have undertaken much of this activity without Khamenei's approval'.³¹⁷ The emerging rift between the IRGC and the Iranian hardliners in the political elite prompted speculation that the IRGC's approach to Syria had fallen out of favour with Khamenei. The IRGC's inability to end the conflict or secure Assad led to growing frustrations within the clerical establishment and this fault line was exposed in the 2013 election of President Hassan Rouhani.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/elite-iranian-units-commander-says-his-forces-are-in-syria/2012/09/16/431ff096-0028-11e2-b257-e1c2b3548a4a_story.html.

³¹³ Akbarzadeh and Conduit, 136.

³¹⁴ Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was founded in the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic Revolution as an ideological custodian charged with defending the Islamic Republic against internal and external threats. It has expanded far beyond its original mandate especially under the Ahmadinejad administration. The IRGC oversees a vast power structure which permeates all areas of Iranian society. Some experts believe it is generally loyal to hard-liner elements in the regime, but is not essentially cohesive. For more information on its structure and power refer to Sinkaya, *Revolutionary Guards in Iranian Politics: Elites and shifting relations*.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 174.

³¹⁶ Akbarzadeh and Conduit, 138.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 139.

Rouhani's election in 2013 signalled to the world an end to the international and economic isolation of the Ahmadinejad administration. The Rouhani administration 'needed to reintegrate Iran into the international community, relieve the pressure of international sanctions, and to resolve the nuclear issue.'³¹⁸ The new diplomatic approach to foreign relations expected a softening of Iran's approach to the Syrian Crisis with rumours that Rouhani was working on a plan to convince Assad to begin negotiations with the opposition.³¹⁹ Rouhani's emphasis on a political solution (particularly demarcating the difference between opposition groups and 'terrorists') signified a fundamental rhetorical change in Iran's policy to the Syrian Crisis. It appears Rouhani was willing to compromise on a future Syria without Assad at the helm. These policies clashed with IRGC interests in Syria, compromising their influence over Hezbollah and in the future of Syrian/Lebanese politics. The IRGC posed a significant stumbling block for Rouhani's shift in rhetoric and action. Rouhani stated clearly that the IRGC should 'stay out of politics' and that foreign policy would be directed once again, centrally, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³²⁰

Rouhani's advancement into the Syrian Crisis however was brief. Rouhani suffered a humiliating political defeat when Iran's invitation to the Geneva II peace talks³²¹ was withdrawn by the UN Secretary General under US pressure. The failure of the Geneva II talks, highlighted Iran's image as a 'pariah' state in the international community and wider Middle East. Such a political embarrassing situation only served to strengthen the IRGC and recalibrate Iran's Syria policy to its status quo.³²²

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ali Hashem, "Rouhani Considers New Approach to Assad's Syria." *Al-Monitor*, May 25 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2013/07/iran-rouhani-support-syria-diplomatic-initiative-opposition.html>.

³²⁰ Mohammad Javad Zarif, "Iranian Foreign Policy in the Rouhani Era," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2014).

³²¹ The Geneva II Conference on Syria in 2014 was a United Nations backed international peace conference on the future of Syria with the aim of ending the Syrian Civil War. See "Iran: No Condition Accepted for Presence in Geneva II," *Fars News Agency*, 9 January 2014, <http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13921019000646>.

³²² Akbarzadeh and Conduit, 144.

Iran's quick reversion back to its original strategy in 2014 illustrated that despite Rouhani's moderate approach to the Syrian crisis, his best attempts to resist the power of the IRGC had failed.³²³ With the rise of ISIS and its expanded territorial claims in Iraq and Syria, the IRGC hard power approach to the Syrian Crisis was further justified. The failure of Rouhani's moderate policy highlights the fragmented nature of Iranian foreign policy. The battle between Rouhani and the IRGC also tested the limits of presidential power in terms of foreign policy direction in the Iranian political system. This fragmented approach to foreign policy can help explain Iran's regional policy and its puzzling relationship with Turkey.

3.1.4. Turkey-Iranian Relations in the Syrian Crisis

Turkey's anti-Assad position created significant problems for its relationship with Iran. Turkey has however, pursued a cautious approach to relations with Iran aiming to keep the relationship durable and not sever ties completely. Certain issues had already caused friction preceding the Syrian Crisis, such as the deployment of a NATO early warning radar system in Kürecik, Turkey.³²⁴ The continued problems in Iraq (especially as US troops began to withdraw) also caused continuing friction between the two countries as each vied for influence once again. The Syrian Crisis exposed the rift in the relationship between the two countries. To Iran, the loss of the Assad regime could lead to 'a loss of Iranian political, military, cultural and economic influence in the region but could also give the Turks unlimited access to Syria and weaken the Iranian hand in Iraq as well.'³²⁵ Iran still fears the possibility of encirclement of hostile neighbours hence maintaining relations with Turkey to some degree is of the upmost importance.

³²³ Laura Rozen, "Iran shifts on Syria." *Al-Monitor*, 17 June 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/iran-shift-syria-diplomats-press-obama-assad.html>.

³²⁴ Argued to be part of NATO's anti-ballistic missile shield, Iran perceived that the missile system was directed at them as a way of mitigating their ballistic missile potential against Israel. See Özden Zeynep Oktav, "The Syrian Uprising and the Iran-Turkey-Syria Quasi Alliance: A View from Turkey," in *Turkey-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Özlem Tür (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), 200.

³²⁵ Ibid., 201.

For Turkey, maintaining relations with Iran is important due to escalating security concerns and fallout from the Syrian Crisis in its border security and economy. Continued economic relations and collaboration against ‘terrorism’ are for Turkey ‘essential’, as it feels it can no longer depend on NATO and the West for support.³²⁶ Adding another complex dimension is the Iran-Russia coordination in Syria which has seen growing strategic synergy with Turkey in its policies in finding a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis and fighting against ‘terrorism’ in the region.³²⁷

The relationship however, has been shaky since the Syrian crisis, as geostrategic and political concerns have led to a ‘war of words’ between Turkish and Iranian politicians. Each side has aimed to undermine and condemn the other for their actions in Syria.³²⁸ Critical reactions and condemnations have led to the cancellation of visits by Iranian President Ahmadinejad.³²⁹ One example is the suspension of the visa waiver program between Turkey and Iran as a response due to an official statement by the Turkish Foreign Ministry in ‘condemnation of Iranian authorities’ remarks regarding Turkey’s support for Syrian Kurdish opposition and participation in the US-led coalition for overthrowing the Syrian government.³³⁰ In 2012, Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç criticised Iran for its silence over the violent crackdown on protestors (especially in Homs where in February 2012, 200 protestors had been killed).³³¹

³²⁶ "The Syrian Civil War and Turkey-Syria-Iran Relations," 14.

³²⁷ Ellie Geranmayah and Kadri Liik, "The new power couple: Russia and Iran in the Middle East," in *ECFR Policy Brief* (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016), 3-6.

³²⁸ For example, Seyed Hossein Hosseini Naghavi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy committee of the Iranian *Majlis* stated that ‘The Turkish government bears the main responsibility regarding these bombings [in Syria], because it explicitly speaks of arming and sponsoring paramilitary groups.’ Quoted in Ahmadi and Ghorbani, 79-80.

³²⁹ The protests by Iran were against the deployment of Patriot missiles in Turkey.

³³⁰ Richard Weitz, "Turkey to Deploy Patriot Missiles." 5, no. 23, *The Turkey Analyst*, 5 December 2012, <https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/328-turkey-to-deploy-patriot-missiles.html>.

³³¹ Arınç accused Iran of not being ‘worthy of being called Islamic’. See "Turkey slams Iran over its silence on Syria," *People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran*, 5 February 2012, <https://www.mojahedin.org/newsen/17119/Turkey-slams-Iran-over-its-silence-on-Syria>.

In March 2015, President Erdoğan accused Iran of fighting IS in Iraq ‘only to take its place’ and accusing them of ‘trying to dominate the region’.³³² Turkey says that ‘Iran’s mobilisation of Shiite militias from across the region to protect the rule of a minority sect, the Alawites, over a majority-Sunni population in Syria has deepened sectarian tensions, providing Sunni jihadists with a potent recruitment tool.’³³³ These exchanges over each other’s policies in Syria and the wider region have been quite heated but since the election of Rouhani, Iran has maintained an engaged and conciliatory tone towards Turkey in terms of bilateral relations.³³⁴

As the Syrian Crisis has evolved into a more ethno-sectarian conflict with the rise and consolidation of territory by ISIS and Jabhat Al-Nusra, a resurgent Kurdish movement in Northern Syria has gained ground under the PYD (and its militia, the YPG) mobilising to defend the minority Kurdish community.³³⁵ The PYD have acted as a dominant force (with the help of coalition forces) in the fight against ISIS. The success of the PYD/YPG forces against ISIS and the declaration of de-facto autonomy in Northern Syria (*Rojava*) has given international legitimacy to the once dormant Syrian Kurdish movement and made the Kurds one of the key actors in the conflict in Syria. However, the resurgence of the Kurdish movement in Syria has both Iran and Turkey worried.

As Syrian Kurds established the autonomous enclaves in 2012, Turkey’s policies became erratic and reactive. Turkey framed the resurgent Kurdish issue in Syria as

³³² Humerya Pamuk, "Turkey's Erdogan says can't tolerate Iran bid to dominate Middle East," *Reuters*, 26 March 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-turkey-idUSKBN0MM2N820150326>.

³³³ See International Crisis Group, "Turkey and Iran: Bitter Friends, Bosom Rivals." Crisis Group Middle East Briefing 51, *International Crisis Group*, 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran/b051-turkey-and-iran-bitter-friends-bosom-rivals>.

³³⁴ William Gourlay, "Mesopotamian Nexus: Iran, Turkey, and the Kurds," in *Iran in the World: President Rouhani's Foreign Policy*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Dara Conduit (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 119.

³³⁵ Fred H. Lawson, "Syria's mutating civil war and its impact on Turkey, Iraq and Iran," *International Affairs* 90, no. 6 (2014): 1352.

part of its own domestic Kurdish issue in dealing with the PKK.³³⁶ For Iran, the ascendance of the PYD has also given rise to renewed militancy by the PJAK in Iranian territory. This has led to coordination on fighting the possibility of an independent Kurdish state or entity appearing in Syria or Iraq. Despite the contradictions in policy between Turkey and Iran in the Syrian Crisis as mentioned previously, relations between the two countries have remained cordial. This includes economic relations which have been further promoted through increased energy and trade.³³⁷ With every critical reaction that has occurred there has been a follow up that tries to repair bilateral relations. Initial disagreement and deterioration of the relations has occurred between the two states. However, there has not been a major break in relations. These relations continue despite distinct and different strategic visions and trajectories for Syria and the Middle East region.

3.2. Analysis of Turkish-Iranian Approaches to the Syrian Crisis and Arab Spring

The above policies of both Turkey and Iran appeared to put the two countries at significant rivalry and disagreement when it comes to the geopolitics of the Arab Spring and the Syrian Crisis. The Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis presents a valid case study to understanding the complexities of Turkey-Iranian relations where security and geopolitical concerns dominate the relationship. Their policies have appeared contradictory but their relationship has continued. Despite continued disagreement over the path of the Syrian Crisis, Turkey and Iranian relations remain cordial. Turkey-Iranian relations seem diminished because of the outcomes of the Syrian Crisis but this fluctuation in the relationship has a historical precedence. Historical Sociology helps us understand that the state is not a 'unitary' actor but is shaped by domestic, regional and international forces. This is true when approaching Turkey

³³⁶ While initially reform measures were established in 2013 and a ceasefire was put in place, the conflict became remilitarised in late 2014.

³³⁷ Barçın Yinanç, "Turkey risks boosting economic ties with Tehran," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 16 February 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-risks-boosting-economic-ties-with-tehran.aspx?pageID=449&nID=95235&NewsCatID=412>; Hatice Karahan, "The Post-Sanction Iranian Economy and Turkey," *ORSAM*, 16 June 2016, <http://www.setav.org/en/the-post-sanctions-iranian-economy-and-turkey/>; Serdar Poyraz, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: A Wider Perspective," in *SETA Policy Brief* (Ankara: SETA, 2009).

and Iran's position to the Arab Spring and the Syrian Crisis, and the historical different positions in the face of their history and the history of their relations.

Due to the complex nature of the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis in Turkey-Iranian relations, two main continuities will be selected and explored in depth, which illustrate the HS/FPA dimensions in this relationship. These two primary continuities are 1) *Ideological Competition* and 2) *The Kurdish Issue*. Each primary continuity will be broken down into three sections: *Historical*, *Domestic Considerations* and *Regional & International*. Including an analysis of these two continuities, this thesis will establish that the rivalry within the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis has been shaped by the interaction of historical continuity, domestic considerations and is affected by subregional, regional and international events. This will also facilitate the analysis of how HS/FPA can help uncover further complexities in Turkish-Iranian relations in this case study.

3.2.1. Ideological Competition

3.2.1.1. Historical

Iran and Turkey's positions towards the Arab Spring and Syrian crisis are shaped around the experience of historical continuities and 'path dependency'. The Arab Spring and the policies of the two non-Arab states in the region demonstrate a continuation of a competition between Iranian and Turkish influence, most specifically the 'Turkish' and 'Iranian' models. Both states ambitions were high when the Arab Uprising occurred. When the protests broke out in 2011, PM Erdoğan's outspokenness and ability to play to the Arab street, 'rather than Khamenei or any figure from Iran, came to be seen as a role model for the protestors in Tahrir Square and elsewhere'.³³⁸ Turkey's soft power approach to the region had given it an advantage over Iran's hard-power pursuit of implementing the 'Iranian' model. This is interesting due to Iran's continued interference in regional politics since the revolution and its 'ideological reproduction' as a means of legitimising its

³³⁸ Gourlay, 117.

foreign policy pursuits in the Middle East. Moreover, this highlights the ‘path-dependency’ of Turkish-Iranian competition in the region.

The ‘Turkish’ vs ‘Iranian’ model contestation has its roots back in the Secular vs Islamic governance divide of the 1980s, as well as soft/hard power approaches to regional competition in Northern Iraq and Central Asia/Caucasus.³³⁹ These historical path dependencies mean that there is a historical tendency between Iran and Turkey to compete for influence in its immediate neighbourhood. With the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and *Ennahda*³⁴⁰ party in Tunisia, it appeared that the ‘Turkish’ model had been successful in its approach of implementing successful ‘Muslim-democracies’ with secular characteristics. By 2013, with the reestablishment of the military status quo in Egypt and the continuing crisis in Syria, both models had failed in their objectives for increased regional influence.

The Syrian Crisis opened the fault lines in the political and strategic relations of Turkey and Iran. As both states sought to pursue their regional interests, it became obvious that their policies had come into conflict. Ideological competition is a continuation that runs throughout Turkey-Iran relations and the situation in Syria is no different. Several scholars have pointed out that the politically charged environment in Syria has slowly deepened the sectarian nature of politics in the region, due to the language employed by Iranian and Saudi politicians.³⁴¹ Turkey itself has been accused of promoting a Sunni agenda by supporting Sunni rebel groups. Despite the ease of applying a sectarian framework to understand Turkish-Iranian relations in terms of the Sunni-Shia divide, this analysis fails to understand the complexities of the relationship. To give an example, the Sunni and Shia divide

³³⁹ Ali Bilgiç and Pınar Bilgin, "Turkey's "New" Foreign Policy toward Eurasia," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52, no. 2 (2011).

³⁴⁰ The Ennahda Party is a moderate Islamist political party in Tunisia. It is founded by Rached Ghannouchi and played a key role in the shift to democracy after the fall of the Zine El Abidine Ben Ali regime in the post-Arab Spring period.

³⁴¹ See Afshon Ostovar, "Sectarian Dilemmas in Iranian Foreign Policy: When Strategy and Identity Politics Collide," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 30 November 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/11/30/sectarian-dilemmas-in-iranian-foreign-policy-when-strategy-and-identity-politics-collide-pub-66288>.

has rarely been an issue between Turkey and Iran, as ‘Iran has not accused Turkey of engaging in sectarian language as they have the Saudis’.³⁴² This deterioration in political relations has been promoted mostly in terms of the discourse between each other. Iran has denounced Turkey’s support for Sunni groups and using its territory for allowing jihadists to move freely into Syria but has not accused the Turkish government of promoting Shia and Sunni divisions.

Although it has not been shaped in a sectarian narrative, ideological competition remains between the two countries over their Syria policies. Iran and Turkey have thus employed ‘identity-based language in their dispute over Syria, which presents the two as historic rivals, evoking memories of the Ottoman-Safavid confrontations of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.’³⁴³ This ideological competition is framed not along the lines of sectarianism but in terms of ‘civilizational’ differences. In the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis, this has manifested itself in the discourse as an ideological competition between Turkish ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ vs. Iranian ‘Expansionism’. Both accuse each other of imperial ambitions within the region and pursuit for influence.³⁴⁴ Iran’s accusations of ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ are aimed at the AKP’s foreign policy objectives over the last decade which have been directed at securing economic interests and regional prominence. This Neo-Ottoman paradigm has allowed ‘Ankara to exert more soft power- political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural influence- in formerly Ottoman territories such as the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans, as well as in other regions where Turkey has strategic and national interests’.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Akbarzadeh and Barry, 6.

³⁴³ Ibid., 7.

³⁴⁴ It must be added that Neo-Ottomanism is not part of AKP discourse but it has been used by critics and media sources in Iran to emphasise the ‘imperial’ character of AKP policies. See for example Nematollah Mozaffarpour, "Iran is a Republic, Not an Empire." *Iran Review*, 25 May 2016, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran-Is-a-Republic-Not-an-Empire.htm>; "Erdogan dreams neo-Ottoman empire: Analyst," *PressTV*, March 31 2016, <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/03/31/458455/Turkey-Erdogan-alNusra-Front-Syria>.

³⁴⁵ Quoted in Demirtas-Bagdonas, 142.

The problem lies however, with Turkey's own preconceived 'new' civilizational identity and geographical imagination. As part of its discourse it emphasises the Ottoman imperial past and Turkish exceptionalism. Thus, leading to allegations of imperial pursuits. With the Syrian Crisis, Turkey's motivations have been framed by Iran as part of an ideological pursuit of this agenda in the Middle East. Ankara's approach to the Syrian Crisis however has not solely been based on this ideological narrative but has been approached with elements intrinsic to Turkish state formation and foreign policy objectives. Ömer Taşpınar indicates that:

*Turkey's cautious policy towards the crisis and reluctance to unilaterally establish a buffer zone can be explained by the government's pursuit of Kemalist principles, while Davutoğlu's references to the protection of Turkey's national interest in the crisis demonstrate the Gaullist elements in the government's policy*³⁴⁶

The Iranian elite however, have shaped Turkey's foreign policy motivations as 'a negative fantasy of Erdoğan's government, representing him as equally dangerous for idolising those who kept Syria under subjugation during the Ottoman period.'³⁴⁷ An Iranian national security official has stated that 'What changed in Syria [after 2011] was neither the government's nature nor Iran's ties with it, but Turkish ambitions.'³⁴⁸ This has gained traction in the Iranian press and the Iranian elite political discourse as this concept of Neo-Ottomanism has been popularised as the fundamental driving force behind Turkey's policy in the Arab Spring and Syria.³⁴⁹ They have argued that 'Ankara's delusions are being irresponsibly fed by their Western allies in order to weaken the regime', as well as accusing Turkey of

³⁴⁶ For more information on the complexity of the Neo-Ottoman discourse and narrative please refer to *ibid.*, 143; Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Strategic Vision and Syria," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2012); Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism," in *Carnegie Papers*, ed. Carnegie Middle East Center (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

³⁴⁷ Nora Fisher Onar, "Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy," (Istanbul: EDAM / German Marshall Fund, 2009).

³⁴⁸ Crisis Group interviews, Iranian officials, Tehran and Istanbul, March-August 2016 quoted in International Crisis Group.

³⁴⁹ See for example "Erdogan dreams neo-Ottoman empire: Analyst."

‘building a phony Islamic ideology in order to lessen the power of the Islamic Republic and essentially seize Syria by proxy’.³⁵⁰

Iranian officials and scholars have also drawn parallels between Turkey’s support of the ‘Turkish model’ with its Neo-Ottomanist agenda. Turkey’s attempted leadership role and its ‘Turkish model’ (with its pro-Western Muslim secular democracy) presents an ideological challenge to Iran’s pursuit of influence in the region. After the Arab Spring, this relationship has moved from sincere competition to ‘delicate brinkmanship’.³⁵¹ Turkey has tried to shape the rivalry by aiming to frame Iran as ‘expansionist’.³⁵² Relations have been mainly cordial and both Iran and Turkey have called for dialogue since 2015. However, this has not been without its problems. Turkish lawmakers and President Erdoğan stated in a press conference in March 2015 that ‘Iran is trying to dominate the region... This has begun annoying us, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. This is really not tolerable and Iran has to see this.’³⁵³ Turkey has at times accused Iran of pursuing a sectarian agenda in the region, as well as framing its Syria policy in a negative light using religious discourse.³⁵⁴ Turkey has maintained however, a positive discourse towards Iran, focusing on

³⁵⁰ Akbarzadeh and Barry, 9.

³⁵¹ Peter Kenyon, "In Balancing Act, Turkey Hosts Iranian Nuclear Talks," *NPR*, 13 April 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/04/13/150571682/in-balancing-act-turkey-hosts-iranian-nuclear-talks>.

³⁵² İlınur Çevik, "Isn't Persian expansionism a reality?," *Daily Sabah*, 17 February 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/ilnur-cevik/2017/02/17/isnt-persian-expansionism-a-reality>.

³⁵³ Pamuk.

³⁵⁴ For example, Burhanettin Duran, "Challenging the Iranian Influence over Iraq," SETA, 22 December 2016, <http://www.setav.org/en/challenging-the-iranian-influence-over-iraq/>; Muhittin Ataman, "The Impact of Iranian Over-Expansionism on Regional Politics," SETA, 22 December 2016, <http://www.setav.org/en/the-impact-of-iranian-over-expansionism-on-regional-politics/>; Şaban Kardaş, "Between a Hard Place and the United States: Turkey's Syria Policy Ahead of the Geneva Talks," *ORSAM*, 4 February 2016, <http://orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4561?s=orsam%7Cenglish>; Bayram Sinkaya, "Continuity and Change in Iranian Politics after the Nuclear Deal," in *Orsam Review of Regional Affairs* (Ankara: ORSAM, 2016).

cooperation and economic ties as it has tried to reconcile what is a failed policy approach in Syria.³⁵⁵

The framing of the ideological competition mentioned above is nothing new to Turkey-Iranian relations. Ideological competition between Turkey and Iran is not based around the ‘grand civilizational’ themes³⁵⁶ that are common with many scholars and analysts to define the macro trends in this relationship.³⁵⁷ This ideological competition can be found later than this, from the ‘Secularist vs Islamist’ mistrust and indemnity that has been a prominent feature of Turkish-Iranian relations since 1979. Iran accuses Turkey of ‘Neo-Ottomanist’ policies and Turkey accuses Iran of ‘sectarianism’ and ‘expansionism’ but, each approach shares the same historical sentiments and roots. Looking back to the pre-AKP period, *the fundamental ideological discord between Turkey and Iran is based on its incompatible models of governance, mainly Secularism vs Islamism*. We can see that the Iranian discourse perpetuating ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ is based around this historic ideological competition and mistrust of Turkey’s ability to project regional power and provide itself as a model for the region. To Iran, ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ presents the same incompatible governance model. Turkey’s foreign policy objectives in the Iranian elite’s perspective are therefore still tied to its ‘Secularist/Kemalist’ roots as well as the uncertainty that lies with Turkey’s perceived closeness to the West.

The same discursive narratives about Turkey’s relationship with the West and Iranian fears of Turkish prominence in the region has the familiarity of the issues that were apparent when both Iran and Turkey competed for regional influence in

³⁵⁵ Sabah newspaper provides an example of this kind of narrative. See Editorial Board, "A turning point in Turkish-Iranian relations," *Daily Sabah*, 6 April 2015, <https://www.dailysabah.com/editorial/2015/04/06/a-turning-point-in-turkishiranian-relations>.

³⁵⁶ These ‘grand civilizational’ themes include the Sunni-Shia rivalry and the Ottoman-Safavid competition in the pre-modern era.

³⁵⁷ One such example is this article by the Jerusalem Post framing the ‘grand narrative’ of Turkish-Iranian relations. Refer to David Batashvili, "Iran and Turkey: A New Round of an Ancient Rivalry," *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 February 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Iran-and-Turkey-A-new-round-of-an-ancient-rivalry-480275>.

Northern Iraq as well as the Caucasus and Central Asia in the 1990s.³⁵⁸ This is evident in the discussion of the 'Turkish model' by Iranian elites and their continued attempts to discredit this apparent 'model'.³⁵⁹ This has become more problematic for Turkey to counter this narrative since the Gezi Protests of 2013, in which the use of arbitrary state power and the repression of civil liberties has exposed the authoritarian nature of the AKP regime. The 'Turkish model' discourse of being a secular Muslim democracy has been fundamentally undermined and has shown its disjuncture from contemporary realities compared to the rhetoric espoused.³⁶⁰

For Turkey, there is still a general aversion to Iran's undue influence in the region, particularly in its Syria policy. Turkish intellectuals and media continue to view with suspicion Iran's regional policies in the Middle East, framing their wider regional policy within the sectarian narrative.³⁶¹ This echoes similar misgivings from the post-1979 revolutionary period and the fear of undue Iranian influence (including support of the PKK which will be discussed in the next section). However, when discussing Turkey-Iranian relations directly, it is never framed through this Shia/Sunni prism.

In spite of the rhetoric espoused by both Turkey and Iran in the Syrian Crisis, the same fundamental issues that were apparent previously in competition between the two states remain. This approach is not undermining the rationality of decisions made in the Arab Spring and Syrian crisis but it is trying to highlight that there is a continuation of the ideological reproductions that were found in the relationship previously. In the Syrian crisis, these ideological overtures are more overt and active in terms of hard and soft power but the same apprehension between the two states in

³⁵⁸ See Efeğil and Stone.

³⁵⁹ International Crisis Group.

³⁶⁰ Göçer Akder and Herzog, 510.

³⁶¹ Burhanettin Duran, "The Illusion of Change in Iran." *SETA*, 2 March 2016, <http://www.setav.org/en/the-illusion-of-change-in-iran/>; Ataman; Khosrow Soltani, "Erdogan in Tehran: It is not all about the economy," *Al-Jazeera*, 7 April 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/erdogan-tehran-economy-150407082205187.html>.

terms of political and ideological projection remains. The ideological competition is all but different in name and narrative.

3.2.1.2. Domestic Considerations

Despite its best attempts, the failure of the 'Iranian model' legitimised Iran's hard-power approach to the region. First and foremost, its main process of foreign policy is based on 'ideological reproduction' which seeks to legitimise and rationalise foreign policy in the domestic sphere. Iran seeks its foreign policy agenda to shape its geopolitical reasoning and policy implementation within its historical ideological framework.³⁶² This creates a legitimising factor for domestic consumption even though the main aim of foreign policy is based on 'regime survival'. While regime survival is aimed at 'preserving authoritarian rule against real and imagined challenges'³⁶³, foreign policy can be justified within this ideological paradigm. In terms of the Arab Spring, Iran's experience with the 2009 popular protests and Green movement led to suspicion of the Arab Uprisings and their outcomes. Once they had realised that the Arab Uprisings were directed by secular democratic forces and would not lead to the emergence of Iranian style Islamist regimes, it was easy for this 'ideological reproduction' to shift the narrative in perceiving the protests as 'terrorist movements, and uprising[s], inviting civil wars in the Arab Spring countries'.³⁶⁴ However, this 'ideological reproduction' is also beholden to domestic political considerations.

It is important to consider when applying a HS/FPA approach to states and their actions that there must be an understanding that they are not singular 'units'. In fact, there are other factors such as domestic considerations, which are crucial to the contribution to the decision-making process. The opposition in the jurisdiction of the Iranian elite is a primary enabler of foreign policy. In the Iranian case, the fractured

³⁶² The 'nationalism' and 'third-world resistance' approaches to foreign policy as discussed by Maloney also add to this ideological reproduction. See Maloney, 91-102.

³⁶³ Aras and Falk, 329.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

nature of its foreign policy stems from the elite fragmentation and factionalism that has been an intrinsic part of the Iranian state since the formation of the Islamic Republic. Unlike the Turkish case where domestic politics functions as an enabler of foreign policy decisions, the Iranian state is combined with different factions that compete and contest for political power and influence. The Iranian constitution splits power between various legislative and political bodies. It is based on a two-tiered system of Islamic governance: one based on the 'sovereignty of God' or *Velayat-e Faqih* (represented by a supreme Islamic jurist) and the other 'sovereignty of the people' represented by the National Parliament or *Majles*, and the President.³⁶⁵ The principle of *Velayat-e Faqih* endows immense constitutional authority and religious power over the people. The Supreme Leader sits at the apex of this system and rules with 'decisive authority'.³⁶⁶ Adding to the complexity is the numerous parallel and extra-political bodies which wield considerable influence and power, tying themselves to the formal state apparatus.

This two-tiered system has led to political pluralism within the theocratic elite where factionalism has shown and demonstrated the fragmented nature of Iranian domestic and foreign policy. Factions within the Iranian elite are mainly formed around ideological lines (rather than conventional political parties which have a more identifiable socio-economic base). Moving between conservative, pragmatists and reformist factions is a process that facilitates a level of internal flexibility when the state needs to overcome internal and external challenges. However foreign policy can be dominated by that subsequent faction's ideology. There is a 'relative estrangement from the rest of Iranian society' as its elite and ideologically based focus fails to represent the 'views, aspirations and grievances of the wider public'.³⁶⁷ The ideological nature of Iran's elite focus on foreign policy means that state-society relations are configured in such a way that 'public opinion cannot adequately

³⁶⁵ Amin Saikal, "Iran and the Changing Regional Strategic Environment," in *Iran in the World: President Rouhani's Foreign Policy*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Dara Conduit (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 21.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

³⁶⁷ Mahan Abedin, "The Domestic Determinants of Iranian Foreign Policy: Challenges to Consensus," *Strategic Analysis* 35, no. 4 (2011): 619.

monitor and influence the country's foreign policy'.³⁶⁸ In addition, the institutional complexity of the regime means that other external-political organisations have a say in the decision making process, which leads to a marginalisation of the foreign ministry as the sole source of foreign policy decision making.

Factionalism within the ruling elite demonstrates that there is rarely any solidarity within the ruling structure and the system is not free from patronage networks, corruption and inept functionality. The fragmented nature of Iran's elite has meant that 'Iran has failed to articulate a set of foreign policy goals as per a consensual set of ideological and conceptual norms. In other words, consensus at the ideological level has been elusive.'³⁶⁹ The institutional complexity as well as the ideological reading of foreign policy ensures that there is a lack of consensus in terms of Iran's foreign and regional policy framework. It is also important to note that despite the factionalism that is apparent within the Iranian elite, all factions have a vested interest in maintaining the regime and its survival. Therefore, all foreign policy disagreements are framed in a way that promotes the 'national interest' above all and which one serves it best. Such intra-elite factional disputes of foreign policy highlight the resilience of the authoritarian character of the Iranian regime.³⁷⁰

This ideological opposition is key to understanding the decision-making processes of Iran in terms of its policy in the Syrian Crisis. The dominance of the IRGC hard power strategy over Rouhani's 'diplomatic' approaches demonstrates the constraining influence of Iran's policy towards Syria. The election of Rouhani was supposed to advocate to the international community that Iran was moving away

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 617.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Elliot Hen-Tov, "Understanding Iran's New Authoritarianism," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2006); Güneş Murat Tezcür, "Democracy promotion, authoritarian resiliency, and political unrest in Iran," *Democratization* 19, no. 1 (2012); "Democratic Responses and Authoritarian Responses in Iran in Comparative Perspective," in *Middle East Authoritarianisms: Governance, Contestation, and Regime Resilience in Syria and Iran*, ed. Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); "Intra-Elite Struggles in Iranian Elections," in *Political Participation in the Middle East*, ed. Ellen Lust-Okar and Saloua Zerhouni (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008); Arang Keshavarzian, "Contestation Without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005).

from its confrontational and ideological position under Ahmadinejad, towards becoming a more conciliatory and rational actor. Rouhani was supported by Khamenei to facilitate this 'opening' and reintegration into the international community. Rouhani was voted in on the premise of dealing with the international community in a more open and diplomatic way. While his approach to Syria was one that was initially conciliatory, this approach did not last long.

The power and influence of the IRGC and its dominance over Iran's foreign policy in Syria and the region, severely constrains Rouhani and Iran to pursue soft power approaches in regional politics. The failure of Geneva II and Iran's continued image as a 'pariah state' helped the IRGC in maintaining its power in Iranian foreign policy direction. The factionalist structure and parallel organisations of the Iranian state inhibits Rouhani's ability to negotiate within the system. This indicates that the traditional 'hard power' approach will continue in Syria. It is possible that if a solution is not found soon that the 'soft power' approach promoted by Rouhani could gain prominence once again. It is also worth mentioning that Iran is constrained further because of the IRGC's close ties with the Assad regime and Hezbollah. Even if Iran needs to make a face-saving change in terms of its policy of Syria, it may not have the flexibility to do so.

The IRGC's hard power policy however is not wholly negative in terms of Rouhani's presidency. While Rouhani is effectively constrained in the decision-making processes by the IRGC's control of Iran's foreign policy direction in Syria, the greater geostrategic gains that Iran has made has given the regime much more prominence and stature within the region. This has meant that it has more clout when it comes to regional politics than it did before. Rouhani has lost the ability to control the direction of Iran's Syria policy but it has opened the possibility of increasing its diplomatic advantage in other regional states such as Yemen and Iraq.

From a HS/FPA analysis, Iran's unique elite fragmentation and factionalism helps us understand the opposition that foreign policy decisions face in key regional conflicts. Foreign policy reflects the domestic considerations of power politics within the

regime. This allows flexibility in its ability to project soft and hard power. At the same time, it is constrained by these factions, as each faction considers its own self-interest within its foreign policy decisions. The lack of consideration of public opinion means that foreign policy in Iran is not beholden to the whims of the people but rather the ideological competition between factions. The complexity of its institutional basis in foreign policy making, further complicates the state-society dynamic. Iran's Syria policy demonstrates the positive and negative effects that this factionalism has on state-state relations and we can see that it can explain the ability for Iran to have completely contradicting policies with Turkey in the Syria Crisis but at the same time pursue a civil and cordial relationship due to its own factional and 'national interest'.

In Turkey's case, domestic considerations and politics is a very important part in how the political identity of foreign policy is formed. While domestic politics assists the foreign policy, decision making process, the reverse is also true. Turkey's approach to the Arab Spring can be viewed through its foreign policy strategy of 'social reproduction'. Hoffman and Cemgil point out that the major pillar of the AKP's strategy of reproduction is based on its establishment of a 'Turkish sphere of influence in the former Ottoman geography by exploiting the power vacuum after the so called "Arab Spring" or "pax-Turca".³⁷¹ 'Politica survival is another aspect of the AKP's social reproduction. The AKP has pursued a strategy that serves to decrease the military's role in politics and define itself as the sole source of institutional power in Turkey.³⁷² This has meant securing high levels of electoral support and continued economic growth through directing and shifting state-society relations. The pursuit of its policies in Egypt and Tunisia finds its origin in this suspicion of secular military establishments and its quest to 'democratise civil-military relations'.³⁷³

³⁷¹ Hoffmann and Cemgil, 4.

³⁷² Ibid., 14-15.

³⁷³ While initially, the AKP's soft power agenda and 'Turkish' model had resonance in the wider region, its continued narrative of regional leadership has worn thin with other states in the region such as Egypt who competed for influence. See Safa Joudeh, "Why Turkey and Egypt won't reconcile anytime soon." *Al-Monitor*, 2 August 2016, <http://www.al->

The AKP's inability to effectively place itself within the power vacuum of the region and present the 'Turkish model' as an example has had consequences. Increasing domestic challenges have arisen due to the AKP's unconditional support for the Syrian opposition. Turkey's Syria policy has become a major source of weakness in domestic politics due to increased instability at the border and growing security risks.³⁷⁴ In addition, the 2013 Gezi protests challenged Turkey's democratic credentials in the region. The mass protests presented the first major challenge to the AKP's position as the sole source of institutional power and shattered the idea that the AKP was unrivalled in the Turkish political sphere.³⁷⁵ The AKP governments responses 'consisted of increasing authoritarianism and attempts to consolidate the AKP's power base using more unorthodox means', in turn, losing a lot of the moral authority it had garnered in its approach to regional and foreign policy.³⁷⁶

In its attempt to respond to increasing domestic challenges, the AKP attempted to shore up support through its own base as a means of defending its ambitious foreign policy agenda, polarising further an already divided society. In the face of domestic challenges to its foreign policy agenda, the AKP and President Erdoğan have consistently engaged in using foreign policy as an instrument to expand and energise their electoral base, undermining the institutional framework for conducting state-

monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2016/08/egypt-turkey-reconciliation-coup-erdogan-sisi.html; Hossein Mofidi Ahmadi, "Iran-Turkey Relations in the Light of Iran's More Prominent Regional Position and Impossibility of Saudi-Turkish Coalition." *Iran Review*, 16 January 2016, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran-Turkey-Relations-in-the-Light-of-Iran-s-More-Prominent-Regional-Position-and-Impossibility-of-Saudi-Turkish-Strategic-Coalition.htm>; Veysel Kurt, "The New Regional Order and Turkey." SETA, 19 December 2014, <http://www.setav.org/en/the-new-regional-order-and-turkey/>.

³⁷⁴ Esen Kirdiş, "The Role of Foreign Policy in Constructing the Party Identity of the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP)," *Turkish Studies* 16, no. 2 (2015): 186-87.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 187; Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, "Rising competitive authoritarianism in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (2016).

³⁷⁶ After the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood dominated government in Egypt, the 2013 Gezi protests presented a fundamental threat to the AKP's concept of regime survival. See Hoffmann and Cemgil, 17.

state relations.³⁷⁷ This has constrained Turkey's ability to continue to pursue its ideological approach to the region, as Syria has drained the AKP's foreign policy of 'moral authority, or soft power that it had exercised in its early years after 2002.'³⁷⁸ Therefore, to increase domestic support for its policies, Turkish foreign policy has returned to its more traditional strategy of realist politics and hard power rather than mediation and soft power that was pursued by PM Davutoğlu's 'Strategic Depth' policy.

Since foreign policy has been conducted in polemics for domestic consumption, this has undermined the institutional basis of Turkey's policy in Syria. It has led to contradictory and irrational decisions as well as constrained Turkey's ability to conduct viable foreign policy, without framing it for domestic consumption. Turkish policy has failed to create any new foreign policy strategies when its 'zero-problems with neighbours' policy collapsed but 'its lack of credible commitment to democracy beyond victory at the ballot boxes has been revealed' and thus undermining its value based approach to foreign policy.³⁷⁹ In the post-July 15th 2016 period this has been even more exacerbated as power has become more concentrated within the executive and erratic decisions are increasingly justified through 'external threats' and the AKP's conception of a hostile international environment.³⁸⁰

In effect, Turkey's response to the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis has changed the state-society dynamic in Turkey, as well as clouds the discussion in terms of the agency-structure division of Turkish foreign policy. Turkish foreign policy towards Syria has been constrained by its use of foreign policy to increase its domestic support. Framing foreign policy decisions as a means of consolidating its base, has led to increasing polemics which have undermined the institutional basis of foreign

³⁷⁷ Ahmet T. Kuru, "Turkey's Failed Policy toward the Arab Spring: Three Levels of Analysis," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2015): 98-99.

³⁷⁸ William Hale, "Turkey's Domestic Politics, Public Opinion and Middle East Policy," *Palgrave Communications* 2 (2016): 6.

³⁷⁹ Bilgin Ayata, "Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing Arab World: Rise and Fall of a Regional Actor?," *Journal of European Integration* 37, no. 1 (2014): 109.

³⁸⁰ Kirdiş, 188.

policy decisions. This has left foreign policy to emotive responses and hubris rather than rational decisions. Therefore, due to its focus on domestic considerations and early focus on ideological pursuits, Turkey has been increasingly constrained in its approach to Syria. It has had to undermine its original ideological agenda for a more adventurist approach to foreign policy. The AKP has found that despite domestic opposition to its policies in Syria, it has had to defend its adventurist foreign policy as a means of continuing domestic political support, also securing its position as the sole source of institutional power in Turkey and maintaining regime survival. This change in state-society relations has directly affected how state-state relations have been conducted since 2013.

3.2.1.3. Regional & International

As mentioned in the above sections, the intersection of domestic considerations and historical path dependency help paint a larger picture of the complexity of Turkish-Iranian relations in the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis. To further this analysis, it is important to examine the intersections and causal relationship of the ideological competition in the regional and international arena, and how this has affected the Turkish-Iranian relationship. The Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis have presented such a rupture to the region that there has been a shift of regional relationships and rivalries which have fundamentally influenced and affected how both Iran and Turkey have dealt with each event. The Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis has not just influenced regional responses to each of them but has also influenced international actors. These responses have shaped and complicated the geopolitics of the international community and region.

It is important to explore the wider context of regional relations and their interconnectivity to the development of Turkish-Iranian relations. One of the most stark and obvious problems in the region is with the growing issues between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry is one that has had geopolitical significance for the region as the two actors continue to fight for regional hegemony

through their policies in Syria and Yemen.³⁸¹ This has led to proxy support of rebel groups in differing conflicts, which is often justified through a sectarian narrative. This sectarian narrative shapes the Iran-Saudi rivalry in the grand ideological discourse of Sunni vs Shia discussions.³⁸² This is particularly crucial when exploring Iran-Saudi rivalry in the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis. For Saudi Arabia, it has shown a contradictory approach in terms of support and criticism. It made attempts to undermine the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, supporting the coup attempt in 2013 but has pursued an active policy and support for rebel groups in overthrowing Assad in Syria. While it has criticised Iran for supporting the Assad regime, it brutally put down the protests in Bahrain against the al-Khalifa family.³⁸³

The 'Gulf monarchies are apprehensive about Iranian encroachment in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and beyond. In response, they are relying on a military build-up and the power of religious orthodoxy to help deter and roll back Iranian intrusion into what they regard as a rightfully Sunni Arab sphere of influence'.³⁸⁴ Saudi Arabia has been extremely critical of Iran, arguing that it is fuelling sectarian violence and is seeking to expand its influence in Yemen and the greater region. Turkey has pursued a dual-approach to Saudi Arabia and Iran, simultaneously courting both actors in the region.³⁸⁵ However, Turkey's relationship with Saudi Arabia is complex to say the

³⁸¹ Khaled Abdullah, "Turkey's Yemen Dilemma." *Foreign Affairs*, 7 April 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2015-04-07/turkeys-yemen-dilemma>.

³⁸² Emile Hokayem, "Iran, the Gulf States and the Syrian Civil War," *Survival* 56, no. 6 (2014); Ingrid Habets, "Obstacles to a Syrian peace: the interference of interests," *European View* 15, no. 1 (2016).

³⁸³ Hossein Mofidi Ahmadi, "Turkey at Crossroads: Strategic Coalition with Saudi Arabia or Convergence with Iran?", *Iran Review*, 17 April 2015, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Turkey-at-Crossroads-Strategic-Coalition-with-Saudi-Arabia-or-Convergence-with-Iran-.htm>; Semih Idiz, "Turkey plays both sides in Iran, Saudi conflict." *Al-Monitor*, 12 April 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/04/turkey-iran-saudi-arabia-dual-track-diplomacy.html>; Tim Arango, "Turkey, Which Sought Middle Ground, Enters Saudi-Iranian Dispute," *The New York Times*, 8 January 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/09/world/middleeast/turkey-iran-saudi-arabia.html?_r=0.

³⁸⁴ Bülent Aras and Emirhan Yorulmazlar, "Turkey-Iran Relations: A Long-Term Perspective." *Center for American Progress*, 11 July 2016, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2016/07/11/140959/turkey-iran-relations/>.

³⁸⁵ Sadık Ünay, "The Saudi-Iranian Rift and Turkey's Position." *SETA*, 9 January 2016, <http://www.setav.org/en/the-saudi-iranian-rift-and-turkeys-position/>; Veysel Kurt, "Saudi-Iranian

least. Turkey has been very critical of Saudi Arabia's support of the Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi regime in Egypt while Turkey's support of the Muslim Brotherhood has caused tension between them.³⁸⁶ Turkey's support for Saudi Arabian financed anti-Assad groups gives Turkey a strong Sunni partner as its rivalry with Iran has deepened over Syria. Turkey's role in the region however has been drawn into this Sunni-Shia narrative. Turkey's strong relationship with Qatar only emphasises this further. Both Qatar and Turkey have been active in transitions in the region supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its continuing support of pro-Sunni groups in Syria.³⁸⁷ As Bulent Aras and Emirhan Yorulmazlar assert:

*This combination of geostrategic rivalry with sectarianism and ethnic solidarity, whereby the Arab powers aim to crowd out non-Arab claimants—Turkey and Iran—for regional leadership, creates a volatile regional setting that is not conducive to stabilization efforts. Even worse, Ankara and Tehran do not seem interested in finding a middle ground or stopping the current cycle of conflict—the necessary first step to stabilizing the region and shaping a new, sustainable regional order in accordance with their national interests.*³⁸⁸

Although they both remain as cordial partners in the region, the wider context of regional relations of Iran and Turkey's policy find themselves both constrained. The ideological competition in the region plays into this grand sectarian narrative of Sunni-Shia. Despite its best efforts, Turkey has been perceived in the region as a pro-Sunni power and its relationship with Iran is constrained by its openly supportive policies of Sunni groups in the region. While the sectarian narrative is incorrect in explaining the variety of geopolitical rivalries in the region, it is important because it puts a constraining element on finding a common discourse in regional affairs between Iran and Turkey. Iran's policies in Yemen adds to the ideological competition at a regional level and does not aid both countries in finding

Tensions: Regional Turmoil and Turkey." *SETA*, 8 January 2016, <http://www.setav.org/en/saudi-iranian-tensions-regional-turmoil-and-turkey/>.

³⁸⁶ See Joudeh.

³⁸⁷ Crystal A. Ennis and Bessma Momani, "Shaping the Middle East in the Midst of the Arab Uprisings: Turkish and Saudi foreign policy strategies," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 6 (2013): 1140.

³⁸⁸ Aras and Yorulmazlar, "Turkey-Iran Relations: A Long-Term Perspective".

a common discursive narrative. These constraining regional elements mean that it is possible for Iran and Turkey to focus collaboration on areas of mutual concern in the region such as the Kurdish Issue and expanding economic ties. However, 'Neither Iran nor Turkey can eliminate the sectarian tensions unleashed over the past five years [and] nobody can put the genie back in the bottle'.³⁸⁹

Regional issues are an important part in understanding the ebb and flow of Turkey-Iranian ideological competition in the Arab Spring and Syria but the international context also plays an important part to understanding this. The Syrian Crisis has become more complex and difficult to contain within its sovereign borders as regional and international actors have entered the conflict. The failure of Turkey to respond effectively to both regional and domestic challenges has undermined the legitimacy of the 'Turkish model'. It has failed to fill the power vacuum left after the Arab Spring, demonstrating the limits and constraints that Turkish soft power influence has. Instead Turkish attempts to impose the Turkish model through hard power (as in the case of Syria), has caused controversy with its traditional alliance networks with the United States and NATO. This has become even more apparent since the Assad regime used chemical weapons in August 2013, leading to a 'retreat by revolutionary military forces and an expansion and rise of transnational extremist groups'.³⁹⁰ The expansion of ISIS in the region has become the primary existential threat to Turkey's Western allies, leaving Turkey and its regional policies adrift as it continues to call for deposing Assad. The inclusion of the United States (including coalition forces) and Russia into the Syrian conflict has not only brought regional ideological competition to the forefront, but now brings an international dimension of geopolitical and strategic rivalry.

³⁸⁹ See International Crisis Group. "Turkey and Iran: Bitter Friends, Bosom Rivals." Crisis Group Middle East Briefing 51 *International Crisis Group*, 2016, published electronically, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran/b051-turkey-and-iran-bitter-friends-bosom-rivals> (Date Accessed, 21 January 2017).

³⁹⁰ Ammar Kahf, "Geopolitical Realalignments around Syria- Threats and Opportunities," *Insight Turkey* 18, no. 2 (2016): 23.

Following the Russian intervention into Syria, Iran has gained a strong ally in the region and in propping up the Assad regime. Although Iran maintains a strong presence in other regional issues, it has withdrawn from day-to-day management of the regime's affairs.³⁹¹ The United States focus on ISIS has isolated Turkey and forced it to pursue difficult policy choices, therefore limiting Turkey's ability to push for its policies in Syria. Turkey and Saudi Arabian insistence on a 'Safe-Zone' has fallen on deaf ears.³⁹² Turkey's options in terms of Syria have been limited since Russian intervention and the shooting down of a Russian jet in 2015.³⁹³ However there has been growing strategic synergy and cooperative dynamics that have started to occur between Russia, Iran and Turkey. Developing ties with Russia has helped Turkey remove itself from the geopolitical isolation that it has felt due to a lack of US support for its policies in Syria.³⁹⁴

A rapprochement between Russia and Turkey also facilitates easier cooperation with Iran on issues related to Syria and allows a convergence on positive sum collaboration. Both Turkey and Iran may not be 'on the same wavelength' in terms of their policy in Syria but 'both sides are fully aware that costs of failure to jettison geopolitical differences for the sake of maintaining peace and security in the Middle East will be far greater than those of a marriage of convenience.'³⁹⁵ This has become more of a reality since the Turkish incursion to liberate Jarbalus which has put

³⁹¹ See Bayram Sinkaya, "The Iran-Russia Axis in the New Geopolitics of the Middle East." *ORSAM*, 18 January 2016, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4551?s=turkmen%7Cenglish>; Hossein Aghaie Joobani and Mostafa Mousavipour, "Russia, Turkey, and Iran: Moving Towards Strategic Synergy in the Middle East?," *Strategic Analysis* 39, no. 2 (2015); Zülfikar Doğan, "Turkish-Iranian rivalry may derail Syrian peace efforts." *Al-Monitor*, 3 January 2017, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/01/turkey-iran-russia-ankara-tehran-rivalry.html?utm_source=Boomtrain&utm_medium=manual&utm_campaign=20170104&bt_ee=dbJhPr9wbZQ0V2/FLh14v7IfEQstk9ORlEgfkZvd8lCVrnac6l677s4+f9sxP+8E&bt_ts=1483554510065.

³⁹² "No-fly and safe zone, Turkey's priorities in Syria: Erdogan," *Anadolu Agency*, 26 September 2014.

³⁹³ Dion Nissenbaum, Emre Peker, and James Marson, "Turkey Shoots Down Russian Military Jet," *The Wall Street Journal*, 24 November 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/turkey-shoots-down-jet-near-syria-border-1448356509>.

³⁹⁴ Aghaie Joobani and Mousavipour, 150.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

Turkey right into the midst of both Assad, Kurdish and ISIS controlled areas.³⁹⁶ Turkey has sought to create synergy with its Russian and Iranian counterparts in Syria. However, its relationship with the United States (however strained it may be) and increasing multidimensional linkages to the Gulf (particularly Saudi Arabia) provides an ideological impediment to further geopolitical cooperation with Russia and particularly Iran.

3.2.2. The Kurdish Issue

This chapter will now move on and provide an analysis of the second of our two continuities. It will explore the same three intersections that will emphasise our understanding of how the interaction of the *Historical, Domestic Considerations* and the *Regional & International* can provide a deeper understanding of the importance of the Kurdish Issue in the Syrian Crisis in relation to Turkish-Iranian relations.

3.2.2.1. Historical

The Syrian Crisis has contributed to a lot of non-state actors gaining prominence and forwarding their agenda due to the instability of the region. The Kurdish Issue remains a strong theme when analysing Turkish-Iranian relations in the Syria Crisis. Framing it within a domestic context has allowed Turkey to pursue a policy of tying the fate of the PYD in Syria to its own battle with the PKK. However, Iran has faced its own issues with the resurgent Kurdish movement in Syria (due to PJAK revived militancy in 2013), but the Kurdish movement in Iran remains fragmented more so than Turkey or Syria.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ Turkey launched Operation *Euphrates Shield* on the 24th of August 2016, entering Syrian sovereign territory unilaterally without Coalition military support. While the Turkish government said it aimed to stop ISIS, many analysts believe that the unilateral move was more directed at the possible threat of the Northern Kurdish Cantons joining with the Western ones forming a Kurdish entity along the Turkish-Syrian border. For more information refer to Kareem Shaheen, "Turkey sends tanks into Syria in operation aimed at Isis and Kurds," *The Guardian*, 24 August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/24/turkey-launches-major-operation-against-isis-in-key-border-town>.

³⁹⁷ Lawson, 1358.

The rapprochement between Turkey and Iran has accelerated as both actors have vowed to fight terrorism and extremism throughout the region. Despite the rhetoric coming from the Turkish side regarding the overthrowing of Assad, it appears that after 2013, the resurgence and internationalisation of the Kurdish movement in Syria presented an existential crisis to Turkey. This growing internationalisation poses a significant problem for both Turkey and Iran as more Western powers have shown sympathy towards the nascent Kurdish movement. This is especially true after the siege of Kobane where there has been considerable cooperation between the PYD and the US.³⁹⁸ Turkey has moved to bolster relations with the KDP-led government in the KRG. The Barzani-led KDP has consistently been fighting against PKK positions in Iraq and are opposed to the PYD's autonomy project in Syria.³⁹⁹ The construction trenches alongside the western fringes of the KRG, was a strategy to stop the PUK (KDP's main rival) from supplying arms and materials to the PYD in Syria.⁴⁰⁰

This has led the Kurdish issue in Iran and Turkey to move from a fundamentally domestic issue to one that is international. This initially led to a hardening of responses by both Turkey and Iran and coordination to stop the establishment of a Kurdish 'state' or independent entity on the Turkish border. However, this has not ceased Turkish accusations that the Assad regime and thus Iran are supporting a resurgence of the PKK to undermine Turkish territorial interests. This discourse has become prominent since it appears that Turkey has changed its foreign policy priorities to its fight against the PKK. Turkey's Syria policy in terms of the Kurdish Issue is obscure but has been dominated by one primary motivation since 2014 which is the 'exterminat[ion of] the PKK'.⁴⁰¹ Aykan Erdemir points out that for Iran, its priorities are quite different from Turkey in its approach to the PKK:

³⁹⁸ Cengiz Gunes and Robert Lowe, "The Impact of the Syrian War on Kurdish Politics Across the Middle East," (London: Chatham House: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2015), 12.

³⁹⁹ See Wladimir Van Wilgenburg, *The Syria Factor in Iraqi Kurdish Politics* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014).

⁴⁰⁰ Gunes and Lowe, 11.

⁴⁰¹ Pinar Tremblay, "Iranian-Turkish tug-of-war over Kurds." *Al-Monitor*, 13 December 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/turkey-iran-become-latest-surrogate-of-pkk.html>.

*In Syria, Tehran is skeptical about the PKK-affiliated PYD's [Kurdish nationalist Democratic Union Party] attempts to carve a contiguous Kurdish-controlled territory, worrying that this entity could then provide a base for Western powers. In Iraq, Tehran sees the PKK as an asset in counterbalancing Turkish military presence in Bashiqa. As the tension between Ankara and Tehran over the future of Tal Afar climbs, both Iran and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units seem to be more willing to enter into tactical alliance with the PKK.*⁴⁰²

When we analyse both Turkey and Iran's approach to the Kurdish issue in the Syrian Crisis, it has resounding similarities to the way in which both states have dealt with the Kurdish Issue since the PKK insurgency began in 1984. Despite Turkey and the AKP's rhetoric of overthrowing the Assad regime as a priority, the Kurdish issue remains the primary security concern for Turkish territorial sovereignty and integrity. Through a HS/FPA lens, the AKP's approach to the resurgent Syrian Kurdish movement is reminiscent of previous Kemalist Turkish regimes, as they have sought to securitise the Kurdish Issue. In Iran's case, we can still see that a resurgent Kurdish issue also poses an existential threat towards its own Kurdish community (however not as much as Turkey).⁴⁰³

It is likely that the same discursive patterns have occurred in terms of approaches to the Kurdish Issue and both policies are shaped in the competition, and use of the Kurds for their own political and regional purposes. This is most explicit in Turkey and Iran's continued competition for influence in Northern Iraq, as each has used its relations with different Kurdish groups to expand influence and projection of power in the region at the others expense. Relations between Turkey and Iran are reminiscent behaviour and outcomes despite some cooperation on security and fighting 'terrorism' as the Kurdish issue has become more 'securitized' and 'externalised' by either actors, there is less geopolitical cooperation between Iran and Turkey. *However, continually externalising the Kurdish issue serves to generate*

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Mohammad Salih Mustafa, "Iran's Role in the Kurdistan Region," (Doha: Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2016).

mistrust between both Iran and Turkey, despite the obvious benefits collaboration on the issue would espouse.

3.2.2.2. Domestic Considerations

The Kurdish Issue and its role in Turkey's policy toward Syria must not be understated. For Turkey, the Kurdish Issue in the region is primarily a domestic issue. Turkey 'frames its policy towards Syria's Kurds within its overall policy on the management of the Kurdish conflict'.⁴⁰⁴ The ongoing conflict between the PKK and the Turkish government indicates that the developments in the Kurdish autonomous cantons in Northern Syria and the efficiency of the YPG units are interpreted as a threat to Turkey's national security. This originates from the close relationship and ideological affinity of Öcalanism⁴⁰⁵ that the PYD (who have a dominant voice within the political management of *Rojava*) has with the PKK. Turkey believes that the rise of the PYD can facilitate the growth and strength of the PKK within Turkey's own borders.

Turkey believes that the empowerment of the PYD and the autonomous regions on the border will lead to the territorial breakup of Syria. They further fear that this trend could spread and lead to similar calls from amongst Turkey's restive Kurdish population. Thus, Turkey has consistently called for a 'buffer zone' against 'terrorists' who threaten Turkey from the border regions. Turkey and President Erdoğan have consistently called the PYD a 'terrorist' organisation and has accused them of cooperating with the Assad government. Such is the existential fear within domestic Turkish politics of a Kurdish entity on its border that the Turkish military has engaged in shelling activities on the Syrian border against YPG positions west of the Euphrates river. In 2016, Turkish forces invaded a large swath of territory in Northern Syria on the pretence of clearing out ISIS from its border regions but have

⁴⁰⁴ Gunes and Lowe, 8.

⁴⁰⁵ Öcalanism is the political ideology purposed by the Kurdish Nationalist leader and one of the founders of the PKK- Abdullah Öcalan. His philosophy in terms of the Kurdish movement has argued for a Kurdish nationalist model based on democratic confederalism.

admitted that the main objective was to stop the Kurdish cantons in the west joining with the ones in the east.⁴⁰⁶

The AKP government frames the PYD/PKK issue within a domestic political context and security discourse. As mentioned previously, domestic politics plays an essential part in how foreign policy is conducted and framed. By framing it as a domestic issue, it allows Turkey leeway to conduct its operations within the region. Since it has historically dealt with this issue over the last 30 years, there is thinking that this direct access to the Kurdish Issue gives Turkey more authority in the region in dealing with this issue. Turkey's association of the PYD in a domestic political framework of fighting the PKK gives them the opportunity to conduct military operations within Syria based on a viable security framework. This means that cross-border operations can be conducted without minimal problems from other states such as what occurred in Northern Iraq in the 1990s. When it comes to its policy in Syria, the domestication of the Kurdish issue gives legitimacy to its often unpopular policies in the region.

In the Turkish media, the Assad regime has been represented as a 'major threat supporting Kurdish rebels in Northern Syria'.⁴⁰⁷ Turkey's media and AKP governments concentration on and dispersal of the fabricated truth of the 'devil's triangle' (PYD-PKK-Assad collaboration)⁴⁰⁸ allows the Turkish state to construct public opinion around its policies in Syria. Linking the Kurdish issue with the Assad regime prompts the discourse around an 'immediate threat' and limits the damage of its failed policy in Syria. Such a discourse brings forth historical narratives and threat perceptions that fuel security concerns of citizens which allows for some manoeuvrability in a domestic context. On the other hand, the framing of this issue

⁴⁰⁶ Çalışlar; Oytun Orhan, "Why does Turkey hit PYD/YPG." *ORSAM*, 3 March 2016, <http://orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4570?s=orsam%7Cenglish>.

⁴⁰⁷ Umut Can Adıönmez, "Making Sense of Turkish Mainstream Media: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Change," *Asian Politics & Policy* 8, no. 4 (2016): 632.

⁴⁰⁸ Merve Aydoğan, "PYD leader reveals hidden relations between PYD, Assad," *Daily Sabah*, 27 June 2015, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2015/07/27/pyd-leader-reveals-hidden-relationship-between-pyd-assad>.

domestically means that it does not allow much regional manoeuvrability for Turkey. This has been illustrated by its fraying relationship with the United States (who have been supporting the YPG/PYD) and its increasing regional 'isolation' due to its inability to change its policy towards the Kurdish issue.⁴⁰⁹ This has led to increasing volatility within the Turkish Kurdish movement and the increase of PKK attacks within Turkey, furthering the need for its security-orientated discourse.

It is not just Turkey that is constrained and enabled by its Kurdish policy. The PKK/PYD axis presents another problem in understanding the complexity of the Kurdish issue. One could argue that the Kurdish movement has been constrained because of the rise of the PYD and its association with the PKK. The PKK has tied its future to the fate of the autonomous cantons in Northern Syria.⁴¹⁰ Such a policy (while seemingly strengthening the Kurdish resistance in the region), has severely constrained the PKK within its operational theatre in the South-East of Turkey. As the PKK has sought to continue propping up the PYD/YPG in Northern Syria, its future direction and policy has been tied to the success of *Rojava*. Conversely, the PYD's administration of the cantons and the YPG's continued success against ISIS has gained international legitimacy at the expense of the Turkish government. Continued failure and securitisation from Turkey to deal with the Kurdish Issue effectively has only strengthened the regional and international position of the PYD, and inadvertently the PKK.

Overall, Turkey's continued pursuit to view the Kurdish issue through the prism of domestic politics serves to enable and justify its erratic and contradictory positions in Syria. At the same time, its Kurdish policy has constrained its ability to effectively engage in regional and international politics. This inability to manoeuvre, limits its foreign policy ability to conduct relations with other states in the region such as Russia and the United States, who have both been supporting the PYD/YPG.

⁴⁰⁹ For more information on the inflexibility of Turkey's policy in Syria see Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Inflexibility of Turkey's Policy in Syria," in *IEMeD Mediterranean Yearbook* (Barcelona: IEMeD, 2016); "Regional Powers in a Transforming Middle East."

⁴¹⁰ See Aaron Stein and Michelle Foley, "The YPG-PKK Connection." *Atlantic Council*, 26 January 2016, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-ypg-pkk-connection>; Isik.

However, the PKK's ties to the Kurdish movement and its future existence in Turkey is linked to the fate of what happens to the PYD in the Syrian conflict.

Unlike Turkey, Iran's position towards the Kurdish issue in Syria has a higher degree of flexibility. Although Iran's Kurdish community has a restive history of relations with the Iranian regime, the Kurdish movement within Iran is fragmented.⁴¹¹ Rouhani's approach to Iranian Kurds is one that fluctuates. Unlike the Ahmadinejad administration (which severely repressed the Kurdish areas), Rouhani's government from 2013-2015 had sought to bolster the economy in the Iranian Kurdish regions and grant some limited rights. After two years neither of these policies have come to fruition. This lack of progress can be attributed to the role of the IRGC in securitising the threat of separatism to 'justify a strong military presence.'⁴¹²

The Syrian Crisis has had a less direct impact on Iran's Kurds but the crisis in Syria has given some support for the PJAK. Supporting a similar model of governance as *Rojava*, the PJAK has advocated a canton model for *Rojhilat* (East Kurdistan). This has led the IRGC to pursue a strong security response to threats made by the PJAK that it would create 'a second Syria in case Iran would continue military operations against Kurdish forces in Iran'.⁴¹³ The Iranian establishments continued security concerns from a resurgent PJAK means that it is not an ally of the PYD's project in Northern Syria. While Iran agrees with Turkey's position on keeping the Kurdish movement divided, the fact that there is no strong link to the Syrian Kurdish movement allows Iran more manoeuvrability in their policy in Syria. Unlike Turkey, Iran is not constrained by the domestic challenges that the resurgent Kurdish

⁴¹¹ Gunes and Lowe, 12.

⁴¹² Costas Laoutides, "How Foreign Is the Kurdish Issue in Iran's Foreign Policy?," in *Iran in the World: President Rouhani's Foreign Policy*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Dara Conduit (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 104.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 105. Doğan Ertuğrul, "A Test for Turkey's Foreign Policy: The Syria Crisis," in *Foreign Policy Programme* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2012); Çalışlar.

movement may have on domestic and regional policy. Currently, Iran prefers the power vacuum in Syria filled by the Kurdish movement rather than ISIS.⁴¹⁴

The liberation of Kobane against ISIS, has called for strengthening ties with the Kurds in Syria and Iraq. The synergy of interests seems to have come together for Iran and the Kurds due to their mutual interest in fighting ISIS. As mentioned previously, Iran's policy is constrained by its relationship with the Assad regime and how they perceive the nascent Kurdish movement. Currently, the Assad regime and Syrian Kurdish movement have common objectives and goals in fighting ISIS and Islamic jihadism in Syria. If ISIS and rebel threats are contained and the Assad regime redirects its threat perception against the Kurdish cantons, Iran may pursue a more active policy towards the Syrian Kurdish movement and align itself further with Turkey's interests against the PYD/PKK in the future. As the Kurds position continues to grow in the region, the ability for Iran to make a 'sharp distinction between Kurds internally and externally becomes more remote in the current security environment'.⁴¹⁵

3.2.2.3. Regional & International

In the wider regional context, Iran and Turkey's relationship with the KRG is significant in understanding their relations towards the Kurdish Issue. The KRG role has provided an avenue for Turkey and Iran to conduct relations with Kurdish groups to undermine PKK/PYD gains in Syria. This was evident when the KRG brought together Kurdish political parties in Syria in 2011 under the Kurdish National Council (KNC), but excluded the PYD. However, the rise of ISIS has seen closer collaboration between the PYD, PKK and KRG, particularly in collaboration with YPG and *Persmerga* forces.⁴¹⁶ KRG relations with the PYD need to be seen, however, in the broader context of Turkey's relations and the military conflict

⁴¹⁴ Laoutides, 105.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.105

⁴¹⁶ Kamal Chomani, "KRG, PKK make unlikely allies as they battle IS together." *Al-Monitor*, 22 August 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/08/pkk-krp-peshmerga-join-forces-fight-islamic-state.html>.

against ISIS gains in Syria and Iraq. The Turkish–KRG relationship puts significant restraints on the ability of Erbil to cooperate with the PYD dominated cantons. Iran has pushed its agenda in the KRG as well as seek to enhance its energy ties in the region. For Iran, it also has the same belief as Turkey that continued rivalry between the PKK and KRG forces suits their agenda of limiting the ability of a Kurdish resurgence in Iran.⁴¹⁷

The spectre of independence of the KRG hangs heavily over Turkey and Iran, as both parties agree that such a move is not in their best interests.⁴¹⁸ Erbil's continued disagreements with the Iraqi government is pushing this issue to the forefront of relations. Such a move may mean that both Iran and Turkey show flexibility in their relations with the Kurds but could also present a significant problem internally. PYD gains and the KRG's claims for independence may force Turkey and Iran to reconsider their security perspectives towards the Kurdish Issue and treat it as a transnational issue rather than internal and domestic problem.⁴¹⁹

The growing internationalization of the Kurdish movement also constrains Turkey and Iran's continued ability to view the Kurdish movement through a security prism. The after effects of Kobane have translated into growing sympathy for the Kurdish movement within the region and the international community.⁴²⁰ The United States and the coalition have been supporting the PYD/YPG as the most effective fighting force against ISIS. This has upset Turkey and complicated its alliance with NATO and the United States. Although there has been limited recognition of the autonomous cantons in Northern Syria, both Russia and the United States have recognized the PYD internationally in their efforts in Syria.

⁴¹⁷ Ranj Alaaldin, "Why the Turkey-KRG alliance works, for now," *Al-Jazeera*, 7 November 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/11/turkey-krq-alliance-161105141533661.html>.

⁴¹⁸ Elyas Vahedi, "Kurds: A Common Issue for Iran, Turkey." *Iran Review*, 24 June 2015, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Kurds-A-Common-Issue-for-Iran-Turkey.htm>.

⁴¹⁹ Laoutides, 106.

⁴²⁰ Gunes and Lowe, 12.

For Turkey, this has constrained its ability to persuade the international community of the existential threat the PKK poses to them in the region and to voice their concerns regarding the Kurdish Issue. In effect, this has led to an increase in the domestication of the issue in Turkey and has partially forced Turkey to seek accommodation with other powers in the region such as Russia and Iran. With its unilateral decision to invade Syria with Operation *Euphrates Shield* (outside the anti-ISIS coalition control), Turkey has further undermined its international prestige and prioritised domestic security against the PKK instead of its fight against ISIS. For Iran, the internationalisation of the Kurdish Issue poses further existential problems particularly if a solution to the Syrian Crisis is negotiated. Iran is not as limited and affected by the internationalisation of the Kurdish movement but could face problems if the PYD project in *Rojava* is successful and Iranian Kurds seek international acceptance from the United States.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed Turkish and Iranian approaches to the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis through the prism of HS/FPA. From the analysis of these events, this chapter has illustrated that by analysing the intersections of the historical, domestic, regional and international, a more complex understanding of Turkish-Iranian relations can be investigated. From the analysis in this chapter, both Turkey and Iran's policies in the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis have illustrated the historical continuities and enabling/constraining factors that have shaped their policies towards these two major crises in the Middle East. These factors include historical path dependencies, agency vs structure debates and changes to state-society relations which further explain the changes in foreign policy formation.

This chapter has investigated two primary continuities: *Ideological Competition* and *The Kurdish Issue*. It discovered that the ideological competition between Turkey and Iran in Syria and the Arab Spring is not a new phenomenon or based on an ancient grand civilisation narrative. The rivalry rather originates from a competition over Turkey's and Iran's governance models and the Secular vs Islamist debate. The

rivalry over the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis has historical continuity from similar rivalries in the 1990s that were observed in Northern Iraq, Central Asia and the Caucasus. We recognise the same discursive patterns in security cooperation and competition in terms of the Kurdish Issue. Both Turkey and Iran see the resurgence of the Kurdish movement in Northern Syria as an existential threat. The response to the Kurdish Issue is not a recent phenomenon to the Syrian Crisis. It has been securitized and externalized by both states since the late 1980s. This includes its continued power projection in Northern Iraq. The analysis has discovered that although cooperation has occurred between Turkey and Iran on security and fighting ‘terrorism’, the continuing externalisation of the Kurdish issue generates mistrust between both Iran and Turkey, despite the obvious benefits collaboration on the issue could create.

While this explains the over-arching historical significance of Turkey-Iran relations in the Syrian Crisis and the Arab Spring, Iran and Turkey are constrained in their ability to conduct relations on this issue by the nature of their domestic politics. For Iran, its intra-elite factional disagreements over what is best for ‘national interest’ has a constraining/enabling effect on its relations with Turkey and the region. Currently, the factional dispute over Syria between the IRGC hardliners and President Rouhani’s moderates has constrained the president’s ability to conduct foreign policy. This has led to a more ideological and military pursuit of Iranian ‘national interest’ at the expense of moderation that was prompted with the election of Rouhani in 2013. The key to the resilience and survival of the Iranian regime is that if its foreign policy (promoted by certain factional policies) compromises the survival of the regime, it can be changed quickly to another faction. Hence we observe the hard and soft approaches of both the IRGC and Rouhani in the policies towards Syria. Foreign policy in Iran is constrained by the machinations of power politics through competition by each faction on the ‘national interest’ but Iran’s policy can fluctuate depending on what at that time serves the ‘national interest’ most appropriately.

The analysis highlights that in Turkey's case, its ideological project of expanding its regional influence has been curtailed due to its insistence in tying its foreign policy and its 'social reproduction' of this policy through the prism of domestic politics. The AKP attempted to promote itself as the sole source of institutional power in the Turkish state but as this has been compromised, it has used foreign policy to shore up domestic support in its own base. Polemics rather than a sound institutional basis for foreign policy has severely constrained Turkey's ability to engage in the region successfully. The AKP's insistence on using its foreign policy as a tool for consolidating domestic support has changed the state-society dynamic and agency vs structure division. This has been highlighted by its failure as a 'model' due to the Gezi park protests in 2013 and its increasingly unpopular adventurist and contradicting policies towards the Syrian Crisis. Consequently, continually justifying its policies in a domestic context has constrained its ability to conduct relations within the Middle East and with Iran.

Regarding the domestic implications of the Kurdish movement on Turkey and Iran's policy in Syria, the analysis provides two contrasting views. For Turkey, the Kurdish issue is a very serious domestic priority due to its own restive Kurdish movement. The domestication and externalisation of the Kurdish Issue acts as both a constricting/enabling agent in Turkey's Syria policy. By framing the PYD and the Syrian Kurdish movement as an extension of its own domestic problems with the PKK and the Assad regime (PYD-PKK-Assad) enables Turkey to give its unpopular policies in Syria legitimacy. This limits the domestic political fallout and unpopularity of its adventurist policies but has consequently led to increased PKK attacks in Turkey, thus justifying the continued need for a security orientated discourse towards the Kurdish Issue.

However, the insistence to frame the issue in a domestic context means that Turkey has limited its regional manoeuvrability in its regional and international policy due to its insistence on remaining combative on the Kurdish Issue, against US and anti-ISIS coalition wishes. The Kurdish Issue however, does not affect Iran as much as it does Turkey since Iran's Kurdish population is not as restive as Turkey, and has no

affiliation with the PYD or Syrian Cantons. This in effect affords them greater flexibility in their Syria policy as Iran is not challenged and constrained by the domestic challenges and regional implications that the resurgent Kurdish movement has on domestic and foreign policy.

The wider regional and international affects have also enabled and constrained Turkey and Iran's policies on the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis. Despite their best intentions, they are constrained by both the larger ideological competition in the region originating from Turkey's relationship with the Gulf countries and Iran's 'sectarian' rivalry with Saudi Arabia. This has only become more complicated as Russia and the United States have entered the Syrian fray, sharpening the ideological divisions further. Turkey is placed in a difficult position as both its Turkish model has failed to fill the vacuum created following the events of the Arab Spring and its call for the toppling of Assad has become second priority to ISIS, leaving Turkey isolated in the region. The unilateralism of Operation *Euphrates Shield* only highlights Turkey's isolation and inability to conduct a successful regional policy towards Syria and the region. Iran does not face the same international and regional constraints due to its alliance with Syria, and as an extension Russia. Turkey however, will continue to be affected by the impossible ideological contradiction between synergy with Iran and its traditional alliance with the US.

The Kurdish Issue highlights the constraining effect of regional and international events on Turkey-Iran relations. The internationalisation of the Kurdish movement and the KRG's possible declaration of independence means that Turkey and Iran are reconsidering their approaches to the Kurdish issue through the prism of security. Iran is not faced with the same international pressure on its Kurdish movement but there may come a time that this existential threat may assert itself. The intersection of the regional and international also highlights Turkey's isolation in the region in its attempts to control the Kurdish Issue. Both the United States and Russia have recognised the work of the PYD/YPG forces against ISIS, thus alienating Turkey's Kurdish policy further. Turkey has failed to convince these international actors of the threat that it sees from an empowered PKK movement. Its unilateral intervention in

Syria has not brought it any regional prestige or any closer to the US position in the region.

In conclusion, the findings in this chapter as mentioned above, provide an extra layer of complexity to the academic discussion on Turkish-Iranian relations in the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis. The intersection of the historical, domestic, regional and international provides a much more in-depth analysis of the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis than can be deconstructed through the lens of geopolitical and ideological disagreement. A HS/FPA analysis does not only provide and demonstrate the continuities that shape Turkish-Iranian relations in Syria but also explains why and how the relationship is complex in terms of the Syrian Crisis and Arab Spring. This deeper level of analysis helps present a more rounded approach to explaining these crises from an Iranian and Turkish perspective.

The geopolitical rivalry in the Syrian Crisis and the Arab Spring does not solely emanate from a Neorealist or regional hegemonic perspective but has a deeper complexity in their relationship due to historical path dependencies. The intersection of domestic politics bolsters our analysis of each state as it explains the processes of why decisions are made. Finally, a HS/FPA approach has demonstrated the importance of the regional and the international in the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis, and how they impact and constrain foreign policy decisions. Turkish-Iranian relations are highly complex, and using this analysis illuminates the reasons why Turkey and Iran have conducted relations the way they have in the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis.

CHAPTER 4

THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

The Iranian nuclear program is a controversial issue that has had both domestic, regional and international effects. The question around Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology has divided the Middle East region and international community. The Iranian Islamic regime has been accused of developing nuclear energy technology for nefarious purposes with accusations that Iran has been developing nuclear weapons. There has been coordinated efforts by the international community to put an end to Iran's perceived pursuit of nuclear weapon technology through economic and diplomatic sanctions which have put enormous strain on the economic and social fabric of Iran. Turkey has been at the centre of the Iranian nuclear debate and has sought to play a 'mediating role' in this issue.

This chapter will apply the HS/FPA framework of this thesis to analyse Turkey-Iranian relations in light of the Iranian Nuclear Issue. It will explore the period from 2002 until the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2016. It will firstly provide a background of the Iranian and Turkey positions toward the nuclear issue. From there it will provide a HS/FPA analysis of the historical, domestic and regional/international considerations in the conflict and how this has affected Turkish-Iranian relations. By highlighting the continuities and constraints each actor has faced, this chapter will demonstrate how HS/FPA can provide a fundamentally new approach to understanding the complexity of the Iranian Nuclear Issue in Turkish-Iranian relations compared with dominant IR approaches.

4.1. Empirical Background of Iran's Nuclear Issue

4.1.1. The Policies of Khatami and Ahmadinejad

Iran's nuclear program has been a defining political issue for Iran, the Middle East and the international community. It is a policy that is shrouded in secrecy and has been deemed by Iranian officials as the 'most important issue facing the Islamic

Republic.’⁴²¹ In the immediate aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini suspended the nuclear program (which had commenced in 1973 under Mohammad Reza Shah) deeming it a ‘Western-inspired relic of the monarchy’. In 1987 however amid the Iran-Iraq war, the program was reinitiated as an attempt to increase self-reliance in terms of arms and technology.⁴²² Until 2002, the Iranian nuclear program was not presented in the controversial light as it is now. The program was depicted as a source of diversification of energy resources and power generation.⁴²³

In 2002, the revelation of the existence of a uranium enrichment plant in Natanz as well as a heavy water research reactor in Arak created suspicion that Iran was no longer in compliance with its safe guard obligations under the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).⁴²⁴ In response, the United States requested that Iran’s file be transferred from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the UN Security Council so that corrective and disciplinary measures could be taken. While the US implemented a punitive sanctions regime on Iran, the EU sought to engage Iran through negotiations. The Khatami government suspended its enrichment program and applied the thorough inspections stipulated by the 1997 Additional Protocol of the NPT. Iran with the EU3 (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) sought to ensure the international community that there was no military dimension to its program and it was seeking the peaceful right to nuclear technology as stipulated as a signatory of the NPT.⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ Shahram Chubin, "Domestic politics of the nuclear question," in *Iran's Nuclear Programme: Strategic Implications*, ed. Joachim Krause (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 101.

⁴²² This change was due to Iraq’s use of chemical weapons against Iranian troops during the Iraq-Iran War.

⁴²³ For more information on the beginnings of Iran’s nuclear ambitions refer to Shahram Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambition* (Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

⁴²⁴ The exiled opposition movement *Mojahedin-e-Khalq* had released this information to Western intelligence sources. For more information see Juneau, 171; Chubin, "Domestic politics of the nuclear question," 101.

⁴²⁵ The Brussels Agreement in 2004 saw Iran and the EU3 express a commitment to establish long term relations including a Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Unfortunately, due to changes in Iranian domestic politics, discrepancies in Iran’s report to the IAEA, as well as increasing US pressure it was never implemented. See Warnaar, 138.

By 2005, US pressure alongside the election of the Ahmadinejad administration saw a shift in the progress of the Iranian nuclear program.⁴²⁶ The marginalisation of the reformists and the shifting of power to conservatives and hardliners in the regime saw a gradual deviation towards a more assertive and confrontational position for Iran. So much so that, ‘Tehran became more confident that it could afford to make progress in mastering the fuel cycles while deflecting or mitigating international pressure’.⁴²⁷ Hardliners believed that the negotiations with the EU3 proposed during the Khatami period were a ‘fruitless exercise’. To demonstrate this shift in the internal power balance, lead nuclear negotiator Hassan Rouhani was replaced with Ali Larijani (a close ideological colleague of Ahmadinejad).⁴²⁸ From 2006 to 2008, Iran adopted a more belligerent and bellicose attitude towards international condemnation of the Iranian nuclear program. The IAEA sent Iran’s file to the UN Security Council in 2006 and the UN passed Resolution 1696 demanding Iran suspend ‘enrichment and reprocessing activities within one month’.⁴²⁹

Despite its failure to comply, Iran began to engage with the P5+1.⁴³⁰ The United States however convinced the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 1737 which would implement the first round of sanctions banning the sale, supply and/or transfer of materials that could be used in Iran’s ballistic missile and nuclear programs.⁴³¹ Tougher sanctions were implemented by the Security Council in 2007 but by 2008 it appeared that US pressure to maintain and increase sanctions was waning. By the end of 2008, Iran had gained a stronger position in the negotiations as it insisted in

⁴²⁶ See Ehteshami and Zweri, 142-44.

⁴²⁷ Juneau, 188.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 189.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 190.

⁴³⁰ The P5+1 consists of the Permanent five members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) including Germany.

⁴³¹ Warnaar, 139.

talks with the P5+1 that 'it would join negotiations only after sanctions were lifted and its right to enrichment recognised'.⁴³²

With the popular protests and regime crackdowns after the presidential election in June 2009, the Ahmadinejad administration changed course and opted for negotiations in October with the P5+1 in Geneva.⁴³³ The Ahmadinejad regime demonstrated a willingness to engage with the international community, including the US, over the nuclear issue as a means of restoring some legitimacy which had been lost by the regimes response to the protests.⁴³⁴ At the end of the Geneva talks (which lasted more than seven hours) Iran had tentatively agreed to ship to Russia and France its low-enriched uranium to be enriched to a higher grade for use in medical purposes.⁴³⁵ Initially pronounced as a 'win-win', the agreement never found traction and was effectively abandoned.

Iranian officials pointed to its failure due to 'Western mistakes in publicly discussing the deal, particularly what some have called deficiencies in the technical aspects of the draft that was presented by the IAEA.'⁴³⁶ Both the Green movement and conservatives had been critical of Ahmadinejad's approach to the nuclear issue but his economic mismanagement led to growing frustration within the political elite.⁴³⁷

⁴³² Juneau, 193.

⁴³³ The talks in Geneva saw the P5+1 and Iran agree "in principle" to a US-initiated, IAEA-backed, proposal to fuel the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR). The proposal entails Iran exporting most its 3.5 percent enriched Uranium in return for 20 percent enriched uranium fuel for the TRR, which had exhausted much of its supply. This agreement was later met with domestic political opposition in Iran, resulting in attempts by Tehran to change the terms of the "fuel swap". More detailed information can be found in the report by CSIS, see Bryan Gold, Anthony H. Cordesman, and Chloe Coughlin-Schulte, "U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition: Sanctions, Energy, Arms Control, and Regime Change," (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2013).

⁴³⁴ Volker Perthes, "Ambition and Fear: Iran's Foreign Policy and Nuclear Programme," *Survival* 52, no. 3 (2010): 100; Shahram Chubin, "The Iranian Nuclear Riddle after June 12," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2010).

⁴³⁵ Nader Entessar, "Iran's nuclear program and foreign policy," in *Iranian Foreign Policy Since 2001*, ed. Sam Razavi and Thomas Juneau (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 81.

⁴³⁶ Perthes, 102.

⁴³⁷ Shahram Chubin, "The Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program." *The Iran Primer*, *United States Institute of Peace*, 2015, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/politics-irans-nuclear-program>.

However it was apparent that the deal was also compromised by certain elites within the Iranian establishment who wanted to deny Ahmadinejad success on the issue. The shock of the popular protests and the question around regime survival also meant that 'the regime was reluctant to engage in important foreign policy initiatives, fearful of shocks to [its] fragilised system.'⁴³⁸

Mistrust of negotiating with the West pushed Iran to pursue other partners in nuclear negotiations. The consequence of this was the signing of the Tehran Declaration in 2010. Further sanctions were implemented with the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1929.⁴³⁹ This resolution was issued in June 2010 and set about imposing sanctions on Iran's nuclear program and military activities. This resolution expanded previous sanctions by restricting arms sales, providing states with the ability to search vessels suspected of carrying contraband cargo, and by targeting Iranian firms linked with the Iranian nuclear development capability. Most components in Resolution 1929 were 'focused on banning as well as showing vigilance over financial activities of certain institutions'⁴⁴⁰

By 2010, Ahmadinejad's policies within Iran had produced high inflation, low growth, and massive government corruption. With the onset of the Arab Spring, there was a further threat of destabilisation within the region as well as the popular discontent that was arising due to the damage that the sanctions regime was having on the Iranian economy. By this point, the impact of unilateral and UN sanctions had caused severe damage to the Iranian economy and its oil industry meaning a solution needed to be found to elevate the damage that had been caused. Ahmadinejad was no longer in favour within the regime and it appeared as though Ayatollah Khamenei would try to bring 'back balance between the factional

⁴³⁸ Juneau, 194.

⁴³⁹ Turkey and Brazil voted against UN Resolution 1929.

⁴⁴⁰ Kadir Üstün, "Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanction," *Insight Turkey* 12, no. 3 (2010): 22.

elites'.⁴⁴¹ The presidential elections in 2013 would mark another shift in the nuclear policy of Iran and its place in the region and world.

4.1.2. Rouhani and the JCPOA

With the election of President Rouhani in 2013, a new direction was sought regarding Iran's nuclear program and its relationship with the international community. For Rouhani, resolving the nuclear issue became the centrepiece of his new agenda. His approach to the nuclear issue saw a more balanced and centred policy that would reconcile both Iran's economic and energy needs with the lifting of economic sanctions. Rouhani stated during his election campaign that 'you should know the nuclear issue and the sanctions will also be resolved, and economic prosperity will also be created.'⁴⁴² Once elected, Rouhani resumed negotiation efforts with the P5+1 agreeing to an interim agreement in November 2013.⁴⁴³ The agreement was supported by Khamenei⁴⁴⁴ showing a rare display of elite agreement over the nuclear issue. In July 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)⁴⁴⁵ was agreed upon by Iran and the P5+1.

⁴⁴¹ Chubin, "The Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program".

⁴⁴² "Iran election: Hassan Rouhani in his own words," *BBC News*, 15 June 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22921680>.

⁴⁴³ Guy Dinmore, Geoff Dyer, and John Reed, "Six powers reach historic nuclear deal with Iran," *Financial Times*, 24 November 2013, <https://www.ft.com/content/2170f95e-54af-11e3-862d-00144feabdc0>.

⁴⁴⁴ To see Khamenei's response to the nuclear agreement and his overall politics see Reza Marashi, "Undivided Tehran: Khamenei and Rouhani's Joint Strategy at the Nuclear Talks." *Foreign Affairs*, 11 February 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-02-24/undivided-tehran>; Sayyid Ali Khamenei, "Supreme Leader's response to President Rouhani's letter on nuclear negotiations." *The Centre for Preserving and Publishing the works of Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei*, 2013, http://english.khamenei.ir/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1840; Kayhan Barzegar and Masoud Rezaei, "Ayatollah Khamenei's Strategic Thinking," *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (2017).

⁴⁴⁵ October 18, 2015 marked Adoption Day of the JCPOA, the date on which the JCPOA came into effect and participants began taking steps necessary to implement their JCPOA commitments. January 16, 2016, marked Implementation Day of the JCPOA. Because of Iran meeting its nuclear commitments, the US and the EU lifted nuclear-related sanctions on Iran, as described in the JCPOA. See for more information US Department of State, "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)." *US Department of State*, 2016, <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/>.

Rouhani's approach to the nuclear issue can be viewed through 'the dual prism of economic independence and international status'.⁴⁴⁶ The Rouhani administration pursued the same strategic goals as the Khatami and Ahmadinejad administrations in securing Iran's rights under the NPT to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The red lines that the Iranian regime had placed in terms of its nuclear program have not been altered despite changing political machinations and international 'coercive diplomatic strategies'.⁴⁴⁷ However, what was demonstrated by the election of Rouhani was not so much a change in policy but one of style. Rouhani and his foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif presented a strong message in the international media outlining Iran's priorities and expectations with its nuclear program. Unlike the Ahmadinejad regime which presented itself as bellicose and reactionary, the Rouhani administration's use of an innovative communicative and public relations strategy, presented Iran's concerns and ambitions in a positive light demonstrating Iran as a 'stability seeking actor'.⁴⁴⁸ While the JCPOA recognised Iran's right to produce a full fuel cycle (within certain parameters), it did not undermine Iran's key foreign policy concept of independence and self-reliance.

4.1.3. The Nuclear Issue and Turkey-Iranian Relations

The Iranian nuclear issue is one that has spanned several generations of policy makers in the Iranian establishment. This has been such a critical issue that it has brought other actors from the region into the fold to try and solve the issue. Turkey is one such actor. Due to the complexity of the region and being near to areas that pose significant risk in terms of nuclear proliferation means that Turkey is in favour of

⁴⁴⁶ Morgane Colleau, "Iran's Janus-Faced US Policy: The Rouhani Administration Between Continuity and Change, Opportunity and Constraint," in *Iran in the World: President Rouhani's Foreign Policy*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Dara Conduit (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 45.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 44; Thomas Juneau, "Iran under Rouhani: Still Alone in the World," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 4 (2014): 92.

⁴⁴⁸ The Rouhani administration engaged in a massive PR campaign to enhance Iran's image, publishing in academic journals and presenting at world forums to change the perception of Iran in the eyes of the global community. See some examples in Colleau, 45; Zarif.

global disarmament.⁴⁴⁹ Turkey has been an active participant in non-proliferation, arms controls and disarmament procedures including being signatory to all international non-proliferation and export control regimes.⁴⁵⁰ Ankara is also a member of the NPT as well as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. It is a national security priority for the Turkish political establishment that the Middle East remains a nuclear weapon free zone (NWFZ) as an arms race that could emerge may lead to further regional destabilisation.⁴⁵¹

In terms of Turkey's relations with Iran on the issue, a nuclear armed Iran poses a direct threat to regional security and stability. There are fears that if Iran were to possess a nuclear weapon that it could be more assertive in its regional policy and provide a security umbrella for its proxies in Lebanon and Iraq. In addition, an increased regional conflict between Israel and Iran would destabilise the region, drawing Turkey into the ensuing conflict as it could be forced to choose sides.⁴⁵² Turkey believes in principle that every state has the right to develop nuclear technology and energy for peaceful purposes, arguing that 'the Great Powers should not follow monopolistic approaches on the accession to this technology'.⁴⁵³ Turkey shares the same concerns regarding a nuclear Iran as much of the international community does. However, Turkey believes that as a member of the NPT, Iran has the authority to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. Ankara therefore, is not

⁴⁴⁹ Sina Kısacık, "The Approach of Turkey on the Internationalising Iranian Nuclear Question," in *Turkish Foreign Policy in the New Millenium*, ed. Hüseyin İskıkal and Ozan Örmeci (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2015), 214.

⁴⁵⁰ Aaron Stein, "Understanding Turkey's Position on the Iranian Nuclear Program." The Nonproliferation Review, *James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies*, 12 January 2012, http://wmdjunction.com/120112_turkey_iran_nuclear.htm.

⁴⁵¹ States in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have sought to balance Iran's nuclear ability by using the US nuclear umbrella but have threatened at times to create or purchasing their own nuclear weapon if Iran eventually possesses an active warhead.

⁴⁵² Kısacık, 215.

⁴⁵³ Turkey highlights the hypocrisy that the international community has towards Iran's intentions of nuclear power yet illustrates their failure to criticise Israel for not being a signatory to the NPT and their (undisclosed) nuclear arsenal which threatens regional stability. See "Turkey: World Is Turning a Blind Eye to Israel's Nuclear Weapons," *Haaretz*, 11 April 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/turkey-world-is-turning-a-blind-eye-to-israel-s-nuclear-weapons-1.284046>.

against Iran's target of 20% enrichment.⁴⁵⁴ Unlike its ally the US, Ankara has thus pushed for a more diplomatic approach to the nuclear issue rather than a military approach. They are aware of the consequences of continued sanctions and the fallout that can arise from them if not followed as was the case of Iraq. In addition, 'although not explicitly voiced, Turkish actors are concerned that international proceedings against Iran might form a precedent for sanctions on states such as Turkey.'⁴⁵⁵

Turkey has bolstered itself as a mediator and facilitator in this issue and has been active since 2006. The AKP has been eager to offer itself as a mediator in the Iranian Nuclear Issue as it has escalated since 2006. Former President Abdullah Gül visited Tehran in 2006 and met with Ali Larijani to discuss Turkey's role in facilitating dialogue between Iran and the EU's High Representative of Foreign affairs in Ankara. In a press conference Larijani stated that 'Turkey could be a bridge between Iran and some countries and he welcomed Turkey's attempts to deescalate tensions and recalled Turkey's good relations with other countries in the region'.⁴⁵⁶ This meeting would pave a way for a technical agreement between the IAEA and Iran.⁴⁵⁷ PM Erdoğan pronounced in 2009 that Turkey could act as a mediator between Iran and the United States.

The US welcomed such moves hoping that Turkey's support could help break the deadlock that had occurred in negotiations and bring Iran back to the table.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁴ 215.

⁴⁵⁵ Aylin Gürzel, "Turkey's Role in Defusing the Iranian Nuclear Issue," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2012): 144.

⁴⁵⁶ Rahman G. Bonab, "Turkey's Emerging Role as a Mediator on Iran's Nuclear Activities," *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 3 (2009): 170.

⁴⁵⁷ Turkey was also asked to mediate on the release of British sailors in Iran that had been captured by Iranian forces in the Strait of Hormuz. See James Meikle, "British sailors detained by Iran en route to Gulf yacht race," *The Guardian*, 1 December 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/30/british-yacht-sailors-detained-iran>.

⁴⁵⁸ See Yüksel Kamacı, "Turkey-Iran Relations during Ahmadinejad Presidency (2005-2013)," in *Turkish Foreign Policy in the New Millennium*, ed. Hüseyin Isıkıl and Ozan Örmeci (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2015).

Turkey's new role fitted into its pursuit of a 'multi-dimensional and multi-track foreign policy' that coincided with FM Davutoglu's 'zero problems with neighbours' rhetoric. Essentially, Turkey sought to act as a 'key fulcrum between the East, and the West.'⁴⁵⁹ Such moves appeared to have ended the mistrust that had been quite commonplace in the relationship as has been discussed previously in chapter two of this thesis.

4.1.4. Tehran Declaration 2010

In 2010, it appeared as though there was no possibility of finding a solution to what had become an impasse regarding Iran's nuclear program. The United States and other powers in the UN Security Council were drafting up further sanctions due to Iran's continued failure to comply with previous UN resolutions. However, the Tehran Declaration was announced on May 17th 2010 outlining a fuel-swap deal with Iran. Negotiated by Turkey and Brazil, the Tehran Declaration⁴⁶⁰ was a revision of the Nuclear swap deal that had occurred in 2009 between the P5+1 in Geneva. It sought to divert 'Iran's mistrust of Russia and France by using Turkey as a middleman'.⁴⁶¹ The deal would have seen Iran exchange 1200kg of 3.5 percent low enriched Uranium for 20 percent enriched nuclear fuel to produce medical isotopes at the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR). The Tehran Declaration offered a confidence building measure between Iran and the rest of the international community due to the failure of negotiations. Iran was much more comfortable dealing with Turkey and Brazil (as non-permanent members of the Security Council) Although Iran tried to bolster its relations with both states, it was wary of Turkey's motivations behind its proposal.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Gürzel, 146.

⁴⁶⁰ "Joint Declaration by Iran, Turkey and Brazil on Nuclear Fuel May 2010." *Council of Foreign Affairs*, 17 May 2010.

⁴⁶¹ Warnaar, 139.

⁴⁶² Gürzel, 147.

From the AKP governments point of the view, the success of the 2010 Tehran Declaration would raise Turkey's status in the international community.⁴⁶³ By engaging with Iran through dialogue it could help solve conflicting views and disagreements that Iran had with the rest of the international community. Their objective was to convince 'Iran to respond fully to the concerns of the international community' and attempt 'to find a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear issue in order to prevent a military attack on Iran'.⁴⁶⁴ The success of this would potentially consolidate Turkey's position as a key regional player in solving inter and intra-regional disputes. The prospect of further sanctions on Iran could also negatively affect Turkey's own economic and trade interests with Iran. This emphasised the continuation of Turkey's long stance against nuclear proliferation in the regime.⁴⁶⁵ The deal however was downplayed by the US and criticised by the five permanent members of the Security Council.

It was argued that the fuel swap deal did not assuage the fears of continued Iranian enrichment. US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton stated that the Tehran Declaration was a 'transparent ploy to avoid Security Council Action'.⁴⁶⁶ Paradoxically to what Turkey and Iran had envisaged, the Tehran Declaration did not stop new sanctions being implemented under Resolution 1929. Turkey and Brazil inevitably voted against Resolution 1929 and heavily criticised the UNSC decision. PM Erdoğan seemingly following the Iranian narrative on the nuclear issue tried to gather support for the Declaration, arguing against the inherent hypocrisy of the UNSC decision.

⁴⁶³ Both Brazil and Turkey have disapproved of the imbalance in power in the UNSC as well as the asymmetries that are apparent in the international system.

⁴⁶⁴ Gürzel, 146.

⁴⁶⁵ PM Davutoğlu, stated to reporters on Iran's capacity for nuclear weapons that 'You must be sure that Ankara's views on Nuclear weapons are similar to Iran. Ankara and Tehran are both against the use of Nuclear Weapons.' See IRINN, "Iran's Nuclear Activities 'Transparent'- Foreign Minister," *IRINN*, 20 April 2010.

⁴⁶⁶ United States State Department Documents and Publications, "Remarks by Clinton, Treasury Secretary Geithner in Beijing; Answers Questions on North Korea, U.S.-China Dialogue, Iran and More," ed. United States State Department Documents and Publications (2010).

Also in line with the Iranian discourse, Erdoğan stated that ‘the ones who are mistrustful [of Iran] in this process, are not the ones who live in the region.’⁴⁶⁷

Although the deal was promising in terms of what it could have provided to Iran, Turkey and the rest of the international community, the failure of the Tehran Declaration was a blow to Turkey’s standing as a reliable negotiating partner with Iran. In addition, it also dampened Ankara’s attempts to increase its regional and international standing. Despite the Tehran Declaration being the ‘most concrete and the only agreement that Iran had signed’⁴⁶⁸ at that time, its failure demonstrated the inconsistency of Davutoglu’s strategic depth policy and the real influence of Turkey as a power broker in the region. Its ‘equality amongst nations’ rhetoric which was very prevalent in the aftermath of the failure of the Tehran Declaration, demonstrates the compromise Turkey must make in engaging in dialogue with Iran. Turkey’s inability to project its power demonstrates its immaturity as a partner in the region and mediator. It would however maintain a ‘dual track’ approach to its dealings with Iran, as a solution to the Iranian Nuclear Issue would allow greater opportunities for further cooperation and commerce. However, since the failure of the 2010 Tehran Declaration, Turkey has remained in the background in direct negotiations with Iran over the nuclear program.

4.1.5. The JCPOA and the Turkish Response

The JCPOA between the P5+1 and Iran has been viewed quite positively by Turkey. The implementation of the ‘framework’ has presented new opportunities and challenges in its relationship with Iran. From a purely security point of view, the JCPOA assists Turkey with its nuclear free Middle East policy. The cost of Iran’s nuclear program developing into nuclear weapons could ‘pave the way for a path dependency towards a nuclear arms race in the region’ as other regional powers

⁴⁶⁷ Julian Borger, "Cool response to Iran's nuclear fuel swap with Turkey," *The Guardian*, 18 May 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/may/17/iran-nuclear-fuel-swap-turkey>.

⁴⁶⁸ Üstün, 22.

would follow the same course.⁴⁶⁹ There is a political concern within the Turkish political establishment on what extent that the JCPOA will 'normalise' Iran's foreign relations. Such discussions argue that the JCPOA could allow Iran to curtail its revolutionary rhetoric and solidify itself as a state within the international system.⁴⁷⁰

On the other hand, the freedom that the deal has given Iran in terms of more economic power could translate into political and strategic power. Despite the growing uneasiness that an unconstrained Iran may have on the Middle East, these concerns are not shared by Turkey, although Iran's policies in Syria are putting that into question.⁴⁷¹ Turkey fears that Iran's reintegration into the international system will afford it more political currency in the region. With the obvious economic and political benefits that the JCPOA presents for Iran,⁴⁷² its growing importance may serve to undermine Turkey's regional and international standing leading back to the competition we have seen so often in this thesis.⁴⁷³ This concern has also been aired by the Turkish foreign policy elite who believe that the JCPOA may allow Iran and Turkey to compete for US and Western cooperation similar to that of the pre-1979 balance in the region. However, the eventual outcome of the Syrian Crisis may have a further effect on how these political relations develop in the JCPOA period.

From an economic perspective, the lifting of sanctions from Iran is a great boon for Turkey's longstanding trade relations with Tehran. Ankara sees that 'a more prosperous Iran with access to foreign currency affords Turkey a new market to sell industrial and commercial goods, and to offer tourism services', therefore opening

⁴⁶⁹ Özgür Özdamar, "Turkish-Iranian Relations after the Framework Agreement," in *NUPI Paper* (Oslo: NUPI, 2015), 1.

⁴⁷⁰ See Akbarzadeh and Conduit, "Rouhani's First Two Years in Office: Opportunities and Risks in Contemporary Iran."; Ariane Tabatabai, "Reading the Nuclear Politics In Tehran," in *Arms Control Today* (Washington D.C: Arms Control Association, 2015).

⁴⁷¹ Özdamar, 4.

⁴⁷² Gabrielle Vianna, "Securing Iran: Opportunities Presented with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," *Global Security Studies* 6, no. 4 (2015).

⁴⁷³ Özdamar, 4.

the ‘potential for real economic opportunity with its long-sanctioned neighbour’.⁴⁷⁴ Although this economic potential could be short term, Iran’s reintegration into the international market may mean that Turkey will have to compete with larger and financially stronger European firms. A joint report by Roubini Global Economics and the Centre on Sanctions and Illicit Finance state that ‘the relative advantages that Turkey will have in the early [period] may wane over time as Iran becomes more competitive’ and ‘they [Iran and Turkey] may compete over investment into third [party] countries’.⁴⁷⁵ It also depends on Tehran’s ability to implement the necessary economic and financial reforms and for Ankara to maintain its fiscal discipline and a strong economy.

The effect of Turkey’s Syria policy as well as the increased domestic problems within the Iranian elite over its Syria policy has seen less growth and development than expected.⁴⁷⁶ However, if these can be overcome then economic and commercial ties with Iran will continue to grow. The relationship will probably remain asymmetrical as before with Iran benefiting from Turkey’s exports and Turkey’s import of energy and gas still dominating the relationship.⁴⁷⁷ However, since the agreement has only been in place since 2015, it is yet to be seen how the developments in the region and domestic politics may affect Turkey-Iranian relations in the future.

4.2. Analysis of Turkish-Iranian Approaches to the Nuclear issue

The theoretical discussions outlined in chapter two can provide insights and have explanatory power into why Iran chooses to pursue and engage with actors in its pursuit of nuclear technology and possible weaponisation. However, these theories

⁴⁷⁴ Mert Yıldız et al., "Nuclear Deal: Impact on Iran-Turkey Economic Relations," ed. Center on Sanctions & Illicit Finance (Washington D.C: Roubini Global Economics/ Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), 2016), 1.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 21.

overlook the important shifts in the dynamics of Iranian nuclear policy from the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005 onward. In addition, there is no major differences ‘between the pre-2005 and the post-2005 periods in terms of regional power balances, the NPT, Iran’s threat perceptions and symbols attached to being a nuclear power.’⁴⁷⁸ This is where we can consider using the HS/FPA framework which can help provide crucial insights into the changes in agency and structure within this period and their effect on the nuclear issue. This further illustrates the complexity of the dynamic between the two states. The abovementioned policies of Turkey and Iran in terms of the nuclear issue show a stark difference compared to the previous chapter and their relations related to the Syrian Crisis.

The Iranian Nuclear Issue is a valid case study in understanding where cooperation is more common. Turkey and Iran appear to be in agreeance with the state of nuclear proliferation in the region and Iran’s right to pursue peaceful use of nuclear energy. Economics and pragmatic concerns apparently dominate the relationship in this case study demonstrating that despite geographical competition there are areas where Turkey and Iran can work together. It is easy to argue that economic or pragmatic collaboration between the two is the crux of the relationship but when we apply the HS/FPA method to this event, it appears that it is more convoluted than first thought. This analysis will evaluate the relative weights of international, regional and domestic factors over foreign policy between Iran and Turkey on the nuclear issue. It will explore the ‘*cuspness*’ of both Turkey and Iran and the historical continuity of the ‘*bridge*’ narrative as well as how *the interaction of domestic, regional and international factors* has shaped Turkey-Iranian relations in the nuclear issue.

4.2.1. Historical

Both Iran and Turkey have sought to benefit from the nuclear issue and its implications in regional and international politics. The reasons behind these decisions however are not a new phenomenon and are rooted in historical processes

⁴⁷⁸ Halit Mustafa Tagma and Ezgi Uzun, "Bureaucrats, Ayatollahs, and Persian Politics- Explaining the Shift in Iranian Nuclear Policy," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 24, no. 2 (2012): 244.

of Iran and Turkey's position as cusp states.⁴⁷⁹ This 'cuspness' has manifested itself into the construction of both Iran and Turkey's geopolitical representations in their discourse and practice in foreign and regional policy. These constructions are not singly unique to each government that has formulated foreign policy but in fact are enduring historical path dependencies that have continued throughout each states relations within the region. Turkey and Iran have tried to utilize their unique situations as both have exclusive historical and cultural affinities with the region, yet are not part of it. It also underlines the importance of how each state sees opportunities and challenges in their cuspness. Both Iran and Turkey 'cuspness' presents themselves as 'unique' and 'victims' in the international and regional order but also in the way they positively engage in inter-regional linkages, mediation and multilateralism.⁴⁸⁰ It is in these historical path dependencies of 'cuspness' that our HS/FPA analysis can discover continuities in both Iran and Turkey's positions towards the Iranian Nuclear issue.

Since 2006, the AKP government has emphasised its role as a neutral 'mediator' and 'facilitator' in the nuclear issue. Mediation has been an important part of the 'new geopolitical representation of Turkey', with it gaining more prominence and significant meaning under the AKP.⁴⁸¹ This new geopolitical representation of a 'mediator' can be illustrated by the 2010 Tehran Declaration⁴⁸² in which Turkey attempted (along with Brazil) to reach a nuclear swap deal agreement with Iran 'to serve as a confidence building measure during the Iranian nuclear crisis'.⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁹ Unlike liminal and milieu states, Philip Robins provides a working definition of a 'cusp state' being 'states that lie uneasily on the political and/or normative edge of what is widely believed to be an established region [aka multi-milieu solidarity group]'. For more information on liminal and milieu states see Philip Robins, "Introduction: 'Cusp States' in international relations- in praise of anomalies against the 'milieu'," in *The Role, Position, and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations*, ed. Marc Herzog and Philip Robins (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 2-3; Bahar Rumelili, "Liminal identities and processes of domestication and subversion in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 38 (2012).

⁴⁸⁰ See Robins, 15-16. Altunışık, "Geopolitical representation of Turkey's cuspness: Discourse and practice," 26-27.

⁴⁸¹ "Geopolitical representation of Turkey's cuspness: Discourse and practice," 38.

⁴⁸² See section 4.1.4. of this chapter for a discussion on the 2010 Tehran Declaration.

⁴⁸³ Altunışık, "Geopolitical representation of Turkey's cuspness: Discourse and practice," 38.

Altunışık argues that by ‘straddling both worlds, claiming to have good ties with both Iran on the one hand and the US and EU on the other, this was seen as a perfect role for Turkey.’⁴⁸⁴ Turkey saw itself in a unique position to act as a mediator and in this case facilitator in bringing Iran back into the international fold. In fact, Turkey used its ‘image’ of a bridge between the EU and Iran to develop its regional as well as international prestige and position in the region. By acting as a ‘bridge’ between the West and East, Turkey promoted itself as responsible actor and projected more regional power. This falls well into its cuspsness as a state, as it seeks to increase its status both regionally and internationally.

It is interesting to note that this ‘bridge’ narrative or ‘bridge-ness’ has been quite a long-term feature of Turkish foreign policy. The AKP’s narrative of framing its unique geographical position and shifting its axis to both the West and East works well to serve its identity and domestic policy goals. The concept of being a ‘bridge’ has been a defining feature of Turkish identity since the end of the Cold War. The Iranian Nuclear Issue only highlights the historical continuity of this bridge narrative as Turkey has sought to be a third party in numerous issues. However, it must be said that Turkey and the AKP decreased its mediating role in the nuclear issue after the failure of the 2010 Tehran Declaration. The failure of the declaration highlighted the limitations that Turkey’s unique cuspsness or its ability as a bridge could facilitate. While its role in the nuclear issue has been good for the AKP to enhance its domestic support and identity as a central country, the failure in its attempt of mediation only demonstrate the constraints that this bridge narrative has. This has been true of other such mediation incidents.⁴⁸⁵

Despite the AKP’s best attempts to lay out a new geopolitical representation in the region, Turkey’s historical legacies and its policy formation as a ‘cusp’ state has limited its ability to be a suitable negotiator. This originates from the fact that while

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.38

⁴⁸⁵ The AKP also attempted to mediate peace talks between Syria and Israel in 2008. However, the success of them was short lived when Israel conducted its large-scale military assault called Operation ‘Cast-Lead’ against militants in the Gaza Strip. See "Israeli Source: Syria, Israel Were on Brink of Direct Talks in 2008," *Haaretz*, 6 February 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israeli-source-syria-israel-were-on-brink-of-direct-talks-in-2008-1.341647>.

Turkey seeks mediating roles in terms of Iran's nuclear issue, it is undeniably difficult for two cusp states to mediate with each other due to the uniqueness of either's geopolitical representations. The 'bridge-ness' of Turkey is both an enabler and constraining agent on how they can relate to the region and to Iran. Its inability to form its 'bridge' identity shows the failure of its agency compared to structural factors. The international environment that is dominated by the US and EU in the nuclear negotiating process, does not allow Turkey as much manoeuvrability in its 'mediator' role, despite its best intentions. This highlights again the structural constraining factors that unfortunately lead to the failure of its ability to project its 'mediating' and 'bridge-ness' to the nuclear issue. Turkey's role as a mediator is also influenced by the intersection of domestic, regional and international factors which will be explored later in this chapter.

For Iran, its 'cuspsness' is also important in understanding its approach to the nuclear issue and its policy until 2016. Iran as a country vacillates between 'different geopolitical, cultural and historical poles of state identity' and similar to Turkey is a 'bridge' to various sub-regions such as the Caucasus, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East. Adding to this is the internal characteristics where its 'internal vacillations between different political directions are continuously upheld by the interactions between international and domestic politics.'⁴⁸⁶ Iran's contestation between its external and internal identity has been the core of its foreign policy efforts since 1979. Khomeini's adaption of Islamism, Persian Nationalism and Third-Worldism⁴⁸⁷ provides a narrative which runs throughout foreign policy decisions today. Iran's interaction between these external and internal poles has led to a 'sense of victimhood, of defeat, occupation, exploitation and manipulation.'⁴⁸⁸ Iran shares the same 'bridge' narrative as other cusp states like Turkey, which plays

⁴⁸⁶ Derya Göçer Akder, "Iran as a Cusp State: the politics of dislocation," in *The Role, Position, and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations*, ed. Marc Herzog and Philip Robins (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 80.

⁴⁸⁷ For more information on this discussion see section 1.1.2. of this thesis.

⁴⁸⁸ Hunter, 19.

a fundamental role in understanding Iran's foreign policy in terms of the region and the way in which the nuclear issue has evolved over the last two decades.

Similar to Turkey, the 'bridge' narrative is important in how Iran engages with both its internal and external dynamics in terms of its foreign policy. Iran's 'bridge-ness' both in terms of 'actual routes and also of political mediation and multidimensional linkages to multiple areas, Iran is seen as on the edge of these sub-regions by other regional actors and by the extra-regional actors that have intervened in this region'.⁴⁸⁹ Iran emphasises its geography, its natural resources and its 'bridge-ness' not just in terms of regionalism but also in its international projection. Iran's economic interdependent relationship with Turkey has been built on this bridge-ness where both states have facilitated each other to reach certain markets and increase prestige. However, this 'bridge-ness' has also placed them in competition as was seen in the 1990s in the Caucuses and Central Asia where Iran emphasised its position 'between East and West' rather than 'neither East nor West'.⁴⁹⁰ The non-confrontational attitude towards Central Asia highlights the fact that Iran's cuspness both has positive and negative effects on its ability to project its goals in the region.⁴⁹¹

This 'bridge-ness' has been used by power holders within the Iranian elite to be manipulated to suit both internal and external purposes. For example, you can see that Khomeini's slogan of 'neither East or West' or Khatami's 'Dialogue among Civilisations' helps define a strategy that can emphasise Iran's uniqueness and/or stability towards the international community. The ascension of Ahmadinejad and his shift from Khatami's reformism to his brand of neo-conservatism saw the bridge metaphor transformed solely into a 'Look East' policy. As Göcer Akder explains 'until Ahmadinejad's era, Iran was seen by its rulers as being on the cusp of regions,

⁴⁸⁹ Göcer Akder, 81.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 89.

political ideas, cultural spheres and so on'.⁴⁹² The Ahmadinejad administration wished to deny Iran's position on the cusp of the West. Rouhani's embryonic grand narrative 'Prudence and Hope' with its ambition to 'save the economy, revive morality, and interact of the world' characterises and emphasises once again the 'bridge-ness' of Iran towards the West and international community.⁴⁹³

This 'bridge-ness' and the abovementioned grand narratives through the lens of the nuclear issue affords the Iranian elite flexibility in the way that it shapes its discourse towards the international community. Iran's cuspness 'has structural and agential determinants and as such analysing states under this rubric invites us to reflect on both determinants at the same time as building out explanations.'⁴⁹⁴ Iran's 'bridge-ness' can be viewed through the agency vs. structure debate. For the Iranian nuclear issue, the afforded flexibility means that agency plays a vital role in how policy is exposed to the international community. This afforded flexibility can be viewed throughout the whole nuclear discourse- from Khatami, to Ahmadinejad to Rouhani. Each administration had the same goals as the others (such as peaceful pursuit of nuclear energy). However, it was the way in which this discourse was shaped that allowed it flexibility in its negotiation practices.

With the JCPOA and the P5+1 talks, the fundamental goals of the Iranian elite to allow for nuclear development were still achieved. It was reached using Rouhani's more conciliatory emphasis on Iran's importance to the international community and its interaction in the world rather than isolation. Even Khamenei has accorded the 'heroic flexibility' that Iran's nuclear negotiators were given in their pursuit of relative gains in the nuclear issue. The afforded flexibility of the 'bridge' narrative has allowed Iran to pursue the best possible position for obtaining relative gains in its pursuit of nuclear power. It has allowed Iran to reengage with the international

⁴⁹² Ibid.89

⁴⁹³ Colleau, 42.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 93.

community without compromising its ‘independence’ and ‘freedom’, fundamental goals of Iranian foreign policy.⁴⁹⁵

Overall both Turkey and Iran’s role as ‘cusp’ states and their historical continuation of their ‘bridge-ness’ influences the agency vs. structure debate of each state’s decision making processes regarding the nuclear issue. For Turkey, its pursuit of a ‘mediation’ role was met with failure due to its inability to change the structure of the international system and its opinion of Iran’s pursuit of its nuclear program. In fact, it played more of a constraining factor on Turkey’s ability to influence decision-making processes in the future particularly when the JCPOA and P5+1 discussions occurred. In Iran’s case, it’s ‘bridge-ness’ works the other way and enables greater flexibility in its ability to obtain gains in the nuclear issue.

As we can see throughout all three administrations from 2000 to 2016, Iran has not compromised on its original goals for its pursuit of nuclear energy or on its fundamental principles of foreign policy such as ‘freedom’, ‘independence’ and ‘self-reliance’. Its historical use of its cuspness allows it greater flexibility in its ability to engage with regional and international actors. The ebb and flow between different regimes and their utilisation of the bridge narrative has obtained relative gains in Iran’s nuclear program. With the election of Rouhani, we see that the regime itself is willing to allow certain elites to rebuild the image of Iran as a bridge between itself and the international community. The success of the nuclear deal only highlights the ‘heroic flexibility’ that the system and the agency of the Rouhani regime has obtained in relative gains for its nuclear program compared to the Ahmadinejad administration.

4.2.2. Domestic Considerations

Despite the abovementioned ‘flexibility’ that Iran’s cuspness grants it in terms of its engagement with the nuclear issue, it is also important to understand that domestic considerations interact with its decision-making processes. It is true that the

⁴⁹⁵ Bayram Sinkaya, "Iranian Politics After the Nuclear Deal." *ORSAM*, 10 June 2016, <http://orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4715?s=orsam|english>.

historical continuation affords it greater adaptability in its approach to the international community and region but it is also beholden to changes in the domestic situation of Iran as we saw in the previous chapter with the Syrian Crisis and the Arab Spring. It is important to understand that while Iran is an authoritarian state, it is 'one with democratic aspects, political factions and a degree of genuine competition for political power'.⁴⁹⁶ Its fluctuating policy direction domestically has often affected both state-society relations as well as the debate around agency vs. structure within the Iranian elite. Iran's long running saga of the nuclear dispute has been framed by scholars 'enjoy[ing] universal domestic support' and that 'there is no discernible difference within the elite on foreign policy'.⁴⁹⁷ However, this analysis is inattentive and fails to understand the complexity of the Iranian political system.

The Iranian domestic political system is fraught with multiple centres of power both ideological and political. This has led to the nuclear issue becoming intertwined in not just the whims of domestic political actors but also (unlike its Syria policy) beholden to public discontent.⁴⁹⁸ Iran's foreign policy is usually a reflection of these elite disagreements over the future of the country 'whether Iran should continue (and intensify) its revolutionary activity, promoting its "resistance model" while confronting the international community, or seek to shift to normalisation of relations internationally, adopting a more "national interest" approach.'⁴⁹⁹ The intertwining of the nuclear issue into domestic policy has meant that it has been used by factional elites as a means to centralise power and exclude domestic opponents.

This overall elite fragmentation is evident since the post-September 11th period and the crisis that the region faced when confronted by the US invasion of Iraq in

⁴⁹⁶ Steven Hurst, "The Iranian Nuclear Negotiations as a Two-Level Game: The Importance of Domestic Politics," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27, no. 3 (2016): 547.

⁴⁹⁷ Chubin, "Domestic politics of the nuclear question," 99.

⁴⁹⁸ Although Iran is an authoritarian state and power is concentrated within the different political and extra-political structures, public opinion is still very important for regime legitimacy. We can see this by the regime's reactions to the sanctions regime and with the election of Rouhani in 2013.

⁴⁹⁹ Chubin, "Domestic politics of the nuclear question," 100.

2003.⁵⁰⁰ The real politicisation of the nuclear issue occurred with the 2005 presidential election. Ahmadinejad's controversial and confrontational diplomacy in the international arena allowed him to 'factionalise' the nuclear issue since his election in 2005. His brand of effectively popularising the nuclear issue was a formidable way to marginalise his opponents in the reformist camp.⁵⁰¹ Ahmadinejad's and the 'Principalists' dominant narrative that Iran had been denied its nuclear rights allowed him to tap into a feeling of injustice and nationalism but also emphasised the revolutionary principles of self-reliance and independence. Ahmadinejad's emphasis on the international community's 'selective proliferation' eschewed the possibility of compromise and 'resist[ing] pressure and sanctions as the inevitable price to be paid for being independent'.⁵⁰² Chubin argues that such a narrative emphasises Iran's strategic defiance as a model for others as well as a means to marginalise foes as it also energises the flagging momentum of the revolution.⁵⁰³ However, it is also important to note that Ahmadinejad by himself may have led the narrative but it was his alliances with other factions within the regime that helped continue the 'resistance' to compromise on the issue.

The IRGC had also attained more power with the rise of Ahmadinejad and his approach to the nuclear issue. For them the nuclear issue provided an opportunity for further domestic integration into the economy and its own oligopoly over defence and weapons industry. The economic power that the IRGC had gathered came from their entrenchment within the economic mechanisms as well their monopoly on expensive imports. For the IRGC, the possibility of economic liberalisation and an integration into the global economy posed a challenge to their direct interests.⁵⁰⁴ IRGC interest in enrichment also came from their increased role and appointment

⁵⁰⁰ The nuclear issue did not cause much significant intra-factional disputes from its inception until 2005. Prior to this there had been compromises on the nuclear issue by all elite factions within the Iranian establishment.

⁵⁰¹ Tagma and Uzun, 251.

⁵⁰² Chubin, "Domestic politics of the nuclear question," 103.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.103

⁵⁰⁴ Tagma and Uzun, 251.

into the Supreme National Security Council. Khamenei had sided with the hardliners and ‘Principalists’ in their rhetoric of Iran’s nuclear sovereignty.

With the June 2009 elections and subsequent backlash against fraudulent practices, the already fractured institutional structure of foreign policy making on the nuclear issue grinded to a halt. The usual consensus building mechanisms failed to function leading to further intra-factional disputes, particularly over the nuclear issue. The Geneva Agreement served to significantly weaken Ahmadinejad’s position⁵⁰⁵ and over the period of 2010 to 2012 the relationship between Khatami and Ahmadinejad collapsed. The alliance networks that had made the Ahmadinejad administration strong from 2005 to 2010 began to fall apart.⁵⁰⁶ By 2012, crippling sanctions imposed by the US and the international community were causing serious damage to Iran’s economy. It is at this point that we see the election of Rouhani and the JCPOA agreement.

It is important to understand the reasons why we see a shift in domestic considerations from the antagonistic policies of Ahmadinejad to Rouhani’s more conciliatory and moderate approach in dealing with the nuclear issue. The first argument is a *structural* one. As Halliday states, the biggest failure of the Islamic project has been its inability to talk about ‘economics’.⁵⁰⁷ The structural effects of sanctions⁵⁰⁸ on the Iranian economy led to growing popular and elite discontent, eventually leading to a change in direction of Iran’s nuclear program. The additional and harsh sanctions implemented in 2013, led to an existential crisis within the elite factional system about the survival of the regime. Ahmadinejad’s defiance against

⁵⁰⁵ Ahmadinejad’s rivals presented the initial Geneva Agreement as ‘giving too much away’ particularly as the Western powers claimed that the agreement would significantly weaken Iran’s nuclear capability. The deal itself was positive for Iran but the attack on Ahmadinejad was primarily politically motivated to weaken and damage Ahmadinejad’s position. See Hurst, 548-49.

⁵⁰⁶ See Sezgin Kaya and Zeynep Şartepe, "Contentious Politics in Iran: Factions, Foreign Policy and the Nuclear Deal," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 3 (2015).

⁵⁰⁷ Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 317.

⁵⁰⁸ For more information on sanctions and their effects refer to Keith Crane, "Iran and international sanctions: Elements of weakness and resilience," in *Iran's Nuclear Programme: Strategic Implications*, ed. Joachim Krause (Oxon: Routledge, 2012).

sanctions may have illustrated the fundamentals of Iran's revolutionary policy however his convictions saw mass economic mismanagement as well as increasing internal and popular dissent. His building of patronage networks with loyalists and allies had caused Iran's inflation to reach astronomical highs.⁵⁰⁹ In addition, his reduction of state subsidies as well as the devastating effects of the sanctions on Iran's oil exports, only further fuelled popular discontent.

The regime had already suffered a loss of legitimacy due to the popular protests of 2009, thus a collapse of the economy could spell certain death for the regime. Consequently, 'faced with an existential threat to the regime's survival, important factions within the elite were to make a realpolitik shift away from resistance and towards significantly reducing its nuclear ambitions.'⁵¹⁰ Iran's economy is oil dependent and despite its revolutionary rhetoric is still affected by the international economy. Those factions which sought to lose the most with the economy crashing (such as the IRGC) therefore had to make a choice. Rouhani effectively 'won the election in 2013 because he positioned himself against the outgoing President Ahmadinejad's nationalistic economic policies'⁵¹¹ and the conclusion of the nuclear deal was important in reintegrating the Iranian economy back into the global economic system, as well as remove crippling sanctions. Essentially, we see that *structure therefore played a definitive part in shaping the shift in the Iranian nuclear discourse as the economy reached a precipice as interests and regime survival were compromised.*

Secondly, we see the structural effects of sanctions on the role of agency within the Iranian elite. What is meant by this is that as the supreme authority within the complex Iranian establishment we see Khamenei shifted from being an ideologue to

⁵⁰⁹ By the time of Rouhani's election inflation stood at 39.3 percent. See Iran Primer, "Iran's Economy, By the Numbers." The Iran Primer, *United States Institute of Peace*, 11 May 2015, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2015/may/11/irans-economy-numbers>.

⁵¹⁰ Maximilian Terhalle, "Why revolutionary states yield: International sanctions, regime survival and the security dilemma. The case of the Islamic Republic of Iran," *International Politics* 52, no. 5 (2015): 599.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 597.

a pragmatist. Despite the structural argument due to economic necessity, the threat of unrest ‘amplified by the Arab Spring, and reformists ‘willingness to adhere to the political rules instead of outright opposition convinced Khamenei to return to a balance between the two factions (conservative/reformists) – a balance he himself had upset by overtly supporting hardliners since 2005’.⁵¹² For the sake of regime survival, Khamenei and the hardliners allowed Rouhani to win the election in 2013 and effectively sidelined their traditional support for defiance. Terhalle argues that ‘In fact, with Ahmadinejad bent to continue his path, the Supreme leader faced a straightforward choice: Sticking to the nuclear politics of his (long-grown-up) former protégé and, consequently, politically and socio-economically exposing the Islamic Republic to intensifying pressure, or silencing the defiant voices and accepting limitations on the real target of the sanctions: Iran’s stance in the nuclear negotiations.’⁵¹³

Therefore, Khamenei acting pragmatically in putting the interests of the country ahead of ideological and revolutionary imperatives (like what Khomeini had done at the end of Iran-Iraq war) demonstrates that regime survival and maintaining the structural integrity of the state over ideological issues is paramount. With the election of Rouhani and the signing of the JCPOA, regime survival was maintained. In the end Khamenei promoted the signing of the JCPOA as a success not for the foreign diplomats but for Iran showing ‘heroic flexibility’ in dealing with the P5+1, allowing the regime to save face for what has been deemed a ‘necessary compromise’ by certain factions within the Iranian elite.⁵¹⁴ However, the intra-factional disputes have arisen once again between the IRGC and Rouhani over ballistic missile tests and increased pressure from the United States over what has been seen as failures in applying the articles of the JCPOA.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² Chubin, "The Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program".

⁵¹³ Terhalle, 602.

⁵¹⁴ Mohamad Bazzi, "An ancient imam at the center of Iran nuclear deal," *Reuters*, 13 April 2015, <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2015/04/12/an-ancient-imam-at-the-center-of-iran-nuclear-deal/>.

⁵¹⁵ Zahra Alipour, "How the IRGC is trying to tighten its grip on Rouhani," *Al-Monitor*, 11 July 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/iran-irgc-intelligence-organization-rouhani-vet->

Elite competition between factions will remain in Iran's domestic system in terms of the future of the nuclear issue. While Rouhani has attempted to curtail the power of the IRGC, his agenda of privatising the economy and ending Iran's isolation cannot be achieved without their assistance.⁵¹⁶ If Rouhani were to pursue further domestic political and economic reforms this could jeopardise the position of the IRGC and the nuclear deal could come to an end if the result of the 2017 presidential elections does not remain in moderates' hands. The JCPOA and interim deal will not sideline the IRGC and Rouhani must balance this consideration when dealing with the domestic fallout of not liberalising the economy and providing sanctions relief fast enough.

The Iranian Nuclear Issue does not have such a wide array of domestic considerations for Turkey as it does Iran. Under the AKP government, Turkey has become more assertive in its support of Iran at the international level as their relationship has developed, most notably on the nuclear issue. The sanctions regime and/or possible military intervention into Iran would have devastating consequences for Turkey's security and place within the region. Despite the nuclear activities of Iran, AKP officials have stated that Iran does not pose a threat to Turkish national security. Even though a nuclear Iran could present a security risk, it is not a priority.⁵¹⁷ This is reflected in the way that dealings with Iran have remained at an elite level and are utmost pragmatic in the nuclear issue. These primarily have revolved around economic, security and political concerns but in terms of domestic politics, the nuclear issue on its own does not have any resonance. Except for pressure by international actors, Turkey has remained as a neutral partner in negotiations.

appointees.html; Abbas Qaidaari, "Rouhani moves to slash IRGC budget, empower army." *Al-Monitor*, 5 May 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/iran-military-spending-irgc-budget-reduced-army-increase.html>.

⁵¹⁶ Chubin, "The Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program"; Pınar Arıkan Sinkaya, "Change in Foreign Policy of Iran under Rouhani Government and its Reflections in Domestic Politics," in *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs* (Ankara: ORSAM, 2014); Sinkaya, "Continuity and Change in Iranian Politics after the Nuclear Deal."; Mozaffarpour, "The Vicious Circle of Middle East: Why Iran-Turkey Cooperation is Important?"

⁵¹⁷ Efe Çaman and Kenan Dağcı, "Iran's Nuclear Program and Turkey: Changing Perceptions, Interest and Need for Revision," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 2 (2013): 11.

Domestically, Turkey's nuclear decision making 'is made easier by the non-politicization of the nuclear issue. Turkey does not have a strong anti-nuclear movement and the Green political movement is politically insignificant.'⁵¹⁸ Despite the 2010 Tehran Declaration and its failure there has not been much in terms of media sentiment (within the pro-AKP media at least) or domestic political engagement on the issue. Unlike contentious geopolitical issues (such as the Syrian Crisis) which have served domestic political interests, the nuclear issue is irrelevant due to a lack of use in both pro and anti-government propaganda.⁵¹⁹ As discussed in the previous chapter, foreign policy plays an intrinsic part in the way that the AKP formulates its domestic policy and vice-versa. However, a lack of domestic considerations and non-politicisation of the nuclear issue allows greater flexibility in their foreign policy decisions towards Iran. Unlike Syria and its geopolitical consequences, pragmatic approaches from the elite level provides an avenue for Turkey to pursue economic engagement with Iran.⁵²⁰ This includes facilitation of continued energy politics that are discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

The nuclear issue provides a politically convenient geopolitical issue in which both Turkey and Iran can cooperate on as well as provide the necessary political capital to facilitate increased economic and energy relations.⁵²¹ The sanctions regime was quite beneficial to Turkey for its energy and trade needs as discussed in chapter two of this thesis. Since no ideological competition exists and there is no evident domestic political or public pressure on the AKP government to facilitate a nuclear deal then there is no constraining ability for decision makers on the issue. Since the state vs. society relationship remains dominated by the state, bilateral relations can remain

⁵¹⁸ Aaron Stein, "Turkey and Tactical Nuclear Weapons: A Political Love Affair." EDAM Non-Proliferation Policy Briefs 2012/1, November 2012, 1-18, http://edam.org.tr/disarmament/EN/documents/Turkey_TacticalNuclearWeaponsCleandraft.pdf.

⁵¹⁹ Mustafa Akyol, "Why doesn't Turkey speak up on Iran nuclear issue." *Al-Monitor*, February 26 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/turkey-geneva-nuclear-iran-un.html>.

⁵²⁰ Sadık Ünay, "Turkey and Iran: Competitive Collaboration." SETA, 10 April 2015, <http://www.setav.org/en/turkey-and-iran-competitive-collaboration/>.

⁵²¹ See Yıldız et al.

quite pragmatic, similar to the immediate post-1979 revolutionary period. This can explain the more moderate tone and approach to the nuclear issue that the AKP has taken from 2006 onwards.

The AKP has announced that it sees the JCPOA and the interim agreement as generally positive.⁵²² However, it has remained mostly silent on the issue since the failure of the 2010 Tehran Declaration. Therefore, this means that the Iranian Nuclear Issue does not have the political and domestic traction that other issues have in Turkey. In addition to this the polarisation and domestic political battles that have affected Turkish politics since the Gezi park Protests and corruption scandals in 2013 (alongside the long standing Kurdish Issue) have taken priority in domestic politics.⁵²³ The Iranian nuclear deal affords Turkey with more opportunities to pursue economic engagement particularly with the AKP's 'Anatolian Tiger' base.⁵²⁴

The Iranian nuclear deal illustrates that it in areas where there is no domestic pressure, Turkey-Iran relations can maintain pragmatic and non-contentious relations. This can answer the question as to why Turkey and Iranian relations remain pragmatic in areas that do not affect the domestic political context as well as compromising regime survival. The Iranian Nuclear Issue affords Turkey and subsequently the AKP, space and flexibility to pursue strong state to state relations

⁵²² See Semih İdiz, "Turkey reluctantly welcomes Iran deal." *Al-Monitor*, 7 April 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2015/04/turkey-welcomes-iran-deal-with-some-resentment.html>; Emre Peker, "Turkey Hails Iran Nuclear Deal," *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 January 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/turkey-hails-iran-nuclear-deal-1453045276?mg=id-wsj>; "Rouhani, Erdogan Discuss Nuclear Deal Effects on Developing Iran-Turkey Ties," *Alalam*, 17 July 2015, <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1721364>; Mohammed Nuruzzaman, "Post-Nuclear Deal Iran- Back to the Fold of Imperialism?," *Insight Turkey* 18, no. 2 (2016); Emre Kızılkaya, "Four potential effects of the Iran nuclear deal on Turkey," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 20 July 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/four-potential-effects-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal-on-turkey.aspx?pageID=238&nID=85626&NewsCatID=359>.

⁵²³ Akyol.

⁵²⁴ Sadık Ünay, "Economics of the Iran Nuclear Deal." *SETA*, 16 July 2015, <http://www.setav.org/en/economics-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal/>; Tür; Dorian Jones, "In Turkey, Mixed Reactions to Iran Nuclear Deal," *Voice of America*, 15 July 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/a/mixed-reactions-in-turkey-about-iran-nuclear-deal/2862966.html>; James M. Dorsey, "The Iran Nuclear Deal- Rewriting the Middle East Map," *Insight Turkey* 16, no. 1 (2014); "Rouhani, Erdogan Discuss Nuclear Deal Effects on Developing Iran-Turkey Ties."; Fulya Ozerkan, "Turkey eyes Iran deals as Rouhani meets Erdogan," *The Times of Israel*, 16 April 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/turkey-eyes-iran-deals-as-rouhani-meets-erdogan/>.

without the domestic consequences that have been a frequent feature when domestic considerations are embroiled in the foreign policy of Turkey towards Iran.

4.2.3. Regional & International

So far this chapter has explored the historical and domestic dimensions of Turkish-Iranian relations due to the nuclear issue. To further this analysis, it is important to examine the intersections and causal relationship of the nuclear issue on the regional and international arena and how this has affected the Turkish-Iranian relationship. The Iranian Nuclear Issue has not only brought regional actors into the discussion but has also been an issue of importance for the global community. These factors constrain and/or enable relations between the two states. The Iranian Nuclear Issue while not a priority for bilateral relations, however has affected the alliance networks and regional relationships of each country. From a regional perspective, the Iranian nuclear issue has also influenced Iran's relationship with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. When the nuclear issue was at its zenith, Iran's image within the region was presented as hegemonic due to an ever-increasing confrontational attitude towards the US. Despite Iran's assurances that its nuclear program was for peaceful purposes, GCC countries were unsure of Iran's intentions and are tied closely to the US in terms of economics and security. Iran had dealt with GCC countries on an individual basis rather than a collective group due to its differences with Saudi Arabia.

Economic relations between some of the GCC countries and Iran had been quite positive with smaller states like Oman and the UAE 'aspir[ing] to pursue a meticulous diplomacy... walk[ing] a tightrope not to antagonise Iran or the United States.'⁵²⁵ Iran places great importance on its economic relations with the Gulf states particularly as they compensated for losses from European markets due to sanctions. Iran maintains the same neighbourly relations with the small Gulf states as it does with Turkey, emphasising that it does not want to threaten its neighbours but

⁵²⁵ Gülriz Şen, "The Prospects of "Constructive Engagement" in Iran-GCC Relations: The Levant Dimension," in *Iran's Relations with the Arab States of the Gulf: Common Interests over Historic Rivalry*, ed. Maaike Waraer, Luciano Zaccara, and Paul Aarts (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2016), 16-17.

continue cordial relations. With the election of Rouhani, a moderate approach has been sought to mitigate any fallout that may have occurred due to the domestic, regional and international consequences of sanctions on GCC-Iran relations. However, the appearance of Iranian resurgence due to the Syrian Crisis (as discussed in the previous chapter) has increased the threat perception of Iran's regional pursuit for hegemony.

The conclusion of the nuclear deal has brought some respite on this issue but it has allowed Iran to flex its geopolitical muscles in its support for the Assad regime and Shia militia in Syria and Iraq.⁵²⁶ Despite its close relations with certain GCC states, Iran's relations are also exposed to the growing struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia as each continue their geopolitical contest for power in the region. In addition to this, the GCC states fear that 'in case of a military attack [by the US], Tehran would target US bases in the Persian Gulf, exert direct pressure and punish GCC states for acquiescence'.⁵²⁷ With the added strain of Syria, it appears the relationship between the GCC-Iran will be further strained as accusations of sectarian politics become more pronounced and the good work of the nuclear deal undone.

Israel's position in terms of the Iranian Nuclear Issue also presents a challenge to Turkey-Iranian relations. Israel's position on the nuclear issue presents challenges to both Turkey and Iran as both states are in close distance of the nuclear armed state. Israel has unofficially around two hundred war heads and a growing missile defence capability.⁵²⁸ Given that Israel is a nuclear weapons state and not a signatory to the NPT gives reason as to why Iran wishes to develop its own domestic nuclear program (whether weaponised or not). Threats of military strikes also contribute to Iranian foreign policy decisions regarding the nuclear issue, seeing itself as a counter

⁵²⁶ Richard Nephew and Robert Einhorn, "The Iran nuclear deal: Prelude to proliferation in the Middle East." *Brookings Institute*, 31 May 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-iran-nuclear-deal-prelude-to-proliferation-in-the-middle-east/>; Mohammed Ayoob, "The Iranian Nuclear Deal- Long-Term Implications for the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* 17, no. 3 (2015).

⁵²⁷ Şen, "The Prospects of "Constructive Engagement" in Iran-GCC Relations: The Levant Dimension," 16.

⁵²⁸ Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, 172-73.

balance against an unfair asymmetrical power balance.⁵²⁹ Since Israel poses an existential threat to Iran, this also challenges the argument that Iran must curtail its nuclear program. The relationship between Israel and Iran has not been helped by Ahmadinejad threatening to 'wipe Israel off the map.'⁵³⁰ The JCPOA has been argued by current PM Netanyahu as 'no deal is better than a bad deal' as Israel continues to see Iranian nuclear narrative as an existential threat.⁵³¹ For Turkey, this presents a challenge. Although relations between Israel and Turkey have been at a historical low point since 2009, there is still plentiful communication between the two states and possible rapprochement in the future.

Turkey (particularly the AKP) agrees with Iran about the need for a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East and believes that Israel should remove its nuclear weapons stock from the region as it is a destabilising factor in regional relations. Erdoğan continues to point out that there is a latent level of hypocrisy in the international community's condemnation of the Iranian Nuclear Issue stating that 'those who criticise Iran's nuclear program continue to possess the same weapons. I think that those who take this stance, who want these arrogant sanctions [on Iran], need to first give these [weapons] up.'⁵³² Turkey has consistently voted against draft resolutions from the rest of the international community. The AKP and Erdoğan's criticisms of Israeli nuclear weapons can be interpreted as advocacy of Iran's nuclear position on the asymmetric power relations in the region.⁵³³

In terms of the international, we can look no further than the way the US has played a significant role in the nuclear issue for both Iran and Turkey. Turkey's alliance with the United States and as an extension NATO has been a significant factor in

⁵²⁹ Entessar, 78.

⁵³⁰ Ewen MacAskill and Chris McGreal, "Israel should be wiped off map, says Iran's president," *The Guardian*, 27 October 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/27/israel.iran>.

⁵³¹ Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu: Israel Worried by Iran Talks, No Deal Is Better Than a Bad Deal," *Haaretz*, 23 November 2014.

⁵³² "Turkey PM: If You Don't Want Iran to Have Nukes, Give Yours Up," *Haaretz*, 31 October 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/turkey-pm-if-you-don-t-want-iran-to-have-nukes-give-yours-up-1.5055>.

⁵³³ Çaman and Dağcı, 8.

tensions between Iran and Turkey. Although Turkey has remained somewhat neutral in its approach to Iran's nuclear program, it is however constrained by US actions and sanctions against Iran. Even though it has given tacit support to the Iranian nuclear program, the failure of the 2010 Tehran Declaration demonstrated the constraining influence of the US on Turkey-Iran relations. What could have been a perfect deal to end the nuclear standoff was rejected and further sanctions were implemented. Turkey as such withdrew from acting as a mediator in the nuclear issue and has refrained from commenting on the issue since then. Despite the pragmatic nature of Turkey-Iranian relations, Turkey is forced to cooperate with the US and NATO in terms of security and defence policy because it does not have the necessary mechanisms or structure to be able to balance against Iranian nuclear interests.

However, as mentioned previously its neutral stance has afforded it greater flexibility to deal with Iran in an economic way. Turkey even found loopholes in the sanctions regime to maintain pragmatic economic relations with Iran. For Iran, the US position in the nuclear issue is a continuing constraining factor on its nuclear ambitions. Despite the success of the JCPOA, there is little recognition of a thawing of relations between the two countries. US policies in the region (in Iraq for example) are one of the fundamental reasons behind the increased insecurity and blustering rhetoric of the Iranian regime. The US continued insistence on curtailing Iran's nuclear program and its 'selective proliferation' only fuels hardliners within the Iranian regime. However, with continued US involvement in the region including Syria, the possibility of a rapprochement seems a long way off.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to analysis and explore the complexities in Turkish and Iranian relations in terms of the Iranian Nuclear Issue from 2002 to 2015. The use of the HS/FPA framework has allowed us to discover what are the continuities and changes that have occurred in Turkish and Iranian relations and can contribute further to our understanding of their approaches to the nuclear issue. Through the interaction of historical, domestic, regional and international processes, this

chapter's analysis of the nuclear issue has discovered new understandings that can add to the existing discourse and academic scholarship. This includes Turkey and Iran's roles and decision making processes in regards to their foreign policy on the Iranian nuclear issue. After applying the HS/FPA framework and exploring the interaction of the historical, domestic, regional and international, several findings have been discovered.

Firstly, in the HS/FPA analysis of the historical continuities of the Turkish-Iranian approaches to the Iranian Nuclear Issue, Turkey and Iran's position as 'cusp states' provides an arena in which they can use their unique position to acquire relative gains in terms of the nuclear deal. This is manifested in emphasizing their role as a 'bridge' or 'bridge-ness' between East and West. Historically both Turkey and Iran have used their role as a 'bridge' to expand influence and create opportunities in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Northern Iraq. The 'bridge-ness' of Turkey and Iran in the nuclear issue however affords it flexibility in its foreign policy decisions and can act as a constraining/enabling agent.

Turkey has used its narrative of the 'bridge' throughout its attempt to represent its unique strategic and geopolitical representation, presenting itself as a 'mediator' within the Iranian Nuclear Issue. It sought to do this by trying to be a 'middleman' and bring Iran back into the international fold. However, as we have seen above, its attempts to conduct itself as a suitable negotiator failed. This was due to structural constraining factors of the international dominated talks of the Iranian Nuclear Issue and a failure of Turkey to promote its new geopolitical representation in the region. Therefore, we can argue that from this analysis, Turkey was constrained when it tried to use its 'bridge-ness' as a positive point and this was a clear failure of agency over structure.

In Iran's case, we see the opposite. Iran's 'bridge-ness' enables it to be flexible in its foreign policy towards the West in its nuclear negotiations. Iran's consistent objectives towards the attainment of the use of peaceful nuclear energy are clear through every regime but it is in the use of its 'bridge-ness' that allows it to either engage or disengage with the international community to obtain relative gains. This

strategy was used in the Khatami, Ahmadinejad and Rouhani administrations with different results. Khatami and Rouhani could engage with the international community because they emphasized their bridge role, however Ahmadinejad's refusal to engage with 'both sides of the bridge' contributed to the inability to engage on the nuclear issue. The success of utilizing this 'bridge-ness' by Rouhani has led to the JCPOA and the easing of sanctions for Iran. In the Iranian case, its 'bridge-ness' is not a constraining factor but can enable pragmatic foreign policy decisions.

Secondly, in looking at domestic considerations, Iran and Turkey also have constraining and enabling factors which affect their policy decisions in the nuclear issue. In the Iranian case, a combination of the loss of legitimacy from the 2009 popular protests and the structural effect of sanctions placed pressure on the regime. The increasing popular discontent and a potential economic collapse meant that the factionalism within the Iranian elite had to compromise from its previous position on the nuclear issue. The changing state-society dynamics, as well as the structural consequences of sanctions persuaded the regime to be more pragmatic in its approach to the nuclear issue and move from the ideological rigidity of the Ahmadinejad administration.

Structural factors take priority over agency in terms of the Iranian nuclear deal when regime survival is compromised. In addition to this, Khamenei allowed a more pragmatic approach and distanced himself from the 'Principalists' ideological inclinations. This once again emphasised the role of structure over agency and how the structure of sanctions and the political system are constraining factors in its relations. In the Turkish case, the analysis points out that unlike Iran, when there is no domestic pressure on its foreign policy agenda (such as the Iranian Nuclear Issue), it affords it greater flexibility to engage with Iran in economic engagement. The Iranian nuclear deal illustrates that in areas where there is no domestic pressure, Turkey-Iran relations can maintain pragmatic and non-contentious relations unlike its relations in Syria as discussed in the previous chapter.

Finally, the regional and international highlight the challenges each state faces in their attempt to find common ground on the nuclear issue. Turkey and Iran are somewhat tied by the regional and international situation. Iran's relationship with the GCC has been strained due to the problems associated with the Iranian Nuclear Issue, particularly in terms of the growing mistrust of Iranian expansionism in the region and sanctions. The signing of the JCPOA and the election of Rouhani provided some reassurance, however, US pressure and the growing sectarian narrative within the region threatens to undermine Iran's relations with Turkey and the wider Middle East. Israel's undisclosed nuclear stockpiles also threaten the ability to convince Iran of giving up their pursuit of nuclear technology.

Turkey has been a staunch advocate for Iran's pursuit of a nuclear program and highlights the hypocrisy and security dilemma that a nuclear Israel presents. This of course draws further challenges for Turkey due to the closeness of the US-Israel alliance and the staunch US involvement in the nuclear issue. Due to the tensions between the US and Iran, Turkey is constrained in its attempts to contribute to the nuclear deal because even though it maintains neutrality it does not have the manoeuvrability to conduct successful independent negotiations. This is due to its dependence on the US for security and defence under its obligations in NATO and their relation in the international arena. The fact that the nuclear issue is internationalised and involves actors (such as the US) means that Turkey and Iran may maintain a pragmatic relationship but may never be able to pursue completely conflict free relations, as the regional and international factors provide constraining agents on this relationship.

In conclusion, analysing the intersection of the historical, domestic, regional and international, provides a much more complex picture to the relationship of Turkey and Iran. The nuclear issue sees that historical processes are just as important as domestic considerations when examining Turkish and Iranian foreign policy. The interaction of structure vs agency, state-society dynamics and historical path dependency all help provide a comprehensive analysis of the constraining and enabling factors in Turkish-Iranian relations. The combination of applying HS/FPA

to this case study provides the reasons of ‘how’ and ‘why’ the relationship is much more complex and how Turkey and Iran can maintain pragmatic relations yet be constrained by these factors at the same time.

With the signing of the JCPOA, Turkey-Iran relations remain pragmatic when there are no domestic issues fuelling erratic foreign policy decisions. As such when there is no domestic pressure, Turkey-Iran relations maintain a pragmatic character and are not constrained by the same factors that affect their relations over Syria. However, growing sectarianism and shifting regional/international changes can affect this pragmatism in the bilateral relationship. As demonstrated in this chapter, the application of HS/FPA to this case study adds a complex understanding to the already existing academic discourse on Turkish-Iranian relations and the nuclear issue. It provides a much more thorough analysis of the complex factors that influence bilateral relations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Since the events of the Arab Spring, it can be said that the relationship between Turkey and Iran is tumultuous at best. There are areas of conflict in geopolitical and ideological competition, while at the same time there is cooperation on economics and security. The purpose of this thesis was to explore how Historical Sociology can add to the existing academic discourse and discover the changes and continuities that have affected Turkish-Iranian relations in the post-Arab Spring period. From the analysis of the two case studies (Arab Spring/Syrian Crisis and the Iranian Nuclear issue), it is apparent that there are more fundamental changes and continuities that exist within the relationship. It is clear to say that the relationship is incredibly complex. Indeed, more complex than the dominant theories and narratives which have analysed the diplomatic, economic and security ties between these two neighbours have suggested. The current academic discourse around Turkish-Iranian relations only brushes the surface of the complexity within this relationship.

The theoretical discussions explored in the literature review and their application do not go beyond this superficial description and do not show the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of the complexity in Turkish-Iranian relationship. The overarching theories of discussed in the literature review in chapter one, play a key part in how Turkish-Iranian relations have been framed. These academic discussions are just a part of the immense puzzle that scholars face when exploring the relationship between these two actors. The HS/FPA framework that this thesis has employed in its analysis has sought to bridge the gaps in the literature of ‘why’ and ‘how’ the Turkey-Iranian relationship is so complex. It has examined how the intersection of the historical, domestic, regional and international in both case studies provides constraining and enabling factors to bilateral engagement as well overall relations in the Middle East and regional environment.

It is important to note that the application of the HS/FPA theoretical approach does not seek to supplant the dominant narratives that have been discussed. However, it does aim to enhance the discussion. A HS/FPA approach not only answers the fundamental question and sub-questions outlined at the beginning of this thesis, it also simultaneously adds a much more varied discussion and analysis to the existing academic narrative. In addition, the historical background of this thesis as outlined in chapter two, provides an outline of how relations have been conducted since the Iranian Revolution in 1979 to 2011 and as such provides a formula to conduct historical analysis and examine the continuities and conflicts in bilateral relations.

This concluding chapter will discuss the findings of this thesis and address how the application of Historical Sociology provides a more robust account to the scholarly discourse in the study of Turkish-Iranian relations. It will firstly provide a discussion of how the HS/FPA theoretical approach assists in promoting a further understanding of the complexity of Turkish-Iranian relations in the two case studies (Arab Spring/Syrian Crisis and the Iranian Nuclear issue) of this thesis. Furthermore, it will demonstrate how HS/FPA is highly applicable to the understandings of Turkish-Iranian relations and will discuss the broader implications and influence of the findings of this thesis regarding the wider discourse. Finally, this chapter will outline the limitations of this study and the agenda for further research on this topic.

Findings of this Thesis

In this thesis, the HS/FPA theoretical framework was applied to two case studies. These were critical and present-day issues in Turkish-Iranian relations: 1) The Arab Spring/Syrian Crisis and 2) the Iranian Nuclear Issue. These case studies provided an example of serious geopolitical issues which have not just affected bilateral relations between these two countries but have also had a resounding domestic, regional and international effect. Both case studies were dissected by the main theoretical discussions in IR and those outlined in the literature review. The purpose of applying the HS/FPA framework is to discover through its analysis of the historical, domestic, regional and international, whether a discussion through this framework can address why the relationship is so complex and add to the existing academic discussion on

Turkey and Iran. This section will explore the principal findings of this thesis and illustrate how they add further to the scholarly discourse.

The Historical Continuation of Ideology

Ideology is a vital part of understanding Turkish-Iranian relations. The scholarly discourse around Turkey and Iran focuses on ideology as a prominent component of what causes ruptures within the relationship. As was outlined in the literature review in chapter one, this ideological discord is a fundamental division between Secularism and Islamism. The outcomes of this thesis do not dispute this fact. However, the current discussion highlights that since the election of the AKP this ideological division is no longer an impediment. Instead, the rivalry between Turkey and Iran is framed in sectarian and ‘grand civilizational’ narratives. The outcomes of this thesis problematise this proposition and argues that continuing ideological competition between Turkey and Iran in any form is a historical process and originates from this Secularism/Islamism divide from 1979.

The Arab Spring/Syrian Crisis provides a valuable example of how serious geopolitical issues tend to dominate the Turkish-Iranian relationship. Both states have dealt with the ‘ruptures’ that have affected the region since the Arab Spring and the fallout of the Syrian Crisis. From the application of the HS/FPA framework in our analysis, we discover that the rivalry that occurs between Turkey and Iran is not new. In fact, the rivalry that emanates in this regional dispute has historical continuity and path dependency that is shaped by the intersection of historical, domestic, regional and international processes. Both historical continuities and path dependencies were affected by the above-mentioned intersection of processes in different ways.

Ideological competition between Turkey and Iran in the Arab Spring/Syrian Crisis was not a new phenomenon. The rivalry between the two has not yet been shaped by the sectarian narrative that has become common place within the scholarly and journalistic work on the Middle East especially in the last decade but it has been

shaped regarding 'identity-based language'. This has manifested itself as a confrontation in terms of 'civilizational differences'. Iran and Turkey have defined their ideological conflict based on the 'grand narratives' of historical rivalry originating from pre-modern times. It is thus manifested within the narrative between the two states as a competition between 'Neo-Ottomanism' and 'Iranian Expansionism', with both states accusing the other of imperial ambitions within the region regarding their policies towards the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis. From using an Historical Sociological approach, this thesis discovered that the rivalry actually derives from the competition over 'governance models' that aligns to the immediate post-1979 revolution period. This is rooted in the same ideological discord between Turkey's 'Secularist' model and Iran's 'Islamist' model of government and society. We see the same discursive narratives of Turkey's relationship with the West and Iranian fears of Turkish prominence in the region in their policies in Syria as we have previously.

The competition between the 'Turkish' and 'Iranian' models has permeated not just the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis but has also been a feature of other areas of competition in the region such as Northern Iraq, Central Asia and the Caucasus. In the literature review and background chapters of this thesis, this ideological competition appears to be a consistent factor in relations between the two states. What the HS/FPA analysis demonstrates is that the same ideological competition over governance models exists throughout Turkish-Iranian relations and manifests itself (albeit in different language and narrative) in many of the geopolitical and regional disputes that have occurred between Iran and Turkey. HS/FPA highlights that there is a continuation of the ideological reproductions that were previously found in the relationship.

In the Arab Spring and the Syrian Crisis, these ideological overtures are more overt and active in terms of hard and soft power, but the same political and ideological projections remain. The ideological competition is all but different in name and narrative. The HS/FPA framework eliminates the 'grand historical rivalry' narrative that is commonplace in the current discussion. It discovers that the origin of rivalry

between Turkey and Iran does not come from an ancient competition among rival empires but is in fact a quest for regional influence in the post-1979 period between two neighbours and their governance models. Despite the ‘civilizational’ rhetoric and accusations of imperialism espoused against each other by Turkey and Iran in the Arab Spring and the Syrian Crisis, the same fundamental historical continuity and path dependency that was apparent previously in competition between the two states remains.

The Continued Externalisation and Securitisation of the Kurdish Issue

Another key outcome that this thesis has uncovered is the historical path dependency of the Kurdish issue and its continued externalisation and securitisation. This thesis discovers that the approaches that Turkey and Iran have towards the Kurdish Issue today are similar to those it has had throughout its shared history. Turkey and Iran have used the Kurdish Issue for domestic purposes as well as part of its competition for influence. The Syrian conflict has highlighted that for Turkey, the ‘threat’ of a Kurdish entity on its southern border continues to remain its most dominant security priority. This thesis exposes that the AKP’s approach to a resurgent Kurdish movement in Syria is the same ‘securitisation’ policy of previous Kemalist administrations that has been in place since the PKK insurgency began in 1984. For Iran, the resurgence of the Kurds in Syria poses only an existential threat to its Kurdish community. In light of this, Iran and Turkey continue to externalise the Kurdish issue and use their relationship with certain Kurdish groups to increase their influence in the region at the expense of the other, such as what we have continued to see in Northern Iraq.

Turkey, unfortunately, feels more pressure and constraining factors because of the domestic considerations of the Kurdish Issue. The AKP views the nascent Kurdish movement in Syria under the PYD as a domestic issue, linking it to its problems with the PKK. This domestication and continued securitisation of the Kurds in Syria allows the AKP to construct public opinion around the issue and use it to limit the damage of its policies in Syria. This domestic manoeuvrability, however, does not

translate into its regional and international policies. The internationalisation of the Kurdish Issue has added to the constraining effects on Turkey's position in the region. Consequently, it has led to increased regional isolation from its traditional alliances because it remains inflexible in its Kurdish policy. Such inflexibility and continuity in associating the PYD with the PKK for domestic consumption have meant that its inability to change its policy has served to undermine Turkey's regional standing. It has inadvertently also strengthened the legitimacy of the PYD internationally and regionally. However, this thesis has also uncovered that the fate of the PKK is also tied to the future of the PYD and *Rojava* cantons. Whatever the outcome is of the Syrian conflict, it will inevitably shape Turkey and the PKK's responses to the Kurdish issue in the future.

Unlike Turkey, Iran does not view the Kurdish movement in the same light and does not securitise the issue for domestic consumption. This allows greater flexibility in its ability to deal with the Kurdish Issue in the region. Its relations with Northern Iraq and common objectives in Syria (where it prefers the power vacuum being filled by Kurds rather than ISIS) reflect this flexibility. Despite shared objectives of not allowing an independent Kurdish entity nor fighting Kurdish irredentism, control of the Kurdish Issue has been used for gaining power and position in the region. Turkey has used it for domestic consumption, to serve and justify its adventurist policies in Syria and promote its influence in Northern Iraq, while Iran uses the issue as a point of leverage against Turkey. Even though both states have cooperated on the PKK threat, when the Kurdish Issue becomes externalised and securitized, there is less geopolitical cooperation between Iran and Turkey. This thesis has discovered that despite the obvious benefits that collaboration and a sensible joint policy towards the Kurdish issue would have for bilateral relations, continued externalisation by both states serves to generate mistrust between both Iran and Turkey.

The Flexibility of being the 'Bridge'

The Iranian Nuclear Issue presented interesting findings following the application of the HS/FPA framework. Unlike the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis (which provides

an example of a prominent conflict between the two states), the Iranian Nuclear Issue demonstrated an arena where Turkish-Iranian relations has seen some coalescing and agreement. When the HS/FPA framework was applied, and analysed the intersection of the historical, domestic, regional and international, this thesis discovered several new additions to the understanding of Turkish-Iranian relations.

In the analysis of the historical processes of Turkey-Iranian relations in the Iranian Nuclear issue, it was discovered that Iran and Turkey's positions as 'cusp states' as well as both adapting a 'bridge-role', have acted as a constraining and enabling agent in their ability to conduct relations bilaterally, regionally and internationally. This role has been used and utilised by both Turkey and Iran over many decades, adding or subtracting flexibility to its foreign policy discourse. Each has used its unique position and regional aloofness to be able to use the 'bridge-role' for relative gains. In the Iranian Nuclear Issue, it has however provided negative outcomes for Turkey. While conversely, has afforded Iran greater flexibility in its dealings with the international community. Both states have used this 'bridge role' to conduct pragmatic economic and energy relations with each other.

Turkey saw itself in a unique position to act as a mediator and, in this case facilitator, in bringing Iran back into the international fold. It pursued independent diplomacy and attempted to demonstrate to the US and EU that it was a 'bridge' between the international community and Iran. However, its attempts to act as a functioning 'mediator' failed. The failure of the Tehran Declaration in 2010 concluded Turkey's pursuit of having a role in the negotiations. Turkey's historical legacies and 'cusp' state identity formation limited its ability to be a suitable negotiator. Turkey's inability to form its 'bridge' identity in the Iranian Nuclear Issue demonstrates the failure of its agency compared to structural factors. Due to the internationalisation of the nuclear issue, Turkey did not have manoeuvrability in its 'mediator' role, despite its best intentions. Again, this highlights the structural constraining factors that unfortunately lead to the failure of its ability to project its 'mediating' and 'bridge-ness' to the nuclear issue. Ultimately, Turkey lost not only face but the regional and international prestige it had energetically pursued, particularly as the rest of the

international community came to a negotiated deal with Iran with the JCPOA in 2015.

Iran's utilisation of its cuspness and 'bridge-ness' can be viewed in strong contrast to Turkey. Its use of the bridge narrative has afforded itself flexibility in its relationships with the region and internationally when it has been dealing with nuclear negotiations. Every administration (besides Ahmadinejad) has formulated a narrative based on Iran's unique position between the East and the West but has remained staunch in their pursuit of the peaceful use of nuclear technology for energy use. The bridge narrative suits both internal and external purposes as Iran has highlighted its uniqueness and outreach to both the Middle East and region. Iran has used this historical narrative to obtain relative gains without compromising its foreign policy objectives. Iran's 'bridge-ness' has afforded it the flexibility to pursue the best possible position for obtaining relative gains in its pursuit of nuclear power. This was highlighted with the election of Rouhani and the conclusion of the JCPOA. Rouhani's election allowed elites to re-engage with this bridge narrative to return Iran to the international fold, however, it is important to note that following the JCPOA and the P5+1 talks, the fundamental goals of the Iranian elite to allow for nuclear development were still achieved.

The 'bridge-ness' of Iran's approach to the nuclear deal, therefore, emphasises the importance of agency and narrative in Iranian foreign policy. The HS/FPA approach to the historical process on the nuclear issue highlights Turkey and Iran's cuspness. Unlike the other theories discussed in the literature review in chapter 1, the analysis of the 'bridge role' demonstrates that the historical continuities that Iran and Turkey utilise in their foreign policy are important in foreign policy making just as much as security and geopolitical concerns. The nuclear issue presents a useful example as it demonstrates the constraining and enabling functions of this role in their relations. It demonstrates how the application of the bridge role and emphasis of each countries cuspness affords flexibility in decision making that another area of policy does not. Furthermore, a HS/FPA analysis highlights the discussion of how agency and

structure play an essential role in allowing flexibility within Turkey and Iran's foreign policy decisions and interactions with regional and international actors.

The Constraining/Enabling Effect of Domestic Politics

Another outcome this thesis has exposed is how much domestic politics acts as a constraining and/or enabling agent in terms of Turkey-Iran relations. The two case studies have shown where Iran and Turkey can and cannot work together because of domestic considerations in their foreign policy making. The study of the domestic adds an additional complex layer to the understanding of the 'how' and 'why' relations between Iran and Turkey's fluctuations between cooperation and/or conflict. This is where our FPA analysis grouped with HS works effectively. Foreign policy is not made in a bubble. Thus, an analysis of the domestic considerations for Turkey and Iran demonstrates how essential the 'domestic' is in how policy and decisions are formed, especially in regards to the Arab Spring/Syrian conflict and the Iranian Nuclear Issue. These domestic considerations allow for flexibility or constraint when it comes to decision-making processes.

Turkish and Iranian policies towards the Arab Spring/Syrian Crisis are affected by domestic processes which have served to constrain and enable foreign policy decisions of each state in their relations. From the HS/FPA approach, this thesis has demonstrated in the Iranian case that its policies in Syria, for example, reflect the domestic considerations of power politics within the regime and its 'ideological reproduction'. The dual headed approach of the Iranian political system illustrates that institutional complexity as well as the ideological reading of foreign policy facilitates regime survival and adds further complexity to foreign policy decision making. This potentially confirms ideological opposition is key to understanding decision making in Iran, especially in regards to its response to the Arab Spring and Syria Crisis.

The elite fragmentation of the Iranian political system and factionalism has served to become a constraining element in foreign policy decision making. However, this

allows flexibility to deal with both soft and hard power approaches to suit policy decisions. This inevitably complicates the state-society dynamic as foreign policy is not determined by the public, but by intra-factional disputes. This has been demonstrated by the ideological competition between the IRGC and Rouhani. The power and influence of the IRGC and its dominance over Iran's foreign policy in Syria and the region, has severely constrained President Rouhani and Iran to pursue soft power approaches in regional politics since the failure of Geneva II. The HS/FPA analysis demonstrates that this dual headed approach allows it the flexibility to pursue ideologically based interests in the region (such as its policies in Syria and the Arab Spring) but concurrently engage in cordial and pragmatic relations with countries such as Turkey.

The prominent academic theories discussed in chapter one can supply the reasons behind Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology but what they fail to highlight is how domestic politics influences the decision-making process. This thesis has shown that the nuclear issue has been used as an arena for political factions to concentrate power and weaken rivals. However, even these factions are beholden to the processes of structure and agency. The post-Arab Spring period sees a shift from the antagonistic policies of Ahmadinejad to Rouhani's more conciliatory and diplomatic approach. Why does this happen? From the HS/FPA analysis, which this thesis has employed, the first argument comes down to a structural one. The effects of growing sanctions on Iranian society led to growing discontent from the public and certain factions. The 2009 popular protests had already undermined the regime's legitimacy.

The loss of power that certain factions and the regime faced if an economic collapse occurred shifted the elite disagreement on the 'national interest' away from Ahmadinejad's economic nationalism to Rouhani's reintegration into the international economy. Secondly, the cause and effect of sanctions also affected the role of agency within the regime. Khamenei for the sake of the survival of the regime, in fact, allows Rouhani to win the election in 2013. Despite the ideological inclination of the regime in its support of the Ahmadinejad position on the nuclear deal, pragmatism won out. This is because regime survival and maintaining the

structure of the state takes precedence over the 'ideology' of the state. Essentially, what an HS/FPA analysis demonstrates is that structure overcomes agency in the shift of Iran's nuclear policy because of the shifting state-society relations that has occurred in Iran in the post-2009 period.

In the Turkish Case, the Arab Spring/Syrian Crisis exposes the level to which domestic politics affects Turkey's foreign policy. The AKP and President Erdoğan have consistently used foreign policy initiatives to enhance domestic support for their ambitious foreign policy agenda. The failure of the 'Turkish model' (and a loss of the moral authority it once commanded) have led to foreign policy becoming an extension of domestic consumption. Turkey's adventurist and contradicting policy in Syria has thus reflected this attempt to 'domesticize' foreign policy. The AKP has been increasingly dealing in polemics and failed to create a sustainable and alternative strategy to its 'zero problems with neighbours' policy. Essentially, with the state-society dynamic changing, this has also affected the agency and structure of Turkish foreign policy.

We can see that Turkey is in fact constrained in its approach to Syria because it has effectively undermined the institutional basis for foreign policy decision making, leaving it to polemics, hubris and the whims of political expediency. As the AKP has sought to solidify itself as the sole source of institutional power, foreign policy has now become an extension of domestic politics and thus, politicised. This has reached such a stage that it will be challenging for Turkey to approach a middle ground with Iran regarding the Syrian conflict. If an accommodation is found, it may be very costly domestically for the AKP. Turkey's options are limited in Syria because it has fundamentally eroded the institutional basis of sound policy making with its continued use of polemics and ideology to justify its failed foreign policy.

Unlike Turkey's foreign policy on the Arab Spring and Syria, the Iranian Nuclear issue is non-politicised. Consequently, Turkey does not have the same pressures it has on the nuclear issue as it has when dealing with Iran on other geopolitical issues. The public in Turkey did not pay attention whether the AKP facilitated a nuclear

deal and there was no fallout domestically when the Tehran Declaration failed in 2010. Without the impetus of ideological competition and the state-society relationship remaining dominated by the state, relations between Turkey and Iran remain pragmatic. This lack of domestic considerations, therefore, affords it a greater ability to engage economically with Iran in enhancing its energy resources as well as trade ties. The Iranian Nuclear deal illustrates that in areas where there is no domestic pressure, Turkey and Iran's relations can maintain pragmatic and non-confrontational relations. This illustrates the modest and muted response of Turkish policy makers in their approach to the nuclear issue and subsequent failure to influence events.

A HS/FPA analysis of domestic considerations highlights that both Iran and Turkey's foreign policy decisions are not solely driven by domestic politics. In fact, when there is no ideological competition between the two or there is an impetus to enhance domestic support, both countries can employ a pragmatic approach to each other. We can see that because the AKP does not have the domestic pressure in regards to the nuclear issue as it does in Syria, it allows them to pursue a much more pragmatic and moderate approach to the relationship. A lack of domestic political pressure affords such flexibility, that it allows them to attempt to be a 'mediator' in the nuclear issue. Even though the mediation effort was a failure, there was minimal domestic fallout because of it. Hence, these areas of flexibility in their foreign policy allow for cooperation in Turkey-Iranian relations. This explains why Turkey and Iran can facilitate economic and security relations when they are so geopolitically opposed on other issues.

The application of this framework highlights that even though Iran is an authoritarian country and foreign policy is made at the elite level, it still is constrained by the effect their decisions have on the country and civil society. This is apparent from the structural effects of sanctions on the regime and its effect on regime legitimacy and survival. Regime survival is based on a delicate balancing act between factional elites, domestic support and pragmatism. Despite Ahmadinejad and the IRGC's best intentions to stick to its 'isolationist' and boisterous rhetoric on

the nuclear issue, when the legitimacy of the regime was compromised after the 2009 protests and its economic interests jeopardised then its default setting tends to be more pragmatic.

The election of Rouhani and his approach of bringing Iran back into the international fold was more about maintaining the structure and interests of the regime. Rouhani is not an outsider but a cleric thus still part of the elite structure. Structure, therefore, played an essential part in shifting the Iranian nuclear discourse towards a more conciliatory approach as interests and regime survival are compromised and threatened. This demonstrates the flexibility that the Iranian elite uses in maintaining the status quo. Although, disagreement on foreign policy does occur between factional elites on what is most appropriate for the 'national interest', the resilience of the authoritarian regime in Iran survives due to the ability of factions to compromise on what is the best path for the 'national interest' and thus maintain the structure and legitimacy of the regime.

The Defining Influence of Regional & International Politics

The intersection of regional and international processes is another important discussion this thesis highlights. Even though historical and domestic factors play a significant role in how Turkish-Iranian relations are conducted, regional and international events and actors have an influence on their policy. It is important to note that it is not just the regional and international that shapes Turkey and Iran's policies towards each other and the region, but also how Turkey and Iran's policy shapes the regional and international as well. The causal interaction of the regional and international has shaped Turkey and Iran's relationship regarding its ideological competition, the Kurdish Issue and policies towards the nuclear issue. As we have seen in chapter 3, the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis did not just see Turkey and Iran respond to events, but there were also responses by regional and international actors who have further complicated the geopolitics of the conflict and wider region. The regional context serves to constrain the possibility of close Turkey-Iranian ties.

Both Turkey and Iran's relationship to the Gulf (particularly Saudi Arabia) has put a limit on how much the two states can cooperate. The Iran-Saudi Arabian rivalry further complicates and constrains the relationship as it frames the conflict in Syria and the wider region as one based on sectarianism. Although Iran and Turkey do not see their relationship in this way, unfortunately, the Sunni-Shia narrative becomes an all-encompassing part of relations in the region. Neither state has addressed the dominance of this narrative as they continue to back opposing sectarian militant groups in Syria. Iran's relationship with the GCC (although pragmatic and economically driven) still draws accusations of 'sectarian meddling' and 'expansionism'. GCC-Iranian economic ties have improved, but mistrust remains. Israel's role in the region must also be considered as a critical factor in how Turkey and Iranian relations can be conducted. As chapter four has illustrated, the AKP is in agreeance with Iran's pursuit of peaceful nuclear technology. Turkey's relationship with Israel and the United States, however, is in stark contrast to Iran's aggressive stance against Israel. This presents further challenges to cooperation between Turkey and Iran.

Russia and the US involvement in the conflict have added another strategic dimension which will continue to put Turkey and Iran at odds. Despite their best intentions, both Turkey and Iran sit on opposite sides of the conflict. Turkey's alliance with NATO and the US will always be viewed with mistrust by Iran, remaining an ideological stumbling block towards full cooperative ties. Turkey does not have the necessary mechanisms or structure to be able to balance against Iranian nuclear interests thus, it is forced to cooperate with the US and NATO in terms of security and defence policy. This also extends to the conflictual nature of the Iran-US relationship which further constrains relations between Turkey and Iran. The inability of Turkey to successfully be part of the nuclear negotiations highlights this issue.

The intersection of the regional and the international plays a vital part in constraining possible ties between Turkey and Iran. With the US and Russian presence in the Syrian Crisis, there is another level of ideological competition which makes it

difficult for Turkey and Iran to reconcile their differences. Although Turkey has attempted to seek convergence with Iran and Russia on its policies in Syria, its multidimensional linkages to the Gulf (especially its relationship with Saudi Arabia) means that regionally it will continue to be perceived regarding this Sunni-Shia divide that has become a reality of the Syrian Crisis. Turkey's ability to assuage Iran of this sectarian perception has become more difficult due to its invasion of Jarabulus under Operation *Euphrates Shield* by Turkish Armed Forces in 2016.

Turkey's alliance with NATO (and as an extension the US) signifies there will continually remain an ideological divide between Turkey and Iran at a regional and international level. This can also be extended to Iran, whose full support of the Assad regime (and as an extension Hezbollah) has left it with little manoeuvrability regionally and internationally. Russia's insertion into the conflict has added another constraining element which will make it difficult for Iran to assert its dominance over the Assad regime as the conflict continues.

Turkey and Iran's responses to these events and actors also aids our understanding as to why despite the opportunities for cooperation between each other, ties have continued to remain cordial. The regional and international play a major constraining role on the ability of Turkey and Iran to develop full political ties. Despite their best intentions, the nature of the ideological competition in the regional and international sphere is a reality in their bilateral relations. First and foremost, Turkey and Iran will always secure their geostrategic and 'national-interest', therefore geopolitical and ideological conflict will continue. However, it is because there is a minimal intersection of these regional and international processes on economic and security ties that permits them to be more pragmatic and maintain cordial relations. Both areas are not driven, nor demand an immediate response to regional and international elements by each country. This allows more short-term relative gains between the two states. Hence, this thesis has discovered that one of the fundamental problems that explains the inability of Turkey and Iran to become closer and fully develop their ties beyond economics and security, is their impotence to overcome, respond and be influenced by the regional and the international.

The Importance of HS/FPA on the Wider Discourse

The outcomes of this thesis highlight the significance of an HS/FPA approach, as it adds another dimension to the study of Turkish-Iranian relations. The outcomes demonstrate a much more complex picture of the relationship beyond the geostrategic, ideological and economic points of view which have so far been studied and discussed in the scholarly discourse of Turkey-Iranian relations. What this means for the wider discourse, is a solid theoretical approach which provides another layer and fuller details to the analysis of state-state relations by considering factors which are often overlooked in the IR and Middle East Studies research. As we can see from the outcomes of the thesis, a HS/FPA framework uncovers not only original findings but also adds a further layer of complexity to the already existent academic discourse.

Firstly, applying this framework offers an alternative route for scholars to diverge from the purely state-based approach to foreign policy that is so common in the IR discipline. Secondly, reviewing the Historical Sociological aspects of foreign policy through the interactions of the historical, domestic, region and international provides a much more succinct analysis of the complex relations in the Middle East. Thirdly, while adding to the complexity of foreign policy, HS/FPA can explain the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of the intricacies of the relationship, thus providing a fuller picture for scholars in their analysis. This framework does not seek to supplant the existing academic literature or disprove their analysis. What is intended by applying this framework, is to open the analysis of Turkey-Iranian relations further to a much deeper level of understanding. The goal of this research is to demonstrate that HS/FPA can be applied to foreign policy and with its application expose a more complex understanding of state to state relationships in the Middle East. It is in this researcher’s hope that the findings of this thesis can be extrapolated to other studies in the diverse range of foreign policy actors in the greater Middle East. It also believes that this approach can provide a bridge between both IR and Middle East Studies in further research into the complexities of the Middle East.

Areas to Expand/Limitations

The use of the HS/FPA framework in analysing Turkish-Iranian relations could be expanded into other areas of the relationship that were not covered in this thesis. The role of Islamism within each country could be a potential area for further research in the future. The HS/FPA framework can be extrapolated to explore the relationship between Turkey or Iran and its neighbours in the Gulf, Levantine and North Africa. An exploration of this would further enrich the scholarly discourse in IR and Middle East Studies of Turkey and Iran's relations with the wider Middle East. Due to time and resource limitations, this thesis examined only English language sources and those sources that could be easily translated. Further analysis of media and academic sources in Turkish and Farsi could develop a more rounded picture of the discourse between the two states. Interviews with senior Turkish and Iranian diplomats/officials could reveal other factors and intricacies that play into the Turkish-Iranian relationship but due to time constraints and the current political climate, these were not possible for this research.

In conclusion, this thesis had attempted to provide a new perspective in understanding the Turkish-Iranian relationship. It has employed the post-Arab Spring period to highlight the continuities and changes within bilateral ties but also the deeper complexity that is involved in relations between Turkey and Iran. Historical Sociology allows us to shift our perspective from the traditional scholarly discussions of foreign policy to explain the changes and continuities through the interaction of macro forces such as the historical, the domestic, the regional and the international. The intersection of these forces provides a deeper understanding of the sociological, ideological and historical processes that shape the relationship between states. Turkey and Iran are just one example of how this theoretical approach can be used in the academic discourse to further and deepen IR and Middle East studies knowledge of foreign policy in the Middle East.

However, the critical question remains. What is next for Turkish-Iranian relations? The July 15th 2016 coup attempt has created a 'rupture' for the domestic

environment in Turkey. In addition to this, the conflict in Syria has reached another phase in which Turkey and Iran have now military forces within Syria's sovereign borders. The nuclear deal is in doubt as many policymakers in the region are questioning what the regional goals and motivations of the newly elected Trump Administration might be. All these are challenges that both Turkey and Iran face in an ever-changing region. No challenges so far have damaged the cordial relationship between the two countries and economic cooperation continues. However, with the whole geographical composition changing in the Middle East and sub-national actors gaining international legitimacy, it may not be long until there is a clash that may break this delicate balance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Türkiye ve İran, Orta Doğu'da ve daha geniş anlamda Avrasya coğrafyasında kilit rol oynayan önemli aktörlerdir. Paylaştıkları jeopolitik konumları, tarihi mirasları, zengin kültürleri ve nüfusları her iki ülkenin de ortak özellikleri arasındadır. Ancak iki ülkenin bu mazisi; güvenlik konusundaki önceliklerinden kaynaklı farklılıklar, ideolojik ve siyasi çatışmalar, ekonomik işbirliği ve ticaret gibi meselelerden zarar görmüştür. Bu farklılıklara rağmen, her iki devlet de toprak bütünlüğü ve meşruiyeti konularındaki hassasiyetleriyle birlikte medeni ilişkilerini de sürdürdüğünden, ikili ilişkiler samimi olagelmıştır. Türkiye ve İran ilişkileri üzerine çalışmak önem arz etmektedir, çünkü her iki devlet de Orta Doğu'da ve bölgelerinde önemli rollere sahip kilit aktörlerdir. Fakat bölgedeki Arap komşularıyla aralarındaki dil, kültür ve tarihsel farklılıklardan ötürü onlardan ayrı bir noktada durmaktadırlar.

Son yüz yıl içerisinde Orta Doğu'daki değişim akımlarını etkileyen aynı güçlerden ve kırılmalardan hem Türkiye hem de İran etkilenmiştir. Her iki devletin de tarihinde büyük bir imparatorluk tecrübesi olmasına rağmen günümüzde bu devletler bölgelerindeki güç odaklarının bir parçası olabilmek için çabalamakta, ancak bunu elde edememektedir. Yine de iki ülkenin de Orta Doğu, Avrasya, Orta Asya ve küresel ölçekte oynanan oyunlarda büyük etkisi vardır. Türkiye – İran ilişkileri incelendiğinde, hem bu iki ülkeyi hem de bulundukları bölgeyi değiştiren ve yeniden şekillendiren mikro ve makro çaptaki tarihsel ve jeopolitik süreçler daha iyi anlaşılabilir.

Türkiye – İran ilişkileri üzerine yapılan çalışmalar Uluslararası İlişkiler (IR) veya Orta Doğu Çalışmaları (MES) alanlarında yeni değildir. Orta Doğu'nun bu iki önemli aktörü arasındaki ilişki, pek çok akademisyen tarafından, kökeni önceki nesillerin büyük imparatorluk dönemlerine kadar giden bir medeniyetler rekabeti olarak nitelendirilmektedir. Akademisyenler, Arap asimilasyonundansa Anadolu'nun ve İran'ın asimilasyonunu destekleyen Türk – İran ittifakından, Osmanlı ve Safevi

İmparatorluklarının arasındaki tarihi rekabete kadar geçen dönemde yaşanan devamlılıkları ve çatışmaları modern zamandaki ilişkilerin günümüzde devamlılığını koruyan mirasına bir sebep olarak göstermeye çabalamaktadırlar. Ulus devletin yükselişi ve uluslararası ilişkiler çalışmalarının artışıyla birlikte, akademisyenler Türkiye ve İran arasında ihtilaflı bir ilişki olduğunu belirtmeye çabalamışlardır. Bu ihtilafların sebebi de geçmişten gelen tarihsel ve jeopolitik kaygılar ve Şii/Sünni ayırımından kaynaklı dini farklılıklardır. Bu yaklaşımlar Türkiye – İran ilişkilerinin karmaşıklığının anlaşılmasına yönelik ancak üstünkörü ve ilgisiz bir analiz ortaya koymaktadır. İki ülke arasındaki ilişkiler, tarihin en eski dönemlerine kadar inerek değil, her iki ülkenin de ulus devlet olarak doğduğu dönemlerden başlayarak (özellikle de 1979 İran Devriminden bu yana) analiz edilmelidir.

Realizm, Liberalizm ve Yapısalcılık gibi yaygın Uluslararası İlişkiler teorileri Türk – İran ilişkileri için geçerli analizler ortaya koymaktadır. Bu teoriler, bölgedeki Arap kökeninden gelmeyen bu iki ülke arasındaki karmaşık ilişkileri anlamak için kullanılmaktadır. Her ne kadar bu teoriler Türkiye – İran ilişkilerindeki işbirliği ve uyuşmazlıkların açıklanmasında gerekli olan kilit noktalara yönelik sağlam bir anlayış getirse de, bu teorilerin de kendilerini sınırlayan teorik limitleri mevcuttur. Güvenlik meselelerine, ekonomiye veya normlara gereğinden fazla odaklanılırken, hiçbir şekilde bu karmaşık ilişkileri anlamak için daha dengeli bir yaklaşım getirilememiştir. Bu tez ile Türk – İran ilişkilerini incelemek için mevcut olan geleneksel Uluslararası İlişkiler teorileri kapsamının dışına çıkabilmek ve bu ilişkileri etkileyen başka unsurları keşfetmek amaçlanmıştır. Bu tezde ortaya konan soru da şudur: Tarihsel Sosyoloji kullanımı akademik söyleme ve Arap Baharı sonrasındaki Türk – İran ilişkilerinin anlaşılmasına nasıl bir katkı sağlayabilir?

Bu tezde Türk – İran ilişkilerini etkileyen değişiklikler ve devamlılıklar, Tarihsel Sosyoloji ve Dış Politika Analizi objektifinden incelenerek keşfedilmek istenmiştir. Fakat bu çerçevede Türk – İran ilişkilerinin tamamının incelenmesi, bu tezin kapsamının ötesindedir. Bu nedenle, işbu tezde iki farklı durum çalışmasının analizine odaklanılacaktır: 1) Arap Baharı ve Suriye Krizi, 2) İran'ın Nükleer Meselesi. Bu iki durum çalışmasının analizi neticesinde bu tezde, İran ile Türkiye

arasındaki ilişkileri etkileyen bölgesel ve uluslararası unsurların yanı sıra bir takım yurt içi kaynaklı değerlendirmeler ve tarihsel devamlılıklar olup olmadığı belirlenecektir. Bir takım alt konular ile de Tarihsel Sosyoloji ve Dış Politika Analizinin (bu noktadan itibaren tezde HS/FPA olarak kullanılacaktır) Türk-İran ilişkilerinin anlaşılması hususuna nasıl katkıda bulunacağı sorusuna cevap aranacaktır:

1. Türkiye – İran ilişkilerindeki tarihsel devamlılıklar ve tarihsel izlek bağımlılıkları nelerdir?
2. Yurt içi kaynaklı değerlendirmeler Türkiye ve İran’ın hem kendi etki alanlarında hem de karşılıklı ilişkilerinde uygulanan dış politikasını ne ölçüde etkilemektedir?
3. Bölgesel ve uluslararası olaylar, değişimler ve ilişkiler ile girdikleri etkileşimler, Türkiye ve İran arasındaki karşılıklı bağları ne şekilde etkilemektedir?
4. Tarihsel, yurt içi, bölgesel ve uluslararası anlamda yaşanan etkileşimler Türk – İran ilişkilerini ne şekilde daha verimli hâle getirmekte veya daha zora sokmaktadır?
5. Türk – İran ilişkilerindeki karmaşaya dair “nasıl” ve “niçin” sorularına Tarihsel Sosyoloji nasıl bir açıklama getirmektedir?

Tezin ana sorusu ve alt konularının cevaplanmasında HS/FPA esaslarının uygulanması ile Arap Baharı sonrası dönemde Türk – İran ilişkileri üzerine muhtasar bir analiz elde edilecek ve bu konudaki akademik söylem daha da geliştirilmiş olacaktır. Bu tezin ortaya çıkardığı belli başlı bulgular mevcuttur.

İlk olarak, Arap Baharı ve Suriye Krizi dönemlerinde Türkiye ve İran arasında var olan ideolojik rekabet yeni bir olgu değildi. Bu rekabet henüz özellikle son on yılda Orta Doğu’da akademi ve basın çevreleri tarafından olağanlaştırılmış mezhepsel anlatılar üzerinden şekillendirilmemiş, onun yerine kimlik üzerine kurulu dil üzerinden şekillendirilmişti. Bu da kendisini medeniyet odaklı farklılıklara dair bir karşı karşıya gelme durumu olarak belli etmekteydi. İran ve Türkiye, aralarındaki ideolojik çatışmaları, kökeni modern dönemlerin öncesine kadar inen tarihsel bir rekabetin üst anlatısı olarak tanımlamaktadır.

Bu anlatıda açıkça ortaya çıkmaktadır ki, “Neo-Osmanlılık” ile “İran Yayılmacılığı” arasındaki bu rekabet dâhilinde her iki devlet de bir diğerini Arap Baharı ve Suriye Krizi gibi meselelerdeki politikalarından ötürü bölge üzerinde emperyalist emellere sahip olmakla itham etmektedir. Tarihsel Sosyoloji açısından yaklaşılarak bu tezde, söz konusu rekabetin 1979 Devriminden hemen sonraki süreçte meydana gelen, yönetim modelleri üzerine yaşanmış bir takım çekişmelerden kaynaklandığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu durum, hükümet ve toplum yapısı bağlamında Türkiye’nin Laik, İran’ın ise İslamcı bir model benimsemesindeki ideolojik fikir ayrılığında da kendisini belli etmiştir. Türkiye’nin Batı ile ilişkileri ve Suriye’de uyguladığı politikalarla bölgede yükselişe geçebileceğine dair İran’ın endişeleri gibi daha önce de tanık olunan tutarsız anlatılar görülebilmektedir.

Türkiye ve İran’ın benimsediği modeller üzerindeki çatışmalar yalnızca Arap Baharı ve Suriye Krizi gibi meselelerde değil; Kuzey Irak, Orta Asya ve Kafkaslar gibi bölgedeki diğer rekabet alanlarında da geçerli bir unsur olmuştur. Bu tezin literatür tarama ve arka plan bölümlerinde de, bu ideolojik rekabet iki devletin ilişkilerinde devamlı bir faktör olarak yer almaktadır. HS/FPA analizinde de ortaya çıkmıştır ki yönetim modelleri konusundaki ideolojik rekabet Türk – İran ilişkilerinde var olagelmıştır. Bu durum, Türkiye ve İran arasında yaşanmış pek çok bölgesel ve jeopolitik tartışmada (her ne kadar farklı dillerde ve farklı anlatılarda olsa da) açıkça ortaya konmuştur. HS/FPA tarafından, İkili ilişkilerde önceden de mevcut olan ideolojik yeniden üretimlerin devam ettiğine dikkat çekilmiştir.

Arap Baharı ve Suriye Krizinde bu ideolojik önermeler, sert/yumuşak güç bağlamında daha aleni ve aktif olsalar da, yine de aynı politik ve ideolojik öngörüler geçerliliğini korumaktadır. İdeolojik rekabet mevcut olsa da isim ve anlatıya göre değişiklik göstermektedir. Güncel tartışmalarda yaygın olarak kullanılan “büyük tarihi rekabet” anlatısı HS/FPA çerçevesi tarafından saf dışı bırakılmıştır. Türkiye ve İran arasındaki rekabetin kökeninin eskiden hüküm sürmüş iki imparatorluk arasındaki çekişmeler olmadığı, 1979 sonrası dönemde iki komşu devletin ve onların yönetim modellerinin bölgede daha fazla etki sahibi olma arayışı olduğu sonucu ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Her ne kadar Arap Baharı ve Suriye Krizi meselelerinde

medeniyetler retoriği ve emperyalizm suçlamaları her iki ülke tarafından birbirine karşı kullanılmış olsa da, Türkiye ve İran arasındaki rekabetin geçmişinde var olduğu görülen tarihsel devamlılık ve izlek bağımlılığı esaslarının hala varlığını devam ettirdiği görülmüştür.

İkinci olarak, bu tezde ortaya çıkarılan bir diğer önemli sonuç, Kürt Sorununun tarihsel izlek bağımlılığı, dışsallaştırılması ve bir güvenlik meselesi haline getirilmesinin devam etmesidir. Bu tez ile Türkiye ve İran'ın Kürt Sorununa bugünkü yaklaşımlarının, geçmişteki ortak tarihlerinde sahip oldukları yaklaşımlarla benzerlik gösterdiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Hem Türkiye hem de İran'da Kürt Sorunu bir iç siyaset unsuru olarak ve bölgede güç sahibi olma yarışının bir parçası olarak kullanılmıştır. Suriye meselesi göstermiştir ki, güney sınırında bir Kürt oluşumu tehdidi, Türkiye'nin güvenlik açısından en büyük önceliği olmaya devam etmektedir. Bu tez ile ortaya çıkarılan sonuçlara göre, AK Parti'nin Suriye'de yeniden canlanan Kürt hareketine yönelik yaklaşımı, PKK ayaklanmasının başladığı 1984 yılından bu yana iktidara gelmiş olan önceki Kemalist iktidarların izlediği "güvenikleştirme" politikasından farklı olmamıştır. İran için ise, Suriye'deki Kürtlerin yeniden canlanarak hareketlenmesi ancak ülke içindeki Kürt toplulukları için varoluşsal bir tehdit teşkil etmektedir. İran ve Türkiye Kürt Sorununu dışsallaştırmaya devam etmektedirler. Her iki devlet de, Kuzey Irak bölgesinde görüldüğü gibi bazı bölgelerdeki etkinliğini kaybetme pahasına o bölgedeki etkinliğini artırmak için diğer Kürt gruplarıyla olan ilişkilerini kullanmaktadır.

Ne yazık ki Türkiye, iç politikaya dair kaygılardan ötürü Kürt Sorunu konusunda daha fazla kısıtlayıcı unsur ve daha büyük bir baskı altındadır. AK Parti, Suriye'de PYD yapısı altında yeni oluşmaya başlayan Kürt Hareketini PKK ile bağdaştırmakta ve bu yüzden bir iç sorun olarak görmektedir. Suriye'deki Kürtlerin bir iç mesele hâline getirilmesi ve güvenikleştirilmesine devam edilmesi, AK Parti'nin bu konuda kamuoyu oluşturmaya ve bunu da Suriye'deki politikalarının zararlarını azaltmak için kullanmasına imkân tanımaktadır. Ne var ki iç işlerinde sahip olunan bu manevra yeteneği bölgesel ve uluslararası politikalara gelindiğinde geçerli olmamaktadır. Kürt Sorununun uluslararası bir hâle gelmesi de Türkiye'nin bölgedeki pozisyonunun üzerinde mevcut olan kısıtlayıcı etkenlere yenilerini

eklemiştir. Bu da sonuç olarak ülkenin bölgedeki geleneksel müttefiklerinden uzaklaşarak gittikçe yalnızlaşmasına yol açmaktadır, zira Kürt sorunu ile ilgili politikalardaki inatçılık sürdürülmektedir. Bu türden bir inatçılık ve iç meselelerde kullanılmak üzere PYD'nin PKK ile ilişkilendirilmesinin sürdürülmesi; Türkiye'nin politikasını değiştirmedeki aciziyetinin bölgedeki duruşunun sarsılmasına sebep olduğu anlamına gelmektedir. Bu durum, her ne kadar kasıtsız bir şekilde de olsa, PYD'nin bölgesel ve uluslararası anlamda meşruiyetini güçlendirmesine yardımcı olmuştur. Bu tezde varılan sonuçlara göre PKK'nın kaderi de PYD'nin ve Rojava Kantonlarının geleceğiyle yakından bağlantılıdır. Suriye Krizinden çıkacak netice her ne olursa olsun, Türkiye'nin ve PKK'nın Kürt Sorununa gelecekteki yaklaşımlarını biçimlendirecek olması kaçınılmazdır.

İran, Türkiye'nin aksine Kürt Hareketini aynı açıdan değerlendirmemekte ve bu sorunu yurt içi meselelerde kullanmak adına güvenlikleştirme yoluna gitmemektedir. Bu durum da Kürt Sorunuyla ilgilenirken daha fazla esnekliğe sahip olmalarına olanak sağlamaktadır. Kuzey Irak ile olan ilişkileri ve Suriye'de oluşan iktidar boşluğunun IŞİD tarafından değil Kürtler tarafından doldurulması yönündeki ortak hedefleri de bu esnekliğin bir göstergesidir. Bağımsız bir Kürt oluşumunun varlığına izin verilmemesi ve Kürt irredantizmine karşı mücadele edilmemesi gibi ortak bir takım hedeflere rağmen; Kürt Sorununun kontrol altında tutulması, bölgede pozisyon almak ve güç kazanmak için kullanılmıştır. Türkiye bu sorunu, Kuzey Irak'taki etkisini artırmak ve Suriye'de izlediği maceracı politikaları haklı çıkarmak adına yurt içinde kullanmaktayken; İran bu sorunu Türkiye'ye karşı elinde bir koz olarak bulundurmak amacıyla kullanmaktadır. İki devlet her ne kadar PKK tehdidi karşısında işbirliği içerisinde olsa da, Kürt Sorunu dışsallaştırıldığında ve güvenlikleştirildiğinde, İran ve Türkiye arasındaki jeopolitik işbirliği azalmaktadır. Bu tez sonucunda ortaya çıkmıştır ki, Kürt Sorununa yönelik geliştirilecek mantıklı bir ortak politika ve işbirliğinin iki tarafa da sağlayacağı bariz menfaatler ortada olmasına karşın, meselenin iki devlet tarafından da dışsallaştırılmaya devam etmesi İran ve Türkiye arasında bir güvensizlik atmosferi oluşmasına sebebiyet vermektedir.

Üçüncü olarak, İran Nükleer Meselesi ile ilgili Türk – İran ilişkilerindeki tarihsel sürecin analizinde; Türkiye ve İran’ın “arada kalmış devlet” (cusp state) şeklindeki pozisyonlarının yanı sıra her iki devletin de bir “köprü rolü” üstlenmeye de uyum sağladığı sonucuna varılmıştır. Sahip olunan bu pozisyon ve üstlenilen roller, iki devletin de bölgesel ve uluslararası anlamda karşılıklı ilişkiler yürütmesinde hem bir fırsat hem de kısıtlayıcı bir etken olabilmektedir. Hem Türkiye hem de İran, dış politika söylemlerine bazen esneklik katmak, bazen de bu söylemleri tam tersine inatçı hâle getirmek için on yıllardır bu rolden istifade etmektedir. Her iki devlet de bölgede “köprü rolü” üstlenmelerine imkân sağlayabilecek emsalsiz konumlarını nispi çıkarlar için kullanmaktadır. Ne var ki, İran Nükleer Meselesinde bu durum Türkiye adına olumsuz sonuçlar yaratmıştır. Öte yandan aynı durum İran’a uluslararası arenada kurduğu ilişkiler adına büyük bir esneklik avantajı sağlamıştır. Her iki devlet de bu “köprü rolünü,” birbirleriyle kurdukları ekonomi ve enerji ilişkilerini fayda sağlayan bir şekilde yürütme noktasında kullanmıştır.

Türkiye, arabulucu devlet statüsünde hareket ederek kendisini tek bir pozisyonda görmüştür ve İran’ı uluslararası camiaya geri kazandırmada kolaylaştırıcı bir rol oynamıştır. Aynı zamanda bağımsız diplomasi yürütmüş ve Türkiye’nin uluslararası camia ve İran arasında bir “köprü” işlevi gördüğünü, ABD ve AB’ye göstermeye çabalamıştır. Fakat etkin bir “arabulucu” olarak hareket etme çabaları başarısızlıkla sonuçlanmıştır. 2010 yılında imzalanan Tahran Bildirisi’nin başarısızlığı, Türkiye’nin müzakerelerde bir role sahip olma arayışıyla sonuçlanmıştır. Türkiye’nin tarihsel mirası ve “arada kalmış” (cusp) ülke kimliği oluşumu, uygun bir müzakereci devlet olmasının önünü kapatmıştır. İran nükleer meselesinde, Türkiye’nin “köprü” kimliği oluşturmadaki başarısızlığı, yapısal etkenlerle kıyaslandığında, bir kurum hatası niteliğindedir. Nükleer meselenin uluslararasılaştırılmasından dolayı, Türkiye –tüm çabalarına rağmen- “arabulucu” rolünde bir manevra alanına sahip değildir. Bu durum, nükleer meseleye Türkiye’nin “arabulucuk etme” ve “köprü görevi görme” kabiliyetinin –ne yazık ki- başarısızlıkla sonuçlanmasına sebebiyet veren yapısal kısıtlayıcı etkenleri ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bilhassa 2015 yılında uluslararası camianın geri kalan aktörlerinin İran’la yaptıkları müzakereler sonucunda müştereken oluşturdukları, Ortak Kapsamlı

Eylem Planı (JCPOA)’nın yürürlüğe girmesiyle birlikte, Türkiye yalnızca kendi itibarını yitirmekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda da gayretle yürüttüğü bölgesel ve uluslararası saygınlığını da zedelemiştir.

İran’ın “arada kalmışlığından” (cuspness) ve “köprü görevi görme” işlevinden faydalanmasının, Türkiye’yle uzlaşmaz bir tezat oluşturduğu görülmektedir. Nükleer müzakereleri yürütürken, İran’ın köprü anlatımı kullanması, bölgeyle olan ve uluslararası ilişkilerinde kendisine esneklik sağlamaktadır. Her yönetim (Ahmedinejad da dâhil olmak üzere), İran’ın Doğu ve Batı arasındaki eşsiz konumuna dayalı bir anlatı üretmektedir ancak enerji kullanımı için üretilen enerji teknolojisinin barışçıl kullanım amacına sadık kalmaktadır. İran, eşsizliğiyle birlikte Orta Doğu’ya ve bölgeye uzanan erişilebilirliğini ön plana çıkardığı için köprü anlatısı hem iç hem de dış amaçlara hitap etmektedir. İran, dış politikasındaki hedeflerinden taviz vermeksizin, nispi kazançlar elde etmek için tarihsel anlatısını kullanmıştır. İran’ın “köprü görevi görmesi”, kendilerine nükleer enerjinin peşinde nispi kazançlar elde etmek için muhtemel en iyi konumu izleme esnekliği sağlamaktadır. Ruhani’nin seçilmesi, elit kesimin uluslararası camiaya dönmek için yeniden köprü anlatısına başvurmasını sağlamıştır fakat JCPOA’ye ve P5+1 ülkelerinin görüşmelerini takiben, nükleer gelişmelere olanak sağlayacak İranlı elitlerin temel hedeflerinin başarıya ulaştığını kaydetmek önemlidir.

Böylece, İran’ın nükleer anlaşmaya yaklaşımının “köprü görevi görme” işlevi, İran dış politikasında kurumun ve anlatının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Nükleer meseleye ilişkin tarihsel sürece yönelik HS/FPA yaklaşımı, Türkiye ve İran’ın arada kalmışlığını vurgulamaktadır. Birinci bölümdeki literatür taramasında tartışılan diğer kuramların aksine, “köprü rolü” analizi, İran’ın ve Türkiye’nin dış politikalarında kullandıkları tarihsel devamlılığın, dış politika yapımında güvenlik ve jeopolitik sorunlar kadar elzem olduğunu göstermektedir. Nükleer mesele, ilişkilerde bu rolün kısıtlayıcı ve kolaylaştırıcı işlevlerini gösterirken kullanışlı bir örnek sunar. Aynı zamanda, köprü rolünün ve her ülkenin arada kalmışlığının öneminin; karar vermede, politikanın başka bir alanında sağlamadığı esnekliğin nasıl sağladığını göstermektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, bir HS/FPA analizi; kurum ve yapının Türkiye ve

İran'ın dış politikadaki kararlarında, bölgesel ve uluslararası aktörlerle kurulan etkileşimlerde esneklik sağlamanın ne kadar önemli bir rol oynadığına dair tartışmayı ön plana çıkarır.

Dördüncü olarak, yerel değerlendirmelerin HS/FPA analizi, hem İran hem de Türkiye'nin dış politikadaki kararlarının yalnızca yerel siyaset tarafından belirlenmediğini vurgulamaktadır. Aslında, bu iki ülke arasında ideolojik bir rekabet olmadığında veyahut yerel desteği artırmak için bir güç ortaya çıktığında, her iki ülke de birbirine karşı pragmatik bir yaklaşım geliştirebilir. Bunu ise şu şekilde gözlemlenebilir: AK Parti'nin nükleer meseleye yönelik, Suriye'ye uyguladığı türde, yerel bir baskıya sahip olmamasından ötürü bu durum ilişkilerde her iki ülkenin de çok daha pragmatik ve ılımlı bir yaklaşım sergilemesine olanak tanımaktadır. Yerel politik baskının eksikliği, nükleer meselede bu ülkelerin bir “arabulucu” statüsünde hareket etmeye kalkışmalarına sebebiyet verecek esnekliği sağlamaktadır. Arabuluculuk faaliyetleri başarısızlıkla sonuçlansa da bu sebepten ötürü, asgari oranda yerel yansımalar oluşmuştur. Böylece, dış politikalarındaki bu esneklik alanları, Türkiye – İran ilişkilerinde işbirliğini mümkün kılar. Bu da; Türkiye ve İran'ın diğer meselelerde son derece karşıt bir tutum sergilerken, nasıl ekonomik ve güvenlik ilişkilerini kolaylaştırdıklarını açıklamaktadır.

Türkiye'nin, dış politikada karar verme mekanizmasını polemiğe, güç zehirlenmesine ve siyasi takdir yetkisinin isteklerine bırakarak bu mekanizmaya dayalı kurumsal temeli etkin bir biçimde baltalamasından ötürü, aslında kendi yaklaşımını belirlerken Suriye'ye mecbur kaldığı görülebilir. AK Parti hükümeti kendi mevkisini kurumsal gücün tek kaynağı olarak güçlendirmeye çalışırken şimdi ise dış politika, yerel siyasetin devamı hâline gelmiş ve siyasallaşmıştır. Bu durum; süreci, Suriye çatışmasında Türkiye'nin İran ile bir orta yol bulmasını güçleştirecek bir noktaya getirmiştir. Bir uzlaşmanın sağlanması hâlinde, söz konusu uzlaşma AK Parti hükümeti için yerel anlamda son derece pahalıya patlayabilir. Türkiye, başarısızlığa uğramış dış politikasını savunmak için devamlı polemikleri ve ideolojiyi kullanarak başarılı bir politikaya dayalı kurumsal yapıyı temelinden sarstığı için kendi seçenekleri Suriye'de kısıtlıdır.

Arap Baharı'nda ve Suriye'de Türkiye'nin benimsediği dış politikanın aksine, İran nükleer meselesi siyasallaşmamıştır. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye; nükleer meselede maruz kaldığı baskılarla, İran'la diğer jeopolitik meselelere ilişkin çözümler ararken karşılaşmamıştır. Türkiye halkı, AK Parti hükümetinin bir nükleer anlaşma hazırlayıp hazırlamadığına dikkat etmemiştir ve Tahran Bildirisi 2010 yılında başarısız olduğunda, bunun yerel olarak bir yansıması oluşmamıştır. İdeolojik rekabet gücü olmadan ve geriye devlet hâkimiyetinde devlet-toplum ilişkisi kalmaksızın, Türkiye ve İran arasındaki ilişkiler pragmatik sürdürülmektedir. Bu sebepten ötürü, yerel değerlendirmelerin eksikliği, enerji kaynaklarını artırmada ve ticari ilişkileri geliştirmede İran ile ekonomik olarak yakın ilişkiler kurmak için daha geniş çapta bir yetenek gerektirmektedir. İran nükleer anlaşması; yerel baskının olmadığı alanlarda, Türkiye – İran ilişkilerinin pragmatik olarak ve birbiriyle çelişmeyen bir şekilde sürdürülebileceğini göstermektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, Türkiye'deki karar verici mekanizmanın nükleer mesele konusunda ve olaylarda söz sahibi olmada gösterilen müteakip başarısızlık karşısında benimsenen yaklaşımda ılımlı ve sessiz bir müdahalede bulunduklarını göstermektedir.

Ruhani'nin seçilmesi ve İran'ı uluslararası camiaya yeniden kazandırma yaklaşımı, daha ziyade rejimin yapısını ve çıkarlarını korumaya yöneliktir. Ruhani, dışlanmış bir aktör değil, hâlâ elit kesimin üyesi olan bir vaizdir. Çıkarlar ve rejimin devamlılığı tehdit ve tehlike altında olduğu için yapı, İran'ın nükleer söyleminin daha uzlaşmacı bir tutuma bürünmesinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu durum, İran elitlerinin statükoyu muhafaza etmek için başvurdukları esnekliği göstermektedir. Hizipleşmiş elitler arasında neyin “milli çıkarlar” için en uygun olduğuna dayalı dış politikada bir anlaşmazlık yaşanmamıştır. Buna rağmen, hiziplerin “milli çıkarlar” adına oluşturdukları en iyi yolun ne olacağı üzerinde varlıkları uzlaşma sayesinde İran'daki otoriter rejimin direnci zarar görmeden kurtulmuştur. Böylece yapı ve rejimin meşruiyeti sağlama alınmıştır.

Son olarak, bölgeselin ve uluslararasıının kesişme noktası Türkiye ve İran arasındaki muhtemel kısıtlayıcı ilişkilerde büyük bir rol oynamaktadır. ABD ve Rusya'nın

Suriye Krizi'ne katılımıyla birlikte, Türkiye ve İran'ın anlaşmazlıklarında uzlaşma sağlamayı güçleştiren ideolojik rekabetin başka bir boyutu da bulunmaktadır. Türkiye, Suriye'deki politikalarında İran ve Rusya ile yakınsama oluşturmak için gayret göstermiştir. Buna rağmen, Körfez'deki çok boyutlu bağlantıları –özellikle Suudi Arabistan'la olan ilişkileri- gösteriyor ki bu gayret, Suriye Krizi'ni meydana getiren Sünni-Şii ayrımı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda bölgesel olarak bu ayrıma uygun yorumlanmaya devam edecektir. Türkiye'nin İran'daki mezhep algısını bastırmaya yönelik çalışmaları, 2016 yılında Türk Hava Kuvvetleri tarafından gerçekleştirilen Fırat Kalkanı Harekâtı ile Cerablus'a yapılan müdahale yüzünden çok daha zora girmiştir.

Hem Türkiye'nin hem de İran'ın Körfez ile olan ilişkileri –özellikle de Suudi Arabistan ile olan ilişkileri- iki ülkenin ne derece işbirliği yapabileceğine yönelik kısıtlama getirmiştir. İran – Suudi Arabistan arasındaki rekabet, Suriye'ye ve bölgenin daha geniş bir coğrafyasına hâkim olan çatışmayı mezhepçiliğe dayalı bir çatışma olarak ifade ettiği için ilişkileri daha karmaşık bir hâle getirip kısıtlamaktadır. İran ve Türkiye kendi ilişkilerini bu şekilde tanımlamazken Sünni-Şii anlatısı – maalesef ki- bölgedeki ilişkilerin tüm ülkeleri kapsayan kısmını oluşturmaktadır. Hiçbir devlet, Suriye'deki muhalif grupları desteklemeye devam ederken bu anlatının hâkimiyetine değinmemiştir. İran'ın Körfez Arap Ülkeleri İşbirliği Konseyi (GCC) üyeleriyle olan ilişkisi –her ne kadar pragmatik ve ekonomik sebeplere dayalı olsa da- hâlâ “mezhep müdahalesi” yapma ve “yayılmacı” olma ile itham edilir. GCC – İran ekonomik ilişkileri gelişme göstermiştir ancak güvensizlik devam etmektedir. İsrail'in bölgedeki rolü, Türkiye – İran ilişkilerinin nasıl yürütülebileceği konusunda hâlâ elzem bir unsur olarak görülmelidir. Dördüncü bölümde bahsedildiği üzere, AK Parti hükümeti İran'ın barışçıl amaçlarla nükleer teknoloji kullanımını hedeflemesine mutabıktır. Ancak Türkiye'nin İsrail ve ABD ile ilişkileri, İran'ın İsrail'e karşı takındığı sert tutumla uzlaşmaz bir zıtlık içindedir. Bu durum, Türkiye ve İran arasındaki işbirliği önünde daha büyük engeller çıkarmaktadır.

Rusya ve ABD'nin çatışmaya müdahalesi, Türkiye ve İran'ı ihtilafa düşürmeye devam edecek başka bir stratejik boyut ortaya koymuştur. Tüm çabalarına rağmen,

hem Türkiye hem de İran çatışmanın iki ayrı ucunda yer almaktadır. Türkiye'nin NATO'nun ve ABD'nin müttefiki olması, İran tarafından her zaman bir güvensizlik emaresi olarak görülecektir ve bu durum, tam işbirliğine dayalı ilişkiler kurmanın önünde ideolojik bir engel olarak kalacaktır. Türkiye, İran'ın nükleer çıkarlarına karşı dengeyi kurabileceği gerekli bir mekanizma veya yapıya sahip olmadığı için güvenlik ve savunma politikası gereği ABD ve NATO ile işbirliği yapmaya mecburdur. Bu durum, Türkiye – İran ilişkilerini ilerleyen aşamada sekteye uğratan İran – ABD ilişkisinin ihtilaflı yapısını da genişletmektedir. Türkiye'nin nükleer müzakerelerde başarılı bir şekilde yer alamaması bu meseleyi ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Bu tezin sonuçları, HS/FPA yaklaşımının Türk – İran ilişkileri çalışmalarına yeni bir boyut kazandırması açısından önemli olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuçlar; Türk – İran ilişkilerinin akademik söyleminde şu ana kadar çalışılmış ve tartışılmış jeostratejik, ideolojik ve ekonomik bakış açılarının ötesinde çok daha karmaşık bir resim ortaya koymaktadır. Bu, daha geniş bir söylem için Uluslararası İlişkiler ve Orta Doğu Çalışmalarında sıklıkla gözden kaçırılan unsurları göz önünde bulundurarak devletlerarası ilişkilerin analizine başka bir katman ve tüm detaylarıyla sağlam bir kuramsal yaklaşım geliştirmek demektir. Bu tezin sonuçlarında gördüğümüz üzere, bir HS/FPA çerçevesi sadece orijinal bulguları ortaya çıkarmamakta, aynı zamanda mevcut akademik söylemde karmaşıklığın ek bir katmanını oluşturmaktadır.

İlk olarak, bu çerçeveyi kullanmak; akademisyenleri Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplininde yaygın görülen tamamen devlet bazlı yaklaşımdan saptıracak alternatif bir yol sunmaktadır. İkinci olarak; tarihsel, yerel, bölgesel ve uluslararası etkileşimleri aracılığıyla dış politikanın tarihsel sosyolojik unsurlarının incelenmesi, Orta Doğu'daki karmaşık ilişkilerin çok daha öz bir analizini sunmaktadır. Üçüncü olarak, HS/FPA dış politikanın karmaşıklığına bir eklemede bulunurken, analizlerinde akademisyenler için daha kapsamlı bir resim ortaya koyarak ilişkinin inceliklerinin “nedenini” ve “nasılını” açıklayabilmektedir. Bu çerçeve mevcut akademi literatürünün yerine geçmeyi veya analizlerin aksini ispat etmeyi amaçlamaz. Bu çerçeveye başvurulurken hedeflenen, Türkiye – İran ilişkilerinin analizine çok daha derin seviyede bir anlayış getirmektir. Bu araştırmanın amacı;

HS/FPA'nın dıř politikada uygulanabilir olduėunu g stermek ve bu uygulamayla, Ortadoėu'da devletlerarası iliřkilerin daha karmařık bir anlayıřa sahip olduėunu g stermektir. Bu tezin bulgularının, Orta Doėu'nun daha geniř bir coėrafyasındaki  eřitli dıř politika akt rleri  zerinde yapılacak diėer arařtırmalara ıřık tutması ama lanmaktadır. Aynı zamanda bu tez ile se ilen yaklařımın, Orta Doėu karmařasında yapılacak arařtırmalar i in Uluslararası İliřkiler ve Orta Doėu  alıřmaları arasında bir k pr  oluřturacaėı varsayılmaktadır.

APPENDIX B: THESIS PHOTOCOPY PERMISSION FORM/TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN 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 : MacGillivray
Adı : Iain William
Bölümü : Orta Doğu Araştırmaları

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce): Turkish-Iranian Relations in the Post-Arab Spring
Period: A Historical Sociological/Foreign Policy Analysis

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: