STATE CAPACITY, FOREIGN/SECURITY POLICY AND POLITICAL CRISIS IN TURKEY: **THE PROMISE OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM**

BÜLENT ARAS

# STATE CAPACITY, FOREIGN/SECURITY POLICY AND POLITICAL CRISIS IN TURKEY:
## THE PROMISE OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

BÜLENT ARAS

February 2018

**Bülent Aras** is Senior Scholar and coordinator of the Conflict Resolution and Mediation Stream at Istanbul Policy Center and Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Sabancı University.

**About Istanbul Policy Center**

Istanbul Policy Center is an independent policy research institute with global outreach. Our mission is to foster academic research in social sciences and its application to policy making. We are firmly committed to providing decision makers, opinion leaders, academics, and the general public with innovative and objective analyses in key domestic and foreign policy issues. IPC has expertise in a wide range of areas, including—but not exhaustive to—Turkey-EU-U.S. relations, conflict resolution, education, climate change, current trends of political and social transformation in Turkey, as well as the impact of civil society and local governance on this metamorphosis.

## ABSTRACT

The current crisis of Turkey's foreign and security policy, and associated conflict resolution capability is to a considerable extent the result of the failure to accommodate the rivalry between the bureaucratic and societal-pluralist modes of policymaking. The rivalry and inability to institutionalize either mode has resulted in the political and institutional crises in foreign policy. The political crisis is the direct result of policy actors losing touch with, and to a certain extent disregarding, societal demands for policy making, utilizing a populist attitude in a way to reflect deep-seated divisions and polarization in the country, as well as feeding into these divisions in order to extend one's domestic hold on power. The institutional crisis has resulted from the sidelining of the bureaucracy, as well as its loss of agency in major issues, in the wake of state crisis and from continuous blows to the political class' struggle against "bureaucratic tutelage" in Turkey. Against this backdrop, this paper traces the roots of the crisis, attempts to make sense of the twin institutional and political crises in foreign and security policy, and provides guidelines for the reform and reset of foreign/security policy in Turkey.

## INTRODUCTION

This study aims to analyze the growing anomalies in Turkish foreign and security policy (FSP) against the backdrop of state crisis in the aftermath of the July 2016 coup attempt. The historical-institutional background of the policy anomalies set the stage for the current derailment of Turkish foreign policy—from the lack of political consistency and state perspective to the eventual loss of a normative basis. FSP analysis requires an analytical framework or modeling focusing on multiple factors, i.e., ideas, actors, institutions, and engagement with goals, strategies, measures, directives, agreements, among others, within a multilevel discussion. This study will disclose two influential and determining models—bureaucratic-authoritarian tradition and societal-pluralist policymaking—as constitutive agents of historical development of FSP behavior in Turkey.

The historical evolution of Turkish foreign/security policy went hand-in-hand with a dialectical battle of ideas alongside institutionalized interests and attempts to harmonize with the emerging conjunctures in domestic landscapes and international environment. As the bureaucratic institutions and societal constellations are the agents molding people's behavior in policy making, the following quote by Marx can explain the transformation of foreign policy: "[M]en make history, but they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."[1] The continuous inter-subjective formation and organization of foreign policy by the agents of opposing patterns of relationships "should be analyzed through identifying how contradictory relations between social agents are resolved, reconciled, or set aside."[2] The dialectic reading of the historical development of FSP behavior does not rule out partial overlaps and convergences in the process, but posits that constitutive elements clash with representations and practices of adversely inspired agents.

The current crisis of Turkey's FSP is to a considerable extent the result of the failure of accommodating the rivalry between the bureaucratic and societal-pluralist modes of policymaking. The rivalry and inability to institutionalize either mode has resulted in political and institutional crises in foreign policy. The political crisis is the direct result of policy actors losing touch with, and to a certain extent disregarding, societal demands for policy making, utilizing a populist attitude in a way to reflect deep-seated divisions and polarization in the country, as well as feeding into these divisions in order to extend one's domestic hold on power. The institutional crisis has resulted from the sidelining of the bureaucracy, as well as its loss of agency in major issues, in the wake of state crisis and from continuous blows to the political class' struggle against "bureaucratic tutelage" in Turkey. Against this backdrop, this paper will try to trace the roots of the crisis, make sense of the twin institutional and political crisis in FSP, and provide guidelines for reform and the reset of FSP in Turkey.

1    Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, Vol. XI* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975).

2    Benno Teschke and Can Cemgil, "The Dialectic of the Concrete: Reconsidering Dialectic for IR and Foreign Policy Analysis," *Globalizations* 11, no. 5 (2014): 620.

Turkish foreign policy long carried the legacy of Ottoman modernization. The traumatic process of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire gave rise to a defensive foreign policy outlook. The early Republican elite undertook the gargantuan task of nation-building in a post-imperial setting. While the Empire was melting on the warfront and at the post-war negotiating table, the late Ottoman intellectuals were discussing different ideas of Westernism, Islamism, Ottomanism, and Turkism. Thus, it was far from certain in the beginning that the ideational basis of the Republic would be Western.

The Republican elites' intellectual transformation occurred under the demise of the Empire and the emergence of a nation-state in the Anatolian Turkish heartland, which was dictated by a new geographical and demographic necessity. Although Turkey's new political elite had more room for maneuver in terms of their ideological choices and preferences of government, these choices and preferences were made under the conditions of intellectual transformation to a new post-Ottoman mind. This new mindset was apprehensive and defensive, with serious concerns for the survival of the new nation-state.

Falih Rifki Atay's autobiography, *Zeytindağı*[4] (Mount of Olives), is a good example for understanding how the new Turkish elite interpreted the past and what they expected from the future. Atay, who served as the chief of staff to Cemal Pasa, the commander of Palestine and Syria in the Eastern front during the First World War, considered the Ottoman presence outside Anatolia, particularly in the Middle East, as a useless endeavor and waste of resources. He referred to the devastating situation in Anatolia and held the Ottoman Empire responsible for its deterioration. He blamed the Ottoman administration for spending the precious human and material resources of Anatolia in the Arabian lands in vain. In accord, Turkey's new intellectual mind chose to defy the imperial legacy and opted for the Western model of government and secularism as appropriate for the country's future. In other words, this new project was based on actively forgetting—if not denigrating[5]—Turkey's Ottoman and Islamic past.

Yet, the Republican elite in some ways also symbolized a continuation of the Ottoman bureaucratic tradition, particularly in FSP.[6] The most predominant Ottoman legacy was perhaps that a selective group of bureaucrats determined the contours of foreign policy, national interests, and foreign policy identity. In the beginning elitism was born out of necessity due to the post-war devastation of the country and the prerogatives of nation-building. However, the bureaucratic mandate has been perpetuated in later stages with a security-first outlook and bloc mentality during the Cold War. Despite Turkey's attempted steps toward democratization, the Turkish foreign policy establishment found ways to reserve foreign and security policy-making for bureaucratic cadres and, more often than not, cordoned it off from public debate under the pretext of "national security." Thus, Turkish foreign policy has also been viewed as an instrument of endorsement of Turkey's Western identity, and Turkey's foreign policy choices have aptly reflected this ideological orientation.

The international system played an important role in shaping the political and ideological choices of Turkey and its foreign policy. The Western prevalence in Ottoman lands after the First World War had a consequential impact on the founding father's decision to establish a nation-state with a secular and nationalist character. The end of the Second World War and the creation of the UN system had a similar impact on the transition to a multi-party system and democratization. Turkey's preferences reflected the conscious decision to harmonize with the prevalent international order. However, Turkey's inclination toward the West's foreign policy was reflected in domestic politics through a sort of filtering mechanism. While elites clamored for increased modernization and Westernization so as to elevate Turkey to the economic level of the civilized world, at the same time Turkish identity at home also reflected the distrust and latent enmity towards the West inherited from the Ottoman administrative elite.[7]

**3**  This part relies on a former study of the author, see Bülent Aras, "Turkey's Rise in the Greater Middle East: Peace-Building in the Periphery," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 29–41.

**4**  Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytindağı* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 1980).

**5**  Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 1.

**6**  See, Roderic H. Davison, "Ottoman diplomacy and its legacy," in *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. L. C. Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 172–199.

**7**  Orhan Koçak, "'Westernisation Against the West': Cultural Politics in the Early Turkish Republic," in *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, and Philip Robins (Basingstoke, England; New York; Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, in association with St Antony's College, 2010), 305–322.

"Peace at Home, Peace in the World"—the guiding Ataturkist principle in Turkish foreign policy—has long been a rally cry to underscore Turkey's need for domestic consolidation and staying away from "foreign adventures." The establishment media and intellectuals of statecraft hewed closely to the ideological positions of the foreign policy elite, constantly struggling to legitimize the regime's stance. After 1945, Turkey's cautious policy matched the Cold War straitjacket of Western identity. Security concerns thus trumped the European case for democratic pluralism and extension of the human rights regime. In any case, Turkey was more comfortable in its relations with the United State, which did not question Turkey's domestic political environment after the Second World War.

Turkey's post-Ottoman state and foreign policy identity required an inward-looking and defensive approach to international relations. On occasion, Turkey showed considerable audacity in its foreign policy. However, Turkish foreign policy has been also shaped by the constraints of "Sevres Syndrome," a mentality directly related to its transformation from an Empire into a nation-state. It refers to the repercussions of the stillborn Treaty of Sevres, which outlined further partition of the Ottoman Empire by foreign powers and their proxies in Ottoman territories after the First World War. Reflexively, it imbues the apprehension that the country is surrounded by enemies and constantly faces "foreign designs" for break-up or partition. This distinctively rejectionist view of the world still plays a vital role in shaping the minds of Turkish policymakers.

Turkey's FSP has been largely determined by domestic political priorities. The Kurdish and Islamist rebellions during the establishment period gave the founding fathers of the Republic an opportunity to silence the opposition. The threats of Kurdish separatism and Islamist rebellion shaped the cognitive map of the security elite and contributed to the creation of an exclusive political culture whereby serious opposition to government policies or comprehensive disagreement with their progress laid open the possibility that the disaffected groups would be labeled as traitors. Conducting foreign policy in line with a security-first outlook was in conformity with the growing role of the military in foreign policy formulation. In the end, ideological narrowing in domestic politics caused foreign policy to be strict, less sensitive to change, and less flexible in regional policies.

Turkey's FSP identity has been shaped by the bureaucratic-authoritarian paradigm, which was overwhelmingly wrought by the state's security concerns. While it has proven an asset in state building and regime consolidation in early stages, later on the "security-first" outlook limited Turkish foreign policy's ability to minimize conflicts, seek common ground, and develop alternative coalitions and alliances. During the Cold War, the bloc mentality and the straitjacket of the NATO alliance masked the latter deficits. Yet, the end of the Cold War and rising ethnic and cultural conflicts unraveled Turkey's ability to both stick to the terms of this insular worldview and project influence on conflicts directly affecting Turkey's multicultural population. Such was the case in Bosnia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Iraq.

With the removal of strong barriers between the domestic and international spheres in the post-Cold War era, one could make a strong case that Turkish foreign policy gradually slipped out of the control of the nationalist elite with the rising influence of societal demands in policy making. In the early 21st century, the key to understanding Turkish politics was to examine the tension between globalist and nationalist perspectives on domestic and international politics. There was an emerging literature arguing that the future of Turkish politics will be heavily influenced by globalist demands and, subsequently, Turkish foreign policy.[8] A number of foreign policy issues in this period, e.g., the first and second Gulf Wars in Iraq, the Palestinian question, and independence of Turkic Central Asian states, presented some unusual deviations from the traditional bureaucratic-authoritarian FSP stances. Foreign policy behavior, among others, is ideally shaped by the norms existing within the relevant society. These values arise out of common historical experiences and become widespread over time, coming to be seen as natural developments, making them most difficult to change. These values-norms can have significant effects on the formulation of a nation's foreign policy.

When the values widely held by society conflict with the views of expert foreign policy-makers in a polity, social values-norms may tend to outweigh expert opinion on FSP in a pluralist political atmosphere. In reverse, Turkish policy-makers have for a long time adopted a bureaucratic-authoritarian tradition of policy making, hampering the way in which social values must be taken into consideration in the development of foreign policy. In this period, a considerable section of Turkish society had expressed its support for globalist-demo-

8  See, Ziya Öniş, "Conservative Globalists versus Defensive Nationalists: Political Parties and Paradoxes of Europeanization in Turkey," *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 9, no. 4 (2007): 247–261; Bülent Aras, "Turkish Foreign Policy and Jerusalem: Towards a Societal Construction of Foreign Policy," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2000): 31–59.

cratic demands and expected policy-makers to guide the development of FSP according to the values of the people. This demand was also in accord with the post-Cold War international normative order, which was increasingly imbued with democratic norms, values, and principles.

Democratization and de-securitization in the early phase of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) rule changed the inside/outside matrix to include more societal input in the processes of formulating FSP.[9] In this period, Turkey's bid for EU membership was at the center of domestic changes. In order to prepare for EU accession, Turkey undertook considerable legal, political, and economic reforms. A significant segment of Turkey's bureaucrats, politicians, and citizens joined in on the consensus to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership and tolerated the pain of the IMF-directed structural adjustment programs.[10] Societal forces increased their influence in policymaking and competed against the old bureaucratic–authoritarian tradition. At the same time, foreign policy-makers were paying more attention to international legitimacy, values, and norms. The significance of Turkey's domestic transformation was the consolidation of stability in the country, enabling it to emerge as a peace-promoter in neighboring regions. The changes moved a number of former security issues off the political agenda.

This new imagination placed different assumptions about regional countries in the minds of policy-makers. The territorial limits to Turkish involvement in neighboring countries disappeared in this new mindset. The relationship between "bordering and othering"[11] lost its meaning after removing the strains of domestic threat perceptions in regional policy. The resultant novel practices of power have sealed the fate of a number of evolving trends in FSP, which have actually been unfolding since the end of the Cold War yet resisted change until recently due to the overriding role of the military bureaucracy. In due course, but particularly after the failed July 2016 coup and subsequent state crisis, traditional actors such as the Armed Forces, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and National Security

Council have turned into non-players and effectively bookkeepers. In addition, the idea that foreign policy was more or less about bipartisan national interests has given way to a partisan realm of victories and inevitably losses.

The quest for grandeur in Turkey's broader neighborhood won popular applause but largely failed to earn the consent of bureaucratic cadres, which were forced out of their comfort zone and into the ever-conflicting environment in Turkey's neighborhood.[12] The Turkish bureaucracy was ill-equipped to provide an expansionist or even a more conciliatory soft power role beyond its traditionalist concerns for security and stability.[13] In that sense, the so-called "Davutoğlu era"[14] in Turkish foreign policy represented political overreach and paved the way for undermining the role of the bureaucracy, if only through demonstrating its unreadiness for a more active role. Overall, the transitional deficiency has had ideational and institutional components. Ideationally, Turkey failed to establish a new foreign/security policy ethos among its bureaucratic cadres in accordance with its changing policy goals, which sought a regional leadership role and global harmony with major centers of power such as the United States, EU, Russia, and China. Institutionally, the present setup has proven both uncommitted and deficient in leading a change from a more comfortable "security-first" outlook towards a laborious extension of the Turkish zone of influence. Lacking lingual and professional skills as well as reluctant to promote Turkish expansionism, the Turkish bureaucracy confined themselves to propagating the validity of traditional goals of "non-intervention" and following Atay's bitter experience for "staying away from the Arab swamp."[15]

---

9    Bülent Aras and R. Karakaya Polat, "Turkey and the Middle East: Frontiers of the New Geographic Imagination," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, no. 4 (2007): 471–488.

10   Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu, "The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey," *International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 199–216; Ersel Aydınlı, Nihat Ali Özcan, and Doğan Akyaz, "The Turkish Military's March toward Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 1 (January–February 2006): 77–90.
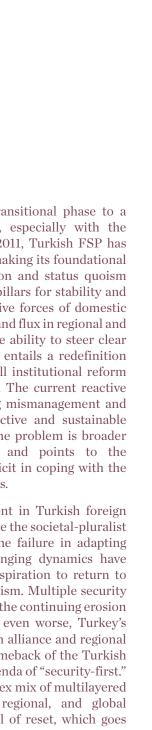
11   Henk V. Houtum, "The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries," *Geopolitics* 10, no. 4 (2005): 674.

12   Bülent Aras, "Reform and Capacity Building in the Turkish Foreign Ministry: Bridging the Gap between Ideas and Institutions," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 17, no. 3 (2015): 269–286.

13   Interview with a bureaucrat in correspondence with the author, Ankara, December 21, 2016.

14   Bülent Aras, "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy," *SETA Policy Brief* 32 (Ankara: SETA, 2009).

15   Mensur Akgün, "Ortadoğu Bataklığı," Star, June 22, 2014, accessed January 24, 2018, http://www.star.com.tr/yazar/ortadogu-batakligi-yazi-899209/.

## PREROGATIVES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

The central factor begetting the current inability to cope with multiple crises has been the timing of the regional and global disorder, which weighed on top of the unfinished domestic political transition in Turkey. The latter had to do with the liberalization and in a way civilianization of the Turkish political regime, which still carried the imprint of the 1930s single-party era and successive military coups afterwards. To overcome the government-bureaucracy dichotomy, the conservative AK Party espoused a flag-bearer role to liberalize the constitutional order and rollback the military bureaucracy's predominant role. The subsequent flow of events has disproven this idealistic projection of "liberal transition" as Turkey had to settle for fake court cases; illegal buildup of alternative levers of power, especially in the bureaucracy; and eventually a coup attempt, which brought the state apparatus virtually to the breaking point. Even though the coup was averted, the turn of events ever since points to further polarization, recriminations, and zero-sum logic rather than expanding consensual politics to gather around common principles.

In fact, the transition has proven more difficult than expected and undermined the earlier assumption that Turkey could lead the move towards change[16] (and is rather than be menaced by change) particularly in regional dynamics. The underlying domestic factors that inhibited a smooth transition have been the secular-Islamist, Sunni-Alevi, and Turkish-Kurdish cleavages on top of the statist outlook that defied peripheral demands for political representation. The statist worldview has also undermined the Turkish ability to introduce flexible foreign policy formulas against regional and global upheaval. It is now apparent that the pluralist (and also multiculturalist) attempt to transcend the traditional foreign policy of status quoism largely hit a wall in zeroing out regional confrontation. Yet, its failure also unwound the preliminary attempts to reset TFP with a proactive approach against growing upheavals. Thus, Turkey ended up with a prevalent domestic focus that hampered Turkey's regional and global alliances and possible coalition-making vis-à-vis foreign conflicts.

With the derailment of the transitional phase to a democratic-pluralist paradigm, especially with the advent of the Arab revolts in 2011, Turkish FSP has entered a new cycle of crises, shaking its foundational premises of Western orientation and status quoism yet failing to place alternative pillars for stability and continuity. Facing the destructive forces of domestic instability, geostrategic rivalry, and flux in regional and international security order, the ability to steer clear definitely now more than ever entails a redefinition of goals, interests, and above all institutional reform to address complex challenges. The current reactive mode rather reflects a growing mismanagement and inability to respond with effective and sustainable policy formulas. In any case, the problem is broader than policymaking solutions and points to the structural and institutional deficit in coping with the unprecedented mix of challenges.

Against the current predicament in Turkish foreign policy, the inability to perpetuate the societal-pluralist foreign policy paradigm and the failure in adapting the institutional setup to changing dynamics have dialectically given way to an aspiration to return to the good old days of traditionalism. Multiple security challenges at home and abroad, the continuing erosion of Turkish regional goals, and even worse, Turkey's isolation from both the Western alliance and regional dynamics set the stage for a comeback of the Turkish Republic's traditional policy agenda of "security-first." Yet, Turkey today faces a complex mix of multilayered and multivectoral domestic, regional, and global challenges. Therefore, the ideal of reset, which goes beyond the recent debates of recalibration,[17] has to take into account the intermingling of conflicts on multiple, overlapping levels. This background makes it obligatory for Turkish policymakers to broaden their predominantly domestic focus and rather come to terms with the need for a reset in TFP.

### Turkey against multilevel challenges

The primary casualty of the failure of the democratic transition in Turkey has been domestic stability. In the beginning of the decade, Turkey had grasped the chance to democratize and liberalize its constitutional order, while the traditional forces of authoritarianism were placed on the back burner. However, the historical chance was misspent to corner and minimize the

---

16  "Davutoğlu: Ortadoğu'da Değişim Dalgasını Yöneteceğiz," *Cumhuriyet*, April 26, 2012, accessed January 24, 2018, http://www.cumhuriyet.tr/haber/diger/337928/_Ortadogu_daki_degisim_dalgasini_yonetecegiz_.html.

17  See, Bülent Aras, "Turkish Foreign Policy after July 15," *IPC Policy Report* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, February 2017).

opposition, expand the AK Party's hegemony over the political arena, and arguably "inadvertently" empower the Gülenists—followers of self-exiled Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen, who is alleged to have mastermind the July 2016 coup attempt—to claim overarching bureaucratic power. The so-called Kurdish "peace (resolution) process" with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) also failed to realize its ultimate aim of reconciliation as it turned into a tool of politicking by both sides. On top of these, the succession crisis within the AK Party also eroded the democratic credentials of the government as the party espoused growing adherence to the cult of personality rather than an ideal of evolution to post-Erdoğan politics.

The end results of these failures were eventual political instability and erosion of state authority. In that sense, the July coup was a corollary not a sudden flare. Yet, its aftermath has proven detrimental to earlier Turkish goals of democratic transition and regional leadership. The rally around the flag effect after the coup attempt, namely "the Yenikapı spirit," which was able to bring together all mainstream political parties in support of the constitutional order, was shortly eclipsed by partisan considerations. The AK Party's unwavering commitment to supposedly reinvigorate the executive organ through a "Turkish type" presidential system undid the remaining bits of consensual politics in Turkey. Having the nationalist party leader Devlet Bahceli on board for this cause seemed to have missed the designed objective of a grand nationalist-conservative coalition. Rather, what has emerged has been further fragmentation and polarization in Turkish politics, whereby not only the nationalist party was split into two, but also the AK Party had to enforce self-harming party discipline to silence opposition among its ranks. Neither the referendum of April 16, 2017 nor the looming elections on the horizon offers feasible prospects for restoring democratic norms of accountability, transparency, and more importantly across the board, respect for the electoral mandate for ruling the country. The resultant political instability has in turn undermined the Turkish ability to play up to its potential role as a power broker in regional geopolitics.

Turkey's geopolitics is both its most formidable asset and biggest liability. While it assigns Turkey a role broader than its political and economic capacity, it also overburdens its capacity to cope with complex conflicts. For example, the Arab Spring overturned the Turkish role to interconnect the West and Islamic Middle East. Turkey faced the possibility of severing its ideational link to both worlds, which set the stage for a reincarnation of Turkey's historical isolationist complex. Unable

to lead change, especially in neighboring Syria, Turkish security concerns were elevated with the expansion of the twin threats of PKK separatism and Islamic State jihadism. Worse still, Turkey lost common ground with Arab partners, with the minor exception of Qatar, upon a major discord on the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Arab politics, which left Turkish pro-Sunni tendencies void of major support. Turkish fixation on the overthrow of Egyptian President Morsi and the rejection of his successor, President Sisi, pushed the door wide open for anti-Turkish coalitions between Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, and—with a veiled role from behind the scenes—Israel in the Eastern Mediterranean.[18] The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and to a lesser extent Saudi Arabia also occasionally volunteered to disrupt Turkish interests.[19]

Against this backdrop, Turkish security concerns came to trump regional policy goals, i.e., support for like-minded regimes, with a single focus on confronting the PKK's expansionism in Syria and Iraq. This lately brought Turkey and Iran together against Kurdish aspirations, particularly in Iraq. It also pushed Turkey to Russia's orbit to gain a free hand against PKK offshoots under the pretext of Syrian territorial integrity. Thus, Turkey seemed to have narrowed its external focus in order to extend its major domestic goal of fighting against PKK terrorism.

Beyond the flux in international dynamics, especially with the loss of direction in U.S. politics and the EU as well as the growing confidence of rising great powers such as China and Russia, Turkey appeared desperate to seek international support for regime consolidation after the coup attempt. This exclusively domestic focus hindered a possible Turkish role in meeting its security interests and balancing Western ties with broader global engagement. Turkey could have overcome a legitimate but narrow preoccupation with the PKK to lead the broader fight against terrorism in Syria and Iraq, which would have strengthened its hand in global equations. Rather, Turkey turned itself into a rejectionist power opposing the Russian and Iranian alliance with Assad, the American alliance with the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)'s independence referendum in Iraq, and Arab-Israeli coalition against Iran. Thus, Turkey

18    Aya Samir, "Egypt, Greece, Cyprus: Model for Successful International Cooperation," *Egypt Today*, November 21, 2017 accessed January 24, 2018, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/33551/Egypt-Greece-Cyprus-Model-for-successful-international-cooperation.

19    Mehmet Solmaz, "Why Saudi Arabia and the UAE are Targeting Turkey," *Middle East Eye*, December 27, 2017, accessed January 24, 2018, http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/why-uae-hostile-turkey-1184696487.

pushed itself to the sidelines and ultimately did a great disservice to its national interests.

The coup attempt and the explicit role played by the Gülenists also undermined Turkey's relations particularly with Western and regional partners. Turkey unleashed a helter-skelter plan to erase the Gülenist outreach (schools and financial links) from Central Asia to Africa, the Balkans, and Western countries, especially after the coup attempt. Unable to receive international support in return, Turkey felt even more isolated. Meanwhile, the Gülenists found a receptive audience, particularly in the United States and Germany, to diffuse their anti-government and increasingly anti-Turkish views. In return, the Turkish government espoused anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric to consolidate its electoral base and win over the nationalists across the board.

This overall picture seemed to give leeway to resuscitation of the bureaucratic-authoritarian tradition in Turkish foreign policy albeit in a renewed form. In the new era, Turkey is a major advocate of non-intervention in third countries' domestic affairs and territorial integrity of neighboring states as well as a vocal opponent of Western intervention in regional affairs. This resuscitated traditional model of status quoism absent Western orientation automatically assigns the security cadres a prevalent role in policymaking and implementation. The AK Party government visibly co-opted the military and intelligence apparatus in its quest for damage control. Thus, Syria and Iraq again became realms of securitized foreign policy. Civilian and academic input has largely been absent. Even institutional feedback from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was lacking due both to the growing influence of the presidential team on foreign policy and the Ministry's eroding human capacity after the purges.

To overcome this vicious circle of conflicts aggravated by eroding institutional capacity and to cope with multiple challenges beyond the use of military-security tools, working on civilian institutional capacity is a no-brainer. Of course, domestic consolidation is a governmental priority, and political transition would still trump all other concerns. Yet in any case, a reinvigorated institutional setup, new thinking, and multidisciplinary approach could pay off. Emphasis on diplomacy and better representation could open up new venues for explaining and finding an regional and international audience for legitimate Turkish interests. The ability to insert Turkey's interests either through public diplomacy or behind closed doors would motivate qualified public servants to engage more in

policymaking and implementation. Again, Turkey's return to international diplomacy as a responsible and respectable actor would better serve its interests both politically and economically.

## PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

The need for reform in FSP mainly stems from the loss of guiding principles in organization and formulating policy. Credibility entails upholding the principle of continuity in state affairs. Bureaucracy's ideally long-term vision is supposed to keep track of state records and pursue national interests. Their network with both national and international interlocutors shapes policy-making and makes sure different stakes are taken into consideration. Yet, the undeclared struggle between the bureaucracy and government elites has endangered this assumed long-term vision and dilapidated the bureaucracy's ability to steer an autonomous course even if acting under the government's ruling mandate. The dialectical dynamics of assigning the bureaucracy either an all-in or minimized role disrupted the state apparatus's ability to sustain the so-called "state memory," which has again run the risk of alienating partners and emboldening adversaries.

Indisputably, the agents of foreign and security policymaking are in dire need of reform. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs lost its traditional role and failed to produce a working ethos to catch up with the political changes in Ankara and beyond. The military suffered large-scale purges and lost its interest in its traditional claim to get actively involved in policy-making. Academia, like civil society, is bleeding due to large-scale purges and infringements on academic independence. The resultant void impoverished the current style of overarching personal policymaking from institutional feedback. Moreover, following the uncertainties of constitutional transition and the resultant deficiency of a practical understanding of the government-bureaucracy relationship, the bureaucracy has automatically been excluded from the policymaking process. Last but not least, the foreign and security institutions have had to struggle against burgeoning personnel and resource deficits, which also demoralized the bureaucracy and eroded its founding ethos as a servant of the nation.

Against these setbacks, a three-pronged set of measures should be put in place. First, meritocracy and the bureaucratic ethos to serve the nation should be revitalized. The gargantuan task to employ new bureaucratic cadres is, however, both a chance and a potential menace. Provided that the political authority avails this opportunity to seek efficiency and long-term commitment, Turkey still has qualified public officials such as career professionals and a young and educated pool of personnel to compensate for the purges. However, if partisan considerations prevail, the state crisis would be prolonged with damaging repercussions on state performance. Second, at a time of economic bottlenecks, more efficient use of available resources is obligatory. Prioritization rather than quantitative expansion in public service—such as the goal of maximizing the number of diplomatic missions across the globe—would serve Turkish interests better. Providing additional resources, fringe benefits, and above all, giving actors a stake in policymaking could be employed to better motivate the current cadres. Third, the government should lose no time to set up the legal framework for the government-bureaucracy relationship. The current uncertainty only breeds future uncertainty and leads to further stalling tactics on the part of the bureaucracy. The latter needs a road map, confidence, and applicable rules and procedures to implement and keep track of governmental policies.

Government circles might think that inconsistency is an asset against uncontrollable instability both at home and abroad. It might also serve to confuse the electorate to avert attention from burgeoning political and economic problems. It could even be thought to work toward derailing a reasonable government-opposition debate, which again supposedly gives the government an upper hand with its prevalent control of media and messaging outlets in Turkey.

These largely domestic goals, however, mar Turkish interests and the ability to gain international support for foreign policy goals. Each and every day, an internal debate in Turkey reaches an international audience either on social media or specific national channels, which at best engenders mockery or worse plays into anti-Turkish feelings.[20] The government's overzealous attention to these negative sentiments agitates the domestic electorate and enhances feelings of external deceit and animosity between Turks and the outside world, which is further aggravated by personalized use of social media to attract attention. When a tweet or retweet pops up in any corner of the world about Turkey or Turkish history, it immediately enters the national agenda, and the response it gets from government

---

20  For example see, Alan Yuhas, "So Muslims Beat Columbus to America? They Have Better Get in Line," *The Guardian*, November 17, 2014, accessed January 24, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/17/muslims-beat-columbus-america-better-get-in-line.

circles turns into a bilateral or multilateral debate.[21] The pro-government media also plays a leading role in further alienating foreign partners in a similar fashion.

Beyond public diplomacy setbacks, FSP is visibly losing overall consistency. Turkey's foreign relations have become more about short-term ups and downs rather than long-term alignments. To exemplify, the recent rapprochement with Russia was preceded by testing the limits of confrontation after the downing of the Russian jet. A poor grasp of the Trump presidency early on gave way to a shame and blame game from single issues such as Jerusalem and the U.S. backing of the PYD in Syria to particular court cases in the U.S. against the Turkish banking system. Early hopes about King Salman's rule in Saudi Arabia were overturned by opposition to Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's pro-Israeli and anti-Iranian stance. Relations with Iran, Greece, Iraq, Germany, Bulgaria, Egypt, and Israel have seen pragmatic cooperation in certain fields overshadowed by an ideological reproach for divergences in foreign policy. A critical volte-face was also experienced with the KRG in Iraq, which devolved from a major regional ally to assumed national security threat and came virtually under Turkish containment.

In addition to oscillations in bilateral ties, Turkey's Western orientation has lost its core meaning even if Turkey is still a member of distinctive Western clubs, above all NATO, the OECD, and the Council of Europe. Anti-Western rhetoric, which boomed after July 15, shows signs of becoming a structural discourse beyond an instrument of domestic politics. "Anti-imperialism" (read anti-Americanism) has become a catchword among government and opposition circles. While there is still an implicit expectation of rapprochement with Western countries, which is expectedly more about the West showing empathy for Turkey against growing challenges,[22] daily developments certainly shut the door for any potential opening. Even if relations with both the EU and the U.S. still trump all others economically and culturally, Turkey has been losing touch with Western capitals and undoubtedly lost many friends in the West.

On that note, restoring policy consistency with institutional feedback would be a crucial step towards restoring Turkish credibility vis-à-vis international interlocutors. To that end, Turkish policymakers need to make a goals-capability analysis and better seek conformity of Turkish regional and international goals with capacity to cope with multiple challenges. Admittedly, this has become a harder task given the erosion of expertise and staff in the public sector on top of the security and transitional challenges mentioned above. Yet, Turkey has to rethink its relationship with Western allies and seek common ground against shared challenges, above all terrorism, geopolitics, and the incessant refugee flow. Unless Turkey reinvigorates its Western ties, the possibility of reaching its national goals of security and prosperity and improving its ability to co-opt regional hegemons such as Russia and Iran in support of Turkish interests will diminish. There is no perfect model Turkey may match in order to achieve its goals; but, the history of Turkish FSP is an enlightening guide, i.e., Turkey must balance ties between Western and regional countries.

Setting achievable goals in regional policy is a necessity in Turkish foreign policy, however humbling. Turkey has to acknowledge that the benevolent conjuncture early in the decade toward the rise of Turkish clout has simply slipped away. Rather, Turkey exists in a world of risks and challenges that entail the utmost caution for conflict resolution. Therefore, Turkey should espouse a cautious but active "balancer" role, not an awkward pretense of leadership. To that end, Turkey should expand its efforts toward coalition building in order to secure the territorial integrity of Syria and Iraq, engage in post-ISIS reintegration of Sunni demographics, and isolate the root causes of terrorism, i.e., disenfranchisement, sectarianism, and extremism. This, again, entails being open to dialogue with both worlds, i.e., pro- and anti-Iranian fronts. The current tilt towards the Iranian-Russian alliance risks alienating the anti-Iranian coalition and Western support for Turkish goals. Again, Turkish intrusion in intra-Arab conflicts in the Gulf would undermine the need for sustainable regional engagement. The Western orientation also needs a boost, which will not come on a golden plate in the form of EU accession or total U.S. support for Turkish security goals. Rather, Turkey should absorb the changing character of international relations based on transactional cooperation without missing the broader goals of normative harmonization with Western countries, which would expand the possibility of cooperation.

---

21   The most recent example has been a retweet of the UAE Foreign Minister. See, "Turkey Denounces UAE Over Divisive 'Propaganda' Retweet," Al Jazeera, December 17, 2017, accessed January 24, 2018, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/turkey-denounces-uae-divisive-propaganda-retweet-171219192504147.html.

22   This issue has actually turned into a chicken-and-egg question on whether Turkey is misunderstood by the West or if Turkey is unable to explain itself. A better way of approaching the issue would be to reframe Turkish-Western relations not as an idea ("friends support each other whatsoever") but in terms of norms and interests.
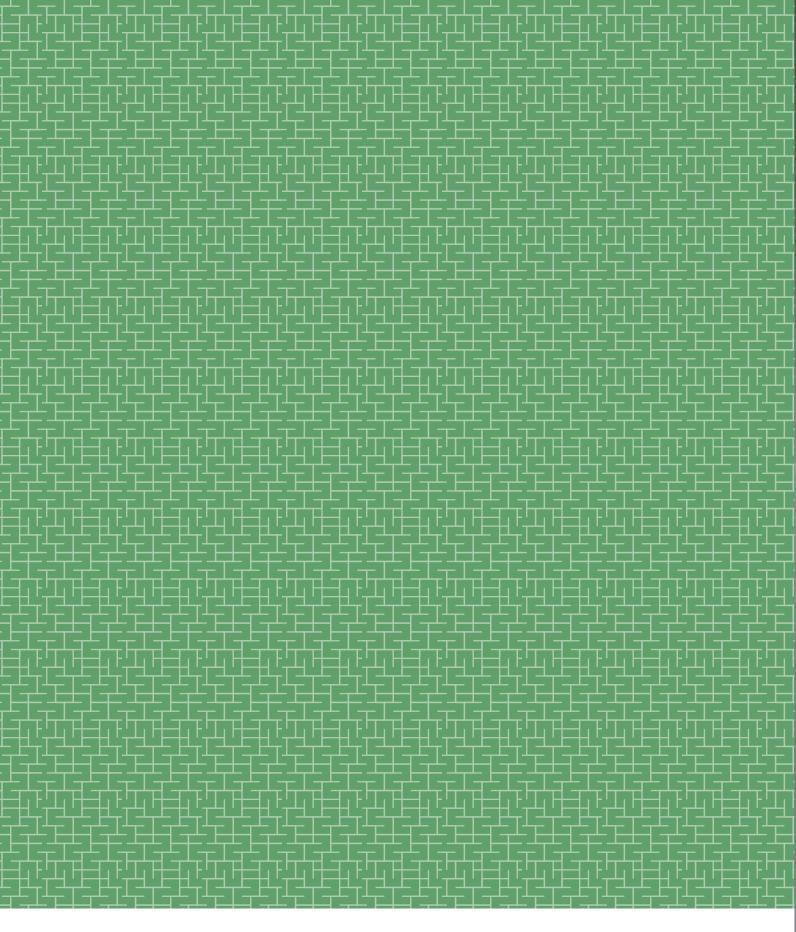
The framework for cooperative engagement could only be set in rethinking the vulnerable policy of "security first," which gives Turkey's international interlocutors the upper hand in defining relations. This has particularly been the case with Russia, especially after the reconciliation process. Russia appears to have played its hand well in order to have Turkey on board for securing the Assad regime in Syria in return for its dubious and questionably marginal role in northern Syria. The Turkish eschewing of its case for a pluralist Syria not only undermines its credibility but also its ability to project power in regional equations. The emboldened Russian presence neighboring Turkey complicates Turkish security and blocks its direct access to the Arab and rapidly developing Kurdish geopolitics in the region. Overreliance on the Russian security design defies a perennial Turkish goal for keeping great powers away from its borders.

The security-dominant outlook has also undermined the Turkish ability to co-opt Western allies in support of its regional goals. The derailment of the so-called Arab Spring from its initial aspiration for "liberalization" certainly played its part in the eventual divergence between Turkey and the West. While street protests gave way to sectarian and extremist causes, the Turkish ability to stand together with Western allies proved unsustainable. First was the Western (American) reticence to shoulder the burden of yet another "quagmire." Second was the uncertainty about the prospects of "liberalization," i.e., whether it would give leeway to overarching Islamization. However, Turkey also failed to demonstrate consistent policy in supporting democratization and liberalization rather than centering on first geostrategic rivalry and then fighting against the PKK. The latter particularly had been a setback in maintaining a cooperative tone with the West at a time when the Western world was locked into the fight against ISIS. The PKK rather shrewdly turned itself into a cooperative proxy of the West. This dissonance, in turn, not only handicapped Turkish security goals but also eroded remaining common ground with the West to the detriment of Turkish clout in regional equations.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the complexity of challenges of the twin crises of bureaucratic-authoritarian and societal policy making entails a reset and reform in FSP in Turkey. Two traditions in policy making face deep running problems of their own beside their dialectical engagement against each other on determination of the course of FSP in Turkey. To accommodate the conflicting views on FSP making, a sober reevaluation of Turkish national interests should be a priority. In a contemporary fashion, Turkey needs to act as a performing state and espouse the best practices of good governance. The former is about providing security and public goods, the latter is about transparency, accountability, and pluralism. Turkish policymakers cannot confine their immediate goals to providing the first and shelving the latter for sunnier days. As the nonliteral clash of state and societal powers in recent history exemplifies, there is a proven direct correlation between good governance and state power that must be struck in order to lead a country. These principles are also valid for FSP making. Without state power, the rhetorical ability to perpetuate the ultimate Turkish goals of security and prosperity is nil. Lacking good governance and the public support for and sustainability of policy will merely prove successful in achieving short-term goals.

These goals are also a call to reinvigorate institutional setup, public-private partnership, and the extension of stakeholders in foreign policy among civil society, academia, and relevant societal groups. Turkey cannot waive its earlier commitment to the societal-pluralist paradigm in foreign policy: the Pandora's box has already been open. Beyond the current emergency rule, Turkish society is ripe for participation in policymaking and would welcome its own reinstatement as an FSP stakeholder. This, more than ever, entails rebuilding state institutions with academic and societal feedback. Turkey needs division of labor, expertise, multidisciplinary approaches, and representation of multiculturalism in foreign policy. Diversifying sources of policymaking would broaden public support and would also put up a barrier against taking narrow-minded and one-sided approaches in Turkey's FSP. A blend of academic, societal, and pluralistic input would enrich Turkish FSP and build a much-needed organic link with its neighborhood. However, it is only if Turkish foreign and security institutions make the most of this pluralism that Turkey can live up to its desired role as a muscular regional power.