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# 'We are not barbarians': Gender politics and Turkey's quest for the West

## Ali Bilgic
Bilkent University

## Abstract
Turkey's policy-makers have historically aimed to position Turkey within the West by convincing the latter that Turkey meets the 'standards' of the West, that they 'are not barbarians'. This article aims to offer a gender analysis of Turkey's relations with the West by showing how 'devalorization' as feminization and hypermasculinization of the non-West becomes a source of insecurity for non-Western policy-makers. This gendered ontological insecurity is intensified when they face a military threat from a third party. The argument is that Turkey's policy-makers try to benefit from military crises in order to represent Turkey as a state meeting Western 'standards' of masculinity, and therefore to address its gendered 'devalorization'. The analysis aims to contribute to the literatures of postcolonial feminism and non-Western insecurities.

In 1911, Enver Pasha, one of the leaders of the Committee of Union Progress that practically ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1912 to 1918, wrote to his friend from Tripoli, the last territory of the Empire in North Africa under Italian occupation: 'I hope, my dear friend, that we will show to civilized Europe that we are not barbarians, who are not entitled with rights, and that we deserve respect'.[1] Ambivalence was also detectable in his words: 'True, I hate my European enemies, but I also admire them because they showed me that I was right during our conversations with Hans when I said "Only interests matter in the game of nations, there is no role for emotions"'.[2]

**Corresponding author:**
Ali Bilgic, Department of International Relations, Bilkent University, 06800 Ankara, Turkey.
Email: abilgic@bilkent.edu.tr

Over 60 years later, in 1974, Prime Minister (PM) Bülent Ecevit, following the military operation of Turkey in Cyprus, attempted to convince the West that in comparison with Greece, Turkey was 'a more realist nation'.[3] In two different historical–political contexts, therefore, two foreign policy-makers of the Ottoman Empire/Turkey developed similar narratives. Both Enver Pasha and Ecevit were keen to convince Europe/the West/ international society (heretofore, the West) that their country should not be treated by the West with disrespect and contempt, as Turkey is *like* the West and one of them, and that they are not 'barbarians'.

This article aims to explore why Turkey's policy-makers have continually tried to prove to the West that Turkey meets the 'standards' of the latter. Answers will be sought within the possibility that feminization and hypermasculinization, or *gendering*, in patriarchal global politics have been and are instrumental in constructing power hierarchies between the West and non-West. As gendering normalizes the subordination of the non-West (in this case Turkey) to the West, this leads to a non-Western insecurity arising from the idea of falling short of 'the standards'. It will be argued below that when the policy-makers of Turkey perceive a military threat, they try to benefit from military crises as opportunities to address a gendered ontological insecurity. They achieve this by identifying Turkey as a state that meets Western 'standards' of masculinity while gendering the source of military insecurity.

Turkey's foreign policy vis-a-vis the West has been studied from competing theoretical and historical perspectives.[4] However, these studies, which include constructivist and critical accounts focusing on identity construction processes between Turkey and the West, have not factored gender as an analytical category. Consequently, they overlook the ways in which gender becomes one of the constitutive tropes in these processes. To the contrary, this article examines how hierarchical relations between the West and non-West are reproduced through gendering, with the objective of addressing this overlooked dimension. Moreover, it analyses gendering as a source of insecurity for the non-West with specific reference to Turkey's gendered relations with the West. This examination will be performed through the theoretical insight offered by writers about masculinities in global politics, feminist critiques of Orientalism and postcolonial feminist literature on West/non-West relations. It also aims to discuss the narrative of non-Western decision-makers when addressing this gendered insecurity at times of military crises with a third party. This narrative has never solely targeted the perceived military threat per se, but has aimed to challenge Turkey's gendered subordination vis-a-vis the West.

The argument begins by setting out the theoretical foundation of the argument based on relevant literatures.[5] The second section will lay out the historical and political context preceding each military crisis – with Greece in 1974 and 1996 and with Syria in 2012. It will be argued that in all three historical periods, Turkey's policy-makers underlined Turkey's hybridity to differentiate it from the West yet at the same time sought to embed it *within the West*. In this way, they attempted to address Turkey's gendered ontological insecurity. However, the military crises interrupted these processes. Finally, elements of Turkey's policy-makers' gendered narrative will be examined in moments of military crises: Turkey as a *democratic teacher/guide* and as a *rational/not emotional* state. Through this double-discursive move, they attempted to drop the hybridity in favour of an approach that unconditionally constructs Turkey as a politically and

epistemologically Western state, while feminizing and hypermasculinizing the military threats to represent them as 'non-Western'.

The main reason for choosing *moments* of military crisis in Turkey's history is to underline the significance of gendered ontological insecurity even when policy-makers face military (physical) insecurities. Paraphrasing Krishna,[6] what really happened in these moments is less important than how policy-makers narrated them to address gendered insecurity. 'Narratives are essential (for a feminist analysis) because they are a primary way by which we make sense of the world around us, produce meanings, articulate intentions, and legitimize actions'.[7] The objective of this study is to point out a specific context (the Turkey–West gendered power hierarchy) where gendered ontological insecurity cannot be overlooked. This will be conducted through examining narratives during the moments when military insecurity was perceived intensely by policy-makers.

## Gendered ontological insecurity of the non-West's 'Devalorized' masculinities

Feminist International Relations (IR) offers students of the discipline 'gender lenses' through which global politics can be unpacked and problematized with the purpose of revealing its gendered characteristics.[8] This critical practice is not solely related to the wider interest of feminist IR in 'gender emancipation'; it is also related to the presumption that the problematization of global power hierarchies requires an analysis of how individuals, social groups and geographies are continuously *gendered* to reconstruct these hierarchies.[9] However, power in global politics does not operate through the timeless, universal and monolithic dichotomy between 'dominant masculinity' and 'subordinated femininity'.[10] Instead, there are multiple masculinities interacting with each other to reproduce or transform power hierarchies. While Hooper underlines the significance of 'the politics of masculinity as a contested field of power moves and resistances' in understanding global politics,[11] Tickner and Sjoberg argue that for feminist IR, which aims to reveal gendered dimensions of power relations and transform them, an examination of the complexities of masculinities is of key importance.[12] Following this line of thinking, the current gender analysis will focus on power hierarchies among masculinities within the West/non-West context.

Theory of masculinities, primarily formulated by Connell,[13] enables students of feminist IR to examine how masculinities are constructed in different historical, social and political contexts and how structures, processes, institutions and individuals are represented through relations among masculinities. Applying the theory to global politics, Hooper conceptualizes different masculinities of states which become prominent in changing historical periods: 'the citizen-warrior masculinity' revolving around aggressiveness, militarism and materialistic power accumulation, and 'the bourgeois-rational masculinity', which is more egalitarian, democratic and less aggressive.[14] The latter is both a product and producer of increasing liberal economic relations, and states are gradually gendered through this type of masculinity.[15] However, in post-9/11 global politics, more aggressive and highly militarized and exclusionary states have become dominant over other masculinized identities of states in the form of 'remasculinized'[16] or 'hypermasculinized'[17] units. This type of power hierarchies among temporal masculinities is

conceptualized by Connell as a dichotomy between 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'subordinated masculinity'.[18]

The concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' has provoked criticisms in feminist IR. Eichler's analysis of militarized masculinities in post-Soviet Russia highlights the improbability of any masculinity obtaining a 'hegemonic' position when multiple subordinated masculinities constantly challenge it.[19] It is also argued that different social, political and economic conditions obstruct the understanding of a timeless and monolithic hegemony of one masculinity over another (such as between heterosexual and homosexual masculinities).[20] These criticisms rightly underline the necessity of approaching masculinities cautiously 'to avoid sliding into the practice of treating masculinities as singular, as static, or as decontextualized'.[21] Yet, one type of masculinity, in spite of its changing content, can enjoy dominancy over others because it provides the 'standards'. As put by Hutchings:

> Standards are specified for what it means to be a proper state (man) in the context of international politics. These standards provide the parameters of what can count as a state (man) but enable discrimination between more or less stately (manly) attributes and actions.[22]

Postcolonial feminists elaborate that these 'standards', mainly provided by the West but regenerated through the contribution of the non-West, are also products of global political and economic structures that feminize the non-West.[23] In the context of West/non-West relations, the perception of non-Western subjects that they fall short of meeting the 'standards' (or being articulated as such by the West) can be a source of insecurity for them because they are positioned as 'the feminized and hypermasculinized other' of the West.

Politics of masculinities is closely related to the process of 'othering' in West/non-West relations. In critical[24] and postcolonial literature,[25] these relations have been examined with regard to dichotomist identity construction processes. Some critical scholars expose the gendered dimension of these identity construction processes explicitly.[26] However, how gender itself contributes to the generation of identity dichotomies between masculinities, both in inter- and intra-state relations, has only been studied by feminist IR.[27] Postcolonial feminists perform an analysis of masculinities that construct hierarchical relations within the West/non-West context through gendering. This is epitomized primarily, albeit not exclusively, in two ways. In the case of hypermasculinization, the non-West is represented and discursively reproduced as excessively authoritarian, barbaric, violent, reactionary and irrational (or sometimes possessing 'cold rationality').[28] The feminization of the non-West, on the other hand, constructs it as passive, emotional and weak.[29] The gendering of the non-West is essential for its spatial construction as the other and as an underdeveloped, uncivilized, non-modern geography that requires the West's (the self) intervention and penetration to reorder.[30] In addition, as will be discussed below, for non-Western policy-makers, gendering can 'naturalize' the exclusion of the non-Western state from the international society by rejecting its equality with the West, and undermining its sovereign right to conduct its domestic and international affairs independently. The question, however, remains, 'how does gendering operate in the politics of masculinities during the West/non-West encounters?' Two answers are in order.

One can be traced to the feminist critique of Orientalism. As has been versed prevalently so far, Said argues that the West reproduces 'the self' through orientalizing the East as 'the other'.[31] The East is monolithically essentialized as geography of absolute power, corruption, violence, underdevelopment, oppression and also sexual desire. Therefore, as argued by Slater earlier, the West's domination of and intervention in the East becomes 'natural' and even 'necessary'. Although this brief account does not do justice to the complexities of Said's argument, it sufficiently shows that the West/non-West dichotomies are generated through continuous epistemological reiterations, which reproduce both Western and non-Western subjectivities. The feminist critique of orientalism, however, claims that sexualized representations of the East are not just part of *latent* Orientalism as opposed to the *manifest* one,[32] as argued by Said; instead, they are one of the constitutive tropes of the process.[33] This includes the representation of Eastern women as an object of desire, a victim to be liberated by the West.[34] More importantly for the purposes of this analysis, it also involves often conflicting sexualized representations of the East as 'the other'. On the one hand, it is a woman who is exotically beautiful, aesthetic, an object of desire to be conquered and protected; on the other, it is a man who is excessively violent, aggressive, abusive, irrational, an object of fear. Following Bhabha, the colonizer is ambivalent towards the colonized: fear and desire, dislike and affection, underestimation and appraisal ambivalently co-exist.[35] Concomitant feminization and hypermasculinization of the non-West as 'the other' reflect this ambivalence.[36]

The second answer to the question of how gendering works in the politics of masculinities during West/non-West encounters can be found in Spike Peterson's 'devalorization'. Peterson argues that feminization is used to 'normalize' hierarchical power relations. The 'cultural privileging' of what is considered as masculine '(reason, agency, control, objectivity etc.) at the expense of that which is stigmatized as feminine (emotion, passivity, uncertainty, subjectivity etc.)' articulates feminization as a devalorizing practice.[37] 'The more an individual or a social category is feminized, the more likely that their devaluation be assumed or presumed to be explained'.[38] As a result, power hierarchies can be naturalized and legitimized through a feminization of 'the subordinate'.[39] In other words, as there is no 'natural' or 'essential' ontology in power hierarchies between the West and the non-West, the feminization of the non-West contributes politically and epistemologically to reproducing and naturalizing the hierarchy through constructing a gendered 'other'.

Hinted yet not elaborated by Peterson, devalorization as a naturalizing and essentializing strategy of the non-West's difference and its subordination is also closely related to 'hypermasculinization'. Hypermasculinity is conceptualized in postcolonial feminist literature as an indicator that both the colonizer and the colonized value excessive aggressiveness against each other.[40] Ling gives a twist to the concept and uses it to explain the aggressive way that Asian economies react to recast 'economic development into a retrieval of cultural-national manhood' against the West.[41] Similar to feminization, hypermasculinization can be considered as a devalorizing practice because the hypermasculinized non-West is represented as subordinate to the prudent, liberal, rational, democratic West, which is reproduced through the 'bourgeois-rational' type of masculinity stated above. This also paves the way for the naturalization of the exclusion from the West and of Western intervention to 'the hypermasculinized other'. This point leads the analysis to gendered insecurity of the non-West vis-a-vis the West.

One of the underlying dynamics that shapes West/non-West relations is the insecurity of the non-West. However, this insecurity is not only articulated as a military threat but also as 'non-military and non-specific'.[42] Reflecting on Turkey, Bilgin argues that 'the non-specific and non-military security problem encountered by Turkey's founding leaders was one of seeking a way to negotiate difference, given European/international society's ambivalence toward their difference'.[43] The possibility of exclusion from European/international society due to their 'difference' prompted Turkey's policy-makers to adopt policies of Westernization, which 'allowed Turkey's leaders to claim the right to be treated equally and with respect'.[44] In a more comprehensive analysis that compares the socialization processes of Russia, Japan and Turkey with the international society, Zarakol discusses the issue by engaging with the concept of ontological insecurity. In the analysis of the empires defeated by the West, she argues that particular non-Western states attempted to enter the international society – defined in Westphalian terms – from a disadvantageous position as 'non-modern' and 'underdeveloped', thus giving rise to ontological insecurity. 'Once the peoples of the old empires started accepting this worldview, it was inevitable that they too would embrace its judgement: *they* found *themselves* as coming up short, not just materially but socially and culturally'.[45] The result is the continuous efforts of the non-Western states to *convince* the West that they are 'catching up' with the standards.

'Ontological insecurity' is constructed through ambivalent gendered representations and reproductions of the non-West. Ambivalent as it is, the hypermasculinization and feminization of non-Western masculinities reproduces non-Western subjects in a way that this 'devalorization' paves the way for physical insecurity. It makes the non-Western space and subjects susceptible to the so-called 'legitimate' Western political and military intervention as the holder of the temporal standards of masculinity, in order to 'civilize', 'modernize' or 'democratise' those who could not meet the 'standards'. Deriving from Bilgin's and Zarakol's conceptualizations, a second type of insecurity is articulated as falling short of meeting Western masculinities' political, economic and social standards, and is therefore excluded from the international society and deprived of respect and equality. Represented as emotional, passive, incompetent, in need of guidance and protection from the West, and as excessively aggressive, militarist, non-modern and irrational, it reproduces the non-Western subject, who desires to be both like the West and to be different from it. This manifests another ambivalence.

The underlying reason of the non-West's ambivalence is the hybridity that its spatial–temporal identity epitomizes. Following Bhabha, Young argues that during the colonizer/colonized encounters, it is possible that the colonized can construct a hybrid identity which involves elements from the colonizer's identities in combination with local characteristics. The result is the generation of 'polymorphously perverse peoples who are, in Bhabha's phrase, white but not quite'.[46] In the case of Turkey, as a response to its hypermasculinization and feminization, policy-makers of the Empire and Republic embarked upon a Westernization process that aimed to reproduce the non-Western unit, including its geography and peoples, as 'white'. However, it was revealed that there was a parochial dimension of this non-Western identity: 'but not quite'. For policy-makers, this dimension, which can be embodied in the form of nationalism, renders the non-West 'different' from the West.[47]

However, as this analysis aims to illustrate in the case of Turkey, this difference can also emerge in the form of anti-imperialism (1970s), a model country (1990s) and 'the leader of its civilizational basis'[48] (2000s). This temporal 'difference' enabled Turkey's policy-makers to reposition Turkey vis-a-vis the West – not as opposed to it, but as a different member of the West-centric international society that is built upon the (neo)realist/liberal epistemological foundation. In all three historical periods under analysis, Turkey's gendered ontological insecurity was vehemently felt by the policy-makers. The danger of being represented as emotional, passive, irrational, weak or highly aggressive, authoritarian, militarist 'other' of the West was tackled discursively by highlighting Turkey's hybridity and its unique value for the West.

## Addressing Turkey's gendered ontological insecurity during military crises

Since the identification of the Ottoman Empire as a devalorized entity ('the Sick Man of Europe'), *convincing* the West that the Ottoman Empire/Turkey is Western and modern has been important. In the mid-nineteenth century, a pro-reform Ottoman intellectual argued that:

> It is absolutely necessary that we catch up with the strongest civilization in the world, to be accepted in it, and be included among the states living in the European order. In order to achieve these objectives, we must *convince* Europe about our reform-mindedness by practicing novelties without hesitation. If, and only if, Europe trusts us about our willingness to adopt reforms, it can accept us in its order.[49]

*Convincing* the West that the purpose of the reforms was to render the Empire 'one of them' was an embodiment of non-Western anxiety about its own self-being. With the foundation of the Republic (1923), Turkey's policy-makers, primarily the founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (President, 1923–1938), launched an intensive Westernization process coloured by nationalism: 'white but not quite'. Turkey's gendered insecurity was occasionally eased when Turkey joined the League of Nations (1932), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (1952) and signed the Ankara Agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC) (1963), all serving as institutional manifestations of Turkey's Western credentials. However, this was not always the case. In the preceding years of the three military crises, Turkey's policy-makers were facing problems regarding Turkey's position within the West as an equal, respectable and strategically valuable state. In what follows, these periods and the subsequent military crises will be discussed.

### The Cyprus crisis (1974)

In Cyprus, Greek and Turkish communities lived under British administration until 1954 when Greek nationalists (Ethnikí Orgánosis Kipriakoú Agónos (EOKA)) began to launch attacks against British posts. The status quo was changed by the attempt to unite the island with mainland Greece (*Enosis*). The increasing tension between Greece and Turkey was cooled down with the intervention of Britain. In successive meetings in

Zurich and London, the three countries agreed for the foundation of a bicommunal independent Cyprus in 1960. Britain, Greece and Turkey became guarantor states of the independence of the island. In 1964, the attempts of Cypriot President Makarios to alter the Constitution prompted Turkey's policy-makers to use its guarantor state rights per the 1960 London Agreement in order to preserve the status quo in Cyprus. While Turkey sent jetfighters to fly over the island, the infamous 'Johnson letter' from US President Johnson halted Turkey's attempts to intervene. Developments on the island in 1974 put Turkey's policy-makers in a precarious position. The government led by President Makarios was toppled by a Greek *junta*. The President fled and the Turkish-speaking community was in danger. Turkey intervened in July 1974.

The preceding years of the military intervention were troubled years, both domestically and internationally. In 1963, the Ankara Agreement, which approved the prospect of Turkey's entry to the Customs Union, was signed between the EEC and Turkey. Then Foreign Minister (FM) Ulvi Cemal Erkin celebrated the event as the affirmation that 'Turkey belonged to the West'.[50] While Turkey's ontological insecurity was eased momentarily, the conjuncture was changed by the letter of President Johnson (1964) to PM Ismet Inonu (centre-left Republican Peoples Party, CHP), warning against a possible military operation of Turkey to Cyprus in order to protect the Turkish-speaking community. 'Once more it seemed that NATO did not see it fit to protect Turkish interests',[51] since the letter clearly stated that NATO would not take the side of Turkey in case of military intervention nor would it guarantee Turkey's defence in the case of Soviet aggression. In addition, Turkey's policy-makers interpreted that when Turkey was in conflict with Greece, a 'historical companion of Western civilization', Turkey would be denied support.[52]

Turkey's primary response was to reinvigorate relations with USSR with the visit of FM Erkin to Moscow. The successive governments of Süleyman Demirel (centre-right Justice Party, AP, 1965–1971) adopted the same policy and PM Demirel visited Moscow in September 1967.[53] In 1965, the Demirel government had already decided to withdraw from the Multilateral Force, a naval force created under NATO. The 1971 military memorandum and the subsequent interim government ended with the 1973 coalition government between the CHP and the political Islamist National Salvation Party (MSP). The opium issue (the US request to ban opium production in Turkey) aggravated tension with the United States. PM Ecevit accused the latter of 'treating Turkey as if it was a mandate state', a statement reflecting the insecurity of not being accepted in the West as an independent, sovereign state.[54] During this period, relations with the Soviet Union and the Arab world progressed.[55] So did anti-American sentiments in Turkey's public opinion, in parallel with rising left-wing political consciousness. Ecevit defined Turkey's multifaceted foreign policy as 'an exemplary of liberal democratic foreign policy for the least developed and developing countries'.[56] The feminization of Turkey's masculinity, especially by the United States, as a weak, passive, peripheral, 'mandate' state in need of Western guidance and as a state which could not independently conduct its domestic (e.g. the opium issue) and international affairs (e.g. Cyprus) intensified the gendered ontological insecurity. The prospect of being a 'devalorized Other' of the West prompted both right- and left-wing policy-makers to reposition Turkey in global politics in order to convince the West that Turkey as a modern and sovereign state could conduct its affairs

without Western intervention. The hybridity of Turkey's identity was reflected by a multifaceted foreign policy to balance the West, and especially Ecevit's positioning of Turkey closer to the developing world reflected: different from the West yet within the West-centric political and epistemological global order.

## The Imia/Kardak crisis (1996)

Greece applied to the EEC for full membership in 1975 and became a full member in 1981. In the same period, PM Ecevit froze Turkey's responsibilities to complete the Custom Union with European Commission (EC) in 1978, and the 1980 military coup led the European Parliament to freeze relations with Turkey. Under the Premiership of Turgut Özal (centre-right, Motherland Party, ANAP, 1983–1989), Turkey reinvigorated relations with the EC. The application of Turkey for full membership in April 1987 was rejected by the EC in December 1989. To deepen the perception of the unconditional Western (read, European) support to Greece, since the latter is 'one of them', Turkey's policy-makers started to look at the problems with Greece from the prism of inclusion of and exclusion from Europe.[57] Greece's inclusion in the West was institutionalized, while Turkey remained as an outsider. During the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, Turkey's policy-makers' insecurity vis-a-vis the West/Europe was further intensified because of the highly critical stance of the European Union (EU) towards the democracy and human rights record of Turkey.[58] Turkey was represented as a hypermasculinized (aggressive, non-democratic, oppressive) state, which conflicted with the bourgeois-rational masculinity of the West in the 'new world order'.[59]

While Turkey's position within the EC/EU was perilous, the post-Cold War period aggravated the problem of ontological insecurity. Turkey's policy-makers historically represented Turkey's Western credentials with heavy reference to its NATO membership. With the post-Cold War discussions about NATO's place in the new global order, policy-makers were put in a precarious position.[60] Their insecurity about 'Turkey's relevance for the West' increased when NATO seemed determined to strategize European security through the Western European Union, of which Turkey was not a member.[61] Similarly to the period after the Johnson letter, Turkey developed a multifaceted foreign policy by increasing relations with the newly independent Central Asian states and the Middle East.[62] This policy was strongly underlined by attempts to *convince* the West about Turkey's 'unique value' as a role model. The coalition government programme of the centre-right True Path Party (DYP) and centre-left Social Democratic Peoples Party (SHP) led by DYP's Tansu Çiller (1993–1995) stated that 'Turkey has a special position within Atlantic-Europe and in Eurasia. We are with the Western world. We are a secular, democratic, and modern member of the Islamic world. We are a model country'.[63] In the post-Cold War era, Turkey's hybridity was increasingly prioritized as a country within but different from the West. It should be noted that rather than being a 'threatening other', this difference was represented as a strategic value for the West in its quest for democratization in 'new world order'. In addition, the emphasis on democracy, human rights and secularism was also targeting the hypermasculinized representations.

In 1995, the EU confirmed Turkey's accession to the Customs Union, starting from January 1996. PM Çiller was represented in the Turkish media as the leader who 'made

Turkey European': a non-Western desire for the West.[64] However, the rise of political Islam emerged as an obstacle to fulfilling this desire by challenging the model country representations. Before 9/11, hypermasculinized representations of political Islam[65] as violent, excessively aggressive, oppressive and reactionary shaped Turkey's domestic and international affairs. For example, during the 1995 election campaign, Çiller represented herself as the modern and liberal panacea of the political Islamist Welfare Party (RP). Her election would secure Turkey's place in the West.[66] However, this did not prevent an election defeat in December 1995, where the RP came the first and DYP second. None of the parties could form a government single-handedly and the DYP was refraining from forming a coalition with the RP, which claimed that Turkey's place was not in a 'Christian Union'.[67] Messages from the EU about 'rising Islamism' in Turkey and the improbability of the EU to accept a possible Islamist government in Turkey rendered centre policy-makers anxious about reverberations of an Islamist government on Turkey's relations with the West.[68] While Turkey was struggling with the government crisis, the 'flag race' of several Turkish and Greek journalists on the islets of Imia/Kardak in the Aegean Sea, whose status was disputed, triggered a military crisis between Greece and Turkey. Turkey's policy-makers perceived the issue as a violation of territorial waters. Both of them deployed small-scale special military units to the rocks. The crisis was averted by a US diplomatic intervention.

## The Syria crisis (2012)

The final military crisis is the one with Syria in 2012. With the government of the Justice and Development Party (rooted in political Islam, right, AKP, single party governments since 2002), Turkey's relations with the West were in a process of transformation, which was sometimes negatively viewed as an 'axis shift' from the West to the East. In fact, AKP policy-makers, including Abdullah Gül (PM in 2002–2004, FM in 2004–2007, President 2007–2014), R. Tayyip Erdoğan (PM 2004–2014) and Ahmet Davutoğlu (Foreign Policy Chief Advisor of PM in 2002–2009, FM 2009–2014) were continuing the foreign policy activism launched by the previous centre-left and centre-right governments.[69] Starting from the 1964 Johnson letter, Turkey's policy-makers adopted a multifaceted foreign policy. This policy was sometimes coloured by anti-imperialism similar to Ecevit's in the 1970s; sometimes, it became more conciliatory towards the West (e.g. centre-right party governments). This activism also generated questions about Turkey's 'axis shift' from 'the West' to 'the East'. For example, in 1967, when then PM Demirel was asked by a New York Times correspondent about the 'axis shift'. Demirel's reaction was 'What axis shift? … We are anti-communist. Just because we buy something from Russia does not mean that we get closer to it'.[70] In the post-Cold War era, Turkey's hybridity was often used as a positive value for the West: it offered a way to confirm Turkey's 'difference' from the West by repositioning it within the West.

What differentiates the AKP's multidimensional foreign policy is that it has 'cast Turkey as the leader of its own civilization, with the implication that Western civilization is not Turkey's own'.[71] The borders of this civilization are determined as the former territories of the Ottoman Empire.[72] Although the search for an 'alternative path' for Turkey

can be explained by political Islamist parties' anti-Western stance, this rhetoric has never matched practice.[73] Another explanation this analysis pursues is that AKP policy-makers attempt to address the feminization of Turkey historically by the West. In *Strategic Depth*, Davutoğlu states that 'Turkey made a serious and radical decision in terms of its international position: choosing to become a regional power under the umbrella of the hegemonic Western civilizational basin over being the weak leader of its own civilizational basin'.[74] For Davutoğlu, Turkey was feminized (and Turkey's policy-makers accepted it) as a country needing Western guidance and authority in its foreign policy, which could only become a regional power in the Western world order. This devalorization, however, does not correspond to Turkey's cultural/historical heritage, which could offer more than being a regional power.

Yanık argues that Davutoğlu's formulation is also built upon the hybridity in which multiculturalism renders Turkey 'centre state' rather than a bridge; in other words, not only a value for the West but an advantage for Turkey vis-a-vis the West.[75] The question hereby is 'to what extent can Davutoğlu's approach be identified as anti-Western?' Three points can be made to argue the contrary. First, as a scholar of International Relations, Davutoğlu looks at global politics from the prism of the neorealist–neoliberal nexus. The recurrent themes throughout *Strategic Depth* are the primacy of national interests in inter-state relations, 'the right to survival', a rationalist understanding of global politics and the importance of material power underlined by soft power.[76] Therefore, Davutoğlu epistemologically reproduced West-centric global politics.[77] This epistemological perspective is fed into his foreign policy. Second, he did not politically adopt a revisionist position. In the part where Davutoğlu criticized the West's policy in the Yugoslav civil war, for example, his criticism was not towards the United Nations system but towards the failure of the West to uphold its principles. Finally, Davutoğlu did not imagine a role for Turkey beyond the West-centric global order. On the contrary, he has supported Turkey's integration into it in the post-9/11 era by using Turkey's hybridity as a strategic value for the West. The 'civilizational dialogue' that Davutoğlu vehemently supported[78] has been materialized as a project of West-centric neoliberal world order on the 'Alliance of Civilizations', co-chaired by Turkey and Spain (2005).

In short, similar to the previous centre-left and right governments, AKP foreign policy aims to address Turkey's gendered devalorization by the West. This approach has been underlined by the use of Turkey's hybridity as an identity that exists politically within the West rather than in opposition to it. That is why comments from some EU states about the Muslim character of Turkey and its cultural incompatibility with 'Europe' provoked PM Erdoğan to state that:

> Those who are talking about 'axis shift', unless they have a secret agenda, are the ones who could not understand Turkey's multidimensional foreign policy. We, this government, started the accession negotiation with the EU … If EU is not a Christian Union, it should accept Turkey. In fact, that is the only thing to prove that the EU is not a Christian Union. But you [referring to EU] are too extreme to understand this.[79]

Similar to Demirel's reaction regarding the 'axis shift' in 1967, Erdoğan's words are indicative of how non-accession to the EU can not only be a rejection of Turkey's hybrid

identity within the West but also a factor that contributes to AKP policy-makers' gendered ontological insecurity: a devalorized 'different' Turkey, excluded from the West.

During this period, a military crisis with Syria erupted. In fact, during the AKP era, Turkey's relations with Syria had flourished.[80] The bilateral relationship reached to the level where visas were removed and Turkey acted as a mediator in the Syria–Israel disagreement. However, relations were hampered by the civil war in Syria. Turkey's policy-makers took the side of the opposition against the Bessar Assad regime. In 2012, two military crises occurred. First, on 22 June 2012, a Turkish jetfighter was shot down very close to the Syrian air space. Second, on 3 October 2012, a border town in south-eastern Turkey was hit by a bomb launched by the Syrian side, and five Turkish citizens were killed. On the following day, a Parliamentary Act that allowed the government to send the army abroad was issued. Unlike the other two moments, Turkey has been engaging not with a member of the West, but with a state that has been considered as a problem by the West. On various occasions, Turkey reaffirmed its conflating interests with the United States; it became an active member of 'the Friends of Syria' meetings, the second of which was held in Istanbul on 1 April 2012. The interesting point is that despite this concord, policy-makers' narrative is very similar to the previous moments.

In all three periods, the military crises erupted while Turkey's policy-makers were addressing gendered ontological insecurity vis-a-vis the West. The failure to tackle the military threat in accordance with the West's 'standards' underlined by the (neo)realist/liberal ideology furthered Turkey's gendered representations as weak, emotional, irrational and excessively aggressive, militarist and authoritarian. Three discursive moves were adopted. First, the hybridity narrative, which differentiates Turkey from the West, was dropped in favour of a narrative constructing Turkey as a 'Western state'. Second, the source of military threat was feminized and hypermasculinized as irrational, emotional, aggressive and therefore failing to meet the Western 'standards'. The 'devalorized other' was discursively separated from the West. Turkey's policy-makers hereby mimic the Western ways of dealing with the non-West.[81] Finally, related to the previous point, Turkey's identity was reconstructed in a way that meets the Western standards of rationality, prudence and democracy. In what follows, the elements of gendered narrative of Turkey's policy-makers in these crises will be analysed.

## Turkey as a democratic teacher/guide of others

One of the most important tactics to represent Turkey as a democratic, liberal, rational, Western state was to 'otherize' the military threat through gendering. In 1974, Turkey's policy-makers' narrative was to feminize Greece by ascribing irrationality, emotionalism, aggressiveness, authoritarianism and misguidedness. As a result, Turkey constructed itself as a paternal figure who was ready to teach the latter what is right and wrong – in other words, as a figure who was ready to help by being tolerant towards the emotional and irrational practices of the *infant*. Reflecting the (neo)realist/liberal epistemology, Ecevit praised Turkey's realist and rational position as opposed to Greece's irrationality:

> We are in a period when foreign policy cannot be based on emotions and revenge. The most unfortunate thing for Greeks is that they were educated based on dreams and fed by anger

towards Turks … I do not think any Greek politician would say 'I do not want enosis' … On the contrary, in Turkey, no politician is talking about the invasion of Cyprus … No Turkish politician says 'We should get Thessaloniki back' as a response to Greek saying 'We should get Istanbul back'. Why are we like this? Because we are a more realist nation.[82]

As a paternal figure, Turkey claimed the right to remind Greece of the benefits of being a democracy, and similarly presented Turkey as a member of the democratic Western family. After the military operation, Ecevit spoke to the media:

The most important reason why we had such a transparent and honest foreign policy [during the crisis] was Turkey's strong democracy … In comparison with Greece, the virtue of democracy was proved true. Especially at the beginning of the crisis, one the most important weaknesses of Greek diplomacy was its lack of democratic character. It was under a dictatorial regime. Only after Greece became a democracy did it get stronger at diplomacy.[83]

In the 1996 crisis with Greece, Turkey again adopted a democratic teacher role, but different from the previous one due to the post-Cold War geopolitical context. Unlike 1974, Greece was an EU member state. Moreover, Turkey's democratic credentials were highly questioned by the EU.[84] As the democratic/authoritarian dichotomy became irrelevant, Turkey's foreign policy-makers chose to adopt the role of paternal figure to teach Greece how democracies should act. In this narrative, the question was not about Turkey and Greece, but about being good examples as 'established democracies' for the post-communist democracies emerging in Eastern Europe. In the words of Nüzhet Kandemir, then Ambassador of Turkey to Washington, 'There is no other option for the established democracies but to act as a role model in this regard and to begin by applying international rules amongst ourselves first'. He warns, 'What other hope is there for the emerging nations if we fail?'[85]

The similar 'enlightened democratic paternal' figure can also be observed in 2012 vis-a-vis Syria. In the words of PM Erdoğan, the AKP government first chose to convince the regime to start the reform process. This, however, failed. He expressed this paternal approach in the following:

With our good intentions, sincerity, without expecting anything in return … when the Arab Spring started in different countries, we approached the Syrian regime to help. We made recommendations to Bessar Assad and showed the way. However, the Assad regime preferred to put us off, instead of hearing what we were telling him.[86]

This democratic leader identity produces an interesting result. As a paternal democratic country, Turkey identifies itself as a friend of the people of the militarily threatening authoritarian state. In this case, Turkey's policy-makers mimic United States' gendered narrative, especially towards Latin American countries, which represented a dichotomy between a hypermasculinized authoritarian regime and the feminized people who are waiting for the US intervention to liberate them.[87] In 1974, the superiority of Turkey's masculinity over Greece was formulated with reference to the dichotomy between democratic Turkey and authoritarian Greece. As a result, Turkey went so far as to present itself as a saviour of Greeks from the junta. In a press conference in London on 18 July 1974, while promoting the peaceful intentions of Turkey, Ecevit stated:

I have come here to seek out a peaceful solution to the problem … As a matter of fact, something happened today. During the lunch break, I went out to see the bookstores. Greeks who knew me came and hugged me saying 'Save us from this regime'.[88]

Similarly, in 2012, Erdoğan's primary reaction was to separate the Syrian people from the Syrian regime and adopt a saviour role, as in the case of 1974 vis-a-vis the junta regime in Greece. Erdoğan stated that:

Our only goal is to see the Syrian people freed from oppression and persecution and reach peace and prosperity. Should we leave women, children all these people to the mercy of the Assad regime? Is this acceptable for Turkey? Is this acceptable for the Turkish nation?[89]

## Turkey as rational/not emotional/patient state

Showing its democratic credentials, however, has not been adequate for Turkey's policy-makers to address gendered ontological insecurity. Their narrative has been formulated to convince the West that Turkey's foreign policy is based on rationality, not emotions, is always considerate of the 'facts' of international relations and is thus not revisionist. Turkey's policy-makers' epistemological endorsement of West-centric (neo)realist/liberal global politics underlined this narrative. In 1974, PM Ecevit stated that 'we live in such a world that no one can say "it is none of others' business." No state can say "what is this United Nations to interfere?" We cannot isolate Turkey from the world'. That is why, he said, 'we must always consider the balance in the world when we are formulating our Cyprus policy. This has utmost importance … We have always avoided emotional reactions, and I think the world has benefited from this'. As a state that acts realistically in foreign policy, restraint was presented as a quality of Turkey.[90] After the military operation, Ecevit stated, 'Obviously our military forces could have done so much, could have gone so much further. However, as army, as state, as nation, we know exactly where to stop'.[91]

As with the Cyprus issue, in the 1996 Imia/Kardak crisis, Greece was discursively constructed as an irrational, aggressive, hard-headed state, while Turkey was the rational side which looked for opportunities for peaceful solutions to the problem. This can be observed in the words of then President Demirel (1993–2000):

The relations are getting tense. We are on the side of peace but the other side is not keen on it. It is necessary to look for and find peaceful solutions. First of all, Greece should remember that we are neighbours. Not all problems are handled through conflict. We should keep our calmness.[92]

In other words, Greece's irresoluteness left no option for Turkey but to send special units to the adjacent islets because of Greece's irrational and even emotional foreign policy.[93] Feminizing Greece's masculinity by attributing irrationality and emotionality can be observed in Ambassador Kandemir's statement. He argued that following the military intervention in Cyprus in 1974, thanks to the Greek lobby in the United States, Greece's emotional foreign policy was successful, as opposed to Turkey's realistic and rational foreign policy upholding international law. He continues:

This time, however, in the Kardak case, the international community insisted upon a resolution grounded in universally accepted principles that did not rely on religion, race, or historical vengeance. The United States and the European Union asked Turkey and Greece to settle their dispute peacefully within the prescribed legal framework. In Turkey's view, this *even-handed* reaction from our allies was encouraging, and further set an example for others to follow.[94]

He starts with feminizing Greece's masculinity. However, he continues, this irrational and emotional foreign policy was not welcomed by the international community 'this time'. This resulted in what Turkey had been longing for: equal treatment by the international community. 'Even-handed' reaction was perceived as a solution to gendered insecurity.

In 2012, while policy-makers reconfigured Turkey's masculinity as a paternal figure towards the Syrian regime and society; they also constructed Turkey as a state which values restraint and patience in spite of the (hypermasculinized) provocative aggressiveness of Syria. This enabled them to depict an identity for Turkey as a respectable member of the international community. When Turkey's jetfighter was shot down, FM Davutoğlu stated:

In the last nine months, we tried to stop it [the Syrian regime] through direct engagement. This even reached to the point where we begged them … We acted with the international community … Look at the attack on our plane and the attitude we have had about it! Turkey reacted with extraordinary restraint through active diplomacy.[95]

Similar discourse was adopted by Erdoğan after the bomb incident:

This was not the first attack by Syria on Turkey. There had been this type of attacks seven times, but without casualties. We were patient in every attack. In spite of our diplomatic note, Syria did not step back … As Turkey, our only objective is peace and security. We shall never have an objective of creating war.[96]

Turkey was continuously presented as a rational actor, respectful of the values of international society. Davutoğlu's words are indicative:

Being very experienced in statecraft, we never act in anger. We never act based on incomplete information. We first lay down our options [and then decide] … The Security Council, international community, all of them will be informed … The international community will see the photo we took. Our extensive state experience requires this.

Turkey's practices as a 'good citizen of international society' were rewarded by easing gendered insecurity. Reflecting his (neo)realist/liberal lenses, Davutoğlu stated that Turkey was backed by the international community against irrational, aggressive, authoritarian, 'devalorized' Syria:

All states expressed their condolences and in the light of the information we shared, they underlined their solidarity with Turkey … They thanked us for our restraint and tempered attitude, from the General Secretary of United Nations to Russia … Turkey has the capacity to protect its interests within the rules of international law.[97]

## Conclusion

The feminist analysis developed above aimed to show that policy-makers in different historical and political contexts constructed a certain narrative about Turkey, the West and others. Through this narrative, they reconstructed Turkey's non-Western masculinity to demonstrate the way in which Turkey met and meets the West's 'standards', that 'we are not barbarians'. Three conclusions can be derived from this analysis. First, the discussion accentuated that the insecurity of the non-West vis-a-vis the West cannot be fully understood without revealing how hierarchies between the two are reproduced through gendering, both between the West and non-West, and among non-Western political units. In the former, both the West and non-West are 'essentialized' and power hierarchy is 'naturalized'. The 'devalorized' gendered representation of the non-West becomes a source of insecurity for non-Western policy-makers, who also invoke gendered reactions. In moments of military insecurity, non-Western states can feminize or hypermasculinize the military threat, since gendering becomes instrumental to construct a hierarchy between the self and the threatening other and to position the non-Western state in the West. Therefore, in order to understand how the West is reproduced in non-Western contexts, it is crucial to examine relations among non-Western political units.

Second, as the analysis delved into Turkey's relations with the West from a feminist perspective, it revealed that Turkey as a non-Western political unit experiences gendered ontological insecurity. Although there are compelling feminist studies on how the process of Westernization shapes relations between state, society and individuals in Turkey in domestic politics,[98] feminist perspectives have not yet analysed Turkey's international relations. Lack of this feminist prism, however, has hindered the examination of subordination through the gendering of 'Turkey', and of the ontological insecurity this devalorization generates. This analysis has underlined that being the gendered other of the West, and reproducing non-Western subjectivities through this self-understanding, has led to a gendered ontological insecurity in the non-West. The continuity of the narratives of Turkey's policy-makers in different historical moments highlighted the consolidated nature of this insecurity. Repeated attempts to convince the West that Turkey is meeting the standards of the West's hegemonic masculinities constituted gendered security discursive practices.

Finally, the analysis contributed to an understanding of how Turkey's policy-makers from different places on the political spectrum 'felt' the gendered ontological insecurity, showing why scholars cannot neglect gendered ontological insecurity when examining Turkey's military insecurities. The non-Western desire to be like the West, but also different from the West, has led Turkish policy-makers to prioritize the 'anti-imperialist Western state' of Ecevit, 'the role model country' of Çiller and 'the leader of its civilization' of Davutoğlu–Erdoğan. In different ways, they were saying 'We are not barbarians: we belong to the West, but we are different'.

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## Author biography

Ali Bilgic is Assistant Professor in Department of International Relations, Bilkent University. His research interests include critical approaches to security, feminist security studies, Turkey's foreign policy, social resistance movements, the European Union's external relations. He is the author of *Rethinking Security in the Age of Migration: Trust and Emancipation in Europe* by Routledge. Some of the journals where his articles have appeared are *Review of International Studies, Eurasian Geography and Economics* (co-authored), *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* and *International Migration*.