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DİPLOMATİK İLİŞKİLER ve POLİTİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER for DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS and POLITICAL STUDIES

USA 2020 ELECTION AND IMPLICATION ON AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN
Dr. Stephen BLANK

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Panel Notes

On 27.10.2020 at 7.30 pm, the panel titled "USA 2020 Election and Implication on American Foreign Policy" was held online by DİPAM. Moderated by Transatlantic Global Advisory Founding President Ellen WASYLINA, Foreign Policy Research Institute Senior Specialist Dr. Stephen

BLANK and Rector of Altınbaş University-DİPAM Advisory Board Member Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN attended as speakers.

Moderator Ellen WASYLINA started her speech by introducing the panelists. She explained the purpose and subject of the

panel and evaluated the environment in which the American elections would be held as controversial. Stating that this election process is more contentious compared to other elections, she said that hostility, disagreement, division and opposition between the parties are at an extreme level. She said that this situation was not only among politicians but also widespread in society. Covid-19 started last year and has become a global epidemic, by putting countries and politicians into trouble; she stated that it affected political, economic and social life in a very different way. She stated that this process forced political decision-makers to restrict and to introduce new social, health and economic regulations. She stated that the epidemic period also affected the USA politically and economically, and evaluated the society's perspectives on the election process and leaders progressing in this process.

She stated that this election will affect the US foreign policy and its role in the world and these effects can be observed especially in the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean and Europe. The moderator explained 4 main topics to be discussed in the panel and provided time for panelists for their introductory speeches.

Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN stated that the US elections in this period proceeded in a very different way compared to the previous elections, listing the differences between them and drew attention to the lack of place of foreign policy in the election process and debates. He categorized the differences between them by mentioning the differences of opinion among the presidential candidates. He stated that Joe Biden and Donald Trump have at least three differences of opinion

on the issue, based on the results of the surveys conducted with many academicians by think tanks called Carnegie Institute and Global Research Institute. The candidates put the differences on multilateralism in international relations first, and then stated that Donald Trump did not have any multilateral approach and put America in the first place as in the previous elections. He stated that Joe Biden thinks differently on this issue and emphasized international cooperation, international institutions and organizations. He explained that Biden, by thinking this way, wanted to return to the multilateral policies under Obama and Clinton administrations. He added that Trump paid less attention to these issues.

Speaker stated that the second difference of opinion was candidates views on climate change and environmental problems. He stated that Biden openly criticized Trump on this issue. He said that Biden thinks that Trump's policies on climate change and the environment have harmed the future generations of America and the world. He expressed that Biden was ready to return to the environmental policies of the Obama and Clinton periods on this issue.

Erhan, stated that the third divergence was about global public health. He stated that the Covid-19 issue is very hot on the US agenda and has a very important place in the presidential discussions. He expressed that Biden criticized Trump on this issue and that he criticized his failure to lead global efforts and struggles during the epidemic period.

On the other hand, in the survey conducted, it is stated that the candidates will follow almost the same type of foreign

policy, especially in three areas, regardless of who wins the next elections; He stated that it was concluded that they would only apply in different shades.

Erhan, stated that the first was related to the use of military force and stated that it was about the US cross-border operations. He said that Biden criticized Trump's increase in defense budget. However, he added that if Biden was elected, there was no clear indication that the defense budget would soon be reduced, and there was no situation that US troops would withdraw.

Speaker, stated that the second was the policies towards China, Biden was not as harsh on China as Trump, but Biden also had concerns about China. He stated that Biden wanted to use soft power instruments more to deal with China. He also said that Biden acknowledged that China challenged the US globally. He added that if Biden is elected, he will take measures against the Chinese threat.

He said that the third is the fight against terrorism and that for both candidates, terrorism is a great threat to the USA. He stated that no matter who wins the election, the USA will continue the fight against terrorism and take measures, and underlined that global terrorism is not over.

According to the result of this survey, which was participated by more than 700 academicians working in the field of International Relations, 92% stated that they believed that foreign governments would be more willing to cooperate with the USA if Biden was elected.

Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN, said he found the results interesting and argued that such a

situation would not apply to Turkey. Turkey's society and academia, after Biden's remarks about the politics of Turkey stated would want to Trump win the elections.

In his own opinion, he stated that the main policies that the candidates have followed and will follow have certain differences and that they will follow similar policies regarding China, terrorism and the use of military force. He stated that he believes that if Biden is elected, there will be multilateralism and more cooperation in the international arena. However, it also questioned whether international actors would be willing to cooperate more with the USA. He stated that Biden wanted to revive the Clinton era rather than Obama.

Dr. Stephen BLANK started his speech by saying that the foreign policy of a great state does not depend on a single period. He argued that the world would not differ radically if Biden won the elections. Stating that he does not see himself as someone who supports any side, he said that there are fundamental differences between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. Not only for relations between the US and Turkey, it has said that it is extremely important differences global scale. As a main point, if Biden is chosen, there will be big changes; he claimed that no one had any idea about what would happen if Trump was elected. He said that Trump proved that he could not implement a consistent foreign policy except for a few issues.

Under the Trump administration, he pointed to the under-financing of the State Department and the massive resignations among foreign service officials, noting that any issue or problem

could not be solved and accomplished in this way. He pointed out that discontent with the government also applies to the Pentagon, and therefore stated that it is very difficult to formulate and implement a coherent policy. He stated that Trump is extremely naive and uninformed about the world, so he is experiencing crises with intelligence. He also mentioned the negative effects of this situation on foreign relations.

Blank said that the United States has no clear policy towards Turkey and in public opinion there is a very deep misunderstanding in this issue. The speaker attributed this situation to Trump's ambiguous foreign policy understanding.

He said that the situation would be the opposite for Biden and stated that Biden is experienced in foreign policy and has a large foreign policy team. He said that Biden was well known by the governments of Europe, Middle East and Asia and added that Biden was trusted. He stated that if Biden is elected as a president, he will quickly provide and finance staff in the necessary offices in the National Security Council, State Department and Pentagon (which he thinks Trump cannot provide them). Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN stated that he agreed with what Blank had said about multilateralism and that if Biden was elected, US relations could develop internationally. He also talked about the benefits of international alliance and cooperation for the USA and underlined that all these will be based on a new basis. Dr. Stephen Blank, addressed the normalization processes with Israel and mentioned that countries such as UAE, Bahrain and Sudan participated normalization movement to get US support against Iran and Turkey. He

claimed that these countries joined the normalization movement because they were afraid of not receiving the support of the USA.

He emphasized that there will be no predictability in the possible Trump administration and underlined that there will be no basis for institutional consistency. He argued in particular that there would be no solid foreign policy.

Moderator Ellen WASYLINA expressed that she was curious about the panellists' views on change and continuity in US politics, and how the decision-making process in foreign policy evolved.

Dr. Stephen BLANK stated that power is dispersed in the US system. He stated that the first duty of the President should establish a coherent and good foreign policy and stated that in this process, the President was bombarded with information and oppressed by non-governmental elements. He gave an example to Roosevelt and Eisenhower, who managed this process well. He underlined that the final decision was made by the President and that this situation should be managed well. He criticized the Trump administration and complained that there was no system in foreign policy. He said that Trump rejected the intelligence community's findings and belittled alliances.

Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN drew attention to the communication between the White House and Congress by mentioning the US political system. He underlined that there is a separation of powers in the USA and a combination of powers. He mentioned the relations between the President and the Congress and stated that lobbying activities also affect the decision-making

processes. He called this situation "the synthesis of different approaches". He said that he saw three separate branches in US foreign policy and listed these as: the State Department, the Pentagon (as the security bureaucracy) and the Treasury. He talked about the effects of these three bureaucratic circles. Prof. Dr. Çağrı Erhan said that if Biden is elected, who will manage these three bureaucratic circles (departments) is important. He also mentioned resignations in these departments in the Trump administration. He stated that the generals within the Pentagon had disagreements with Trump and thought that these disputes could be resolved if Biden was elected.

Moderator Ellen WASYLINA asked the panelists about the importance of NATO and the importance of bilateral and other multilateral alliances for the United States. Dr. Stephen BLANK said that alliances are extremely important to US interests. He stated that after the Second World War, alliances took a high place in the foreign policy of the USA. He said that the administration and protection of alliances and allies made the United States stronger and served it all over the world. He also repeated that Trump did not have a successful period in this regard.

Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN talked about the establishment purpose and development of NATO and found it obligatory to transform it in the new world system. By questioning the concept of the enemy within NATO, he touched on Russia's relations with member countries. He predicted that the selected candidate would try to make NATO a global alliance. He stated that NATO is still a defense organization and said that NATO should be transformed into a security organization. He stated that NATO should open its door

to new members and stated that NATO could be more effective in this way. He has not forgotten that this situation may anger certain parties such as Russia and China. But he believed that NATO had to be transformed in terms of geography and business relations in order to survive.

Moderator Ellen WASYLINA asked Dr. Stephen BLANK his opinions about role of NATO based on increasing tension in Eastern Mediterranean between Turkey and Greece.

Dr. Stephen BLANK said that during this tension, the US took the Greek side and that the US had a large military base in Crete. He said that this base could control not only the Mediterranean, but also Africa and the Middle East. In this way, the United States has clearly stated that that it was against Turkey. Dr. Stephen Blank pointed out what he described as "Turkish aggression against Cyprus and Greece" in his own words. He also underlined that traffickers should comply with international law and said that the parties should stay away from active war. He drew attention to the role of the USA in order to end the tension in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Moderator Ellen WASYLINA, asked Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN for his opinions on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and the role of the USA.

On different perspective from Dr. Stephen BLANK, Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN said that: Greek Cypriot Administration and Greece with excluding Turkey, they seeking to create marine areas step by step in last 10 years. He added that the USA should look at this issue on a "fair" basis. Drawing attention to the demilitarization of the islands according to international law and

the maritime jurisdiction of the islands according to the law of the sea, he questioned the attitudes of Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration. Speaker, evaluated Turkey's exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and has made an analysis of the current situation. In particular, he drew attention to the agreement signed between Turkey and Libya. And expressed that Turkey's actions could not be considered active warfare. He stated that the USA's interest in Crete was not new and questioned the existence of a large navy such as the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean. He questioned the existence of this fleet in the Mediterranean today, and that it is not the same as its present existence 30 years ago. He also questioned Russia's military presence in the Mediterranean.

Dr. Stephen BLANK, based USA's presence in the Mediterranean on the invitation of NATO member states such as Turkey, Greece and claimed that the main purpose was the welfare, security and democracy systems of the member states, and said that USA was in the Mediterranean for a peaceful order. He said that her main purpose is not energy, and note that the USA is an independent state in terms of energy. Speakers emphasize that Turkey is left alone in the region and in the region everybody is against her. Blank said that Turkey is faced with political and economic challenges and it is difficult to get out of this situation. Speaker, said that Turkey exaggerated its position in the region and have claimed that Turkey was in a dangerous situation that Washington might have had to save her.

Prof. Dr. Cağrı ERHAN, emphasize that according to 90% of the population in Turkey, has said that they believes the force behind the 2016 FETO coup attempt

is US. Erhan questioned non-extradition of the terrorist Gulen despite thousands of documents and US's military support to YPG and PYD which are side arms of PKK terrorist organization. Speaker evaluate US's this behaviours as a interesting. Despite all these speaker mentioned that he was optimistic for the future of Turkey-US relations and said that cooperation between the two countries believe should be done. He emphasized that there are many opportunities, especially in the field of trade, and stated that harmony and cooperation should be made against the common threat.



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ABOUT DISCUSSANTS

Ellen WASYLINA, Former President of the International Geostrategic Maritime Observatory based in Paris, France (IGMO, 2011-2018), Editor in Chief of our bi-annual flagship publication, the Geostrategic Maritime Review (GMR, 2013-2018), she is also an author, speaker, commentator, adjunct professor and mentor. Expert to EUROPAID in Algeria (2014-2015) she has more than 20 years of business leadership experience in both France, Europe and the United States. She possesses two Masters degrees done in France in French in Defense Strategy and Policies from HEI-CEDS (2005) and another Master degree in Conflict Resolution from the Institut Catholique de Paris (2006), she has written many contributions and articles in the press and in university reserach publications. Her books published in French, are “Ukraine : prémices de guerre froide en Europe?” (2014); and “La défense européenne face aux menaces : l’Europe est-elle prête pour son 11 septembre?”(2015), Harmattan , Paris; and two books in English, “Sustainability governance in a post-globalized world” (2019); “Securing the periphery of Europe post-9/11 : the Black and Mediterranean Sea axis”(2019), both on Apple Books; and finally her latest contribution was to the book “The Geopolitical Realities for Russia : from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean” (2019) under the direction of Nursin Atesoglu Güney; her chapter was “What lies behind the Ukrainian crisis and Moscow’s gains and losses?” (2019).

Prof. Dr. Çağrı ERHAN, is Member of DİPAM Advisory Board Member of the Turkish Presidential Security and Foreign Policy Board. He graduated from Ankara University Faculty of Political Science, Department of International Relations in 1993. In 1996, he received his MA degree in International Relations from Ankara University and concluded his Ph. D. in Hacettepe University Department of History in 2000.

Prof. Dr. Erhan started his academic career as a research assistant at AUFPS Department of International Relations in 1994. He was appointed as an academic member (2000-2002), as an assistant professor (2002-2003), as an associate professor (2003-2009) and as a full Professor (2009-2015) at the same department.

Prof. Dr. Erhan is one of the founding editors of Journal of International Relations and Review of Ankara European Studies. He has held/holds several positions at European Research Center (ATAUM), Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs Center for Strategic Research (SAM), International Relations Council of Turkey (UIK), Turkish Commission of Military History, National Committee of Historiography, Editorial Board of History – Education Projects (Council of Europe), Center for International Political and Economic Relations.

Dr. Stephen BLANK, is Senior Fellow at FPRI's Eurasia Program. He has published over 900 articles and monographs on Soviet/Russian, U.S., Asian, and European military and foreign policies, testified frequently before Congress on Russia, China, and Central Asia, consulted for the Central Intelligence Agency, major think tanks and foundations, chaired major international conferences in the U.S. and in Florence; Prague; and London, and has been a commentator on foreign affairs in the media in the U.S. and abroad. He has also advised major corporations on investing in Russia and is a consultant for the Gerson Lehrmann Group. He has published or edited 15 books.