



Republican People's Party
Research and Policy Development Department
Foreign Relations And Organizations Abroad

POLICY BRIEF

The AKP's Middle East Policy: "No Peace at Home, nor in the World"

Summary

The AKP's Middle East Policies

The AKP government considers the Middle East as a part of the Ottoman realm and history and views the region as Turkey's backyard. The AKP has reflected its polarising, offensive and aggressive attitude in domestic politics on foreign affairs. Regarding conflicting issues the AKP government has openly backed certain groups and governments in the region. Turkey's policy of respecting their neighbours' territorial integrity, which had been pursued until the AKP rule, was pushed aside for both Syria and Iraq. The negative results of the AKP's irresponsible Middle East policies now threaten Turkish citizens' safety and welfare.

The CHP's Middle East Vision

The CHP's approach to the Middle East is primarily determined by its basic values and principles of stability, peace and welfare in the region and throughout the world. CHP believes in making efforts to reinforce regional cooperation and seek resolutions via political and diplomatic channels. Turkey should be respectful towards all national, ethnic and religious diversity in the region and stand at an equal distance to all. The CHP is determined to return Turkey back to a credible, reliable and problem-solving model country.

Due to poorly adopted policies and miscalculations made by the AKP, Turkey has turned into an incompetent country that cannot implement its foreign policies and achieve its goals. During the AKP's rule, Turkey has become a country which is not taken seriously regionally or globally, excluded from international processes and even perceived as a threat by some of its neighbours. Concepts used by the AKP such as "order building", "Neo-Ottomanism" and "strategic depth" have not fared well with the historical and cultural characteristics of the region. The AKP aspired to be a regional leader through these erroneous policies but now flounders in worthless and dangerous solitude.

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Bill for Adventurism Paid By Citizens

Due to the AKP's foreign policy, Turkey's diplomatic relations with Syria, Egypt and Israel have been severed and, as a consequence, Turkey does not have ambassadors in three important capital cities. We are going through a tense and

unstable period in our relations with Iraq and Iran. The Iraqi government openly states its feeling of discomfort with regard to the AKP government's meddling in Iraq's internal affairs. In addition, Turkey has lost its role as an intermediary or facilitator in relations between Iran and the West. Our relations with the countries of North Africa are not even mentioned. Thousands protested Erdoğan in Tunisia, proclaiming their solidarity with Gezi.



Suicide Attack in Damascus

The AKP government has adopted an aggressive approach against Syria and can no longer cope with the negative reflections of the war on our country. The AKP has also caused the burgeoning of Al Qaeda and several radical organisations in Syria and has made the country a meeting and battle site for these organisations. Recently, The Islamic State in Iraq and the Syria (ISIS), a terrorist organization, took control of Iraqi cities of Mosul, Tikrit, Samarra and Tal Afar. Turkish consulate in Mosul was seized and many Turkish citizens together with the consulate were being held hostage by the organization. ISIS, previously kidnapped and held for

ransom more than 30 Turkish truck drivers working in Iraq and consolidates its military power. Consequently, it has led the region into great chaos. Today, Turkey is accused of sponsoring terrorism by both the Syrian regime and some of the opposition groups. Turkey cannot distance itself from Syria completely, nor can it initiate further steps in this matter. Turkey now remains ineffective in efforts to find a political solution for the war in Syria and during Middle East peace talks.

Starting out with the claim of “zero problem with neighbours”, the AKP government brought Turkey to the verge of a probable war. The tension on the Syrian border increased substantially after a Syrian warplane was shot down by Turkish forces. The AKP does not refrain from dragging the country to war in an effort to cover up the corruption claims involving the Prime Minister and four Ministers of the government. AKP’s “enthusiasm” for waging war is evident in disclosed audio recordings. Even an assault by Turkey against the Tomb of Suleyman Shah, a sovereign territory of Turkey in Syria, was offered by top state officials “as an option” in order to produce a pretext for war. It has thus become evident that the AKP will not refrain from putting Turkish citizens’ lives on the line in order to create “grounds” for war.

The negative results of the AKP’s irresponsible Middle East policies now threaten Turkish citizens’ safety and welfare.

Moreover, Turkey’s trade operations in the Middle East have slowed down and investments in the region have come to a stop. The Prime Minister, who once had encouraged the business world to invest in Egypt, severed ties with Egypt. Fresh fruit-vegetable export from Turkey to the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia can only be performed via Israel and this is done with difficulty. Many companies conducting trade operations in the region have been sequestered because of the vehicles procured.

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The Turkish passport has become the least reliable passport in the Middle East. The region has turned into an area where our citizens cannot travel safely and have no personal security. Turkish journalists have difficulty operating in the region; several reporters are imprisoned in Egypt and academicians have cancelled their work and research in the area. Our pilots have been kidnapped. Our citizens feel great discomfort of the increasing number of incoming refugees, bombings, our planes being shot down and billions of dollars spent by the government to sponsor the Syrian opposition. Polls clearly indicate that the public do not support the AKP government’s Syria policy.

Why has the AKP's foreign policy management become the worst in the history of our republic? What led the AKP's Middle East policy to be a complete failure?

The AKP failed to impose its views and policies on the Middle East countries and has headed towards a foreign policy that is one-sided, imperious, and that even favoured use of military force.

The AKP's Adventurist Middle East Policy

Firstly, the AKP government considers the Middle East as a part of the Ottoman realm and history through a two hundred years old perspective and views the region as Turkey's backyard. As a continuation of this outlook, the government has overlooked neighbouring countries and attempted to mentor them. The AKP failed to impose its views and policies on the Middle East countries and has headed towards a foreign policy that is one-sided, imperious, and that even favoured use of military force.

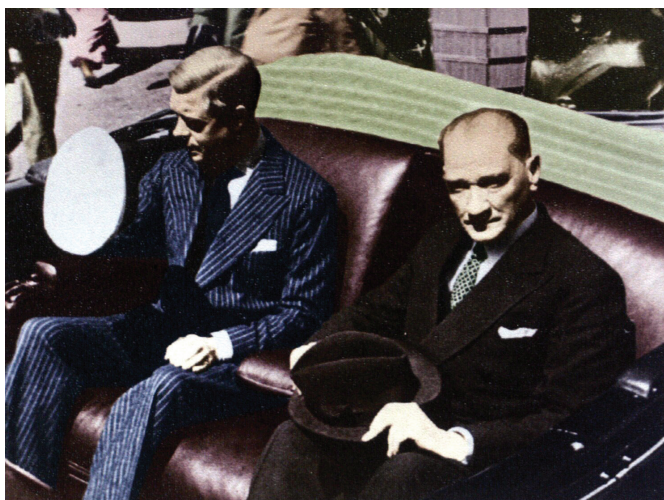
Secondly, the AKP has reflected its polarising, offensive and aggressive attitude in domestic politics on foreign affairs. The allies of the AKP government, who based its foreign policy on religious and denominational discrepancies, in the region are the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Al Qaeda-related radical groups in Syria and Omar Al Bashir, the President of Sudan, who is openly accused of crimes against

humanity by the International Criminal Court and for whom an arrest warrant was issued. However, the AKP government has failed to see that competition with actors such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Al Qaeda, which possess more powerful weapons in religious-related areas is bound to end in naught. The religious and denomination-oriented foreign policy has made Turkey a part of a schism and has induced clashes among these elements. Turkey is now perceived in the region as a "partial power". The AKP's approach has led to an increase in inter-denominational polarisation, has led to increased tension in the Middle East and has promoted the use of violence.

Thirdly, the AKP government has openly backed certain groups and governments, considering that "they are going to succeed." The governments supported by the AKP have failed to fulfil their promises of bringing peace, welfare, stability and democracy to their countries. Their territories have fallen into an environment of tension, fighting and violence within a short period of time. Consequently, the political powers and governments supported by the AKP are no longer trusted regionally or globally.

Fourthly, Turkey's policy of respecting their neighbours' territorial integrity, which had been pursued until the AKP rule, was pushed aside for both Syria and Iraq. The AKP attempted regime change in neighbouring countries and has tried to impose its model on them. Behind

this approach lies “Neo-Ottomanism”, an outlook that draws negative reaction particularly from the Arab world. The AKP claims that it pursues the best foreign policy based on the fact that its knowledge of the Middle East is superior to anyone else’s due to Ottoman heritage; however, the AKP has made numerous mistakes and miscalculations in its foreign policy. The AKP government has presumed that history alone was sufficient for a successful foreign policy and has failed to realise that it is crucial to get to know new actors, political groups and social segments in the region. The AKP deemed that meddling with internal affairs of countries in the region as bait setting, but it rose to its own bait in each instance, particularly due to the aforementioned reasons.



Atatürk and King Edward VIII

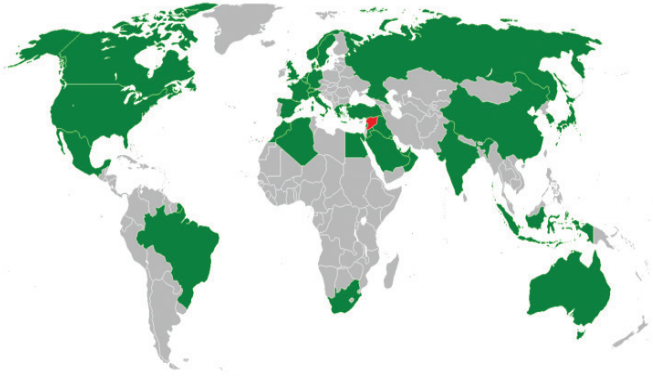
Finally, the AKP government has failed to develop an approach for embracing all political parties and social segments in the Middle East and to initiate transformation towards democratisation. This is due to

the fact that the AKP could not adequately grasp the importance of democratisation in the region for enhancing Turkey’s activity before both the West and the countries in the region. While the AKP should have made efforts to strengthen democracy at home, it contrarily condemned itself to the bottom of all international indicators (e.g., rule of law, human rights, fundamental liberties, gender equality). The AKP’s Turkey, where the separation of powers principle is suffering with each and every passing day and where democracy is on the decline, has lost its prestige and credibility in the Arab countries. The AKP regime that has been becoming more authoritarian with regard to internal affairs could not pose as a model for its neighbours. It has lost its reliability and weight in the region and in the world. Consequently, both Turkey and the region have become losing parties.

Stability-Oriented Middle East Policies

The CHP has been advocating that all political and diplomatic means should be employed in order to end the war in Syria and any external intervention should be avoided. The CHP has advised the government against meddling in Syria’s internal affairs and being partial in schisms and clashes, but also to maintain equal relations with the relevant parties. For the resolution of the problem, the CHP proposed the organisation of an international conference under the guidance of Turkey, annihilation of chemical weapons and a call for a ceasefire. The CHP’s proposals and initiatives, which

were ignored by the government, now have been adopted by the international community as the means for a resolution. The most concrete example of this is the Geneva II Conference, proposed and supported by the CHP, which was held in Switzerland to bring peace to Syria.



Countries attended Geneva Conference

In addition, the CHP has been a proponent of maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity and political independence. It advocates establishing amiable relations with all groups and regions in Iraq, regardless of religion, denomination or ethnic background. It supports utilisation of underground resources for the benefit of the country, all of this in line with the legal principles that were agreed on for stability in Iraq.

The CHP also affirms Iran's utilisation of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but rejects nuclear weapons development. The CHP argues that Iran, as a respected member of the international community, should be in trust-based relations with countries in the region. The CHP believes

that this would contribute to stability not only in Turkey and within the region, but also in the world.

Turkey should reassume its place as an impartial and reliable country in the Middle East peace process and during peace talks. Palestine and Israel should coexist in the region safely and peacefully with mutually recognised borders. The CHP is in solidarity with the Palestinian people and favours good relations with Israel. From the very beginning, the CHP has been advocating that Turkey should contribute to the democratic and libertarian movements in Arab countries. It has particularly emphasised that such contribution should involve internalisation of democracy, development of economic and commercial relations, strengthening of ties between non-governmental organisations and diversifying cooperation between universities and scientific institutions. It has been stressed that only through these means could contributions be beneficial and permanent.

The CHP's View on the Middle East

The CHP's approach to the Middle East is primarily determined by its basic values and principles. The CHP deems Atatürk's maxim, "Peace at home, peace in the world" as the assurance of stability, peace and welfare in the region and throughout the world. This approach requires giving precedence to protecting neighbouring countries' territorial integrity, political independence and sovereignty. Cooperation among

countries can only be developed by countries' legitimate institutions and circles' mutual request.



The White Palace where Saadabad Pact was signed

The AKP could not understand the Turkish model and failed the mission of bringing this model to the region. Pre-AKP governments tried to bring Turkey's multidimensional identity to the forefront of foreign affairs and the Middle East by emphasising our basic cultural sources such as Anatolia, Islam, Seljuk history, the Ottoman past and the West. The Turkish model is an authentic experience with its democracy, relations with the West, secularism and pluralism. Turkey's pluralism attracts a lot of attention in the Middle East.

Turkey is a key country in the elimination of inequalities between the northern and southern hemispheres and in the bringing together of different approaches among countries with different cultures on the east-west axis. The CHP is aware of Turkey's solid position in this respect and important responsibilities in the region. Economic and commercial relations among the countries in the region should be maximised. It

should be ensured that the people in the region benefit from their own economic resources, particularly energy. The CHP argues for a realist policy and a balanced "activism" in the Middle East. The CHP is a political party with sound views and consistent approaches that can establish new and different relationships in the Middle East.



Kılıçdaroğlu and Maliki

Turkey should make efforts to reinforce regional cooperation and seek resolutions via political and diplomatic channels. It should be ensured that efforts for resolution comply with legitimacy standards according to international law. It should be known that countries inclining towards using military force do not trust their democracy and diplomatic capacity.

The CHP emphasises that Turkey should refrain from being partial in conflicts between Arab countries or within an Arab country. Turkey should not be a country which manipulates the internal affairs of countries and incites inner conflicts.

Turkey should be respectful towards all national, ethnic and religious diversity in the region and stand at an equal distance to all. The principle of secularism, one that ensures equality among all faiths, should be adopted in foreign affairs as well as in justice and solidarity.

The imperious and aggressive attitude towards our neighbours in the Middle East should be abandoned and replaced by a constructive dialogue and good, permanent and sustainable relations.

The CHP is determined to return Turkey back to a credible, reliable and problem-solving model country. The imperious and aggressive attitude towards our neighbours in the Middle East should be abandoned and replaced by a constructive dialogue and good, permanent and sustainable relations. A consistent, serious and prudent approach constitutes the basis for the CHP's understanding of foreign policy. Law, legality and legitimacy should be prioritised in the resolution of

problems. Turkey should make efforts to consolidate stability, predictability and common interests in the Middle East. Turkey should also act as a facilitating and intermediating country which provides constructive contributions in the resolution of conflicts.

Turkey should support efforts for developing cooperation and communication between educational institutions and non-governmental organisations in order to popularise values of freedom and democracy in the region. Turkey should firstly ensure the internalisation of basic rights and liberties at home and work to achieve a strong economy to help improve welfare, advanced democracies and model societies in the Middle East. Institutions maintaining values such as social justice, participation, pluralism, rule of law and gender equality should be strengthened. Turkey should offer the model that it develops accordingly to the countries in the region, emphasising that Turkey is a country which works for the whole region's welfare and safety.

