

**Project Title:**

Turkey's Foreign Policy Roles: An Empirical Approach

Abstract

Role theory, borrowed from sociology literature, has been used in foreign policy analysis studies since the early 1970s. In his seminal article, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy", K.J. Holsti (1970) founded this part of the foreign policy analysis (FPA) literature. Following Holsti, scholars have produced various works on different countries' role conceptions and these roles' effects on foreign policy. This project aims to build on this literature and find out what roles Turkey has produced and advocated for itself in the last decades, analyze sources of these roles and the attitudes of the foreign policy elite as well as the public opinion on these roles. Despite role theory's success in the analysis of foreign policy and application to many countries, no study focusing empirically on Turkish foreign policy roles has been found in a preliminary literature review. This vacuum in the Turkish foreign policy literature will be filled with execution of this project.

Many roles have been employed by Turkish foreign policy makers since the foundation of the Republic in 1923. Since 1980s, TFP has taken a more active stance and leaders in the past three decades pursued rather similar foreign policies despite nuances. Since 2002, in the Justice and Development Part (AKP) era, TFP seems to be more active, focusing on regions surrounding Turkey and claims leadership in the MENA. In this context many roles, such as, 'bridge', 'bridge between the East and the West', 'bridge between Islam and Christianity', 'central country', 'regional leader', 'rising power', 'mediator', 'facilitator', 'protector of the oppressed', 'protector of Muslims'; 'leader of the Muslim world', 'independent power' are used to describe Turkey's roles in the international system.

The proposed project with a duration of 24 months will be implemented by a project team which is composed of the project coordinator Assoc. Prof. Dr. Özgür Özdamar, two graduate students from Bilkent University and two consultants (Prof. Dr. Mustafa Aydın, the Rector of Kadir Has University and Prof. Dr. Bülent Aras, the president of the Center for Strategic Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The project has two parts. In the first part by using content analysis of top decision makers' speeches and semi-structured elite-interviews, Turkish foreign policy elite's attitudes about different roles will be analyzed. Using semi-structured interview techniques, about fifty TFP decision-makers, opinion formers and civil society representatives will be interviewed. In the second part, a professional survey firm will be hired to measure attitudes of Turkish public opinion on Turkey's foreign policy roles. The dependent variable is the attitudes of Turkish public on Turkey's different foreign policy roles. Following the qualitative and quantitative data collection, a comparison of attitudes towards foreign policy roles at public and elite levels will be discussed and role prescriptions will be drawn for Turkey. Such a study will test traditional attitudes about TFP roles and whether they are accepted at the public level. In TFP literature, studies that attempts to combine strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods are rare. In this sense, this project makes an important contribution to the literature. Also, mapping the Turkish foreign policy roles may help policy-makers in Turkey as well as the world. Therefore this study also has a potential to produce strategic inputs for policy-makers. Also, foreign policy-making in the world is increasingly democratized and influenced by public's choices. In this sense the project will benefit the society since it will survey public opinion on foreign policy roles of Turkey.

Keywords: Turkish foreign policy, role theory, foreign policy roles, national role conceptions, elite, public opinion, central country, regional leader, bridge country, independent power.