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THE TRANSFORMATION OF NEO-OTTOMANISM UNDER JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (JDP) RULE IN TURKEY (2002–2022): THE CENTRAL ASIAN VECTOR

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Abstract. *Introduction.* The paper describes aspects of the transformation of neo-Ottomanism under Justice and Development Party (JDP) rule in Turkey (2002–2022), with a focus on the situation in Central Asia. *Methods and materials.* The article employs the case study method and examines the Central Asian vector of Turkish foreign policy from 2002 to 2022. *Analysis.* Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, filling the political power void in Central Asia has been one of Turkey’s key foreign policy interests. This interest was reinvigorated by the domestic political transformation in light of the accession of the Justice and Development Party in 2002. The neo-Ottomanism that formed the basis of JDP’s foreign policy, on the one hand, elaborated on the Ottomanism of the last century and, on the other hand, mirrored the changes in the political system of the country after 2013, such as the authoritarianization of the ruling regime and the rise of Islam as a tool for public support consolidation. *Results.* As a result, the conclusion was drawn that over the past twenty years, neo-Ottomanism has come to represent a broadly circumscribed liberal economic approach combined with an appeal not only to the common Ottoman past and pan-Turkic sentiments but also to the Muslim present. Meanwhile, Turkey’s cultural and religious rapprochement with the region is driven by its strategic economic interests, for which Central Asia is an integral component of Turkey’s new international role. Thus, Turkey’s policy towards Central Asian states reverberates the outcome of the transformation of the neo-Ottoman discourse as a product of the country’s changing domestic political landscape while shedding light on the strategic priorities it encompasses: becoming a regional hub and a proactive regional power. *Authors’ contributions.* T.V. Marmontova – preparation of the structure of the article, methodology, and review of literature, M.B. Zhiyenbayev – “Regionalization” of foreign policy of Turkey and the place of Central Asia in the pan-Turkic picture of the world, E.A. Vaseneva – assessment of the policy of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey in 2002–2022.

Key words: foreign policy of Turkey, neo-Ottomanism, Central Asia, pan-Turkism, Erdogan, Justice and Development Party.

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ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ ПОЛИТИКИ НЕООСМАНИЗМА В ГОДЫ ПРАВЛЕНИЯ ПАРТИИ СПРАВЕДЛИВОСТИ И РАЗВИТИЯ В ТУРЦИИ (2002–2022 гг.): ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОАЗИАТСКИЙ ВЕКТОР

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Статья освещает вопросы трансформации политики неоосманизма в период правления Партии справедливости и развития в Турции в период 2002–2022 гг., с упором на ситуацию в Центральной Азии. *Методы и материалы.* Статья опирается на метод *case study* и рассматривает центральноазиатский вектор турецкой внешней политики с 2002 по 2022 год. *Анализ.* С распадом Советского Союза заполнение вакуума политической власти в Центральной Азии называлось одним из ключевых внешнеполитических интересов Турции. С новой силой этот интерес возрос под влиянием внутриполитических трансформаций в стране, сопряженных с приходом к власти в 2002 г. Партии справедливости и развития. Легший в основу ее внешней политики неоосманизм, с одной стороны, развивал положения османизма, возникшие еще в прошлом столетии, а с другой – являлся зеркалом изменений политической системы страны после 2013 г., таких как авторитаризация правящего режима и усиление позиций ислама в общественной жизни как инструмента консолидации общественной поддержки ПСР. *Результаты.* По итогам анализа были сделаны выводы о том, что за прошедшие двадцать лет в свете внутриполитических трансформаций неоосманизм стал представлять широко очерченный либеральный экономический подход, сочетающийся с апелляцией не только к общему османскому прошлому и пантюркистским настроениям, но и к мусульманскому настоящему. При этом культурное и религиозное сближение Турции с регионом движется стратегическими экономическими интересами Анкары, для которой Центральная Азия – неотъемлемый компонент занятия ей новой роли на международной арене. Тем самым турецкая политика в отношении государств Центральной Азии в полной мере отражает результат трансформации неоосманистского дискурса как продукта изменений внутриполитической конъюнктуры страны, в то же время проливая свет на заключающиеся в нем стратегические приоритеты: превращение в региональный хаб и проактивную региональную державу. *Вклад авторов.* Т.В. Мармонтова – подготовка структуры статьи, методология и анализ литературы, М.Б. Жиенбаев – рассмотрение «регионализации» внешней политики Турции и места Центральной Азии в пантюркистской картине мира, Е.А. Васенёва – оценка политики Партии справедливости и развития в Турции в 2002–2022 годах.

Ключевые слова: внешняя политика Турции, неоосманизм, Центральная Азия, пантюркизм, Эрдоган, Партия справедливости и развития.

Цитирование. Мармонтова Т. В., Жиенбаев М. Б., Васенёва Е. А. Трансформация политики неоосманизма в годы правления Партии справедливости и развития в Турции (2002–2022 гг.): центральноазиатский вектор // Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета. Серия 4, История. Регионоведение. Международные отношения. – 2023. – Т. 28, № 3. – С. 178–186. – (На англ. яз.). – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2023.3.16>

Introduction. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of independent Turkic republics in 1991, Central Asia became a major direction in Turkish foreign policy. One of the tasks of the Justice and Development Party, whose leader, as you know, is the current head of

the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was to fill the power vacuum characteristic of the political situation in the newly independent states in Central Asia. The changes in the political situation in the region partly coincided with the internal transformations of the Turkish political

system, where the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) has been in power since 2002. This transformation at the junction of foreign and domestic policy became the basis for a gradual change in foreign policy behavior in the 2010s, which became increasingly proactive, anti-western, and multilateral [20, p. 3052; 23].

Having won the December 2002 elections, the AKP combined economic liberalism with political conservatism, in which Islam played a key role. The party's approach represented a new, intermediate option between Kemalist secularism and Islamism. As L. Gontingio emphasizes, the AKP "used Islam as a means to consolidate support and also relied on nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire to rebuild the national identity of the country" [16, pp. 6-9] having achieved, as a result, an increase in the country's position in the international arena. The party itself is the last and most successful organization of the Islamist Movement of the national outlook (Milli Görüş Hareketi, MGH), which determines its predisposition to appeal not only to common ethno-national but also religious grounds [32, p. 1815].

Traditionally, the neo-Ottoman rhetoric of the AKP emphasized the common cultural heritage, Islamic ideology, and economic pragmatism [16, p. 3], which largely explains its attractiveness for the countries of Central Asia.

Purpose of the work is to carry out monitoring of the process of transformation of neo-Ottomanism policy in the Republic of Turkey in 2002–2022.

The subject of the work is the Central Asian vector of Turkey's foreign policy during the rule of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey.

Methods. The research is based on a systematic approach and the principle of scientific objectivity. The article used comparative and evaluative methods, including case studies, which made it possible to show the process of transformation of the neo-Ottomanist policy in the Central Asian direction of Turkey's foreign policy.

Literature review. The information base for the study was a set of works devoted to various aspects of the doctrinal aspects of Turkey's foreign policy. In particular, V.A. Avatkov [1; 2] examines in detail the place and instruments of Turkey's foreign policy in the context of the modern system of international relations. Central Asian vector the foreign policy described in papers

of T. Dzhakupov, M. Laumullin, G. Lukyanova [3; 4; 5], as well as M. Celebrate, Z. Preface, T. Wheeler [20; 29]. It is possible to evaluate the doctrinal foundations of Turkey's policy formation during the rule of the Justice and Development Party on the basis of studying the works of such authors as T. Cavlan, S. Durgun, L. Gontijo, S.B. Çevik, and Y. Naz [9; 10; 12; 16; 21].

Analysis. The analysis focuses on the internal dynamics and historical transformations of the neo-Ottomanist policy and its natural limitations arising from the ideological approaches of the countries of the Central Asian region to cooperation. The authors focus on the transformation of the Turkish neo-Ottomanist policy in a Central Asian direction. Azerbaijan is mentioned in the work only in the context of its positioning by Turkey as a "Turkic" state, which determines the importance of its mention in the context of the analysis of neo-Ottomanism as a whole. In this regard, the work touches on certain aspects of Turkey's policy towards Azerbaijan that are only inscribed in the general context of Turkish policy in Central Asia. Turkish neo-Ottomanism in the post-Soviet space as a set of cultural-ideological and political-economic measures is considered by some researchers as one of the factors distancing the Central Asian countries from Russia [6]. Neo-Ottomanism as the central ideology in Turkish foreign policy has undergone transformations during the AKP's rule, reflecting the internal political dynamics in Turkey and the evolution of its approach to participation in the regional agenda, including in Central Asia.

From Ottomanism to Neo-Ottomanism.

The origins of neo-Ottomanism go back to the politics of the Young Turks and the idea of Turkism in the 20s of the last century [3, p. 438; 28, p. 491]. The formation of the "Ottoman" identity was conceived as a unifying factor for the ethnically and confessionally diverse population of the country and was seen as a socio-political link that would unite multi-ethnic elements from top to bottom [12, p. 308]. Throughout the 20th century, the content of the concept of "Ottomanism" was associated with the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Without challenging the Western orientation of Turkish politics, it was associated with the weakening of the role of religion in the life of society and democracy, as well as the unifying nature of the Ottoman historical and

cultural heritage [28, p. 495; 16, p. 12]. However, according to S. Durgun, the idea of Ottomanism as a rationalistic state project in the early years of the Turkish Republic could not emotionally satisfy society and establish itself, as a result of which Islam was put forward to the fore [12, p. 303].

Neo-Ottomanism emphasized both pragmatic economic and ideological-historical foundations of the Ottoman identity. They were fully developed during the reign of T. Ozal (1989–1993), when an attempt was made to update the country's policy; its multi-vector nature was expressed in the intensification of bilateral relations between the Republic of Turkey and its partners, the Balkan countries and Central Asia. Even then, the President emphasized the commonality of the historical past of Turkey and the countries of the region [28, p. 493].

In 1993, along with the summits of the Turkic states, congresses of Turkic public organizations and communities (Turkic kurultai) began to be held. The kurultai was suspended by the AKP in 2002 and resumed only in 2006 [3, p. 439]. In the 1990s, pan-Turkist rhetoric was noticeable in the foreign policy discourse of the Turkish government. This was happening against the backdrop of economic liberalization: Turkey was becoming a key regional player whose growth, coupled with internal secularism and ethnic diversity, turned it into a model for the developing countries of Central Asia.

The transformation of the country's international positioning proceeded in parallel with internal political changes: at the second stage of the AKP's dominance, a more authoritarian and appealing to historical sentiments and economic interests, policy began to move in place of democratic consolidation [32, p. 1816].

The coming to power of President R.T. Erdogan marked the fusion of Turkish national identity with social and cultural conservative traditions [16, p. 5]. Although the party in the program emphasized the importance of Islamic values and the inseparability of secularism as the primacy of the state over religious institutions from democracy, the changes in the political system were characterized by growing authoritarian tendencies and the strengthening of the positions of Islam. Within the country, the ideological promotion of neo-Ottomanism has affected education; since 2011, the Ottoman Turkish language has been included

in the curricula of secondary schools, and since 2014, it has been recommended as an optional course [16, p. 6].

The religious aspect of Turkish neo-Ottomanism was Islamization, which often took place under the pretext of "religious democratization"; an illustration is the attempt to lift the ban on women wearing headscarves in state institutions in 2008 [16, p. 6]. The rhetoric of religious democratization was linked to the process of organizing Turkey's accession to the EU; in fact, "religious epistemology" largely replaced "Kemalist secular epistemology" [26, p. 195]. A striking example is the deprivation of the Hagia Sophia mosque of the status of a museum in 2020 and the resumption of Muslim worship in it; the gradual "return of the rights" of Muslims under the AKP enters the field of historical memory issues and cultivates nationalism [21, p. 226]. "Religious democratization" meant the empowerment of the Muslim population, which reflected the appeal to the Islamic heritage as a tool to consolidate support for the AKP.

In his address to the nation on February 25, 2005, Erdogan presented a new concept of Turkey's foreign policy, neo-Ottomanism (*yeni osmanlıcılık*), based on the principles of strategic depth (*stratejik derinlik*), multi-vector foreign policy (*çok boyutlu dış politika*), and regional centrality of the country (*merkez ülke*) [28, p. 494]. The synthesis of Islamic ideology with economic and political pragmatism began to be at the heart of the neo-Ottoman policy of the AKP, constructing a picture of the great Turkic and "Ottoman-Islamic" past and legitimizing Turkish policy not only inside Turkey but also beyond its borders: in the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa [31, pp. 21, 23].

Economic pragmatism put neoliberalism at the forefront – the liberalization of Turkey's trade relations with partners. The economic component of pan-Turkism, for example, contributed to the identification of another ideology similar to neo-Ottomanism, neo-Adventurism, emphasizing the policy of the common cultural and historical past of all Turks in combination with "smart" tools for its promotion, including economic and cultural.

Against the background of escalating tensions in countries bordering Turkey or belonging to regions that constitute a priority for it, the promotion of the image of the historical Turkic-Muslim heritage and stability formed the essence

of the neo-Ottoman course promoted in the foreign policy of the AKP governments. Meanwhile, the democratic appeal, which for some time was part of the image of the Turkish state model promoted by the party, gradually dissolved in the light of the authoritarianization of the Turkish political system after the protests, giving way to Islamic values. Thus, following the results of the 2010 referendum on the amendment of the country's Constitution, innovations consolidated the reorganization of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors, de facto placing them under the control of the government; Since the late 2000s, the pressure of the state on independent media has increased; symptomatic episodes were the anti-government protests in Istanbul's Gezi Park in 2013, which spread throughout the country, and, finally, the 2016 coup attempt led by F. Gulen [32, p. 1816]. Accompanied by the growth of President Erdogan's personal authority and populist rhetoric, the AKP's actions in these years were aimed at social consolidation on religious and nostalgic grounds. The concept of "neo-Ottomanism" largely repeated the fate of its predecessor, "Ottomanism", and was replaced by a more pronounced Islamic narrative, both inside and outside the country. The strengthening of the Islamic component of neo-Ottomanism testified to the construction of a new Turkish identity: the perception based on the principle of gender was displaced by a broad, cultural, and religious Turkism, thereby expanding to the borders of the entire Muslim Turkic world [30, p. 40].

The "Regionalization" of Turkey's Foreign Policy and the Place of Central Asia in the Pan-Turkist Worldview. Along with the appeal to historical values and neo-Ottomanist discourse, the innovation was the reorientation of Turkish foreign policy to a regional perspective. The regional focus of Turkish politics was expressed in new geopolitical concepts; one of them was the concept of "strategic depth", proposed in 2001 by Ahmet Davutoglu. In the book of the same name, he stressed the need to form a long-term and independent strategy for Turkey in relation to its key regional areas, which include both the Middle East and Central Asian countries [19, p. 214]. Davutoglu's central idea was the diplomacy of a regional mediator power not involved in border conflicts.

With the AKP coming to power in 2002, the reorientation of Turkish policy from the West to the East and "cooperation with Muslim countries" was marked [16, pp. 6-9]. The Central Asian countries, due to their ethnolinguistic, historical, and economic proximity, were among the priorities of Turkish foreign policy after the AKP came to power.

Historically, such features of the Turkish model as secularism, democracy, common culture, and economic growth have been factors of rapprochement between the countries of Central Asia and Turkey [8, p. 5]. Since the 1990s, Turkey has been building up institutional cooperation mechanisms with the region; for example, in 1992, the Turkish Agency for Cooperation and Coordination (TIKA) was established, whose activities are aimed at supporting Turkish communities abroad and allocating official development assistance. Following the opening of the first office in Turkmenistan, the agency opened offices throughout the region: out of 2,506 activities carried out by it from 1992 to 2003, 31.3% were implemented in Kazakhstan, 10.9% in Kyrgyzstan, and 8.8% in Turkmenistan [25, p. 21]. In 1993, the Organization for the Joint Development of Turkic Culture and Art (TÜRKSÖY) was founded. A reflection of the new neo-Ottoman "multi-vector nature" was President Erdogan's proposal at the 2012 Kurultai to create a Commonwealth of Turkic-speaking States [3, p. 440]. Earlier, in 2009, the Turkic Council was established, which in 2021 was transformed into the Organization of Turkic States, which marked a new stage in the institutionalization of Turkey's cooperation with the "Turkic republics", which include Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. It also serves as a basis for discussing mechanisms for creating a Turkic investment fund [22]; the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries functions under the auspices of the Organization.

Along with the use of institutions of multilateral cooperation, Turkey uses the tools of "cultural diplomacy." These include the International Organization of Turkic Culture and the Yunus Emre Foundation, whose opening began in 2009 [1]. The main areas of cultural expansion in Turkey have become education, religion, the film industry, and tourism. Along with the institutions promoting Turkish culture and

language, the financing of the Turkish film and TV series industry has become a manifestation of the state's use of neo-Ottoman discourse as a tool of soft power. Although Turkish TV series were not originally created for sale abroad, today Turkey is a world leader in the export of film products. As S. Cevik notes, Turkish television, especially after the 2013 protests, "has become a tool of public engineering." Two major TV companies are associated with the AKP: Tekken Film, which created the series "Resurrection" (Dirilis Ertugrul), broadcast in 72 countries, was founded by K. Tekden, a member of parliament from the AKP [10, p. 231; 13].

With references to the Ottoman past, neo-Ottomanism in Turkish foreign policy has reached a broader contour among Muslim Turks, which has become a factor in the active use of religion as an institution of interaction with partners. Reliance on Islam allows Ankara to form "symbolic, cultural, and network" ties; after the defeat of F. Gulen's Hizmet movement in 2016, Islam became even more clearly the basis of Turkish foreign policy tools [24]. In the post-Soviet space, the key institution of Turkey's religious "soft power" has become Diyanet (Diyanet, Directorate of Religious Affairs). Since the AKP came to power, its budget has grown four times, surpassing even the Foreign Ministry in 2013 [18, p. 752].

The key characteristic of the transformation of Turkey's foreign policy under the AKP was its regionalization – an appeal to new diplomatic directions and instruments: cultural, religious, and educational. Appealing to the common historical past and the Muslim present of the "Turkic republics", Turkey seeks to increase cultural and religious promotion within its priority regional directions.

Between ideology and economics. The Turkish model – both democratic and, further, pan-Turkist – faced obstacles in the course of its progress in Central Asia. Thus, Uzbekistan, considered by Ankara a "recipient of its secular model with an emphasis on modernization and democracy" after Turkey supported the UN resolution condemning the events in Andijan in 2005, temporarily froze relations with Ankara [14, p. 118]. Pan-Turkic narratives also face limitations: the nationalism of Central Asian countries is less susceptible to Turkish influence, emphasizing their autonomous identities [14, p. 118]. As a result,

instead of promoting historical models, the Turkish policy of neo-Ottomanism in Central Asia focuses on the tools of "smart power" – building up institutional, economic, and cultural ties.

Turkey, as a Eurasian power connecting the West and the East, positions itself as a bridge between two continents and a regional hub [9, p. 134]. This approach determines its importance for the realization of Turkish foreign economic ambitions. The desire to become an "energy terminal and corridor" (Enerji Terminali ve Koridoru) of the Eurasian continent dictates Turkey's policy of increasing cooperation with Azerbaijan as well as Central Asian countries: first of all, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan [4].

One of the facets of Turkey's economic presence in Central Asia is transport infrastructure and logistics. Thus, in February 2021, Turkish Foreign Minister M. Cavusoglu held a meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan on Turkey's participation in hydrocarbon exploration, and discussions resumed on a potential Trans-Caspian pipeline for transporting Turkmen gas to Europe [15, p. 2]. Ankara has also invested in the restoration of the Turkmenbashi port in the Caspian Sea [7].

One of the landmark stages on the way to deepening bilateral partnerships was the joint statement of the leaders of Turkey and Kazakhstan on May 10, 2022, on the expanded strategic partnership and the construction of the Trans-Caspian International Trade Route (TMTP) as part of the Central Corridor [11; 17]. Due to the Central Corridor, Turkey will be able to play an active role in the integration of Central Asia and the South Caucasus into the international community through trade and transport [25, p. 24].

At the same time, the results of bilateral trade between Turkey and the "Turkic republics" are far from potential: in 2021, the share of the republics in the structure of Turkish exports was only 3.2% [5; 27]. Despite the relatively low indicators of bilateral trade, the growing level of interaction between Ankara and the Central Asian states is evidenced by their ten-year growth: exports of Turkish goods to Kazakhstan in 2012 amounted to \$ 1.06 billion, compared with \$ 160 million in 2001; imports were \$ 3.3 billion, up from \$ 203 million in 2002 [29, p. 9].

Thus, the driver of Turkey's relations with the states of the region is primarily the potential

of their economic interaction and the integral role of the countries of the region in realizing Ankara's international ambitions: becoming a hub standing at the junction of three continents and transport and energy arteries. Its policy of "soft" and "smart" power corresponds to Turkey's geostrategic interests, and neo-Ottomanism acts as an ideological and civilizational framework that frames them.

Conclusion. The neo-Ottomanism of the Justice and Development Party under R. T. Erdogan became the ideological formalization of the pragmatic aspirations of Turkish diplomacy, using the tools of "soft power" – historical, linguistic, and cultural community – to achieve rational foreign policy guidelines for proactive positioning and strategic economic objectives. The central vector for Turkish foreign policy has been a shift in focus from focusing on cooperation with Western countries to the regional agenda, where, along with the Middle East and the Balkans, Central Asia has become one of the key areas. At the same time, the domestic political background for this was a departure from democratic secularism in favor of a more authoritarian regime governing the country based on the consolidation of public support, including on a religious principle. The consequence of this transition on the diplomatic plane was the expansion of the concept of neo-Ottomanism, from the principle of community based on the heritage of the Ottoman Empire to the expansion of its borders along ethnic and religious lines. The pairing of identity and ideology with rational political and economic priorities today serves as a distinctive feature of the policy of neo-Ottomanism promoted by the AKP.

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