



Cabinet of Turkey (2022)

Topic Background

The Republic of Turkey is the cultural bridge between the Middle East and Europe. With its extensive diplomatic network and connection with Western nations, Turkey has played an important role in some of the largest conflicts and political watersheds of the 20th and 21st centuries. Another pivotal moment has arrived. As part of President Erdoğan's cabinet, you will be advising him on how to guarantee and secure Turkey's interests. Internally, you will work to manage inflation and monetary policy amid issues with the Turkish currency, lira, as well as address mass social movements that have arisen in response to the repeal of the Istanbul Accords. Abroad, you will continue to navigate Turkish self-sufficiency and independence, which will likely necessitate negotiations with Europe and regional players on issues like migration, ethnic tension, and trade. Through a deliberate, well-considered approach that holds the Turkish nation at the forefront, we can hold Europe responsible and reassert our role as a leader in international politics.

Historical Background and Current Situation

Situation in Belarus

Throughout 2021, a geopolitical refugee crisis developed at the border of Belarus and the European Union (EU). Given the circumstantial and legal limitations imposed due to the pandemic, thousands of migrants may be trying to enter Europe through less conventional paths, such as through Belarus and Poland. At these border flashpoints, the EU has responded with force. Where refugees have formed camps, they are often without basic food, water, and medical care. Compared to refugee streams at other parts of the EU border, this particular crisis is renewing geopolitical tensions between the EU and Belarus; to the outsider, it seems to be more about borders and EU power than about the condition of refugees or consequences of war in the Middle East.

Belarussian head of state Alexander Lukashenko currently oversees this crisis amidst civil unrest. Lukashenko is already under sanctions by the EU due to his violent crackdown regarding Belarussian protests. These protests began in response to a potentially rigged election that brought Lukashenko a landslide victory in 2020. Lukashenko has continued to crackdown on dissent in the populace, imprisoning and arresting thousands, imprisoning or targeting journalists

with violence, and otherwise using force to subdue Belarus and enact his policies. These activities have prompted multiple further rounds of EU sanctions. The situation today culminates in a crisis at the border that may be at least partially manufactured to put pressure on Europe.

Lukashenko openly stated that he would not stop migrants from heading to the EU, relaxing immigration restrictions and creating a generous tourist visa program for refugees. Thousands of migrants arrived in Belarus and went in the direction of Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia. These countries declared a state of emergency and reinforced their border security. Poland used tear gas and water cannons against the refugees, drawing some international criticism. On the Belarusian side, border guards stopped the refugees' retreat and pushed them back towards Europe.

Situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Modern Bosnia-Herzegovina formed in the 6th and 7th centuries when Slavs migrated into the Balkans. The two main Slavic tribes were the Croats and the Serbs, prone to cycles of infighting and conflict. In 1463, the region was conquered by invading Ottoman Empire troops. Migration and conflict brought Islamic communities into the country, creating the three ethnic divisions that we see today: Orthodox Christian Serbian-Bosnians, Catholic Croat-Bosnians, and Muslim Bosnians.

In the 1990s, there was an attempt by Serbian nationalists to consolidate control over the country but failed due to the intervention of UN forces working alongside the allied Bosniak and Croat forces. Peace negotiations led to the Dayton Accords, which established the Bosnia Croat Federation and the Serb Republic within Bosnia-Herzegovina. This set the stage for more peace within the state and better economic development.

Despite these improvements, ethnic tensions have flared up in the past few years, threatening to unravel the delicate power-sharing agreement. Within the Dayton Accords, executive power is distributed among three presidents: one Serb, one Bosniak, and one Croat. Each president serves as head of state for a period of time before passing it to the next president in the triad. In the last year, Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik sparked fears of a succession bid when he said the Serb Republic would pull out of three key Bosnia-Herzegovina statewide institutions: the armed forces, the top judiciary body, and the tax agency. This decision was motivated in part by the passage of a law banning genocide denial and would create a de facto secession from the state and potentially violate the Dayton Accords.

Turkey has always been a close ally of the Bosnian-Serbs and of Milorad's Party. This is potentially an opportunity for Bosnia-Herzegovina to pivot away from the West and towards Turkish influence, especially as the EU and the US have released statements condemning the rhetoric from Milorad Dodik and threatened sanctions if the situation continues.

Migration in Turkey

The Republic of Turkey itself has had extensive experience with European prejudice and irresponsibility in regards to the refugee crisis. In 2015, instability in Syria, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern countries pushed migrants through Turkey and crossing into Greece. In 2016, the EU established a relationship with Turkey to manage the migrant crisis, including providing 6 billion euros to create migrant camps in Turkey and therefore reduce the flow of migration into Europe.

Today, Turkey still hosts almost 4 million refugees; of those, approximately 3.6 million are Syrian. Managing this crisis has only become more difficult for the Republic of Turkey due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Relationship with the EU

The European Union considers itself to be a politically aligned institution, with each nation contributing to the same core system of values. As changes have occurred within Turkey's approach to governance, the EU appears to feel more and more entitled to criticism of the Republic's actions despite continuing to use Turkish territory to manage the Syrian refugee crisis. Countries such as Greece and Cyprus within the EU, both of whom happen to be most likely to not take on their fair burden of refugees, also voice disproportionate criticisms of Turkey. These criticisms are best exemplified by the freeze on accession negotiations to the EU in 2018 due to "the deterioration of Turkish democracy".

Nonetheless, Turkey has always demonstrated a commitment to a reciprocal relationship with the EU that does not violate national sovereignty or the rule of law. In 2021, Turkey was granted accession to EU programs such as ERASMUS+ and the European Solidarity Corps. Turkey is interested and willing to cooperate on many vital facets of policy, such as trade, migration, counterterrorism, and investment.

In terms of security within and outside of the EU, Turkey, as one of the largest contributing members to NATO with extensive military operations in Western Asia and Southeastern Europe, feels that its policies are not destabilizing but rather forward-looking. Turkey has always sought to maintain relationships with both the East and West, and this will continue as a mainstay of Turkish foreign policy moving forward.

Domestic Issues

Inflation in Turkey has been in the double digits since November of 2021. Two years ago the lira was worth twice as much as its value today, and the Turkish people are intimately aware of the devaluation of their salaries and the rising prices of goods. There has been extensive political drama surrounding the central bank of Turkey, as Erdoğan dismissed three central bank chiefs in the last two years over policy differences. Erdoğan seeks a kind of economic independence for the Turkish economy, and is against raising interest rates to manage the high rates of inflation.

Additionally, the Turkish public has expressed discontent over some of the decisions made over international agreements. The Erdoğan administration withdrew from the Istanbul Accords, an international agreement between 45 countries and the EU concerning domestic violence and gender-based mutilation. The decision to withdraw from the treaty was based on concerns that the treaty “promoted divorce” and would tear apart the social fabric. Critics of the decision have pointed to a record high number of femicides this year. Administration proponents have answered that accusation by saying the protesters are confusing causation with correlation and that actually the protesters have been responsible for an increase of crime and covid cases in large Turkish cities.

Key Terms

- Istanbul Convention - A human rights treaty to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence
- 2016 EU-Turkey Deal
- Asylum
- Asylum-seeker
- Exclusion Clauses
- Gender-related persecution
- Local integration
- Resettlement
- Dayton Accords

Bloc Positions

- **Isolationism vs. aggression:** Erdogan faces a domestic crisis across multiple facets and politically considers the easiest way back to popularity to be engaging with foreign rivals.
- **European Ally vs. Russian Ally:** While Turkey has collaborated more with Russia in recent years, their relationship remains volatile, in part due to Turkey’s relationship with NATO. Turkey is also aligned with the EU, the US, and other Western countries economically, but these relationships have grown weaker over time.
- **Accommodative (of refugees) vs. restrictive:** Eastern European countries lacking EU membership and North African countries are generally forced to be accommodating of refugees. EU countries have been restrictive on the matter.

Sources and Additional Links

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- To explore the issues with the migration deterrence model employed by the EU, check out this report: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/...>
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