

# FOREIGN POLICY IN THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE

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This report is the summarized  
version of the main report.

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# FOREIGN POLICY IN THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE

## ABSTRACT

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The “Foreign Policy in the Turkey of the Future,” beyond providing a foreign policy vision for the future, intends to lay out a comprehensive, coherent, and practical framework of analysis for Turkish foreign policy (TFP). Firstly, report touches upon the critical junctures of basic foreign policy in the last century and evaluates Turkey’s position in the world while providing a general outlook on TFP. Secondly, it analyzes TFP’s relations with global and regional actors during the AK Party era. Thirdly, report is devoted to examining the principal parameters that will influence foreign policy in Turkey’s future. The final section of the report, has been prepared with the aims of determining the weaknesses in Turkish foreign policy and bringing principle-advocating suggestions regarding visions for both institutions and foreign policy as a result of the topics addressed in previous parts.

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## İLKE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE PROJECT

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## ABOUT THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE PROJECT

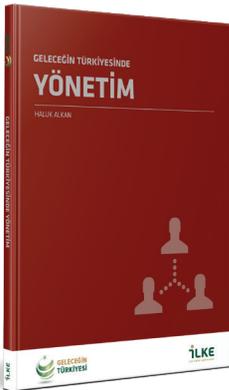


Having embraced the necessity of observing and understanding society, of producing analyses that acknowledge social needs, and of conducting studies oriented to social problems since the day of its inception, the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education believes in the importance of conducting studies relevant to humanity as a whole rather than any one particular group of people.

The current state of the deterioration in our intellectual productivity, inefficiency in realizing current potentials, and the expansion of problems building up in all spheres of life, riddled with many a vicious cycle, have reaffirmed the İLKE Foundation's conviction in studies oriented to field-research and problem-solving. To this end, we prepare reports by experts in their fields and provide them to the public in the fields of Education, Higher Education, Administration, Economics, Foreign Policy, Social Policy, Cultural Policy, and Civil Society.



As the İLKE Foundation, we aim to contribute to Turkey's vision for the future by adding the İLKE reports to our studies that promote principles and provide solutions, studies that check the world's pulse while simultaneously being informed by local dynamics. Within the purview of the Turkey of the Future project, we aim to provide guidance to policy-makers by developing coherent, functional, and sustainable strategy and policy recommendations based on data and knowledge in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres.



## Foreword

As the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education, we believe that NGOs and the studies conducted therein are critical for policy-makers, practitioners, and the society. Accordingly, we endeavor to shape our studies so to function as a bridge between decision-makers and society. It is evident that society's level of prosperity will rise when the structures and functions of civilian organizations are better understood and constructed.

As the İLKE Foundation, we attach importance to being an active part of the construction of a strong society with institutions such as İLEM, YEKDER, and İGiAD that are part of our organization and are conducting compelling and leading studies in their fields. In this, we endeavor to keep our finger on the pulse of the civilian sphere while proceeding with the understanding that a deeper comprehension of national issues is necessary. We strive to construct all our studies in a perspective that addresses, first of all, our country and the entire world, for the wind of globalization has left no door unopened and has connected even the most disjointed of things. With this care and understanding, we prepare policy notes and research reports comprising proposals for practical solutions in a variety of fields and present them to the public. While we believe in the importance of the accumulated knowledge of the past, we also believe that the day's circumstances must be analyzed properly as to equip ourselves with a strong vision of the future.

The İLKE Foundation has espoused the mission of preparing our country for the future, under the Turkey of the Future Project, as it has done in other studies. With the Turkey of the Future Project, we study Turkey's fundamental issues on a real basis and by observing the integrity of time and space. Our main effort has consisted of consistently challenging the difficulties encountered when handling the issues comprising the project, treating the problems holistically, and suggesting solutions not only concerning our country but also worldwide. We believe that understanding and communicating problems is an important obligation, for solutions will become possible only when we meet problems head on and understand them holistically. Having said that, we also appreciate the importance of consulting our constructs, methods, and outputs with experts being aware that studies pertaining to the future are open to speculation.

We initiated the "Turkey of the Future Project" in 2018 with this objective. With this project, we want to draw attention to the increasing importance of speaking about the future in an era of constant change. In the purview of the project, we develop medium-term vision proposals for Turkey through research reports in the fields of primary and higher education, economy, governance, foreign policy, social policy, cultural policy, and civil society. In the other part of the project, we provide specific diagnoses and policy suggestions related to the aforementioned fields and their subfields through Policy Notes and Analysis Reports.

We hope that the studies conducted in the purview of the Turkey of the Future Project will illuminate our road ahead in the relevant fields and contribute to the creation of a more sustainable order.

Lütfi Sunar

Chairman of the İLKE Foundation  
Coordinator of the Turkey of the Future Project

## **Introduction**

The first section shows the conditions upon which the new millennium has been entered, as well as providing a general perspective on TFP. To this end, it touches upon the critical junctures of foreign policy in the last century and assesses Turkey's position in the world. The second section focuses on Turkey's relations with global and regional actors while examining the challenges TFP faces. However, most of the issues faced by Turkey emanate from the country's both acute and chronic problems rather than the nature of the international system or regional developments. Cyprus, the 1915 Incidents and Turkish-Armenian disagreements, the PKK, and economic difficulties are such problems. The third section is devoted to the principal parameters that will affect foreign

policy in Turkey's future. Two world wars, a Cold War, and many revolutions witnessed in the 1900s have signaled a new age of extremes as if it wants to carry these into the new millennium. Even though some have declared the end of history with the US rising as a hegemon out of the Cold War, this has not quite occurred, as the September 11 attacks in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century brought about an impact that could perhaps be felt throughout the rest of the century. Regional and global developments affecting TFP in the 2000s did not end with these, as the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq brought about the Memorandum of March 1. The economic crisis of 2008, the Arab uprisings, the Syrian crisis, and the following immigration problem are other important topics that have been influential in TFP.

### *Principal Parameters in Foreign Policy Making*

When speaking of Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP), different techniques based on intensive studies, technological assistance, and common reason must be utilized. This is a prerequisite of the region in which Turkey is located. Some parameters are found in the report on Foreign Policy in the Turkey of the Future to help better understand.

The most important eight of these are the following:

1. Foreign policy is a field that necessitates expertise and experience.
2. Foreign policy requires a multilayered and broad perspective.
3. Foreign policy is an art that requires patience, gentleness, and attention.
4. In foreign policy, "equal sovereignty" is an abstract principle.
5. When making foreign policy, "internal-external affairs" does not constitute a sharp and concrete distinction in terms of its effects.
6. In foreign policy evaluations, the "level of analysis" is determinant.
7. Foreign policy decision-making requires haste and team effort.
8. Foreign policy making must be conducted on realpolitik grounds with a foundation of values. In foreign policy analysis, assumptions are as important as parameters.

### *Principal Assumptions Regarding Turkish Foreign Policy*

1. The assumptions regarding TFP axiomatic to the report can be listed as follows:
2. A serious continuity of foreign policy is found between the early Republican and late Ottoman eras.
3. Turkey is a mid-sized regional power attempting to become a global power.
4. Both the extraneous and essential changes in post-Cold War Turkey have made Turkey's narrative shift from being a "bridge country" ("köprü ülke") to a "central country" ("merkez ülke") possible.
5. Elements of soft power with a variety of public diplomacy instruments and the issue of the multiplication of actors due to NGOs has increased in importance in TFP as a necessity of a proactive and multifaceted foreign policy.
6. Turkey possesses better determinacy for fulfilling the necessities of being a regional power.

### **The Changing Structure of the International System in the 2000s and Turkey**

The September 11 attacks following the Gulf War and the end of the Cold War have been the most important turning points in TFP's shift from a passive to active identity in foreign policy. Thus, Turkey has undertaken an effective role in its regional involvements while becoming the United States' "strategic partner." Turkey has shaped its foreign policy according to the US in its post-September

Table 1. Results of the Memorandums Brought to the TBMM After September 11

Memorandum Date	Valid Votes	Aye Votes	Nay Votes	Abstaining Votes	Result
1 March 2003	533	264	250	19	Rejected
20 March 2003	535	332	202	1	Accepted

11 invasion of Afghanistan—just like it has done so in several previous periods. By becoming the United States’ friend and trusted ally with the invasion of Afghanistan, Turkey lost these epithets when the Memorandum of March 1 was rejected by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM). After harsh denunciations from the US and fears of a new economic crisis, the memorandum was brought back to the Parliament 19 days later and accepted.

Another development that has influenced TFP in the new millennium was the 2008 global economic crisis. Even though cons-

trued as a crisis that “tangentially passed” the economy, Turkey was considerably affected, as demonstrated in its economy-focused foreign policy at the time. On other hand, the Arab Uprisings, beginning in 2010 and the Syrian crisis that followed along with the immigration issue are related to each other.

In our vision for the future headlines, the developments that have intimately affected Turkey correspond to the following titles: “timely reaction of foreign policy to regional and global problems,” “foreign policy that adapts past experiences to current circum-



Figure 1. Turkey's Growth Rates (%) (2000-2018)

tances,” “producing realistic but effective foreign policy for regional issues,” and “foreign policy ensuring a coherence of discourse-practice-outcome.” Even though Turkey has attempted to be effective in the region since the inception of the Arab Uprisings, it has been passive relative to other actors in this regard. Furthermore, Turkey has not been able to quickly respond to the expansion of the Arab Uprisings into Syria and its possible consequences. As can be seen, the last eight years of the immigration problem is a result of the lack of planning in foreign policy and prospective risk optimization.

***Turkey’s Diplomacy at the UNSC and the Search for an Opening in the New System of Multiple Actors***

One of Turkey’s rather salient efforts in the new millennium has been its constant at-

tempts to question global injustices. The figure below, which depicts the vetoes by the UNSC’s permanent members, demonstrates the significance of the topic. In practice, such an initiative has corresponded to the search for reforms at the UN and the slogan, “The world is bigger than five.” This issue should not be altered or in fact should be better developed in the foreign policy of the Turkey of the future and has been included in our vision of the future headlines as “more effectively maintaining global justice diplomacy.” On the other hand, Turkey’s proactive foreign policy has not been limited to a discourse of reform at the UN but has also crystallized with its UN, Africa, and Latin America initiatives.

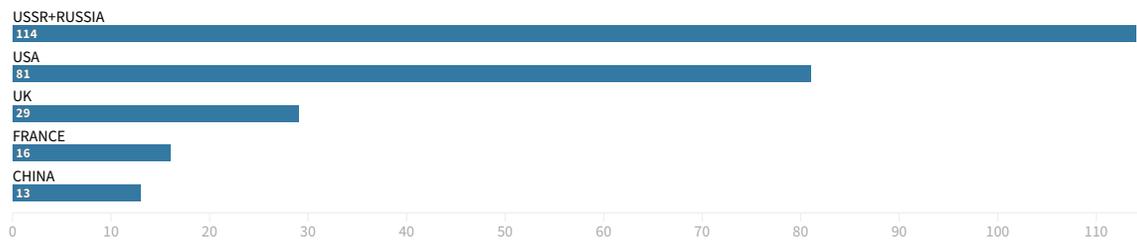


Figure 2. Veto numbers by permanent members at the Security Council (1946-2019).

### *The Changing and Differentiating Factors in Turkish Foreign Policy*

As the world has encountered an order of multiple actors whose monopoly of the nation-state has been disrupted by globalization, the process of foreign policy making for countries has also transformed. Turkey has signaled a differentiating foreign policy. In this context, institutions such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), Turkish Airlines (THY), the Turkey Maarif Foundation (TMV), the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), Anadolu Agency (AA), the Directorate for Religious Affairs (DİB), the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), and the Turkish Red Crescent have come to the fore.

In our vision statements, the maintenance of foreign policy with a variety of actors corresponds to “developing and increasing the sustainability of a foreign policy with multiple (f)actors.”

*Foreign Policy in the Turkey of the Future* will continue more effectively in light of the experiences and knowledge gained from these. One of our vision statements, “establishing, developing, and making the relationship among foreign policy-academia-civil society sustainable,” is precisely what this corresponds to. Along with this, a policy on raising quality that begins with the individual must be followed and integrated into the process of foreign policy making. This topic has taken its place among our vision statements as “cultivating better human resources while making and maintaining foreign policy.”

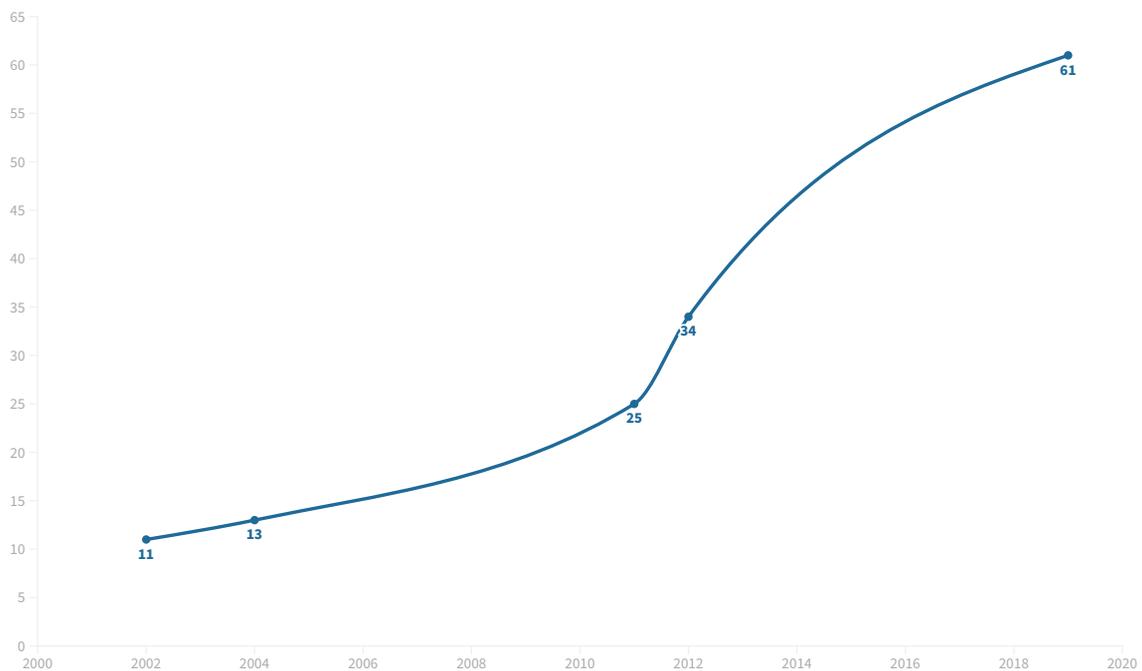


Figure 3. The Number of TİKA's Coordination Offices throughout the World

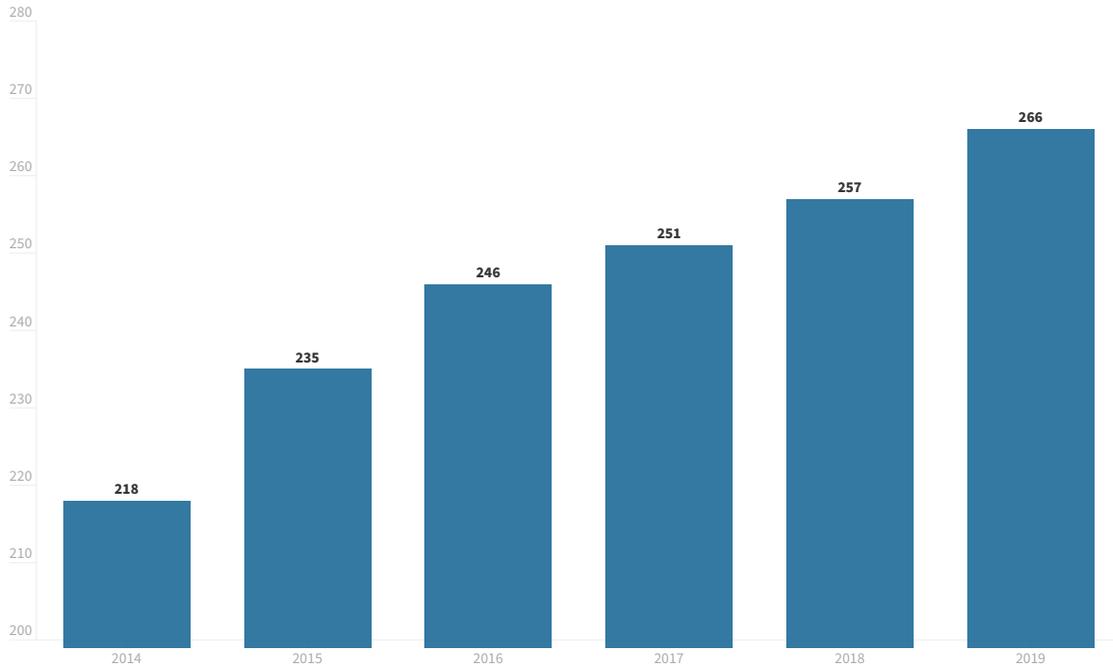


Figure 4. The Number of Turkish Airlines' Foreign Points of Flight According to Years (2008-2019)

### **A New Foreign Policy Vision for the Turkey of the Future**

The foreign policy perspective in the Turkey of the Future carries significance for achieving Turkey's maximum interest. To this end, a new foreign policy vision for the Turkey of the future has been provided in Part 4. This section aims at providing points and suggestions for better foreign policy making in particular. The AK Party, coming to power at a time when global politics were being redesigned after the September 11 attacks, has realized some sweeping transformations in foreign policy. With the new vision it has brought to Turkey's traditional foreign policy understanding, the AK Party governments have significantly increased Ankara's standing in global politics. Focused on

redefining and expanding Turkey's position in the international system, this new approach has provided Ankara with important gains and made Turkey's weight more impactful in the international system relative to previous eras. Furthermore, the increase in Turkey's representation abroad and its active use of various diplomacy channels has evidently strengthened Ankara's hand. Having attracted notice with its political vision, discourse, and strategy in the eyes of both Western and Islamic countries, the AK Party governments have not been able maintain the levels of success they had achieved in the first decade. A shift in the direction of events in the Arab world and the AK Party's deficiencies in its mission to democratize the region has resulted in structural crises. The sustainable and stable foreign policy the AK Party governments had suc-

cessfully practiced in the first decade later shifted to a fragile foreign policy process as a result of the crises experienced with global and regional powers. This has without a doubt reduced Turkey's flexibility in the international system and has brought along many justified questions regarding the direction of its foreign policy.

### ***Adaptation to Multi-Dimensional and Multi-Actor Foreign Policy Approach***

In addition to the fragility experienced in foreign policy, the shift to the Presidential Government System has increased the importance of inter-institutional coordination compared to the past. As changing global dynamics have directly addressed this, Ankara must urgently bring about a new understanding using a rational perspective of the future in which the past is properly analyzed and political and economic capacities are accurately gauged. Surely an understanding in harmony with political, economic, and societal realities and perceptive to the changing dynamics of global politics is essential. The constants of the new vision plan must particularly be directed toward strengthening the weak or damaged aspects of the post-2002 strategy rather than breaking with it. In this context, a primary topic in the new vision for foreign policy is greater focus on the multi-dimensional and multi-actor foreign policy approach. The reality is that the foreign policy strategies of the AK Party governments, in terms of both actors and dimensions, have changed Turkey's course of events. Thus, it would be pertinent that Ankara first organize its foreign policy paradigm according to the multiplication of

actors and dimensions in the international system in this new era.

### ***A Value-Centered Foreign Policy***

It cannot be denied that Turkey, with its emphatically normative foreign policy in the recent years, has breathed new life into global politics that has lacked a value-centered understanding. Due to criticizing the fundamentally conflictual world order upon a basis of ethical principles, a constant in Turkey's vision for the new era must be the *value-centered foreign policy* approach. The contribution that Ankara would make with a value-centered political understanding will open up an avenue for a different understanding of international relations globally.

### ***The Rationalization of the Balance of Soft Power/Hard Power***

The soft power strategy Turkey has made use of in its post-2002 ascension in world politics has had a large impact on this. Achieving important involvements in other regions by going beyond traditional diplomacy, particularly through institutions such as the TİKA, YTB, YEE, and TMV, Turkey must also make structural decisions regarding hard power while maintaining its strategy of soft power. Particularly when considering the security challenges facing the country, the unsustainability of a foreign policy understanding solely based on soft power is as clear as day. In this context, the rationalization of the balance of soft power/hard power will have a significant revitalizing effect on Ankara's vision of the future. With the achievement of 100% au-

turkey in a national defense industry, Turkey has the opportunity to become more resolute vis-à-vis global powers. In the years to come, this will rehabilitate the processes of foreign policy making and practice.

### *Humanitarian and Developmental Diplomacy Approach*

In the recent years, Turkey has been globally distinguished as the “most generous nation” for its humanitarian diplomacy and development aids. Especially acclaimed for aiding countries worldwide without discrimination, Turkey centering its humanitarian and developmental diplomacy understanding in its foreign policy vision is a principal factor that will ease Ankara’s initiatives in the future. For this reason, developmental aids or development-focused politics will have an important role in deepening relations with other countries while determining foreign policy strategy.

### *Effective Coordination Between Institutions*

The coordination of foreign policy-makers has increased in importance with the shift to the Presidential Government System. Especially in the contemporary foreign policy making process where actors have multiplied, uncoordinated or non-interdependent practices lead to debacles in achieving the desired results in global politics due to a loss of energy and focus in public institutions. It is a prerequisite that the institutions taking an active role in the making or practice of foreign policy should be restructured in this new era for practicing a proper foreign policy strategy.

### *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the New Foreign Policy Vision*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is certainly the primary institution in determining and applying the new foreign policy vision. With a restructuring of the ministry’s organizational structure according to the new government system and improving the in-house information production mechanism with a more effective rotation, Turkey will be able to expand its opportunities for being flexible. It is mandatory that the number of ministerial personnel be increased in proportion to the country’s expanding representation abroad. This will also allow the ministry to become a policy-making institution—beyond a policy implementing one. Considering the fact that the institution’s bureaucracy used to be administered by an undersecretary and seven assistant undersecretaries, it seems difficult that three deputy ministers can currently handle it. Accordingly, increasing the number of deputy ministers and transitioning into a practice of regional deputy ministers for more field involvement will bring vigor to the institution.

## **Conclusion**

In the contemporary international system, the process of foreign policy making necessitates the simultaneous performance of very complex, layered, and disparate processes. Having actors that are sovereign states and discussions that are constantly evaluated in terms of sovereignty has brought forth debates regarding independence. This fact, which often reappears in the study, shows

that independence is the most significant foreign policy principle after sustainability, coherence, and practicability.

The most conspicuous point from the perspective of global trends is the constant increase of uncertainty, disorder, and unscrupulousness in world politics and, thus, in foreign policy. This situation is visible in its reception throughout the study, particularly in the post-2000 practice of TFP. While taking this new perspective into consideration, having Turkey properly use its balance of power and plan ahead under an institutional/organizational umbrella formed with allies would be appropriate. Therefore, Turkey's proactive involvement at the EU, UN, NATO, OIC, and other regional and international organizations is important in protecting current circumstances from adverse effects.

The best response to, "How should Foreign Policy be in the Turkey of the Future?" would

be to not repeat past mistakes and to continue accurate policies while further developing them. Consequently, the most fundamental suggestion regarding TFP would be to understand that the limits of a nation-state as foreign policy making, in the ontological sense, is defined and framed by the realities of the international system and the nation-state. In tandem with our remarks above, globally and economically changing TFP's regional and politics-centered focus is the most accurate and likely to succeed discourse. Another benefit of such a change would be the resulting increase in Turkey's effort to become a "smart power" as opposed to the dilemma of being a "hard vs. soft power" when foreign commercial elements come to the fore.

# FOREIGN POLICY

## IN THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE



### TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY VISION

Significant gains have been made in Turkish Foreign Policy in the past 20 years. To be able to proceed with power and certainty, the following must be achieved:

1

A “grand strategy” must be formed for a strong, effective, and independent foreign policy, and its overall framework must be shared with the public.

2

Foreign policy leaning toward the West must be changed with a multi-directional approach. Practices supporting Turkey’s recent values-centered (ethical, humanitarian, historical, etc.) discourse in international politics must be implemented.

3

Strong and lasting relations must be formed with countries such as China, India, Russia, Iran, and Brazil in a manner that supports the search for a “new world system” shaped by the discourse that “the world is bigger than five.”

4

A rational, predictable, institutional, positive, and participatory decision-making process must be conducted for a practicable and forward-looking foreign policy.

5

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ institutional structure and human resources must be adapted to a multi-dimensional and multilayered process of foreign policy making in all of its dimensions.

6

Different diplomatic channels (economic, cultural, non-governmental) must be used in a constant and sustainable manner to support basic policy processes.

7

The roles of “problem solver” and “reliable interlocutor” must be consolidated in regional and global conflicts, and “crises management” processes must be developed.

8

Turkey must change its foreign policy goal from being a regional power to a global power.

9

Turkey must transform its “soft power” into “smart power.”

10

The participatory decision-making model that was formed in accordance with the “Presidential Government System” must achieve its aim, and “coordination” between institutions must be procured.

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This report, beyond providing a foreign policy vision for the future, intends to lay out a comprehensive, coherent, and practical framework of analysis for Turkish foreign policy. Firstly, report touches upon the critical junctures of basic foreign policy in the last century and evaluates Turkey's position in the world while providing a general outlook on Turkish foreign policy. Secondly, it analyzes Turkish foreign policy's relations with global and regional actors during the AK Party era. Thirdly, report is devoted to examining the principal parameters that will influence foreign policy in Turkey's future. The final section of the report, has been prepared with the aims of determining the weaknesses in Turkish foreign policy and bringing principle advocating suggestions regarding visions for both institutions and foreign policy as a result of the topics addressed in previous parts.