

Florya Chronicles of Political Economy



İSTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

Journal of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences

Year 12 Number 2 - October 2026

GENERAL DOI: 10.17932/IAU.FCPE.2015.010

FCPE October 2026 Year 12 Number 2 DOI 10.17932/IAU.FCPE.2015.010/2026.1202

ISSN : 2149-5750

e-ISSN: 2717-7629

Florya Chronicles of Political Economy

ISSN : 2149-5750

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Publication Period

Published twice a year

October and April

Language

English - Turkish

Academic Studies

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Press

Levent Baskı Merkezi

Sertifika No: 53055

Emniyetevler Mahallesi Yeniçeri Sokak

No:6/B

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DOI Numaraları / DOI Numbers

FCPE October 2026 Year 12 Number 2 DOI: 10.17932/IAU.FCPE.2015.010/2026.1202

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10.17932/IAU.FCPE.2015.010/fcpe_v012i2001

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Editör Yazısı

Bu sayımızda yer alan çalışmalar, uluslararası ilişkiler, dış politika, siyasal iktisat ve muhasebe alanlarındaki güncel gelişmeleri farklı teorik ve metodolojik yaklaşımlarla ele alarak ilgili literatüre önemli katkılar sunmaktadır.

Oğuzhan Göksel, “Devlet Yönetiminin Siyasal ve Ekonomik Tipolojileri: AK Parti Dönemi Türk Dış Politikasını Konumlandırmak” başlıklı makalesinde, Türkiye’nin 2002–2025 dönemindeki dış politika yönelimlerini siyasal ve ekonomik devlet yönetimi tipolojileri çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Uluslararası ilişkiler, dış politika analizi ve karşılaştırmalı siyasal iktisat literatüründen hareketle oluşturulan on beş farklı tipoloji üzerinden gerçekleştirilen nitel analiz, Türk dış politikasının tek bir devlet yönetimi modeliyle açıklanamayacak ölçüde çok boyutlu ve değişken bir yapı sergilediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, AK Parti iktidarının ilk yıllarında ticaret ve kalkınma odaklı yaklaşımların öne çıktığını, sonraki dönemlerde ise güvenlik, stratejik özerklik ve ideolojik yönelimlerin belirginleştiğini göstermektedir. Bu çerçevede araştırma, Türkiye’nin dış politika dönüşümünü dönemsel farklılıklar ve bir arada var olabilen devlet tipolojileri üzerinden değerlendirerek dış politika analizi literatürüne katkı sunmaktadır.

Sibel Elif Özdilek, “2003–2025 Döneminde Rusya Federasyonu–Azerbaycan İlişkilerinin Dönüşümü: Uluslararası ve Bölgesel Dinamikler Bağlamında Bir Analiz” başlıklı çalışmada, Rusya ile Azerbaycan arasındaki siyasi, stratejik ve jeopolitik ilişkileri uluslararası sistemdeki dönüşümler ve Güney Kafkasya’daki bölgesel gelişmeler çerçevesinde analiz etmektedir. Jeopolitik teoriler, hegemonya, stratejik ortaklık ve uluslararası hukuk ilkelerinden yararlanan çalışma; enerji güvenliği, bölgesel güç dengeleri ve dış politika stratejilerini çok boyutlu bir yaklaşımla değerlendirmektedir. Resmî belgeler, ikili anlaşmalar ve diplomatik açıklamaların içerik ve söylem analiziyle incelendiği araştırma, Rusya–Azerbaycan ilişkilerinin yalnızca çatışma veya tek taraflı bağımlılık üzerinden açıklanamayacağını; iş birliği, rekabet ve karşılıklı bağımlılığın bir arada bulunduğu pragmatik bir stratejik ortaklık niteliği taşıdığını ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, Güney Kafkasya’daki değişen jeopolitik dengelerin anlaşılmasına katkı sunmaktadır.

Bu sayının son makalesinde Cem Niyazi Durmuş, “Bibliyometrik Analiz ile Yalın Muhasebede Dinamikleri ve Eğilimleri Ortaya Çıkarmak” başlıklı çalışmada, yalın muhasebe alanındaki akademik literatürün gelişimini ve araştırma eğilimlerini bibliyometrik analiz yöntemiyle incelemektedir. Web of Science Core Collection veri tabanından elde edilen ve 1996–2025 dönemini kapsayan 53 çalışma, Bibliometrix ve VOSviewer yazılımları aracılığıyla yayın performansı, atıf ilişkileri, yazar iş birlikleri ve kavramsal eğilimler açısından

değerlendirilmektedir. Bulgular, yalın muhasebe literatüründe bilimsel üretimin istikrarlı ancak sınırlı bir artış gösterdiğini, araştırmacılar arasındaki iş birliği ağlarının parçalı bir yapı sergilediğini ve dijital dönüşüm, sürdürülebilirlik ile Endüstri 4.0 gibi güncel konuların henüz yeterince ele alınmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, mevcut araştırma boşluklarını belirleyerek yalın muhasebe alanında gelecekte yürütülecek araştırmalara yönelik bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

Bu sayıya bilimsel ve değerli çalışmalarıyla katkı sunan tüm yazarlara teşekkür ederiz. Ayrıca, Dr. Ecem COŞAR CANLIER'e İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Rektörü Prof. Dr. İbrahim Hakkı AYDIN ile Mtevelli Heyet Başkanı Prof. Dr. Mustafa AYDIN'a FCPE'ye verdikleri sürekli destekten dolayı teşekkür ederiz.

Prof. Dr. Hüseyin SELİMLER
Baş Editör

Editorial

The articles featured in this issue address contemporary developments in international relations, foreign policy, political economy, and accounting through diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, making significant contributions to the relevant literature.

In his article entitled “Political and Economic Typologies of Statecraft: Positioning Turkish Foreign Policy during the AK Party Era,” Oğuzhan Göksel examines Türkiye’s foreign policy orientations during the 2002–2025 period within the framework of political and economic typologies of statecraft. Drawing on the literature on international relations, foreign policy analysis, and comparative political economy, the study employs a qualitative analysis based on fifteen distinct typologies, demonstrating that Turkish foreign policy exhibits a multidimensional and dynamic structure that cannot be adequately explained by a single model of statecraft. The findings indicate that trade- and development-oriented approaches were prominent during the early years of AK Party rule, whereas security considerations, strategic autonomy, and ideological orientations became increasingly pronounced in subsequent periods. In this context, the study contributes to the foreign policy analysis literature by examining the transformation of Türkiye’s foreign policy through period-specific variations and the coexistence of different statecraft typologies.

In her article entitled “The Transformation of Relations between the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan during 2003–2025: An Analysis in the Context of International and Regional Dynamics,” Sibel Elif Özdilek analyzes the political, strategic, and geopolitical relations between Russia and Azerbaijan within the context of transformations in the international system and regional developments in the South Caucasus. Drawing on geopolitical theories and the concepts of hegemony, strategic partnership, and principles of international law, the study adopts a multidimensional approach to examining energy security, regional balances of power, and foreign policy strategies. Through content and discourse analyses of official documents, bilateral agreements, and diplomatic statements, the research demonstrates that Russia–Azerbaijan relations cannot be explained solely in terms of conflict or unilateral dependence. Rather, these relations reflect a pragmatic strategic partnership characterized by the coexistence of cooperation, competition, and interdependence. The study contributes to a better understanding of the evolving geopolitical dynamics in the South Caucasus.

In the final article of this issue, entitled “Uncovering Dynamics and Trends in Lean Accounting through Bibliometric Analysis,” Cem Niyazi Durmuş examines the development of academic literature and research trends in the field of lean accounting using bibliometric analysis. A total of 53 studies published between

1996 and 2025 and retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection database are analyzed using Bibliometrix and VOSviewer software in terms of publication performance, citation relationships, author collaborations, and conceptual trends. The findings reveal that scholarly output in the lean accounting literature has increased steadily but remains limited, while collaboration networks among researchers exhibit a fragmented structure. Furthermore, contemporary topics such as digital transformation, sustainability, and Industry 4.0 have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention. By identifying existing research gaps, the study provides a framework for future research in the field of lean accounting.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the authors who have contributed to this issue with their valuable scholarly work. We also extend our appreciation to Dr. Ecem COŞAR CANLIER, Prof. Dr. İbrahim Hakkı AYDIN, Rector of Istanbul Aydın University, and Prof. Dr. Mustafa AYDIN, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, for their continuous support of FCPE.

Prof. Hüseyin Selimler
Editor-in-Chief

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TYPOLOGIES OF STATECRAFT: LOCATING TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE AKP

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Abstract

This article asks which political and economic typologies of statecraft best characterize Türkiye's foreign policy under Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule and how their applicability has changed since 2002. It tests the hypothesis that no single, time-invariant typology is adequate: Turkish foreign policy is hybrid, and its dominant profile has shifted from trading and developmental orientations toward illiberal, garrison, Machiavellian, civilizational, and revisionist traits, while middle- and regional-power characteristics persist. Methodologically, the study employs a theory-guided qualitative single-case design and deductive typological analysis. Fifteen categories drawn from International Relations, Foreign Policy Analysis, and comparative political economy are operationalized through their defining political, economic, security, and ideational indicators and assessed on a four-point interpretive scale. The analysis distinguishes four phases: Europeanization and commercial expansion (2002–2010), Arab Spring activism and ideological regionalism (2011–2015), securitized strategic autonomy (2016–2022), and selective normalization and constrained pragmatism (2023–2025). The findings support the hypothesis. Early AKP policy most closely resembled a trading and partially developmental state; later phases display stronger illiberal, garrison, intelligence, Machiavellian, civilizational, and revisionist features. Across all periods, Türkiye remains best understood as a middle power with contested regional-power ambitions. The article therefore treats typologies as combinable and temporally variable analytical dimensions rather than mutually exclusive labels.

Keywords: *Foreign Policy Analysis, Economic Statecraft, Statecraft Typology, Turkish Foreign Policy, Justice and Development Party (AKP)*

*Araştırma Makalesi, Geliş Tarihi: 02.07.2026, Kabul Tarihi: 26.08.2026.
Bu makalede Etik Kurul Onayı gerekmemektedir.

DEVLET YÖNETİMİNİN SİYASAL VE EKONOMİK TİPOLOJİLERİ: AK PARTİ DÖNEMİ TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASINI KONUMLANDIRMAK

ÖZ

Bu makale, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti) iktidarı döneminde Türkiye'nin dış politikasını hangi siyasal ve ekonomik devlet yönetimi tipolojilerinin en iyi açıkladığını ve bu tipolojilerin uygulanabilirliğinin 2002'den itibaren nasıl değiştiğini araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, tek ve zaman içinde değişmeyen hiçbir tipolojinin yeterli olmadığı; Türk dış politikasının melez bir nitelik taşıdığı ve baskın profilinin ticaret devleti ile kalkıncı devlet yönelimlerinden illiberal, garnizon, Makyavelist, medeniyetçi ve revizyonist özelliklere doğru kaydığı, buna karşılık orta güç ve bölgesel güç özelliklerinin devam ettiği hipotezini sınamaktadır. Yöntemsel olarak teori güdümlü nitel tek-vaka tasarımı ve tümdengelimsel tipolojik analiz kullanılmaktadır. Uluslararası İlişkiler, Dış Politika Analizi ve karşılaştırmalı siyasal iktisat literatürlerinden türetilen on beş kategori; siyasal, ekonomik, güvenlik ve düşünsel göstergeleri üzerinden operasyonelleştirilmekte ve dört dereceli yorumlayıcı bir ölçekle değerlendirilmektedir. Analiz dört dönemi ayırmaktadır: Avrupalılaşma ve ticari açılım (2002–2010), Arap Baharı aktivizmi ve ideolojik bölgeselcilik (2011–2015), güvenlikleştirilmiş stratejik özerklik (2016–2022) ve seçici normalleşme ile sınırlı pragmatizm (2023–2025). Bulgular hipotezi desteklemektedir. İlk dönemde ticaret devleti ve kısmen kalkıncı devlet özellikleri öne çıkarken, sonraki dönemlerde illiberal, garnizon, istihbarat, Makyavelist, medeniyetçi ve revizyonist nitelikler güçlenmiştir. Türkiye bütün dönemlerde, bölgesel güç iddiaları tartışmalı olan bir orta güç olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Makale böylece tipolojileri birbirini dışlayan etiketler yerine bir arada bulunabilen ve zaman içinde değişebilen analitik boyutlar olarak ele almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Dış Politika Analizi, Ekonomik Devlet Yönetimi, Devlet Yönetimi Tipolojisi, Türk Dış Politikası, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti)*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Türkiye's foreign policy has increasingly captured the attention of scholars and practitioners of International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) (Kesgin, 2020; Kutlay & Öniş, 2021; Müftüler-Baç, 2013; Oğuzlu, 2020; Ovalı & Özdikmenli, 2019; Taş, 2022). The shift toward a more assertive, multifaceted and often controversial foreign policy under the AKP (Justice and Development Party) has raised critical questions about the motivations, strategic priorities and ideological drivers of contemporary Turkish foreign policy. These developments challenge existing frameworks in the field of FPA, which often categorize states based on broad typologies, such as "trading states," "illiberal states" or "garrison states" that reflect different motivations and strategic outlooks (Lasswell, 1941; Rosecrance, 1986; Zakaria, 2003). However, the case of contemporary Türkiye reveals the limitations of relying on any single typology, as its foreign policy behaviour incorporates multiple and often contradictory elements that do not fit neatly into one specific category.

This article addresses the need for a multidimensional framework capable of capturing the complexities of contemporary statecraft. By locating Türkiye's foreign policy under the AKP within such a framework, it seeks both to clarify Türkiye's evolving external behaviour and to contribute a more flexible analytical tool to FPA. The proposed typology table integrates insights from realism, liberalism, constructivism, comparative politics, and political economy, enabling analysts to assess several dimensions of state behaviour simultaneously rather than forcing cases into a single category. The central research question is: Which political and economic typologies of statecraft best characterize Türkiye's foreign policy under the AKP, and how has their relative applicability changed across distinct phases of AKP rule since 2002? This formulation directs attention both to the coexistence of different behavioural logics and to temporal change within the same governing-party era.

The article evaluates the following hypothesis: no single, time-invariant statecraft typology adequately explains Turkish foreign policy under the AKP; instead, Türkiye displays a hybrid configuration whose centre of gravity shifts from trading and developmental orientations in the early period toward illiberal, garrison, intelligence, Machiavellian, civilizational, and revisionist orientations in later periods, while its middle-power and regional-power characteristics remain comparatively persistent.

Methodologically, the article conducts a theory-guided qualitative single-case study using deductive typological analysis. It derives defining indicators for fifteen categories from the relevant IR, FPA, comparative politics, and political-economy literature; evaluates Türkiye against those indicators using scholarly secondary sources and illustrative foreign-policy decisions; and compares the resulting pattern across four periods between 2002 and the study's evidentiary cut-off in December 2025. A full account of the research design, scoring criteria, evidence base, and limitations is provided below.

This article offers several original contributions to the literature on FPA, Turkish foreign policy and IR theory. First, it responds to the limitations of existing FPA typologies, which often lack flexibility to account for states that display characteristics of multiple state types. This rigid classification is problematic when analysing countries like Türkiye, whose foreign policy has oscillated between pragmatic, economic-oriented approaches and ideologically driven, assertive actions that reflect domestic pressures and regional security concerns (Yavuz, 2022). By constructing an integrated typology table, this study aims to provide a versatile tool that can possibly accommodate complex, hybrid cases and offers a means for comparative analysis across diverse political and economic systems (see Table 1).

Second, the article puts forward an empirical contribution by systematically analysing Turkish foreign policy under the AKP through the lens of various statecraft types, including the trading state, illiberal state, intelligence state, garrison state, Machiavellian state and others. This framework enables an investigation of how the AKP's domestic ideological positioning and political agenda influence Türkiye's international strategy, with particular emphasis on how these motivations align with or deviate from existing typologies. Such an analysis is crucial for understanding the AKP's approach, which combines economic pragmatism with ideological imperatives. Third, the study introduces a typology table that can be expanded into a broader theoretical framework, potentially applicable to a global range of case studies. Such an endeavour would not only enhance our understanding of how different states navigate the complexities of the international system but also contribute to a more robust and adaptable FPA framework capable of accommodating an increasingly multipolar world.

The following section reviews political and economic typologies of statecraft and explains their theoretical foundations. The article then develops the multidimensional analytical tool and sets out the research design, indicator-based assessment scale, evidence base, and temporal boundaries. The empirical section first periodizes AKP foreign policy into four phases and then applies the typologies to Türkiye, using the phase-sensitive summary in Table 2 as a guide to the detailed discussion. The concluding section assesses the hypothesis, considers the framework's implications for FPA and IR theory, and identifies avenues for comparative and longitudinal research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TYPOLOGIES OF STATECRAFT AND FPA

Much of the scholarly literature on the connection between domestic political regimes and foreign policy-making focuses on the ways in which regime types and institutions shape a country's external behaviour (Fearon, 1998; Kaarbo, 2015; Kissinger, 1966). This relationship has been examined through several theoretical lenses, including Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, and studies derived from the sub-field of Comparative Politics. Classical Realists (e.g. Hans Morgenthau) and Neo-Realists (e.g. Kenneth Waltz) have long argued that domestic politics have little impact on foreign policy (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979). According to Realists, democracies, autocracies and hybrid regimes behave similarly in their pursuit of security and survival in an anarchic world. Liberal theorists (e.g. Michael Doyle and Bruce Russett), by contrast, emphasize the significance of domestic factors, particularly the nature of a political regime, in shaping foreign policy (Doyle, 1986; Russett, 1993). The "Democratic Peace Theory" famously posits that democracies are less likely to go to war with one another due to shared norms, political accountability, and institutional constraints.

Constructivist scholars like Alexander Wendt argue that foreign policy is shaped not just by material forces but also by ideational factors, including national identity, political culture, and the social construction of regime legitimacy (Wendt, 1999). According to this view, domestic political regimes shape foreign policy by influencing how states perceive their role in the international system and their relationships with other states. For instance, a regime that defines itself as a defender of human rights may prioritize humanitarian interventions, while a regime that draws legitimacy

from nationalist rhetoric may pursue more aggressive territorial expansion. Comparative politics scholars also examine the variations in foreign policy behaviours between different types of regimes. For example, Barbara Geddes and Dan Slater argue that the structure of domestic political institutions, the level of political competition, and the nature of elite-mass relations significantly influence foreign policy decisions (Geddes, 1999; Slater, 2012). As such, authoritarian regimes with less accountability to the public may engage in riskier or more aggressive foreign policies because they do not face electoral consequences.

Military regimes may prioritize security and stability, while personalist regimes may be more prone to adventurism due to the personal ambitions of the leader. On the other hand, party-based authoritarian regimes, like China's Communist Party, tend to have more institutionalized foreign policy processes, which may lead to more calculated and less erratic behaviour. Scholars such as Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell have argued that China's foreign policy has been relatively stable due to its strong institutionalized governance structures, even though it remains authoritarian (Nathan & Scobell, 2012). Hybrid regimes, which blend democratic and authoritarian elements, exhibit more unpredictable foreign policy behaviour. Scholars like Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way have explored how the competitive authoritarian nature of hybrid regimes leads to foreign policy inconsistency (Levitsky & Way, 2010). Leaders of hybrid regimes may alternate between cooperative and aggressive foreign policies depending on their domestic political needs, such as rallying nationalist sentiments to maintain power.

The political economy of foreign policy-making is another sub-field that explores how economic interests, domestic political structures, and international economic systems shape a state's external behaviour. According to classical Realist thinkers like E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, foreign economic policy is a pragmatist extension of the state's broader strategic objectives (Carr, 1939; Morgenthau, 1948). On the other hand, Liberal scholars such as Richard Rosecrance, Robert Keohane, and Joseph Nye argue that economic globalization and interdependence reduce the likelihood of conflict between states by raising the costs of war (Keohane, 2005; Nye, 2004; Rosecrance, 1986). Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories of foreign policy-making focus on the relationship between capitalism and imperialism. Scholars like Immanuel Wallerstein argue that foreign policy

is driven by the interests of the capitalist class and the need to expand markets, secure resources, and access cheap labour (Wallerstein, 1993).

Studies on FPA have used the aforementioned core theories of IR and Comparative Politics as a foundation to develop various domestic politics-based and economically-oriented typologies of statecraft. These typologies offer distinct perspectives on how states interact with each other, what drives their actions, and how internal and external factors shape their strategies. In this context, commonly used typologies such as the “trading state”, “illiberal state”, “garrison state”, “middle power” and “developmental state” have long offered useful frameworks for simplifying and codifying a range of state behaviours in international politics. However, the increasingly complex nature of global politics and the fluidity of state motivations often challenge these fixed categories. The primary strength of FPA typologies is their ability to provide conceptual clarity and facilitate comparative analysis; however, they often lack the flexibility required to fully account for states that exhibit multiple or shifting behavioural characteristics. As such, this article has chosen fifteen widely used political and economic typological categories in the existing FPA literature to build a comprehensive typology table and assess state behaviour according to how well a given state’s political, economic and social features fit into each category.

The “trading state” typology, based on Liberal internationalist thought, emphasizes the importance of economic expansion through international commerce (Kirişçi, 2009; Rosecrance, 1986) (see Table 1). Such countries want to maximize their economic interconnectedness with other countries, lower trade barriers, and utilize global markets to create national prosperity. Trading states usually use cooperative and multilateral approaches to foreign policy. They are more inclined to seek free trade agreements, join international economic organizations (such as the World Trade Organization), and advocate for globalization. These governments wish to avoid armed confrontations that may disrupt commerce and prefer negotiation to combat (Mansfield & Milner, 2012). Indicators of a trading state include robust trade agreements and a low priority on militarized foreign policy. Economic diplomacy, which includes negotiating advantageous trade conditions and encouraging exports, takes precedence in their foreign policy agenda. From World War II to the present, Singapore and Japan have constituted two of the archetypical trading states (Leifer,

2000; Solis, 2017). With limited natural resources, Singapore has aimed to become a worldwide hub for commerce, finance, and logistics. Its foreign policy has focused on maintaining stable ties with major powers such as China and the United States (US), safeguarding regional security, and promoting economic integration through ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and other trade agreements. Likewise, Japanese foreign policy has largely been a pacifist one that avoids military conflict, focusing instead on trade and economic partnerships alongside Tokyo's provision of development aid.

A “garrison state” is a country in which military-centric concerns dominate political and societal systems (Lasswell, 1941) (see Table 1). The state is extremely militarized, and the military-industrial complex has substantial influence over policymaking. National security takes precedence above civil freedoms and economic progress. Garrison states pursue foreign policies that focus on maximising national security and defence. They are more inclined to take aggressive postures, seek strategic alliances, and use deterrent techniques to retain their security. The militarization of foreign policy frequently includes increased defence budget, the use of coercive diplomacy, and a willingness to commit military action. Since the Korean War (1950-1953), the regime of North Korea has been a prime example of a garrison state (Winn, 1986). Its military-dominated governing system has a significant impact on its foreign policy. The leadership retains a major emphasis on building nuclear weapons as a deterrent, while utilizing its military might as leverage in international discussions.

Not unlike North Korea, Egyptian politics and foreign policy has also been examined in the literature as a garrison state case study (Khan et al., 2021). Since the Free Officers' Movement overthrew the monarchy in 1952, the Egyptian military has played a central role in governing the state. Key leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak, and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have risen from military ranks, ensuring the armed forces remain deeply embedded in Egypt's political structure. The Egyptian military controls significant portions of the economy, from infrastructure and manufacturing to agriculture (Khan et al., 2021: 88–89). Military aid, particularly from the US, has long been a cornerstone of its foreign relations, enabling the regime to maintain its internal and external security apparatus (Khan et al., 2021: 91–95)

The “illiberal state” typology, drawn from scholarship on authoritarianism and populism, describes states with limited democratic practices that often leverage nationalist and populist rhetoric to consolidate domestic power (Zakaria, 2003). Illiberal states are distinguished by their authoritarian or semi-authoritarian political systems (see Table 1). These regimes frequently retain nominal features (e.g. regular elections) of democratic structure while restricting freedoms such as press independence, political pluralism, and civil rights (Boyle, 2016). Domestically, they consolidate control and silence criticism. Illiberal regimes conduct foreign policies that mirror their domestic political arrangements. They frequently stress sovereignty and oppose international rules that promote democracy or human rights. Their foreign policy may involve authoritarian solidarity, which is building relationships with other illiberal or authoritarian countries to fight Western democratic influence. Such regimes employ foreign policy to boost internal legitimacy, frequently citing nationalism or external dangers. Russia, under Vladimir Putin, is the prototypical illiberal state as its foreign policy includes support for other authoritarian governments (e.g. North Korea, Syria and Iran), antagonism to Western organizations such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), and a strong focus on sovereignty and non-intervention (Boyle, 2016: 37). Russia’s use of hybrid warfare and anti-Western propaganda across the globe reflects its illiberal state mind-set.

An “intelligence state” emphasizes the importance of intelligence agencies in governance and foreign policy decision-making (see Table 1) (Andrew, 2018; Omand, 2010). In such countries, intelligence agencies are actively involved in both domestic and foreign activities, frequently wielding substantial power over political and socio-economic areas. Intelligence nations frequently take hidden and indirect ways to international policy. These might involve espionage, cyber operations, and systematic misinformation efforts. They rely extensively on intelligence networks to shape international outcomes, protect regime security, and retain strategic advantages. Foreign policy in such countries is frequently opaque, with intelligence services having a disproportionate role in decision-making. Israel’s intelligence agencies, including the Mossad (external intelligence), Shin Bet (domestic security), and Aman (military intelligence), are renowned for their efficiency, innovation, and global reach (Pascovich, 2014). These organizations have developed cutting-edge capabilities in cyber warfare, surveillance, and counterterrorism. Given the crucial role

Mossad and Shin Bet play in Israel's foreign affairs, the country has long been considered an intelligence state. Israel's intelligence-driven foreign policy involves aggressive "counter-terrorism operations", espionage, and cyber actions to strengthen its national security and regional influence. Operations such as the capture of Adolf Eichmann in Argentina (1960), the destruction of Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor (1981), and targeted assassinations of numerous anti-Israeli leaders (e.g. Hassan Nasrallah) demonstrate its proactive use of intelligence (Nimmons, 2018).

Compared to other typologies included in this study, the so-called "Machiavellian state" is a more recent term that requires further refinement (Baccelli, 2025; Fischer, 1996; Göksel, 2023; Mindle, 1985; Örmeci, 2023). Nevertheless, it builds upon established ideas such as *realpolitik* and power maximisation within the Offensive Neo-Realist literature (see Table 1) (Kissinger, 1994; Krasner, 1999). A Machiavellian state consistently puts national interests and strategic objectives – as subjectively evaluated through the self-serving vision of the ruling elite – over any ethical or ideological grounds (Göksel, 2023: 77). They are willing to employ deceit, manipulation, and coercion to accomplish their goals. Machiavellian regimes are distinguished by their flexibility and opportunism in international affairs. They often easily change alliances, exploit power vacuums, and prioritise short-term advantages above long-term goals. This type of state focuses on retaining a competitive advantage and increasing relative strength in the international system while keeping regime survival and oligarchic consolidation – of the ruling party and/or leader – as top priorities of foreign policy. What distinguishes a Machiavellian state from an ordinary Neo-Realist state, however, is its utilitarian grasp of the significance of trade and soft power in global affairs. Machiavellian states approach foreign economic policy with a highly instrumental, opportunistic, and strategic mindset. Rather than being guided by consistent rules, long-term institutional commitments, or normative principles (such as fair trade, democracy promotion or global economic justice), these states treat economic relationships primarily as tools to strengthen regime survival and gain short to medium-term advantages.

Machiavellian states prioritize bilateral, deal-based economic interactions over multilateralism. They often view economic agreements not as frameworks for cooperation but as short-term bargains to extract maximum benefit. They use trade, investment, debt diplomacy, or access

to markets strategically—either to reward allies, punish adversaries, or shift alignments in their favour. Tools such as sanctions, subsidies, or selective market access are wielded not just economically but politically. Economic policies abroad are crafted primarily to ensure domestic regime stability—whether by securing foreign investment that reinforces elite interests, neutralizing external economic threats, or cultivating client states that depend on the regime’s economic patronage. Such states often partner with weaker economies to establish dependency, extract concessions, or dominate key sectors—often through opaque deals or elite-level economic capture. An example would be using infrastructure investments abroad not only for economic gain but also to gain political leverage over recipient states—tying economics to long-term strategic positioning.

In our present time, China’s foreign policy may be characterized as Machiavellian in many ways (Göksel, 2023: 87). For example, the Belt and Road Initiative seeks to systematically expand Chinese influence in Asia, Africa, and Europe while establishing dependencies through economic investment (Rolland, 2017). Beijing’s leadership lacks democratic values but recognizes the importance of commerce in global affairs. The concept of Machiavellian state highlights a significant gap in the aforementioned liberal understanding of trading states. Ambitious illiberal regimes often use foreign economic policy to gain power and ensure regime survival. China and other illiberal regimes may disregard the perceived worth of democratization for their image, but nevertheless prioritize trade-oriented soft power, similar to democratic countries. As such, a Machiavellian state is an illiberal polity that can behave like a trading state in its commitment to using foreign policy for maximum economic benefit, but may lack some basic principles of a liberal democratic regime or, as in the case of China, be completely non-democratic.

The “developmental state” aims to achieve rapid economic growth through state-led programs (see Table 1) (Amsden, 1989; Öniş, 1991). These countries prioritize industrial policy, infrastructural development, and strategic resource allocation to drive economic modernization. Developmental countries frequently integrate their foreign policy with their economic objectives, seeking access to international markets, investment, and technology. They prioritize stable international relations in order to secure advantageous economic circumstances. Developmental governments may also engage in “economic diplomacy” by using foreign

aid and development initiatives to gain geopolitical clout (Öniş, 1991: 122–124). Since the 1960s, under leaders like Park Chung-hee, South Korea adopted export-oriented industrialization (EOI) strategies, using state-driven economic policies to foster key industries like electronics, shipbuilding, and automobiles (Amsden, 1989). Foreign policy was intricately linked to this agenda, prioritizing trade relations, foreign investment, and technology transfer from advanced economies such as the United States and Japan. Seoul has long used bilateral and multilateral trade agreements (e.g. with the US, China, and the EU) as tools of statecraft to reinforce its global economic position (Amsden, 1989: 11–20). South Korea views foreign policy through the lens of securing the resources and trade relationships necessary to sustain its export-oriented economy. For example, it actively engages in energy diplomacy with Middle Eastern nations to ensure stable supplies of oil and natural gas (Jeong, 2022). South Korea has leveraged its position in organizations like the WTO (World Trade Organisation) and G20 to advocate for policies that benefit open and rule-based trade systems, reflecting the priorities of a developmental state.

“Petrostates” – more accurately referred to as “resource-dependent states” as some such polities rely on non-oil natural resources – are countries whose economy and foreign policies are substantially impacted by their dependence on exports of natural resources such as oil and natural gas (see Table 1) (Karl, 1997; Ross, 2012). These countries often have a resource-driven economy, with oil, gas or diamond profits influencing domestic policies and foreign initiatives. Petro-states frequently utilize their energy resources as tools for foreign policy, leveraging oil and gas exports to achieve geopolitical clout. They may engage in “rentier state” behaviour, with resource money funding internal stability and foreign policy objectives (Ross, 2012). These countries are very vulnerable to global energy market swings, which affect their international alignments and agendas. Saudi Arabia is a widely studied major petro-state within the literature as its foreign strategy focuses on retaining its position as the leading energy provider, influencing OPEC decisions, and using oil as leverage in international affairs (Karl, 1997; Ross, 2012). Saudi Arabia’s strategic links with the United States, as well as its regional actions in Yemen, are inextricably linked to its status as a petro-state.

In foreign policy, “normative states” prioritize the promotion of liberal global norms, values, and principles such as democracy, human rights,

environmental preservation, and peacebuilding (see Table 1) (Manners, 2002). These governments frequently see their international position as one of moral leadership. Normative states pursue a foreign policy that emphasizes multilateralism, international collaboration, and norm entrepreneurship. They take an active role in developing and implementing international accords, and they frequently employ soft power to influence global behaviour. Their policies seek to position themselves as models of ethical government and responsible global players. Sweden illustrates a normative state as its foreign policy prioritizes human rights, sustainable development, and gender equality (Brommeson, 2010). Sweden's overseas aid programs and strong participation in peacekeeping deployments demonstrate its adherence to normative ideals.

A "rogue state" opposes international conventions and frequently engages in practices that endanger global security, such as seeking weapons of mass destruction, funding terrorism, or systematically breaking international laws (see Table 1) (Chomsky, 2000). These states are frequently ostracized and sanctioned by the international community. Rogue states pursue confrontational and self-serving foreign policies, and they frequently employ harsh means to attain their objectives. They are distinguished by their disdain for international conventions and attempts to exploit geopolitical weaknesses. Such nations may take controversial steps to boost regime legitimacy at home. North Korea is commonly recognized as a textbook example of a rogue state because of its nuclear weapons program, human rights violations, and isolationist policies (Chomsky, 2000: 20). Its foreign policy focuses on regime/leader survival, using its nuclear weapons as a negotiating chip.

"Civilizational states" base their identity and foreign policy on perceived cultural, historical, or religious distinctions (see Table 1) (Coker, 2019). They highlight their status as defenders of a separate culture and frequently utilize this narrative to justify their domestic and foreign policies. Civilizational regimes frequently pursue soft power-based foreign policies, extending their cultural or ideological influence overseas. They strive to be leaders of their supposed "civilization" and may regularly defy global conventions that they consider as Western-centric. Their foreign policy discourse frequently emphasizes similar ideals and historical links with other governments or areas. Both India and China have been discussed in the literature as civilizational states in recent years (Jacques, 2009; Volodin,

2022). India's foreign policy is informed by its perception of itself as an ancient civilization with millennia of cultural and intellectual contributions to the world. Concepts like *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* ("the world is one family") and *Ahimsa* (non-violence) are drawn from its philosophical traditions and are often invoked in its diplomatic rhetoric (Volodin, 2022). India's contemporary foreign policy emphasizes its role as a successor to ancient Indian empires that engaged in extensive trade, cultural exchange, and knowledge transfer across Asia. Drawing on its civilizational ethos, India has long attempted to position itself as a moral and political leader of the Global South. Its role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the Cold War and its advocacy for equity in global governance structures resonate with its perceived identity as a "civilization of tolerance and wisdom" (Volodin, 2022: 829).

In a recently published notable work, Amitav Acharya critically examines the concept of the "civilization state" as recently adopted by leaders of various rising powers such as China, India, Türkiye, and Russia (Acharya, 2020). Acharya argues that while these states emphasize their civilizational identities to legitimize domestic authority and assert international influence, the notion of a monolithic civilization state is misleading. He contends that civilizations are not uniform or static entities; instead, they are diverse, internally contested, and historically interconnected. The portrayal of a singular civilizational identity often serves political agendas, masking internal pluralism and suppressing dissent. Acharya warns that embracing the civilization state concept risks fostering exclusionary nationalism and undermining the pluralistic foundations of the international order. He advocates for a more inclusive and dialogical approach to global order, recognizing the multiplicity and hybridity of civilizations rather than framing them as distinct and competing entities.

A "failed state" is one in which central political authority has collapsed, resulting in substantial governance deficiencies, anarchy, and a failure to deliver fundamental services (see Table 1) (Rotberg, 2004). These countries frequently face internal conflicts, poor institutions, and outsider interference. Failed states' fractured governance prevents them from developing cohesive foreign policy frameworks. Their foreign acts are frequently impromptu, motivated by external actors or warring internal factions. Failed states can become hotbeds for proxy wars, smuggling networks, and terrorist operations, threatening regional security. They

are frequently targets of international humanitarian or military initiatives. Somalia is a prototypical failed state (Rotberg, 2004: 87). Since the fall of its government in 1991, Somalia has suffered persistent violence, piracy, and the impact of non-state entities such as al-Shabaab. Its foreign policy is heavily affected by external entities like as the African Union and the United Nations, who have interfered to help stabilize the nation.

“Revisionist states” aim to change the current international order to better line with their strategic objectives or ideological vision (see Table 1) (Mearsheimer, 2001: 334–346). These governments question the established status quo, frequently seeking to rebalance power within the global system or regional hierarchies. Revisionist states pursue forceful foreign policies aimed at undermining or reshaping existing institutions, alliances, and norms. They may seek territorial expansion, military modernization, or the establishment of alternative international frameworks in order to reduce the influence of major nations. Historically, Nazi Germany is well-known case of a revisionist power that aimed to entirely demolish the post-World War I global political order (Krickovic, 2022). Russia under Vladimir Putin in our time has similar revisionist tendencies, as seen by its annexation of Crimea, ongoing invasion of Ukraine, and efforts to destabilize Western institutions such as NATO and the European Union (Krickovic, 2022: 618). Its foreign policy aims to reaffirm its place as a global power and a bitter rival to the US-centric global order.

In contrast to revisionists, a “status quo” state is one that seeks to maintain the existing international order, including its own position within it (Carr, 1939). These states prioritize stability, resist major changes to the balance of power, and favour the preservation of established norms and institutions. Status quo states engage in diplomacy, multilateralism, and institutional participation to uphold the current system. Their foreign policy is often conservative, emphasizing conflict avoidance and the strengthening of alliances. These states may resist revolutionary or revisionist movements and are likely to oppose actors attempting to disrupt the global order. Germany is a classic example of a status quo state in the contemporary world as it champions EU integration, supports multilateral organizations like the United Nations, and seeks to sustain global economic stability. Its policies reflect a commitment to the rules-based international order.

“Buffer states” are strategically located between great powers or competing

blocs, frequently acting as geopolitical cushions (see Table 1) (Gear, 1941). These states may use their status to preserve neutrality or to align with a single power to provide protection. Buffer states frequently adopt foreign strategies centred on survival and neutrality in order to avoid becoming battlegrounds for greater powers. Some buffer states may seek to balance opposing interests, while others form strategic alliances with a dominating power to assure security. Their vulnerable situation often limits their ability to make foreign policy decisions. Afghanistan has long served as a buffer state between rival empires, such as the British and Russian Empires in the nineteenth century, and more recently between regional powers such as Pakistan and India. Its foreign policy has frequently been influenced by external forces and activities. Finland's location between Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) and Western Europe places it at the intersection of Eastern and Western geopolitical spheres. This unique position has shaped its foreign policy choices and domestic priorities for much of its modern history (Gear, 1941: 83–85).

The penultimate typology to be studied in this article is derived from the Neo-Realist IR understanding that a country's territorial size, economic resources and military capacity directly determine its level of power within the global system and that all states would have to act according to their position in an imaginary hierarchy or power pyramid (see Table 1) (Kennedy, 1987; Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979). Accordingly, a given state could be a "small state" with very limited territory, population and economic and military resources. Because of their limited capacities, such countries rely on more powerful countries or international organizations for security and influence. Singapore, for instance, exhibits a tiny state that wields power through economic diplomacy, strategic neutrality, and active involvement in global commerce (Leifer, 2000). Yet, it has established itself as a regional economic centre and an advocate for multilateralism in Southeast Asia.

Above small states are placed the so-called "middle powers" with average to above average economic and military capabilities by global standards (Jordaan, 2003). Middle powers often play a significant role in regional or global politics through notable diplomatic, economic, or military influence. Middle powers are typically characterized by their ability to mediate conflicts, form alliances, and project influence beyond their immediate borders, even if they lack the comprehensive global reach of

larger powers. Iran can possibly be analysed as a middle power due to its substantial influence in the Middle East and its active engagement in shaping regional dynamics, despite its persistent economic challenges and international isolation (Jordaan, 2003).

“Great powers” are countries with substantial economic, military, and diplomatic clout, able to shape world affairs in their area and beyond (Kennedy, 1987). These countries frequently play leading roles in global governance and are critical participants in preserving or challenging the international order. Great powers may conduct aggressive and comprehensive foreign strategies, using hard and soft power to protect their interests. They frequently lead regional coalitions, serve in global organizations, and implement power-balancing tactics. While they may operate as status quo nations, some major powers engage in revisionist behaviour in order to increase their influence. The EU may be seen as a modern great power – with its influential member France possessing a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and another member Germany having one of the largest economies of the globe (Gehring et al., 2017). A “superpower” is an even more enhanced “great power” with unrivalled worldwide influence, superior military capabilities, and a strong economic position. Superpowers influence international conventions, institutions, and alliances, and they frequently act as arbiters of world order. Since the end of World War II, the US has been the world’s leading superpower.

The final typology to be studied in this article is “regional power” – which is derived from Neo-Realist IR as well as the insights of the English School (see Table 1) (Cline et al., 2011). Accordingly, a state can be termed a regional power if it is widely seen as one of the dominant economic, military, technological and/or diplomatic forces within a specific geographic sub-system (e.g. Brazil in South America or Iran in the Persian Gulf) (Destradi, 2010; Nolte, 2010). To qualify as a regional power, a state typically possesses superior material capabilities—such as economic strength, military capacity, and demographic weight—compared to most of its neighbours. Additionally, it seeks and often attains recognition from other states within the region and sometimes from global powers as a leader or stabilizing actor. A regional power is also expected to show leadership in regional governance, mediate conflicts, and promote or shape regional norms. Importantly, regional powers often aim to shape

the strategic and institutional architecture of their surroundings and pursue policies of strategic autonomy that distinguish them from mere followers of global powers.

While middle powers and regional powers may overlap in some cases, they are not conceptually identical. Middle powers are defined less by geography and more by their moderate material capabilities. In contrast, regional powers concentrate their influence on a specific geographic area, often playing a leadership role in regional institutional building. For example, Brazil functions as a regional power in South America due to its overwhelming demographic size, economic clout, and diplomatic leadership in organizations such as MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) and UNASUR (Union of South American Nations). Brazil has historically promoted regional integration, asserted itself in regional conflicts (e.g. in Bolivia and Venezuela), and positioned itself as a representative of South American interests in global forums such as the G-20 and BRICS (Wehner, 2015). However, it also exhibits middle power characteristics globally—such as advocating for UN reform and multilateral diplomacy—thus showing that a state can simultaneously exhibit both roles depending on context.

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL TOOL TO COMPARATIVELY STUDY FOREIGN POLICY

The study of foreign policy behaviour has long been a cornerstone of IR and FPA as scholars and practitioners alike have sought to categorize states based on their actions, motivations, and systemic roles. Existing and most commonly used aforementioned typologies—such as the trading state, garrison state, or revisionist state—offer valuable insights into specific aspects of statecraft. However, these typologies often function in isolation, rooted in singular theoretical frameworks or narrowly defined behavioural patterns. This article argues for the creation of a comprehensive typology table that synthesizes these diverse classifications into a unified framework (see Table 1). Such a project is both necessary and original, providing scholars with a multidimensional tool to analyse state behaviour systematically. Given the hybrid, sometimes contradictory motives behind a country's foreign policy, a multidimensional framework allows for greater precision in categorizing states' behaviours, especially those that resist classification into a single typology.

The proposed typology table incorporates insights from Comparative Politics and IR theories—e.g. realism, liberalism, and constructivism—providing a structured, theoretically grounded model that accounts for the economic interests, security concerns, ideological commitments, and domestic political dynamics that drive a given country’s foreign policy. Much of the existing FPA literature operates within distinct theoretical paradigms. Realism informs concepts such as the garrison state and the revisionist state, while liberalism underpins the trading state and normative state. Constructivism, on the other hand, explains classifications like the civilizational state or the normative state. While these paradigms provide valuable lenses, they often lead to fragmented analyses that fail to account for the interplay of economic, ideological, and security factors. A comprehensive typology table would transcend these theoretical silos, integrating insights into a holistic framework. It is important to note that the selected statecraft typologies on Table 1 refer to differing variables within a given country’s foreign policy making mechanism. For example, “illiberal state” and “failed state” largely focus on institutional dynamics, whereas “buffer state”, “regional power” and “petrostate” are shaped by geographic and structural factors. Typologies of “revisionist state”, “normative state”, “civilizational state” and “rogue state” derive from specific foreign policy directions, while “intelligence state”, “garrison state”, “trading state”, “developmental state” and “Machiavellian state” categories are related to systemic objectives of an incumbent government.

Table 1. Typologies of Statecraft and Foreign Policy

	Inspiration (IR Theory)	Criteria	Country Examples
Trading State	Liberalism	Economic Diplomacy Avoids Conflict	Japan (Post-WW II)
Garrison State	Defensive Realism	Militarized Foreign Policy High Threat Perception	Egypt (Present)
Illiberal State	Realism & Constructivism	Unpredictable Behaviour Prioritizes Regime Survival	Russia (Present)
Intelligence State	Realism	Covert Operations Strategic Partnerships	Israel (Present)
Machiavellian State	Realism	Opportunistic Behaviour Temporary Allies for Gains	China (Present)
Developmental State	Dependency Theory (Marxism)	Economic Diplomacy Seeks Foreign Investment	South Korea (1960s to Present)
Resource-Dependent State (Petrostate)	Dependency Theory (Marxism)	Resource Exports Allying with Importers	Saudi Arabia (Present)
Normative State	Liberalism	Value-Based Rhetoric Abides International Law	Sweden (Present)
Rogue State	Constructivism	Aggressive Foreign Policy Defies International Law	North Korea (Present)
Civilizational State	Constructivism	Historical Vision Cultural Unity	India (Present)
Failed State	Realism	Weak Territorial Control Reliance on Foreign Aid	Somalia (Present)
Revisionist State	Offensive Realism	Challenging Status Quo Seeks Territorial Expansion	Nazi Germany (WW II)
Buffer State	Defensive Realism	Non-Aligned Behaviour Balancing Neighbours	Finland (Cold War)
Regional Power	Realism & English School	Notable Regional Actor Agenda Setter	Brazil (South America)
Small State / Middle Power / Great Power / Superpower	Realism	Foreign Policy Shaped by Economic Resources and Military Capabilities	Singapore / Iran / EU / USA (Present)

Source: Author.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study uses a theory-guided qualitative single-case design and deductive typological analysis to examine Türkiye under AKP rule. The unit of analysis is the dominant orientation of Turkish foreign policy within each period rather than isolated statements or events. The fifteen entries in Table 1 are treated as analytical dimensions that may coexist, not as mutually exclusive regime labels. For each dimension, the study identifies defining political-institutional, economic, security, and ideational indicators from the literature and asks how consistently those indicators appear in Türkiye's objectives, instruments, and observed foreign-policy conduct.

The assessment uses a four-point interpretive scale. "Not applicable" indicates that a typology's defining features are absent or substantially contradicted by the evidence; "slightly applicable" denotes isolated, episodic, or mainly rhetorical indicators; "moderately applicable" denotes recurrent indicators accompanied by important countervailing evidence; and "highly applicable" denotes sustained correspondence across several defining indicators. These ratings are based on triangulation across peer-reviewed scholarship, scholarly books and policy studies already cited in the article, together with illustrative decisions such as the zero-problems policy, responses to the Arab uprisings, cross-border military operations, the S-400 acquisition, energy diplomacy, and regional normalization initiatives. The ratings are therefore transparent analytical judgments rather than statistical measurements.

To avoid treating more than two decades of AKP rule as homogeneous, the analysis distinguishes four phases: (1) Europeanization and commercial expansion, 2002–2010; (2) Arab Spring activism and ideological regionalism, 2011–2015; (3) securitized strategic autonomy, 2016–2022; and (4) selective normalization and constrained pragmatism, 2023–2025. The breakpoints capture major changes in the regional environment, domestic regime dynamics, governing coalitions, and economic strategy. The cut-off of December 2025 makes the temporal scope explicit and prevents the open-ended use of "the present."

This design has two limitations. First, it relies primarily on qualitative secondary-source interpretation rather than an original event dataset or systematic coding of official documents. Second, some categories operate

at different levels of analysis: for example, middle-power status concerns material and relational position, whereas illiberal-state and Machiavellian-state categories concern domestic institutions and governing strategy. The framework addresses this problem by presenting a multidimensional profile and by comparing change within each category over time, rather than aggregating the ratings into a single numerical score.

MAKING SENSE OF THE AKP'S OSCILLATING FOREIGN POLICY

Since the AKP took office in 2002, Turkish foreign policy has experienced considerable changes. Over the last two decades, Türkiye has evolved from a relatively constrained, status quo-oriented operator within the Western alliance to an increasingly aggressive and independent player in regional and global affairs (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021; Oğuzlu, 2020; Ovalı & Özdikmenli, 2019). This transformation has been fuelled by ideological movements, structural changes in global politics, and the internal consolidation of the AKP's authority. One of the most distinguishing features of Turkish foreign policy under the AKP is its ideological basis. The AKP's foreign policy is largely inspired by a combination of political Islam, neo-Ottomanism, and pragmatism (Cinar, 2018). While political Islam has inspired sympathy with Muslim-majority states, neo-Ottomanism has shaped Ankara's goals to regain its dominance in former Ottoman regions in the Middle East, Balkans, and North Africa. However, pragmatism frequently takes precedence over ideology, especially in terms of economic and security concerns, resulting in a flexible and opportunistic attitude.

Under the AKP, Türkiye aimed to become a regional force capable of influencing the Middle East's political, economic, and security infrastructure. This aim is reflected in Ankara's active participation in crises in Syria, Iraq, and Libya, as well as its forceful postures in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Caucasus. These activities are frequently portrayed in the context of safeguarding regional stability, but they also indicate a desire to project Turkish influence. The AKP has steadily separated Türkiye from its longstanding alliance with the West. While Türkiye remains a NATO member, its acquisition of Russian S-400 missile systems, as well as its repeated disputes with the US and the EU, indicate a shift toward strategic autonomy. This movement is being pushed by a mix of perceived Western double standards, the growth of multi-polarity in the global system, and local political forces within Türkiye. Economic

concerns have also been crucial to influencing Turkish foreign policy under the AKP. Ankara has targeted trade diversification, positioned itself as an energy centre, and used economic links to increase diplomatic influence (Novikau & Muhasilović, 2023). However, economic issues like as currency crises and growing inflation have limited Türkiye's ability to pursue its aspirations.

In recent years, the AKP has become increasingly reliant on military strength to fulfil its supposed foreign policy goals (Mehmetcik & Çelik, 2022). Türkiye's militaristic approach reflects its garrison state inclinations, with cross-border operations in Syria and Iraq and drone deployments in Libya and Azerbaijan. This militarization is frequently justified in the name of battling terrorism and maintaining national security. Despite its military policies, however, Türkiye has also made significant investments in soft power under the AKP. Turkish TV dramas, humanitarian help, and institutions like the Yunus Emre Institute and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) attempt to strengthen Türkiye's cultural and ideological appeal overseas (Beşgöl, 2024). This includes components from the normative and civilizational state typologies.

PERIODIZING AKP FOREIGN POLICY: FOUR PHASES

Phase I, Europeanization and commercial expansion (2002–2010), was marked by EU-oriented reforms, macroeconomic stabilization, expanding trade networks, and the “zero problems with neighbours” doctrine. Foreign policy relied heavily on diplomacy, market access, regional economic integration, and soft-power instruments. Although strategic and ideological motives were never absent, the trading-state and, to a lesser extent, developmental-state logics were most visible during this period, while revisionist, garrison, and intelligence-state characteristics remained limited (Kirişçi, 2009; Oğuzlu, 2020).

Phase II, Arab Spring activism and ideological regionalism (2011–2015), constituted a transitional rupture. Ankara's support for political change and Muslim Brotherhood-linked actors, the collapse of relations with Syria, tensions with Egypt and Israel, and growing civilizational rhetoric weakened the earlier trade-centred strategy. The government became more willing to accept diplomatic and economic costs in pursuit of regional influence. The Gezi protests in 2013, deepening domestic polarization, and regional insecurity accelerated the rise of illiberal, civilizational, and revisionist

tendencies, even though commercial pragmatism continued in selected relationships (Kardaş, 2021; Yavuz, 2022). Phase III, securitized strategic autonomy (2016–2022), followed the failed coup attempt, the AKP’s governing alliance with the MHP, and the consolidation of presidential rule. Cross-border operations in Syria and Iraq, military involvement in Libya and support for Azerbaijan, the expanded role of the National Intelligence Organization, and the purchase of the Russian S-400 system reflected a more militarized and autonomy-seeking posture. Garrison, intelligence, illiberal, Machiavellian, and revisionist characteristics became particularly pronounced, while balancing between Russia and the Western alliance remained an instrument of strategic flexibility (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021; Mehmetcik & Çelik, 2022).

Phase IV, selective normalization and constrained pragmatism (2023–2025), combined continuity in strategic autonomy with attempts to repair regional relationships and stabilize the economy. The appointment of Mehmet Şimşek, normalization with several Middle Eastern actors, and a less confrontational tone toward some partners signalled a partial return of trading and developmental considerations. Yet this did not amount to restoration of the first phase: centralized and illiberal domestic institutions, security-driven regional policies, transactional bargaining within NATO, and balancing between Russia and Ukraine continued to shape foreign policy. The phase is therefore best understood as selective recalibration rather than a wholesale strategic reversal.

Table 2 summarizes the degree of fit between each typology and these four periods. Placing the table here provides a roadmap for the typology-by-typology analysis that follows and makes visible both continuity and change across AKP governments.

Table 2. Phase-Specific Applicability of Statecraft Typologies to Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP

Typology	2002–2010 Phase I	2011–2015 Phase II	2016–2022 Phase III	2023–2025 Phase IV
Trading State	High	Moderate	Slight	Moderate
Garrison State	Slight	Moderate	High	High
Illiberal State	Slight	Moderate	High	High
Intelligence State	Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate
Machiavellian State	Moderate	High	High	High

Typology	2002–2010 Phase I	2011–2015 Phase II	2016–2022 Phase III	2023–2025 Phase IV
Developmental State	High	Moderate	Slight	Moderate
Resource-Dependent State (Petrostate)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Normative State	Moderate	Moderate	Slight	Slight
Rogue State	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Civilizational State	Slight	High	High	Moderate
Failed State	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Revisionist / Status Quo State	Mainly status quo	Moderately revisionist	Highly revisionist	Moderately revisionist
Buffer State	Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate
Regional Power	Moderate	High	High	High
Power Tier	Middle power	Middle power	Middle power	Middle power

Source: Author.

Note: N/A = not applicable. Ratings indicate interpretive degree of fit based on the criteria explained in the methodology section.

The trading state typology stresses economic interdependence and prefers commerce to confrontation in foreign policy. Türkiye largely demonstrated characteristics of a liberal trading state especially during Phase I (2002–2010) as famously studied by Kemal Kirişçi – most notably in its pursuit of enhanced commercial relations with nations in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia (Kirişçi, 2009). The AKP’s “zero problems with neighbours” policy in particular was a liberal trading state initiative aimed at increasing economic integration with regional countries (Kirişçi, 2009: 36–38). Nevertheless, this classification is no longer accurate in terms of accounting for the transition in Phase II and especially the securitized posture of Phase III (see Table 2). Türkiye’s post-Gezi democratic erosion, repeated militaristic acts and aggressive tactics (towards neighbours such as Syria and Greece) under the AKP have frequently contradicted its reputation as a primarily trade-driven liberal democratic entity during the later phases (Göksel, 2023: 88–99). Repeated diplomatic conflicts with countries like Syria, Israel, Armenia, Greece and Egypt continue to limit Türkiye’s potential as a trading state during the 2023–2025 period.

Given Türkiye’s authoritarian inclinations under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s personalist rule and their populist anti-Western expressions in foreign policy, the illiberal state typology is ideally suited to the AKP rule

(see Table 2) (Akser & Baybars, 2023; Özpek & Tanriverdi Yaşar, 2018). The AKP's emphasis on consolidating power, restricting liberties, and stifling criticism at home mirrors its frequently coercive stance overseas – which has involved using state-run media and diaspora networks to influence overseas audiences (Yilmaz & Demir, 2023). Türkiye's ongoing transformation towards an illiberal polity has shaped Turkish foreign policy, particularly in the post-2016 coup period. The government has become more resistant to Western criticism, especially regarding human rights, and it has cultivated closer ties with other illiberal/authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and Qatar. Ankara – President Erdoğan in particular – has adopted an often-confrontational anti-Western discourse towards the EU and the US over democratic governance and human rights issues (Göksel, 2019; Taş, 2022). It has been argued that the reluctance of the AKP administration to cut or reduce its close diplomatic and economic cooperation with illiberal Russia since the Ukraine War constitutes an illiberal solidarity linkage between two regimes (Kubicek, 2022).

The garrison state, defined by a strong emphasis on security and militarism, is increasingly consistent with Türkiye's national security and foreign policy strategies under the AKP administration – especially since the party closely allied with the ultra-nationalist and militarist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) since 2016 (see Table 2). The AKP has overseen a significant militarization of Turkish foreign policy, particularly after the failed coup attempt in 2016. Under President Erdoğan, Türkiye has engaged in military operations in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Azerbaijan. The government's concentration on countering perceived internal and external dangers (e.g. the PKK,¹ FETÖ² and the autonomous Kurdish political entity in Syria) via cross-border military interventions has resulted in a highly “securitized foreign policy” (Mehmetcik & Çelik, 2022). As such, the increasing role of the military affairs in shaping Türkiye's international actions suggests a partial shift towards the garrison state model.

Türkiye fits to some extent within the intelligence state paradigm, with the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) playing an increasingly high-profile and active role in foreign affairs. Intelligence-gathering and covert operations have become a regular part of Türkiye's foreign policy

¹ Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is designated as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye.

² Türkiye has designated the Islamist fraternity – globally known as the Gülen Movement – formerly led by the recently deceased Fetullah Gülen as terrorists and refers to it as FETÖ (Fetullah Gülenist Terrorist Organisation).

toolkit, particularly after the 2016 coup attempt. The AKP administration has engaged in intelligence activities both within and beyond its borders, including crackdowns on dissidents abroad and espionage efforts related to Kurdish armed groups (Yegen, 2023). However, this typology alone cannot capture the whole scope of AKP's statecraft. While Türkiye's foreign policy have long incorporated intelligence operations since the pre-AKP era of the 1990s, particularly for internal security and counter-terrorism (e.g., against the PKK), it is not primarily an intelligence state like Israel. Intelligence plays a role, but other dimensions of power remain more central (see Table 2).

Türkiye's foreign policy under the AKP resembles a Machiavellian state – particularly in its pragmatism, opportunism and overall moral blindness. This is obvious in Ankara's fluctuating balancing act with the US and Russia, its use of refugees as leverage in EU discussions, and its tactical partnerships with various Middle Eastern powers such as Qatar (Kaya, 2020). The Machiavellian state focuses on pragmatism, power, and *realpolitik*, using any means necessary to achieve its objectives in terms of regime/leader survival. Türkiye's foreign policy under the AKP has shown clear Machiavellian characteristics, particularly through opportunistic cooperation with Russia, Libya and Qatar – seeking to reap maximum economic benefits possible (see Table 2) (Göksel, 2023). Türkiye initially maintained strong ties with Israel, but relations deteriorated after the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010. However, despite ongoing tensions, the AKP has intermittently sought normalization, driven by economic and strategic interests. During the Arab Spring, Türkiye supported Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to expand its influence. However, as these movements lost momentum, the AKP adapted by cautiously engaging with post-Morsi Egypt. The AKP has also used energy diplomacy opportunistically, pursuing gas exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean and fostering relationships with energy-rich states like Azerbaijan and Qatar. The AKP has often framed its foreign policy in ways that support its domestic political agenda and ensure regime survival. Domestically, the AKP has cultivated a nationalist and anti-Western narrative to consolidate its base, particularly following the failed coup attempt in 2016. This narrative has allowed the government to justify contentious foreign policy moves, such as strained relations with the US and EU (Özpek & Tanriverdi Yaşar, 2018).

As the AKP has consolidated its hegemony over Turkish politics over the years, the developmental state typology has become less and less relevant for Turkish foreign policy – not unlike the aforementioned trading state typology which it most closely resembles (see Table 2). While the AKP's early years in power during Phase I focused on economic growth, infrastructure development and concerted efforts to attract high levels of foreign direct investment from developed world in the manner of a developmental state such as South Korea, this emphasis has decreased as a result of economic mismanagement and political instability during the transition through Phase II and especially Phase III (Göksel, 2023: 90). Türkiye's foreign policy has not been consistently linked to economic and human development goals, the above garrison state foreign policy approach and an acute hyper-inflation overshadowing the validity of developmental state typology. The appointment of liberal economist Mehmet Şimşek as the Minister of Treasury and Finance in 4 June 2023 – with the daunting task of stabilising the Turkish economy – has raised the hopes of Turkish big businesses and some foreign observers that the AKP administration may be returning to the “economic orthodoxy” of a developmental state and that its foreign policy would be less-confrontation going forward (Sak, 2024). Time will tell if such hopes will be realised or if the AKP administration could pull off yet another dramatic economic and foreign policy shift during Phase IV (see Table 2).

The petrostate (resource-dependent) typology does not apply at all to Türkiye because its economy is not based on any notable natural resource (e.g. oil or gas) exports (see Table 2). Türkiye's pursuit of energy security or independence, such as explorations in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, is a key focus, but it does not define Türkiye as a petro-state. Türkiye's ambition to become an energy centre, aided by its location and pipeline projects such as TANAP, suggests a potentially Machiavellian desire to use energy for geopolitical influence (Novikau & Muhasilović, 2023). Akin to the petrostate typology, the failed state paradigm does not apply to Türkiye under the AKP – which maintains functional governance and significant degree of independence in its domestic and foreign affairs (see Table 2). Despite chronic economic instability and occasional security troubles stemming from terrorist attacks (e.g. the PKK), Türkiye's governmental institutions and security forces remain strong when compared to failed states such as Somalia. The buffer state typology, on the other hand, is slightly applicable to Türkiye's unique

geographical placement between major contending powerhouses of the globe and the region (e.g. Russia versus the EU; Iran versus Israel, see Table 2). Historically, Ankara had a potential buffer position between the NATO and Warsaw Pact albeit it clearly aligned with the former during the Cold War. Resembling classical non-aligned buffer state behaviour, the AKP has pursued an active balancing act between the US-EU coalition and Russia in Eurasia as has become clear during the ongoing Ukraine War. The trajectory of Turkish foreign policy regarding the intensifying NATO-Russia rivalry and a potential Israel-Iran armed conflict is not clear at the present though signalling non-alignment overall.

The AKP foreign policy discourse of presenting Türkiye as a global protector of “downtrodden Muslims”, as well as its much-publicised humanitarian aid initiatives in various economically less-developed countries such as Palestine and Sudan, are reminiscent of a self-styled normative state (see Table 2) (Yılmaz & Demir, 2023). However, Türkiye’s normative claims to morality are frequently contradicted by militaristic and unilateral acts, reducing its legitimacy as a solely normative actor. The AKP foreign policy has gradually shifted away from normative ideals, such as promoting democracy or human rights to the Middle East. Instead, pragmatism and strategic interests have dominated Türkiye’s approach, particularly as it has distanced itself from the EU. Hence, though the AKP foreign policy has an assertive normative state rhetoric, its actions fall short of such an idealist typology.

Türkiye under the AKP largely fits the civilizational state model since its foreign policy heavily draws on neo-Ottoman, Islamist and Turkish nationalist nostalgia (see Table 2) (Cinar, 2018; Yılmaz & Demir, 2023). President Erdoğan has repeatedly framed Türkiye as a leader in the Muslim world, frequently using historical and cultural links to legitimize its activities in the Middle East, Africa, Caucasia and the Balkans. Nevertheless, the civilizational state framework does not completely explain the entire nature of Turkish foreign policy, as pragmatic concerns remain dominant over such rhetorical devices.

The revisionist state typology is relevant to some extent to Turkish foreign policy under the AKP, which have occasionally been vocal about the supposed need to re-structure the regional and global status quo (see Table 2) (Kardaş, 2021). Ankara’s military activities in Syria, Libya, and

the Eastern Mediterranean, its criticisms of Western global hegemony and continuous calls for reforms regarding the workings of UN Security Council – most notably with President Erdoğan’s slogan of “the world is bigger than five” – in particular reflect AKP’s revisionist foreign policy vision (Aral, 2019). Türkiye’s interventions in Syria and Libya, its support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and its maritime claims in the Mediterranean all reflect revisionist tendencies and a readiness to use military power in this context. The AKP is a moderately revisionist actor in regional and global affairs indeed, but the administration and its leader Erdoğan cannot realistically be evaluated as a truly revolutionary actors in the manner of Nazi Germany, the former Soviet Union or the present-day Islamic Republic of Iran. After all, Türkiye does not have any formal/official territorial ambitions against any of its neighbours.

Türkiye under the AKP-MHP alliance aspires to great power status as commonly found in the foreign policy discourses of both parties, but lacks the necessary economic, military, and diplomatic strength at the present (Kelkitli, 2024). As such, Türkiye is widely considered a middle power in terms of its military and economic capabilities, as well as its active participation in regional and international diplomacy (see Table 2) (Altunışık, 2023). It often acts as a regional mediator (e.g. Ukraine War), engages in multilateral forums, and plays a significant role in NATO. However, Türkiye’s increasing assertiveness and independent foreign policy may push it beyond traditional middle-power behaviour. Türkiye’s growing assertiveness in regional conflicts could suggest an evolution from middle power status to a more independent regional power. As such, it is important to note that Ankara’s aforementioned revisionist inclinations and frequent unilateralism distinguish it from pacifist middle powers of the literature such as Canada – positioning it closer to interventionist middle powers such as contemporary Iran.

While Türkiye has become more assertive and defiant on the global stage, it is not classified in a strict sense as a rogue state (see Table 2). The AKP’s foreign policy is not as destabilizing or antagonistic as rogue states like North Korea or Iran, though Türkiye’s defiance of Western norms and its growing regional assertiveness have raised concerns among its allies within NATO (Parmeter, 2023). Ankara’s unilateral assertions of maritime borders with Libya (i.e. the 2019 Türkiye-Libya maritime delimitation agreement) have been accused of breaking international law, notably the

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which Türkiye has not ratified (Özkan & Kırval, 2023). Türkiye's military forays into northern Syria (e.g. the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations) and Iraq, to combat the PKK and its affiliates, have provoked charges of undermining the sovereignty of these countries (Kara, 2023). While Ankara claims that these acts are defensive in nature, they are frequently seen as infringement of international territorial integrity standards by Western governments. Nevertheless, while Ankara's unilateral actions (e.g. in Syria, Libya or the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War) have sparked controversy; Türkiye remains a nominal NATO ally and active participant in international diplomacy, separating it from rogue states.

Contemporary Türkiye exemplifies the characteristics of a regional power, particularly within the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean, the South Caucasus, and parts of the Balkans (Kardaş, 2021; Köstem, 2018; Parlar Dal, 2016). With its sizable economy, large and modernizing military, strategic geographic location, and active diplomatic initiatives, Türkiye has positioned itself as a key actor in regional politics. This is evidenced by Türkiye's intensifying regional power projection with military interventions in Syria, its role in Libya's civil conflict, its involvement in post-war reconstruction and mediation efforts in the Caucasus following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, and its naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Through these activities, Türkiye has sought to secure its national interests while simultaneously shaping the security and geopolitical landscape of its neighbourhood.

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), Turkish Airlines, and government-affiliated educational and religious institutions have all played significant roles in projecting Turkish influence in the Balkans, Central Asia, and Africa (Ipek, 2015). Additionally, Türkiye's use of energy diplomacy, infrastructure investment, and cultural outreach, including television exports and humanitarian aid, bolsters its regional presence. Ankara has also positioned itself as a regional mediator in crises such as the Ukraine War, exemplified by its hosting of negotiations and balancing act between NATO commitments and its relations with Russia. However, Türkiye's bid for regional leadership has at times generated tensions with neighbours, especially in the Gulf, Egypt, and the EU, indicating that recognition of regional power status is often contested and fluctuating.

Türkiye's regional power strategy is underpinned by a civilizational and ideological narrative advanced by the AKP leadership. Drawing on Ottoman imperial memory and pan-Islamist and/or pan-Turkic rhetoric depending on the audience, Ankara seeks to project a vision of Türkiye as the natural leader of the Muslim world or the Turkic world—especially among Sunni populations and Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia (Yilmaz & Demir, 2023). While this vision resonates with some domestic constituencies, it also creates frictions, particularly with rival claimants' regional leadership, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, or Iran. As such, Türkiye's regional power status is both enabled and constrained by its ideological vision, which can alienate partners even as it motivates strategic outreach.

Türkiye's regional power identity is further shaped by its ambiguous relationship with the West. As a NATO member with a historically close security partnership with the United States and the European Union, Türkiye remains institutionally embedded in the Western order. However, over the past decade, Ankara has increasingly distanced itself from Western normative expectations, particularly on issues of democracy, human rights, and multilateral consensus. This divergence has been accompanied by a foreign policy pivot toward strategic balancing, wherein Türkiye seeks to maximize its autonomy by engaging with non-Western powers such as Russia, China, and Iran—sometimes even in ways that contradict NATO's collective stance. In sum, Türkiye represents a complex and evolving case of regional power—a state with significant hard and soft power capabilities, a willingness to act assertively in its neighbourhood, and an ambition to shape the regional order in accordance with its own strategic and ideological preferences (see Table 2). Yet its regional leadership is not universally accepted and is often met with resistance. The Turkish case illustrates that regional power status is not solely determined by capabilities or self-perception but also depends on recognition by other states and the stability of regional institutions. Türkiye's assertive and sometimes unilateral behaviour enhances its regional clout in the short term, but over the long term, sustaining regional leadership may require recalibrating its approach toward greater consistency, cooperation, and legitimacy in the eyes of its neighbours.

As Table 2 demonstrates, Türkiye's foreign policy under the AKP is neither typologically uniform nor temporally static. Trading- and developmental-state characteristics were strongest in Phase I, weakened through Phases

II and III, and recovered only partially in Phase IV. Conversely, illiberal, garrison, intelligence, Machiavellian, civilizational, and revisionist characteristics became more pronounced after 2011 and especially after 2016. Middle-power status and regional-power ambition show the greatest continuity across the four phases. No single typology therefore captures the full trajectory; a periodized, multidimensional framework is necessary to explain both the coexistence of different logics and shifts in their relative importance.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE AVENUES

This article has sought to advance the academic literature on FPA by developing a comprehensive typology table of statecraft and foreign policy behaviour, while applying this framework to analyse Turkish foreign policy making under the AKP. The study argued that existing typologies, though insightful, often suffer from narrow theoretical foundations, oversimplification, and a lack of flexibility to account for hybrid or shifting foreign policy behaviours. By incorporating a wide range of typologies—spanning political, economic, and strategic dimensions—this article offers a multidimensional framework that enhances our ability to systematically and comparatively analyse the foreign policy behaviour of states. The proposed typology table encompasses both established categories, such as the trading state, developmental state, garrison state, civilizational state, normative state, rogue state, and emerging concepts such as the Machiavellian state, illiberal state and intelligence state. These typologies reflect a synthesis of insights from Comparative Politics and International Relations (IR) theories, including realism, liberalism, and constructivism, as well as practical observations of state behaviour in an increasingly complex international system.

Applying this typology to Türkiye under the AKP has revealed its hybrid and dynamic nature, which cannot be easily categorized. The AKP's foreign policy reflects a mix of pragmatism and ideology, blending realist power politics with neo-Ottoman and Islamic civilizational narratives. The study's findings underscore the limitations of applying rigid, singular typologies to states like Türkiye. A more nuanced approach is required to capture the complexity of its foreign policy, particularly in an era where the lines between domestic and international politics are increasingly blurred. The typology table presented here offers a valuable tool for understanding such hybrid behaviours, not only in Türkiye but also in other states with

similarly multifaceted foreign policy approaches. The periodized findings support the article's hypothesis. The early AKP era was closest to a trading-developmental configuration, the 2011–2015 period constituted an ideological and interventionist transition, the 2016–2022 period was dominated by securitized strategic autonomy, and the 2023–2025 period produced selective normalization without reversing the institutional and security orientations of the preceding phase. The persistence of middle-power status and regional-power ambition alongside these shifts further demonstrates why statecraft typologies should be used as temporal and combinable dimensions rather than exclusive labels.

While individual typologies—such as the intelligence state or the developmental state—are well-established, no study had so far systematically synthesized these classifications into a single framework. This article represents an original contribution by identifying commonalities and divergences across typologies, creating a unified table that accommodates a wide range of state behaviours. While this study focused on Türkiye, the typology table's design allows for its application to other states worldwide, paving the way for future research. New studies could build upon this article by enhancing and comparatively applying Table 1 to various countries and classifying complex foreign policy behaviours.

Firstly, scholars might explore how hybrid typologies manifest in non-Western states with shifting strategic identities, such as Brazil, South Africa, or Indonesia. Secondly, longitudinal studies can track how a single state transitions between typological categories over time, shedding light on the drivers of such transformations—be they regime change, economic shocks, or geopolitical shifts. Thirdly, the framework invites integration with quantitative methods by operationalizing typology indicators for use in large-N studies of foreign policy behaviour. In the specific context of Türkiye, future studies could develop an original observational dataset that categorizes each major foreign policy decision made by the Turkish state over time. Such an empirical foundation would allow scholars to systematically analyse the evolution of Turkish foreign policy behaviour across different political periods and leadership styles, offering a more granular understanding of typological shifts. This would also facilitate temporal comparisons with other states undergoing similar transitions.

Moreover, while this article has introduced a broad range of statecraft typologies, it is important to note that there are additional, notable

typologies emerging in the ever-expanding literatures of IR and FPA that could not be included here due to space limitations. Concepts such as the “cusp state”, among others, offer further nuance and theoretical richness (Herzog & Robins, 2014). A future study could build upon the typology table developed here by expanding it with such additional classifications, ultimately contributing to the creation of an even more robust and flexible analytical tool for capturing the full diversity of foreign policy behaviours worldwide.

Finally, further research might investigate how different state typologies interact with global governance institutions, particularly how Machiavellian or revisionist states navigate normative frameworks dominated by status quo or normative powers. Another avenue includes examining how statecraft typologies correlate with leadership psychology, institutional constraints, and public opinion—offering a deeper understanding of the domestic sources that underpin strategic foreign policy variation. Together, these research directions would not only test the robustness of the proposed framework but also enhance its utility in both academic and policy-oriented settings for analysing the complex and evolving nature of state behaviour in international politics.

DECLARATIONS

Ethical Committee Approval: Ethical committee approval was not required because the study relies exclusively on publicly available documentary sources.

Funding: This study received no external funding.

Competing Interests: The author declares no competing interests.

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THE TRANSFORMATION OF RUSSIA–AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS DURING THE 2003–2025 PERIOD: AN ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the political, strategic, and geopolitical changes in the relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan during the period 2003–2025, within the context of transformations in the international system and developments in the region. The analysis goes beyond bilateral diplomacy to take into account the global power struggle, regional security arrangements, energy geopolitics, and the fundamental principles of international law. Its theoretical framework includes Mackinder’s Heartland theory, Spykman’s Rimland theory, Mahan’s sea power theory, Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, international legal principles concerning territorial integrity and self-determination, and the concept of strategic partnership. Within this framework, the study investigates the relationship between Russia’s “Near Abroad” policy and Azerbaijan’s multidirectional foreign policy under the Heydar and İlham Aliyev administrations, which has been shaped by sovereignty, territorial integrity, and strategic autonomy. Bu qualitative study is based on an extensive literature review in Turkish, Russian, Azerbaijani Turkish, and English. It also examines official documents, bilateral agreements, and diplomatic statements through content and discourse analysis. The findings indicate that the Russia–Azerbaijan relationship cannot be adequately explained by unilateral dependence or continuous conflict. Instead, the relationship has evolved into a pragmatic, multidimensional strategic partnership in which cooperation, competition, and mutual dependence coexist simultaneously.

Keywords: *Russia-Azerbaijan Relations; South Caucasus; Geopolitics; Strategic Partnership*

* Araştırma Makalesi, Geliş Tarihi: 15.08.2026, Kabul Tarihi: 12.10.2026
Bu makalede Etik Kurul Onayı gerekmemektedir.

2003–2025 DÖNEMİNDE RUSYA FEDERASYONU– AZERBAYCAN İLİŞKİLERİNİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ: ULUSLARARASI VE BÖLGESEL DİNAMİKLER BAĞLAMINDA BİR ANALİZ

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, uluslararası sistemdeki değişimler ve bölgedeki gelişmeler bağlamında, 2003-2025 yılları arasında Rusya Federasyonu ile Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti arasındaki ilişkilerdeki siyasi, stratejik ve jeopolitik değişimleri incelemektedir. Analiz, ikili diplomasiyi aşarak, küresel güç mücadelesini, bölgesel güvenlik düzenlemelerini, enerji jeopolitiğini ve uluslararası hukukun temel ilkelerini dikkate almaktadır. Teorik çerçevesi, Mackinder’in Kalp Bölgesi teorisi, Spykman’ın Kıyı Bölgesi teorisi, Mahan’ın deniz egemenliği teorisi, Gramsci’nin hegemonya kavramı, toprak bütünlüğü ve kendi kaderini tayin etme ile ilgili uluslararası hukuk ilkeleri ve stratejik ortaklık kavramını içermektedir. Bu çerçevede, çalışma, Rusya’nın “Yakın Çevre” politikası ile Haydar ve İlham Aliyev yönetimleri altındaki Azerbaycan’ın egemenlik, toprak bütünlüğü ve stratejik özerklik tarafından şekillendirilen çok yönlü dış politikası arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktadır. Bu nitel çalışma, Türkçe, Rusça, Azerbaycan Türkçesi ve İngilizce dillerindeki geniş kapsamlı bir literatür taramasına dayanmaktadır. Ayrıca, resmi belgeleri, ikili anlaşmaları ve diplomatik açıklamaları içerik ve söylem analizi yoluyla incelemektedir. Bulgular, Rusya-Azerbaycan ilişkilerinin tek taraflı bağımlılık veya sürekli çatışma ile yeterince açıklanamayacağını göstermektedir. Bunun yerine, ilişki, işbirliği, rekabet ve karşılıklı bağımlılığın aynı anda var olduğu pragmatik, çok boyutlu bir stratejik ortaklığa dönüşmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Rusya-Azerbaycan İlişkileri; Güney Kafkasya; Jeopolitik*

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to analyze, within the framework of multidisciplinary considerations, the tripartite relationship between the Russian Federation, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the international system in the period from 2003 to 2025. The structural changes in the global and regional systems have led to the growth of the geopolitical importance of the Eurasian region, with the energy security issues, regional conflicts, great power politics, and international organizations playing a critical role. In this regard, the present study considers Russia-Azerbaijan relations in a larger context, beyond bilateral diplomacy and paying attention to geopolitical, theoretical, and regional issues. To begin with, the current Russia-Azerbaijan relationship is examined through the prism of the Russian Federation's growing interest in the "Near Abroad" in the early 2000s after Putin came to power and Azerbaijan's multi-vector diplomacy of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and strategic autonomy. Particular attention is drawn to the energy security issues concerning Azerbaijan's natural resource potential with the Caspian Sea legal status and Karabakh conflict (including the Second Karabakh War in 2020 and the prospects of the Russia-Azerbaijan relations after the fighting in 2023). Besides, the paper explores the role of Turkey in Azerbaijan's foreign and security policies, including propaganda and soft power, and energy diplomacy. The role of regional organizations in the Russia-Azerbaijan confrontation, namely CIS, CSTO, EEU, and the prospects of Azerbaijan for joining the European Union and NATO are considered. The Russia and West confrontation, associated with the Russian military adventures, and the redefinition of the regional balance of power characterize the situation in the South Caucasus at the beginning of the 2020s. At the same time, there are also power vacuums and regional undercurrents in the South Caucasus conducive to rapprochement. In this vein, Azerbaijan has pursued a multi-vector policy of aligning with the West and Turkey while balancing with Russia. In this regard, the Russia-Azerbaijan relationship can be seen as a pragmatic partnership, which should be viewed in the context of both countries' geopolitical orientations rather than a traditional alliance. It should be emphasized that the present paper studies the relationship between Russia-Azerbaijan from multiple angles, not limited to bilateral diplomacy. Specifically, the research takes into account global and regional geopolitical factors, including security issues in the South Caucasus, energy security, and soft power. Particular attention is drawn to legal frameworks and international law, energy diplomacy, and regional organizations. In addition, the study highlights both countries'

historical legacies, ranging from the 19th century to modern times, which shape their relationships. Finally, the paper reviews the relevant literary sources and theoretical concepts, including the bipolar world, great power politics, and international security. The analysis of the current relationship between Russia-Azerbaijan, including the assessment of its prospects, is complemented by the examination of the foreign policy practices of Azerbaijan in the post-Soviet space. More specifically, the comparison is made between the foreign policy strategies of Mutallibov, Elchibey, Heydar Aliyev, and Ilham Aliyev eras, which have been characterized by notable contradictions. At the same time, the paper highlights the revisionist tendencies of Russia under Putin, which seeks to revise both regional and global status quo. In this regard, the study aims to contribute to the existing scholarly discourse on Russia-Azerbaijan relations by demonstrating that they feature multidimensionality, including cooperation, competition, and interdependence. In this regard, the research question of this study can be formulated as follows that How have the Russia-Azerbaijan relationship been shaped by geopolitical, economic, and strategic factors throughout the 20th and 21st centuries? The study seeks to answer this question in order to determine whether Russia-Azerbaijan relations are to be viewed through the lens of strategic partnership or not.

METHODOLOGY

This study follows a survey review model within a qualitative research framework. It systematically examines national and international literature published in Turkish, Russian, Azerbaijani Turkish, and English; this literature includes books, peer reviewed journal articles, master's theses, and official state documents, reports of international organizations, bilateral agreement texts, and diplomatic statements. Content analysis was applied to bilateral agreements, joint communiqués, and official statements. Changes in discourse and policy were subsequently compared under thematic headings. The material was organized chronologically and thematically. Rather than relying on quantitative measurement, the study aims to reveal how the relations between the two countries have changed structurally and historically through detailed text analysis, discourse analysis, and multidimensional interpretation.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK **EMPIRES: LAND, MARITIME, AND HYBRID EMPIRES**

In the contemporary social sciences, the concept of empire is gaining

increasing attention in international relations. In a historical perspective, it embraces a set of political, economic, and socio cultural characteristics (Howe, 2002, pp.15-30). Historians tend to study an empire as a unit of analysis since the late nineteenth century; yet before attempting to define it, it is essential to note that the word “empire” was derived from the Latin word *imperium* that expressed the idea of command, authority, rule, and simply power. For more than a century and a half, up to the early first century AD, the republicans used the word *imperium* to denote the authority of judges to declare wars and to enforce the law. It is vital to note that the empire embodies a civilization mission, which aims to promote universal values and bring order to chaos. Michael W.Doyle’s definition “An empire is a formal or informal relationship in which one state controls the sovereignty of another political entity” sums up the nature of the relationships between the metropolis and its satellites (Doyle, 1986, p.45). Therefore, one should distinguish three types of empires. First, there are land empires. They are based on territorial expansion on the continent with little or no naval power projection. The dominance of land empires depends solely on their military force, and their expansion is viewed as the natural objective, while their contraction is perceived as mortal. In other words, land empires are divided into two groups that those with an expansionary and passive tendency (Özcan, 2019, p.72). Second, maritime empires are those that rely on their naval power to extend their political control and influence across continents. Their expansion depends on the strength of the trade network and the dominance of the mother country. Nonetheless, they are relatively decentralized as compared to land empires. Maritime empires’ decline or transformation takes place when their naval power is weakened or when a new sea power emerges, but their growth is attributed primarily to innovations and technological advances.

Finally, hybrid empires are those that combine both extensive overseas and continental domination with elements of exploitation to achieve their imperialist objectives. In land empires, expansion serves primarily economic purposes, while maritime ones use their influence to transfer wealth from the periphery to the metropolis. Hybrid empires share the characteristics of both land and maritime ones, but they possess the weaknesses inherent in these powers. It is noteworthy that the Ottoman Empire is considered to be a hybrid one as it simultaneously pursues continental and maritime expansion; thus, the Ottoman Empire fits better into the third category (Özcan, 2019, p.103). Similarly, the Russian Empire belongs to hybrid

empires. Complex empires must respond to the challenges of international relations as well as technological innovations; otherwise, they risk losing their stability and experience their decline.

THE CONCEPT OF HEGEMONY

The word hegemony comes from the Greek *hegéomai* that means “to lead” or “to guide” (“hegemony”). In a political sense, hegemon means a commander-in-chief, and hegemonia is the leading city-state of the alliance of Greek city states, which have been formed to fight the Persian Achaemenid Empire. For instance, Sparta was the hegemon that commanded the alliance of the free city states in fighting the Persians. Two characteristics were considered fundamental to the ancient Greek concept of hegemony. First, the hegemon and the allies should be independent and equal in their union as it was a coalition of equals, not a confederation. Second, the hegemon and the allies had to accept the leadership of the hegemon freely and democratically because there was no other authority in Ancient Greece. Consequently, it is possible to suggest that the concept of hegemony was entirely positive and implied loyalty; even Aristotle stated that hegemony served the interests of all and was different from despotism. Moreover, Isocrates, writing about the decline of Athenian power, claimed that hegemony could be realized by moral guidance combined with persuasion that was based on public opinion rather than coercion (“hegemony”). Nevertheless, although the concept of Hegemony had positive implications at that time, it is essential to analyze the concept created by the Western Marxism tradition and especially by Gramsci. The Gramscian concept of hegemony has been further developed in critical international relations theory, particularly in relation to international political economy, cultural studies, media studies, and theoretical linguistics and political sociology (Cox, 1993, pp.214-216). According to Gramsci, hegemony takes place in civil society, implying a domination by one class over another through ideological leadership, which is manifested in consent and compliance. With regard to the concept of hegemony, production relations are considered to be a critical element of social relations, despite the fact that Gramsci accentuated the role of ideological domination over the relations of production (Cox, 1993, p.214). Gramsci’s concept suggests that the hegemonic class chooses its strategies and institutional forms to develop the ideological leadership in every field of social life; although these particular forms can be different, the hegemonic apparatus can be classified according to the ways in which they express

class leadership. It is possible to suggest that the concept of hegemony is closely related to the historical development of the modern capitalist state and the transition from the classical to the new hegemony. It is possible to suggest that in the middle of the nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie was confronted by the rising labor movement; yet, it responded to the threat by eliminating revolutionary activity through coercive forces. In other words, the bourgeois state used primarily police and judicial powers to restrict and regulate the growing socialist movement. Still, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the socialist parties and trade unions turned into national movements. Pelz notes that the new European bourgeois state faced a new challenge because universal political mass parties emerged (“Class Analysis and the Third Way”, 2016, pp.83-102). Being confronted by the socialist revolution, the bourgeois state adjusted its policy; it used its hegemonic power to incorporate the growing labor movements within the framework of political society. Nonetheless, according to Harris, “at this stage the hegemonic power of the bourgeoisie no longer had the capacity to mobilize popular consensual endorsement of the status quo” (“Hegemony and the New System”, 1992, p.11). Gramsci referred to this stage of the development of the capitalist state as an organic crisis brought about by a passive revolution. Within the framework of this concept, it is possible to suggest that the state apparatus transforms civil society in order to exercise control over it by creating numerous non-state and state hegemonic apparatus. Consequently, civil society becomes an integral part of the state power; yet, the border between the class state and society is not definite anymore. Gramsci called such a state the integral state. The hegemonic apparatus in the integral state implements the reformist policies of the state; still, its role is to dominate the conciliatory processes that take place in society, which has been transformed into the integral state. Gramsci argues that the concept of hegemony helps to explain the domination of a particular class in favor of another, not only in the state but in all areas of social life. Thus, according to Gramsci and his support of the idea of the integral state, the domination was promoted by state hegemony and its apparatus in the form of private institutions.

THE PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

According to the legal literature, territorial integrity is related to land, sea, and air as the material elements necessary for the existence of the state. Political independence, in turn, is the abstract principle of the sovereignty

of the state, its internal and external freedom, and the free exercise of power. President Woodrow W. Wilson introduced the principle of territorial integrity as part of the legal norms. In his message to the joint session of Congress of the US in January 1918, he called for a peaceful settlement in Europe, particularly respecting the mutual independence, political and territorial integrity of large and small countries (Wilson, 1918). The Covenant of the League of Nations, which enshrined this principle in international law, was another essential document. According to Article 10 of the Covenant, League of Nations members commit to respecting the territorial integrity and political independence of other states and to taking measures against states that have violated these principles. Later, this principle was enshrined in the UN Charter as part of the UN's basic principles. According to Chapter II, Article 4 of the UN Charter, all states' members commit to refrain in their international relations from the use of force or the threat of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of other states, as well as other actions contrary to the UN Charter. Since then, many resolutions on this issue have been adopted within the framework of the UN, as well as bilateral and multilateral treaties. On the one hand, the principle of territorial integrity, as reflected in international law, seems to contradict the right to self-determination, which is also enshrined in the UN Charter. According to the principle of territorial integrity, states have the right to protect their territorial integrity, including by using force against separatists. On the other hand, the right to self-determination allows peoples to freely decide on their political future. Consequently, peoples can seek to leave the state, which constitutes an infringement on the territorial integrity of the state. However, the principle of territorial integrity does not prohibit states from seeking to protect their integrity by using force against secessionist movements. Moreover, some legal scholars argue that the principle of territorial integrity puts the right to self-determination to the test, as the right to self-determination is primarily proclaimed for peoples living within states, not separating ones. The scholar Gudeleviciute notes that "in general, self-determination is a territorial concept, the exercise of which necessarily involves state territories" (Gudeleviciute, 2005, p. 54). Nonetheless, Libarona argues that "self-determination is an essentially geopolitical principle with potentially extensive ramifications when there is both popular support for secession and external support for separatist aspirations" (Libarona, 2012, p. 113).

STRATEGIC COOPERATION, PARTNERSHIP, AND ALLIANCE

Since international relations are characterized by dynamic change and new trends, strategic alliances and partnerships are becoming increasingly attractive today. Indeed, they are regarded as an important way to gain competitive advantages (Karimifard, 2009, p. 25).

Strategic partnerships have become a prominent phenomenon in the changing international relations system and a new approach in international politics. Basically, these are special relationships of a general nature; nevertheless, an analysis of the internal characteristics of partnerships and their role in foreign policy in the context of a changing geostrategic environment allow us to conclude that “since the early 1990s, the transformation of international relations has been conducive to shaping strategic partnerships as a response to both systemic and specific international problems” (Tyushka and Czechowska, 2019, p. 8).

It is difficult to quantify the number of strategic alliances and agreements that make up the entire body of strategic partnerships at the present time. The reason for this is the lack of coherent and consistent accounting for such agreements by the state and international organization foreign policy bureaucracy. However, this does not apply to the study of the factors that have encouraged the creation of strategic alliances. According to Nadkarni, structural, regional, and civilizational changes that have occurred after the end of the Cold War are regarded as factors explaining the transition from the traditional North Atlantic alliance pattern to partnerships (Nadkarni, 2010, p. 45).

Thus, what is a strategic partnership and what role has it played in international relations? It should be noted that this term can be applied to a wide range of interactions or mean a convergence of action vectors. At the beginning of the 21st century, the concept of strategic partnership acquired new dimensions, turned to the fore of international politics, international law, and international economics. However, due to the use of this concept as an instrument of rhetorical inflation, its value became blurred (Renard, 2013, p. 302). Michalski and Pan, in turn, note that strategic partnerships should be considered within the framework of specific concepts, implying a particular form of bilateral interaction, designed to establish privileged relations between the participating actors in the international arena (Michalski and Pan, 2013, pp. 611-627). In other words, strategic

partnerships can pursue various goals that from specific foreign policy objectives to the pursuit of values and vision through international relations, and enhance the international prestige of the participating states.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIA–AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

AZERBAIJAN WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE CAUCASUS

Russia's Caucasian policy began in the 16th century and lasted until the 1860s. During this period, the Caucasian wars with Turkey led to the complete expulsion of the Ottoman Empire from the Caucasus. The Russo-Iranian wars (1804–1813, 1826–1828) led to the same result with Iran. From the beginning of the Caucasian wars, Russia has sought to create a Caucasian administrative region within the Russian Empire to govern the territories gained in the South Caucasus. Russia has decided to develop an administrative system based on the conquered lands and to expand its administrative borders. The territory of modern-day Azerbaijan was occupied, and one of the main goals of the Tsar's government was to weaken the khanates and the khanate system itself. The authorities established a command system in the occupied territories and introduced the system of provinces instead of khanates. The post of the governor of the province was also established. In most cases, the governors were appointed from the commanders of the Russian troops stationed in a particular region. The commanders could only be Christians (mostly Armenians) holding the rank of major, lieutenant colonel, or colonel. For this reason, the system is also known as the command system (Mustafayev, 1989, p. 27).

The nobility and beys in the early 19th century played a significant role in the social and economic structure of the country. However, already at the beginning of the occupation, the Russian military authorities in Azerbaijan took steps to weaken the land ownership of the beys and restrict their political and civil rights. In addition, the Russian authorities often used the term “administration” to undermine the status of local feudal beys. According to the Russian administration, most of the beys in the past did not own their lands, and therefore they were not landowners but state officials (stewardship over state peasants). Thus, the beys were at the forefront of the Muslim uprising, which began in June 1826 (Orucov, 2012, p. 147). The Azerbaijani beys' opposition to the Russian authorities led to the confiscation of their land. It was the social unrest in Azerbaijan

that prompted the authorities to develop a new administrative system. Thus, two administrative system projects were developed in 1829. The first project was developed by General Paskevich and Senators Kutaysov and Mechnikov. The second project was presented in May 1833 and was called "General Thoughts on the Lands of Transcaucasia" (Milman, 1966, p. 132). Paskevich, the commander in chief of the Russian forces in the Caucasus, submitted his project to the Emperor in 1829. The general proposed to abolish the command system and annul all the existing local laws and regulations and to create a centralized system in the manner of the Russian Empire. It is noteworthy that in his project, Paskevich did not take into account the cultural traditions and beliefs of the local population. According to Paskevich, "the Muslim peoples will draw closer to Russia if they are subject to the same general laws and economic sanctions." However, these projects were not realized since the State Council of the Russian Empire returned them for revision. In 1837, Senator Gan was tasked with the issue of revising the projects. Instead of studying the social and economic structure of the peoples of Transcaucasia, Gan used the projects developed by Paskevich, Kutaysov, and Mechnikov. The senator presented his project entitled "Administrative Management of the South Caucasus Region" to the Emperor and the State Duma. The State Council evaluated Gan's project in February 1838 and responded to his criticism of the domestic law system in the Khanate. The Council noted that during the Khanate, "in Azerbaijan, there was no law except the will of the Khan," and "Azerbaijanis did not dare to bring their disputes to the Sharia Courts." The Russian authorities would correct all these "injustices" (Bayramov, 2011, p. 19). The driving force behind Gan's reform was the policy of reliance on the "big men" in the country. In this regard, Tsar Nicholas I adopted the reform project in April 10, 1840, and it was approved as law (Mustafa, 2020, p. 74). The law, entitled "Administration of the Caucasus region," came into force on April 10, 1840, and divided the South Caucasus into two: the Imereti governorship of Georgia and the Caspian province (News. az, 2022; Aliyeva, 2021, p. 57).

RUSSIA-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS DURING THE FIRST PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE

After the Russian Tsarist regime was overthrown, liberation movements began in all the empire's regions, including Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijan People's Republic (ADR) was formed in the territory of modern day Azerbaijan in 1918. The first meetings of the ADR were held in Tbilisi,

where the capital of the republic was initially declared (Keykurun, 1998, pp. 34-35). However, in Ganja, the capital was also presented as a candidate for the title of the capital of the future republic. At that time Baku was under the control of the Baku Council of People's Commissars, which was established on the order of the Russian Provisional Government. The Council was dominated by Dashnak Bolsheviks. When the Baku commune was liquidated, the Baku government was formed, which was controlled by the Central Caspian dictatorship of the Mensheviks and Asarists. The Turkish troops managed to free Baku from the Bolsheviks and on 15 September 1918, and on 17 September the Azerbaijan People's Republic began its work there.

The short lived ADR was to last only 23 months, but it laid the foundation for the century long struggle for independence. In particular, a fundamentally new, civilized republic was created in Azerbaijan. The first signs of independence were the adoption of a new progressive law, as well as the establishment of a government structure with a Council of Ministers, which was elected by the National Assembly (Parliament). In other words, the ADR was a parliamentary republic.

Russia was preparing to occupy the newly created independent state. In August 1919, having fulfilled its duty to protect the independence of the ADR, Great Britain withdrew most of its troops from Transcaucasia, leaving only a detachment of soldiers in Batumi. In addition, there was another factor that ensured the full independence of Azerbaijan. However, the Red Army began its relentless advance to the south. In these circumstances, Baku was looking for ways to ensure its security. In an attempt to create a united front against the Bolsheviks, an agreement on mutual defense between Azerbaijan and Georgia was concluded. Armenia did not join the defense alliance. The representatives of the Azerbaijan People's Front presented a declaration on the recognition of Azerbaijan's independence at the Versailles Conference, where the leaders of the Allied nations were invited. In January 1920, Azerbaijan received de facto recognition of its independence (Akbulut, 2017, p. 30). This allowed Azerbaijan to preserve its independence and maneuverability in its foreign policy with the traditional allies of Russia, Iran, and Turkey.

The Allied powers, and in particular Great Britain, were hesitant to provide military assistance to the newly created state. They wanted to get

as many concessions as possible from the Bolsheviks, and the military intervention of Britain in Transcaucasia was too expensive. Besides, the troops stationed in the Caucasus were insufficient to resist the attacks of the Red Army. Nevertheless, the Azerbaijan National Front (ANF) turned to the Allied powers for help and support. ANF representatives participated in the meetings of the Supreme Council of the Allies in London and San Remo (Musa, 2011a, pp. 213-216). The issue of Azerbaijan was discussed at the London conference, where the newly independent states were invited to submit their proposals. The draft resolution entitled "Allied Policy toward Russia" developed by the ANF peace mission in Paris, which was approved at the London conference, was to develop a policy of peace with Soviet Russia and stop the war. However, despite several attempts to gain the support of the Allies, Azerbaijan was unable to get military aid. The reason for this was the reluctance of Great Britain to provide assistance. In addition, there was a threat of the occupation of Azerbaijan by Soviet Russia. The Hovci (Hoyski) government sent the Russian Foreign Minister Chicherin the third note on 15 February 1920. The note once again called on Russia to respect the independence of the ADR and protect the integrity of the territories of the Caucasus countries. It was also noted that Russia should explain to the world the reason for its military presence on the borders of the newly independent state. In addition, it was proposed to establish direct contact between the governments of the two countries and begin negotiations on a number of issues. However, Lenin's Russia, which had long been preparing for war with the ADR, did not respond to the call for negotiations. The Hovci government was forced to turn to other allies for help.

The new plan was developed in two variants. The first version of the plan assumed that the Red Army would cross the borders of the ADR on 27 April 1920, capture Baku, and seize control of the Azerbaijani oil fleet. However, the Red Army's objective was to occupy all of Azerbaijan. The occupation of Baku began on 27 April 1920 and marked the end of the ADR's 23 month independence (Aydinoğlu, 2023, p. 8). Thus, another attempt by Azerbaijan to follow the path of independence was stopped by the Red Army. It was the policy of the world socialist revolution pursued by Lenin and his comrades that led to the creation of the ADR and its subsequent destruction. Russia did not recognize the independence of the ADR, and by occupying the country, Russia once again established its dominance over the region. In addition, Russia canceled the independent

foreign policy of the ADR and began to dismantle its army (Nəşibli, 2011, p. 273). Azerbaijan again became the source of raw materials for the Russian industry. In particular, Azerbaijan's fuel reserves were transferred to Russia, which, in turn, led to the Azerbaijani people's resistance to the occupation and the struggle for independence.

THE KEY DETERMINANTS OF RUSSIA–AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

By the mid-1980s, the political conditions in the USSR were deteriorating. The central government and the Communist Party further undermined their credibility by resorting to mass violence against citizens. Relations between the center and the periphery began to unravel both politically and economically. Meanwhile, the countries of Eastern Europe were experiencing complex socio political upheavals. As the socialist system was collapsing, their peoples aimed to end Soviet intervention and pursue forms of independent development.

The restoration of state independence marked a significant turning point in the history of the Azerbaijani people and inaugurated a new era. At the same time, it set the country on the path to building a democratic, law-based state grounded in national state traditions and its historical and cultural heritage. However, independence also brought serious responsibilities. Azerbaijan had to secure and consolidate its state, resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh issue stemming from Armenia's unfounded territorial claims, liberate the occupied territories, and create favorable conditions on the international stage. Above all, the Republic of Azerbaijan had to protect its people and support the country's development. Meeting these demands required consistent and purposeful preparation and action in both domestic and foreign policy. Shortly after the restoration of state independence, the Azerbaijani people entered an important period in their history. The Republic of Azerbaijan also took its first steps in foreign policy. Many countries recognized Azerbaijan's independence, and in January 1992 Azerbaijan joined the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE; since 1995 the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and ratified numerous international agreements.

Haydar Aliyev's rise to power and strong political activities saved the Republic of Azerbaijan from conflict, separatism, and fragmentation.

At the same time, it marked the beginning of efforts to build a stable, continuously developing state and to restore the self-confidence of its people. To resolve Azerbaijan's difficult domestic and foreign problems, the country pursued an active foreign policy. Haydar Aliyev, who tied Azerbaijan's future to state independence, said: "One of the principal tasks of strengthening the independence of our Republic is to have an intelligent and competent foreign policy that can protect Azerbaijan's interests on a global scale. Our foreign policy must primarily focus on securing the state's independence." "The task is to establish equal, mutually beneficial relations with every country in the world and to use them effectively to strengthen the international position of the Republic of Azerbaijan while developing its economy, science, and culture" (Aliyev, 1997, p. 204).

Azerbaijan's foreign policy has shifted toward a more pragmatic direction compared with previous years in order to tackle the complex challenges ahead. Abandoning the ineffective approach that pushed the country into regional isolation, a balanced and diversified foreign policy line was adopted (Yenicag.az, 2022). At the same time, wide ranging measures were taken to maintain internal stability and ensure the normal functioning of state institutions. Resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh issue on the basis of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity also became one of the main priorities of foreign policy.

Azerbaijan, situated at a sensitive geopolitical point between Europe and Asia, prioritizes establishing and strengthening its ties with its neighbors Turkey, Russia, Iran, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. Its primary aim is to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation on the basis of good neighborliness and mutual benefit. Heydar Aliyev expressed this view as follows: "As a democratic state, the Republic of Azerbaijan must establish equal relations with all states.

A parallel effort to establish and expand ties with the United States and European countries also became an important part of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. The main aims were to present Azerbaijan as an independent state, strengthen its position abroad, address the conflict resulting from Armenian aggression, and move toward integration with Europe. This strategy extended beyond Europe and the United States that Azerbaijan also established contractual and legal foundations for relations with countries in Asia and Africa, including Japan and China. The approach initiated by

Haydar Aliyev was later continued by Ilham Aliyev, who maintained a balanced foreign policy. During Ilham Aliyev's tenure, Azerbaijan expanded its bilateral and multilateral relations with various states and achieved significant foreign policy results since 2003 (Orujova, 2025, pp. 580–581). During this period, there was also an increase in the number of countries seeking cooperation with Azerbaijan. In 2018 alone, President Ilham Aliyev made official and business visits to 16 foreign countries, including Turkey, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Croatia, Switzerland, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. In the same year, presidents from 16 countries and the Federal Chancellor of Germany paid official visits to Azerbaijan, including leaders from Turkey, Russia, Iran, Italy, Serbia, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Macedonia, and Albania (Aliyev, 2019).

RELATIONS WITH THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION DURING THE AYAZ MUTALIBOV PERIOD

After the collapse of the USSR and Azerbaijan's regaining of independence, other states intensified their competition for regional influence, creating new conditions. As a result, Azerbaijan transformed from an area where states cooperated around regional interests into one where they competed. After Azerbaijan regained independence, Russia whose borders had been greatly reduced and whose superpower status had diminished sought to maintain its position as a major power and chose confrontation over cooperation. The struggle for influence in Azerbaijan intensified further among Russia, the West Turkey alliance, and Iran, whose regional foreign policy approaches conflicted. Under these conditions, Russia failed to develop a strategy that matched the new reality of the South Caucasus. The imperial perspective it tried to preserve no longer fit that reality. There was also no consensus within Russia regarding Azerbaijan. Because Russia had long regarded Azerbaijan as strategically important, it used the Karabakh conflict to its advantage, openly supporting Armenia while attempting to keep Azerbaijan within its sphere of influence.

During this period, the foreign policy of the president of the newly independent Azerbaijan was of great importance. He had to fulfill several urgent tasks that prevent separatism, preserve the territorial integrity and security of the state, mitigate the severe socio economic effects of the war, and improve the country's position in foreign relations. Ayaz Mutallibov served as Azerbaijan's first president from 1991 to 1992. At

that time, an ideological split emerged in Azerbaijan between two factions. Mutallibov's faction supported a more Russia-oriented approach, while the independence oriented Popular Front aimed to move away from Russia and the structures led by it. During Mutallibov's presidency, his foreign policy was generally open to proposals advanced by Russia. At a meeting held in Almaty on December 21, 1991, Mutallibov supported and signed the agreement for Azerbaijan's membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and signed the declaration (Kasimli, 2015, p. 505). The Azerbaijan Parliament had already adopted Decision No. 32 of December 20, 1991, on the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which aimed to limit Mutallibov's actions. According to the decision, the authority to participate in the meeting related only to the status of Soviet military units in Azerbaijan (Aslanli, 2023, pp. 50–51); under these conditions, Azerbaijan's CIS membership was not considered appropriate. Despite Parliament's stance, Mutallibov signed the Almaty Declaration (Kasimli, 2015, p. 505). The opposition objected to this decision, which the Parliament had not approved.

However, Mutallibov continued his pro-Russian foreign policy strategy, seeing ties with Moscow as the fundamental element of Azerbaijan's foreign policy (Öztarsu, 2011, p. 2). Despite this, he expected Russia to assist Armenia in occupying Karabakh, while Russia continued to refuse to recognize Azerbaijan's independence. This Moscow centered approach collapsed after the Armenians, with the help of the Russian 366th Armored Regiment, committed genocide in Khojaly on 26 February 1992 (Cafersoy, 2001, p. 10). This tragedy sparked nationwide protests demanding Ayaz Mutallibov's resignation; the protests intensified on 5 March 1992. The next day, 6 March 1992, the protests succeeded and Mutallibov was forced to resign (eqanun.az, 1992).

THE ELCHIBEY PERIOD

During this period, the Azerbaijan Popular Front repeatedly called for the country's president to resign. After the tragic events in Khojaly on 25–26 February 1992 and a series of failures in Nagorno-Karabakh, Ayaz Mutallibov resigned (Məmmədov, 1999, p. 160). One of the Popular Front's leaders, Abulfaz Elchibey (1992–1993), became Azerbaijan's first democratically elected president. His foreign policy differed considerably from that of his predecessor. Pro-Turkish, Elchibey pursued a nationalist strategy aiming to forge closer ties with Turkey and to develop friendly

relations with Western countries as well. He identified these states as strategic partners and waged a covert campaign against communism, the remnants of the Soviet past, and Iran, which was increasingly seen as Azerbaijan's most dangerous neighbor.

From that point on, efforts intensified in Azerbaijan to promote the Turkish language and foreground the national identity. Elchibey even spoke in Azerbaijani Turkish at some international meetings (Yavuz, 2004, p. 67). While Pan-Turkism later became central to foreign policy, from 1992 onward matters of trade, economy, credit, investment, and industrial and technical cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan gained importance. Turkey also began to support Azerbaijan on the Karabakh issue. In the same year Ankara severed economic ties with Armenia for the first time, and in 1993 the Turkey and Armenia border was closed. Relations with Iran deteriorated significantly during Elchibey's period. He pursued an openly anti-Iranian policy, describing Iran as "the enemy of the entire Muslim and Turkic world" (Alizada, 2021, p. 301). His harsh criticisms were based on what he saw as violations of rights and freedoms in Iran. In the South Azerbaijan region, where the majority of Azerbaijani Turks live, they had been deprived of their freedoms and subjected to cultural discrimination. To resolve these disagreements with Iran, Elchibey advocated for the reunification of South and North.

During Elchibey's presidency, Russia was among the countries that particularly complicated foreign policy for Azerbaijan. The main reasons were Russia's political pressure and military superiority, but the previous government's pro-Russian stance also played a major role; it had paid a heavy price in the Karabakh conflict and had helped the Armenians advance in the war. Therefore, Elchibey focused on expanding military capacity to resolve the Karabakh issue and on obtaining foreign assistance in order to internationalize the conflict. As part of this effort, the Tashkent Agreement of 15 May 1992 envisaged the sharing of military assets. According to the agreement, both parties transferred to Azerbaijan 220 tanks and armored vehicles and 285 artillery units. The aim was to create an army with a nationalist spirit, and this equipment significantly contributed to the successful completion of the Azerbaijan Army's operations (Elchibey, 1996a, p. 1).

However, neither national restructuring measures pursued by Elchibey's side nor the efforts to find a negotiated solution to the Karabakh

problem produced a positive result. The Armenian side maintained its uncompromising stance, Azerbaijan did not receive the support it expected from the West, and Russia contributed to the stalemate. As is well known, Russia supported Armenia on Karabakh and continuously provided military and political assistance. In this context, Azerbaijan Popular Front's decision to pursue a strategy of resistance against Russian imperialism (Elchibey, 1996b, p. 1), together with efforts to develop alternatives that could free Azerbaijan from Russian influence, led to a complete break with Russia. In light of these developments, Elchibey pursued two main directions in his strategy toward Russia. The first emerged during the national restructuring period he implemented. At that time Russia could not ignore Azerbaijan's demands and stated that it would not obstruct the country's progress toward democratization. Russia later abandoned this stance by adopting the "near abroad" doctrine and once again made Azerbaijan a priority in its foreign policy. The second direction concerned Elchibey's policy toward the Turkic republics. His efforts to establish a common Turkic union and initiatives to have the Turkish language recognized among the UN languages made Azerbaijan a renewed target of Russian policy. As Russian forces withdrew from Azerbaijan, they handed over their weapons to Suret Huseynov, who would later attempt a coup in the country. At the same time, Russia increased its support for Armenia, which led to Armenia's occupation of Kelbajar.

HEYDAR ALIYEV'S BALANCING POLICY AND RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

For Heydar Aliyev, whose foreign policy was shaped by these issues, maintaining balanced relations with Russia and other states was extremely important. However, Russia's unconstructive efforts to maximize its military and political influence in the South Caucasus showed that it was not seeking mutually beneficial, equal relations with the countries of the region. Armenia's unjust approach to resolving the Karabakh dispute stemming from its unfounded territorial claims against Azerbaijan and the measures that restricted Azerbaijan's commercial and economic ties reflected a state policy contrary to the interests of both countries. These actions also long harmed the development of good neighborly relations.

In this context, Azerbaijan joined the CIS in September 1993 in an effort to rebuild its political, economic, and cultural ties with Russia and the other CIS countries. It aimed to base these relations on new principles

reflecting the common interests of the independent states and, at the same time, to protect its national interests more effectively in the former USSR territories and in the international arena. Therefore, from the second half of 1993 Azerbaijan pursued a foreign policy that paved the way for a dynamic development of mutual relations with Russia. The Republic of Azerbaijan later confirmed this stance with concrete measures. The "Contract of the Century" signed on 20 September 1994 (Azerbaijan.az, 2024) and the subsequent oil agreements demonstrated Azerbaijan's intention to develop friendly relations with Russia on mutually beneficial terms. Those measures included granting a fair share to the Russian oil company LUKoil, choosing the Baku and Novorossiysk route for transporting the country's oil, and inviting other Russian companies to cooperate (Rzayev, 2023, p. 266). In the following years, Azerbaijan attached special importance to interstate relations with Russia as part of its foreign policy. During President Heydar Aliyev's visit to Moscow on 3 July 1997, Azerbaijan and Russia signed an agreement on friendship, cooperation, and mutual security (Xalqqazeti.az, 2024). This document created a broad legal basis for elevating bilateral relations in line with the national interests of both states.

Vladimir Putin's assumption of office in 2000 led to a more pragmatic trend in Russia's foreign policy, including its relations with Azerbaijan. The official visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Azerbaijan on 9–10 January 2001 marked a new stage in the development of Azerbaijan and Russia relations (Arif, 2008, p. 3). It was the first visit to Azerbaijan by a Russian head of state since the country gained its independence. A more objective Russian assessment of the current geopolitical realities, the need to establish relations with Azerbaijan on equal terms, and the national interests shared by both states helped open a new chapter in bilateral relations. In Baku, President Vladimir Putin and President Heydar Aliyev held interdelegation talks covering all areas of mutual cooperation. They also addressed regional security, strategic stability, and important international issues of mutual concern. The President of the Russian Federation acknowledged that differing views between the two countries on political and economic relations had cooled bilateral ties. Therefore, he emphasized the necessity of effectively taking advantage of every opportunity to turn a new page in their relations.

SOFT POWER AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY INITIATIVES

The concept of soft power is currently recognized as the most potent

geopolitical tool for eroding the influence of actual and potential enemy states in international relations (Nye, 1990, p. 154). By employing certain technologies, interstate geopolitical confrontations may involve a comprehensive yet discreet exploitation of the tools needed to impose indirect control over the policies a given state is to pursue domestically and abroad. In this respect, the actions of the geopolitical actor taking on the role of an aggressor tend to fall under the category of indirect action soft power designed to secure strategic advantages against an adversary in socio-economic, defense, cultural, ideological, and other areas of confrontation (Nye, 1990, p. 167). Within this framework, the primary target of geopolitical aggression is the ruling elites of the enemy state, who are perceived as the decision making and power hubs of society. The overall aim is to obtain control of the target system by covertly influencing the behavior of specific individuals and social groups, as well as promoting the implementation of policy options conducive to the achievement of the aggressor's political and strategic objectives (Əkbərov, 2023). State elites are now capitalizing on the described soft power approach to legitimize their foreign policy choices. The Russian Federation, which is determined to advance its geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus region, also benefits from the use of the described tools of indirect confrontation.

In this respect, Azerbaijan's attempts to soothe Russia and reorientate its foreign policy accordingly have enhanced Moscow's soft power appeal in the region. Russia actively promoted its geopolitical and ideological interests in post-Soviet space through extensive pro-Moscow agitation. Two key Soviet era assets account for the strong appeal of Russia in Azerbaijan namely, the Russian language and education system. The Russian language retained its popularity in the country (Kəngərli, 2012, p. 6). However, Azerbaijan's independence allowed the nation to orientate itself toward the West while pursuing a west oriented foreign policy course. Consequently, Russia's appeal declined, as the Russian language failed to meet the growing demand for English as a foreign language. Russian was officially recognized as a foreign language, whereas its previous privileged position was significantly diminished. Additionally, the decreasing number of ethnic Russians in Azerbaijan after the dissolution of the Soviet Union also decreased the language's attractiveness. Azerbaijani gained ground as the dominant language of instruction in education. In particular, in Baku, the share of students taught in Azerbaijani Turkish increased from 45% in 1988/1989 to 78% in 1995/1996 (Paşayeva, 2016, p. 44). Although

instruction in Russian was compulsory in primary and secondary education for over seventy years, it failed to gain popularity. In 2013/2014, only 21.8% of primary and secondary school students studied the Russian language as a foreign language, compared to 83.5% studying English. According to the 2014 data, Russian was used as the language of instruction in only 7% of primary and secondary schools.

Russia's growing soft power in Azerbaijan is also accounted for by the emergence of the pro-Russian Eurasia Movement, which brings together Azerbaijani individuals and entities with extensive experience in Russia's military and political establishment. Officially launched in Azerbaijan in early 2015, this Russian backed initiative was designed to create conditions for promoting Russia's interests and soft power in the Republic (RIA Novosti, 2024).

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: A STRATEGIC MANEUVER OR A NECESSITY?

Russia's geopolitical and geo-economic interests suggest that strengthening ties with the South Caucasian states is a priority for the country. In particular, Azerbaijan plays a special role given its transit location and strategic importance. The question then arises as to whether the Russia-Azerbaijan relations are based on strategic partnership or mutual necessity. The strategic and economic interests of both countries suggest that their relationship is one of necessity. In particular, a strategically significant step towards strategic partnership was the Agreement between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation on Alliance, which was signed on 22.02.2022 (Kremlin.ru, 2022). The document contains 43 articles, covering all areas of interstate relations, from political to economic. In particular, the agreement highlights the deepening of economic ties between Russia-Azerbaijan. In addition, the sides emphasized their interest in expanding joint investment in the oil, gas, chemical, machine building, agricultural, and construction sectors. Russia-Azerbaijan noted the importance of strengthening economic ties through settlements in national currencies and the use of integrated payment systems, including bank cards. Closer interaction between Russian and Azerbaijani banks is also being established.

Russia is expanding its infrastructure, economic, and institutional networks to promote the concept of Greater Eurasia. President of Russia V.V. Putin

called the project's development a response to global risks, ensuring political stability, and creating conditions for the economic development of states. In particular, the strategic partnership between Russia-Azerbaijan is designed to ensure the state's security, derive benefits from common transit routes, and develop new areas of political, economic, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation. In particular, given the growing political risks and threats to energy security in a context of geopolitical tensions, including among major hydrocarbon producers and exporters, strategic and economic partnership is a priority for both countries. At the same time, enhanced relations between the two neighboring states also serve as a guarantee of stability and predictability in bilateral trade and economic ties.

The evolution of relations between Azerbaijan and Russia between 2003 and 2025 is therefore also determined by key external factors, which are also of interest. In particular, the first critical development was the Russia-Georgia war that broke out in August 2008. Russia's military intervention on Georgia's behalf followed by Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states dramatically altered the regional geopolitical balance. From the standpoint of Baku, this confrontation had significant negative implications for regional security and was a direct challenge to state sovereignty. The event served as a warning to other South Caucasian states of Moscow's intentions. At the same time, although Baku explicitly supported Tbilisi's territorial integrity, it did not follow up with concrete military and political measures. As such, Azerbaijan adopted a strategy of pragmatic balancing that took into account its national security and strategic interests while avoiding direct confrontation with Russia.

Considered together, these developments demonstrate that Azerbaijan's foreign policy between 2003 and 2025 was determined by external factors, including deepening Russia-Western confrontation. From this perspective, Azerbaijan's strategic partnership with Russia was the foreign policy choice of a pragmatic state that sought to pursue its national interests. The experience of the last twenty years demonstrates that such a policy is entirely compatible with the principles of realism. In other words, the mutual interests of Russia-Azerbaijan in the South Caucasian region created common ground for strategic economic and political ties. At the same time, Baku's foreign policy between 2003 and 2025 still demonstrates that the concept of necessity driven geopolitical alliances is also compatible with the principles of realism.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify political, strategic, geopolitical, and other aspects that have shaped and reshaped the Russian Federation's and Republic of Azerbaijan's bilateral relations in 2003–2025. The analysis is based on the author's hypothesis that they are not strictly dependent, hostile, or permanently dependent but rather transformed through time with the international system's shifts and regional dynamics. The findings confirm this hypothesis and highlight several critical aspects of Russia–Azerbaijan relations.

Firstly, the study discovers that despite many crises and political tensions, Azerbaijan and Russia did not experience complete policy disengagement. In other words, the existing bilateral ties acted as a guarantor of the relationship, regardless of sharp fluctuations in interstate diplomacy. For instance, despite the Russia West confrontation drivers (the Russia–Georgia War in 2008, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the Russia–Ukraine War in 2022), Baku chose to pursue a conciliatory policy rather than break ties with Moscow. This implies that both the state's share a diplomatic platform that allows them to sustain the relationship regardless of external fluctuations. Moreover, institutional ties are another critical factor in the current Russia–Azerbaijan strategic partnership. While political ties face periodic tests, economic interdependence remains relatively stable. The discovery underscores natural gas and oil as vital elements of the relationship that ensure a balanced one, neutralizing the risk of either country dominating the partnership.

Furthermore, the research highlights that Azerbaijan's foreign policy does not follow the neorealist balance of power theory, which to a considerable extent determines its foreign policy toward Russia. In other words, while the official narrative promotes strategic partnership, economic, and energy policy ties, Azerbaijan simultaneously engages other powers, including Turkey, the EU, and regional actors. It allows Baku to follow a multi veined foreign policy and retain its independence.

Additionally, the study discovers that the Karabakh war complexified the bilateral ties, but it did not transform them into out rightly adversarial ones. In other words, although Russia has diminished its influence over Nagorno-Karabakh after the war and the events that occurred in 2023, Azerbaijan has not turned into an explicit antagonist. Rather, both countries continue to

pursue a policy of strategic interdependence, which remains their primary foreign policy instrument. This is the fourth discovery of this research.

Finally, the analysis uncovers that the Russia-Azerbaijan relationship has become increasingly institutionalized over time, which underlines their commitment to strategic partnership. For instance, the 1997 Friendship Treaty, energy, and transport agreements, and the 2022 Alliance Declaration suggest that both countries value the alliance, which extends beyond a temporary partnership. This implies that there is a strong institutional framework that can withstand the test of time and international relations' fluctuations. The fifth discovery is that Azerbaijan continues to pursue a multi veined foreign policy, which includes its membership in the CIS. However, its selective participation in some organizations (the CSTO, EAEU, etc.) suggests that it has chosen a pragmatic rather than an explicitly none Western foreign policy.

To summarize, Azerbaijan and Russia share a multifaceted strategic partnership that has withstood the test of time. The 2003-2025 dynamics demonstrate that while the two countries do not follow the traditional realism, their relations remain based on strategic interdependence rather than out rightly hostile or dependent. However, Azerbaijan's foreign policy promotes engagement with several powers, including Turkey and the West, rather than exclusive reliance on Russia. Thus, the relationship is rather unique and serves as an excellent model of how a middle power can exercise its foreign policy to maximize its geopolitical gains.

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UNVEILING DYNAMICS AND TRENDS IN LEAN ACCOUNTING THROUGH BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts a comprehensive and systematic bibliometric analysis of the academic literature on lean accounting published between 1996 and 2025. In contrast to prior reviews that address lean accounting only tangentially or within the broader lean-management literature, this study focuses exclusively on the lean accounting domain and maps its intellectual, conceptual, and social structure in an integrated manner. To ensure a consistent and reproducible metadata structure, the bibliographic data were retrieved from a single, clearly defined source, the Web of Science Core Collection. The search combined the topic terms “lean” and “accounting”, and the retrieved records were screened against explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, yielding a final corpus of 53 documents. The analyses were carried out using the Bibliometrix R package via the Biblioshiny interface and VOSviewer. Performance indicators (annual publication and citation dynamics and the most productive authors, sources, institutions, and countries) were combined with science-mapping techniques (co-authorship, co-citation, keyword co-occurrence, and the three-field plot) to characterize the field. The findings indicate a slow but steady growth of scholarly output, a fragmented author-collaboration structure organized around a few small clusters, and a conceptual core dominated by themes such as impact, performance, systems, and implementation, while contemporary themes such as digital transformation, sustainability, and Industry 4.0 remain comparatively under-represented. On this basis, the study offers a structured research agenda that identifies the principal thematic gaps and prospective directions for researchers and practitioners in lean accounting.

Key Words: *Bibliometric Analysis, Lean Accounting, R Studio, VOSviewer.*

* Araştırma Makalesi, Geliş Tarihi: 17.08.2026, Kabul Tarihi: 16.10.2026

Bu makalede Etik Kurul Onayı gerekmemektedir.

BİBLİYOMETRİK ANALİZ İLE YALIN MUHASEBEDE DİNAMİKLERİ VE EĞİLİMLERİ ORTAYA ÇIKARMAK

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, yalın muhasebe alanında 1996-2025 yılları arasında yayımlanan akademik literatürü kapsamlı ve sistematik bir bibliyometrik analizle incelemektedir. Yalın muhasebeyi yalnızca dolaylı olarak ya da daha geniş yalın yönetim literatürü içinde ele alan önceki incelemelerden farklı olarak bu çalışma, doğrudan yalın muhasebe alanına odaklanmakta ve alanın entelektüel, kavramsal ve sosyal yapısını bütüncül biçimde haritalandırmaktadır. Tutarlı ve yeniden üretilebilir bir üstveri yapısı sağlamak amacıyla bibliyografik veriler tek ve açıkça tanımlanmış bir kaynaktan, Web of Science Core Collection veri tabanından elde edilmiştir. Arama, “lean” ve “accounting” konu terimlerinin birleştirilmesiyle gerçekleştirilmiş ve elde edilen kayıtlar açık dahil etme ve dışlama ölçütlerine göre taranarak 53 belgeden oluşan nihai bir külliyat elde edilmiştir. Analizler, Biblioshiny arayüzü aracılığıyla Bibliometrix R paketi ve VOSviewer yazılımı kullanılarak yürütülmüştür. Alanı betimlemek amacıyla performans göstergeleri (yıllık yayın ve atıf dinamikleri ile en üretken yazarlar, kaynaklar, kurumlar ve ülkeler) bilim haritalama teknikleriyle (ortak yazarlık, ortak atıf, anahtar kelime birlikte oluşumu ve üç alanlı grafik) birlikte kullanılmıştır. Bulgular; bilimsel üretimde yavaş fakat istikrarlı bir büyümeye, birkaç küçük küme etrafında örgütlenen parçalı bir yazar iş birliği yapısına ve etki, performans, sistemler ve uygulama gibi temaların baskın olduğu bir kavramsal çekirdeğe işaret etmekte; buna karşın dijital dönüşüm, sürdürülebilirlik ve Endüstri 4.0 gibi güncel temalar görece sınırlı biçimde temsil edilmektedir. Bu temelde çalışma, yalın muhasebe alanındaki araştırmacı ve uygulayıcılar için başlıca tematik boşlukları ve olası araştırma yönelimlerini tanımlayan yapılandırılmış bir araştırma gündemi sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Bibliyometrik Analiz, Yalın Muhasebe, R Studio, VOSviewer.*

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the complexities encountered in the production, procurement, and retail processes and the intensifying local and global competition that places growing pressure on businesses, traditional accounting practices and procedures may be insufficient to provide sufficient flexibility and strong strategic support to companies in different industries in matters such as accounting, auditing, and reporting. In that regard, the lean accounting approach, derived from the lean production philosophy, stands out as an effective tool for achieving goals such as managing costs, increasing efficiency and performance, and reducing waste in applications such as accounting, auditing, and financial reporting. Unlike traditional accounting practices, lean accounting focuses on value-added activities and aims to make business processes, activities, and business models more transparent, flexible, lean, and manageable. This approach significantly increases the competitiveness of enterprises by enabling the restructuring of practices related to accounting, auditing, and reporting across all industries, especially production enterprises and accounting and auditing firms, based on efficiency.

Disruptive technological developments in recent years, rapidly increasing global and local competition, stakeholders' expectations regarding the development of sustainability and green policies that lead to increasing pressure on businesses, the increasing economic crises at the global and local level, and the economic uncertainties and fluctuations they bring with them have led companies to more flexible, strong, resilient and strategic accounting practices and approaches to respond to these developments. The concept of lean accounting has begun to attract the attention of decision-makers in the service and public sectors, as well as in accounting and auditing firms and production companies, and the approach has taken its place among strategic management tools for performance measurement, cost reduction, and a culture of continuous improvement. When the academic literature is examined, interest in lean accounting has begun to attract increasing attention in the research community. In contrast, the theoretical foundations, application methods, and sectoral effects of the lean accounting approach are handled by different disciplines. However, while a significant part of previous studies in the literature on lean accounting has focused on specific applications and conceptual dimensions and frameworks, comprehensive analyses examining the development trends and evolution of the concept in a holistic manner are very rare. Accordingly, examining academic production on lean accounting in a systematic and analytical context is essential to

understanding the evolution of the relevant literature, research gaps, and future trends.

This study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to reveal critical trends, managerial implications, and valuable insights while reviewing the literature on lean accounting. Drawing on data from the Web of Science Core Collection database, this study examines 53 studies published between 1996 and 2025. It traces the evolution of the literature in the context of lean accounting. This review used VOSviewer and RStudio to clearly show trends in publications, author collaborations, keywords, country-level publication distribution, and the evolution and development of the literature in a conceptual context. The main findings and results show that the concept of lean accounting, as an extension of the lean production philosophy, is attracting increasing attention from the research community. Accordingly, a steady increase is observed in the literature regarding publications on this subject. It proves that there is a growing research interest, albeit slowly.

By using innovative, systematic, and analytical tools and methodological frameworks, this research reveals the implications, importance, and relationships among stakeholders in lean accounting across different industries and accounting, auditing, and financial reporting disciplines. At the same time, it suggests adopting lean accounting practices and increasing stakeholder acceptance. In addition, despite the highly critical findings and inferences obtained in the study, it is necessary to accept the existence of some existing limitations, mainly because it is not yet possible to obtain sufficiently structured data in some databases (TR Index), as well as the fact that the data used are obtained from a single source and cannot be integrated with the data obtained from different sources (Scopus). In future studies, this study can be replicated using data from these databases, and the results can be compared. More comprehensive analyses can be conducted by integrating data from multiple databases.

EMPLOYED METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

This investigation categorizes the data sources and implementations into two primary categories, as shown below:

Origin of Data Source and Research Strategy

The bibliographic data used in this study were retrieved on 22 May 2025 from a single, clearly defined source, the Web of Science Core Collection (WoSCC). A single database was deliberately selected in order to preserve

a homogeneous and internally consistent metadata structure, with uniform author, affiliation, keyword, and citation fields, which is a prerequisite for reliable science mapping. Consequently, no cross-database record merging was performed, and the reconciliation of duplicate records across heterogeneous sources was not required; within the WoSCC, records identified as duplicates by the platform were automatically consolidated. The query was executed in the Topic (TS) field, which simultaneously searches the title, abstract, and author keywords by combining the two core terms of the domain with the Boolean AND operator: "lean" (Term 1) AND "accounting" (Term 2). This deliberately conservative query was adopted to prioritize precision and capture studies that explicitly position themselves within the lean accounting domain, rather than the far broader lean manufacturing or general management accounting literatures. The retrieved records were then screened against explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria. Records were included when they were written in English, belonged to the document types article, review, book chapter, or conference proceeding, and were thematically relevant to lean accounting based on a title-and-abstract assessment. Records were excluded when they were not written in English, were editorial notes or corrections without substantive content, or were thematically unrelated to lean accounting despite containing the search terms. After this screening procedure, a final corpus of 53 documents was retained for the bibliometric analysis. It should be acknowledged that restricting the query to the terms "lean" and "accounting" is a conservative choice that may not capture all studies employing related terminology, such as "value stream costing", "value stream accounting", or "lean management accounting". This choice, together with the reliance on a single database, is revisited in the concluding section and proposed as a direction for future work.

The main objective of this review was to conduct a bibliometric analysis to explore the evolving landscape of lean accounting in the accounting and auditing industry, including related developments, trends, and evolution. The conclusions and findings provided an intensive overview of scientific publications in this field, providing information on publication trends, author collaborations, and keyword distributions. In addition, the study aimed to more clearly highlight the effects, advantages, and contributions of lean accounting practices in the industry.

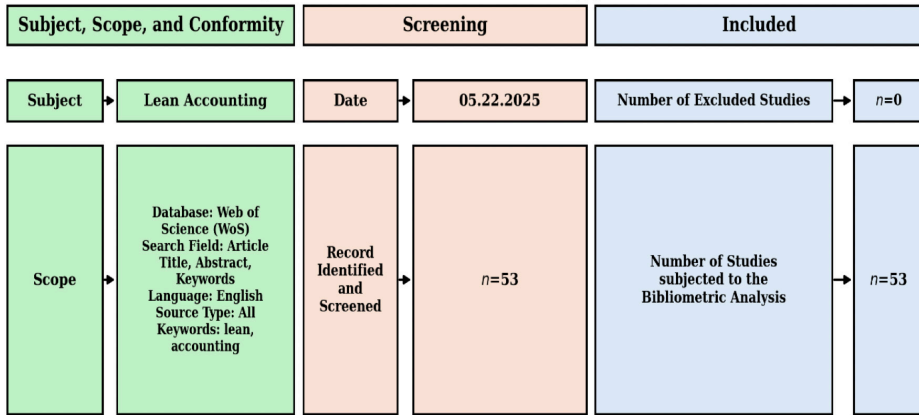
Data Analysis

This study used the Bibliometrix R package program and VOSviewer software to process and analyze the data obtained from WoSCC. Biblioshiny, a web-based tool, was used to visualize the results. The data analysis was conducted using the Bibliometrix database, integrated with R, which provided an effective visual representation of numerical data. The outputs obtained within the scope of the analysis include various bibliometric indicators, such as annual average citation values, most-cited journals, most-productive authors and institutions, publication distributions by country, network structures, resource mapping, word cloud visualizations, and cluster analysis (Eser & Aktan, 2021). The choice of R software strengthened the study's analytical rigor and made an innovative methodological contribution.

In addition, this study employed VOSviewer software, which is widely used across disciplines, to conduct bibliometric analysis (Huang et al., 2022; Shah et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020). VOSviewer creates network maps by visualizing relationships among bibliometric data, enabling visual analysis of the literature's structural features. The study's main objective is to present a comprehensive bibliometric assessment that will reveal the evolution and status of the discipline under study. Findings obtained: By providing essential data on publication trends, author collaborations, and prominent research themes, it has contributed to a better understanding of the field's overall structure and dynamics.

Procedural Process Map

The research outputs obtained from the WoSCC database are visualized in Figure 1 by the determined methodological approach (Shahidan et al., 2021). In this process, a systematic data-scanning and analysis framework was developed using the PRISMA method, which is widely used in the literature. One of the study's main objectives is to analyze and evaluate the data obtained holistically and present it in a regular and meaningful way. The main findings are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart of applications

This investigation used the PRISMA approach to assess the relevant literature for methodological mapping systematically. This approach also facilitates a systematic and analytical literature review, providing researchers and industry practitioners with a practical framework. This methodological framework yields a final corpus of 53 studies on lean accounting, retained after the identification and screening stages described above. This study aims to comprehensively examine, synthesize, and analyze the relevant literature to reveal and illuminate the literature's critical trends, developments, evolution, insights, and findings.

The following research questions are addressed in the study: (RQ1) What are the main findings regarding the general characteristics of lean accounting and auditing studies? (RQ2) What are the top 10 published primary sources in lean accounting? (RQ3) How has the landscape of lean accounting work evolved? (RQ4) What is the distribution of countries, authors, and citation numbers for lean accounting practices? (RQ5) What visual representations of relationships have emerged in studies related to lean accounting? (RQ6) What is the forward-looking outlook for relationships and concepts within lean accounting? (RQ7) What are the global collaborations and partnerships established in the context of lean accounting? (RQ8) What is the trajectory of studies in lean accounting, and what are the field's most relevant and essential concepts?

Objectives and Motivations for This Study

The effects of disruptive technologies emerging in the Industry 4.0 process on the accounting and auditing sector and across all industries are increasing.

At the same time, this situation forces the accounting and auditing industry to develop policies and strategies for digital transformation. Global and local concerns stemming from global warming and climate change compel accounting and auditing firms to develop and pursue sustainability and greener policies. However, the global epidemics encountered in recent years and the serious problems faced by supply chains have led businesses in almost every industry to reconsider and restructure their business models, operations, and activities.

In recent years, the accounting and auditing industry has adopted the concept of lean accounting to rebuild a more sustainable organizational structure, especially through the lean manufacturing approach, a critical and successful philosophy in production processes. The "Lean" approach, first introduced in the literature by Krafcik (1988) through consideration of the Toyota production system, was used by Womack et al. (1990) in the field of accounting and was later referred to as lean accounting. In this context, lean accounting creates an improved, high-quality system that produces accounting, auditing, and reporting services in response to customer demand and reduces the amount of waste as much as possible (Appelbaum et al., 2017) According to the lean accounting approach, accounting and auditing companies should base their strategy on the value provided to the customer by systematically eliminating waste within the organization and throughout the supply chain.

In this context, lean accounting is a fundamental change in how people in the organization think and evaluate. Accordingly, it changes the attitudes and behaviors of the personnel involved in accounting businesses. It has also been defined as providing the highest value to customers by eliminating waste through process design and human factors (Shah & Ward, 2003). The main goal of this approach is to combine less human labor, less inventory, less time to develop quality service, and less space to meet high customer demand, and to produce the highest-quality accounting, auditing, and reporting service as economically and efficiently as possible.

In this context, this review aims to investigate the extent to which the lean accounting approach has been conceptualized and adopted in the literature and related industry, while revealing the latest developments in the literature on this subject.

FINDINGS

The findings and conclusions of this study are based on the well-known international database, the Web of Science Core Collection (WoSCC). Advanced software tools such as R Studio and VOSviewer were used to process and visualize the data.

Descriptive Overview of the Dataset

As a result of comprehensive research and examination, 53 studies were conducted using data from the Web of Science database. Figure 2 shows a summary of the data received.

Figure 2. General information

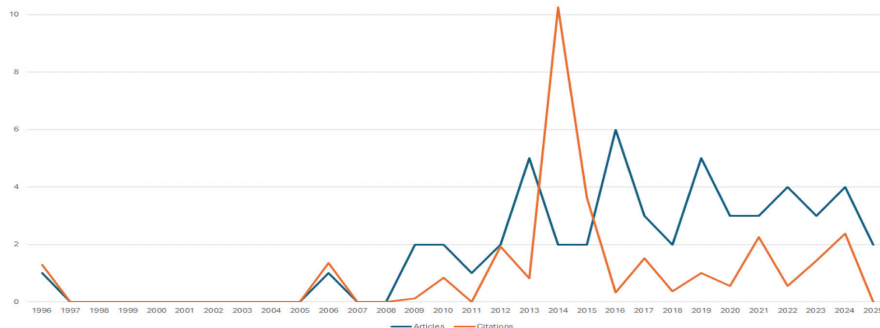


The literature covering publications between 1996 and 2025 included 53 studies across 47 sources; while 149 authors participated in these studies, only 8 were authored by a single author. However, there is a steady improvement in the relevant literature, with an annual increase rate of 2.42%. 18.82% of the studies in the relevant literature were conducted through international cooperation. In addition, there are, on average, 2.96 authors per study. In 53 studies, authors used 202 keywords; the total number of citations used in these studies was 1883, and the average number of citations per publication was 13.55.

Publication Dynamics and the Intellectual Three-Field Structure

The number of studies published on lean accounting from 1996 to 2025 fluctuated, with the highest in 2016. Despite this, the number of published studies increased by an average of 2.42% annually. However, when we look at citations to published studies, the average was 10.2 in 2014. Figure 3 shows the number of studies published each year and the average number of citations.

Figure 3. Number of articles and citations published by years (1996-2025)



These findings show considerable interest among research community members in lean accounting and a steady increase in scientific studies, though this trend fluctuates over time. However, an analysis of citation counts reveals that they do not show a proportional increase with the growing number of publications. Fluctuations in citation counts over the years illustrate the relatively limited scope of research on lean accounting. As a result, the availability of sources for citation in this area is particularly limited in specific periods. There is a disparity between the number of citations and the number of published studies, and an inverse correlation between citations and the number of studies published between 2014 and 2016. This trend, illustrated in Figure 2, underscores the scarcity of academic resources in this field, especially before 2008.

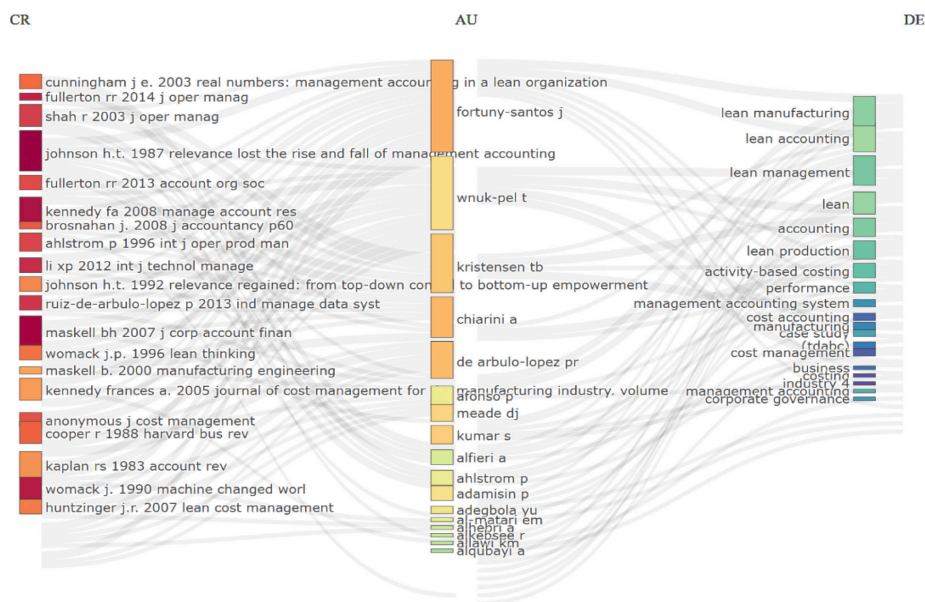
The Three-Field Plot chart presents an intellectual and thematic map of scientific studies in lean accounting. When the cited sources in the left column of the graph are examined, it is evident that the field of lean accounting is primarily grounded in the philosophy of lean production and critical approaches to management accounting. Works such as "Lean Thinking" and "The Machine That Changed the World" by Womack show that the theoretical framework in this field is production-based. However, Johnson's studies questioning the validity of management accounting are also among the essential contributions that form the theoretical basis of lean accounting. This situation reveals that lean accounting studies take a stance against the classical management accounting approach and develop in this context.

The authors in the middle column of the graph show the leading researchers in the field. Names such as Maskell, Kennedy, and Wnuk-Pel stand out with their frequent work in lean accounting. These authors appear to be interested in accounting- and governance-related themes, such as organizational transformation and empowerment (e.g., "bottom-up empowerment"). This shows that lean accounting is not only a technical cost-accounting approach but also a tool for transforming the managerial structure of organizations. Figure 4 exhibits the Three-Field Plot.

The keywords in the right column provide essential clues about the topics and thematic tendencies of the studies. Concepts such as "lean accounting," "lean manufacturing," and "activity-based costing" constitute the basic components of lean accounting. In contrast, concepts such as "management accounting systems," "performance," and "corporate governance" emphasize the managerial and strategic dimensions of this field. In addition, the inclusion of concepts such as "Industry 4.0," "case study," and "feedback" shows that lean accounting is also associated with current technological transformation processes. It reveals that researchers have begun to consider lean accounting in the context of digitalization and data-driven decision-making.

Among the general inferences drawn from the graph, it stands out that lean accounting studies are grounded in deep-rooted theoretical foundations and adopt an interdisciplinary approach. This field, at the intersection of production management, organizational behavior, and financial control systems, offers rich content for academic and applied research. However, the fact that contemporary issues such as digital transformation, sustainability, and ESG (environmental, social, and governance) are not yet adequately covered in the literature indicates a vital research gap that warrants further study in these areas. In addition, the themes that stand out in the studies are primarily drawn from Western sources, so practices in developing countries are insufficiently examined. It could offer a new perspective for future research.

Figure 4. The three-field plot



In conclusion, this Three-Field Plot chart effectively visualizes intellectual resources, leading researchers, and thematic research trends in lean accounting. Careful analysis of the relationships in the graph provides a valuable roadmap for understanding trends in the existing literature and identifying new research areas.

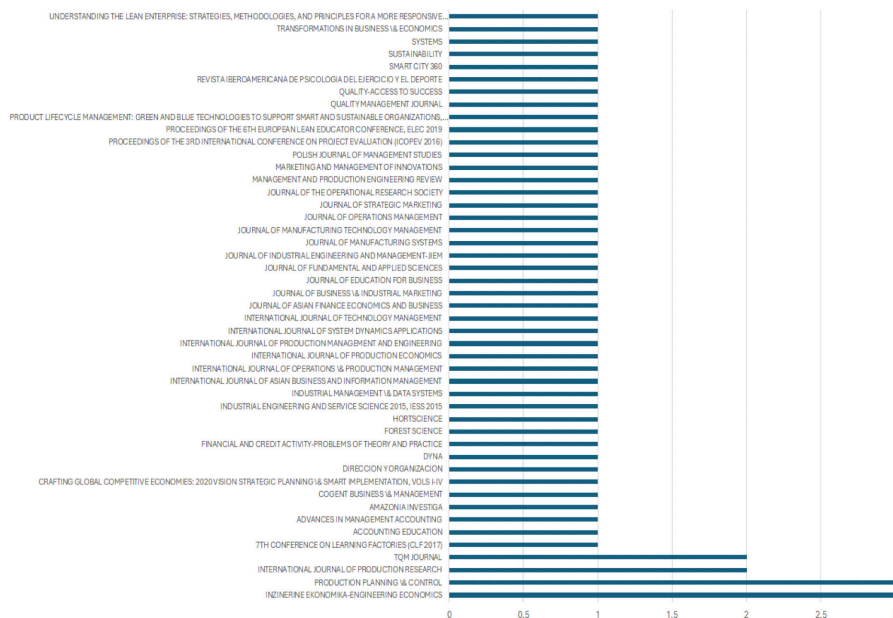
Citation Structure and Interdisciplinary Foundations

This section focuses on the journals that publish the most on and cite most often on lean accounting practices. In this context, Figure 5 illustrates the results for the most-published studies.

The "Most Relevant Sources" data presented in the chart shows the academic sources with the most publications in lean accounting. Among the journals with the most contributions, *Inzinerine Ekonomia–Engineering Economics* and *Production Planning & Control* stand out, each with three publications. This situation reveals that lean accounting is not limited to the accounting discipline but also has strong relationships with areas such as production management and engineering economics. Similarly, journals such as the *International Journal of Production Research* and the *TQM Journal* support the connection between lean accounting and total quality management and production processes.

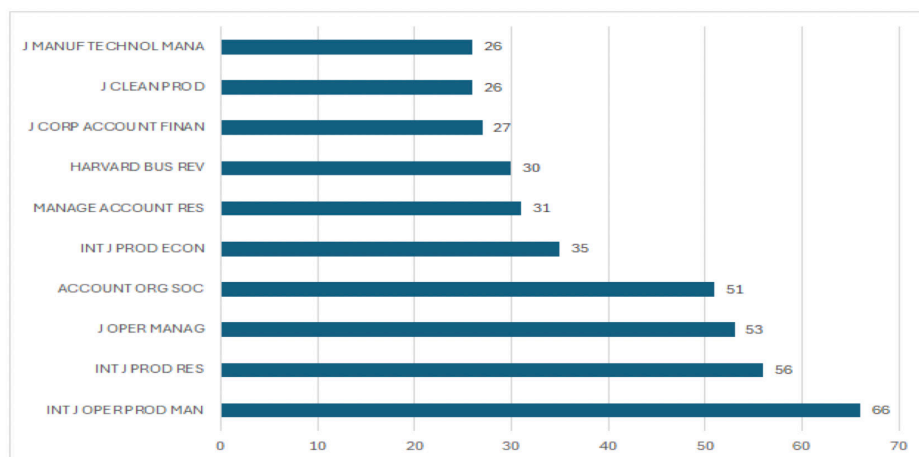
Sources such as Accounting Education, Advances in Management Accounting, and Cogent Business & Management, which are represented as a single publication in the chart, reflect a broader range of literature that addresses different aspects of the field. In particular, the existence of Accounting Education shows that the educational dimension of lean accounting is also being investigated. In addition, conference proceedings, such as those from the 7th Conference on Learning Factories (CLF 2017), indicate that the subject is also associated with industrial practices.

Figure 5. Sources with the most studies on lean accounting



These data show researchers which publications are leading the lean accounting literature and help them identify the sources they should focus on in their literature reviews. On the other hand, the fact that mainstream accounting journals are not included on the list shows that lean accounting remains concentrated in production- and management-oriented disciplines and is not fully integrated with accounting theory. This is an essential insight that the field needs to develop with more theoretical depth and accounting-based approaches. Next, the most cited sources were assessed by the researchers. Figure 6 illustrates the most cited sources.

Figure 6. The most cited sources



The "Most Local Cited Sources" chart shows the most frequently cited sources in the lean accounting literature. Understanding which disciplines the field draws on and its scientific roots, is important. Publications such as the International Journal of Operations & Production Management, the International Journal of Production Research, and the Journal of Operations Management, among the most-cited journals, show that lean accounting studies are grounded in production and operations management. It reveals that lean accounting originates from lean production systems and has a strong applied aspect.

The fact that journals focused on accounting theory, such as Accounting, Organizations and Society, and Management Accounting Research, are also included in the chart indicates that the studies have adopted a more theoretical approach over time. However, the limited number of mainstream accounting journals indicates that the lean accounting literature remains insufficiently integrated into the accounting field. This indicates a need for stronger integration between accounting theory and lean practices.

In addition, the fact that practice-oriented journals such as Harvard Business Review receive many citations indicates that lean accounting is practical for academic and managerial decision-making. However, including environmentally oriented journals, such as the Journal of Cleaner Production, on the list indicates that lean accounting is increasingly associated with the sustainability dimension. This suggests that lean accounting is positioned

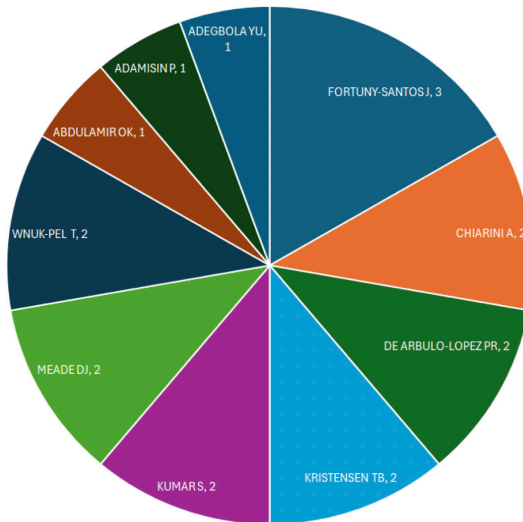
as a tool that can contribute to environmental and social sustainability strategies.

As a result, this graph reveals the interdisciplinary nature of lean accounting, its strong connection with production management, and its aspects that have not yet found a whole place in the accounting literature. Further integration of themes such as sustainability, digitalization, and organizational transformation will make new theoretical and practical contributions to the studies in the field.

The Most Relevant and Cited Authors

This section focuses on the authors who publish the most and are most cited in the field of lean accounting practices. In this context, Figure 7 illustrates the results regarding the most productive authors. Based on the visual data from the "Authors' Production over Time," "Most Local Cited Authors," and "Most Relevant Authors" graphs, several important insights can be drawn regarding the scholarly landscape of lean accounting literature.

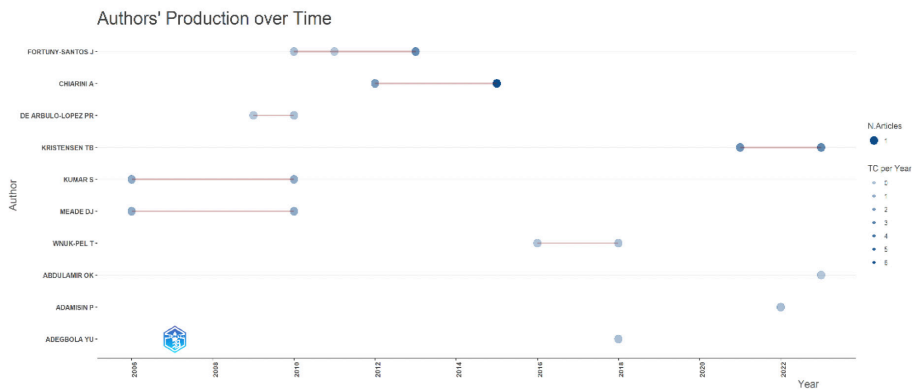
Figure 7. The most published authors



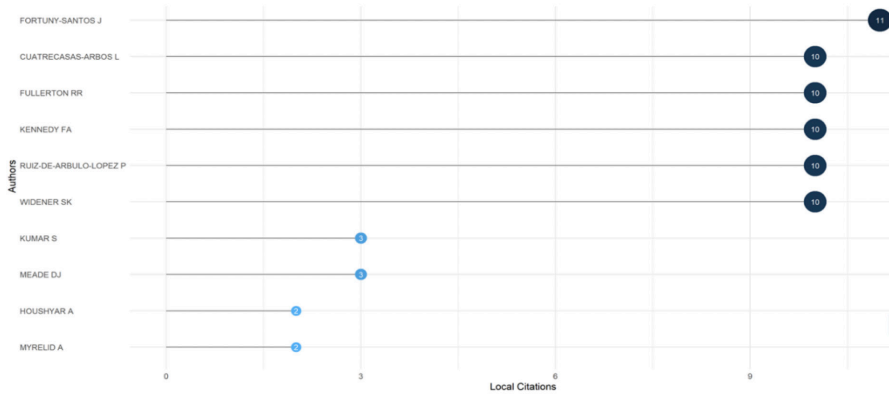
The "Authors' Production over Time" graph illustrates both the temporal distribution of publications by individual authors and their respective annual citation averages. It is evident that initial contributions to the literature began around 2005; however, scholarly output increased noticeably after 2010. Authors such as Fortuny-Santos J demonstrated consistent productivity

during the 2013–2015 period, accompanied by a relatively high average annual citation count, suggesting significant scholarly impact. Early contributors such as Kumar S and Meade DJ were active primarily between 2005 and 2010. Additionally, some authors have published only in a specific year or within a narrow timeframe. High citation averages for authors such as Fortuny-Santos J and Chiarini A indicate strong academic influence, even with moderate publication counts. Figure 8 illustrates the authors' production over time.

Figure 8. Authors' production over time



The “Most Local Cited Authors” graph presents the authors who have received the highest number of local citations, meaning citations from within the dataset of analyzed articles. Fortuny-Santos J ranks first with eleven local citations, underscoring his foundational role within this body of research. Other authors, such as Cuatrecasas-Arbos L, Fullerton RR, and Kennedy FA, also exhibit notable influence within the examined literature set. Despite their productivity, some authors, such as Kumar S and Meade DJ, received fewer local citations, which might suggest that their contributions, while relevant, are not as centrally positioned within this specific scholarly context.

Figure 9. The most cited authors

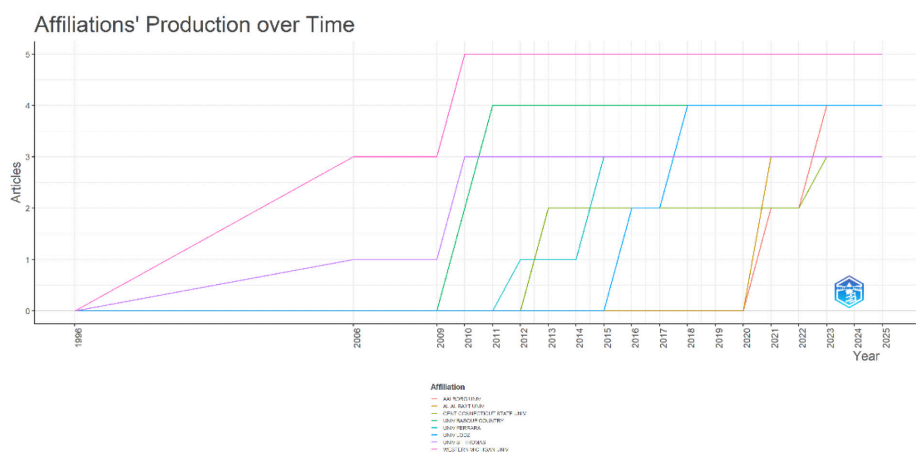
The “Most Relevant Authors” graph identifies the most frequent authors based on the number of documents they appear in. Fortuny-Santos J again emerges as the leading contributor in terms of publication count. He is followed by several authors, including Chiarini A, De Arbulo-Lopez PR, Kristensen TB, Kumar S, and Meade DJ, each with two documents. Although some authors contributed only one publication, their work may still offer valuable insights and make meaningful contributions to the field. The number of documents attributed to an author indicates sustained engagement with the topic and can serve as a heuristic for identifying key voices in the literature.

Taken together, these three visualizations provide a multidimensional view of authorship trends in lean accounting research. Fortuny-Santos J stands out as a central figure in both productivity and impact. The post-2010 increase in publication activity suggests a growing scholarly interest in the topic during the past decade. Authors with high local citation counts may be regarded as providing core theoretical or methodological contributions. In contrast, more recent contributors, even with fewer citations, may represent emerging perspectives or novel research avenues worthy of further exploration.

When the institutions of the authors and the institutions' publication productivity are examined, we face two important implications regarding the affiliations of the authors and the scientific output of these affiliations. The analysis of the two visualizations, “Affiliations' Production over Time” and “Most Relevant Affiliations,” offers significant insights into the evolution of scholarly contributions to the field of lean accounting. These graphs provide a deeper understanding of institutional involvement over time and the

relative importance of different academic affiliations within the field. Figure 10, illustrating affiliations' production over time, highlights the progression of various universities' research on lean accounting.

Figure 10. Affiliations' production over time



Western Michigan University emerges as a pioneer in this domain, contributing consistently since the early 2000s. It reached a peak of five publications by 2011 and has maintained this level, suggesting a sustained commitment to this research area. In contrast, institutions such as the University of Lodz, the University of the Basque Country, and Aalborg University have entered the field more recently, particularly after 2010, showing a rapid rise in scholarly output. These universities each produced four papers, signaling their growing influence on the topic. Other institutions, including Al Al Bayt University, Central Connecticut State University, the University of Ferrara, and the University of St. Thomas, have made moderate contributions with three publications each. Newer contributors, such as Linnaeus University and AGH University of Krakow, have added to the discourse with two publications, reflecting a broader but more recent engagement.

This chronological pattern reveals that scholarly interest in lean accounting increased significantly after 2010, with a noticeable diversification among contributing institutions. Earlier dominance by a few key universities has gradually given way to a more distributed landscape, which may reflect a gradual broadening of the field's institutional and geographic base rather

than full disciplinary maturity. The presence of multiple institutions contributing in the same timeframe suggests a collaborative or converging trend in academic focus, particularly during the post-2010 period.

The second graph, which ranks affiliations by total output, confirms the central role of Western Michigan University, the top contributor with five publications. Universities such as Lodz, the Basque Country, and Aalborg follow closely with four publications each, indicating their emerging leadership roles. Several others, including Al Al Bayt, Central Connecticut State, Ferrara, and St. Thomas, have also made meaningful contributions. The contributions are uneven: only a few institutions have maintained consistent output, while many others contribute sporadically or in smaller volumes.

Overall, the data reflect a field that is still evolving but has entered a stage of broader international academic engagement. The increase in recent contributions by diverse institutions suggests a growing recognition of lean accounting's relevance across different regions and academic systems. This diversity also enhances the potential for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaborations, which could enrich the theoretical and practical development of lean accounting.

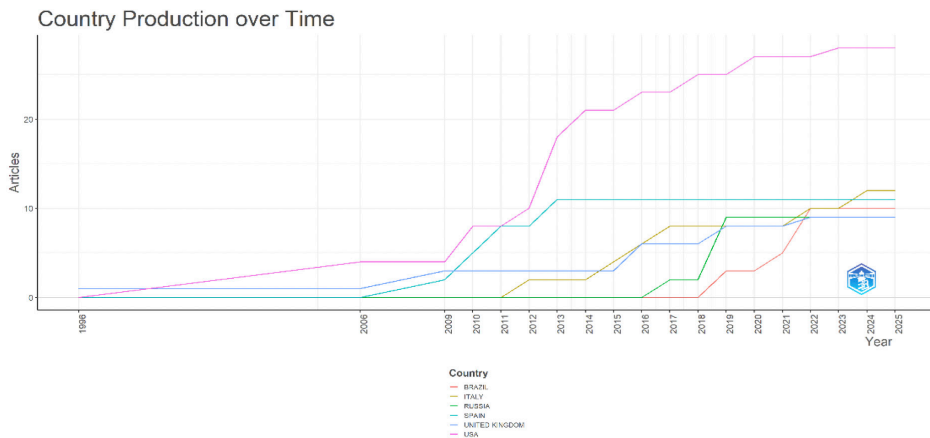
These patterns provide strategic implications for researchers seeking to deepen their involvement in this field. Collaborating with institutions that have demonstrated sustained contributions, such as Western Michigan University, or engaging with emerging players like Aalborg or Lodz, could enhance research impact and visibility. Furthermore, the expansion of the field across various countries presents opportunities to explore region-specific applications and variations of lean accounting practices.

The timeline and contribution patterns suggest that scholarly engagement with lean accounting has broadened over time, although the overall output volume remains modest. While a few North American institutions dominated early work, the recent influx of research from European and Middle Eastern universities indicates a shift toward global discourse. Researchers entering the field today can build upon this foundation by contributing new perspectives, methodologies, and applications, particularly through international collaboration and the exploration of under-researched contexts.

The Most Influential Countries in Lean Accounting

The bibliometric analysis of scientific output on lean accounting reveals significant geographical patterns and temporal trends that offer valuable insights into the evolution and global distribution of research activity in this domain. One of the most noticeable findings concerns the United States, which appears to be the primary contributor to the literature, having consistently produced scholarly work on lean accounting since the mid-1990s. The scientific output from the U.S. shows a steady increase over time, indicating its leadership and sustained interest in the field. In contrast, countries such as the United Kingdom and Spain entered the research landscape somewhat later but have demonstrated increasing engagement since the 2010s. Countries like Brazil, Italy, and Russia have also shown a gradual rise in publication numbers, particularly in the last decade, reflecting growing academic attention in emerging economies. These temporal dynamics are illustrated in Figure 11, which displays the yearly publication trends by country from 1995 to 2025.

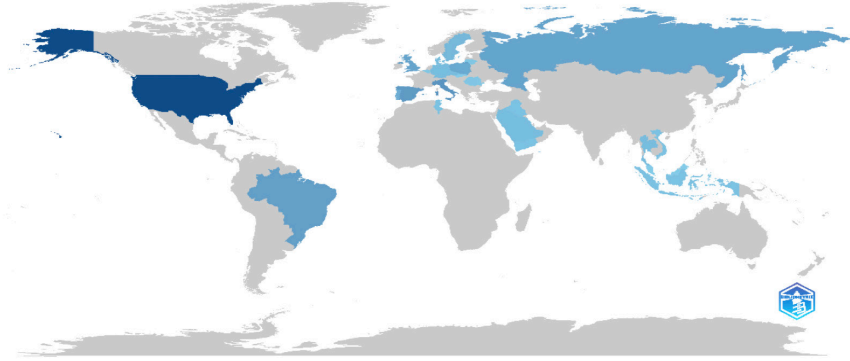
Figure 11. Country production over time



In light of this historical development, a global perspective on the geographic distribution of lean accounting research offers additional insights.

Figure 12. Country scientific production map

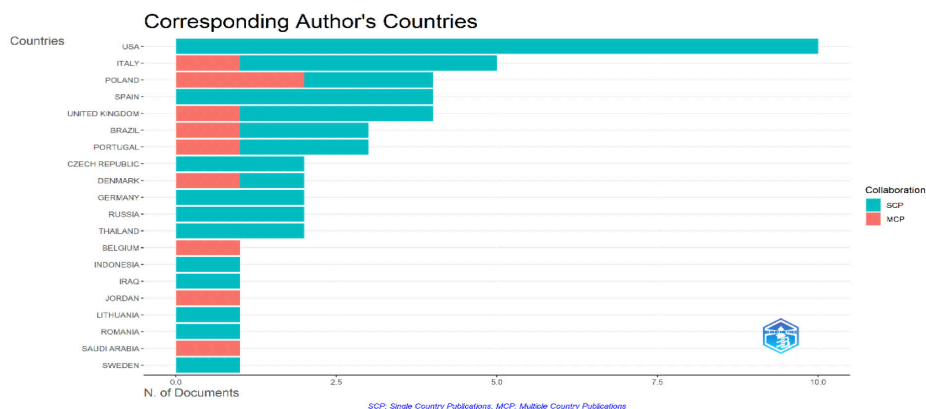
Country Scientific Production



The world map of scientific production highlights that, aside from the dominant output from the United States, European nations such as Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Poland also demonstrate notable contributions. Meanwhile, countries in Southeast Asia (such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam) and the Middle East (notably Saudi Arabia and Jordan) are emerging as new centers of academic activity in this area. The varying intensity of contributions, represented through color gradations, helps visualize the global spread and relative output levels across regions. Figure 11 depicts this scientific density across countries, emphasizing both established and emerging research hubs.

The patterns of authorship and international collaboration further enrich the understanding of global research dynamics. An analysis of corresponding authors' countries reveals that the United States, Italy, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom have the highest number of corresponding authors, signifying their central role in driving the discourse on lean accounting. Interestingly, the U.S. demonstrates a strong tendency for single-country publications (SCP), underscoring a robust domestic research base. In contrast, European countries such as Italy, the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Denmark exhibit a higher rate of multi-country publications (MCP), indicating a more collaborative and international approach to research. Additionally, the participation of countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Iraq, and Jordan highlights the growing involvement of previously underrepresented regions. These authorship and collaboration trends are clearly outlined in Figure 13, which categorizes each country's publication types by the corresponding authors' affiliation.

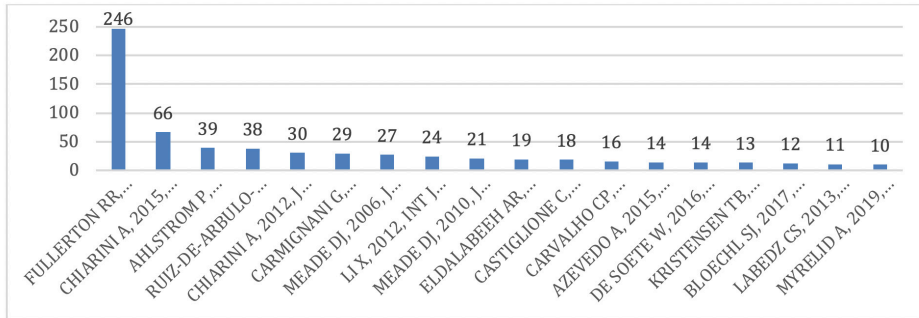
Figure 13. Corresponding author's countries



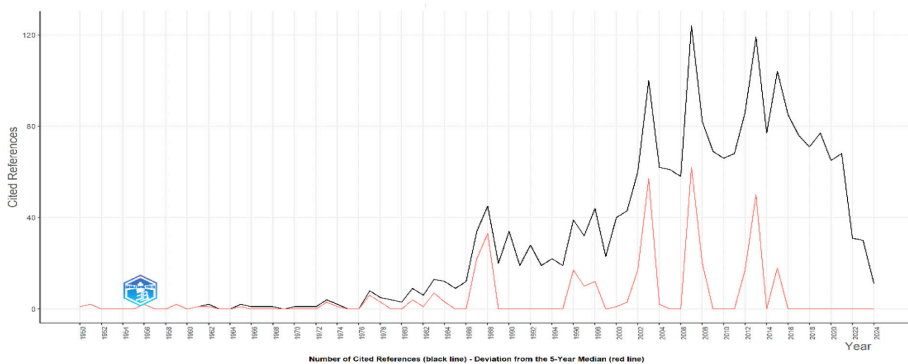
Within the limits of what bibliometric evidence can support, these findings suggest several implications for scholars interested in lean accounting. The United States' leadership underscores the importance of engaging with its academic institutions and outputs. European countries' openness to international collaboration presents an opportunity for joint research initiatives, particularly for emerging researchers. Moreover, the growing involvement of developing countries in lean accounting scholarships suggests a fertile ground for regional research networks and capacity-building efforts. Understanding these dynamics will support more inclusive and globally connected research agendas in the future.

The Most Cited Documents and References

The references cited by these studies, which are the most cited in the field of lean accounting and available in the literature, were also examined. In this context, the study by Fullerton et al. (2014), which examined the effects of lean accounting on businesses adopting a lean production philosophy, received 246 citations. This is followed by a study by Chiarini & Vagnoni (2015), which has 66 citations. These are followed by Åhlström & Karlsson (1996) with 39 citations and Ruiz-De-Arbulo-Lopez et al. (2013) with 38 citations, while Chia (30 citations) ranks below 30.

Figure 14. The most cited documents

The most-cited reference in management-oriented accounting studies was the study of management accounting by Thomas Johnson and Kaplan (1987). This study received 15 citations, followed by Maskell & Kennedy (2007) with 1, and Kennedy & Widener (2008) with 12. Womack et al. (1990) received 11 citations, followed by Fullerton et al. (2014) and Ruiz-De-Arbulo-Lopez et al. (each with 10 citations. Figure 15 shows the distribution of the most cited and least cited studies by year.

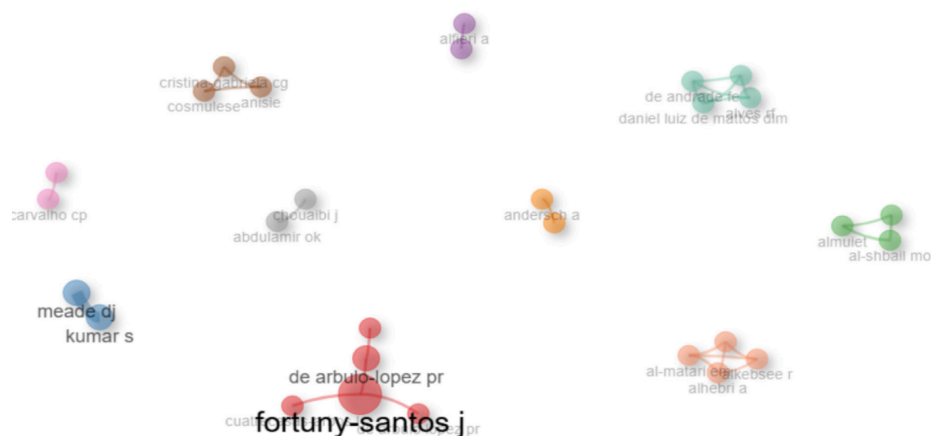
Figure 15. Reference spectroscopy

The General Trends and Networks

This bibliometric study investigates the development and current state of the lean accounting field by analyzing three distinct network visualizations: author collaboration, co-citation patterns, and keyword co-occurrence. These analytical tools collectively provide insight into who collaborates in this research area, which publications form its intellectual foundation, and what core themes and concepts define the field.

The author collaboration network (Figure 16) illustrates the structure of scientific cooperation among researchers in lean accounting. The graph displays multiple small, disconnected clusters rather than a single cohesive research community, indicating that the field remains somewhat fragmented. The most prominent and central figure in this network is Fortuny-Santos J., who collaborates extensively with authors such as De Arbulo-Lopez PR, Cuatrecasas AR, and Lario-Ballesteros M. This central positioning suggests that Fortuny-Santos plays a pivotal role in advancing the field through a productive research group. Meanwhile, other dyadic or triadic collaborations—such as Meade DJ and Kumar S, or Al-Matari M., Elkebsee R., and Alhebri A.—highlight regional research efforts that are significant but less integrated into the broader scholarly conversation. These patterns suggest an opportunity for greater international and interdisciplinary collaboration to enrich the field.

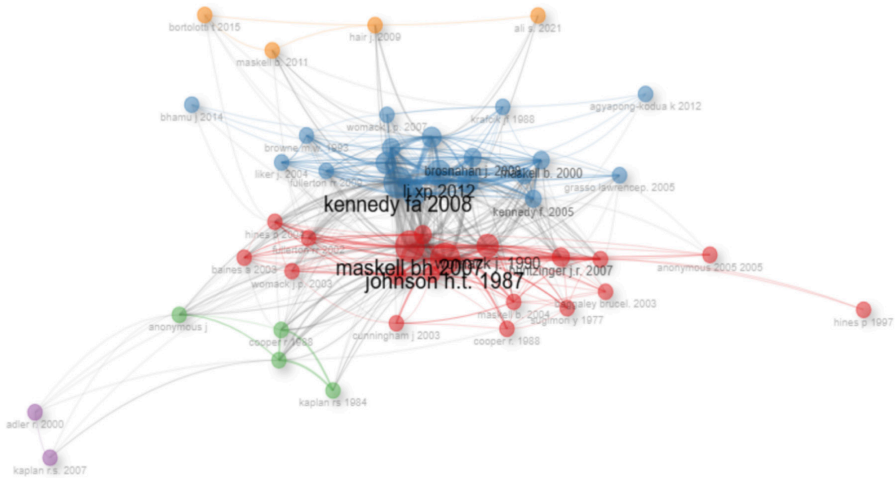
Figure 16. The author collaboration network



The co-citation network (Figure 17) maps the intellectual structure of lean accounting by showing how frequently key authors are cited together in the literature. This network is more densely interconnected than the collaboration network, indicating a strong, shared foundational knowledge base. Central figures such as Johnson H.T. (1987), Maskell B.H. (2000, 2004), Kennedy F.A. (2005, 2008), and Li X.P. (2012) are among the most co-cited authors. Their works serve as cornerstones for later research and are often referenced together, reflecting their shared influence on shaping theoretical and practical approaches to lean accounting. The clustering of these authors suggests thematic subfields within lean accounting, such as

performance measurement, lean implementation frameworks, and strategic cost management. The visual density and interconnectedness suggest that the field rests on a relatively consolidated set of foundational references, even though the overall body of work remains limited in size.

Figure 17. The co-citation network



The keyword co-occurrence network (Figure 18) provides a conceptual overview of the most common topics and thematic concerns in lean accounting research. The term impact appears as the largest and most central node, underscoring the field's primary interest in assessing the effects of lean accounting on organizations. Terms such as performance, management, and systems are also prominently featured, highlighting a focus on organizational efficiency, decision-making processes, and overall business performance. In addition, keywords such as design and implementation suggest that many studies examine how lean accounting systems are structured and applied in practice. The presence of terms such as fit, models, and bundles indicates a concern for theoretical alignment and contextual appropriateness, suggesting ongoing efforts to adapt lean accounting practices to different organizational settings. This thematic mapping reveals that the field is both practically oriented and theoretically grounded, balancing empirical evaluation and conceptual development.

Figure 18. The keyword co-occurrence network



Read together, the three-field plot (Figure 4) and the keyword co-occurrence network (Figure 18) also permit a cautious reading of the field's thematic evolution. The earliest intellectual anchors are rooted in lean production and value-stream costing, from which the discourse has gradually extended to management control and performance measurement concerns, as reflected in the prominence of terms such as performance, management, and systems. More recent but still peripheral nodes, associated with Industry 4.0, digitalization, and sustainability, signal an emerging yet not consolidated thematic frontier. This trajectory suggests that lean accounting is gradually moving from a narrowly cost-oriented conception toward a broader managerial and, increasingly, technological and environmental framing; the latter themes, however, remain thinly represented in the current corpus and therefore constitute the most salient research frontier of the field.

In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis reveals several important characteristics of the lean accounting research landscape. First, while there is a clear presence of influential authors and core theoretical works, collaboration between research groups remains limited, which may constrain the development of a more integrated research community. Second, the field is built on a strong foundation of well-cited literature, indicating theoretical maturity and coherence. Finally, the thematic focus on impact, performance, and implementation suggests that lean accounting continues to evolve in response to both academic inquiry and practical organizational challenges. To further advance the field, future research may benefit from fostering greater international collaboration, exploring emerging topics such as digital transformation in lean systems, and bridging gaps between theory and practice.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This study offers a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the lean accounting literature, examining the evolution, scope, and dynamics of scholarly contributions over nearly three decades. The findings shed light on various aspects of the academic landscape, including the most influential authors, institutions, countries, documents, and intellectual structures that define this field. Through visual and quantitative data drawn from co-authorship networks, citation analyses, and keyword co-occurrence maps, a detailed understanding of the lean accounting research domain has been developed.

One of the most prominent insights emerging from this study is the centrality of specific authors, most notably Fortuny-Santos J, whose work stands out for both productivity and scholarly impact. His contributions, particularly between 2013 and 2015, received numerous local citations, indicating their foundational role within the lean accounting corpus. Other notable figures, such as Chiarini A, Cuatrecasas-Arbo L, and Kennedy FA, also play significant roles in shaping the field through impactful publications and consistent scholarly engagement. While early contributors like Kumar S and Meade DJ were active primarily in the formative years of lean accounting literature, their influence appears to have waned in recent years, suggesting a generational shift in scholarly leadership.

Institutionally, Western Michigan University emerged as the most consistent and productive contributor, maintaining its output over an extended period and underscoring its long-standing commitment to the field. In contrast, universities such as the University of Lodz, the University of the Basque Country, and Aalborg University represent newer but rapidly growing centers of academic activity. This shift reflects a broader diversification of institutional involvement post-2010, indicating the field's evolution from a niche area into a more internationally recognized domain of inquiry. These developments suggest a growing recognition of lean accounting's relevance and applicability across various academic and geographic contexts.

Geographically, the United States has played a dominant role in the global lean accounting literature, producing the highest volume of scholarly work and demonstrating sustained interest in the topic since the mid-1990s. However, the past decade has seen growing engagement from European and emerging economies, including Italy, Spain, Brazil, and Poland. Notably, the expansion

into Southeast Asia and the Middle East—represented by countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan—signals the globalization of lean accounting research and the broader internationalization of scholarly discourse. These trends are further validated by patterns of authorship and collaboration, with the United States leading in single-country publications, while European nations are more active in international, multi-country research initiatives.

Several highly cited documents anchor the intellectual structure of lean accounting. Seminal works such as Fullerton et al. (2014), Chiarini & Vagnoni (2015), and foundational texts by Johnson & Kaplan (1987) and Maskell & Kennedy (2007) are widely referenced and form the theoretical bedrock of the field. These documents emphasize themes such as the impact of lean practices on organizational performance, the strategic role of management accounting, and the implementation of lean accounting frameworks. Their recurring citation in more recent studies underscores their enduring relevance and influence.

The network analyses further highlight the field's structure and maturity. The co-citation network reveals a dense, interconnected intellectual foundation, suggesting a shared core of theoretical and empirical references. Meanwhile, the author collaboration network is more fragmented, characterized by small, loosely connected clusters rather than an integrated research community. This fragmentation indicates an opportunity for increased collaboration across regions and disciplines. The keyword co-occurrence network shows that the field is conceptually cohesive, with central themes such as impact, performance, systems, implementation, and management forming the core of the discourse. These themes reflect the dual emphasis on empirical evaluation and theoretical development in lean accounting research.

The principal original contribution of this study is to provide a dedicated and integrated bibliometric mapping of the lean accounting domain in isolation, rather than as a sub-theme of the broader lean-manufacturing or management-accounting literatures, covering the full 1996–2025 period and combining performance analysis with science mapping within a single reproducible workflow. Building on this, the study contributes to the academic literature and to practice in several further ways. First, it systematically maps the landscape of lean accounting, offering scholars a clear picture of key contributors, influential institutions, and thematic

directions. For practitioners and policymakers, the findings provide insight into how lean accounting is studied, which methodologies are most referenced, and which geographic and institutional hubs are leading the conversation. This information can guide strategic decisions in academic partnerships, research funding, and curriculum development in accounting and operations management programs.

Despite its comprehensive scope, this study is not without limitations. The analysis is based solely on the Web of Science database, which, while extensive, does not capture all relevant publications, particularly those in regional journals or conference proceedings not indexed in the database. Additionally, citation counts may favor older publications due to their longer exposure time, potentially underrepresenting the influence of more recent but impactful studies. Furthermore, while powerful, bibliometric techniques cannot fully capture qualitative dimensions such as theoretical novelty or practical relevance.

Looking ahead, several promising directions for future research emerge from this study. First, greater emphasis should be placed on international and interdisciplinary collaborations, which could help bridge the fragmented author network and enrich the field with diverse perspectives. Second, emerging themes such as digital transformation, sustainability accounting, and the integration of Industry 4.0 technologies into lean accounting systems represent fertile ground for new inquiry. Third, region-specific studies, especially in underrepresented regions such as Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, could provide valuable insights into the applicability and adaptation of lean accounting principles across diverse institutional and economic environments. Finally, future studies could incorporate mixed-method approaches, combining bibliometric data with qualitative content analysis to provide a more nuanced understanding of the evolving lean accounting discourse.

A Structured Research Agenda for Lean Accounting

To translate the preceding analysis into an actionable agenda, Table 1 consolidates the principal research gaps identified in this review, links each gap to the specific bibliometric evidence that motivates it, and sets out a corresponding direction for future research. The agenda is intended to help researchers and practitioners prioritize themes that are currently underdeveloped in the lean accounting literature.

Table 1. A structured research agenda derived from the bibliometric findings

Research gap	Grounding in the present findings	Proposed future direction
Under-representation of digital transformation and Industry 4.0	Related keywords appear only as small, peripheral nodes in the keyword co-occurrence and three-field maps.	Examine how lean accounting interacts with ERP systems, data analytics, and Industry 4.0 technologies through empirical and case-based designs.
Limited integration of sustainability and ESG concerns	Sustainability-oriented terms and outlets are marginal in the analyzed corpus.	Investigate the coupling of lean accounting with environmental and social performance measurement, as well as green cost management.
Fragmented author collaboration	The co-authorship network is composed of small, loosely connected clusters rather than an integrated community.	Encourage cross-institutional and international research consortia to consolidate the field.
Weak integration with mainstream accounting theory	Mainstream accounting journals are largely absent from the most productive and most cited sources.	Develop theoretically grounded studies that connect lean accounting to established management-control and accounting frameworks.
Geographic concentration in a few Western contexts	The United States and a small set of European countries dominate output.	Conduct context-specific studies in underrepresented regions, including Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Türkiye.
Predominantly descriptive and single-case evidence-based	The corpus relies heavily on conceptual and single-case contributions.	Adopt mixed-method and larger-sample designs that combine bibliometric evidence with qualitative and quantitative validation.

In conclusion, this bibliometric study indicates that lean accounting has developed into an internationally distributed but still comparatively small and consolidating field of inquiry. A strong foundational literature, emerging international contributors, and a core set of practical and theoretical concerns characterize it. By illuminating the structural, geographic, and thematic contours of this research area, the study not only advances academic understanding but also offers a strategic roadmap for future exploration and collaboration. Through continued scholarly engagement and cross-border partnerships, lean accounting research can further evolve to meet the challenges and opportunities of modern organizational management.

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