



# Modeling Foreign Policy and Ethnic Conflict: Turkey's Policies Towards Syria

CAROLYN C. JAMES

*Pepperdine University*

ÖZGÜR ÖZDAMAR

*TOBB-University of Economics and Technology*

Studies of foreign policy are as eclectic as the states in the global system. This paper attempts to provide a framework to facilitate the comparative study of foreign policy. Based on the original model by McGowan and Shapiro (1973), the expanded model here reflects advances in the understanding of the global system as well as the increased internationalization of domestic actors and events. The model will be illustrated by an analysis of Turkish foreign policy with Syria influenced by Turkey's own Kurdish citizenry.

The first section of the study begins by presenting a particular ontological approach—a system-oriented model that facilitates understanding of the connection between domestic, or micro, variables and external, or macro, variables. Based on Bunge's (1996) concept of comprehensive "systemism", the model facilitates incorporation of both international and domestic variables. The second part of the section presents a foreign policy model that meets the standards set by a system-oriented approach. This approach is increasingly relevant, as traditionally internal disturbances, such as ethnic conflicts, become internationalized. The second section of the paper presents Turkish-Syrian relations concerning the Kurds to illustrate the potential of the model and its variables. In the third section, this case is used to evaluate the explanatory power of the model. The conclusion provides overall generalizations and implications for further research and policy.

We have chosen to illustrate the model by exploring the relationship between Turkey's Kurdish citizenry with Turkish-Syrian foreign policy. As will be shown, internal relations between Turkish-Kurds and the national government in Ankara have had a direct influence on the relationship between Turkey and Syria. Both states have, at times, centered their foreign policy decisions on this sometimes violent issue.

## Theory and Approach

### *Systemism*

Internationalization of domestic events has become a focus of foreign policy analysis studies. Ethnic conflicts provide numerous examples of this phenomenon (Carment and James 2003). For example, relations between Kashmiri Indians and the national government in New Delhi have influenced Pakistani-Indian relations (James and Özdamar 2005).<sup>1</sup> In order to properly understand situations such as this, it is necessary to consider both domestic and systemic factors.

<sup>1</sup> See this article for a more comprehensive review of literature on ethnic conflict and foreign policy.

A prominent example of this kind of approach to foreign policy analysis is Rosenau's linkage politics in which he refers to how factors from inside the state can impact on issues outside the state, and visa versa (Rosenau 1969). It is a precursor to systems in that it encourages us to think of cause and effect across levels as opposed to simply within them. His idea of turbulence refers to micro and macro levels, such as the microtechnology revolution in terms of how people are changing and becoming, as individuals, more active and knowledgeable and ultimately effective on a macro level (Rosenau 1990). But he does not pull all of this together in the same way as systemism.

Bunge (1996) advocates systemism in studying social phenomena, which simultaneously considers unit-level (or individual) variables with system-level (or holistic) variables. A theory that deals with society comprehensively must include the connections between units and systems, in other words, the connections between micro and macro variables. It combines individualism, which places emphasis on the relationships between micro variables, and holism,

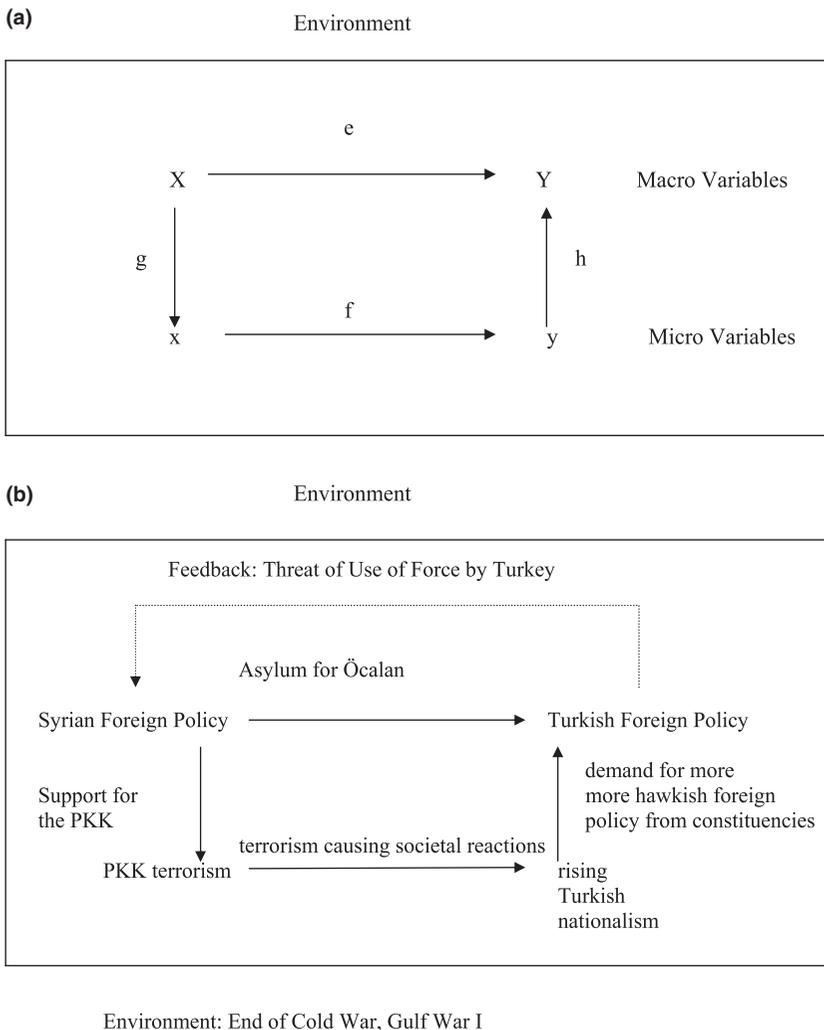


FIG 1. (a) Functional Relations in a Social System. *Source:* Bunge (1996: 149). (b) Functional Relations in a Social System Applied to the Turkish Case.

which concentrates on macro variables. James (2002) offers an approach within the domain of international relations that accommodates the full range of connections linking these variables, presented in Figure 1a as macro- and micro-level variables. The figure indicates the domestic-external and micro-macro connections for internationalization of, in this example, *ethnic conflict and its impact on foreign policy*.

Systemism takes note of the fact that a theory, to be complete, must specify all four kinds of basic linkages.<sup>2</sup> If either holism or individualism alone is employed, important linkages would be missed. There are four possible linkages that systemism considers, with upper cases referring to macro variables and lower cases referring to micro variables: micro-micro (m-m), micro-macro (m-M), macro-macro (M-M) and macro-micro (M-m). A micro-micro linkage, for example, would be the relationship of the U.S.'s National Rifle Association lobbying efforts to U.S. policy regarding private gun ownership. In this instance, a domestic interest group interacts with the government on domestic legislation. A micro-macro relationship occurred when Canada provided government assistance to its softwood lumber industry, producing protests from U.S. softwood companies that this violated free trade. Canada's domestic economic expenditures had an external effect in the United States. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 83 of 1950 authorizing the Korean Conflict is an ideal example of a macro-macro linkage. An international organization was instrumental in creating a multinational force that engaged in an interstate conflict. A macro-micro linkage is exemplified in UNSC resolutions 687 of 1991, establishing UNSCOM, the United Nations Special Commission, to dismantle Iraq's weapons of mass destruction efforts. With reference to national security, Iraq's domestic policy options were restricted by a UN agency.

By taking a system-oriented approach in this study, the relationship between micro and macro variables (i.e., X to x or y to Y linkages) can be included in addition to micro-micro and macro-macro relationships (i.e., x to y and X to Y), thereby providing a more complete picture. Especially in a study in which the relationship between domestically generated ethnic conflict and foreign policy is sought, systemism is the most appropriate choice to comprehend both domestic and external variables and relationships.

For example, the Kurdish case has a significant ethnic dimension domestically for Turkey, with interstate ramifications (see Figure 1b). Domestic ethnic sources of the issue (micro variables) interact with both actor level variables that shape the ethnic conflict (micro variables such as institutionalized elite preferences, political leaders or political structures) and also with system-oriented and other international actors (macro level variables) that reflect internationalization. Such complex relationships can be explained effectively with a foreign policy model based on systemism.

This problem was identified correctly in an exposition of foreign policy analysis by McGowan and Shapiro (1973).<sup>3</sup> Today, connections between domestic and external sources of foreign policy still remain an active part of the discussion on scientific methods in the discipline (James 2002). For example, events such as the condemnation of South Africa's former apartheid policies from both nation-states and international organizations provide an illustration of the

<sup>2</sup> Although some parallels with Bunge's systemism can be drawn, at no time does Rosenau put these basic linkages forward as a standard for evaluation in either his turbulence or linkage politics models. It is perhaps implicit—but he did not say it.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically, McGowan and Shapiro refer to the "levels of analysis problem," exhibited by tendencies toward ecological fallacy or individualistic fallacy (1973:221–222). Holism and individualism represent the underlying thinking that leads to these errors. However, systemism, while recognizing these tendencies, does not preclude the possibility that a single holistic or individualistic variable could approach a comprehensive explanation in certain cases.

internationalization of a domestic policy. Apartheid's end cannot be properly understood with only an individual or holistic approach (Rosenau 2003).

McGowan and Shapiro's model also addresses another, and equally important, concern in the study of foreign policy. More than 30 years ago, they described these studies as "very poorly developed in terms of middle-range and general theory" (1973:49). Comparative work in foreign policy is necessary to move forward in this direction. McGowan and Shapiro's model seeks to coordinate multiple approaches to foreign policy inquiries. In this manner, research is readily cumulative. For example, there are multiple methodological approaches to the study of foreign policy, ranging from comparative case studies to statistical analysis from commonly used data sets. All too often direct comparison of findings only are made within, rather than across, various methods, at times shedding more light on the methodology itself rather than the foreign policy knowledge gained. A systematic approach can bring order to comparative and cumulative efforts.

#### *Foreign Policy Model*

The model in this study expands the original in order to add a further domestic dimension, beginning with the following premise: "... the dependent variable of foreign policy behavior encompasses identifiable acts undertaken by the official representatives of national societies or their agents in order to control the behavior of their counterparts in ways desired by the actors" (McGowan and Shapiro 1973:40).<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the tenets of systemism, this study provides for additional, domestic actors placed at the beginning of the depicted sequence of events and processes (see Figure 2a). The original model by McGowan and Shapiro began at Part II of the figure, in which foreign policy actors respond to inputs from the policies of other nations and systemic variables. That is, like its contemporaries, the original model also overlooked domestic factors as precursors to state level policies that evolve into international issues. In the original model, domestic variables are represented as pre-determined characteristics. We attempt to overcome this omission by adding a prior domestic variable. This provides insight into the development of the original domestic variables in the updated model's Part II. The altered model better reflects the reality of many, but not all, ultimate foreign policy situations whose origins from within a state are themselves the result of the interplay of forces (See Figure 2a). In other words, we acknowledge and emphasize the linkages between domestic and external variables in situations where sources of an international dispute stem from a domestic ethnic conflict. In the expanded version of the model, the origination of an ethnic conflict precedes the internationalization. In this sense, the expanded version expands the scope of the original model by broadening its explanatory capabilities.

More specifically, in Part I of the figure, domestic actors, such as an ethnic minority group, interact with the state's domestic policymakers. This interaction produces a macro-level, international response in Part II. In other words, a domestic matter has become internationalized. In Part III foreign policy actors react to international inputs, with a subsequent impact on foreign policy patterns. Feedback loops, reflecting reality, exhibit the iterative nature of the model. In this manner, foreign policy correctly is depicted as an ongoing and responsive political challenge. For example, when trouble arose between India's Kashmiri Muslims and the central government, international actors such as Pakistan and the United Nations responded in such a way that India's ultimate

<sup>4</sup> All policy has two aspects, one formulation and the other implementation. This article considers the former subset, or the formulation of foreign policies that result in "identifiable acts undertaken by the official representatives..." represented in the model as Foreign Policy Patterns in Part IV.

foreign policy toward Pakistan was affected. In turn, Kashmiris reacted to the evolving Indo/Pakistani relationship.

In Part I, the domestic policy actors are assessed according to seven variables described more fully below: individual and group policy maker preferences, institutionalized elite preferences, political contextual, governmental contextual, economic contextual, historical policy context, and cultural contextual variables.<sup>5</sup> These same variables are applied in Part III, also at the micro-level, with the foreign policy actors. As used by McGowan and Shapiro, these variables added an interdisciplinary aspect to the model (1973:40–42). The addition of Part I, consisting of micro-level variables, broadens the systemic character of the model. When placed in the context of systemism, the model retains the full range of relationships for a comprehensive analysis. The use of the same micro-level variables found in Part III creates a better potential for consistent comparison.

As in the original, the model here strives for operational consistency when applied to comparative foreign policy. It seeks to coordinate existing approaches, rather than inventing a new one.<sup>6</sup> If successful, the model can incorporate the wide range of literature on foreign policy.

#### *Components of the Model: Micro Variables*

##### *Individual and Group Policy Maker Preferences:*

As used here, the individuals or groups of leaders to be observed are those with actual decision-making power, rather than just influence. Specifically we focus on decision-makers' preferences and interests. These policymakers include heads of state and government, relevant ministers and other important domestic groups' leaders that has a direct influence on specific foreign policy. In Part I, this would include decision-makers for a subnational group, such as an ethnic minority. Opposition leaders or less influential groups' decision-makers would not be included. Personal aspects such as background, values, beliefs and experiences are taken into consideration. Cognitive studies, including analogies and crisis decision-making, would be included in this variable.

##### *Institutionalized Elite Preferences:*

The study of institutionalized elite preferences includes group characteristics. Institutionalized elites are assumed to be a definable group whose sum is more than its parts. This group includes state elite (e.g., MFA and military bureaucracy) as well as private groups such as business organizations. In Turkey, a particularly significant institutionalized foreign policy elite is the military. The military repeatedly has exerted political power over Turkey's policies toward

<sup>5</sup> McGowan and Shapiro's original variables were individual, elite, politics, government, economics, linkages, analogies, culture, establishment, and society. Establishment refers to the aspects of governance found today in the study of public administration. Society describes basic information about the population such as size and age. Analogies refer to the personal experiences of critical individuals. For example, considering the generation of a given leader can be instructive. Those world leaders with the memory of the Munich Agreement between Adolph Hitler and Neville Chamberlain may enter a foreign policy situation assuming that compromise is viewed as weakness by aggressive opponents and will invite conflict (Khong 1992). The assumption would affect their approach to foreign policy. Likewise, following the fragmentation and collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's leadership are particularly sensitive to loss of territory. The analogies drawn from the Sevres Agreement of 1920 are excellent examples of how they are used by foreign policymakers today. Although never put into force, the Turkish foreign policy elite still uses the Sevres Agreement as an analogy when debating the Kurdish issue, even nine decades after its signing. Analogies as a variable have been omitted here as these factors now normally are included in other variables. For example, analogies are included as part of the individual variable as cognitive comparisons made by individuals and group policy maker preferences. The remaining variables have been reworked to provide greater specification and identification, as well as to reflect more recent terminology. None of these alterations change the original intent, contribution or effectiveness of the model.

<sup>6</sup> The model presented here seeks a working framework rather than trying to build on the greater discussion of scientific inquiry.

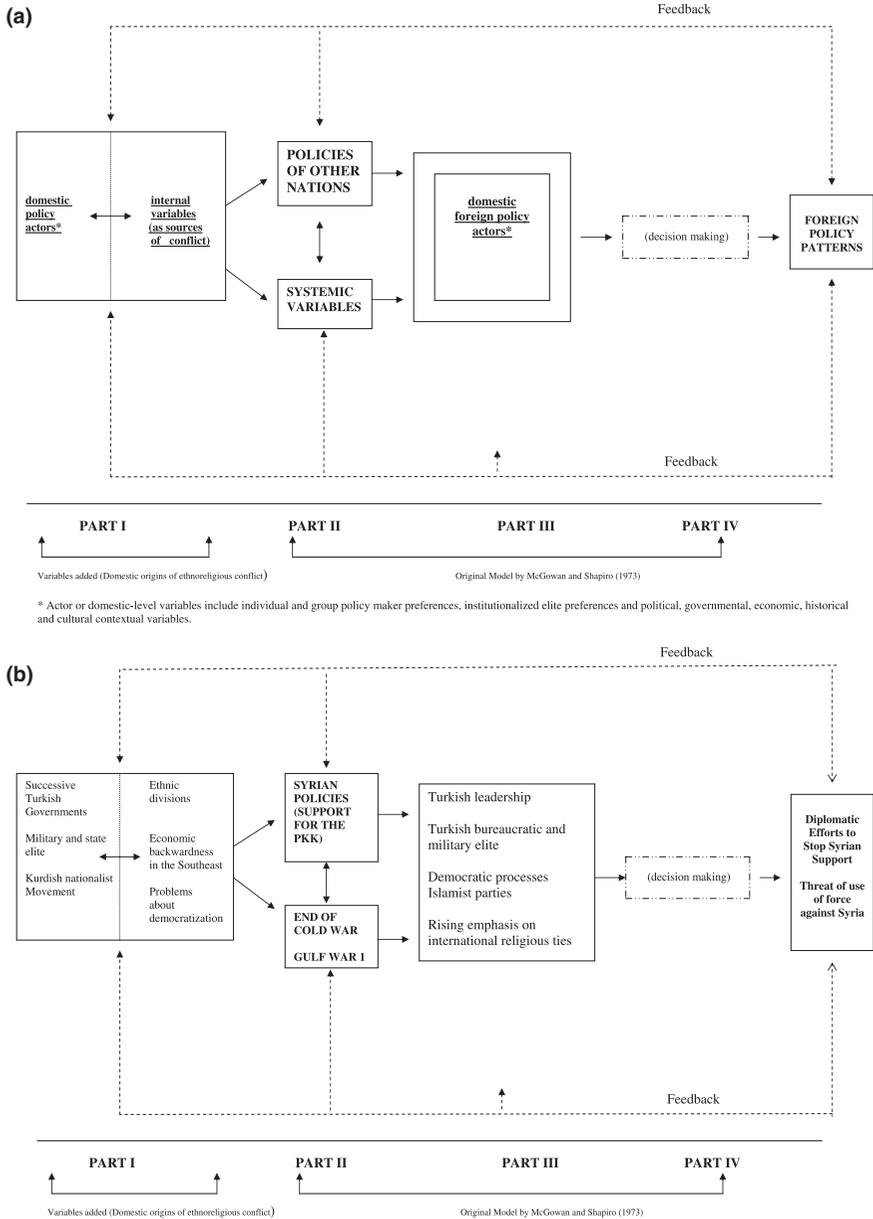


FIG. 2. (a) Generic Foreign Policy Model. (b) Applied Foreign Policy Model—The Turkish Case.

external actors. For example, in 1998 when Turkey hardened its attitude toward Syria over its support for Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) militants, the military institutionalized elite were one of the instrumental groups pressuring the government. Various institutionalized elite groups may have unique decision-making attributes. Turkey’s foreign affairs bureaucracy is another example, known for pursuing a non-involvement policy in Middle Eastern affairs.

*Political Contextual Variables:*

Political contextual variables include the kind of political system in a given country: for example, is a state a democracy, defined as a political system with elected

officials answerable to their constituents, as opposed to a dictatorship? The profile of national political system, including the kind of party system, the degree of political conflict, the role domestic groups in foreign policy decisions and the level of legitimacy the political system enjoys are other considerations. Turkey, for example, is a multi-party democracy where parties across a broad political spectrum have significantly different perspectives on foreign policy objectives. Islamic parties such as the Welfare Party or its successor, the Justice and Development Party, tend to advance relations with other Muslim nations in the Middle East due to pressures from its conservative constituencies. Sometimes this has resulted in policy failures. The emphasis is on the typical political processes rather than political structures.

*Governmental Contextual Variables:*

The governmental contextual variable refers to more structural aspects. For example, democracies come in many forms—democratic presidential versus parliamentary, unitary versus federal, and so on. Political development comes under this category, as some states enjoy more stability as their government structures, such as the bureaucracy, may have an extended history. The opposite may be true, in that the institutions of government may not be well-established, and therefore weak or unstable. Military capabilities and date of independence are the other factors included by McGowan and Shapiro.

*Economic Contextual Variables:*

This category encompasses the type of economic system a state has, the level of economic development and the amount and nature of foreign trade. More specifically, the economic structure of foreign policy and the amount and diversity of foreign trade with the other nations in consideration is central. Availability and sensitivity to resources are part of this variable, such as a state's dependence on foreign oil. In the Middle East region water supply invariably is a critical issue. This sensitivity is highlighted in Turkey's case, as it is the location of the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates river basin. Turkey has, as described below, created tension with downstream states with its water resources development in Southeast Anatolia.

*Historical Policy Context:*

Historical policy context refers to patterns of foreign policy behavior over time. Including this category of variables into the foreign policy analysis is a reflection of the assumption that past foreign policy patterns might influence the future policies. For example, both Tsarist Russia and its communist successor have been defined as "xenophobic," a characteristic that certainly would affect foreign policy decisions. Similarly, despite their political origins, successive Indian governments subscribed to the Nehruian secular nationalism as a response to Kashmiri secessionism based on Islam. The goal of this variable is to detect any foreign policy patterns and infer future behavior from them. According to McGowan and Shapiro, this set of variables is particularly important because it forces analyst to study in dynamic rather than static terms.

*Cultural Contextual Variables:*

Cultural contextual variables include dominant factors in any political situation, including ideology and religion. The degree of cultural pluralism, patterns of national identity, the degree of nationalism and effect of media on political culture are focus of this variable. That is, this variable focuses on the cultural sources of political dynamics and is not concerned with culture in general. Nationalism, religious movements and the role of the media are important features of this variable. For example, both Turkish and Indian state-building

projects originate from similar secular nationalist ideas that shaped cultural factors. In each country, the founding institutionalized elite defined the boundaries of nationalism by which they set the “rules of the game” for society as well as within state-society relations. Via state policies on, for example, education or media influence on civil society, both polities produced their unique blend of cultural influences.

*Components of the Model: Macro Level*

*Policies of Other Nations:*<sup>7</sup>

Not only do macro-level variables influence subsequent foreign policy decisions, the links between micro and macro variables are critical to a full appreciation of foreign policy. In fact, McGowan and Shapiro see this link as the primary need for comparative studies (1973:45). Factors considered as policies of other nations include inducements to cooperation as well as threats or the use of force; the commonality is the state whose behavior is the target. This set of variables includes the manifestations of hostile acts, threats, foreign supports and state visits. This category could be expanded beyond the present two-state study. For example, additional states’ ties with an irredentist group, support to those secessionist and irredentist groups by other nations and superpower involvement could be isolated for more rigorous examination. To illustrate, Iraq might wish to take advantage of trouble between the national government in Ankara and Turkey’s ethnic Kurds in order to affect relations between Baghdad and Ankara.

*Other Systemic Variables:*

This set of variables includes non-state international actors as well as systemic characteristics such as polarity and regionalism. For example, Turkey’s relative power vis-à-vis its Arab neighbors shifted as an eventual result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Other important considerations are geography, alliances, and international organizations. The influence need not be overt. For example, Ankara’s dealings with ethnically Kurdish citizens of Turkey are influenced by its desire to become a full member of the European Union.

Both micro and macro variables are necessary for a comprehensive discussion of foreign policy. In the United States, even to the casual observer, it is clear that an assessment of American foreign policy requires knowledge and understanding of American government *and* international variables. As will be shown below, this applies to Turkish foreign policy, arguably more so, as Turkey’s sovereignty is more challenged than that of the United States, emphasizing the importance of comparative consideration.

## **The Kurds and Turkish Foreign Policy Toward Syria**

*Background*

The Kurdish population in the Middle East and former Soviet Republics is estimated to be between 20 and 25 million (Olson 2000) with around 14 million in Turkey alone (CIA World Factbook 2006). According to David McDowall (1991), the total Kurdish population was 22.6 million at the beginning of the 1990s, spread over four states: Turkey (7–10 million), Iraq (5–6 million), Iran (3–4 million), and Syria (2–3 million) (Aras and Köni 2002). As a result, there is no single loyalty or central authority among them; they have never established their own sovereign state except the short-lived (1946–1947) Republic of Mahabad.

<sup>7</sup> In McGowan and Shapiro, both the “other’s policies” and the systemic variable include, for example, discussion of the United Nations. Considering the increase in the type and number of international actors today, the model here separates state versus nonstate international actors for the sake of clarity.

The common unawareness of ethnicity among the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire prevented Kurds from forming a unified national movement or identity until the twentieth century (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997).

The largest armed effort to win an independent Kurdish state originated in Turkey in the early 1980s. The Kurdistan Workers Party, which sprang from older Turkish Marxist student organizations of 1970s, pursued the strongest terrorist campaign against Turkey with separatist claims spanning more than two decades. From the Kurdish perspective, the Kurdish issue is on a “wholly different scale from regional or external government perceptions.” As Kurds see it, the problem is about their political future and their will to rule themselves while for other regional and global actors, it is a peripheral issue (McDowall 1995:211).

The Kurdish desire for separatism is not a completely new dilemma for Turkey. The first Kurdish revolts in the Republic of Turkey, occurring in 1925, 1930 and 1937–1938, were suppressed by the central government (Olson 1996). After 1938, and until the 1980s, Kurdish nationalism did not threaten internal stability in Turkey. However, with the emergence of the PKK terrorist acts in the early 1980s and subsequent escalation in the 1990s, the Kurdish issue, including its economic implications, has been one of Turkey’s greatest challenges.<sup>8</sup>

Domestically, the legitimacy of the Turkish state was tested; there have been about 30,000 casualties. Military expenditures alone cost between six to eight billion dollars annually and the total cost of suppressing Kurdish violence has been estimated at around \$100 billion dollars since 1980s (Sezgin 2002). Internationally, Turkey’s foreign policy at both the global and regional levels has been affected substantially. In particular, Turkey tried to end aid to the PKK from other states in the Middle East and Europe, such as Syria, Iran, Iraq and Greece (Martin 2000). With the resurgence of PKK violence since 2004, containing the support for the terrorist organization in the region has become the top issue on Turkey’s foreign policy agenda once again.

This case examines Turkey’s relations with Syria, centering on the primary issue of Turkish Kurds. Foremost is PKK terrorism and Syrian support to this organization. Syria has provided strategic support in terms of allowing PKK training camps on Syrian territory, letting PKK terrorists enter Turkey from Syria and granting sanctuary to the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in Damascus for about two decades (Olson 2000, 2001). The relationship between Turkey and Syria over the PKK has been associated with five different sets of negotiations (Olson 2000). The first negotiation was held in Damascus in 1987. Turkey and Syria signed a security protocol promising to “obstruct groups engaged in destructive activities directed against one another on their own territory and would not turn a blind eye to them in any way” (Pipes 2002).

As part of this agreement, Turkey promised to ensure a specific amount of water from the Euphrates. Turkey controls the flow of Euphrates, which is vital to the downstream riparian state of Syria, with a series of dams as part of the Southeast Anatolian Project (GAP).<sup>9</sup> Turkey’s leverage over what is perhaps Syria’s most important natural resource has caused Syrian protests for the past two decades (Martin 2000). Turkey argues that the river is transboundary and claims full sovereignty on the river until it reaches the Syrian border. Syria claims the Euphrates is an international river.

The agreement was not successful, as Syria denied that Öcalan was in Damascus at the time and was reluctant to bring this issue to the negotiations. PKK attacks soon sped up again. As a consequence, there was a stalemate in relations

<sup>8</sup> This is an example of the possible overlap among variables, with an indigenous group’s nationalistic aspirations emanating from, and having implications upon, domestic economic issues.

<sup>9</sup> There had been other water-related projects prior to 1977, but none near the scale of GAP.

for the next five years; Syria continued its support to the PKK and Turkey continued to restrict the flow of the Euphrates into Syria.

Second, the two countries reached two important agreements in 1992 and 1993. In the first, both countries decided to cooperate against terrorists and Syria recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization. However, this agreement had no real effect on Syrian policy, resulting in Turkey's continued use of the "water card" against them. A similar attempt occurred in January 20, 1993, when a joint communiqué was issued stating both sides' assurances not to allow any activity on their territories that could be harmful to the other nation (Sever 2001). Just like the previous one, this agreement had no real effect.

Third, in 1994 following the power vacuum in Northern Iraq after the First Gulf War, Turkish, Iranian and Syrian foreign ministers met and declared their unalterable opposition to the fragmentation of Iraq by the creation of an independent Kurdish state (Olson 2001). Syria's only move at this point, however, was a statement against the fragmentation of Middle Eastern countries. The fourth period of 1994–1995 saw positive development in trade negotiations between the two countries, but Syria's support for PKK terrorism in the Hatay district (also known as Alexandretta) prevented any further improvement in relations.<sup>10</sup> In 1996, Turkey suspended all official contacts with Syria because, despite Ankara's official request, Syria did not expel PKK leader Öcalan from Syria (Sever 2001).

In 1998, the fifth period, Turkey started a serious campaign against Syria described by Olson (2001) as the "undeclared war." The two countries were on the edge of a militarized conflict which included a high possibility of full scale war. However, in the fall of 1998, they signed the Adana Agreement that explicitly ended Syrian support for the PKK. The Syrians kept their word, forcing Öcalan to leave their country immediately. Eventually returned to Turkey in 1999, Öcalan is serving a life sentence.

Relations began to normalize since 1998, highlighted by the Turkish Prime Minister's visit to Syria in December 2004 (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, 2004) and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's visit to Ankara in January 2005 to sign a trade cooperation agreement. Another point that makes this visit so important is that Al-Assad is the first Syrian president to visit Turkey. Turkish newspapers from across the political spectrum, including *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet* and *Yeni Şafak*, argued that a series of events caused the two countries to put conflicts behind them and begin a new search for cooperation. These include the American-led invasion of Iraq, increased tensions and the influence of Kurdish separatism in the region, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party's increased focus on the Middle Eastern matters and closer relations between two countries since 1998. Al-Assad and the president of Turkey, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, condemned any moves that could threaten Iraq's territorial unity (Al-Jazeera.net, 2004). Lastly, the Turkish president paid a visit to Damascus in April 2005 when Syrians were hard-pressed by the international community to withdraw from Lebanon. In addition to the talks on improving trade and economic relations between the two countries, and without the more harsh rhetoric used by other nations, Ankara urged the Syrians to withdraw from Lebanon (Al-Jazeera.net 2005; BBC News, 2005).

Turkish-Syrian relations, especially during the 1987–1998 period, are an ideal example of how domestic ethnic conflicts are internationalized. Domestic

<sup>10</sup> The district of Hatay, or Alexandretta, was mandated by the French until 1936. In the 1939 elections, Hatay Turks gained the majority in Parliament and later decided to join Turkey (Rubin 2004). For years Syria did not accept any of these decisions and claimed sovereignty over the district since French mandatory rule. Lately, in an additional clause to a trade agreement signed with Turkey in January 2005, Syria, in a roundabout way, officially acknowledged that Hatay belongs to Turkey (Hürriyet Online, 2005).

sources of conflict, such as ethnic divides or domestic economic inequalities, have become internationalized in the policies of other countries and other system level variables. These, in turn, affect actor level variables that are part of foreign policy decision-making. As the foreign policy model illustrates, a series of both domestic and external factors are influential in the development of relations between Turkey and Syria, even though the initial impetus for Turkey's policies has been its own Kurdish citizenry.

#### *Model Variables*

##### *Part I of Figure 2b: Initial State and Substate Actors:*

Internal, or domestic, variables in our model, including ethnicity, religion (both cultural contextual variables), economic contextual and governmental contextual factors, often are the main triggers of a conflict. There were dozens of ethnic groups in the former Ottoman Empire. In the late 19th century, Kurdish nationalism began to emerge as a significant ethnic force. The Sevres agreement of 1920, ending World War I between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire, granted the Kurds the right to establish an autonomous polity. The nationalist government in Ankara did not accept the terms of Sevres and after more than three years of fighting against the Allied-backed Greeks, Turkey signed a more advantageous treaty. According to the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, only the non-Muslims in Turkey were given minority rights. After modern Turkey was founded in the same year, the central government in Ankara did not grant autonomy to any Muslim community, including the Kurds. As is true in other states with Kurdish minorities, Turkish Kurds remain a potential source of domestic ethnic conflict.

There are economic contextual and governmental contextual variables at play as well. In terms of governmental contextual variables, Turkey has a French-style unitary system of government that does not allow substantial autonomy to local administrations, let alone Kurdish autonomy. This has created tensions between local administrations in the region and the central government in Ankara.

Connected to this, for the past two decades, the central government in Ankara has depicted the Kurdish situation in economic rather than ethnic terms. Southeast Anatolia, where the Kurds represent the majority, is the most economically backward region of the country. Turkey claims that completion of the regional economic development program created in 1977, Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP), will alleviate the economic problems of the region, thus restlessness among its own Kurds, to a great extent. In an additional example of the internationalization of a domestic issue, Syria's reaction to the project has been contentious based on its own status as a downstream riparian state.

##### *Part II of Figure 2b: Syria's Policies:*

In the overall pattern of Turkey's dealings with its Arab neighbors during the 1990s, its relationship with Syria has arguably been the most critical since there has been the greatest risk of armed confrontation (Hale 2000). The collapse of the USSR and growing collaboration between Turkey and Israel shifted regional balance of power in favor of Turkey, but this hardly solved problems with Syria. Syria and other Arab states now typically take a unified stance against Turkey on various foreign policy issues.

As mentioned, one of Syria's grievances with Turkey has been the Southeast Anatolia Project. While water may be an underlying motivation, beginning in the 1980s Syria chose to exert pressure against Turkey by providing substantial support to the PKK. Syria perceived the PKK as its only "card" against Turkey. For about two decades, Syria provided strategic support and a safe haven for PKK militants in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley. Its leaders were welcomed in Damascus. Although there was reluctance in Ankara to accept the linkage between Syrian

support for the PKK and the water issue earlier, as the 1990s unfolded, Turkish officials increasingly believed that Syria was using the PKK to get concessions from Turkey over the supply of water (Sayari 1997). In fact, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Deniz Baykal reflected popular public opinion in Turkey when he stated, "...some circles may claim that they need additional water to wash the blood of terrorism from their hands." (as quoted in Sayari 1997:48). In the Hatay province that Syria claimed until 2005, Damascus allowed the PKK safe entry to commit terrorist activities.

Systemic-level variables account, in part, for the fact that Turkey went as far as to seriously consider actual armed conflict against Syria. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Soviet support to states such as Syria, Turkey became the second most powerful state in the region after Russia (Barkey 1996; Barkey and Fuller 1998). Although use of force was considered after 1998 and threats were made, Turkey set a higher priority on maintaining a positive relationship with Arab states. As a result, Turkey put indirect pressure on Syria to halt support for the PKK through Iran. In addition, Turkey did not want to compromise its special relationship with Israel, engaged at that time in negotiations with Syria over the Golan Heights (Olson 2000).

*Part III of Figure 2b: Individual and Group Policy Maker Preferences and Institutionalized Elite Preferences Variables:*

The course of the relations between the two countries is perhaps most influenced by the individual, group policy maker and institutionalized elite attitudes and perceptions in the most recent decades (Aras and Köni 2002). It is argued that both sides' government and institutionalized elite leaders "are locked into a vision that is shaped by historical enmity, mutual negative images, establishment ideologies, and policy makers' attempts to externalize the sources of some of their major domestic problems. ... This situation prevents any constructive attempt to discuss, let alone to solve, the problems between each state" (Aras and Köni 2002:57).

Ankara's relations with the world have been determined by powerful foreign policy makers for decades. Other than the 1950–1960 period of the Democrat Party's rule, the powerful institutionalized elite group manifested in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been reluctant to get involved in Middle Eastern issues. A combination of Turkey's commitment to its Western allies and a desire to avoid Ottoman-style overextension in the Middle East reinforced this attitude (Çelik 1999). In addition, a new national identity was created by entities such as the same Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the early modern state aiming to westernize the country, limit Islam in public life, increase Turkish nationalism and promote unwillingness to be involved in relations with Arab states.

Prompted by changes after the end of the Cold War, Prime Minister (1983–1991) and subsequent President (1991–1993) Turgut Özal spearheaded a change in the Turkish policy makers' noninterventionist policies. After the first Gulf War, Özal increased Turkey's involvement in Middle Eastern affairs considerably, in spite of resistance from the foreign affairs bureaucracy, the military, opposition parties and the public (Aydın 2005). His aim was to secure a strategically important position for Turkey in the post-Cold War era as its traditional role of obstacle against Soviet expansionism was no longer valid (Çelik 1999). For example, Turkey was one of the first nations to join the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq in 1991.

Özal also altered relations with Syria. Beginning in 1987, he conducted negotiations using water as both a threat (reducing the Euphrates River downstream flow) and an enticement (construction of a water pipeline). In a parallel move relevant to Syria, President Özal was integral in improving relations

with Israel, particularly with reference to the military, trade, intelligence and water.

A second decisive influence of leadership can be observed in the October 1998 crisis between Turkey and Syria. Although Turkish intelligence had provided evidence that PKK leader Öcalan had lived in Damascus since 1979 and that Syria was supporting the PKK militants, Turkey had not preferred use of force as a foreign policy option. In 1998, the then-Turkish President Süleyman Demirel, then-Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz and high-level military officials changed their rather soft rhetoric against Syria.

Following Prime Minister Yılmaz's visit to Israel in September, accusations against Syria by top-ranking military and civilian officers were continuous. The same month, Prime Minister Yılmaz warned Syria that "it would suffer severe consequences for its support of the PKK terrorists." On September 16<sup>th</sup>, in the Hatay province, General Atilla Ateş of the Turkish Armed Forces said, "By supporting the bandit Apo [Abdullah Öcalan], they [the Syrians] have confronted us with the plague of terrorism. Turkey has made the necessary efforts for good relations. If Turkey does not receive any response to its efforts, it will have the right to take all appropriate measures. We have no patience" (as quoted in Olson 2001:110).

On October 2, the crisis reached its peak with the Turkish Chief of the General Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu's statement that the crisis is "a situation of undeclared war between Turkey and Syria." Kıvrıkoğlu stated "They [Syrians] have been giving support to terrorism since 1984. It looks as though our warnings did not succeed. Indeed, Syria's power cannot be compared to Turkey's. The reason we are patient is that we do not want to waste opportunities for cooperation" (*Cumhuriyet*, 1998, translated by Özdamar).

Harsh rhetoric also was used by Turkey's highest official, President Demirel, just one day before the Adana agreement between two countries was signed. On October 19, 1998, President Demirel visited the Hatay province to deliver messages to Damascus that Turkey was ready for war:

Being peaceful does not mean being weak. Being peaceful means solving problems in a civilized manner with dialogue. If Turkey cannot solve its problems by peaceful means and therefore resorts to some other tools, nobody can criticize Turkey. ... We have said 'enough!' to Syria. Nobody is going to test Turkey's power. Those who did that in the past have always regretted it. The brave Turkish Armed Forces are capable of eliminating any kind of threat and are ready to teach a lesson to those who attempt to threaten Turkey. (Güzel and Biçer 1998, translated by Özdamar)

The Turkish leadership's unprecedented language combined with the military buildup and exercises near the border led Syria to believe that the Turkish threats were credible. On October 20, 1998, the Adana Agreement was signed, cutting Syrian support for the PKK.

*Part III of Figure 2b: Political Contextual-Governmental Contextual Variables:*

Turkey suffered from political party fragmentation and a lack of effective party leadership during the 1990s. In a 10-year period, 10 different cabinets were formed resulting in political instability, exacerbating successful economic policymaking and exerting a negative influence over some aspects of foreign policy, such as relations with the European Union (EU) over membership.

With respect to Syria, however, a consensus was maintained against states that supported internal terrorism. The only departure took place in the period from 1995 to 1997 when the Islamic Welfare Party (WP) was a coalition partner in the

government. WP tried to make substantial changes in traditional Turkish foreign policy by developing relationships with Arab nations. However, WP was unable to overcome opposition from the foreign affairs bureaucracy and the Turkish armed forces. On the contrary, pressure from bureaucratic and institutionalized military elites effectively neutralized political contextual variables that might have altered policies toward Syria.

In terms of governmental contextual variables, military capability has been an influential factor. Turkey has one of the largest armies in the region and its military capacity is superior to Syria. The military aspect remains a latent potential, however, since the use of force against Syria, although threatened, has not, to date, been used. As a result, in terms of the influence of physical military power, there is a mixed effect.

*Part III of Figure 2b: Economic Contextual Variables:*

The role of water to both Turkey and Syria, discussed above, has obvious economic implications. In addition, Turkey used trade as both a carrot and a stick in its relations with other Middle Eastern countries. In December 1994, Yalim Erez, president of Turkey's Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges and a close advisor to Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, led a 100-person delegation to Damascus to engage in trade negotiations (Olson 2001). It appeared, at least temporarily, that Syria's 300 million dollar trade deficit with Turkey would trump other issues. This warming of relations was short-lived; in 1995 Syria increased its support for PKK activities in the Hatay province, returning tension to Turkish-Syrian relations.

This variable offers mixed results. While the economics of water remain a critical component, and one that has been inextricably intertwined with the Kurdish issue, Syria's support for PKK terrorism has a greater influence on Turkey's foreign policy decision-making. The micro-level variable of economics, resulting from Syria's interference with the PKK in Turkey, does have a direct albeit lesser influence on macro level variables such as Turkey's foreign policy.

*Part III of Figure 2b: Historical Policy Context Variable:*

An example of the historical policy context variable is Syria's more than six-decade long hostility toward Turkey over the Hatay province. Turkey annexed the province in 1939 with France's acquiescence (France administered the region at that time) and the popular support of the people in the Hatay assembly. Since then, Syria had maintained a territorial claim over that region, arguing that the province was given to Turkey. Turkey's perception of Syria as an antagonistic neighbor has been reinforced steadily over time, with an overall influence on any foreign policy decisions toward Damascus.

Historical mutual mistrust between Turks and Arabs also has played an important role in Turkish-Syrian relations. Turks felt they were "stabbed in the back" by Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire when the Arab people allied with the British during World War I. For Arabs, four centuries of Ottoman rule meant repression and was the main reason for underdevelopment in the region. These historical events and past behaviors of actors have shaped Turkey's and Syria's rather uneasy attitudes toward each other.

*Part III of Figure 2b: Cultural Contextual Variables:*

Cultural contextual variables also influence Turkish foreign policy. One example of this is the relationship between media coverage and Turkish nationalism, which most of the media outlets support. During the 1990s, increases in PKK terrorist acts resulted in an increase of ethnic Turkish nationalism. This has further consolidated consensus against Syrian support of the PKK. For example, in the

1999 elections, the once-marginal Nationalist Actions Party (NAP) finished second and became a coalition partner with the Democratic Left and Motherland parties. One of the few exceptions to increased Turkish nationalism has been the Kurdish media and the ethnic Kurdish People's Labor Party (HEP)<sup>11</sup> party. The Kurdish media functions in a similar manner, increasing Kurdish nationalism within Turkey. Daily newspapers, such *Gündem*, *Özgür Gündem* or *Özgür Ülke*, along with the HEP have contributed to Kurdish nationalism. Subsequently, the HEP and its members have been accused of promoting terrorism and therefore have been prosecuted by the Turkish courts (Ergil 2001). Again, cultural patterns represent influential micro level variables on final foreign policy decisions. Although both Turks and Kurds are Muslims, the ethnic and linguistic divides continue to be a principal cause of the prolonged strife.

### Model Application

Our intellectual forebears [Sun Tzu, Kautilya, Thucydides, and Herodotus] shared the conviction that one fundamental law of international relations is that such politics is shaped by and rooted in domestic affairs. ... Still, we wrestle with how best to integrate the high politics of international affairs and the daily struggles of domestic, political, economic and social concerns that motivate the actions of citizens and leaders. (Bueno de Mesquita 2002a:2)

International relations and foreign policy have been studied for more than two millennia. Yet, we, the students of international politics, are far from agreeing on basic axioms, such as the effect of domestic affairs on foreign policy decisions. The philosophical approach (i.e., systemism) and the model in this piece provide an example of middle-range theorizing that reflects on the following problem: how can one understand the nature of the foreign policy decisions that are the consequence of domestic ethnic divides? The Turkish case helps to relate theory and practice.

We can account for this relationship by presenting two features of the model. First, the model allows the researcher to explore all four linkages allowed by systemism. It facilitates understanding of how both micro and macro variables have shaped the foreign policy of Turkey in its relationship with Syria, as depicted in Figure 2b.

In Part I of the model, we can trace the origins of ethnic conflict, such as individual, institutionalized elite preferences and governmental contextual variables, at the beginning of Kurdish political violence. Individual leadership and the institutionalized elite of the early Turkish Republic failed to predict that an Ottoman-style integration of ethnicities based solely on religion would not be possible, especially in an age of ethnicity and language-driven nationalism. That is, Islam alone would not be enough to keep an ethnically diverse population intact.

Part II of the model shows how problems originating at home change the behavior of actors at the macro level. For example, it is known abroad that the Kurdish issue has been the political Achilles' heel for modern Turkey since its inception. As early as 1925, a massive Kurdish revolt in Southeastern Turkey occurred that was rumored to be backed by Britain. This revolt caused the young Turkish government to give in to British demands on Northern Iraq where Turkey claimed sovereignty over two major cities, Kirkuk and Mosul. Six decades

<sup>11</sup> HEP (*Halkın Emekçi Partisi*, or People's Labor Party) and its successors DEP (*Demokrasi Partisi*, or Democracy Party) and HADEP (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*, or the People's Democracy Party,) comprise the political wing of the PKK.

later, faced with water concerns, Syria developed a similar policy providing support for PKK terrorism in order to gain leverage over Turkey.

Turkey's dealing with Syria as a result of its support for terrorism is analyzed in Part III of the model. Two of the most influential variables in Part III have been the leadership and elite preferences. In particular, President Özal's substantial changes in Turkish foreign policy in the region as well as his successor, Demirel, and Prime Minister Yılmaz's agonizing pressure on Syria changed the course of relations. On the other hand, the Islamic and conservative governments (controlled by the Welfare Party in 1996–1997 and the Justice and Development Party since 2002, respectively) took a softer line against Syria due to their emphasis on religious ties and a desire to build friendlier relations with Muslim nations of the Middle East. Then again, the military and Ministry of Foreign Affairs bureaucracy's resistance to Middle East policy changes have had no less of an effect on foreign policy decisions. When individual leadership and the institutionalized elite coordinated, the pressure on Syria was increased and some policy satisfaction was achieved in 1998. Domestic ethnic conflict (Part I) had an effect on the policies of other nations and other system-level factors, eventually causing a whole range of aspects that ultimately shaped Turkish foreign policy (Part IV). Indeed, foreign policy decisions and patterns shaped by these variables (Part IV), created feedback effects on other variables such as Kurds (Part I), the Syrians and systemic actors (Part II), and the domestic foreign policy actors themselves (Part III).

The second advantage of using this framework is that it allows comparison among foreign policy analyses. As McGowan and Shapiro (1973) suggest, it is an organizing and heuristic device, rather than a deductive template for hypothesis testing, thus allowing for observation of the influence of various independent variables on the dependent variable, i.e., foreign policy behavior. Examining the variance of similar independent variables across cases is an important starting point to build hypotheses about the sort of factors that shape the foreign policy of multiple states in comparable circumstances.

In line with the suggestions of McGowan and Shapiro, the expanded version of the model also is used as a template for analysis of the Turkish case, rather than hypothesis testing purposes. We do so because drawing greater conclusions about the explanatory power of the model based on a single case study would be a mistake. However, the expanded model's application to another case already exists (James and Özdamar 2005) where India-Pakistan relations over the ethno-religious conflict in Kashmir is analyzed. The expanded model's explanatory power can be analyzed through a comparison of Indian and Turkish foreign policies. Although we are aware of the "too many variables too few cases" problem, the scope of this article is too limited for a study making a comprehensive comparison of cases by using the model. Future studies using the expanded foreign policy framework may achieve such a task. In this study, we limit our contribution to bringing the ethnic conflict dimension to the earlier model.

Other foreign policy work illustrates how the model facilitates comparison across a broad range of topics and paradigms. Consider, for example, the individual and group policy maker preferences variable in Part I and Part III. There are many different approaches to the study of these same variables. For example, Kugler, Yeşilada, and Efirid (2003) use an expected utility model to predict the future of Afghanistan that includes both micro and macro level actors accounting for the political resolution. Carter, Scott, and Rowling (2004) use descriptive statistics in their analysis of members of Congress with foreign policy agendas. Via leadership trait analysis, Dyson (2006) studies how Prime Minister Tony Blair's personality traits have influenced his foreign policy decisions. Marfleet and Miller (2005) use a context content analysis system to analyze interstate cooperation.

Comparing other seemingly diverse works can be facilitated by placing them according to the applicable domestic variable. Some works address historical policy contexts, such as Pickering's (2002) study of past experiences in war and a state's propensity to intervene militarily. Others use diverse approaches to look at cultural contextual variables, such as the media. Van Belle (2000) considers how press freedom affects foreign policy. Scott (2000) asserts that public impressions of the U.S.'s foreign policy role often are based on perceptions encouraged by popular media. Approaching the cultural variable from a different angle, Ozkeceri-Taner (2005) studies when and how domestic institutionalized ideas affect high level foreign policy decision making in coalition governments. Rioux (2005) covers two variables, cultural contextual and governmental contextual, with his work on the differing foreign policy views of Francophone and Anglophone Canadians. A combination of both the political contextual and government contextual variables can be found in Specher and DeRouen's (2005) investigation of Israeli cabinet size and party representation alongside domestic unrest. The expected utility model (Bueno de Mesquita 2002b) incorporates both domestic (Part I and III of our model here) and international pressures (Part II of the model) that decision makers have to face. The model used in this article, as a heuristic device, suggests that analyzing the linkages among these relevant variables of foreign policy analysis is useful, even among eclectic methodologies.

One of the more prolific approaches to foreign policy decision making has been poliheuristic theory (PH), which considers a two-step process that takes into account both psychological and rational choice factors in decision making processes (Mintz 1993).<sup>12</sup> Studies that have tested PH include Redd's (2002) process tracing of information available to decision makers from advisors. James and Zhang (2005) use PH to analyze crisis decision making behavior in China. By placing together work that center on the decision making variable, comparisons are more readily visible, such as putting these and other PH studies alongside Mitchell's (2005) creation of an advisory systems typology to study the relationship between presidential management style and foreign policy. Briefly, other studies cover parts of the model outside the realm of domestic variables. Drury and Li's (2006) work informs policies of other nations, assessing U.S. economic sanctions on China. Harvey (2004) addresses both policies of other nations and system level variables in his study of U.S. unilateralism since 9/11.

## Conclusion

Without the integration of knowledge, revised from time to time in the light of fresh theoretical insights, improved methods, and new evidence, International Studies is destined to remain a collection of bits and pieces of explanation of reality and behavior. (Brecher 1999:213)

Ethnic dynamics are the products of historical legacies; they shape governmental and political structures, affect the policies of other nations, shape individual and group policy maker preferences and institutionalized elite preferences, and help us better understand sources of foreign policy. Especially in the developing world, where the exercise of power often is legitimized on ethnic grounds, the masses can be mobilized with communal consciousness and power structures easily drawn along ethnic lines, including ethnic factors that strengthen an explanation about politics and foreign policy.

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<sup>12</sup> Our model shows decision making processes as an incomplete box, as this aspect of foreign policy making is not a focus of this study, and remains a subject for future research.

The foreign policy model presented here, based on a system-oriented approach, provides further understanding of the relationship between domestic variables and foreign policy as it concerns Turkey. It is shown that domestic ethnic conflicts may become internationalized and determine a substantial part of the countries' foreign relations. Micro level variables, such as institutionalized elite preferences, and macro level variables, such as Syria's foreign policy, appear to have a causal relationship with Turkey's foreign policies.

Related to this, a system-oriented approach is used to better understand internal-external relationships. Micro, or actor level variables, such as ethnic and religious differences among peoples, have profoundly shaped foreign policy patterns. Hence it is shown that foreign policy does not depend merely on external factors. On the contrary, ethnic conflicts originating in Southeast Turkey are as important, if not more so, than international or macro level variables in explaining ultimate foreign policy decisions. In this case, ethnic variables internal to Turkey have served as the impetus for Syrian involvement, subsequently promoting a foreign policy response by Turkey.

To summarize, foreign policy cannot be analyzed successfully without paying special attention to domestic factors. The model presented here provides a systematic way to study various micro and macro level variables and a variety of casual relationships among them. Using domestic actors and structures, such as ethnicity, religion, culture, leaders, political and governmental contextual variables, with specific reference to the ontological approach known as systemism, this study provides a robust example of a foreign policy model that is able to depict a more complete picture of international politics. This study illustrates rather than tests the model. However, it provides a firm foundation for a variety of methodological approaches. For example, the model can be tested via comparative case studies or tested in large-N, quantitative studies. As mentioned above, one of the model's most attractive attributes is its ability to effectively compare and build upon a variety of approaches.

Multiple additional applications of the model are possible. For example, ethnicity as a domestic variable resulting in the internationalization of a conflict can be the focus of concentration for a variety of comparative studies. Beyond the concentration on ethnicity, other actor level variables can be placed under more intense study and analysis. How system level variables can influence a state's specific foreign policy processes would be a natural extension to this and other comparable studies.

Further studies might illustrate needed adjustments to the model. In this treatise, we have not attempted to describe any direct influences the domestic and international variables depicted in Part I through III might have on decision making processes. It may be revealed that more robust feedback arrows are required to correctly depict, and therefore compare, decision making processes with significant systemic level pressures. For example, change from a bipolar to a unipolar international system might have a greater impact on foreign policy decision making processes in states with increasing regional power, such as Turkey since the end of Cold War. The iterative quality to the model may be more vigorous than currently presented.

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