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EDITOR'S NOTE

MUHİTTİN ATAMAN

As 2024 concludes, it stands as a culmination of the seismic shifts and tensions that have tested the very foundations of the international system. Amid unprecedented developments, Türkiye reaffirmed its role as an established and prominent player, embodying a foreign policy that is multilayered, multi-axial, and multidimensional, even as the international system was constantly tested. At its core, Türkiye's foreign policy approach is humanitarian, earning it the reputation of being the guardian of the vulnerable and the protector of the voiceless.

Beyond the ongoing genocide in Gaza, the international system witnessed defining moments such as the abrupt death of Iran's top officials in a helicopter crash and the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. The re-election of Donald Trump as President of the United States further underscored the year's unpredictability. Additionally, elections in approximately 70 countries, encompassing half the world's population, saw incumbent parties faltering under public dissatisfaction with economic disruptions and the lingering effects of the pandemic, paving the way for far-right populist movements.

The return of Trump signaled a marked shift in U.S. foreign policy. His expected "America First! 2.0" protectionist stance and tax cuts raised concerns about the future of multilateralism and global trade, leaving European countries bracing for potential economic ramifications. Meanwhile, the ousting of Assad, after decades of autocratic rule marked by atrocities committed against civilians, signaled the end of an era and the beginning of a new dawn for Syria, one fraught with both challenges and opportunities for the nation's future.

Nonetheless, on a broader scale, global instability defined the year 2024. In Europe, domestic crises resulted in governmental collapses in Germany and France, while South Korea experienced significant political turmoil following

a failed attempt to impose martial law. The ongoing war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza further strained the international system, exposing the fragility of democratic institutions and the continued erosion of multilateral norms. These profound challenges underscore the pressing need for a reimagined and resilient global governance framework capable of addressing the complexities of an increasingly volatile World.

As it has always been a pivotal actor in promoting regional stability and peace, Türkiye continued to assume a leading role in efforts to stabilize the region. With Assad's regime toppled, Ankara positioned itself as a key player in Syria's reconstruction including plans to provide electricity and collaborate on hydrocarbon projects, signaling Türkiye's intent to integrate Syrian energy infrastructure into its sphere. Concurrently, Türkiye brought to the table initiatives for a maritime demarcation agreement with Syria, reinforcing Ankara's leadership in regional stability.

Relations with Israel reached a critical point amidst Türkiye's unequivocal condemnation of the genocide in Gaza. Since the Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Israeli aggression has resulted in over 44,000 civilian casualties, including more than 16,000 children, 105,000 injured and with many others facing famine, sickness, and a lack of essential resources under relentless bombardment. Türkiye, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has consistently advocated for a two-state solution to ensure dignity and freedom for the Palestinian people, while persistently calling for an end to the ongoing genocide. However, the global community, including many of the world's "so-called" democracies, failed to support Türkiye's peace proposals and calls for halting the genocide. Despite this, Türkiye's principled stance resonated at the United Nations Headquarters, the Security Council, and across the globe. In November, Türkiye severed all its diplomatic ties with Israel, a decisive move that underscored its strong alignment with international law, humanitarian principles, and moral values, prompted by Israel's unwillingness to end the genocide in Gaza.

In 2024, Türkiye's humanitarian diplomacy continued its longstanding expansion beyond its immediate neighborhood. In Africa, Ankara further reinforced its influence through ongoing mediation efforts, infrastructure investments, and cultural diplomacy. By exporting cutting-edge drone technology, Türkiye has bolstered its strategic foothold. Simultaneously, educational scholarships and media outreach have bolstered Türkiye's position as an equal partner, emphasizing cooperation in contrast to the traditional asymmetric approaches of ex-colonial Western powers toward the region.

As a result of Türkiye's multiaxial foreign policy, Ankara adeptly balanced its NATO commitments with independent initiatives, reflecting its ability to navigate the complexities of an evolving global order. Türkiye's multiaxial ap-

proach, engaging with both the West and East, as well as the North and South, demonstrated a nuanced and adaptive strategy that reinforced its position as a central actor in international relations. This approach allowed Ankara to foster robust relations with key global players across diverse political and economic blocks while maintaining a steadfast commitment to regional and global stability and cooperation. By strategically aligning its defense, diplomatic, and economic policies, Türkiye advanced its influence and credibility on the global stage, showcasing its ability to contribute to resolving international challenges and ensuring a balanced and inclusive approach to global governance.

For Türkiye, 2024 was a year of assertiveness and proactive diplomacy. Leveraging geopolitical shifts, Türkiye amplified its influence on regional and global stages. Its strategic vision seamlessly blended humanitarianism with calculated diplomacy, offering a beacon of hope amid global turbulence. As the world transitions to 2025, Türkiye's foreign policy underscores the responsibility for redefining her role, standing as a symbol of resilience and inspiration. As the guardian of the vulnerable and the protector of the voiceless, Türkiye remains as a 'beacon of hope,' not only for the neighboring region but for the entire world.

Within this framework, this issue of *Insight Turkey* seeks to address many of these topics, offering in-depth analyses to enhance our understanding not only of Turkish foreign policy but also of the regional and global dynamics in which Türkiye plays a pivotal role.

In recent years, public diplomacy has become a central pillar of Türkiye's foreign policy, particularly since the establishment of the Directorate of Communications in 2018. Therefore, understanding Türkiye's approach to public diplomacy is crucial. In his research article, Oğuz Güner provides a comprehensive analysis of Türkiye's public diplomacy ecosystem. He delves into its practices, explores the transformative impact of institutionalization, and examines the concept of nation branding as a key component of this evolution.

In the same vein, Ali Çiçek and Ali Asker argue that while Türkiye has achieved significant success in its public diplomacy efforts, the time has come for Türkiye and Azerbaijan —united by the deeply rooted concept of "one nation, two states," reflected in public opinion and their cooperative endeavors— to expand their strategic partnership into the sphere of public diplomacy. Çiçek and Asker explore how Türkiye can share its public diplomacy expertise with Azerbaijan and examine the potential for collaborative public diplomacy initiatives between the two nations.

As mentioned earlier, defense continues to be a critical domain in Turkish foreign policy due to its strategic significance. In this context, Recep Şehitoğlu and

İbrahim Karataş offer a fresh perspective in their article, arguing that the rise of Türkiye's defense sector has contributed to establishing a form of *Pax Turka* in certain conflicts. They suggest that as the Turkish defense industry develops more advanced weaponry, the influence of *Pax Turka* could become increasingly pronounced, particularly in parts of the region. Their study further predicts that the scope of *Pax Turka* may expand significantly by the 2030s.

The Kurdish Question has long been a pivotal element in Türkiye's domestic affairs, with significant implications for its foreign policy. While this issue is analyzed in detail regarding the current government's policies, there is a noticeable gap in the discussion concerning the stance of opposition parties, particularly the CHP. Addressing this gap, Halime Kökçe and Ramazan Akkır's article examines and compares the policies of two CHP leaders, namely Deniz Baykal and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. They argue that during Baykal's tenure, the CHP's approach to the Kurdish Question was largely shaped by concerns about protecting the regime. In contrast, under Kılıçdaroğlu, the party's stance shifted to focus more on the socio-economic challenges faced by Kurds, marking a partial departure from nationalist policies.

The growing importance of Türkiye in regional and global affairs has become particularly evident in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, where it has emerged as a key actor striving to end the conflict through various initiatives. This issue of *Insight Turkey* focuses on this topic with both a commentary and a research article. Specifically, Barış Çağlar's commentary emphasizes that the true adversary in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is not any specific nation or faction but the looming threat of nuclear war, arguing that preventing nuclear escalation must be the foremost priority. The author also highlights how Türkiye, by promoting dialogue and facilitating peace negotiations, exemplifies a strategic and alternative approach to conflict resolution, one that seeks not only to prevent further escalation but also to lay the groundwork for lasting peace. On the other hand, Merve Suna Özel Özcan, in her qualitative study, examines the mediating role of militarist and internationalist sentiments in shaping the relationship between the personal values of Turkish society and their attitudes toward the war in Ukraine.

This issue of *Insight Turkey* also places significant emphasis on developments in the Middle East, particularly the events in Palestine and Iran's policies. Within this framework, the commentaries by Mahmoud al-Rantisi and Mustafa Caner provide detailed analyses of these topics. Specifically, al-Rantisi explores the impact of Yahya Sinwar's martyrdom on the Palestinian resistance and the Hamas movement, offering also an analysis of how Israel consistently misunderstands the mindset of the Palestinian resistance, a dynamic that is expected to persist in the future. Furthermore, Mustafa Caner's commentary focuses on Iran-Israel relations, examining Iran's policy toward Israel through historical,

strategic, and contemporary lenses. The analysis delves into Iran's strategic calculations and the balancing actions and mechanisms it has employed in the post-October 7 period to avert a full-scale war in the region.

Two additional research articles focusing on Iran are also included in this issue. The first, by Hakkı Uygur, offers a detailed and significant analysis of the evolution and institutionalization of Iran's intelligence apparatus, including the internal dynamics and developments among its intelligence agencies. The second article, by Yousof Qorashi, examines the efforts of Iran and India to expand their influence in Central Asia, highlighting how the U.S. has not only obstructed these ambitions but also hindered cooperation between the two states.

This issue also addresses developments in Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan. First, Mohamad Hassan Soueidan's article highlights two major projects in Iraq: the Grand Faw Port and the Dry Canal. According to the author, these initiatives, which aim to connect Iraq with Europe through Türkiye and Syria, have the potential to transform Iraq's role in global trade and reshape its economic landscape. Second, Shamkhal Abilov, Natig Abdullayev, and Eldar Hamzalı shed light on the Sumgait events of 1988 and the Khojaly massacre of 1992, focusing on Russia's involvement in both cases. Furthermore, their analysis also examines whether Azerbaijan and Armenia demonstrate tendencies of denialism when comparing these events. Third, Shahid Ahmed Afridi uses Afghanistan as a case study, employing post-structuralism to deconstruct the theoretical foundations of the "liberal peace" order. He critically examines the U.S. peacebuilding framework in Afghanistan, offering fresh insights into its limitations and implications.

Last but not least, this issue of *Insight Turkey* features a commentary that examines the implications of the forthcoming Trump Administration for the global order. Written by Kılıç Buğra Kanat, the commentary provides a detailed analysis of the potential policies of the new administration toward key global actors, including Russia, China, and the Middle East.

As we bid farewell to another year, *Insight Turkey* proudly concludes its 26th year of publication, marked by impactful and comprehensive analyses of Turkish foreign policy and regional developments. As we prepare to embark on a new year, we are excited to bring fresh topics, innovative perspectives, and in-depth insights to our readers. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our readers for their continued support and engagement. We look forward to your continued readership and invite you to join us on this journey as we explore the evolving dynamics of our world in the year ahead. ■

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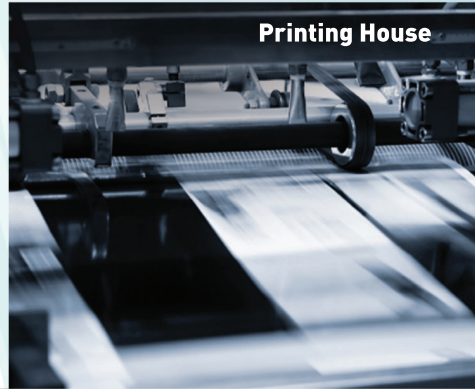
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