



# Turkey's new dynamics in domestic and foreign policy

Bülent Aras & Şule Toktaş

To cite this article: Bülent Aras & Şule Toktaş (2010) Turkey's new dynamics in domestic and foreign policy, , 12:1, 1-3, DOI: [10.1080/19448950903507602](https://doi.org/10.1080/19448950903507602)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448950903507602>



Published online: 18 Feb 2010.



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## EDITORIAL

### Turkey's new dynamics in domestic and foreign policy

BÜLENT ARAS and ŞULE TOKTAŞ

Turkey has been under constant change in the 2000s. Turkey was accepted as a candidate country to the EU in 1999, the same year that the leader of the Kurdish terrorist organization PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured. The National View Movement split in 2000 and the Justice and Development Party (JDP) was formed by younger leaders who denied the legacy of a pro-Islamic establishment and opted for a more neo-conservative ideology with a liberal economic model. Since 2002, the Party has been winning the majority of the votes both in national and local elections and rules the country. Under the JDP government, Turkey has gone through a liberalization process, referred to by some as a 'silent revolution'.

The liberalization encompassed not only an economic liberalization, financial reformation and immense privatization which ended in the minimalization of state involvement in the economy but also a political liberalization. Legal reforms sometimes enacted in the name of EU membership requirements and sometimes in the name of democratization changed the traditional state–society relations outlook in Turkey. The Turkish state no longer dominates the political sphere by itself. What we witness is more and more involvement of individuals, civil society and peripheral segments and circulation of controversial ideas and new social movements in the political life. This special issue is an analysis of the change that Turkey has been going through in the 2000s. It is at the same time an assessment of Turkish politics with its domestic and international aspects.

The issue incorporates seven papers on Turkish foreign policy and domestic politics. Although it is no longer realistic or politically correct to make a division between local and global politics in the age of globalization, we decided to give a brief picture of the happenings occurring at the national and international levels all of which somewhat point to a new pattern in Turkish politics. This new pattern is marked by a rise of a political language disclosed with societal dynamics. It is in this context that the authors, all of whom are experts in their field, dwell upon their themes.

The issue starts with Turkish party politics. Burhanettin Duran explores current trends in Islamism in Turkey and identifies an impoverishment of the Islamist discourses due to Kemalist securitization and control over religion in the name of secularism. Duran argues that a new phase of Islamism has been taking place in Turkey since 2002 with the JDP coming to power. Bayram Ali Soner

carries the discussion on the JDP to its policies towards the non-Muslim minorities. Soner tackles the question of to what extent the JDP government has distanced itself from traditional (in the sense of discriminatory) Turkish policies towards minorities and accommodated the claims of minorities on the basis of universal rights and liberties. Cagla Diner and Şule Toktaş, in a similar vein, construct a profile of contemporary Turkish politics through the lenses of another politically marginalized group—women—and feminist movements. They illustrate the evolution of the women's movement in Turkey and the contemporary challenges posed by the rise of Kurdish nationalism, Islamic revivalism and NGO-ization in women's issues. Ahmet İçduygu outlines the historical–structural background of the issues of international migration within the scope of EU–Turkey relations. İçduygu makes an assessment of population movements from Turkey to European countries.

Turkish foreign policy has undergone a similar transformation process. The change in domestic politics led to a radical transformation of foreign policy with a multi-dimensional and active involvement in regional policy and international politics. Turkey's foreign policy elite foresees a central role for Turkey in the neighbouring areas and in international platforms. Turkey contributes to peace and stability in the neighbouring regions with the self-confidence gained through democratization and de-securitization at home. Bülent Aras and Aylin S. Gorener focus on the role conception of Turkey's new ruling elite in foreign policy. They discuss ideational bases of the JDP in foreign policy and aim to understand the policy-making style of the JDP government. Aras and Gorener analyse the policy statement of Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan to better exemplify and explain the ideational bases of the JDP's foreign policy. İbrahim Kalın discusses Turkish–American relations in the recent era. The main focus of his paper is to discover the changing dynamics of the Turkish–American relation under the new US President Barack Obama. He provides a road map for the relations with potential and actual cooperation areas. Hakan Fidan analyses Turkey's foreign policy toward Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. He undertakes the difficult work of detailing Turkish foreign policy toward the new republics of Central Asia in a periodical order. He mentions about early enthusiasm and the recent more rational policy line toward Central Asia. He explains the change in Turkey's Central Asian policy through the new premises of the Turkish foreign policy, which aims to reach out beyond the immediate neighbourhood through a multi-dimensional and active diplomacy.

**Bülent Aras** is a professor of international relations at Istanbul Technical University. He is the author of *Palestinian–Israeli Peace Process and Turkey* (Novascience, 1998), *New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position* (Frank Cass, 2002), *Turkey and the Greater Middle East* (TASAM, 2004) and co-editor of *Oil and Geopolitics in Caspian Sea Region* (Praeger, 1999) and *September 11 and World Politics* (FUP, 2004). His research interests include Turkish foreign policy, Middle Eastern politics and Central Asia.

**Address for correspondence:** ITU Ayazaga Kampusu, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Bolumu, Maslak 34469, Istanbul, Turkey. E-mail: arasb@itu.edu.tr

**Şule Toktaş** is an associate professor of political science at the Department of International Relations of Kadir Has University. She has published *Immigration to Turkey* and various articles on international migration, women's studies and ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey. She received the Scientific and Technological Research Council (TUBITAK) Award for Young Scientists in 2009.

**Address for correspondence:** Kadir Has University, Department of International Relations, 34083, Cibali, Istanbul, Turkey. E-mail: [sule@khas.edu.tr](mailto:sule@khas.edu.tr)