

Summary of the Study

Turkey is a country that has many strengths. It enjoys a distinctive strategic location, plenty of natural resources, fertile lands, a large population, a unique social structure, and finally a great cultural and historical heritage. However, the country had for one reason or another lost or was made to lose the position that it should hold because of its strengths. For the last century, Turkey has not been able to properly take advantage of these strengths so that it become a country with no influence, no identity, and a lack of effectiveness. In recent years, Turkey has started again to discover these factors and try to use them in an effort to regain the self esteem and prestige it lost when the mother Ottoman Empire vanished. There was also a time when Turkey became a tool in the hands of the West as it was engaged it in the cold war between East and West through NATO. During that period the military had a massive influence on all aspects of life including the political one. However, the new government has managed to limit and regulate this influence.

The arrival of the Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party to power in 2002, armed with the vision of the new Turkish foreign policy envisaged by Ahmed Davutoglu, is a central and historic turning point in the policies of the Turkish Republic. The Republic has started already to occupy a more influential and active position in international and regional politics as it seeks to regain the status and prestige it used to enjoy at the time of the Ottoman Empire. That is what some have called “Neo-Ottomanism .”

That project of neo-Ottomanism is now being associated with the leaders and members of the Justice and Development Party does not mean that Turkey is trying to restore the Ottoman Empire itself, nor does it mean that Turkey is planning to recapture the regions it used to control in the Ottoman period since that is impossible in light of international changes and contemporary circumstances. Neo-Ottomanism is an integrated economic, political, cultural, and social project that Turkey has started to develop with complete openness to its neighbors especially the Arabs. Its active intervention in regional issues benefits from the economic progress the country is making, and its internal development and external stability .

The Arab region and the area of the fertile crescent –with its tremendous wealth, geographical proximity, and cultural and historical partnership with Turkey – forms one of the most important areas for the implementation of this Neo-Ottoman idea. Here Turkey could begin to reconcile with these areas, intervene to solve their problems, and support their issues. These policies were accompanied by the leaders and spokespersons of the Justice and Development Party giving a number of speeches which committed Turkey to reconcile and cooperate with the countries of this region, as well as the desire of Turkey to occupy an international position that is consistent with its strengths and historical status.