



THE TURKISH SONDERWEG: ERDOĞAN'S NEW TURKEY AND ITS ROLE IN THE GLOBAL ORDER

Aslı Aydıntaşbaş



About the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative

The Istanbul Policy Center–Sabancı University–Stiftung Mercator Initiative aims to strengthen the academic, political, and social ties between Turkey and Germany as well as Turkey and Europe. The Initiative is based on the premise that the acquisition of knowledge and the exchange of people and ideas are preconditions for meeting the challenges of an increasingly globalized world in the 21st century. The Initiative focuses on two areas of cooperation, EU/German-Turkish relations and climate change, which are of essential importance for the future of Turkey and Germany within a larger European and global context.

Introduction

About an hour's drive north of Istanbul on a newly built highway stands the city's new airport. "This is not an airport but a monument to victory," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said at its inauguration on October 29, 2018—incidentally, a day that also marked the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey.

The project was controversial—and highly politicized—even before breaking ground, pitting environmentalists and Turkey's secular opposition against the government.¹ When the new airport fully opened in April 2019, travelers passing through it could not help but notice the enormous mosque under construction in front of it. Outside the mosque, a huge poster of Erdoğan bearing the insignia of the Turkish presidency read, "We are building the new Turkey."

By this time, the term "*Yeni Türkiye* (New Turkey)" was known to everyone in the country. Over the past few years, Erdoğan had used it in political rallies as shorthand for the rebirth of a nation under his gaze and in line with his principles. In August 2014, a day before he became Turkey's first popularly elected president (having won 51.8 percent of the vote), Erdoğan wrote on Twitter, "Today is the birthday of the New Turkey. The New Turkey corresponds to new politics, a new economy and a new sociology."²

This paper tries to delve deeper into some of the more fundamental questions on the nature of Turkey's new course: Is the New Turkey simply an Islamist antithesis of the pro-Western Kemalist regime, or is there a more complex, forward-looking ideal behind the country's role in the 21st century? Will the New Turkey be part of the West, an authoritarian ally of Russia and China, or an independent power on the global stage? Is this all about Erdoğan, or will the New Turkey outlast his reign?

Of course, the New Turkey's future is yet to be written. But, the best way to understand the journey that Erdoğan has launched so far is to focus on Turkey's *Sonderweg*, its special path to modernity and in global affairs. The term "Sonderweg" usually refers to Germany's peculiar path from monarchy to liberal democracy, via totalitarianism, with

an emphasis on the social, economic, and political attributes that distinguish Germany from much of the rest of Europe. Similarly, Turkey is an exception in its region, too, with an imperial past and resurgent ambitions. These unique characteristics in domestic and foreign policy have shaped Erdoğan's New Turkey.

Clues for Turkey's *Sonderweg* can be found behind the narrative on New Turkey. In speeches at home and abroad over the next few years, Erdoğan would elaborate that his new philosophy rested on *milli irade* (the will of the people); the end of what he imagined to be Turkey's subservience to external forces; the country's rise as a global power; and a determination to defeat internal and external foes who were bent on hindering its progress.

A significant milestone in the development of the New Turkey was the period that followed the July 2016 attempted coup, which prompted the government to purge Turkey's bureaucracy and judiciary. Another was the April 2017 referendum to change Turkey's governance model from a parliamentary system to a presidential system à la the United States, albeit with fewer checks on the power of the executive—a referendum he barely won, with just 51 percent of the vote against a 49 percent "no." The general election held in June 2018 produced another slim victory, with the alliance between Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the hard-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP) winning 52 percent of the vote. In the run-up to the election, Ali Aslan, writing for a think tank with close ties to the Erdoğan government, echoed the major themes of the AKP's election campaign:

The June 14 [2018] elections are the most political elections in Turkey's history, showcasing the power struggle between the "Old Turkey" and "New Turkey." The vote cast in favor of President Erdoğan, as the actor of change, and AKP/People's Alliance is essentially a vote for the people. This support would enable a political order based on the will of the people and the continuation of the struggle for independence. No matter how you look at it, a vote for the opposition bloc, on the other hand, is a vote for the return to an oligarchical status quo and international dependency.³

While expressions such as “the people’s will,” “independence,” and “sovereignty” have been standard populist slogans for the past century, and they may reveal something about the AKP’s self-image, they do not say much about the deeper character of the regime. So, what is the New Turkey? And what fundamental goals drive its global agenda?

Having defined “New Turkey” as a change agent, Erdoğan used the term in successive elections to refer to the creation of a new order. Even before the introduction of the term in 2014, there had been a significant transformation in Turkey under Erdoğan’s 17-year reign—from the pro-Western Kemalist state run by a secularist bureaucracy to a regional power with ambitions beyond its borders and a strong leader at its center. Ankara’s relationship with its Western allies grew fragile as a more self-assertive Turkey started pursuing an independent policy and forged closer relations with Russia. It has emerged as a key actor in the Middle East. There has also been a rollback of Turkey’s domestic reform process, which was a significant part of its EU accession bid for the first half of Erdoğan’s reign. In all, Turkey seems to have fundamentally changed course in the past decade.

Sonderweg with Echoes of German History

The term *Sonderweg* evokes dilemmas with which Germany has historically wrestled and that will present similar challenges for the New Turkey. *Sonderweg* historically underlined Germany’s revisionist impulses and regional ambitions. It was a term that self-consciously set Germany apart from the rest of Europe. Its use continued through different periods of German history. During the Cold War, the idea of *Sonderweg* often implied that Germany should follow a path that is neither east nor west, one that vacillates “between the pro-Western idealism of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the realist Ostpolitik of Chancellor Willy Brandt,” as Robert Kagan put it.⁴ Proponents of *Sonderweg* thought that an independent course better suited Germany’s interests.

Turkey’s *Sonderweg* will not replicate Germany’s—it will be, by definition, unique. Similar to Germany, the New Turkey’s foreign policy decisions and

dilemmas set it apart from its allies in the West and its new partners in the East. It also rests on the premise that, of all the nations in its immediate neighborhood, Turkey is uniquely positioned to be a hegemon. Turkey’s *Sonderweg* rests on an unusual ideological mix of Turkish nationalism, neo-Ottomanism, and Islamism. This paper argues that *Sonderweg* implies a future that is neither transatlantic nor Eurasian, that is sometimes inward-looking and often unpredictable. Erdoğan’s Turkey will forge its own path, cherry-picking from a list of options and ideologies while remaining non-aligned by virtue of its history, ideology, and strategic aims.

Sonderweg also implies that a nation has a certain idea of itself and the will to translate that idea into a unique role in the world. Turkey’s current leaders believe in a hegemonic future role for Turkey, in contrast to the former cadres of a Kemalist Turkey where external engagement, particularly in the Middle East, was seen as a liability for the survival of the state. Erdoğan’s Turkey sees itself as a resurgent power that will have to maintain a balancing act between various partnerships if it is to maximize its regional influence. When it looks around the globe, it tends to see hostile powers lurking in every corner. It also believes Turkey has a duty to represent and exert influence over Sunni populations beyond its borders. Steadfast loyalty to the West does not fit with Ankara’s vision of its place in the world anymore.⁵ The prevailing sentiment among Turkey’s ruling cadres is that the country can only fulfill its potential and emerge as a major power if it decouples from the West in long-term strategic planning but remains an ally when this fits with its interests.

The paper traces the roots of the New Turkey’s *Sonderweg* to its rise in Turkish nationalism, Erdoğan’s adept fusion of nationalist and Islamist discourse, and the country’s turbulent relationship with its Western partners. Amid allegations that it is drifting away from the West, contemporary Turkey is discovering (and, at times, imagining) a sense of itself as a resurgent power with a unique approach to both domestic affairs and foreign policy. The paper also examines Turkey’s new foreign policy and its relations with Russia to anticipate its future behavior.

A Passing Fancy or a Permanent Reality?

The strong ideological foundations of the New Turkey and the nature of Turkish history suggest that *Sonderweg* is likely to outlive the Erdoğan period. Much foreign policy debate on Turkey is still couched in a U.S.-versus-Russia dichotomy, which is largely misleading. In essence, Turks see their country as a lonely power.⁶ With an ever-weakening belief in the U.S.-backed liberal order, a Europe that looks increasingly self-absorbed, and a Russia that inspires little confidence, Turkey will remain hesitant to plunge in either direction. Ankara's increasing confidence in its own path means that it believes it does not have to choose sides.

There is a precedent for this. For much of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Ottoman Empire believed that it could switch between alliances according to its immediate needs while remaining an independent global power. Modern Turkey was also a lone wolf in the beginning. Until the end of the Second World War, the country remained a non-aligned power—suspicious of the West after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and a war of independence against Western powers. It even engaged in brief periods of rapprochement with the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷ After joining NATO, Turkey occasionally overrode Western objections to act independently, such as establishing trade relations with the Soviets in the 1960s and launching a military incursion into Cyprus in 1974. Similarly, while it helped the U.S. contain Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein throughout the 1990s, Ankara rejected Washington's proposal to deploy tens of thousands of American troops on Turkish soil in the run-up to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

What is different about today's Turkey is its greater sense of estrangement from the United States and increased self-confidence about its future role in the world order. In military terms, the once-predictable NATO partner is now a stronger but unpredictable regional power. Just as Western public discourse questions Turkey's place in Europe or NATO, Turks debate the benefits of being part of the West. Anti-Western sentiments that were buried by the progress Turkey made toward EU accession from 2002 to 2015 have now re-entered the country's mainstream political discussions. Many Turks blame Western states for

the failed coup attempt, for supporting the Gülen movement, or for backing Syrian Kurds. On foreign policy, even secular opponents of the AKP such as the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Good Party (Iyi) have supported Ankara's energy exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean, purchase of the S-400 missile-defense system from Russia, and the launch of a military incursion into Northern Syria.⁸

This wider support for a non-aligned position on strategic matters suggests that, though post-Erdoğan Turkey may rekindle its relations with traditional Western allies, it will likely sustain Turkey's regional entanglements and ambitions. Given the hand-wringing on Turkey in Europe and in the United States, it is doubtful that the West will make a grand offer to Turkey to entice it back into the transatlantic community. Turkey's former aspirations to be part of the EU under a U.S.-led liberal order no longer seem realistic. That order is crumbling: The world has moved on—and so has Turkey. For better or for worse, the country has embarked on its own *Sonderweg*.

“A Carnival of Nationalisms”

Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of Turkey's *Sonderweg* is the rebirth of Turkish nationalism under the guidance of Erdoğan. Nationalism is a necessary ingredient in societies that pursue an independent foreign policy and shun alliances. It casts doubt on normative values, which can restrict the heavy-handed power of the nation-state. It allows Turkey's new elites to make the case that the liberal order has nothing to offer the country as it pursues its grand ambitions.⁹ Nationalism also provides a justification for Turkey's activism outside its borders.

Once an Islamist who denounced nationalism,¹⁰ Erdoğan is now the biggest advocate for a resurgent Turkish empire that plays a major role in great power competition. During the AKP's first two terms, between 2002 and 2011, Erdoğan led reforms that brought Turkey closer to Europe. His advisers sometimes described the party as “Muslim democrats” or “conservative democrats,” suggesting that its brand of Islamism was comparable to the Christian democratic political tradition in Europe.¹¹ Erdoğan also engaged in an on-and-off peace process with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from 2009 to 2015.

But, following the Gezi Park protests and, more overtly, the breakdown of Turkey's peace process with the PKK in 2015, Turkish leaders adopted a more nationalist tone. In the aftermath of the failed coup attempt, the AKP formed an alliance with the MHP—ostensibly to salvage the state and its institutions after purging them of supporters of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gülen, the mastermind of the plot. The two parties entered the 2017 referendum, the 2018 general election, and the 2019 local elections as a formal alliance, pursuing coordinated campaigns that involved strong messaging on security and anti-terrorism, as well as hard-line policies on the Kurdish issue.

The MHP provided the AKP not only with the cadres it needed to fill the bureaucracy and the judiciary after the widespread purge of Gülenists but also with an ideology. The salvation of the state from decline became a rallying point for both political parties after the coup.

Osmosis between the AKP and the MHP has created a unique blend of conservative nationalism sprinkled with Ottomanism, religiosity, and a cult of state worship borrowed from Kemalism. It has, in a sense, provided the domestic justification for *Sonderweg* and an independent foreign policy. Gökhan Bacik notes that Turkey is now a “carnival of nationalisms. The political alternatives presented to citizens are indeed different types of nationalisms: Turkish nationalism, Islamist nationalism, Kemalist nationalism.”¹² It is unsurprising that, in this atmosphere of hyper-nationalism, Erdoğan's speeches are peppered with references to the grandeur of Ottoman and Turkish history. For example, Erdoğan recently tweeted:

This flag will never go down
The prayer will never be silenced
The country never divided
The people never kneel
The state will, God willing, forever survive¹³

The president of Turkey now attends events that he would have shunned a decade ago, such as the annual commemoration of the battle of Malazgirt (Manzikert), which, according to Turkey's nationalist mythology, opened “the gates of Anatolia” to Turkic tribes and started its Turkification in 1071.¹⁴ In a recent appearance at Malazgirt, the president urged young Turks “to live up to the 2023 goals of

the republic [marking the centennial of its founding], be worthy of the 2053 vision of Mehmet the Conqueror, and carry on the moral legacy of [the Seljuk Sultan who led armies in 1071].”¹⁵

The restoration of lost power and nostalgia for the Ottomans are major themes in the New Turkey that resonate among the party faithful. Television dramas that feature Ottoman rulers and conquests—such as *Payitaht* and *Diriliş Ertuğrul*—are often promoted by the government and sometimes even receive the endorsement of Erdoğan himself.¹⁶ Erdoğan's supporters liken his reign to that of Abdülhamid, one of the longest-serving sultans in the final years of the empire, and often compare his opponents to the Young Turks, Christian minorities, and Western powers that opposed and eventually toppled the sultan.¹⁷

Ottomanism is at the heart of *Sonderweg* in that the rulers of modern Turkey want to remind the nation of a glorified past to promise a golden future. However, Erdoğan is not exclusively nationalist, Ottomanist, or Islamist—he is a mixture of all these things. Drawing from Islamism, Kemalism, secularism, nationalism, and Ottomanism, the architects of the New Turkey have created a unique ideology of Erdoğanism that centers on a strong leader. This ideology is purely Turkish and contains inherent tensions, but it now has indoctrinated a generation of conservative Turks—particularly AKP supporters—with the notion that Turkey is destined to forge a unique and independent path in world affairs.

The overarching features of Turkey's neo-nationalism are the cult of state worship, the presence of foreign enemies,¹⁸ and the central role of a strong leader, which is regarded as a necessity for the survival of the state. Indeed, one of the party's main arguments for the 2017 constitutional overhaul was precisely that this transition was a matter of survival for Turkey. Proponents of the New Turkey view their country as a rising power that has shed the trappings of a pro-Western order, found a capable leader, and embarked on a mission to restore the grandeur of a lost empire. Accordingly, the New Turkey is seen as a nation that has emerged from various battles against internal and external foes,¹⁹ including the deep state, the secular elite, Kurdish separatists, and Gülenists, while acquiring the power to redesign the country's bureaucratic structures for a better future.

Beyond Turkey's Borders

A few years ago, Ibrahim Kalin, Erdoğan's senior foreign policy adviser, pushed back against growing criticism of Turkey as isolated in international politics by praising the country's "precious loneliness."²⁰ Today, many Turks see that loneliness as a foregone conclusion and one of the strengths of Turkey's foreign policy.

This "precious loneliness" is also a key part of Turkey's *Sonderweg*. A non-aligned Turkey with ambitions beyond its borders—a country that will work with the West or go around it as needed. It cannot and will not trust foreign powers. The country will take strong geopolitical positions or simply bargain its way into regional matters, charting its own course—as is the case in Turkey's policy on Syria.

This is in sharp contrast to the idea of a "Turkish model" Western policymakers often used in the 2000s in reference to a secular Muslim democracy that was prosperous and firmly anchored in the U.S.-led liberal order.²¹ In the post-9/11 climate, successive U.S. administrations thought that they could use this model to push Middle Eastern regimes toward various shades of democratization and economic reform. Accordingly, presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama both made Turkey a centerpiece of U.S. policy in the region. They defined the U.S.-Turkey relationship as a "strategic partnership"—a label that mattered more in Ankara than in Washington.

Contemporary Turkey wants to define its own interests and avoid a model created in Washington. In his seminal work *Stratejik Derinlik (Strategic Depth)*, former Turkish prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu advocated for a kind of Turkish *Sonderweg*—arguing that in order to fulfill its historical destiny and emerge as a global superpower, Turkey would need to complement its Western orientation with deeper involvement in the Middle East and the Balkans. While Davutoğlu has left office, his approach remains the guiding principle of Turkish foreign policy in Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East in many ways. Turkey no longer contracts its neighborhood policy out to transatlantic institutions or the EU. As seen in Libya, Qatar, or Syria, it has unique policies and goals that stem from being a regional powerhouse. To a large extent, it already is a global power.

Meanwhile, Erdoğan's AKP is also vying for a leadership position in the Sunni world. Following the new

regional fault line in the Middle East, Turkey and Qatar face off against Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. During the AKP's early years in power, the Turkish government worked to expand its political influence throughout the Middle East and North Africa using trade and other instruments of soft power,²² such as exchange visits, tourism, and the export of Turkish cultural products such as its popular television dramas. After the Arab uprisings began in 2011, however, Turkey became eager to support political parties and governments affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly those in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. This placed Turkey at odds with the UAE and Saudi regimes—a split that deepened further with the 2013 military coup in Egypt and the 2018 murder of Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul. From the civil war in Libya to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are on the opposite sides of various regional conflicts. Erdoğan has also been outspoken in his opposition to Israeli policies on Palestinians and has become involved in various humanitarian initiatives in Gaza.

This notion of Turkey as a regional powerhouse is relatively new but, after 17 years of AKP power, is a major influence on Turkish ruling cadres. There are significant differences between Turkey's old generation of transatlanticists and younger diplomats and politicians who believe in Turkey's identity as a regional actor. The latter view their country as a lone wolf, easily betrayed by friends or adversaries. Previous generations of Turkish diplomats thought of Turkey as part of the Western alliance, reliant on the security and prosperity that would come from close proximity to Europe and the United States. The AKP has changed this thinking. Whereas the old generation tended to see Turkey as a weaker power in need of an alliance with the West, the younger generation of bureaucratic cadres does not define Turkey's place in the world order in terms of its proximity to the West. Instead, they believe that Turkey ought to independently reach out to Africa and the Balkans, as well as countries such as China and Russia.

As discussed above, Erdoğan's New Turkey is nationalistic and driven by survival instincts. It has sometimes tried to decouple from Washington on key regional matters, such as the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, sanctions on Iran, the blockade of Qatar, and the Syrian war. Turkey had also devoted greater resources to military expansion (by opening a base in Qatar), sending military aid to Libya, and supporting

non-state actors such as Sunni militia groups in Syria. Turkey established 12 military outposts in Syria's Idlib region and supported Sunni fighters there and along its southern border (as discussed in detail below). Ankara has plans to establish a drone base in Northern Cyprus, where it already has one military base.²³ Turkey also has good relations with the Kurdish regional administration in Iraq, regularly carries out cross-border operations, and maintains a base in the region. Ankara sees the West as a potential partner in some places, such as Idlib, but as an obstacle in others. It is attentive to the divides within the transatlantic camp (Trump versus Europe) and within Europe on issues that range from Libya to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The idea that the West is in decline—and, therefore, Turkey should not bet too heavily on it—is a major constellation in the AKP universe. Pro-government papers often cite the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) protests in France, rifts within NATO, or coalition talks in Germany as signs that the Western order is crumbling. “European cities are burning,” Erdoğan recently warned. “Those that try to provoke fault lines in Turkey should look at how weak the ground they walk on is. You will burn even more.”²⁴

If there were any lingering doubts about Turkey's desire to pursue an independent policy in the new world order, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu recently dispelled them. Addressing major shifts in Turkey's neighborhood and the relative decline of the West, Çavuşoğlu said:

Even though we don't entirely agree, Macron's statements [that NATO is “brain-dead”] are an indication of [the West's crisis.] We live in a world of unilateral policies and trade wars. The West is losing its economic power and Asia is rising. We need to use the opportunities ahead of us ... From Africa to Latin America, what can we do in these zones and how can we contribute? We are trying to formulate a foreign policy that takes all this into account.²⁵

The outlines of such a foreign policy can be seen in the Balkans, where Ankara tends to strike its own agreements with leaders in the region. In the 1990s, Turkey promoted transatlantic and multinational institutions in the Balkans. Today, while still active in transatlantic institutions, it is basing its foreign policy on promoting bilateral relations. Serbia is one of Turkey's closest partners, partly due to the good

relationship between Erdoğan and President Aleksandar Vučić. Turkey has also developed strong economic and political ties with Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia.

The Eastern Mediterranean is another area where *Sonderweg* defines Turkey's course. Turkey joined the EU and the United States in supporting UN-led talks on the unification of Cyprus, but subsequently entered into a dispute with Greece and Cyprus over how to share energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. To prevent Cyprus from striking a private deal that would have excluded Turkish Cypriots from hydrocarbon resources in the region, Ankara deployed two exploration ships and threatened to take action. The EU has called for sanctions on Turkey in response but has not implemented these measures. Given the bipartisan domestic consensus on supporting Turkish Cypriots, Ankara is unlikely to back off from its position on Cyprus's hydrocarbon resources.

Concerns about being frozen out of hydrocarbon resources off Cyprus have shaped the rest of Turkey's outlook on the Eastern Mediterranean and, more noticeably, in Libya. In Libya, Turkey actively supports the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, training its forces to fight the opposition forces led by Khalifa Haftar, who has the backing of Egypt, Russia, the UAE, and some European powers. Turkey's course in Libya is part of a strategy to flex its muscles in the Eastern Mediterranean. Ankara sees its burgeoning relationship with Tripoli as a counterweight to the Greece-Egypt-Cyprus axis. In December 2019, Ankara signed two agreements with the UN-backed government in Tripoli to extend its maritime jurisdiction and provide military assistance to Libya, and in January 2020, the Turkish government started deploying troops to Libya to support the GNA. Ankara views its deployment in Libya as a way to avoid being boxed in the Eastern Mediterranean and also as necessary to be a regional player. “Ankara's security starts in Damascus, in Mogadishu, in Tehran and Sana. Those who ask what business we have in Libya are, unless appointed as proxies, clueless about history or geography,” Devlet Bahçeli, Erdoğan's ally and MHP leader, recently said on Turkish military deployment in Libya.²⁶

Erdogan also warned:

[External powers that back Cyprus and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean] have such a ha-

tred of Turkey and the Turkish people that, if they could, they would root us out of Anatolia and erase us from the earth. Thankfully, our country is powerful enough and has the will to protect its rights and interests against these open and insidious plans. The agreements we have with the Republic of Northern Cyprus and Libya are in line with international law and similar UN treaties ... No one should expect us to accept a Turkey that is excluded from undersea hydrocarbon exploration [in the Mediterranean]. No one should approach us with the intention to exclude us, imprison us to our coastline, seize our economic interests.²⁷

The New Turkey has exercised sizeable military power in Syria. It has established military outposts in Idlib and carved out three separate “safe zones” on its borders that it controls and administers (Afrin, the Euphrates Shield area, and the zone between Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ayn). The role of the Syrian Kurds remains the key point of divergence between Turkey and the West. Ankara views People’s Protection Unit (YPG) forces affiliated with the PKK as an existential threat and has been unhappy with U.S. support for the YPG-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces. As a counterweight to U.S. influence in Syria, Turkey forged a partnership with Russia and Iran through the Astana process—even though it is at odds with both countries about the legitimacy of the Assad regime. Erdoğan negotiated safe zone arrangements with both the United States and Russia in October 2019, with the aim of both protecting Turkey’s borders and ending the Kurds’ experiment with self-rule in Syria.²⁸

Russia - from Enemy to Partner

The evolution of the Turkish-Russian relationship is perhaps the most glaring manifestation of Turkey’s *Sonderweg* and its desire for an independent course on the world stage. Turkey’s ruling elite and mainstream media often cite their skilful use of this relationship to further Turkish interests in Syria as an illustration of the benefits of non-alignment.

Historically, Ankara’s relations with Russia have been complex and burdened with centuries of animosity. Beginning in the 18th century, the Ottomans perceived a threat from their powerful neighbor to

the east—a view borne out by more than a dozen wars between the empires.²⁹ After the Second World War, fear of Joseph Stalin’s Soviet Union led Turkey to seek protection under the NATO umbrella. The NATO commitment to Turkish security allowed the country to adopt a free-market economy and loosely anchor itself to the liberal order—albeit without the full application of the robust democratic program of its Western allies.

Today, the picture is very different. In the words of a senior European politician with close ties to Turkey, “Ankara regards its key allies as a threat and Russia as a strategic partner.”³⁰ The relationship has burgeoned since the 2016 coup attempt, during which President Vladimir Putin called Erdoğan with an offer of help.³¹ While the Turkey-Russia relationship is not deeply woven into the state apparatus of either country, there is a strong convergence of interests and mutual resentment of the constraints imposed by the Western liberal order. The relationship also rests on powerful chemistry between Erdoğan and Putin. Alongside the Astana process and the S-400 purchase, the two countries have also partnered in major infrastructure projects, such as the Turk Stream pipeline, designed to transfer Russian gas to Europe, and the construction of Turkey’s first nuclear plant at Akkuyu.

The S-400 purchase has received greater international attention than any other Turkish-Russian initiative, as it is the first major defense acquisition from Russia by a NATO country. The Turkish government has fiercely defended its decision, despite threats from the U.S. Congress to punish Turkey through the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). Components of the missile system arrived in Turkey in July 2019 to coincide with the third anniversary of the botched coup and thereby underline Turkey’s strategic sovereignty. Turkey’s minister of interior, Süleyman Soylu, hailed the arrival of the S-400s as “a declaration of freedom and independence for Turkey.”³² The S-400 acquisition seemed to have the support of most Turks—partly because they felt that this was a matter of sovereignty—and, as such, received the backing of opposition parties in the Turkish parliament. Turkish-Russian rapprochement has provided Ankara with leverage in dealings with its Western partners because they want to avoid pushing Turkey further toward Russia. This has often made the

United States and Europe overlook Russian-Turkish cooperation on energy and defense. Despite pressure from Congress and the U.S. bureaucracy, President Donald Trump has not imposed CAATSA sanctions on Turkey for its purchase of the S-400s.

None of this means that Turkey has now abandoned the West. But, it does underline that Russia and Turkey are revisionist powers that feel constrained by Western norms—and resentful of Western policies. Even if their partnership lacks a common vision of a new world order, it is more than a temporary convergence of interests. Turkey's ruling elite feels it has to work with Russia on trade, energy cooperation, and military operations in Syria. This does not make Turkey a potential Russian vassal. Ankara aims to position itself as equidistant from China, Russia, and the United States. It wants an à la carte system of flexible partnerships that will not require it to accept Western norms.

If history is any guide, Ankara's pivot to Moscow will not be a permanent realignment, but one should not dismiss it as a passing fancy either. The convergence of interests in the areas discussed above is strong enough to incentivize both players to remain aligned in the coming years. Rather than entering into an ironclad alliance with either the United States or Russia, Turkey will continue to forge shifting partnerships in a roller-coaster ride between great powers—at least until the Syria conflict ends.

Defense of the Homeland

Throughout the Cold War, Turkey hosted NATO bases and made contributions to transatlantic security. For much of that period, Ankara saw the primary threat to its security as coming from the Soviet Union and relied on the American defense industry to address its specific security needs.

Today, the mood in the country is radically different. Since the failed coup attempt, Ankara has been deeply suspicious of its NATO partners undermining Turkey's interests and even territorial integrity. The transatlantic relationship that once defined Turkey's posture in the global order now looks shakier than ever. While the Western media is peppered with articles that question Turkey's place in the West, Turkish leaders largely believe that the Unit-

ed States was behind the 2016 coup attempt³³—and that Europe was, at best, a bystander.³⁴ U.S. support for PKK-affiliated YPG, which forms the backbone of the Syrian Kurdish forces, has also driven a wedge between Ankara and Washington. In the words of one senior Turkish security official: “We are fighting three terrorist organizations. America is supporting two directly [referring to the PKK and the Gülen movement] and the third [referring to ISIS] is easily manipulated by the West.”³⁵

In this environment, it is hardly surprising that Turkey is pursuing an independent defense policy in line with its threat perceptions and priorities.³⁶ Ankara's deeper involvement in the Middle East's conflicts and anxiety about the Kurdish issue has bolstered efforts to become self-sufficient in defense. As the New Turkey imagines itself surrounded by enemies who threaten its very existence, Turkish leaders see greater self-reliance in the defense industry as a direct response to that threat. The defense industry has also become a key export sector, growing in parallel with Turkey's regional agenda.³⁷

While Turkey's desire for self-sufficiency in the defense industry predates the Erdoğan period, progress in the area under the AKP has been facilitated by strong economic growth and technological advances. “Under President Erdoğan's directive, a Turkish sniper is manufactured,” announced a Turkish television network with close ties to the government.³⁸ Over the past few years, other flagship Turkish defense projects in various stages of development—such as Turkish-made tanks, missiles, frigates, submarines, and armored vehicles—have been celebrated in a similar fashion, underlining the goal of reduced dependency on the outside world (mostly NATO allies) in defense procurement.³⁹

The crown jewel of the Turkish defense industry is drones, which have allowed the Turkish military to fight the Kurdish insurgency in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey with superior technology. Turkish drones are also used to support the government of Libya in its fight against Haftar's forces. As discussed above, Turkey is keen to establish a drone base in Northern Cyprus. Erdoğan often mentions Turkish drones in speeches as a symbol of strategic sovereignty. At the National Defense University earlier this summer, he said:

We know of efforts to sabotage our defense industry for no justifiable reason. When I went to U.S. presidents, they wouldn't even loan me [an unarmed drone]. And no chance with an armed one. But bad neighbors have made us buy the house. We are now producing both ... Today, our domestic production has gone up from 20 to 70 percent. When that day comes, once we get to a point where we need no one, neither the sanctions nor what they say will matter.⁴⁰

How Europe Should Engage with Turkey

European and other Western countries need to accept that *Sonderweg* is a key feature of Erdoğan's New Turkey. As a revisionist power with grand ambitions in an unstable region, Turkey is vying for a leadership role in the Sunni world while maintaining its ties with Russia and Europe. It feels constrained by the institutions and norms that have governed world politics since the Second World War. Turkey also has regional entanglements that go beyond the NATO consensus (such as those in Libya, Qatar, and Syria). Its policies in the Middle East may or may not align with European interests. Europeans should be prepared to work with Turkey on issues where there is overlap and work around Turkey when interests collide.

One major problem Europeans have in engaging with Turkey is the fact that the relationship is—at least formally—defined by Turkey's beleaguered accession process. There is no realistic prospect that Turkey will join the EU, but the accession framework defines the parameters for engagement. The process is, in the words of a senior EU official, “a straitjacket. We don't have another mechanism to talk.”⁴¹ Channels of communication are often blocked by the problems related to the accession negotiations. The EU has formally suspended all high-level dialogue with Turkey.⁴²

This policy needs to be adjusted. There is a need for Europeans to talk to Turkey on a wide range of issues, including the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus, Syria, Libya, Balkans, and refugees. Turkey's Western partners will have to start thinking beyond the constraints of the EU accession framework and

develop a new set of initiatives to engage with the country. This can be done collectively as the EU or as individual member states. But, ultimately, European countries will need to step out of Brussels' shadow and engage with Ankara on a more pragmatic level.

There is also a psychological adjustment that both sides need to make. Ankara needs to stop the Euro-bashing that has become part of the political lexicon if it wants to have a strategic dialogue and partnership with Europe. Similarly, Europeans need to start treating Turkey as a regional heavyweight and with the respect that Turkish officials complain it does not receive. In many ways, as Erdoğan's Turkey wants international recognition of its potential as a resurgent power, providing this would bring about significantly smoother bilateral cooperation. Europeans would find it easier to work with Ankara if they recognized the Turkish desire for a zone of influence in foreign policy.

On issues where they strongly disagree—such as support for Kurdish forces in Syria—Europe and Turkey have to accept the need to compartmentalize their relationship, focus on mutual interests, and skirt around the differences. With the exception of the Kurdish issue, there is no fundamental divergence between Turkey and Europe on key regional issues pertaining to the Middle East, including Syria. Leaving the Kurdish conflict aside, Turkey and Europe can cooperate on the Balkans, Syria, Libya, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, Russia, and other issues.

This does not mean Europe has to abandon its normative values or accept Ankara's inward-looking policies in domestic matters. Europe can still contribute to Turkey's domestic political evolution and democracy, but it has to do so in smarter ways. Engagement is key. The EU is likely to be more effective in engagement with Turkey on a pragmatic basis than through the holistic approach of the accession process. While insisting on rules-based cooperation, Turkey's Western allies need to be pragmatic about what the country can provide them with and what they can offer it in return.

Europeans might also want to consider decoupling their policies on Turkey from those of the United States. Washington's entanglement with Ankara is far deeper than Europe's—but it is also burdened

with fissures such as congressional sanctions, U.S. citizens jailed in Turkey, the Gülen movement, and the Syrian Kurds. While there is great chemistry between Erdoğan and Trump, institutional ties between Ankara and Washington are growing weaker every year. The relationship is due for a bumpy ride with a set of congressional sanctions due to come into effect in 2020. It is better for Europe to extract itself from this particular drama and view relations with Turkey through a long-term strategic lens.

“A Place Under the Sun”

The post-war liberal order provided Turkey with prosperity, security, and a great deal of predictability. But the crisis of the liberal order is real, and Europe and the United States have failed to make a compelling case for Turkey to return to the transatlantic community.

Recently, the Turkish president noted with confidence that, “Within half a century, even if we don’t end up witnessing it, Turkey will emerge as one of the strongest powers of the world, sailing into larger accomplishments.” He hinted that this struggle would, “be crowned with victories from Iraq to Syria—from the Eastern Mediterranean to other regions.”⁴³

There is no doubt that a revisionist New Turkey wants its own “place under the sun”—to borrow a phrase coined by former German foreign minister Bernhard von Bülow—and will continue to pursue autonomous policies in the Balkans and the Middle East. While Turkey is geographically stretched too thin and lacks the capacity to compete in the geopolitical rivalry, this does not factor into the political discourse in the New Turkey. In a multipolar world characterized by increasing geopolitical competition, Turkey wants to be a standalone power with a foot in each camp. When constrained by allies, it will challenge the institutions of the liberal order—as it did with its Syrian incursion or Eastern Mediterranean policy. Therefore, it is important for Turkey’s partners to get used to a new reality in which there is not only cooperation but also confrontation. In the absence of a liberal order, Turkey’s relationship with its Western allies will remain transactional for the foreseeable future.

It remains to be seen whether the New Turkey is a temporary mindset or a permanent reality. It also remains to be seen how Turkey will respond when its capacity and ambitions are tested against future geopolitical rivalries. As this paper argues, Turkey’s *Sonderweg* is likely to extend far beyond the Erdoğan years for reasons that have to do with not only the rise of nationalism in Turkey but also global developments. Short of a miraculous restoration of the Western-led liberal order and new a grand bargain with the West, Ankara is likely to pursue an independent course for years to come.

Of course, it is impossible to know when the post-Erdoğan period will begin or who the main actors will be. But, the country’s unique path to modernity, growing nationalism, and global ambitions will likely outlive the current president. Erdoğan is a towering figure in Turkish politics, but even after his departure, his legacy in the New Turkey will be a strong presidential system and a non-aligned reflex that paves the way for Ankara to pursue independent policies on China, Libya, NATO, Russia, and Syria.

There is also the reality that the West no longer offers Turkey an appealing package such as EU membership, regional cooperation, or a central role in the Middle East. In the past century, it was either the threat of the Soviet Union or the appeal of European enlargement that led Turkey to be a loyal member of the Western alliance. Neither factor applies today. Post-Erdoğan Turkey may strive to be more democratic and attempt to fix Turkey’s broken ties with the West. Yet, ultimately, it is impossible to recreate the conditions of the late 1990s and the early 2000s that led to the start of the EU’s accession negotiations with Turkey. Europe has moved on—and so has Turkey. Ankara can establish a special partnership with the United States or Europe, but neither one will always meet its strategic needs in the Middle East. Even with a more liberal government, Ankara will continue to pursue its regional priorities.

All this suggests that Turkey will continue to be a resurgent and, at times, unpredictable power on the periphery of Europe with its own agenda and a desire for an important international role. The country wants its own place under the sun. And, in an age of great power competition, this defines Turkey’s *Sonderweg*.

Endnotes

- 1 | Among the demands in the urban protests of 2013 (Gezi park protests) was that the government halt plans to build a third airport in the city on environmental grounds. Urban planners opposed the scheme out of fear that it would destroy forestland and create urban sprawl toward the Black Sea. Turkey's secularist opposition saw plans to replace the Ataturk Airport with a new airport as a metaphor to supplant the country's secular founding doctrine with Erdoğan's philosophy.
- 2 | Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (@RTErdogan), "Bugün yeni Türkiye'nin doğum günüdür. Yeni Türkiye; yeni bir siyasete, yeni bir sosyolojiye, yeni bir ekonomiye tekabül ediyor." Twitter, August 27, 2014, <https://twitter.com/rterdogan/status/504568554835156992>.
- 3 | Ali Aslan, "24 Haziran: "Eski Türkiye"den "Yeni Türkiye"ye Geçişin Seçimi," SETA, May 12, 2018, <https://www.setav.org/24-haziran-eski-turkiyeden-yeni-turkiyeye-gecisin-secimi/>.
- 4 | Robert Kagan, "The New German Question: What happens when Europe comes apart?" *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/germany/2019-04-02/new-german-question>.
- 5 | Marc Pierini, "Belonging to the Western Camp Doesn't Fit with Erdogan's Vision of Turkey Anymore," Carnegie Europe, November 14, 2019 [originally published in *Le Monde*], <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2019/11/14/belonging-to-western-camp-doesn-t-fit-with-erdo-s-vision-of-turkey-anymore-pub-80377>.
- 6 | See Kadir Has University 2019 survey on Turkish perceptions of their allies, https://www.khas.edu.tr/sites/khas.edu.tr/files/inline-files/TDP-2019_BASINENG_FINAL.PDF, or the German Marshall Fund 2015 research, http://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/TurkeySurvey_2015_web1.pdf.
- 7 | For Turkey's balancing act between the Soviet Union and the West, see Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Onur Isci and Samuel J. Hirst, "Turkey's Balancing Act between the US and Russia," *Duvar English*, November 14, 2019, <https://www.duvarenglish.com/opinion/2019/11/14/turkeys-balancing-act-what-history-tells-us-about-ankaras-relations-with-washington-and-moscow/>.
- 8 | "Muhalefetten S-400 Alımına Destek", VOA, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/muhalefet-s-400-alimina-destek/4999191.html>.
- 9 | Pierini, "Belonging to the Western Camp."
- 10 | Selçuk Şenyüz, "Erdoğan: Milliyetçilik ayak altında," *Hürriyet*, February 18, 2013, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-milliyetcilik-ayak-altinda-22621388>.
- 11 | "AKP Müslüman demokrat parti," NTV Turkey, accessed February 4, 2020, <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/186082.asp>.
- 12 | Gökhan Bacık, "Türkçülüğe dönüş," *Ahval*, October 23, 2019, <https://ahvalnews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/ahvalnews.com/tr/turkiye/turkculuge-donus?amp>.
- 13 | Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (@RTErdogan), "Bu bayrak inmez. Bu ezan susmaz. Bu ülke bölünmez. Bu Millet diz çökmeyiz. Bu devlet, inşallah ilelebet payidar kalır." Twitter, November 5, 2019, <https://twitter.com/RTErdogan/status/1191762099980120065>.
- 14 | Erdoğan has been attending Malazgirt celebrations since 2017 and is only the second Turkish president to do so. His speech depicts Turkey's current opponents—including the PKK, the coup plotters, and the Gülen movement—as instruments of "the same enemy" that fought Turkic commander Alpaslan in the battle of Manzikert. See, Hilmi Hacaloğlu, "Erdoğan Malazgirt Zaferi Kutlamaları İçin Muş'taydı," VOA, August 26, 2017, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/erdogan-turklere-anadolu-nun-kapilarini-acan-malazgirt-zaferi-ni-unutmadi/4002070.html>. In reality, Alpaslan won battles against the Byzantine Empire with the help of local tribes, including Armenians.
- 15 | "Başkan Erdoğan Malazgirt'te konuştu: Kimse kararlılığımızı test etmesin," *Sabah*, accessed

- February 4, 2020, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2019/08/26/baskan-erdogan-malazgirtte-konusuyor>.
- 16 | Atilla Subasi (subasi94), "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan 'Diriliş Ertuğrul' Ekibine Destek.!" Youtube video, November 15, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYyvG1upQME>.
- 17 | "Bilal Erdoğan: Abdülhamid'i yediler, Tayyip Erdoğan'ı yedirmeyeceğiz," CNN Türk, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/bilal-erdogan-abdulhamidi-yediler-tayyip-erdogani-yedirmeyecegiz>.
- 18 | "Bilal Erdoğan: Abdülhamid'i yediler, Tayyip Erdoğan'ı yedirmeyeceğiz," *Hürriyet*, accessed February 4, 2020, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/fuat-bol/sevri-hortlatmak-istiyorlar-41402608>.
- 19 | See columns by *Yeni Şafak's* İbrahim Karagül, including İbrahim Karagül, "The new wave of colonialism will be wrought by Muslims... Who's acting as a buffer while Turkey builds 'fortresses'? Beware, we're speaking in the language of victory, not destruction. The 'last great game' will fail too. Don't compare President Erdoğan to Sultan Abdulhamid III!" *Yeni Şafak*, November 26, 2016, <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/columns/ibrahimkaragul/the-new-wave-of-colonialism-wave-will-be-wrought-by-muslims-whos-acting-as-an-buffer-while-turkey-builds-fortresses-beware-were-speaking-in-the-language-of-victory-not-destruction-the-last-great-game-will-fail-too-dont-compare-president-erdogan-to-sultan-abdulhamid-ii-2047246>, and İbrahim Karagül, "* Vatan haini, 'Ölmediklerine pişman olacaklar' diyordu. * Türkiye üç yılda üç saldırıyı önledi, üç terör örgütünü yendi. * FETÖ olmadı PKK, o da olmadı DEAŞ. Patron aynı. Bu sefer patron da yenildi. * İçerideki 'son yabancılar..' 2023'e sadece üç yıl kaldı!" *Yeni Şafak*, November 1, 2019, <https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/ibrahimkaragul/-vatan-haini-olmediklerine-pisman-olacaklar-diyordu-turkiye-uc-yilda-uc-saldiriyi-onledi-uc-teror-orgutunu-yendi-feto-olmadi-pkk-o-da-olmadi-deas-patron-ayni-bu-sefer-patron-da-yenildi-icerideki-son-yabancilar-2023e-sadece-uc-yil-kaldi-2053225>.
- 20 | Dr. İbrahim Kalın, "Başbakan'ın başdanışmanı 'değerli yalnızlık'ı açıkladı: Yalnız değiliz ama," interview by Tahir Alperen, T24, August 26, 2013, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/basbakanin-basdanismani-degerli-yalnizliki-acikladi-yalniz-degiliz-ama,237875>.
- 21 | See a discussion of the Turkish model by Gönül Tol or Stephano Torelli: Gönül Tol, "The 'Turkish Model' in the Middle East," Middle East Institute, December 14, 2012, originally published in the December 2012 issue of *Current History*, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkish-model-middle-east-0>; Stephano Torelli, "The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Model for the Middle East," in *Turkey's Relations with the Middle East*, ed. Hüseyin Işıksal and Oğuzhan Göksel (Cham: Springer, 2019), 53–64, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59897-0_4.
- 22 | Kemal Kirisci and Neslihan Kaptanoglu, "The Politics of Trade and Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 47, no. 5 (September 2011): 705–724.
- 23 | Ömer BİLGE, "KKTC Siha üssü oluyor... Türkiye'den peş peşe kritik hamle," *Hürriyet*, December 15, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/kkctc-siha-ussu-oluyor-turkiyeden-pes-pese-kritik-hamle-41397739>.
- 24 | "Erdoğan Avrupa'yı hedef aldı: Daha çok yanacaksınız," Euronews Türkiye, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://tr.euronews.com/2019/05/03/erdogan-avrupa-yi-hedef-aldi-daha-cok-yanacaksiniz-turk-bahari-huzurunuzu-bize-borclusunuz>.
- 25 | Mustafa Kurt, "Dışişleri Bakanı Çavuşoğlu'ndan Fransa'ya tepki," *Anadolu Ajansı*, November 11, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/disisleri-bakani-cavusoglundan-fransaya-tepki/1641801>.
- 26 | "Son dakika: MHP Genel Başkanı Bahçeli'den açıklamalar," CNN Türk, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/son-dakika-mhp-genel-baskani-bahceliden-aciklamalar>.
- 27 | "Erdoğan: Gerekirse Libya'ya desteğimizin askeri yönünü arttıracacağız," T24, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/erdogan-2027-yilinda-6-denizaltimiz-hizmet->

- vermeye-baslayacak,853169.
- 28 | Asli Aydintasbas, "Leverage, for now: Turkey's deal with Russia on northern Syria," European Council on Foreign Relations, October 30, 2019, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_leverage_for_now_turkeys_deal_with_russia_on_northern_syria.
- 29 | Soner Cagaptay, "Turkey and Russia are not friends, despite appearances," The Hill, June 16, 2019, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/448485-turkey-and-russia-are-not-friends-despite-appearances>.
- 30 | Comment by a leading European politician in an international conference in Bodrum, Turkey, October 2019.
- 31 | Asli Aydintasbas, "Unhappy anniversary: Turkey's failed coup and the S-400," European Council on Foreign Relations, July 17, 2019, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_unhappy_anniversary_turkeys_failed_coup_and_the_s_400.
- 32 | "Soylu: S-400 bir özgürlük ve bağımsızlık deklarasyonudur," Sputnik Türkiye, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201906101039295851-soylu-s-400-bir-ozgurluk-ve-bagimsizlik-deklarasyonudur/>.
- 33 | Sedat Ergin, "15 Temmuz kalkışmasından S-400'lere uzanan yol," *Hurriyet*, July 23, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/15-temmuz-kalkismasindan-s-400lere-uzanan-yol-41281595>.
- 34 | Ibrahim Kalin (@ikalın1), "Had the coup succeed, you would have supported it, like in Egypt. You don't know this nation but they know you." Twitter, July 20, 2016, <https://twitter.com/ikalın1/status/755681633039224832>.
- 35 | Author's personal conversation with high-ranking Turkish security official, Ankara, August 2017.
- 36 | See a recent government-sponsored documentary on the self-reliance of the defense industry, *Savunma Sanayii Dergilik* (Savunma Sanayii Dergilik), "Türkiye'nin yerli ve milli savunma sanayii belgeseli," Youtube video, August 3, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpKJ2Vd5lvq>, as well as Erdogan explaining the need for self-reliance, "'Kendimize yetmeliyiz, kendimize yeter hale gelmeliyiz,'" TRT Haber, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/kendimize-yetmeliyiz-kendimize-yeter-hale-gelmeliyiz-247910.html>.
- 37 | "Turkish defense industry to break export record in 2019," *Hurriyet Daily News*, accessed February 4, 2020, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-defense-industry-to-break-export-record-in-2019-148331>; "Savunma sanayisi 2020'de ihracatla güçlenecek," *Sabah*, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/ekonomi/2019/11/06/savunma-sanayisi-2020de-ihracatla-guclenecek-1573036704>.
- 38 | "Başkan Erdoğan'ın direktifleriyle yerli 'sniper' üretildi! İşte özellikleri." A Haber, accessed February 4, 2020 <https://www.ahaber.com.tr/galeri/ekonomi/baskan-erdoganin-direktifleriyle-yerli-sniper-uretildi-iste-ozellikleri>.
- 39 | "Erdoğan: Gerekirse Libya'ya desteğimizin askeri yönünü arttıracamız," T24, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/erdogan-2027-yilinda-6-denizaltimiz-hizmet-vermeye-baslayacak,853169>.
- 40 | "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: 'İHA, SİHA ürettik, daha iyisini de üretir hale geleceğiz,'" İhlas Haber Ajansı, accessed February 4, 2019, <https://www.ihha.com.tr/haber-cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ihha-siha-urettik-daha-iyisini-de-uretir-hale-gelecegiz-788356/>.
- 41 | Statement from a European ambassador at EDAM foreign policy forum, Bodrum, Turkey, October 4-6, 2019.
- 42 | "EU Suspends High-Level Dialogue With Turkey 'For the Time Being' - Statement," Sputnik News, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201907151076255985-eu-suspends-high-level-dialogues-with-turkey-for-the-time-being---statement/>.
- 43 | "Başkan Erdoğan Malazgirt'te konuştu: Kimse kararlılığımızı test etmesin," *Sabah*, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2019/08/26/baskan-erdogan-malazgirtte-konusuyor>.

Aslı Aydintaşbaşı is a 2019 Mercator-IPC Senior Fellow.

The interpretations and conclusions made in this policy brief belong solely to the author and do not reflect IPC's official position.

The Turkish Sonderweg: Erdoğan's New Turkey and Its Role in the Global Order

16 p.; 30 cm. - (Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative)

ISBN 978-605-2095-78-2

Cover Design and Page Layout: MYRA

1st Edition: 2020

Istanbul Policy Center

Bankalar Caddesi Minerva Han No: 2 Kat: 4
34420 Karaköy-Istanbul
T +90 212 292 49 39
ipc@sabanciuniv.edu - ipc.sabanciuniv.edu

IPC

ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER

SABANCI UNIVERSITY

STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE