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## EDITOR'S NOTE

MUHİTTİN ATAMAN

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Türkiye is currently commemorating the centenary of the proclamation of the Republican regime. After signing the Lausanne Peace Treaty with the victorious powers of the First World War on July 24, 1923, the Turkish state changed the regime from monarchy to republic. Therefore, although it was designed as a new state by transforming its capital city from the imperial İstanbul to Ankara, the Republic of Türkiye is the successor state of the Ottoman Empire. Most state institutions such as the Council of the State (*Danıştay*) and the Turkish Police Service (*Türk Polis Teşkilatı*), both established in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are inherited from the Ottomans.

The establishment of the Republican regime as a continuation of the Ottoman Empire, a global power extending over three continents, can be compared with the birth of a phoenix out of its ashes. According to the Greek and Egyptian mythology, the phoenix is a bird that throws itself into fire after living for centuries and is reborn from its ashes. It is believed that the main reason for this suicidal act is the distress caused by living in the same pattern for a long time, since it desires to return as a different bird from the ashes. Similarly, many historians and political scientists consider the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War as a suicidal act. Following the collapse of the Ottoman

Empire, after the war, the Turkish state was born out of its ashes, changed its pattern of government in 1923 and established a new regime.

However, domestic, regional and global conditions and developments did not allow Türkiye, the phoenix, to spread its wings. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Türkiye largely followed a defensive domestic and foreign policy. While it tried to build a new “nation” and consolidate the new regime at the domestic level, Türkiye tried to follow a passive and reactive policy towards external developments at the international level. Türkiye secured its borders during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and entered into the NATO alliance, with the Western world against the Soviet threat, for the second half. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Türkiye experienced an identity crisis in the first decade of the post-Cold War era.

Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the AK Party, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, came to power and largely restructured Türkiye’s domestic and foreign policies. At the domestic setting, President Erdoğan and the AK Party successfully normalized state-society relations, made peace with its history, abolished the long-time bureaucratic tutelage, and decreased pressure on certain social groups excluded from the state structure such as the religious groups, Kurds, and Alevis. Radical changes, which are described as a “quiet revolution” by Turkish and foreign observers, were made in different issue areas such as education, health, infrastructure, and economy.

Since 2002, the successive AK Party governments under the leadership of President Erdoğan redefined Türkiye’s foreign policy orientation. Ankara has completed many mega infrastructural projects over the last two decades. After increasing its economic power and military capacity at the national level, Türkiye began to take initiatives and to play a leadership role in its regions. Accordingly, it improved its relations with the Turkic and Muslim worlds. Furthermore, it expanded its sphere of influence and started to deal with global issues. By increasing its effectiveness in international platforms, Türkiye began to contribute to resolving global problems.

Just before the centennial commemoration of the Turkish Republic in October 2022, President Erdoğan unveiled a new foreign policy vision known as the ‘Century of Türkiye.’ This strategic discourse aims to establish a ‘Turkish Axis’ at the onset of Türkiye’s second century. Within this context, President Erdoğan emphasized that Türkiye’s path to achieving autonomy in international politics hinges on breaking free from internal and external tutelage.

For several years, Türkiye has been meticulously preparing to adapt to shifts in the global political landscape and the evolving balance of power. This new Turkish foreign policy vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century carries forward the nation’s

historical pursuit of greater autonomy and a broader sphere of influence, a quest that spans the entirety of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, what sets the current foreign policy orientation apart from the previous century is its approach to alliance formation. Under the rule of the AK Party, Türkiye has undergone a paradigm shift by diversifying its foreign relationships and fostering strategic engagements. This transformation, coupled with President Erdoğan's charismatic leadership and two decades of political stability, has provided Türkiye with a unique opportunity to expand its sphere of influence on a global scale, akin to a triumphant rebirth like that of a phoenix.

The year 2023 holds immense significance for Türkiye, as it marked (among others) not only one of the most pivotal elections -with local, regional and global implications, but also the centenary of the Republic's establishment. Consequently, throughout this year, *Insight Turkey* has been dedicated to delivering in-depth analyses of Türkiye's domestic affairs and foreign policies. To complete the picture, this issue of *Insight Turkey* embarks on a profound exploration, delving into the progress Türkiye has achieved over the past century. It also shines a spotlight on the Century of Türkiye vision, which outlines the nation's aspirations for the upcoming century. The goal is to offer a comprehensive analysis, examining Türkiye's historical evolution and transformation, identifying the catalysts behind these changes, and ultimately, shedding light on what these developments signify for Türkiye's future.

In line with this objective, the latest issue of *Insight Turkey* features a total of 5 comprehensive commentaries. Among these, 2 commentaries delve deeply into the evolution of Turkish foreign policy, while the remaining 3 offer valuable insights into various aspects of bilateral relations. Additionally, the issue includes a collection of 8 research articles, although it's worth noting that 3 of these articles are off-topic.

The commentary section opens with the significant insights shared by Hakan Fidan, the newly appointed Foreign Minister of the Republic of Türkiye, concerning the Turkish foreign policy vision. Fidan's commentary underscores the dynamic shifts in geopolitical landscapes, the escalating global challenges, and the position of Türkiye in this changing international system. He emphasizes Türkiye's aspiration to emerge as a pivotal player, characterized by inclusivity and efficacy, capable of addressing the pressing global and regional issues. Fidan asserts that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, Türkiye is resolutely committed to shaping the foundations for enduring peace and prosperity within its region and beyond, all while adeptly safeguarding its national interests amidst a turbulent global milieu.

In the second commentary, Klaus Jurgens focuses on discovering the underlying reasons for the development of Türkiye's modern foreign policy. Instead of

pursuing bilateral relations with individual countries, he aims to identify the catalyst that triggered the first measurable change in the country's approach to foreign policy. According to the author, in more than two decades Türkiye has made progress towards becoming a fully integrated and often trend-setting international actor.

From a historical perspective, Ali Bakir considers Türkiye's foreign policy towards the Middle East, a region deeply intertwined with Türkiye's heritage. The author examines Türkiye's approach to the region from the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne to the rise of the AK Party in the early 2000s, reflecting both its historical ties and strategic imperatives; he emphasizes the concepts of reactivity, assertiveness, autonomy, diplomacy, neutrality, revisionism, and pro-activeness. As a result, the commentary offers insights into the evolving nature of Türkiye's versatile and adaptable foreign policy and role in the Middle East over the last 100 years (1923-2023).

In the following commentaries, while Dolapo Fakuade looks at Türkiye-Africa relations from the perspective of humanitarian aid and security agreements, Alessia Chiriatti examines Türkiye-Italy relations through food diplomacy and membership in joint international organizations. Dolapo emphasizes that Türkiye does not have a significant colonial history on the continent, unlike other European countries, and evaluates the relations with Africa in recent years through the concept of soft power, concluding that the relations are gradually strengthening. Using examples of Türkiye's security and humanitarian aid deployments in Somalia, Libya and Nigeria, he argues that the relationship between Türkiye and African countries has resulted in more promising and positive impacts on the continent, not least due to relations arising from historical ties with the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Chiriatti discusses Italy-Türkiye relations through food diplomacy and NATO membership, establishing parallels between the current global diplomacy, especially in the midst of the Ukraine crisis. She also explores how Türkiye uses food diplomacy, such as the Black Sea Grain Initiative, to strengthen its regional and global influence.

As stated above, the Century of Türkiye vision is the main highlight of this issue. Within this perspective, Muhittin Ataman, in his article, provides a comprehensive analysis of Türkiye's developing foreign policy in recent years, examines the changes and transformations in depth, and discusses the basic principles and goals that define Türkiye's new foreign policy vision. Ataman argues that President Erdoğan, after a tough struggle against both domestic and foreign tutelage, managed to achieve strategic autonomy in Turkish foreign policy and built a strong economy and increased its military capacity at the national level. The author also argues that Türkiye began to take initiative and play a leadership role at the regional level by improving its relations with

both Turkic and Muslim countries, and claims that it also increased its status at the global level by diversifying its relations with other actors.

In the next research article, Hasan Yükselen delves into what he perceives as the emergence of a new strategic discourse in Turkish foreign policy, referred to as the Century of Türkiye. Yükselen explores the various factors that play a pivotal role in shaping this discourse, elucidates how the institution perceives structural changes, examines Türkiye's positioning in response to shifts in the international political system, global economy, and geography. Furthermore, he analyzes both the potential dangers and promises, associated with this strategic direction, and delves into the specific content and components of this emerging discourse.

Focusing especially on the naval strategies, Serkan Balkan and Murat Yeşiltaş aim to examine the evolution of Türkiye's naval strategy from a coastal defense-focused concept to an assertive concept with a broader geopolitical perspective. Balkan and Yeşiltaş offer an in-depth analysis of the evolution of Türkiye's maritime strategy from the early years of the Republic to the present day. Furthermore, they examine various contextual factors influencing the transformation of Türkiye's naval forces, including the intra-institutional context within the Turkish Armed Forces, the discursive context regarding dominant geopolitical narratives, and the geostrategic context regarding the operationalization of Turkish naval strategy.

Shifting our focus to one of the most contentious subjects concerning Türkiye, *Insight Turkey* presents two research articles that offer diverse perspectives on the Türkiye-Europe relations. Firstly, Kemal İnat and Filiz Cicioğlu analyze the important developments and general trends in Türkiye-Europe relations in the last century and put forward the main argument that while European countries were the regions with which Türkiye had the closest economic and political relations at the time of the establishment of the Republic, Europe is gradually losing this position. In this article, the authors discuss why the relevant countries chose to pursue a policy of pressure and sanctions against Türkiye's democratically elected AK Party government and how the Turkish government reacted to such behavior. In the other research article focused on Türkiye-Europe relations, Hasan Ulusoy and Oğuz Güngörmez examine the discourses of right-wing populist parliamentarians in the European Parliament (EP) towards Türkiye from a social constructivist perspective. By comparatively analyzing the 2009-2014 and 2014-2019 parliamentary periods, the authors reveal which discursive strategies the MPs used in their statements about Türkiye and what kind of a representation of Türkiye they built in the EP.

From our off-topic pieces, Ewa Czarkowska and Magdalena Kumelska-Koniecko aim to analyze the U.S.' Middle East strategy in the context of the ongoing dis-

tribution of power in the region under the influence of the Iran-Russia-Türkiye triangle, using the example of the Syrian civil war. In the following off-topic research article, Mehmet Öztürk and Melih Duman focus on the development of Türkiye's relations with Africa by using the role theory and documentary source screening based on Ministry of Foreign Affairs sources. Last but not least, Kıvanç Ulusoy and Pınar Atakara examine the current Cyprus conflict amid Eastern Mediterranean developments contending that the energy discoveries have escalated tensions rather than fostering a solution. Furthermore, they argue that the conflict's path since the Greek Cypriot administration's EU membership in 2004 reflects a 'joint decision trap,' with EU inaction leading Türkiye to adopt a traditional hard power strategy.

In light of these crucial topics, *Insight Turkey* has included in this issue valuable research that both reflects on Turkish foreign policy from historical perspectives and looks ahead to the future. This exploration is part of our third special issue of the year, commemorating the Centennial of the Republic of Türkiye and unveiling the vision of the Century of Türkiye. We are confident that the thought-provoking and enlightening discussions within this issue will greatly benefit our esteemed readers. ■