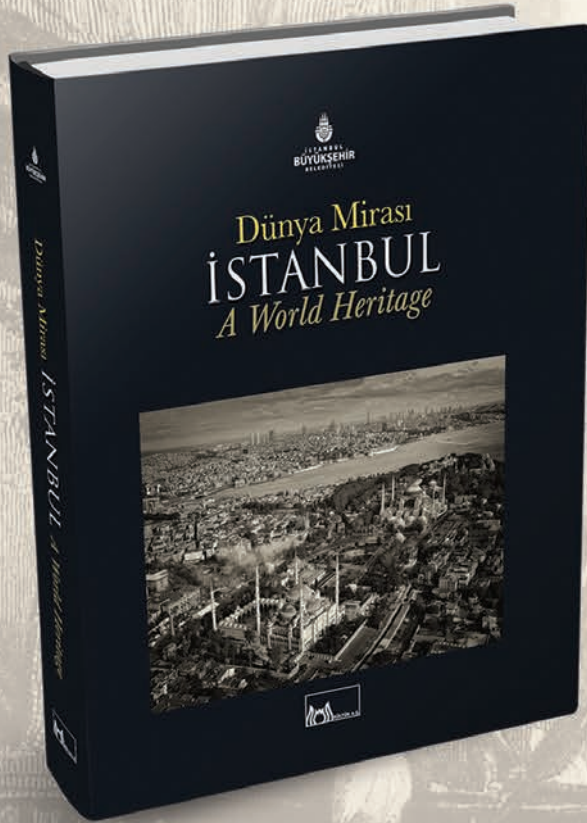


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EDITOR'S NOTE

MUHİTTİN ATAMAN

Today, the world system is in a transition and experiencing a deep international crisis. The U.S. has begun to oppose the basic international institutions such as the United Nations and its subsidiary organs and specialized agencies, even though most of these were established with American motivation. The hegemon state, the U.S., has been alienating most of its partners and even allies. The U.S. governments have begun to focus on the national setting and to underestimate the international one; to favor unilateral policies over multilateral ones. The presidency of Donald Trump has expedited this process. American rejection of providing global public goods such as international security and free trade has led to a systemic crisis.

The relative decline of American power coincides with the persistent rise of China. Those who claim that the days of Pax-Americana are numbered assert that the rise of China will determine the future of the world system. China has begun to expand its influence worldwide. For this purpose it has established alternative political and economic international institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Furthermore, China leads the establishment of some other international organizations as well. BRICS is only one of these formations challenging the political hegemony of the West, led by the U.S. One of the most promising Chinese projects is the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Project, aspiring to connect the East (China) to the West (the world markets). It is expected that, on its completion, the OBOR Project will take China to the center of the world economy and politics.

China has been the fastest growing economy in the world for the last thirty years. Its share of the world trade has increased dramatically, recording the highest share in world exports for several years. China has been enjoying economic transactions with all major international actors with more than 200 partners in exports and imports. However, in terms of per capita income China still lags behind the advanced Western countries. Furthermore, according to

the calculations made by the World Bank and IMF, Chinese per capita income is still lower than the world average.

China recently began to invest in the political and military sphere in the non-Western world. It has military bases in its near abroad and in the African continent. That is, Chinese economic influence and technological leadership is supported by its political and military power. In spite of the increase in Chinese military and political might, it is careful not to challenge the U.S. and the West. There are several reasons for this policy. First of all, China is aware of its vulnerabilities. It suffers some economic and political inconsistencies and weaknesses. For instance, it has to fortify its regional dominance first in the South China Sea and achieve its longtime one-China policy as a precondition for a possible global hegemony.

Second, China wants to win the global rivalry without resorting to war with the current hegemon. Therefore, Chinese leaders refrain from opposing the American hegemony politically. Even though it has introduced some international institutions, the Chinese leadership does not propose a political and diplomatic alternative to the West. It will take time for China to offer a full-scale global leadership alternative to the world, since the global hegemony requires not only economic and military power but also values and norms for cultural hegemony. Lastly, China is not ready to take the global responsibility, since it brings high costs. As long as the current American hegemony works in favor of China, there is no need for China to change the course of its development.

In the light of these developments, this issue of *Insight Turkey* focuses on some of the most important topics related to China's persistent rise in the international system. More specifically, this issue postulates on how to read and understand China's policies towards global powers, i.e. the U.S. and Russia, and regional powers, i.e. India and Turkey.

Africa has once again returned to the attention of the global powers after being left for many years in the shadow of western politics. In recent years, Africa has become the center of China's public, economic and military diplomacy. As it may be expected, China's investments in Africa are not totally 'welcomed' by the U.S. Earl Conteh-Morgan in his commentary focuses on the strategic rivalry between China and the U.S. in Africa. Conteh-Morgan argues that their rivalry has progressed from mild to intense, with both powers increasing their activities on the continent and decreasing Africa's erstwhile marginalization. Another rivalry that shapes China's foreign policies in the region is that with India. Especially, since the Doklam Plateau incident in mid-2017, the expectation of a possible tension between the two regional powers is ever present. Taking this into consideration Bruno Maçães, in his commentary, ponders the economic and strategic rivalry between China and India along with a number of dimensions: infrastructure, border disputes, sea power, and trade.

A reflection of the international conjuncture can be noticed when China-Russia relations are considered. Alexander Korolev in his commentary emphasizes that while both China and Russia do not consider each other a threat the same thing cannot be said regarding their perceptions towards the U.S. By focusing mainly on the military diplomacy between China and Russia, Korolev contends that both states are on the verge of a new relationship and only minor steps are needed for a fully-fledged alliance to materialize; however, the occurrence of such steps is still an open question.

Kadir Temiz in his article focuses on political, economic and military Sino-Turkish relations, with a special focus on the Cyprus issue. Considering that China is unwilling to confront regional and international powers with respect to the Cyprus conflict, firstly China tried to remain neutral; however, with time, it has come close to the southern Cyprus stance. Despite this, Temiz asserts that Turkey has not seriously considered using its political or economic leverage against China in this regard.

Many of the latest developments in the international arena are discussed in this issue of *Insight Turkey*, amongst which are: Trump's declaration on Jerusalem, the Rohingya issue, Turkish-German relations after the elections in Germany and the internal affairs of Pakistan.

At the end of 2017, Trump's addled declaration on Jerusalem surprised the international opinion. Receiving criticisms from the majority of the nation states, Trump's America –despite being a superpower– was left in a stark minority in the United Nations voting process, both in the Security Council and General Assembly. Azzam Tamimi in his commentary presents the events taking place “behind the curtains” that paved the path to Trump's declaration. Despite the events in the Middle East, the world was faced with another humanitarian crisis, this time in Asia. The Rohingya issue has been an open wound for many years but since the second part of 2017, it has been looming large in people's conscious. Jacques Leider calls attention on the fact that victimhood has increasingly come to define the Rohingya's identity as a persecuted minority; however, he argues that designations of victimhood offer a safe zone of protection only in the short-term. According to him, the solution to the Rohingya crisis can be found only via the painful dialogue through history and culture.

Mustafa Yeneroğlu brings to the readers a brief analysis of the Turkey-Germany relations since 2005 to conclude with the latest German federal elections in 2017 and their impact on Turkish-German relations. Yeneroğlu envisages that essential Turkish-German disputes will persist in the short and medium term.

Another current and important development is the political crisis in Pakistan after the resignation of Nawaz Sharif from the position of Prime Minister.

Aiming to answer the question of whether Pakistan is a failed state, Abdullah al-Ahsan examines the significance of Islamic ideas in contemporary Pakistan and offers possible ways to drag Pakistan out of the current political stagnation.

Nevzet Çelik and Sevinç Alkan Özcan discuss the secularization in Turkey and Tunisia respectively. Çelik argues that Turkey's own secular model, *laiklik*, which has its roots in Kemalism, was not aimed at the separation of religion and state but first to control it and finally to try to minimize it from the public sphere. Özcan, on the other hand, asserts that after the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia there has been a shift from the dominance of the French type of authoritarian, exclusivist and monopolistic laicism to a pluralistic understanding of secularization, influenced by the resurgence of political Islam brought through the Ennahda Party.

Shamkhal Abilov, by focusing on external and internal factors, in his article reflects on the possible reasons why Azerbaijan accuses the OSCE Minsk Group of being biased when it comes to the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The last article of this issue, written by Abdolmoghset Banikamal and Wahabuddin Raëes, discusses Iran's educational diplomacy which is used as a strategy to penetrate policy-making circles of the hosting states. To support their argument Banikamal and Raëes focus on the activities of Al-Mustafa International University activities in Malaysia and Afghanistan.

To summarize, in a time when the unipolarity of the international system is highly questioned, China is emerging as a new power that could challenge many of the current global powers. *Insight Turkey*, through this issue, intends to provide a general background regarding the global challenges posed by China and the regional dynamics that are faced as a result of China's foreign policies. This issue aims to provide the necessary background to understand China's foreign policies and some of the latest developments in the international arena. ■

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