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## REFLECTIONS OF TÜRKİYE'S ENTERPRISING AND HUMANITARIAN FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT IN AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

### Abstract

The concept of Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy, which includes hard and soft power elements, emphasizes the assertive, active and strong nature of Turkish foreign policy. At the same time, this Concept introduces Türkiye as a humanitarian state and draws attention to the cooperation, peace and development ties of her foreign policy. This study aims to explain Türkiye's South Caucasus policy with the concept of "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy" adopted in 2018. The concept of Enterprising foreign policy toward the South Caucasus emphasizes cooperation and effective multilateralism, conflict resolution, mediation, regional responsibility and an initiative-taking approach. The Humanitarian foreign policy, on the other hand, has an understanding that puts people in the foreground. Türkiye has assumed a fundamental and responsible role in efforts to develop reciprocal respect and shared values between different cultures and faiths toward the South Caucasus. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991, Türkiye has played a leading role in recognizing the independence of the South Caucasus countries, providing economic and humanitarian aid, resolving conflict problems and mediating. Due to the new territorial alteration as Azerbaijan liberated the Karabakh region in 2020, Türkiye's role has increased as she has strengthened her existing strategic relations and established new ones. Therefore, the study is going to first elucidate the concept and the scope of this new policy and then look for an answer to the question: What has Türkiye done in South Caucasus in line with the concept of "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy?"

**Keywords:** South Caucasus, Turkish Foreign Policy, New Concept, Implementations.





## **TÜRKİYE'NİN GİRİŞİMCİ VE İNSANİ DIŞ POLİTİKA ANLAYIŞININ AZERBAYCAN, GÜRCİSTAN VE ERMENİSTAN'DAKİ YANSIMALARI**

### **Öz**

Sert ve yumuşak güç unsurlarını bünyesinde barındıran Girişimci ve İnsani Dış Politika kavramı, Türk dış politikasının iddialı, aktif ve güçlü doğasını vurgulamaktadır. Aynı zamanda bu yeni kavram Türkiye'yi insani bir devlet olarak tanıtmakta ve Türk dış politikasının işbirliği, barış ve kalkınma bağlarına dikkat çekmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin Güney Kafkasya politikasını 2018 yılında benimsediği "Girişimci ve İnsani Dış Politika" kavramı ile açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Güney Kafkasya'ya yönelik Girişimci dış politika kavramı, işbirliği ve etkin çok taraflılık, çatışma çözümü, arabuluculuk, bölgesel sorumluluk ve inisiyatif alma yaklaşımlarını vurgulamaktadır. İnsani dış politika kavramı ise insani ön plana çıkararak bir anlayışa sahiptir. Türkiye, Güney Kafkasya'ya yönelik farklı kültürler ve inançlar arasında karşılıklı saygı ve ortak değerlerin geliştirilmesi çabalarında temel ve sorumlu bir rol üstlenmiştir. Sovyetler Birliği'nin 1991 yılının Aralık ayında parçalanmasıyla birlikte Türkiye, Güney Kafkasya ülkelerinin bağımsızlıklarını tanıma, ekonomik ve insani yardım yapma, çatışma sorunlarının çözümü ve arabuluculuk alanlarında lider bir rol sergilemiştir. Azerbaycan'ın 2020'de Karabağ bölgesini özgürleştirilmesiyle birlikte yeni toprak değişikliği nedeniyle mevcut stratejik ilişkilerini güçlendiren ve yeni stratejik ilişkiler kuran Türkiye'nin bölgedeki rolü artmıştır. Bu nedenle çalışma, öncelikle bu yeni politikanın ne olduğunu ve kapsamını açıklayacak ve ardından şu soruya cevap arayacak: "Girişimci ve İnsani Dış Politika" anlayışı doğrultusunda Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Güney Kafkasya'da neler yaptı?

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Güney Kafkasya, Türk Dış Politikası, Yeni Anlayış, Uygulamalar.

### **Introduction**

Since the South Caucasus region (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia) is a bridge between Europe and Central Asia in terms of geopolitics, it has been a field of struggle where great powers compete with each other throughout history. This region is important as it hosts different cultures, acts as a bridge between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea and has rich agricultural production. However, the most important factor that makes the region indispensable is its oil and natural gas reserves. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991, these issues increased the strategic significance of the South Caucasus and made the region precious.

Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia's expanding web of relationships with the countries to their South, North, East and West have made the region more vivid and vibrant. However, at the same time, Western countries' interests in the region have decreased in the years due to the domestic policy concerns created by the pandemic process and the adaptation of new China-centered understanding in their foreign policies. The long-standing explanatory policies of both the US and the European Union (EU) countries regarding the important and central position of the Caucasus in their foreign policies are becoming less credible.





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Türkiye, on the other hand, aimed to become an important political actor in the post-Soviet era. The end of the bipolar world was a watershed moment in the history of Türkiye's foreign policy. As of the early 1990s, the basic elements of Türkiye's Caucasus policy were based on political and economic stability, having peace and cooperation with three independent states of the region and introducing the region with Western values.

Turkish foreign policy intends to protect Türkiye's interests in the Caucasus and shape enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy conditions for sustainable peace and development in the region and beyond. The Caucasus region has always been a significant crossroads for many civilizations, empires and powerful states on their way to establishing dominance. Especially the Russian Empire, Iran and the Ottoman Empire fought for years for a solid territorial partition and therefore the Caucasus region witnessed bloody clashes as well as collapsing the empires aforementioned.

With the success of the operation to liberate Karabakh, which the Azerbaijani army started in September 2020 and lasted for 44 days, serious changes have occurred in the geopolitics of the South Caucasus. Türkiye declared that she would support Azerbaijan in every possible way before and after this operation, strengthened its existing strategic relations and established a new one due to the new territorial change. Thus, Türkiye has increased her role in the region accordingly. Since the concept of Enterprising and Humanitarian foreign policy has been used in Türkiye since 2018, first of all, the study will explain in detail what this concept is and how it is understood by Türkiye. Then, Türkiye's South Caucasus policy will be explained in line with the concept of "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy". While doing this, Türkiye's relations with the South Caucasus countries will not be mentioned one by one. Instead, how the "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy" concept has been implemented by Türkiye in the South Caucasus and what Türkiye has done in the region in line with this new understanding will be investigated through examples.

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs discusses Türkiye's Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy concept under eight headlines on its official website: Network of Cooperation, Reconstruction, Regional Ownership and Solutions, Platform for Regional Diplomacy, Conflict Resolution and Mediation, Active Participation of Citizens, Developmental and Humanitarian Aid, Platform for Global Diplomacy (MFA 2022). Therefore, this study will examine the reflections and implementations of Türkiye's Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy concept on Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia under these eight headlines. Meanwhile after submitting an official letter to the United Nations, the country's name has been officially changed from Turkey to Türkiye at the UN. Thus, the new name (Türkiye) is going to be used in this article.





## 1. The Concept of Türkiye's Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy

This concept is a project that reflects Türkiye's enterprising and humanitarian values and has been implemented by Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye. In 2018, this concept was first introduced by Erdoğan and Çavuşoğlu during the conference called, "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy in the Presidential System of Government" (Çavuşoğlu 2018).

The "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy" concept emphasizes the active and vigorous nature of Turkish foreign policy. The concept bears hard and soft power elements. At the same time, it introduces Türkiye as a humanitarian state and draws attention to the cooperation, peace and development ties of her foreign policy (Akınar 2022, 496). Within the framework of the enterprising nature of Turkish foreign policy, Türkiye benefits from many complementary tools of political, economic, humanitarian and cultural cooperation, and implements diplomacy that thinks on a global scale but is effective at the local level in many corners of the world. With a total of 253 diplomatic and consular missions, Türkiye has become the 5th largest diplomatic representation network worldwide. South Caucasus countries were among the first countries where Türkiye opened diplomatic missions. Being the easternmost European and westernmost Asian country, Türkiye aims to strengthen her existing strategic relationships and develop new ones. Türkiye actively contributes to the efforts of finding humanitarian solutions to many problems, including mass migrations. As the transit country of the natural resources and energy lines of the Caucasus region, Türkiye plays a vital role in the energy security of Europe and the world. In short, the concept of Enterprising foreign policy emphasizes cooperation and effective multilateralism, conflict resolution and mediation, and regional responsibility and initiative-taking approach (MFA 2022).

The Humanitarian concept of Turkish foreign policy, on the other hand, has an understanding that puts people in the foreground. Türkiye ranks first in the world in terms of human expenditure compared to national income. She has been one of the countries that provided the most aid to foreign countries during the pandemic process. Türkiye is also the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world. As the UN Refugee Agency mentions that Türkiye is hosting 3.6 million Syrian refugees and 320.000 persons from other Countries and nationalities (UNHCR 2022).

Türkiye has also assumed a fundamental and responsible role in efforts to develop reciprocal respect and shared values between different cultures and faiths. She has adopted a policy that is free from ethnic and religious hatred, discrimination, extremism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and other exclusionary approaches. As a result, Türkiye 's "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy" aims to contribute to the common goals of humanity while securing the country's national interests (MFA 2022).





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Particularly after 2015, Türkiye strives to provide a determined and principled response to the challenges not only in her backyard but also in the world. Türkiye is acting as a responsible player guided by the dictum: "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" formulated by Atatürk and embraces a humanitarian (human-centric) and enterprising (cooperation-oriented) foreign policy approach. In one of his speeches in 2018, Çavuşoğlu (2018) further emphasized the "Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy" concept,

"As we are surrounded by fragilities and are affected by the problems of our region, an "action-oriented", "innovative" but principled foreign policy is a must in our trouble-ridden region and the world. This action-oriented, innovative and principled foreign policy is what we call Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy. In a democracy, foreign policy should be "the reflection of the nation". As pointed out on various occasions by our President, this doctrine is a home-grown and national foreign policy approach "reflecting the enterprising spirit and humanitarian and virtuous culture of our people". We call it enterprising foreign policy because we pursue a Realist, Independent, Peaceful, Creative and Effective foreign policy. A foreign policy can employ various elements of power at the same time in a rational way. A foreign policy is not hesitant of taking initiative. A foreign policy that takes into account the peace and development nexus. Our foreign policy is at the same time humanitarian and virtuous because we are the representatives of a fair national culture that sees humanity as a whole and loves the Created for the sake of the Creator. This culture envisages that all policies must serve humanity and life. It sees serving peace, harmony, security and prosperity of all humanity as serving its own".

The following headline will try to characterize the role the South Caucasus region plays in Türkiye's enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy by examining Türkiye's actions and implementations in the region.

## 2. Reflections of Türkiye's Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy Concept in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia

As Türkiye moves towards 2023, the centennial of the Republic of Türkiye, the 'Enterprising and Humanitarian' Turkish foreign policy implemented in line with Atatürk's "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" guarantees Türkiye's national security and national interests. It also has an understanding that contributes to the common peace and prosperity of humanity. While Türkiye is fighting against the epidemic in the country during the pandemic period, she has continued to demonstrate a strong presence in the field and in diplomacy on issues that closely concern Türkiye's national interests, especially in Syria, Libya, the Eastern





Mediterranean and Karabakh. Within the framework of her “Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy” concept, she has endeavoured to take initiative and responsibility in every issue in the South Caucasus and directed the developments in her favour. Türkiye has used hard and soft power elements together in a rational and balanced way. She tried to stand on the side of the righteous and the oppressed. She has resolutely implemented her human-oriented and effective foreign policy understanding that respects regional stability and universal principles (Çavuşoğlu 2021, 4-5).

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs discusses Türkiye’s Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy concept under eight headlines on its official website: Network of Cooperation, Reconstruction, Regional Ownership and Solutions, Platform for Regional Diplomacy, Conflict Resolution and Mediation, Active Participation of Citizens, Developmental and Humanitarian Aid, Platform for Global Diplomacy. Therefore, this study will examine the reflections and implementations of Türkiye’s Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy concept on Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia under these eight headlines.

### **2.1. Network of Cooperation**

As a result of the close relations established between Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Georgia, High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (YDSK) mechanisms were established. In recent years, mutual high-level visits have been made many times. Türkiye attaches importance to the development of regional cooperation and development projects in line to create a common welfare area in the South Caucasus. In this framework, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines (BTE), Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway (BTK) and The Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) have been put into practice. To establish a sense of permanent peace and stability in the South Caucasus, Türkiye advocates the peaceful resolution of the existing conflicts of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia within the framework of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Georgia (MFA 2022).

### **2.2. Reconstruction**

One of the enterprising roles of Turkish foreign policy is related to the reconstruction of the Karabakh region. During the occupation and withdrawal of Armenia, Armenia destroyed the infrastructure of the region and damaged its historical and cultural sensitivity. At this stage, it was seen that Türkiye stands by Azerbaijan in the rebuilding of the occupied regions with its knowledge and experience. At the press conference on 10 December 2020, the statement of the presidents of Türkiye and Azerbaijan that "after the completion of the highway that Turkish companies will build in the region, they will go to Shusha together" was beyond symbolic in this respect (Pirinççi 2021).





### **2.3. Regional Ownership and Solutions**

Türkiye takes initiative for the problems of the region. One of the latest examples of this is that she obtained observer status in the agreement signed between Russia-Azerbaijan-Armenia on 10 November 2020. Türkiye's presence in the field through her observation mission is a deterrent for possible provocations by Armenia in the new period. In other words, Türkiye's presence in the field is an important message that the process will not be allowed to go back to before September 27, 2020. Another important enterprising initiative in the region is the "6-member South Caucasus platform" proposal, which was voiced by President Erdogan and Aliyev and covers all the countries in the region. The 6-member South Caucasus platform has been proposed to ensure permanent stability in the region, and is important in terms of showing that Türkiye and Azerbaijan do not have any revisionist claims in the region but only aim for sustainable stability (Hurriyet Daily News 2020).

### **2.4. Platform for Regional Diplomacy**

The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform is a well-intentioned diplomatic move of Türkiye, which is trying to find solutions to the problems in the Caucasus and has regional security concerns. With this platform, She aims to take diplomatic responsibility in the Caucasus region and develop good relations by bringing the countries of the region together. However, both the complex ethnic structure in the Caucasus region, frozen and hot conflict areas and the regional geopolitical interests of the USA and Russia make it impossible to establish a peace that will benefit all countries in the region. Despite this, Türkiye makes a great contribution to regional peace. Thanks to this platform, Georgia believes that the whole world will show more interest in this region where Eurasia intersects. However, the events of the 44-day war between Azerbaijan and Armenia showed how impotent the security in the Caucasus region is. Possible friendship and reconciliation between Armenia and Türkiye in the Southern Caucasus will benefit both countries. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has declared that it will support the friendship, brotherhood and cooperation initiatives that will be established with the liberation of the Karabakh lands. After the 44-day of Karabakh victory, Türkiye's existence and role in establishing peace in the Caucasus was once again understood (Asadov 2021, 211).

### **2.5. Conflict Resolution and Mediation**

Tripartite coordination mechanisms continue to work to increase trust among the countries in the region. Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Iran, Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Georgia, Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan and Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Pakistan are among these mechanisms. Finally, the Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Iran quadrilateral cooperation mechanism has been





added to these efforts. In addition to intense visits and contacts, Türkiye hosted many high-level international events in 2018. Türkiye, Iran and Russia Summit concerning the Caucasus, Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Georgia Trilateral Foreign Ministers Meeting, Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Iran Trilateral Foreign Ministers Meeting were hosted by Türkiye (Demirci 2018).

## **2.6. Active Participation of Citizens**

Türkiye is home to people from many different identities. She, on the one hand, preserves the ties of these citizens with their homeland and culture, on the other hand, supports the active participation of these people in work and political life in the country (MFA, 2022). Türkiye 's interest and policy in the Caucasus region are not only about strategic calculations and interests but also social and cultural factors that affect Ankara's approach. About 10 per cent of Türkiye 's population is in close contact with societies in the North and South Caucasus through diaspora ties. Türkiye currently hosts approximately 3-5 million people from the North Caucasus, 3 million Azerbaijani Turks and 2-3 million Georgians (Gafarlı 2014, 176-177).

## **2.7. Developmental and Humanitarian Aid**

Türkiye, as the fifth country with the highest number of diplomatic representatives in the world, attaches importance to its diplomatic missions in the South Caucasus region. Türkiye, which cooperates with Azerbaijan beyond political relations, has an embassy in Baku and a consulate general in Nakhchivan and Ganja provinces. Türkiye has an embassy in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, and a consulate general in Batumi on the Turkish border. Within the framework of the recent normalization steps taken between Türkiye and Armenia, it can be foreseen that Türkiye will soon begin her diplomatic activities in Armenia (MFA 2022). With the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic, Türkiye sent protective materials such as N95 masks, surgical masks, overalls, safety glasses and visors, as well as test kits and aid materials to many countries. In his statement on April 18, 2020, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that 116 countries requested assistance from Türkiye and Türkiye sent medical aid to 44 countries (BBC News 2020).

There is an important institution called TİKA in Türkiye 's humanitarian foreign policy towards the South Caucasus. Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) was established in 1992. TİKA's projects and activities in the South Caucasus shaped by strategic priorities include the Re-establishment and Development of the Karabakh Region, Development of Non-Oil Sectors, Removal of Social Imbalances, Development of Our Common Civilization Values and Development of Joint Activities for Other Countries. TİKA carries out many projects and activities in the fields of agricultural development, tourism, health, reconstruction, finance, education and industry. TİKA, whose office was opened in Azerbaijan in 1994, has been developing the methods used in scientific research, and







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modernization of first aid equipment. TİKA has renovated the Azerbaijan State Migration Service Training Center, increased the capacity building of Azerbaijani non-governmental organizations and provided training for Azerbaijani citizens in the fields of education and agriculture. TİKA has also restored Tbilisi National Rehabilitation-Adaptation Center, repaired the Duisi Mosque in Kakheti-Georgia and inaugurated a child support centre for orphans in Batumi. The number of activities and projects implemented by TİKA, especially in Azerbaijan has exceeded 1200 (TİKA 2022).

## 2.8. Platform for Global Diplomacy

Finally, it is worth mentioning an important diplomatic activity in terms of the enterprising foreign policy concept. Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF), which was held for the second time in 2022, hosted important statesmen from many countries in Antalya and was a beneficial initiative for the South Caucasus. The President of Azerbaijan and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia attended this Forum with Turkish officials and had important meetings. However, what made this Forum special was that, while the Russia-Ukraine war continues, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba took a sit on the negotiating table in Antalya for a possible ceasefire. Türkiye has achieved important diplomatic success with this initiative. Therefore, ADF has taken a very important step towards becoming an important Forum that can shape global politics in the coming years (ADF 2022).

## Conclusion

Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy (EHFP) is essentially a combination of humanitarian aid, development efforts, business investments, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and political relations. In the field, it collaborates with governments, local institutions, civil society organisations, local actors, the public, community leaders and political actors. Türkiye's President Erdoğan and his Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu's conceptualization of EHFP has both a historical and a political dimension. The political dimension defines the content, the historical dimension contextualizes and justifies EHFP. They argue that because of Türkiye's rooted past, Türkiye has a responsibility against the people living in areas once controlled by the Ottoman Empire. However, Türkiye does not also refrain from taking initiatives outside its deep-rooted past. Türkiye's EHFP means rebuilding the Turkish government's worldview and Türkiye's global identity as both a rising Western country and a leader of the Muslim world.

The essence of Türkiye's South Caucasus policy consists of activities centred on history and brotherhood, as well as non-governmental organizations, energy, investment, development aid, trade and the slogan of one nation, two states. The Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy concept emphasizes an understanding that Türkiye as a





determined regional player does not hesitate to take responsibility and desires lasting peace and cooperation. Because relations with the South Caucasus countries constitute one of the main orientations of Turkish foreign policy. The EHFP policy of Türkiye, which is also a Caucasian country, towards the South Caucasus is not only a reflection of a temporal political and economic expectation. With the independence of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia in 1991, Türkiye tried to advance and diversify its economic, political, social and cultural relations and cooperation with these countries. Although there are historical and fraternal motivations in the South Caucasus, Türkiye has supported its commercial relations with an equally active humanitarian and entrepreneurial profile, as noted in the study.

As a result, the ability of Turkish states to create a more robust and efficient enterprising and humanitarian profile has depended on the financial and political stability they enjoy. Türkiye's EHFP engagement in the South Caucasus is a reflection of the country's desire to play a broader regional if not global role. The central role played by important institutions such as TİKA, Turkish NGOs and the private sector made enterprising and humanitarian aid an important pillar of Turkish foreign policy under the AK Party government. However, the link between politics and aid and the conflict-prone structure of the South Caucasus region not only raises principled questions about the feasibility of EHFP but may also risk the sustainability of Türkiye's EHFP concept over time. Therefore, for the continuation of the EHFP concept, Türkiye should take diplomatic responsibility for the resolution of all frozen conflict areas in the South Caucasus, resolutely continue the normalization steps taken with Armenia, sustain her strong and peaceful policies with Azerbaijan and Georgia and should not approach the region with daily political interests.

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