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The Personality and Leadership Style of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy

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ABSTRACT Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is clearly the most controversial figure in recent Turkish political history. His preponderance in political life is remarkable even by Turkish standards. Because Erdoğan is so powerful and has effectively weakened most internal checks on his power, any attempt to explain Turkey's recent foreign policy outcomes will be seriously lacking without considering his leadership impact. The purpose of this study is to investigate Erdoğan's worldview and leadership style, and evaluate their impact on his government's policy processes and outputs. To do that, we employ the Leadership Trait Analysis technique to construct the leadership profile of Erdoğan through content analysis of his verbal records while in office. We contend here that our understanding of AKP-era Turkey is enhanced if we offer a systematic and rigorous account of Erdoğan's personality, and that he presents a clear example of the importance of taking individual-level variables seriously in foreign policy analysis.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is one of the most astonishing yet enigmatic figures of current Turkish political life. Even in a country where the political culture is underpinned by dominant leadership, Erdoğan's sway over the political process has reached a dramatic level rarely seen in modern Turkish political history. As many analysts can concur, no convincing analysis of current Turkish politics can proceed without coming fully to grips with the extent of the control Erdoğan exerts over many of the country's political institutions.¹ Yet, Erdoğan is a political figure who eludes simple characterizations, which has led to an ongoing debate about his character traits and how they impinge upon his government's policy choices. Some see Erdoğan as an "aggressive" and forceful figure who thrives on confrontation, as evidenced by his contemptuous demeanor toward critics and rivals;² others view him as a "charismatic" and "pragmatic" leader who can inspire loyal followers.³ Yet others claim that he is a wolf dressed in a sheep's clothing, waiting for the opportune

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moment to implement his supposed hidden agenda.⁴ Finally, while some see Erdoğan's Turkey as merely a pawn in American plans for the region, others praise him for his independence of action and balanced approach to foreign policy.⁵

The question then becomes: Just who is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan? Which of these images best describe him? How does his leadership style trigger much of the political controversy that surrounds contemporary Turkish politics? In this paper, our goal is to offer a thorough and systematic account of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's world view and leadership profile and evaluate their impact on his policy choices. Much has been written about Erdoğan's rise to power, his break from the Islamist National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) movement and embrace of a secular outlook, the landslide victory of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in two consecutive national elections in 2002 and 2007, and his continued challenge of the established domains of power in the political structure.⁶ Erdoğan's AKP has come under much scrutiny, partly because the country's experience of democratic government by a party with obvious Islamist roots has offered the promise of an escape from the much dreaded civilizational divide, and also because the adoption of markedly different policy choices in issues long considered taboo in the context of Turkish politics has stirred a great deal of controversy in policy circles inside and outside Turkey. Erdoğan's leadership has been the subject of numerous journalistic political analyses, but has received scant scholarly attention in accounts of Turkey's political transformation since 2002.⁷ Obviously, what happens in the domestic political setting and foreign policy context is the result of many factors beside the personal style of Erdoğan. Yet, it is also important to note that Turkey's EU-anchored democratization process has effectively weakened the impact of traditional domestic constraints on the power of the civilian authority and thus further strengthened the position of the prime minister. This makes it all the more important to study the personality of the man who controls most levers of power in Turkey.

Most analyses of Turkish foreign policy resort to structural explanations and make reference to leadership only incidentally.⁸ That is, scholars attempt to explain foreign policy outcomes without any consideration of the individuals who occupy key government offices. Although there is a substantial literature emphasizing how leadership traits bring about substantial changes in policy outputs, particularly in accounts of the US Presidency and, lately, of parliamentary systems,⁹ there has not yet been any systematic and vigorous account of the role of personality in the Turkish political context. This is rather ironic, as leader dominance is a key underlying attribute of Turkish political culture and its party system,¹⁰ with Turkish political parties having always suffered from authoritarian leadership and lack of intra-party democracy. That, combined with a culture that reveres authority, has generated a political system that revolves around a few key individuals rather than ideologies.¹¹ In addition, the political structure of Turkey, which grants substantial power to prime ministers who command a clear majority in the parliament, and the weakness of checks and balances on his or her authority, renders the study of individual leadership as causally significant in the Turkish political system. Erdoğan's great popularity, and his command of a large percentage of the popular vote, provides him with a virtually

unchallengeable authority in the current political context. As one journalist has put it, “Erdoğan has now achieved a greater concentration of power than almost any prime minister before him. And because he is so powerful, his personal opinion carries a lot of weight.”¹²

As we argue below, there is no denying that Erdoğan’s personality is key to understanding many of the controversial policy choices of the AKP government. In the words of Hakan Yavuz, “Few prime ministers have had greater impact on Turkish political life than Tayyip Erdoğan. . . He has been dominant in both the domestic and the foreign policy of Turkey. In many ways, it seems that there is no AKP or related movement but rather the hegemony and dominance of Erdoğan.”¹³ Without understanding his leadership style as a factor in the policy process, it is difficult to come to terms with the behavior of the AKP government. The purpose of this study is to account for the leadership style of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as suggested by his personality characteristics and assess the importance of this style on his government’s policy processes and outputs. We contend here that our understanding of AKP-era Turkey is enhanced if we offer a rigorous account of Erdoğan’s personality. Working from this premise, we employ the Leadership Trait Analysis technique to construct a leadership profile of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan through content analysis of his verbal records while in office. The findings from an extensive use of this technique over the past two decades confirm that it is a valid technique and offers a reliable method for describing leaders’ personalities.¹⁴ Thus, our goal here is twofold. First, we will demonstrate the role that Erdoğan’s personality traits play in shaping the policy process and outputs in contemporary Turkey, thereby demonstrating the value of problematizing one of the most understudied variables of Turkish politics. Second, we hope to contribute to the growing body of research that shows the importance of actor-centered approaches in foreign policy analysis. Before turning to the results of our analysis, the next section will provide a brief overview of actor-specific research in foreign policy and introduce the Leadership Trait Analysis technique for the measurement of personality traits “at-a-distance.”

Leadership as a Factor in Foreign Policy-Making

Dominant theories of international relations traditionally ignore the political impact of individual-level variables on politics. Instead, these theories emphasize structural factors as critical variables in explaining international politics.¹⁵ Clearly, the growth of the structural approach was related to the Cold War where individual-level factors were considered less important in a bipolar system that placed strong external constraints on the actions of states. Lately, however, the understanding of foreign policy as a deterministic response to structural determinants in the international system has come under sustained attack for failing to develop a better understanding of the agents of political action.¹⁶ Structural theories have increasingly been attacked for robbing international relations of human capacity and will. These theories have also been criticized for denying the richness of international reality and for failing to grasp the importance of the leadership that gives meaning to structures outside

and inside of the state.¹⁷ It is after all policy-makers who are called upon to define and interpret external imperatives that impinge upon their policy choices. As Robert Abelson argues, “it is a mistake to assume that leaders experiencing the same political event have similar goals and will choose similar responses without suggesting that their definitions of the situation and beliefs are somewhat equivalent.”¹⁸ There is a growing recognition that integrating individual-level variables, such as perception, cognition and motivation, enriches our understanding of state behavior.

Indeed, some scholars of foreign policy analysis have long recognized the shortcomings of leaving the agent out of the policy process.¹⁹ Their research has demonstrated the value of approaching foreign policy as a decision process that entangles human subjectivity with the impact of structural variables. As Valerie Hudson so aptly puts it, “it is in the cognition and information processing of an actual human agent that all explanatory levels of foreign policy analysis are in reality integrated.”²⁰ Recent research in political psychology and neuroscience has indicated that the assumption of an objective reality readily accessible to policy-makers is radically misleading.²¹ Their argument is that the roots of political decisions can be found in fundamental personality types and the way the brain responds to challenging external stimuli. As Snyder, Bruck and Sapin note, external reality, or the operational world, is in fact “composed of what the decision-makers decide is important.”²² Decision-making is thus beset by factors such as emotions, uncertainty and biases that often produce less than optimal choices. Hence, it should come as no surprise that states often engage in self-defeating policies, given their power capabilities, in the face of structural imperatives. The political decision-maker is then the missing link between the domestic, and external pressures on state behavior and the significant deviations from rationality in foreign policy choices that structural theories fail to account for. It therefore makes a significant difference who occupies the key positions in decision-making at any given moment.

It is all the more important to take leadership seriously when the actor in question has a predominant position in decision-making and has the final word on most policy matters. When dominant leaders have an active interest in any issue or they prefer not to delegate their role in the policy process, they are best positioned to steer the course of policy.²³ The importance of leadership is further highlighted when domestic and external imperatives are combined to allow a window of opportunity for individual characteristics to come to the fore, such as crises or situations that call for the articulation of new policies instead of “routine role performance.”²⁴ In these situations, a leader’s personality characteristics impinge more directly on the direction of policy. What leaders like also has serious implications for the interaction between them and their advisors.²⁵ As most important decisions require deliberation, how leaders set up their advisory systems, who they choose as advisors, and how they respond to advice incongruent with their preconceived notions can radically shape the policy process and outcomes. Selection of like-minded advisors, for example, indicates that a leader does not value diverse opinions and genuine deliberation in decision-making; rather, they just seek advice to bolster their preconceived positions.²⁶ Thus, the focus on individuals is highly relevant, as how leaders are

engaged in the policy process and how they frame and respond to domestic and international pressures have acute implications for state behavior.

Although individual attributes have been found to come to the forefront of foreign policy decision-making when certain situational factors are present, systematic analysis of leadership impact is still a relatively understudied realm in foreign policy analysis. This results to a great extent from the supposed difficulty in accounting for individual behavior. The problems of access to the minds of leaders, and of gathering valid and reliable data about their personality, have plagued such studies in the past.²⁷ Overcoming the difficulties of validly and reliably conceptualizing and measuring individual personality factors has been the cornerstone of latest research efforts in this vein. This effort has produced several sophisticated quantitative content analysis schemes in the last two decades that have effectively remedied the methodological shortcomings of earlier (mostly qualitative) research.²⁸ At-a-distance methods are one such approach. These schemes are designed to measure the individual characteristics of leaders through their own words. As Dyson describes it, “the core assumption of the at-a-distance approach is that the public verbal output of political leaders, when processed by content analysis schemes linked to psychological concepts, can reveal important information about their world views and decision-style.”²⁹ By utilizing words as data, these techniques allow for reliable measurement of beliefs, motivations and personality traits.³⁰ Recent advancements in computerized methods have effectively resolved the validity problem of some of the earlier methods.

One valuable technique using at-a-distance measures to construct leadership profiles through the verbal records of political leaders is Leadership Trait Analysis designed by Margaret Hermann. Leadership Trait Analysis focuses on a leader’s individual personality traits in order to determine his/her leadership style. These traits include belief in the ability to control events (BACE), conceptual complexity (CC), need for power (PWR), distrust of others (DIS), in-group bias (IGB), self-confidence (SC) and task orientation (TASK). The personality traits Herman measures in her method are drawn from many different personality theories. Previous research has established that these particular traits are an accurate predictor of leaders’ political behavior.³¹ An individual’s scores, measured through a content analysis of verbal output on these seven variables, are combined to indicate a particular leadership style (Table 1). As Hermann puts it, “an assumption is made that the more frequently leaders use certain words and phrases in their interview responses the more salient such content is to them. . . . At issue is what percentage of the time in responding to interviewers’ questions when leaders could exhibit particular words and phrases are they, indeed, used.”³²

Leadership Trait Analysis thus counts the frequency of certain words and phrases associated with the absence or presence of a particular personality trait and the score is then presented on a scale from 0 to 1 for each of the seven traits. In coding for self-confidence, for example, an analyst concentrates on the pronouns “I,” “me,” “myself,” “my,” and “mine” that suggest a heightened sense of self-worth and indicate how important a leader perceives himself to what is happening. A score on this trait is created by calculating the percentage of times these personal pronouns are used

Table 1. Leadership Style as Determined by Sensitivity to Constraints, Openness to Information, and Motivation

Responsiveness to constraints	Openness to information	Motivation	
		Problem focus	Relationship focus
Challenges constraints	Closed to information	<i>Expansionistic</i> (Focus of attention is on expanding the leader's, the government's and the state's span of control)	<i>Evangelistic</i> (Focus of attention is on persuading others to join in one's mission, in mobilizing others around one's message)
Challenges constraints	Open to information	<i>Actively independent</i> (Focus of attention is maintaining one's own and the government's maneuverability and independence in a world that is perceived to continually try to limit both)	<i>Directive</i> (Focus of attention is on maintaining one's own and the government's status and acceptance by others by engaging in actions on the world stage that enhance the state's reputation)
Respects constraints	Closed to information	<i>Incremental</i> (Focus of attention is on improving the state's economy and/or security in incremental steps while avoiding the obstacles that will inevitably arise along the way)	<i>Influential</i> (Focus of attention is on building cooperative relationships with other governments and states in order to play a leadership role; by working with others, one can gain more than is possible on one's own)
Respects constraints	Open to information	<i>Opportunistic</i> (Focus of attention is on assessing what is possible in the current situation and context given what one wants to achieve and considering what important constituencies will allow)	<i>Collegial</i> (Focus of attention is on reconciling differences and building consensus—on gaining prestige and status through empowering others and sharing accountability)

Sources: Margaret G. Hermann, "Assessing Leadership Style: Trait Analysis," in Jerold M. Post (ed.), *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 185.

in an interview response. In coding for conceptual complexity, the focus is on words such as “possibly” or “approximately” that indicate high complexity, or words such as “absolutely,” “without a doubt,” “certainly,” “irreversibly” that indicate low complexity. The score for conceptual complexity is determined by the percentage of high and low complexity words in an interview response. The automated profiling software Profiler Plus, developed by Michael Young, scans for these words through its custom-designed dictionaries. Conceptual complexity and task focus variables are calculated by a simple frequency content analysis. The remaining variables require the software to take into account of the types, positioning and relationships of words. The one obvious advantage of computerized coding over hand coding is the elimination of the reliability problem associated with the latter.³³ In addition, automation allows analysts to code greater volumes of data than previously possible with hand coding.

Hermann defines leadership style as the way in which leaders deal with other people in the political environment (constituencies, advisors, and other key personalities) and “how they structure interactions and the norms, rules, and principles they use to guide such interactions.”³⁴ These leadership styles are constructed on the basis of the answers derived from the following questions: (1) Do leaders challenge or respect the constraints in the environment? (2) Are leaders open or closed to information coming from their environment? (3) What reasons motivate leaders to seek political office? Are they driven by a cause, ideology, the desire for power and status or by an interest in building relationships? Based on the answers to these questions, leaders can be divided into one of eight general leadership styles: expansionistic, evangelistic, actively independent, directive, incremental, influential, opportunistic and collegial.³⁵ The seven traits measured in leadership analysis are combined to assess how leaders are described according to each of these three questions. Knowledge about a leader’s belief in their ability to control events, combined with their need for power, allows the analyst to determine the extent to which leaders will challenge or respect constraints in their environment. Assessing a leader’s level of self-confidence and conceptual complexity provide information about whether or not they will be open to contextual information. The sources of a leaders’ motivation are identified by measuring the extent of their in-group bias, general distrust of others, and task or relationship orientation.

Although each of Hermann’s leadership styles represent an ideal type, this typology has been found useful in explicating the foreign policies of a large number of leaders filling various positions in a wide range of countries and time periods. Among the world leaders whose profiles have been developed are Bill Clinton, Charles de Gaulle, Hafez Assad, Saddam Hussein, Tony Blair, Margaret Thatcher, George W. Bush and Michael Gorbachev. What differentiates Hermann’s scheme from other at-a-distance measures is that this method does not treat cognition, motivation and other personality traits in isolation, but focuses on how these traits relate to contextual factors. Although this approach operates on the most micro of all explanatory levels of analysis, it takes situational variables into account and thereby avoids succumbing to overly simplistic explanations of political outcomes on the basis of

leaders' personalities. On the basis of the track record of research conducted in this vein, it is now possible to conclude that leadership style, although not the sole determining factor, is a critical explanatory variable.

Constructing Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Leadership Profile: Method and Data

As noted above, while analyses of Turkish foreign policy-making have tended to emphasize structural determinants, a conceptual approach that integrates the leader's cognition, motivation and other personality traits with the impact of situational variables may offer a more sound analysis. Given the strong leadership influence in Turkish political life, such an approach holds much promise in accounting for variation in foreign policy outcomes while structural constraints remain constant. Studying leadership in the context of Turkish politics has become all the more important as the military's hold on political life has dwindled steadily under the AKP government as part of the measures demanded by the EU to strengthen Turkish democracy.³⁶ Given Erdoğan's widely claimed "autocratic" tendencies and single man rule in the party and in government,³⁷ the study of his leadership style and its impact on state policies has gained urgency.

To measure Erdoğan's personality, we gathered and analyzed the universe of his interview and press conference responses in English from January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2009. Fortunately, the distortion effect that may result from the use of translated material in leadership analysis of non-English speaking leaders has been found to be minimal.³⁸ Our choice of spontaneous material rather than speeches and other scripted materials reduces the risk of our analysis reflecting the personality of Erdoğan's speechwriters rather than his own. As Hermann argues, "because the interest here is in assessing the personality characteristics of the political leader and, in turn, his or her leadership style, interviews are the material of preference. In the interview, political leaders are less in control of what they say and, even though still in a public setting, are more likely to evidence what they, themselves, are like than is often possible when giving a speech."³⁹

Erdoğan's verbal output has been collected from various news sources, including *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Financial Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, but mostly the *Hürriyet Daily News* (a Turkish daily printed in English). Our profile of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's personality is derived from 53,629 words spoken by the Prime Minister, which is a great deal more than the 5000 words required for an adequate analysis. Coding every word spoken by Erdoğan that has been translated into English reduces the risk of sampling bias in our research design. One value of using the Leadership Trait Analysis method to study Erdoğan's personality is the availability of a large pool of personality profiles of many political leaders to compare against Erdoğan's scores. The reference groups for this study consist of 214 political leaders from around the world and a more homogenous sample of 83 leaders from the Middle East. These comparison groups are also constructed by using the Profiler Plus software by Hermann and her colleagues. Together they establish a baseline against which Erdoğan's personality can be assessed.

Whether Erdoğan scores high, or low on a certain personality trait is thus determined by comparing his results with the average scores of the leaders in these two reference groups (Table 2).

In order to lend more methodological rigor to our assessment of Erdoğan's personality, we contextualized our analysis by determining how stable Erdoğan's traits are across time. Understanding if a leader's personality traits change with the passage of time allows analysts to determine their sensitivity to contextual cues. Therefore, we divided his verbal output into five time periods during his tenure in office, and employed an analysis of variance to assess whether there were any changes in trait scores, with statistically significant one-way analysis of variance "*F*-tests" indicating that Erdoğan's scores differed on that trait over time. This would suggest that his scores are affected by contextual factors during those time periods. We specifically wanted to pinpoint the veracity of the criticism levied by some against Erdoğan of exhibiting increasingly authoritarian tendencies by coding and examining material across different time periods. Statistically significant variability in the scores provides insights into the nature of the contextual factors that generate such a change. Thus, the approach here is to provide an in-depth, refined and objective portrait of the personality traits underlying Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership style.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Personality Traits

Table 2 summarizes Erdoğan's scores and compares them with the scores of the two reference groups identified above. At first sight, most of Erdoğan's scores fall clearly at the far end of the spectrum, except for power and self-confidence traits, where his scores are average. According to Hermann's scheme, leaders can be considered high or low in the seven traits when their scores lay one standard deviation or more from the mean of the relevant reference groups.⁴⁰ In comparison with leaders around the world, Erdoğan scores high on belief in the ability to control events (BACE) and high on general dislike of others (DIS), whereas he scores low on conceptual complexity (CC), low on nationalism as indicated by in-group bias (IGB) and low on task orientation (TASK). Only his scores on power (PWR) motive can be considered as close to the average world leader and his self-confidence (SC) score is slightly closer to the lower end of the spectrum. In comparison with 83 leaders from the Middle East, he is placed in the same position as with the first reference group except for self-confidence where he scores lower than the average leader in the region. Several studies in personality research have suggested the possible impacts of high and low scores on these traits on foreign policy decision-making and policy outcomes.⁴¹ Below, we provide a detailed account of the conspicuous facets of Erdoğan's personality that differentiate him from the average leader in the two reference groups and extrapolate his behavior from these identified traits. We expect that our comparison of his actual behavior with the expectations of the suggested personality profile will provide further support for the value of studying individual-level variables in foreign policy decision-making.

Table 2. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Personality Traits in Comparison to Two Reference Groups

LTA characteristics	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan score		Political leaders N = 214	Middle East N = 83
BACE (Belief Can Control Events)	0.40	<i>High</i>	0.34 Low < 0.30 High > 0.38	0.33 Low < 0.29 High > 0.37
CC (Conceptual Complexity)	0.60	<i>Low</i>	0.65 Low < 0.61 High > 0.69	0.64 Low < 0.60 High > 0.68
DIS (Distrust of Others)	0.16	<i>High</i>	0.01 Low < 0.01 High > 0.01	0.01 Low < 0.01 High > 0.01
IGB (Ingroup Bias)	0.12	<i>Low</i>	0.51 Low < 0.44 High > 0.58	0.5 Low < 0.43 High > 0.57
PWR (Need for Power)	0.26	<i>Average</i>	0.26 Low < 0.22 High > 0.30	0.25 Low < 0.22 High > 0.28
SC (Self-Confidence)	0.30	<i>Average</i>	0.36 Low < 0.27 High > 0.45	0.37 Low < 0.26 High > 0.48
TASK (Task Focus)	0.65	<i>Low</i>	0.73 Low < 0.67 High > 0.79	0.71 Low < 0.65 High > 0.77

Note: Low and high scores for Erdoğan are determined on the basis of his scores falling at least one standard deviation lower or higher than the mean of the comparison groups.

Belief in Ability to Control Events (BACE)

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan scores more than one standard deviation above the mean of both reference groups in the belief in ability to control events. This trait indicates the leader's subjectively perceived ability to have the desired effect on outcomes in the political environment. As Hermann argues, "leaders who believe they can influence what happens in the world are generally more interested and active in the policy-making process."⁴² Similarly, Dyson notes, "leaders higher in this trait believe themselves to be efficacious in relation to the political environment on a personal level, and perceive that their state is an influential actor. A higher belief in the ability to control events is hypothesized to lead to a more proactive policy orientation, and a perception that the barriers to successful action are surmountable."⁴³ Leaders such as Erdoğan who score high in this trait tend to confront issues decisively and often forcefully. They prefer to take quick or even pre-emptive action as opposed to delaying. To facilitate quick and decisive resolution of challenging problems, such leaders tend to dominate decision-making, preferring to organize a centralized decision-making structure that situates them self at the top. It is no wonder, therefore, that these leaders are often perceived as micromanagers, as they do not place much premium on deliberation or delegation of important tasks; instead they forcefully exert leverage in all stages of policy.

Conceptual Complexity (CC)

This trait refers to the ability of an individual to see the gray areas or subtlety in issues. According to Hermann, "conceptual complexity is the degree of differentiation that an individual shows in describing or discussing other people, places, policies, ideas, or things."⁴⁴ High conceptual complexity connotes nuanced thinking and an ability to entertain a variety of factors that may be pertinent to a policy choice. High complexity individuals are highly attuned to contextual constraints bearing on their decisions and they seek as much information as possible before making a decision. Individuals such as Tayyip Erdoğan, who have low conceptual complexity, tend to see the world in stark, black-and-white terms, with a low tolerance for ambiguity. They make strong distinctions between "us" and "them," succumbing to categorical thinking on most matters. Lower conceptual complexity is also associated with failure to perceive relevant cues for a failing policy action and a proclivity to discount discrepant feedback from the environment.⁴⁵ Low complexity scores are also taken as an indicator of the leaders' preference for having like-minded advisors around them and their dislike for "out of the box" thinking. As Dyson describes the leaders he studied, "these individuals, with stark views of the world, already knew what they thought about a given problem and did not value highly the opportunity to revisit their conclusions. Higher complexity leaders, by contrast, valued and encouraged decision-making input that challenged their own views, and would actively solicit dissent if it did not appear organically"⁴⁶

Distrust of Others (DIS)

This trait indicates “a general feeling of doubt, uneasiness, misgiving, and wariness about others—an inclination to suspect the motives and actions of others.”⁴⁷ The level of distrust of others helps us understand a leader’s attitude toward the world. Leaders such as Erdoğan with high distrust scores perceive their environment as dangerous and threatening. They view others as actual or potential competitors for their positions or against their cause. This requires high DIS leaders to always be on the lookout for any challenges to their authority. Often leaders with high DIS scores demand unconditional loyalty from those around them, surrounding themselves with a small clique of people who they believe they can trust. As Hakan Yavuz argues, “For Erdoğan, party politics is about loyalty and obedience to the leader.”⁴⁸ In addition, “leaders who distrust others tend to be hypersensitive to criticism—often seeing criticism where others would not.”⁴⁹

Task Orientation (TASK)

Task focus indicates the relative emphasis of a variety of factors that motivate individuals to seek political office. A large body of research exploring motivation in political leaders indicates that leaders are driven either by a task focus—a particular problem or cause, or an ideology—or by the desire to preserve or build relationships through acceptance, approval and support.⁵⁰ Task focused leaders operate with an agenda in mind, whether about foreign policy, domestic political concerns or economic matters. Leaders with a low task focus, as in the case of Erdoğan, focus on the expectations and opinions of their support base at the expense of solving problems or addressing what they believe needs to be done. They place a stronger emphasis from cues coming from their followers, refraining from actions that are deemed unfeasible by the relevant constituencies.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Leadership Profile

As discussed above, Erdoğan’s pattern of scores on the seven traits helps us to delineate the kind of leadership style we can expect from him. For example, his scores on the belief one can control events and on the need for power provide us with information to determine whether he will respect or challenge the constraints in his environment. Erdoğan’s high score in the belief that he can influence what happens in the political environment indicates that he will push the limits of what is possible and try to overcome the limitations on his role. He will take charge of the problems of the moment and exhibit an assertive and at times confrontational leadership style. The expectation that leaders with a strong belief in their ability to overcome obstacles will often adopt a proactive policy orientation and confront issues decisively is certainly borne out in the case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Turkey has made significant strides under Erdoğan’s rule; many domestic political taboos have been broken and the pace of democratic reforms, particularly in the first term of

the AKP government, has reached an unprecedented level. In foreign policy, for example, there has been a sharp departure from long-standing, *status quo*-oriented policy positions.

Erdoğan's willingness to take risks and challenge Turkey's traditional positions has nowhere been as evident as in the Cyprus issue. Despite the strong opposition from the military and hard-line nationalists, Erdoğan's government championed a new approach to Cyprus conflict in support of the Annan Plan. The importance of this development lies in the fact that Turkey's stance on the Cyprus issue was long considered "state policy," meaning that it was above the purview of governmental politics and not open for discussion. Traditional power circles in Turkey and Northern Cyprus viewed the plan's stipulation to cede 10 percent of territories held by the northern Cyprus to Greek Cypriots, to reduce the number of Turkish troops stationed on the island, and to rescind Turkey's role as guarantor as a betrayal of Turkey's strategic interests. Given the tremendous pressure to the contrary, the overwhelming acceptance of the Annan Plan in Northern Cyprus would have been unthinkable without the active support of the AKP government. Erdoğan made clear that he would not tolerate any sabotaging of the negotiations by the old guard in Northern Cyprus, and put his government's full weight behind acceptance.⁵¹ Turkey had never before come so close to the solution of the Cyprus issue.

Erdoğan's challenge against the established state authority on taboo issues like Cyprus has not, however, always yielded successful results. This is partly because his strong belief in his ability to make things happen on his own has led him to be less inclined to seek consensus and agree to power-sharing arrangements or build alliances. Tackling many of Turkey's most controversial policy issues has proven quite difficult without the support of other major societal actors. In addition, Erdoğan's moderate score on power motive indicates that he cannot be expected to do as well, as Hermann puts it, "in reading to how to manipulate the people and work behind the scenes to have the desired outcomes. Such leaders will not be as successful at having an impact as those high in both traits. They will be too direct and open in their use of power signaling others on how to react without really meaning to."⁵²

Erdoğan's tendency for confrontation, his inflammatory rhetoric and lack of restraint seem to play well with a certain segment of the electorate, but does not earn him much sympathy within the power-holding circles. He seems to provoke unnecessary power struggles in the way he uses his authority, yet to lose interest in forcing a policy through when faced with mounting opposition. Erdoğan's subjective perception of his influence in the domestic or international arena does not often correspond with objective reality; he seems to be prone to trying to project power beyond what he is actually capable of achieving. This is nowhere as evident as in his party's various ill-fated attempts to promulgate a new constitution or in responding to the Kurdish question. For example, in August 2009, AKP launched a process termed "the Kurdish initiative." Although limited in its reach and objectives for tackling Turkey's long-standing Kurdish issue, this sincere but poorly managed initiative fomented strong nationalist reactions. The government's reconciliatory approach to Kurds was seen as responsible for the ensuing upswing of terror attacks and soldiers'

funerals. Only a year after all his talk about “brotherhood and cultural co-existence,” Erdoğan adopted a strikingly nationalist tone, saying that the PKK (Kurdish Worker’s Party) members will “drown in their own blood.”⁵³ In the face of the rising nationalist wave and upcoming elections in 2011, Erdoğan seems to have shelved the initiative for good.

This is not, however, the first time that Erdoğan’s disposition to meet the obstacles on his path head-on has caused him problems. The banning of the use of headscarves in all public institutions, including universities by a Council of State decision in 1984, and later, by the decision of the Constitutional Court in 1997, has become one of the most explosive issues in Turkish political life. Early in his tenure in government, Erdoğan introduced two proposals to partially remove the ban, both of which were successfully blocked by the secular establishment. He dropped the issue without taking any further steps aimed at reaching a societal consensus on the matter or making any effort to reduce growing societal polarization. Because Erdoğan is too forceful in his appeals to the opposition and tries to coerce consensus rather than allowing for genuine consultation and debate with actors inside and outside the parliament, he fails to create a favorable environment for change. Erdoğan’s aversion for building consensus and achieving compromise has been noted by various policy analysts. As Hakan Yavuz argues, “[Recep Tayyip Erdoğan] does not have the passion for serious deliberation required to build consensus.”⁵⁴ The effects of the institutional constraints on Erdoğan’s government are real, and his frustration at failing to overcome them successfully is evident in his excessive reaction to any criticism or questioning of his performance. “By now, the Erdoğan who opened up even the issue of the salaries of ordinary workers in the party administration to discussion during the establishment process of the AKP is long gone; instead has appeared another Erdoğan, increasingly intolerant of any criticism and deaf to advice and debate, whether inside or outside his party.”⁵⁵

Erdoğan’s profile can also be presented longitudinally to see whether there are times when he might be more likely to concede to obstacles (Table 3). His scores

Table 3. Erdoğan’s Leadership Traits and the Effect of Time

Time	Traits						
	BACE	CC	DIS	IGB	PWR	SC	TASK
2004	0.36*	0.60	0.09*	0.11	0.26	0.31	0.70*
2005	0.40	0.58	0.16	0.15*	0.30*	0.32	0.62
2006	0.40	0.57	0.18	0.10	0.23	0.32	0.63
2007	0.37*	0.62*	0.20*	0.10	0.19*	0.27*	0.66
2008	0.46*	0.62	0.21*	0.18*	0.36*	0.36*	0.57*
2009	0.41	0.58	0.13	0.15	0.29	0.34	0.67

*Note:** denotes that there is a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 significance level.

for BACE and PWR, for example, fell dramatically in 2007, on the eve of the presidential elections. At this time, Erdoğan was pushing for the nomination of Abdullah Gül, then the Foreign Minister, to become the next President without seeking any consensus among the key actors of the society before the parliamentary vote was to take place. This created immense uproar and resistance in Kemalist circles and led to a mass societal mobilization to stop the process. The resulting rallies, known as “cumhuriyet mitingleri” (republican meetings), together with a harsh warning from the military and the decisions of the Constitutional Court, forced Erdoğan to back down from going through with the process.⁵⁶ His scores during this period indicate a submission to those forces that he seemed powerless to control.

However, the July 2007 national elections brought AKP to power with an even bigger share of the vote than the previous elections. This 12 percent increase in the popular vote fueled a newfound confidence in the AKP government for its second term. Table 3 shows accordingly how Erdoğan’s scores in his belief in his ability to control events, his need for power and self-confidence traits reached their highest points in 2008, and remained high in 2009. The media image of Erdoğan as becoming increasingly “assertive,” “authoritarian” and “power-hungry” is supported by these scores, and Erdoğan himself indeed evidenced a greater interest in forcing and manipulating events during his second term. His higher power scores indicate he became more adept in behind-the-scenes political maneuvering, and resolved to become more ruthless in asserting his positional power. During his second term, particularly after surviving the closure case in the constitutional court on charges of anti-secular activities, Erdoğan set out to remove remaining internal checks on his power. The AKP has increased its sway over the media,⁵⁷ tried to rein in excessive military power through the “Ergonekon” case⁵⁸ and put pressure on the judiciary by wiretapping and leaking of private phone conversations of prominent people in the judiciary.⁵⁹

High need for power is also associated with impulsive and aggressive behavior, as has been increasingly pointed out by policy analysts.⁶⁰ Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, for example, argues that “since 2007, Prime Minister Erdoğan has become more authoritarian, lashing out at his critics, suing journalists and alienating liberal Turks who once supported him.”⁶¹ Similarly, Gareth Jenkins, a prominent Turkey analyst, notes that “through late 2008 and early 2009, Erdoğan became not only more outspoken and but increasingly aggressive; mixing threats and insults in an unprecedented barrage of attacks against everyone from advocates of Kurdish cultural rights to the IMF, the EU, the oppositional media, Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the World Economic Forum.”⁶² The fluctuations in BACE and PWR scores as confirmed by variance analysis indicate that Erdoğan is not entirely unyielding to the obstacles he faces; however, his reactions to them often take the form of lashing out rather than finding ways to build consensus and to seek better political timing to have the desired influence.

Erdoğan’s scores in conceptual complexity and self-confidence can be combined to suggest how open or closed he is to contextual information. As Hermann argues, “these two traits are interrelated to form a leader’s self-other orientation—how open

they will be to input from others in the decision-making process and from the political environment in general.”⁶³ Leaders like Tayyip Erdoğan, whose scores are lower than many other leaders, are generally closed to contradictory information. They do not have the willingness to consider a range of alternatives and monitor the environment extensively for cues before making any decision. These leaders have a principled approach to politics and are confident that what they know and the course they follow is right. However, because they tend to tune out information that contradicts their understanding of the situation, they like to have like-minded advisors around them and they do not appreciate the value of being exposed to critical thinking.⁶⁴ Observers of Erdoğan’s government frequently point out the diminishing intra-party democracy within the party: “most AKP deputies, with the exception of those close to the prime minister, even lack the courage to demand an appointment with Erdoğan. Party group meetings are turned into a private stage for Erdoğan, where deputies do not have the right to speak or ask questions. Increasingly, the same appears to be valid as concerns the council of ministers. AKP members increasingly say what they think Erdoğan wants to hear.”⁶⁵ Similarly, Yavuz argues that “[Erdoğan] does not try to gather experts and bright people around him with whom he could get to the heart of problems and come up with solutions.”⁶⁶ On the contrary, as predicted by his slightly lower score in self-confidence, he appears “intimidated by his intellectual superiors.”⁶⁷

As Hermann argues, “If the scores are low in comparison to other leaders, the individual is likely to be closed. . . inclined to rather easily lock onto a position that will seem likely to be successful. . . These leaders may evidence signs of narcissism, relishing the spotlight, pushing for even more extreme moves than the group may perceive as necessary.”⁶⁸ By all accounts, this is congruent with Erdoğan’s general portrayal in the media. Erdoğan’s insensitivity to political context is evidenced by his lack of patience to let situations unfold and to check the environment to determine what is achievable before committing to a certain policy course. He also fails to perceive relevant cues for a failing policy action because his convictions are so tightly held as to be impermeable to any discrepant information. As Hermann argues, leaders with similar dispositions to Erdoğan typically “reinterpret the environment to fit their view of the world.”⁶⁹ This is clearly evident, for example, in Erdoğan’s reaction to the downturn in Turkish economy precipitated by the global crisis. At a time when Turkey’s GDP had declined by an annual rate of 6.2 percent and the unemployment rate stood at record 13.5 percent, Erdoğan confidently claimed that the global crisis had already bypassed Turkey.⁷⁰ Just a few months later, in January 2009, although an agreement had been reached by the government officials and the IMF on a new loan offer, Erdoğan refused to endorse it at the last minute, reprimanding the IMF for demanding last minute concessions.⁷¹ Erdoğan’s behavior has fueled concerns that he is isolated among his small group of loyal and like-minded advisors. As expected of individuals with low conceptual complexity, Erdoğan’s initial categorization of an issue or an actor into a pre-established frame seems to create a relatively strong resistance to change.

Erdoğan's subjective interpretation of reality in accordance with his world view and his tendency to filter all policy options through his deeply held beliefs and values seems to be taking a toll on Turkish foreign policy. His particular take on morality and his comfort with stark judgments of right and wrong conduct is particularly evident in his approach to relations with Israel. Turkey's firmly anchored bilateral relations with Israel in the form of military cooperation since 1950s have experienced a dramatic downturn in the last couple of years. Following Israel's December 2008 invasion of Gaza, there has been a remarkable shift in rhetoric and action.⁷² Erdoğan's now infamous walk-out of a televised Davos panel with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, and his frequent harsh and undiplomatic criticism of the Israelis for "barbaric acts" and "state terrorism" (in contrast, we might note, to his embrace of Hamas as "activists in a struggle to defend themselves") are examples of a dichotomous thinking underlined by a fixed moral outlook. Erdoğan's opposition to Israel denies Turkey any diplomatic role as a reliable and neutral partner in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Turkey's casting its lot with the Arab cause so openly is a far cry from a balanced foreign policy approach required of an emerging regional leader. In order for Turkey to succeed in its peace-making initiatives, including those between Israel and Syria, Iran and the USA, and the various actors in Iraq, it must maintain good relations with all states in the region and preserve its impartiality. The deterioration of relations with Israel is likely to result in other actors assuming a mediator role, ending Turkey's hopes for taking on initiatives that would bolster its claim for regional leadership.

Erdoğan's aggressive policy toward Israel is an exemplar of his attitude toward those whom he does not perceive as reliable dialogue partners. There is no denying that his religious sentiments play a significant part in who deems as friends or foes, as evidenced by his embrace of Sudanese policies in Darfur, when he claimed that "Muslims do not commit genocide."⁷³ Erdoğan's opposition to Anders Fogh Rasmussen's appointment of NATO General Secretary, despite a prior agreement on this issue between President Gül and President Obama,⁷⁴ also indicates that his Muslim sensibilities and previous positive or negative encounters loom large in his perception of people and events. Erdoğan's stark categorization of world leaders, and its prominent effect on the way he pursues relations with them, can easily be traced in his speech. For example, in referring to the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, he says, "there is no doubt he is our friend... as a friend so far we have very good relations and have had no difficulty at all."⁷⁵ Similarly, Erdoğan's perception of Turkey's relations with France does not seem to rely on objective and rational grounds, but appears to be an extension of his judgment of French leaders' attitudes toward Turkey: "Previously, under Mr. Chirac, we had excellent relations and he was very positive towards Turkey. But during the time of Mr. Sarkozy, this is not the case."⁷⁶ It appears that, for Erdoğan, the perception of an opponent as reliable is a *sine qua non* for a constructive relationship.

Erdoğan's conceptual complexity scores are generally stable from year to year (Table 3), although a statistically significant variance is indicated for the year 2007. His complexity score rose dramatically in that year, indicating a heightened

contextual sensitivity to the developments surrounding the presidential and national elections, apparently making him more eager to seek information, even if solely to confirm his position and convince others of what should be done. However, this openness to contextual stimuli proved short-lived, as the score dropped sharply in 2009. The variance in his self-confidence scores is even more striking. While his scores for this trait were generally stable, the drop in 2007 is particularly noticeable. Such a low self-confidence score again indicates an increased sensitivity to cues from the environment that often leads to a chameleon-like behavior. The change in scores suggests that the political dynamics of an election year turned Erdoğan into a strategic leader, seemingly keener on checking the environment to see his options before taking an action and exercising more restraint in his speech and actions. One example is his ability to turn the widely criticized intervention of the Constitutional Court in the presidential elections over the issue of parliamentary quorum in his favor, capitalizing on his party's downtrodden image and emerging as the decisive victor of the ensuing national elections. Erdoğan's high score in self-confidence in 2008 can also be explained by the Constitutional Court's narrow rejection of the case to close the AKP and ban Erdoğan from politics. This supports the expectation of more opportunistic behavior and increased political haughtiness on the part of Erdoğan, who now has greater tactical freedom to advocate a particular cause or a position.

Erdoğan's scores on task versus interpersonal focus, when combined with his scores on in-group bias and distrust of others, indicate whether he is motivated by a problem, a cause or a need for affiliation, approval or support. Low task scores, as in the case of Erdoğan, indicate attentiveness to the needs and desires of relevant and important constituencies. These leaders are keenly sensitive to what it will take to keep people loyal to their cause and to keep group morale high.⁷⁷ As Hermann indicates, "camaraderie, loyalty, and commitment to the group are critical for leaders with this emphasis."⁷⁸ Erdoğan's low task scores indicate that he may be unwilling to risk alienating his support base to accomplish a task or a project, even if he deems it important. He will only push for a solution to a particular problem as far as and as fast as his followers are willing to go. Erdoğan's relationship focus is also confirmed by Hakan Yavuz who argues that "[h]e knows that the expectations of the core supporters are not fulfilled. He is torn between a sense of siege and frustration that he might lose the support of his base if he does not fulfill its demands."⁷⁹ For example, Erdoğan's several ill-fated attempts to meet the expectations of his supporters by expanding religious freedoms, finding a solution to the headscarf ban and removing discriminations against religious school (imam-hatip) graduates contribute to his insecurity. Leaders with Erdoğan's type of pattern are very protective of those who are loyal to them and they feel a deep sense of debt to those who facilitate their hold on power. Erdoğan has also faced numerous allegations of corruption and patronage regarding the distribution of nominations, appointments and government contracts that seem to have favored close associates.⁸⁰

Erdoğan's consistently low scores on nationalism indicate that he defines his "in-group" as fellow Muslims. Yavuz claims that "Erdoğan has no special sense of

nationalism or of being a Turk. . . From Erdoğan's perspective, a nation is a religious community and the people of Turkey constitute a nation by sharing Islam."⁸¹ He perceives Islamic identity as one that subsumes all other differences among people and nations. Erdoğan's religious background serves as a reference point that helps him decipher the external world. His tendency for categorical thinking further accentuates this trait. In addition, his consistently high level of distrust leads him to approach politics as a battle between good and evil and as a struggle to defend his kind. He is highly suspicious of the motives and actions of others and tends to see the worst in people and situations that are unfamiliar to him. His relationship orientation, combined with high distrust, indicates that Erdoğan puts loyalty and commitment to the group ahead of solving problems or getting things done. In foreign policy, leaders with high distrust scores tend to adopt a confrontational stand toward states who they perceive as adversaries. Their general outlook on international politics shifts from conflictual to cooperation depending on interacting with friends or enemies. In foreign policy, stressful or ambiguous situations can give rise to a "prickly defensive orientation to others."⁸²

Nevertheless, Erdoğan's low level of nationalism leads him to seek opportunities for cooperative relationships and win-win agreements particularly in foreign affairs, although he tends to be more peaceable and less confrontational when dealing with like-minded others. Erdoğan's staunch backing of Iran's nuclear program, while arguing that the real problem in the region is Israel's nuclear capacity, is clear evidence of his relationship orientation. Iranian sympathy with AKP's deeply religious core supporters also compels Erdoğan to continue to support Iran in its duel with the West. The dramatically positive turn experienced in Turkey's relations with Syria during AKP's term is another indicator of Erdoğan's ability to forge cooperative relationships and mutually advantageous agreements with leaders he perceives as trustworthy. Erdoğan's categorical thinking, when combined with relationship orientation toward politics and his exceptionally high dislike of others indicate that foreign policy, more often than not, is likely to reflect his personal agenda whether to revenge previous grudges as in the case of Rasmussen, or reward loyalty as in the case of Assad's Syria. Erdoğan's tendency to personalize policy and his emotional and divisive language seems increasingly to divert Turkish foreign policy from an interest-based and principled operational basis.

What follows from the above discussion is that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's pattern of scores indicates that he has an "evangelist" orientation to politics (Table 1). This is the leadership style that results from a combination of the tendency to challenge constraints in the environment, closedness to information and having a relationship focus.⁸³ Evangelists are the least sensitive to the political context and they selectively seek and interpret information to persuade others or legitimize their policy choices. They tend to be proactive and assertive and often respond to challenging situations without much deliberation and often impulsively. Their most important goal is to attract as much people to their cause or point of view as possible. They measure their success in terms of the number of loyal followers. As Hermann, Preston, Korany and Shaw argue, "evangelists have little use for those who cannot understand

the urgency of their concerns; they identify with their goals completely, at times becoming isomorphic with the positions of their countries and willing to risk their offices for what they believe is right and just. Their positions should prevail because they know what is best for all concerned. Those who cross such leaders are considered the equivalent of traitors.”⁸⁴

Given this description of Erdoğan’s leadership style, he certainly exemplifies the kind of policy behavior we would expect from political leaders with the particular combination of personality traits under study here. Erdoğan’s leadership style impinges upon Turkey’s most controversial foreign policy positions that depart from the established line. His predisposition to take matters into his own hands has reached a point where he has sidelined the President and his Foreign Affairs Minister on many occasions by making unexpected and sharp remarks that have refuted previously established official positions.⁸⁵ By many accounts, the sole function of the Turkish foreign policy establishment, including the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, has been reduced to salvaging the blunders Erdoğan makes in foreign policy.⁸⁶ This problem is demonstrated, for example, by relations with Armenia, where an ongoing rapprochement between two countries has come to a sudden halt as Erdoğan single-handedly committed Turkey to an intractable position by promising Azerbaijan that the protocols of a new treaty would not be approved by the parliament unless the Nagorno-Karabakh issue was resolved.⁸⁷ In addition, Erdoğan’s threatening of “100 000 Armenians living illegally in Turkey” with expulsion has seriously undermined his government’s sincerity in improving relations with Armenia.⁸⁸ Erdoğan’s impulsive disposition and his disinclination to compromise and to make trade-offs has been a factor in the way many of AKP’s previously successful foreign policy initiatives have recently ended in a deadlock.⁸⁹

Conclusion

What is clear from this analysis of the decision-making style of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is that his leadership has had a defining effect on the foreign policy choices of his government and that he exhibits behavior consistent with the evangelical leadership style suggested from our analysis of his verbal record. In the course of our analysis, we have examined how Erdoğan has challenged constraints, whether he has been open to information, and motivated by a task or relationship orientation, which make up the key elements of his leadership style. Thus, it comes now as no surprise that he has been at the center of decision-making in Turkey, and that he has been the driving force behind many of his government’s policy choices. His strong grip over the political process and his authoritarian tendencies have long been recognized by analysts as they have increasingly begun referring to Turkey as “Erdoğan’s Turkey” or “Erdoğan’s Ankara government.”⁹⁰ These descriptions have also captured the departure of Erdoğan’s government from many of the established positions and policies of the Turkish Republic.

Our analysis of Erdoğan’s leadership profile is consistent with many of the qualitative accounts of Erdoğan’s personality.⁹¹ This of course further supports the

validity of the Leadership Trait Analysis and the importance of an objective and in-depth analysis of the leadership profiles of individuals who hold key decision-making positions. It goes without saying that problematizing individual agency may not yield fruitful results in political systems with relatively diffused power schemes in policy-making or in contexts where political choices are strongly dictated by situational constraints. Despite this caveat, the significance of leadership analysis is all the more pronounced when the leader in question, as in the case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, seems to perceive his authority and convictions as being above and beyond all institutions, people and ideas. This study has provided us with a window into Erdoğan's strategies and foibles and has revealed how his perception of the operational environment becomes translated into policy choices.

The most conspicuous personality trait of Erdoğan, and the one likely to have the most profound impact on his foreign policy choices, is his low conceptual complexity. The fact that his convictions are so tightly held and preferences fixed, and that he tends to see only what he wants to see, renders him incapable of deciphering the nuances of diplomacy and successfully navigating the tricky waters of international affairs. Erdoğan's profoundly black and white view of international politics, his rigid thinking and his preference to engage with like-minded others, particularly his reverence for Islamic solidarity, render his intention to make Turkey a player on the global scene rather unconvincing. His dichotomizing tendency predisposes him to view politics as a struggle between right and wrong, just and unjust, villains and victims, which makes it questionable whether Turkey can actually play an effective and neutral mediator role in the many regional conflicts. What accentuates the gravity of this picture is the lack of diversity of opinions that get represented in Erdoğan's close circle of like-minded advisors. His obvious dislike of tedious bureaucratic processes leads him to sideline formal structures of authority in foreign policy processes. Although the conceptual framework of Turkish foreign policy was originally placed on a solid foundation during AKP's term, the day-to-day working of this scheme has been captive to the snap judgments, emotional rhetoric and idiosyncratic preferences of its leader. This study demonstrates not only the utility of problematizing leadership in foreign policy analysis, but also serves as a testimony to the dangers of a leader's domination of foreign policy in the absence of effective checks and balances.

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