



A Bibliometric Analysis on the Role of Mediation in Turkish Foreign Policy Since 2002

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Abstract: After the Cold War, the elimination of limitations regarding foreign policy has led to Türkiye's mediation activities improving. However, external security issues and transitional governments during the 1990-2002 period prevented Türkiye from achieving continuity and consistency with its foreign policy. Since 2002, Türkiye has leveraged soft power and humanitarian diplomacy with support from its geopolitical and cultural depth to enhance its mediating role in foreign policy. Between 2002-2020, mediation assumed a significant position among the key principles determining the direction of Turkish foreign policy. Türkiye's success in regional mediation led to the emergence of branding after 2020. Specifically, Türkiye's responsibility in the Balkans and its mediator role during the Russia-Ukraine War have been considered historical turning points in attaining a character that produces security. In fact, the empirical analysis on mediation has identified Türkiye as one of the actors most associated with mediation post-2002, placing it in the same cluster as such global players as the United Nations and the United States of America. In this regard, Türkiye has differentiated itself from other actors engaged in the same activity. The study uses a mixed methods to examine this differentiation.

The study uses the historical classification of 1990-2024 based on the assumption that Türkiye has become a global actor in mediation since 2002 while only being a regional player pre-2002. In line with this, the study uses bibliometric and discourse analyses benefitting from an explanatory analytical method to explore the concept of mediation.

Keywords: mediation, public diplomacy, Turkish foreign policy, Russo-Ukrainian war, bibliometric analysis

Öz: Soğuk Savaş'ın ardından, dış politika ile ilgili kısıtlamaların kaldırılması Türkiye'nin arabuluculuk faaliyetlerinin gelişmesine yol açmıştır. Ancak, 1990-2002 döneminde dış güvenlik sorunları ve geçiş hükümetleri, Türkiye'nin dış politikasında süreklilik ve tutarlılık sağlamasını engellemiştir. 2002'den bu yana Türkiye, jeopolitik ve kültürel derinliğin desteğiyle yumuşak güç ve insani diplomasiyi kullanarak dış politikadaki arabuluculuk rolünü güçlendirmiştir. 2002-2020 yılları arasında arabuluculuk, Türk dış politikasının yönünü belirleyen temel ilkeler arasında önemli bir yer edinmiştir. Türkiye'nin bölgesel arabuluculukta başarısı, 2020'den sonra markalaşmanın ortaya çıkmasına yol açmıştır. Özellikle, Türkiye'nin Balkanlar'daki sorumluluğu ve Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı sırasında arabulucu rolü, güvenlik sağlayan bir karakter kazanmasında tarihi dönüm noktaları olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Aslında, arabuluculuk üzerine yapılan ampirik analiz, Türkiye'yi 2002 sonrası arabuluculukla en çok ilişkilendirilen aktörlerden biri olarak tanımlamış ve onu Birleşmiş Milletler ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri gibi küresel aktörlerle aynı kümede yerleştirmiştir. Bu bağlamda Türkiye, aynı faaliyette bulunan diğer aktörlerden farklılaşmıştır. Çalışmada bu farklılaşma süreci karma araştırma yöntemiyle incelenmiştir.

Çalışma, Türkiye'nin 2002'den önce sadece bölgesel bir aktör iken, 2002'den sonra arabuluculukta küresel bir aktör haline geldiği varsayımına dayanarak 1990-2024 tarihsel sınıflandırmasını kullanmaktadır. Buna paralel olarak çalışma, arabuluculuk kavramını incelemek için açıklayıcı analitik yöntemden istifade ederek bibliyometrik ve söylem analizleri kullanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: arabuluculuk, kamu diplomasisi, Türk dış politikası, Rusya-Ukrayna savaşı, bibliyometrik analiz

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Introduction

The concept of mediation started to play a more central role in Turkish foreign policy based on three historical periods. A historical classification of these periods includes important factors such as testing and trials and errors to increase power and capacity and ensure continuity and sustainability in foreign policy. In this respect, Turkish foreign policy has undergone an identity transformation in the post-Cold War era by increasing its interest in international politics. These developments formed the basis of new reflexive actions toward assuming more responsibility and taking greater initiative. As a result, the first stage of the emerging mediation activities coincides with the 1990-2002 period. The experience Türkiye gained through trial and error in this process assured the continuity and sustainability of its foreign policy, thus also contributing to its role as a regional actor in mediation between 2002-2020. Türkiye emerged as a global actor in mediation only after 2020, joining the cluster of global actors such as the United Nations (UN) and United States of America (USA) after adopting mediation as a foreign policy principle at the official level. This was due to taking more responsibility and initiative in mediation, the success achieved through this, and the increase in power and capacity.

The ontological origin of the concept of mediation in Turkish foreign policy is based on the discourse of “Peace at home, peace in the world.” Between 1923-1945 Türkiye had pursued a policy based on the status quo and on the balance of power within the scope the state’s Westernizing identity (Olson & Ince, 1977, pp. 277-279). However, the Soviet threat required Türkiye to abandon its policy of active neutrality and to join security organizations and regional pacts. Ultimately, Türkiye aligned itself with the Western camp during the Cold War, when armament and security perceptions were the key bipolar dynamics shaping international relations (Şehitoğlu & Karakuş, 2023, p. 300). For this reason, relations were developed within certain limitations arising from the structure of the international system, and thus national survival and security approaches formed the basis of foreign policies.

With the end of the bipolar system, Türkiye began a search for a new paradigm and identity in its foreign policy. Moreover, this search for identity contributed to a process that was discussed not only in Türkiye but also in international institutions (e.g., North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], European Union [EU]), former Eastern Bloc states, and the West¹ (Hale, 2013, pp. 135-136). Meanwhile, the discourses on

1 For example, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia adopted a liberal state identity and switched to the free market. Thus they started developing their relations with the West in this context.

neo-Ottomanism, Eurasianism, and Islamism reemerged in Türkiye. Despite neo-Ottomanism being a central element for a certain period of time, internal and external security problems posed various challenges due to the imbalance between power and capacity and the inability to ensure continuity. However, this process contributed to the establishment of soft power structures such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), as well as public diplomacy agencies such as the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) and the Eurasian and Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), which have guided Turkish foreign policy since 2002.

Despite the unstable coalition governments, Türkiye acted harmoniously with the West during the Gulf crisis that broke out in the Middle East between 1990-2002 and also provided military and political support for establishing and protecting the peace in Yugoslavia. After 2002, Türkiye assessed security at the global and regional levels over a wide range by mitigating traditional security perceptions, as indicated in contemporary studies on security (Aydın & Ereker, 2014, p. 148). Türkiye followed a passive approach toward resolving international conflicts and adopted a mediational perspective that took responsibility and directly contributed to peace based on the principles of proactive, humanitarian diplomacy after 2002 (Dal, 2018, pp. 2298-2299). Türkiye has additionally played an active role in peacekeeping operations outside Europe.

After 2020, Türkiye adopted a multidimensional humanitarian foreign policy principle by focusing on multilateralism and addressing regional problems with the emphasis of itself being a European country; it pursued a foreign policy centered on understanding its identity as a compassionate power (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). Turkish peacekeeping initiatives can also be considered within this scope, which include Libya's transition to a democratic order, the normalization process after the Second Karabakh War, the advancement of inter-party dialogue, and the USA's withdrawal from Afghanistan. In the context of mediation, Türkiye emerged as a global actor at the same time as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As a matter of fact, it brought the conflicting parties together for the first time, played a facilitating role in opening the Mariupol humanitarian corridor, and initiated the exchange of 200 prisoners of war. Moreover, in order to prevent the deepening of the global food crisis, it took on a mediation initiative among Russia, Ukraine, and the UN, contributing to the emergence of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Lastly, due to the initiative of Türkiye's National Intelligence Organization, 24 Russian intelligence officers were removed from the United States and returned to their countries. Similarly, 26 people of different nationalities who'd been taken from Russia

were returned to their countries (Euronews, 2024). Ultimately, the international community appreciated these initiatives, and the leader's discourse reflected these developments. The success in mediation led to other states nominating President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Within the scope of mediation, the assumption that Türkiye is a global actor in the context of its political, economic, and military power is based on an explanatory analytical method. In this context, the study uses a mixed method combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the assumption, with bibliometric and discursive analyses being determined. The bibliometric analysis is based on 987 mediation-themed articles published between 2002 and October 2024 by scanning the Web of Science (WoS) for articles focused on the discipline of international relations. Meanwhile, the study uses discourse analysis to test the hypothesis. This analysis conducted sorting to ensure objectivity and examined the discourses of international actors and leaders. The study then uses case studies and presents figures in the relevant section to explain the data obtained in this framework.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Mediation for Peacebuilding

Mediation includes all dialogues and efforts initiated by third parties for the resolution of conflicts, wars and disputes. In this context, the UN defines mediation as “*a process by which a third party helps two or more parties, with their own consent, to develop mutually acceptable agreements to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict*” (UN, 2012). Accordingly, Article 33 of the UN Charter stipulated that the conflicting parties can seek solutions themselves or take the initiative if the United Nations Security Council deems it necessary (UN Charter, 6/33). However, it is seen that not every conflict falls within the scope of effective mediation. Three conditions are required for a conflict or dispute to be considered within the scope of effective mediation. These are the “*willingness of the conflicting parties to negotiate, the credibility of the mediator, and the regional and international consensus that support the process*” (UN, 2012).

Mediation begins with the consent of the conflicting parties. The basic principles of mediation include impartiality, inclusiveness, confidentiality, national belonging, voluntariness, and compliance with international law (UN, 2012). In this context, the issue of peaceful resolution of conflicts can be described within the scope of intervention and diplomatic efforts of the third party. Effective mediation for the peaceful conclusion of the conflict is also based on the principles of experience and trust.

The rise in the number of wars between states highlights the importance of negotiation and mediation. In fact, 55% of the wars between states from 1940-1990 were resolved through negotiation, while only 20% of civil wars could be resolved

through negotiations or similar means. However, peace cannot be achieved without intervening in civil wars (Walter, 1997, p. 335). Moreover, the duration of civil wars that have taken place since World War II increased approximately threefold to four years; after 1990, approximately 20 civil wars were occurring annually (Acemoglu et al., 2010, p. 664). Furthermore, state-based conflicts after 1992 reached their peak in 2024, with a total of 58 state-based conflicts (28 in Africa, 10 in the Middle East, 17 in Asia, 3 in Europe) requiring effective mediation and diplomatic efforts (The Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2024).

The increase in the number of new types of war has also led to an increase in civilian casualties and damage compared to the 19th and 20th centuries. At the same time, the longer duration of wars can be seen as one of the most important obstacles to the efforts of mediation and peacebuilding. Apart from normative objectives, actors' realpolitik goals have also led to the delay of these interventions and accordingly to the increase in damage. Pearson (1974, p. 242), argued the biggest challenge in these interventions to be protecting a targeted social group and economic interests, adopting faith and ideological affinity, considering the regional balances of power, and protecting targeted diplomatic or military interests. Pearson referred to the attitude of Britain and France toward the Suez crisis in 1956 as an example of this challenge. In particular, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser's ideological and political closeness to the Soviets and its problems with the West caused Britain and France to take a pro-Israel stance. An example of this issue occurred during the Vietnam War after 1954, when the USA supported South Vietnam (for ideological reasons) against the communist Vietcong guerrillas in the North, sending its troops to the region after 1965. Ultimately, a stark difference is found between direct intervention and mediation. For this reason, mediation can be seen as a process that includes normative justifications, impartiality, and trust from the parties in conflict.

Differentiating Itself from Competitors Regarding Other Mediation Activities

A total of 61 legal entities, including 53 countries and 8 international and regional organizations, carry out mediation activities under the UN (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). South Africa, Türkiye, and Brazil are considered the countries with the highest number of attempts at mediation between 2002-2014 (Dieckhoff, 2014, p. 111). Norway, Finland, Switzerland, the EU, USA, and UN are also considered key actors within the scope of mediation activities. However, Türkiye's mediation success in recent years and the reliability of its services have attracted the attention of parties in conflict. In fact, the international community started paying more attention to Türkiye once Russia invade Ukraine regarding Türkiye's

role in the Black Sea Grain Corridor initiative, prisoner exchange, and set-up of the humanitarian corridors in Ukraine to ensure energy supply security, especially with how it was bringing parties together for the first time (Karakuş & Ayhan, 2024, p. 8). In this context, the factors that distinguish Türkiye from other mediation actors and competitors needs to be explored.

After 2002, Türkiye overcame its identity crisis that had determined the direction of Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War. It adopted a new understanding of foreign policy and national interest based on culture, history, and geopolitical depth. For this reason, Türkiye's cultural values (e.g., religion, social life) contributed to how it differentiated itself from other actors (the West) within the scope of mediation (Özçelik, 2006, p. 12). In this context, Türkiye's experience in interpersonal mediation, which is grounded in Islamic traditions, enhanced its capacity to successfully resolve conflicts, particularly those rooted in the Middle East and the Balkans (Özçelik, 2017, p. 201). In this context, Türkiye's understanding is based on harmonizing the identity of the state and the nation. Türkiye overcame the traditional Westernism syndrome within the scope Turkish foreign policy and tried to develop multifaceted relations. With this understanding of foreign policy and interests, it implemented such foreign policy principles as benevolent power, entrepreneurial and humanitarian diplomacy, and multilateralism. Operationalizing these principles became possible by constructing and institutionalizing mechanisms for effective public diplomacy.

The factors that bring Türkiye to the fore regarding mediation activities can be listed as its effective public diplomacy and use of soft power mechanisms. In this respect, institutional structures such as TİKA, TURKSOY, BSEC, and the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation were developed after 2002 in the aftermath of the Cold War. Türkiye currently has had the Yunus Emre Institute since 2007, Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities since 2010, TRT Balkan since 2022 as well as other media organizations, the Turkish Maarif Foundation since 2016, and diplomatic representations. These play significant roles as effective tools for achieving Türkiye's soft power capacity (Mulalić & Karić, 2023, p. 115). In addition, the number of foreign representations in Türkiye, which had been 163 in 2002, reached 261 by 2024, making it the third country with the highest number of diplomatic representations (*Anadolu Agency [AA]*, 2024). In addition, Türkiye established the Directorate of Communications of the Republic of Türkiye and the Public Diplomacy Department while taking proactive steps. These can be seen as the mechanisms that distinguish Türkiye from other actors in the context of public diplomacy. As a result, Türkiye rose to 18th place in the field of media and communication regarding soft power measurements and managed to be among the top 25 countries overall (Brand Finance, 2024).

With the functionality of soft power mechanisms and devices, Türkiye has increased its mediational capacity. Furthermore, public diplomacy mechanisms and soft power have allowed Türkiye to develop trust and emotional ties in terms of its geopolitical context. At the same time, Türkiye is claimed to have facilitated the realization of foreign policy goals (Şehitoğlu et al., 2023, p. 408). Türkiye's geopolitical importance has increased, especially after the Arab Spring, thus requiring Türkiye to assume more responsibility while increasing its demand from other actors, such as from the initiative Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia took on for resolving their conflict. The leaders of the two countries met in Istanbul on April 24, 2010 and signed the Istanbul Declaration under the mediation of Türkiye, marking their decision to establish mutual diplomatic representations. At the same time, the leaders made a commitment to soften their relations (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). Türkiye similarly mediated the dispute between Kosovo and Serbia over electricity distribution, taking on the responsibility to ensure they resolved their dispute. In this context, their dispute that had lasted for 24 years was resolved by involving Turkish companies (i.e., Limak Holding, Çalık Holding), thus reaching an agreement on how to distribute electricity to the northern municipalities of Kosovo (AA, 2023). In fact, EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue Miroslav Lajcak thanked Türkiye for its mediation, which contributed to the normalization of Kosovo-Serbia relations (AA, 2023).

The principles of multifaceted diplomacy and multipolarity can also be seen as key factors distinguishing Türkiye from other rival actors in mediation. At the level of leadership, Erdogan's discourse of "The world is bigger than five" supports this foreign policy. At the same time, this discourse aligns with the understanding of "peace at home, peace in the world." In line with this, Türkiye began to play a more significant role through its approach to balance and independent foreign policy between the West and the East. Türkiye is a dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as a member of the UN, NATO, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Organization of Turkic States (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). Furthermore, Türkiye's possible membership in BRICS² can be seen as a reflection of the principles of multipolarity and multifaceted diplomacy. Türkiye has maintained economic, social, and political relations with both the West and the East, and in this respect differs from other actors with regard to its impartiality (Vernigora, 2024). As such, Türkiye has not participated in the Western sanctions imposed on Russia, instead adopting an objective

2 BRICS is a group formed by eleven countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Iran. For more detailed information, please see: <https://brics.br/en/about-the-brics>

perspective toward the parties in conflict in accordance with international law (Gözkaman, 2023, p. 165). This attitude was also reflected in the talks at Dolmabahçe Palace, which were a result of Ukraine demanding Türkiye to take part as a guarantor state in a possible agreement at the official level (President of Ukraine, 2022).

Another factor that distinguishes Türkiye from other actors engaged in mediation activities is its adoption of this perspective as a principle of foreign policy. In fact, during the start of the Arab Spring when humanitarian crises reached their peak, Türkiye came to the fore through the initiatives it took. From this perspective, Türkiye has contributed to peacebuilding activities by adopting the principle of multipolarity against unilateralism (Bayer & Keyman, 2012, p. 75). As a requirement of humanitarian and entrepreneurial diplomacy, Türkiye actually granted temporary protection to refugees and was among the countries in 2018 and 2021 that provided the greatest percentage of humanitarian aid compared to its national income (Development Initiatives, 2023). In this respect, Türkiye received a better ranking in humanitarian aid compared to other mediating actors such as Brazil, India, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Finland. Among the countries that have provided the most humanitarian aid, based on 2023 data, Türkiye ranked in 2nd place, with Sweden in 6th, Switzerland in 12th, Spain in 20th, and Brazil unranked (Development Initiatives, 2024).

Türkiye has used its soft power apparatuses to engage in various activities to increase the dialogue between parties in geographical subsystems possessing high conflict dynamics. In this context, Türkiye is primarily distinguished from other mediating actors through its soft power capacity. The second important factor is its strategy of multipolarity and multifaceted diplomacy based on an equal approach and impartiality, which is a reflection of its foreign policy principles. Ultimately, these elements have also contributed to the development of the trust, impartiality, and equal approach that have been adopted as basic principles in mediation. All these factors have contributed to Türkiye's success in mediation due to it assuming the role of a responsible playmaker.

Türkiye launched the Mediation for Peace Initiative with Finland for hosting mediation activities. As such, Türkiye has hosted mediation-themed conferences in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2017 (Dal, 2019, p. 2306). While Türkiye's pre-2012 mediation initiatives had been focused on the Middle East, since 2012, they have become initiatives that include Eastern Europe. With Russia's invasion in 2022 in particular, Türkiye took the responsibility of ensuring dialogue between the two countries and addressing the factors that caused the international crisis.

The Mediation Policy of Türkiye as a Global Actor: Case Studies and Discourses

Türkiye's prominence in the field of mediation is based on three important historical periods. In the first period (1990-2002), Türkiye had actively participated in regional peacekeeping operations, acting jointly with Western institutions toward peacebuilding. The second period (2002-2020) developed with Türkiye increasing its soft power capacity and adopting mediation as a foreign policy. In this process, mediation activities were shaped both by their consequences and by territorial proximity in the geopolitical context. The last period (2020-2024) has been influenced by the Coronavirus pandemic, which had an impact at the system level, as well as the responsibility Türkiye took in addressing Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In the first period between 1990-2002, Türkiye actively participated in peace-building activities and protection operations, such as sending 1,400 soldiers to the United Nations Protection Force, participating in Operation Alba, and taking an active role in establishing the South-Eastern Europe Brigade (Khalilzad & Ian, 2001, pp. 38-40; Bağbaşıoğlu, 2018, pp. 232-233). Türkiye also provided support by providing 1,320 people for the Implementation Force that had been established to ensure the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement that had ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was implemented (Şehitoğlu, 2021, p. 255; Bağbaşıoğlu, 2018, p. 233). Similarly, Türkiye has contributed to peace and stability "by supporting the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative and the Stability Pact for the Balkans" (Holtom, 2006, pp. 111-114). Türkiye also supported the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended the civil conflict in Macedonia that had begun in 2001. Türkiye was involved in NATO's Allied Harmony and Amber Fox operations, as well as in the Concordia and Proxima operations that had been launched regarding post-conflict peacekeeping initiatives (Bebler, 2015, pp. 159-160). From this point of view, Türkiye's contributions to peace between 1990-2002 "required it to accept a role as an actor that generates regional security" (Karakuş & Ayhan, 2024, pp. 6-7).

Türkiye tested its foreign policy between 2002-2020 and gained mediational experience by taking on greater responsibility and initiative. During this period, the continuity and sustainability of its foreign policy contributed to the country adopting mediation as a core principle of its foreign policy. Türkiye also played a role in building regional security during this period. Accordingly, its mediation activities started to intensify after 2010, and it adopted a proactive, responsible perspective for addressing regional conflicts and disputes. The lack of system-level output in these mediation initiatives has required Türkiye's initiatives to be evaluated on a regional basis. Türkiye led the International Security Assistance Force, which was launched in

2003. Türkiye had participated in NATO's Iraq Training Mission, provided training to Iraqi security forces, and also supported NATO's Operation Active Endeavour in 2009, as well as Operation Ocean Shield and Combined Protective Operations in 2010 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012). After 2012 is when Turkish foreign policy adopted mediation as a principle, and as a result, Türkiye was deemed successful in five out of 11 mediation attempts between 2005-2018 (Dal, 2018, p. 2306). In this context, Türkiye was able to list its core vision on mediation as follows:

Türkiye has gained important experience in these processes and realized that each problem has its own dynamics and conditions and that mediation efforts should be carried out by considering these differences. However, one should not forget that preventive diplomacy has certain golden rules and principles to be followed, no matter what the nature of a conflict is. For instance, in order to be a successful mediator, actors should master all the dynamics of the problem and from the outset show the long-term commitment that may be required for a lasting solution. Likewise, the mediator should propose flexible but principle-based strategies from the start and be able to present a common vision to the conflicting parties, in addition to earning their trust (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Global crises were triggered by the Coronavirus pandemic, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's revisionist attitude that started in 2023. In particular, Russia's invasion of Ukraine brought war back to state agendas and triggered a spiral of global crises. These developments made mediation increasingly important. In fact, global food, energy, and humanitarian crises have emerged, as well as an increased risk of conflict due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Accordingly, global military expenditures increased 6.8% in 2023 compared to 2022, reaching the highest level since 2009 (Tian et al., 2024, pp. 1-3). Sudden increases were experienced in global inflation rates, with food prices increasing by 14.1% in 2023 compared to 2022 (Arce et al., 2023). A similar increase occurred in the energy sector, with oil, coal, and gas costs increasing by 180% immediately after the invasion. Although this situation later showed a downward trend, increases were noted of 27% for oil, 50% for coal, and 11% for gas (Adolfson et al., 2022). In addition, another refugee crisis broke out, with 1.5-5 million people seeking asylum (Glauber & Debucquet, 2023, pp. 10-12). These developments have made Türkiye's mediation initiatives and sense of responsibility even more valuable.

Türkiye condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the grounds that conflicts with international law, but not being a party to the war, Türkiye decided to adopt the principle of equal approach (Chiriatti, 2023, pp. 64-65). This approach aligned with Türkiye's mediation principles and contributed to building the trust necessary for the initiatives that would be taken in the following period. Indeed, Türkiye was

the first mediator to bring the conflicting parties together face-to-face. In March 2022, a month after the start of the war, the parties came together at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, and this meeting ensured the initiation of the Dolmabahçe Palace talks (Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). After these meetings, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said, “Ukraine also wants to see Türkiye, Germany, Canada, Italy, Poland, and Israel among the guarantors” (President of Ukraine, 2022). Thanks to Türkiye’s mediation, the parties to the conflict agreed to exchange more than 200 prisoners and open a humanitarian corridor in Mariupol (*The Moscow Times*, 2022). Immediately after the prisoner exchange, Zelensky issued a message of gratitude to Erdoğan for leading the process (*Kyiv Post*, 2022). After Türkiye’s success in mediation, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg noted, “Türkiye is a key ally. It is very important for two belligerent parties to come together. We must thank Türkiye for its efforts” (*Hürriyet Daily News*, 2022). Stoltenberg later thanked Türkiye for hosting these talks and commended Türkiye’s efforts at finding a political solution to the war, which included the recent talks in Türkiye (NATO, 2022).

In addition to these points mentioned above, a new development was witnessed on May 11, 2025 with regard to the cessation of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine, when Russian President Vladimir Putin made a formal request in Istanbul to restart the direct negotiations that had been interrupted since 2022. Negotiations resumed with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hosting (Tiryaki & Turp, 2025). The timing of this late-hour request required opening a critical door for the sake of peace. In response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that he would wait for Putin in Türkiye (Yorgancı, 2025), thereby indicating his intention to bring an end to the war. Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky paid a working visit on May 15 to Ankara instead of Istanbul to hold a bilateral meeting with Erdoğan. Following an evaluation of the Russian delegation’s commitment to genuine negotiations, their level of engagement was conclusively deemed unsatisfactory. Zelensky made this observation in the context of the ongoing negotiations with the delegation led by Putin, who had travelled to Istanbul for the purpose of peace talks. Furthermore, Zelenskiy declared his intention to dispatch a delegation to Istanbul to be led by the Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, while expressing his respect for both President Trump and President Erdogan (Directorate of Communications, 2025).

On May 16, 2025, the parties convened in Istanbul at the Presidential Working Office within the confines of Dolmabahçe Palace. The Turkish delegation was led by Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan, while the USA delegation was headed by Florida State Senator Marco Rubio. The Ukrainian delegation was led by Rustem Umerov, the Ukrainian Defense Minister, and the Russian delegation was headed by Vladimir Medinskiy, who serves as Advisor to Russian Federation

President Vladimir Putin. In a post on X, Fidan shared the outcome of the meeting with the global public, providing the following statement:

In the wake of extensive diplomatic endeavours, the Russian and Ukrainian delegations convened in Istanbul, a meeting that was facilitated by Türkiye. Following the meeting, the two countries reached a consensus to exchange one thousand individuals as a confidence-building measure. Furthermore, it was agreed that the conditions that would make it possible to reach a ceasefire would be shared with the other side in writing. The parties involved have also reached a consensus to reconvene. As Türkiye, we will continue to make every effort to facilitate the achievement of lasting peace between Russia and Ukraine (AA, 2025).

Türkiye preferred fostering a dialogue with the parties in conflict and refusing to participate in the Western sanctions in order to prevent a global food and energy crisis. Erdoğan supported this neutral stance, saying, “We will not defend a single leader. Instead, we must seek a solution that satisfies all parties involved” (*The Moscow Times*, 2022). In July 2022, the Black Sea Grain Initiative was launched with Türkiye’s mediation, and more than 33 million tons of grains were delivered to buyers in August 2022. This helped reduce an increase in food prices and alleviate the effects of the crisis (UN, 2023). Afterwards, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, “Without Türkiye’s generosity and determination, this initiative would never have been launched... Istanbul continues to be the center of an extraordinary diplomatic success” (AA, 2022,). In addition, Guterres noted that the initiative is hope for peace, arguing that this development would “bring relief to developing countries on the verge of bankruptcy and to the most vulnerable people on the brink of famine” (UN, 2022). The NATO Secretary General at the time made the following statement about Türkiye’s peacekeeping efforts following this initiative:

Türkiye is an important and valuable partner for NATO. I would like to thank Türkiye for the peacekeeping force sent to Kosovo after the tension. Türkiye also continues to train troops in NATO’s mission in Iraq and in Hungary while providing strong support to Ukraine. This includes the initiative launched in the Black Sea under the leadership of Türkiye (NATO, 2023).

Türkiye also played a significant role in mitigating the effects of the post-war energy crisis in Europe. Compared to the previous year, Türkiye increased its energy supply to Europe by 900% in 2023, shipping 97 billion cubic meters of gas (AA, 2023). Mediation activities were additionally undertaken in 2024 to facilitate the prisoner exchange between the West and Russia, with 24 Russian intelligence officers being handed over to Russia and 26 people held captive by Russia being returned to their countries (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 1, 2024). This development was considered a diplomatic victory for Türkiye in the Russian press, as

well as one of the most comprehensive post-Cold War mediation activities between the West and the East (Radio France Internationale, 2024).

Since 2020, Türkiye has stood out from the rest of the actors by taking responsibility for mediation and launching initiatives. Furthermore, Erdogan's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize following his peacemaking efforts highlighted Türkiye as a global actor within the scope of mediation. Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó declared his support, stating, "Türkiye is the only country that has successfully mediated negotiations for addressing the situation in Ukraine so far" (TASS, 2023). Pakistan also supported Erdogan's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize (*Business Times*, 2023; *Ani News*, 2024).

Bibliometric Analysis

This section focuses on the bibliometric analysis method, which the study has preferred for understanding the development of the studies on mediation. This analysis provides a useful method for exploring and analyzing large volumes of data (Ufacık, 2024, p. 20). In this context, bibliometric analyses are preferred for identifying emerging trends regarding article and journal performance, collaborative patterns, and research elements and for exploring the intellectual structure of a particular field regarding the available literature (Bal & Ufacık, 2023, p. 1657).

This study has scanned within its scope the concept of mediation in the WoS database and included English articles published in the field of international relations in the analysis covering the period from January 2003-October 2024. Within this framework, the terms mediation, English articles, and international relations have been selected, with the scope limited to the years 2003-2024. In line with this, 987 articles were accessed. Keywords being used at least 10 times were taken as the criterion for inclusion. Of the 1,695 keywords found, 24 met the threshold value. These keywords are as follows: mediation (242), civil war (74), conflict resolution (62), conflict management (62), negotiation (47), conflict (31), United Nations (30), diplomacy (24), China (19), Syria (14), Middle East (13), Africa (10), USA (10), and Türkiye³ (10).

3 In the analysis, the word 'Turkey' was preferred instead of Türkiye. In reality, Türkiye was registered as the official spelling with the UN in 2022.

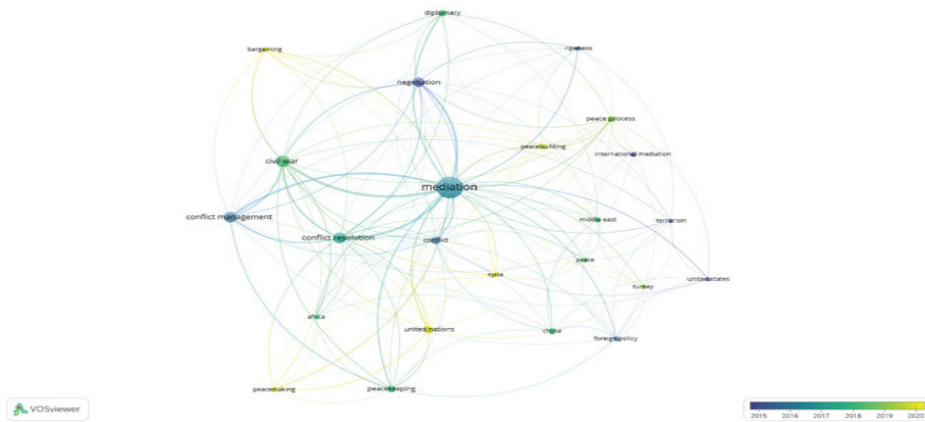


Figure 1. Mediation word network map.

The words most commonly used regarding mediation are listed in the word network map in Figure 1. Africa, the Middle East, and Syria have also been included in the word network map due to the armed conflicts and internal instability there. In this context, when examining the network map, Türkiye can be seen as one of the most up-to-date keywords within the scope of mediation and conflict resolution. In fact, Türkiye is the only country to have cochaired mediations and groups of friends at the UN, OIC, and OSCE (Ataman, 2023, p. 88). Accordingly, Türkiye has been able to maintain its mediational activities regarding the conflicts in Africa -e.g., Somalia, Chad, Libya- (Eshete, 2024, p. 18). Indeed, the government of Türkiye facilitated a mediation effort between the governments of Ethiopia and Somalia in December 2024, convening the parties in Ankara. As a result of this initiative, a resolution was reached regarding the issue of access to the open seas between the two countries (*Aljazeera*, 2024). Moreover, Türkiye, which had launched the initiative and took responsibility in the EU's failed mediation process between Serbia and Kosovo, continues to play an important role in maintaining dialogue between states in the region (Vuksanovic, 2023, pp. 109-110). Ultimately, Türkiye's success in mediation attracted the attention of the UN, which is making special effort to have Istanbul be a mediation center (Keyman, 2017, p. 67).

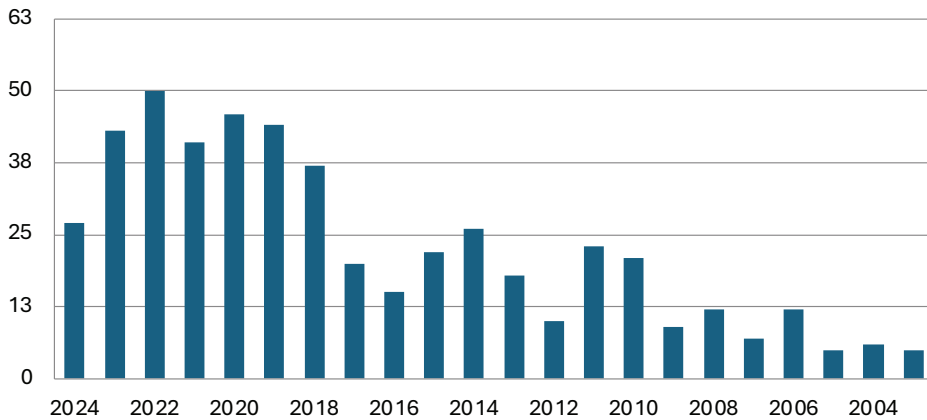


Figure 2. Number of mediation publications by year.

Figure 2 shows the number of studies on mediation over the years. In this context, the number of studies on mediation is seen to have increased after 2008 when international and civil wars intensified. As a result of the analysis, four clusters emerged.

The first cluster includes China, conflict, foreign policy, international mediation, the Middle East, peace, peace process, peacebuilding, Syria, terrorism, Türkiye, and USA. China, USA, and Türkiye, which are not parties in conflict, are prominent for their mediation activities aimed at peace. As a result, Türkiye didn't emerge as a global actor in mediation until 2022. The fact that Türkiye's mediation activities include Latin America, the Middle East, and Eurasia supports this argument. The second cluster generally consists of actors in conflict zones. The third cluster includes the words negotiation and ripeness,⁴ while the fourth cluster consists of the words negotiation and diplomacy.

Conclusion and Findings

This study has explored the development of mediation within the scope of Turkish foreign policy based on three historical periods. These historical periods have been classified according to the principle of continuity in foreign policy. In the first period (1990-2002), Türkiye engaged more in direct attempts to ensure peace and security as opposed to engaging in mediation efforts. In this period, Turkish foreign policy

4 The ripeness of a conflict, which is one of the conditions for effective mediation, can also be considered to be commonly understood.

was limited by severable factors, including unstable coalition governments, identity debates, and soft power capacity formation in the context of continuity. The second period (2002-2020) is based on Türkiye ensuring the continuity of its foreign policy after 2002. In this context, Türkiye was found to have increased its mediation activities, obtained successful results, and differentiated itself from other mediating actors. The key dynamics that distinguish Türkiye from other actors are its public diplomacy, soft power, humanitarian and compassionate power, multipolarity, and adoption of mediation as a principle of foreign policy. In fact, Türkiye was observed to have launched the most initiatives compared to other mediation actors, including Finland, China, Sweden, and Switzerland. Moreover, Türkiye has also provided the most humanitarian aid among these actors. However, these mediation activities were more regional during the second period, both in terms of the outputs as well as the geographical boundaries being covered. The third historical period covers 2020-2024, when Türkiye was accepted as a global actor within the scope of mediation.

The mediation activities Türkiye has undertaken and their subsequent outcomes prior to 2020 are observed to have had a discernible impact on the regional landscape. Indeed, the fact that Türkiye's initial mediation efforts had been primarily directed toward geographically close regions lends support to this explanation. After 2020, however, the geographic scope and dimensions of the outcomes from Türkiye's mediation efforts have clearly expanded. This development has enabled Türkiye to be regarded as a significant global actor in this field. The success and outcomes of Türkiye's mediation efforts following Russia's invasion of Ukraine have also noteworthy contributed to global stability and the resolution of crises.

In light of the growing prevalence of interstate wars, international conflicts, and global crises, the significance of efficacious mediation activities for peace has become increasingly apparent. Concurrently, the inability of international institutions such as NATO and the UN to prevent conflicts (e.g., Israel and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine) has created opportunities for alternative actors to assume more prominent roles. In this context, Türkiye's current foreign policy principles, public diplomacy instruments, and soft power capacity contribute to its mediation capabilities, inspiring confidence among third parties in potential conflicts and disputes. Furthermore, this perspective aligns with the principles of international mediation (e.g., neutrality, inclusivity, confidentiality, national ownership, voluntariness, and compliance with international law), thus facilitating other actors' recognition of Türkiye as a mediator.

The experience gained by the trial-and-error method in foreign policy and the increase in power capacity (especially soft power) accelerated Türkiye's mediation activities after 2020. As a result, this dynamism revealed itself in the form of taking

on greater responsibility and starting more initiatives following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Türkiye's success in mediation and initiatives has facilitated efforts to overcome the global food and energy crises while increasing hopes for peace within the international community. Türkiye's mediation initiatives have contributed to achieving a positive image at the state and system levels. This has been reflected in political discourse, attracted the attention of the press and broadcast organs, and been appreciated by international institutions. As a result, trust in and attention toward Türkiye's mediation activities have started to increase. In fact, Türkiye plays a critical role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, especially when considering the leader discourses discussed in the study. This issue has also been addressed by a bibliometric analysis, with the analysis results showing Türkiye to be a key player among the global cluster of actors. Indeed, Türkiye/Turkey is one of the most frequently used keywords with respect to mediation in the literature, and this is due to Türkiye's principles on mediation, public diplomacy, soft power, and continuity in foreign policy.

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