

aggressive stance and readiness for military action in multiple spheres.

Is Turkey's militaristic foreign policy sustainable?

Ankara's recent foreign policy choices were prompted by the coup attempt, which not only provided justification for the necessity of an increased militarism beyond national borders, but also placed foreign policy choices in the hands of narrow interests. A full understanding of these choices would, however, be incomplete without taking into account the changes in the defense industry since 1980s. The sustainability of Turkey's hard power approach in the medium-to-long term is highly questionable, however, given the limitations that domestic factors also can pose. The rapid weakening of state institutions since the coup attempt, Erdoğan's growing legitimacy crisis in the aftermath of the 2019 municipal elections, the fragility of intra-state alliances, and last, but not least, a growing economic crisis – one that COVID-19 is already exacerbating – risk a clash between aspirations and realities.

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UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL ISLAMISTS' FOREIGN POLICY RHETORIC IN THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE: A TURKISH OPERATIONAL CODE ANALYSIS APPROACH

By Sercan Canbolat

In January 2009, then-Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stormed out of a panel at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "I will never come back to Davos after this," he uttered in protest after sparring with Israeli President Shimon Peres. He kept his promise: Erdogan has not partaken in the forum since 2009. As Lisel Hintz notes, after the Davos

incident, many Muslim and Arab audiences in addition to his domestic supporters referred to Erdogan as the "conqueror of Davos," and increasingly viewed him as both a powerful regional leader and a protector of the Muslim world.¹⁸

Individual leaders have played an outsized role in Turkish politics. From the founding fathers like presidents Kemal Ataturk and Ismet Inonu to military general Kenan Evren to modern Islamist leaders such as Ahmet Davutoglu and Erdogan, Turkish politics is dominated by high-profile personalities. As powerful as individual-level factors can be, my research demonstrates that they are conditioned by audience effects. In my research, I focus on how foreign policy rhetoric by Turkey's Islamist leaders is conditioned by audience type: domestic vs. international. Such bifurcation allows a specification of the effects of audience on rhetoric, while providing insight into otherwise puzzling divergences in positions articulated by Justice and Development Party (AKP) leaders.¹⁹

This short essay draws on an at-a-distance analysis of the speeches Erdogan and former prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu gave in Turkey (in Turkish) and abroad (in English), I demonstrate that 1) leaders alter their foreign policy profile and political beliefs depending on the type of their audience; and 2) idiosyncrasies of individual leaders make more difference than any overarching Islamist political ideology. While the 'automation turn' in political psychology has addressed many challenges associated with the study of political leaders from a distance, such as the paucity and low quality of text corpora as data,²⁰ automated at-a-distance analysis of verbal statements of political leaders to create leadership profiles has remained largely confined to English-language texts.²¹ To overcome this limitation, I employ a novel Turkish operational code analysis (TOCA) scheme, which is compatible with the Profiler Plus software and operational code analysis research program in the field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA).

The remainder of this essay consists of three parts. First, I explain TOCA and underscore its

added value in the study of leaders and foreign policy decision-making in MENA. Second, I account for the need for, and significance of, factoring leader psychology in our understanding of Turkish politics and foreign policy. Lastly, I apply TOCA to illustrate how Turkish Islamists' sometimes confoundingly contradictory foreign policy rhetoric is contextually dependent on the nature of their audiences.

Profiling Leaders in Turkish: Introducing a New Tool

Since the introduction of automated coding schemes for leadership profiling in 1998, FPA research using leadership trait analysis (LTA) and operational code analysis (OCA) has made great advances with an increasing volume of research from seven publications in 1998²² to ninety-nine publications in 2019.²³ The diminished coding costs of using automated coding schemes for LTA and OCA—which run on Profiler Plus²⁴ and profilerplus.org—and advancements in the reliability and comparability of speech data played a major role in the development of leadership studies within the field of FPA.²⁵ Nevertheless, this automatization process, which rests on the analysis of verbal statements of leaders to create leadership profiles, has remained largely constrained in terms of language of text as data because the coding schemes can only process English-language texts. By confining both the quality and quantity of available data, language-boundedness of the automatization efforts has hampered the application of automated leadership profiling techniques beyond the Anglosphere.

Such limitations also militate against the scope of FPA research because most people in the world do not speak English as their first language. According to Ethnologue's projections, only 378 million of approximately 7.5 billion people speak English as their first language making up only five percent of the world population.²⁶ The problem for automated leadership assessment tools and FPA in general is that many texts are not available in English. Neither machine translation applications, e.g., Google Translate, nor human translation offer a suitable solution, because of issues that render machine translation substandard and the

cost of high-quality human translation exorbitant.

My colleagues and I recently developed a novel Turkish coding scheme for leadership analysis, called TOCA, to contribute to efforts in addressing the afore-mentioned void in Turkish studies.²⁷ TOCA allows future researchers to address novel empirical questions and to revisit established insights using a more rigorous and contextualized methodology. The TOCA provides a handy and pertinent tool to address the following research questions, which prove perennial in scholarly discussions of Turkey: 1) How do Turkish leaders' idiosyncratic political beliefs influence their decision-making? 2) How do beliefs of Turkey's secular leaders differ from those of political Islamists? 3) How do political beliefs of key decision-makers influence certain high-stakes Turkish foreign policy decisions such as the Cyprus issue, the second Gulf war, Syrian civil war, and the Kurdish issue?

There are three main utilities of TOCA and non-English coding schemes in general:²⁸ 1) TOCA augments the size of Turkish text as data on which leadership profiles can be constructed; 2) TOCA is instrumental in generating more precise and contextualized profiles of Turkish leaders because they are predicated on leaders' words in their native tongue; and 3) non-English coding schemes expand the scholarship on political leadership beyond the Anglo-North American core and contribute to the efforts in decentering the FPA and, by extension, the International Relations (IR) field.

Contributions of Leader Psychology in Understanding Turkish Politics

Since the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923, most Turkish political leaders have come to power with a lofty vision. For instance, while Bulent Ecevit wanted to see a Turkey "where humanistic values had preeminence," Suleyman Demirel sought to "create a Great Turkey." Personalized tug-of-war between certain Turkish leaders, such as the Bulent Ecevit-Suleyman Demirel and Tansu Ciller-Mesut Yilmaz rivalries, has had far-reaching effects on the country. Heper

and Sayari note that Turkish politics has always been “a stage for leader-based politics,” as the Islamic tradition exalts the role of a strong and charismatic leader in maintaining order, enables personalities to shape domestic politics and foreign policy.²⁹ Kesgin argues that individual leaders, prime ministers, and now presidents have enjoyed both legal powers defined by the Turkish constitution and informal powers derived from their personality and charisma.³⁰ By focusing on certain decision-makers and their leadership traits in media coverage and framing of politics, the Turkish media also plays a key role in personalizing politics.³¹

The audience factor has become ever more rampant in populist and polarized political systems, with Turkey being one of the primary cases of this phenomenon.³² While the audience effect impinges upon Turkish leaders’ rhetoric in general, the effect may be more pronounced in the foreign policy realm due to its double-sided audience, that is domestic vs. international. For example, Erdogan’s foreign policy speeches in Turkish have been the most vitriolic and belligerent during critical electoral cycles such as the 2015 and 2018 general elections and the 2017 constitutional referendum. TOCA allows us to contrast leaders’ political beliefs when they deliver speeches in their native Turkish language at home with those delivered in English abroad in the same temporal domain.

Table 1 below depicts Davutoglu and Erdogan’s contrasting political belief scores conditioned by the audience effect, which are also compared to world and rogue leadership norming groups. First, Davutoglu’s political beliefs are akin to those of average world leaders when he addresses domestic audiences, but his speeches in English exhibit a regression in all of his beliefs placing his profile between mainstream and rogue leadership norming samples. While the decline is evident in all three beliefs, his *perception of control* score fell almost by half in his foreign policy speeches abroad. Unlike Erdogan, Davutoglu has a command of English and chose to speak in English when he was before foreign audiences instead of seeking translation help.

Second, Erdogan’s foreign policy profile abroad is like an average world leader as his three belief scores point to a more cooperative leadership in unison. His *nature of political universe* and *strategic direction belief* scores featuring his speeches in English are even higher than those of the average world leader. However, when he addresses domestic audience in Turkish, Erdogan views *political universe* and others in more negative terms and he is inclined to employ more aggressive strategies to accomplish foreign policy goals. In his domestic speeches, furthermore, Erdogan attributes more control to himself in managing foreign policy events vis-à-vis others. On the eve of most elections, Erdogan embraced hawkish foreign policy themes in his campaign speeches such as threatening the Syrian government and Kurds with military operations, but those themes are more pronounced in his domestic speeches in Turkish than in those targeting Western and Arab Spring-struck countries.³³ Erdogan’s following words back in 2012 as the Turkish premier are illustrative: “İnşallah biz en kısa zamanda Şam’a gidecek, Emevi Camii’nde namazımızı da kılacağız.” (God willing, we will go to Damascus very soon, and will pray in the Umayyad mosque, too).³⁴

Table 1. Davutoglu and Erdogan’s master belief scores in English (E) and Turkish (T) materials compared to norming groups on state leaders³⁵

	Rogue Leader Average	World Leader Average	Davutoglu (E)	Davutoglu (T)	Erdogan (E)	Erdogan (T)
Nature of Political Universe	0.151	0.301	0.225	0.315	0.331	0.201
Strategic Direction	0.25	0.401	0.321	0.401	0.425	0.281
Perception of Control	0.18	0.224	0.188	0.374	0.207	0.302
Speech N	52	164	30	30	40	40
Years			2014-2016	2014-2016	2016-2019	2016-2019

Source: Own depiction.³⁶

While they hail from the same ideology and political party lines, the stark differences between Erdogan and Davutoglu conditioned by the audience type are notable. Table 1 above shows that while addressing domestic audiences,

Erdogan employs harsher and more hawkish foreign policy rhetoric toward other countries. Yet, Erdogan switches to a much softer tone when he addresses foreign audiences in the same time frame and about the same topic. By contrast, Davutoglu's speeches at home in Turkish are more dovish, while those in English have a more conflictual tone. Consistent with the results above, President Erdogan uses self-effacing language about himself populated by modest utterances such as "Kardeslerim, bu fakir hiçbir zaman Sultan olma gayretinde olmadı." (My brothers, this destitute person (I) never tried to become a Sultan).³⁷ As Cagaptay notices, the findings give further credence to "the effects of populism and audience" on Turkish leaders' foreign policy rhetoric.³⁸

The results lend support to the argument that there is no single monolith political Islamist leadership in foreign policy and individual leaders sometimes matter more than a presumed ideology of the ruling elite. This preliminary research also indicates the necessity and utility of factoring the audience effect in the study of political leaders and foreign policy. A quantitative content analysis of Erdogan and Davutoglu's statements delivered in Turkey and abroad also suggests that political leaders are adept at projecting contrasting leadership profiles depending on their main audience. As Kesgin cautions, while the variability of personality traits can be a personality trait itself, further research is warranted to evaluate the validity of such argument.³⁹

The preliminary findings from Erdogan and Davutoglu's speeches before domestic and foreign audiences suggest this would be a fruitful line of research and contribute to our understanding of political leaders and their foreign policy decisions. In that sense, TOCA should be considered as a stepping-stone to opening novel research avenues in leadership studies and non-Western FPA. Specifically, future students of Turkish politics and foreign policy might work on such potentially statistically significant differences between English and Turkish text corpora and help disentangle the relationship between populism, audience effects, and decision-making in Turkish studies.

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TURKEY'S PHANTOM COALITION: THE AKP-MHP PARTNERSHIP AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

By Sibel Oktay

The June 2015 parliamentary election was nothing short of a watershed moment for Turkish politics. The incumbent Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since its ascent to power in 2002. Surprising many, the defeat quickly brought back talks of an old tradition that had shaped the country's politics for decades preceding AKP: coalition governments. Today, many consider the recent alignment between the AKP and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) a governing coalition; however, evidence from Turkish foreign policy shows that this is not an accurate description..

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's disdain for coalition politics is well known. "We know that Turkey loses under coalition rule," he said in the wake of his party's electoral loss as he alluded to the unstable and short-lived string of coalition governments throughout the 1990s. "Coalition is not a project," Erdogan warned, "it is a nightmare."⁴⁰ Further to the AKP's right on the political spectrum, the MHP was similarly unenthusiastic about the possibility of governing together with the AKP. That same night, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli signaled firmly that they would rather have an early election than participate in a coalition with the AKP.⁴¹ Little did Bahçeli know that in the November election later that year his party would first be decimated in the parliament and then eventually splintered, and that a partnership with the AKP would save his party's fortunes.

The AKP-MHP partnership has become the new status quo in Turkish politics since then. In 2017,

Endnotes

Cammett and Kendall Notes

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- ⁱⁱⁱ Articles coded as "multi-country" are those covering 2 to 3 countries; articles coded as "regional" focus on the MENA as a whole or a sub-region, such as the Gulf, the Levant, and North Africa.

Hintz Notes

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³² See, for example, Oksan Bayulgen, Ekim Arbatli and Sercan Canbolat. "Elite Survival Strategies and Authoritarian Reversal in Turkey." *Polity* 50, no. 3 (2018): 333-365 and Baris Kesgin, "Turkey's Erdogan: Leadership Style and Foreign Policy Audiences." *Turkish Studies* 21, no. 1 (2020): 56-82.

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³⁵ The norming sample scores on rogue and average world leaders are courtesy of Stephen Benedict Dyson (personal

communication, May 6, 2018) and Akan Malici (personal communication, April 5, 2018).

³⁶ For the operationalization of variables used in this research, see the following: 1) Nature of Political Universe (P-1) Index: % Positive Other Attributions minus % Negative Other Attributions. Varying from -1 (the most conflictual) to +1 (the most cooperative); 2) Strategic Direction (I-1) Index = % Positive Self Attributions minus % Negative Self Attributions. Varying from -1 (the most belligerent) to +1 (the most cooperative); 3) Perception of Control (P-4) Index: Self Attributions divided by [Self Attributions plus Other Attributions]. Varying from 0 (the least self-control) to 1 (the most self-control). Source: Stephen G. Walker, Mark Schafer, and Michael D. Young, "Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis: Measuring and Modeling Jimmy Carter's Operational Code." *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998): 175-189.

³⁷ English translation my own. For Turkish-language media coverage of this speech, see: *Hürriyet Daily News* "Erdogan: Bu fakir hiçbir zaman sultan olmanın gayretinde olmadı" available at <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/erdogan-bu-fakir-hicbir-zaman-sultan-olmanin-gayretinde-olmadi> (accessed 03/20/2020).

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