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INSIGHT

T Ü R K İ Y E



THE CENTURY OF TÜRKİYE

REBORN FROM THE ASHES

KEMAL İNAY, ALİ BAKIR, MURAT YEŞİLTAS, ALESSIA CHIRIATTE, HASAN ULUBOY,
HASAN YÜRSÖLEN, MAGDALENA KUMELSKA, FİLİZ CİCİOĞLU, KRİSTİN GUSOP

Turkish Foreign Policy at the Turn of
the Century of Türkiye

MUKİM FIDAN

Re-Defining Türkiye's International
Relations

KLAUS FÜRGENS

The Century of Türkiye

MUHTEREM ARAMAN

Türkiye-Africa Relations

DELAPÖ FAKURDE

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EDITOR'S NOTE

MUHİTTİN ATAMAN

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 19th 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 20th 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 20th 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 21st 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 21st 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 20th 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 21st 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. ■

stream leadership of the Rohingya generally has not used political violence. According to the author, the violence against the Rohingya in 2012, the ensuing mass incarceration, and the disenfranchisement of the Rohingya in 2015 prompted some Rohingyas to rethink the usefulness of peaceful strategies. In this context, attention is drawn to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) organization, which attacked state security posts in northern Rakhine in October 2016, following the increasing violence and human rights violations by the Tatmadaw. On the other hand, it is claimed that the absence of an incriminating decision by the UNSC against the Tatmadaw facilitated the Tatmadaw's actions.

Chapter 8 and 9 is a review of the international aid and action taken for the Rohingya community and an assertion that a change in the domestic political environment is re-

quired for a solution. This change is said to require serious internal opposition, including from the civilian government to the brutal practices of the Tatmadaw. It outlines some (admittedly limited) political opportunities that could contribute to improvements in the Rohingya. However, according to the author, there seems to be little hope for the Rohingya community.

The book covers human rights violations, which the author describes as genocide, experienced by the Rohingya people; the Myanmar ruler's view of the Rohingya people; and how these people were made stateless in its historical and current dimensions. The author's field research, not only through documents, increases the analytical power of the study. This book is a comprehensive study for researchers and scientists interested in this subject.

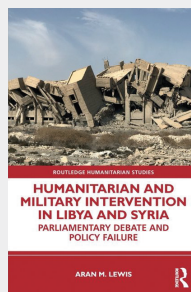
Humanitarian and Military Intervention in Libya and Syria: Parliamentary Debate and Policy Failure

By Aran M. Lewis

Routledge, 2023, 220 pages, £120.00, ISBN: 9781003317630

Reviewed by Recep Şehitoğlu, Gaziantep University

In recent years, the literature on Libya and Syria has significantly expanded. Aran M. Lewis's *Humanitarian and Military Intervention in Libya and Syria: Parliamentary Debate and Policy Failure* is valuable work in this field in terms of examining the complexities and challenges surrounding humanitarian and military interventions in the conflicts in Libya and Syria. In the book, the author discusses the parliamentary debates and policy



decisions that shaped the international response to these crises and the contradictions that emerged as a result.

The book consists of nine chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. The methodology chosen to divide the chapters into headings and analyze them separately is influential. The author used thematic analysis, which is a qualitative data analysis system,

as a research method since the study is supported by large data sets. In this respect, the study strengthens its claim of being original. Based on the thematic analysis method, dozens of themes related to humanitarian intervention are listed according to the number of repetitions by the speakers selected from the British Parliament and this serves as a data source for the study. On the other hand, the contradictions between the good intentions mentioned in these themes and the actions taken and the negative consequences caused by these actions are investigated.

Considering the debates on Libya and Syria in general, as an example, the themes in the Libya debates section of the study stand out as follows: The humanitarian theme encouraging humanitarian and military intervention, regime change, the protection of lives, the theme of lost/misdirected weapons, commercial opportunities for the United Kingdom.

On the other hand, the five main themes under the other pillar of the study, the Syria debate, can be listed as follows: The theme of killing civilians as an act requiring regime change, oppressive government, humanitarian aid, weapons of mass destruction, the theme of supporting the opposition.

The author argues that the P3 members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Britain, the U.S., and France), who were ambivalent about the intervention in Syria but acted swiftly in the military intervention in Libya, caused violations in the NATO-led intervention and started the process that led to contradictions. The fact that the British government, which supported the acceleration of this process, received 557 out of 570 votes in favor of the House of Commons increases Britain's influence in the intervention.

According to the author, although the British government was able to convince the parliament by justifying the military intervention on liberal grounds and the protection of civilians, the abandonment of Libya at its most vulnerable moment shows that the humanitarian justification for intervention was ignored. The withdrawal of NATO planes from the country when they should have been protecting the city as the rebels advanced was enough to topple the dictator Gaddafi, but it should not be overlooked that he was replaced by more tyrants. Ironically, NATO's declaration of the successful end of the mission in Libya has widened the anarchy in Libya and made it more difficult for civilians to survive. The relative freedom, rule of law, security, and prosperity that existed under Gaddafi has been reduced to much worse levels. Ultimately, NATO and the West's withdrawal from Libya at a time of need show that they are not capable and/or willing to rebuild the country.

The book's chapters on Syria also mention that the British Parliament was affected by the negative military interventions in Iraq and Libya. Moreover, the fact that Russia and China, the permanent representatives of the Security Council, are not in favor of intervention in Syria and insist on Assad shows that the process will manifest itself in a different way than in Libya. As a matter of fact, the P3 countries intervened in Syria by supporting the anti-government rebels (military training, weapons, armor, and salaries). These interventions weakened the government while protracted internal conflicts impoverished the population. Moreover, the weakening of the parties in Syria created a power vacuum, which led to the expansion of the sphere of influence of terrorist organizations. Consequently, the policies that the West said it would implement under the theme of hu-

humanitarian aid led to worse living conditions for the people living in the region.

In the following chapters, the author emphasizes that the West's refusal to host millions of refugees in Europe, which has rapidly increased as a result of its policies in Libya and Syria, has actually turned the aid process, which was carried out as humanitarian aid, into a humanitarian disaster campaign. The author then compares the debates on Libya and Syria and argues that the failure and protracted nature of foreign intervention in Syria have led to the theme of intervention being more prominent in the British Parliament.

Although the book was published in 2023, the fact that it does not address all the difficulties experienced after the interventions in the relevant countries stands out as an important deficiency. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in late 2019 and which even strong countries had difficulty in combating without anarchy, had worse consequences in Libya and Syria, which were weakened by foreign interventions. However, it was observed that this situation was not covered in the book.

In conclusion, the book draws attention to the tendency of the British government to seek political support for military purposes through deception. The long-term negative effects of the active management of this situ-

ation in the international arena in Libya and Syria are mentioned. The author argues that these negativities have played an important role in shaping the diminishing willingness of Members of Parliament in the UK to support the use of force for humanitarian reasons. Apart from Iraq, the negative experiences of the interventions in Syria and Libya, which are examined in the book, seem to have influenced decision-making mechanisms for future interventions.

Taken as a whole, the book sheds light on the political, strategic, and historical factors shaping the international response to interventions. Thus, it clearly responds to the discourses in the field of international politics that polemicize Western interventions in the respective countries by using thematic analysis. It is considered to be an important work for students and researchers interested in the field in terms of presenting the Western-led interventions in Libya and Syria, their results and contradictions in an unbiased and clear manner. On the other hand, it stands out as an important contribution to the literature on international relations and conflict resolution, as well as a courageous publication in terms of processing the negativities. In this context, the book titled *Humanitarian and Military Intervention in Libya and Syria: Parliamentary Debate and Policy Failure* written by Aran M. Lewis is recommended by me as a book that should be read by those working in this field.