

The Impact Of Türkiye's Decision-making Mechanism On The Transformation In Türkiye-syria Relations (2002-2024)

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Abstract : This study analyses the transformation of Türkiye's Syria policy between 2002 and 2024 and the impact of domestic political dynamics in this process. Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye and Syria have had a tense relationship for a long time due to reasons such as border issues, water sharing, security concerns and the activities of terrorist organizations. However, the process that started with the Adana Agreement in 1998 gained momentum with the Justice and Development Party (Ak Party) coming to power in 2002 and a historical period of rapprochement began between the two countries. During this period, Türkiye adopted the concept of "zero problems with neighbors" in its foreign policy and deepened its strategic partnerships in the region. Turkish-Syrian relations also developed within this framework, the trade volume between the two countries increased and cooperation was strengthened through mutual visits and diplomatic agreements. However, the Arab Spring that started in 2011 was a sharp turning point in Turkish-Syrian relations. The harsh stance of the Bashar Assad administration against the popular uprisings in Syria caused Türkiye to take a stance against Assad and support opposition groups. This process led to the severing of diplomatic ties between the two countries and the gradual deterioration of relations until 2024. Türkiye directly intervened in the civil war in Syria after the Arab Spring and conducted military operations in northern Syria that highlighted security policies. The main purpose of this study is to examine the transformation in Türkiye's Syria policies between 2002 and 2024 and to analyze the role of domestic political dynamics in Türkiye in this transformation. The main research question of the study is how domestic political actors in Türkiye, especially decision-makers (leaders, governments, political parties), shape foreign policy. In this context, the extent to which the leadership of the Ak Party government is decisive in decision-making processes and how the impact of domestic dynamics on foreign policy emerges will be studied. In this study, how both the pressures of the international system and domestic political dynamics shape foreign policy will be analyzed using the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism. How decision-making processes are decisive in foreign policy will be examined through a case study specific to Türkiye-Syria relations. In addition, the strategic preferences of leaders such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Ahmet Davutoğlu in foreign policy and how these preferences overlap with developments in domestic politics will be evaluated using the discourse analysis method. This study aims to make a new contribution to the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of how domestic dynamics shape foreign policy in Türkiye-Syria relations.

Keywords : decision-making mechanisms, foreign policy analysis, neoclassical realism, syria, türkiye

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