

POLICY BRIEF | VISITING SCHOLAR SERIES

TURKEY AND THE UNITED STATES: A PARTNERSHIP IN PERIL

By: Professor Mehmet Gurses

Dr. Mehmet Gurses spoke on October 26, 2018 at Tower Center sponsored event, "Turkey and the United States: A Partnership in Peril."

Turkey, as the first Muslim-majority democracy, has been at the center of much controversy. Despite decades-long westernization efforts by the country's secularist elite, Islamists have emerged as the new power holders and are increasingly consolidating their grip on power. The new Islamist political elites' ambitious plans to re-emerge as a global power have shifted the political and military balance in the Middle East.

As Turkey is flexing its muscles, its neighboring states are undergoing historic changes. It is becoming clear that the Middle East of the twenty-first century will look different than that of the past century. Many have pointed to the demise of the Sykes-Picot agreement that brought about modern Middle Eastern states with shaky foundations a century ago. Israel's former Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon declared in late 2014 that Middle Eastern borders will "absolutely change."

The new Islamist political elites' ambitious plans to re-emerge as a global power have shifted the political and military balance in the Middle East.

Turkey, a country Samuel Huntington described as a "torn country," is undergoing monumental changes. French President Emmanuel Macron described his counterpart, President Erdogan of Turkey, as "anti-European" whose values and principles are incompatible with that of the European Union. The Turkey of Erdogan, he continued, is "not the Turkey of President Kemal," referring to the founding father of the secular republic. President Trump announced in August 2018 "our relations with Turkey are not good at this time!"

The new Turkey under President Erdogan has often portrayed the United States as the source of all problems in the region and has not shied away from resorting to religious arguments and rhetoric to describe the changing Turkish-American relations. The changes taking place in Turkey and the Middle East should not be treated in isolation. The founding global institutions of the post-WW II era, including the United Nations and NATO, are being questioned.

Changes at the domestic, regional, and global levels call for novel solutions. Can Turkey serve as a stabilizing force in the region? Can it be trusted as an ally? What are the implications of the rise of an Islamist Turkey in the Middle East?

Questions? Reach out to Dr. Gurses at:

GURSES@FAU.EDU



SMU | John Goodwin Tower Center for Political Studies
DEDMAN COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SCIENCES