

**PUBLIC OPINION AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY PERCEPTION: SELCUK
UNIVERSITY CASE¹**

KAMUOYU VE TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASI ALGISI: SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ ÖRNEĞİ

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we discuss the comparison of the questionnaire study conducted between the dates of 20 May 2016 and 15 Apr 2017 online with the students of Selcuk University Vocational School of Social Sciences and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and the response of the students to that questionnaire are analyzed. In the survey, the issues which have been occupying Turkish foreign policy recently were discussed. Within this context, it was aimed to measure the perception of the society in diversified amount of issues from the process of membership of Turkey for the EU to Immigrant Policies, from the perceptions of friend-enemy to specific and strong foreign policy applications. The survey study aims to determine the attitudes and perceptions among the students related to Turkish foreign policy through revealing the relationship between the Public and Turkish Foreign Policy, the Membership of Turkey at the EU, the attitudes of the members of RU, their opinions about the USA and Russia and how to deal with the issue of immigrants.

Keywords: Turkish Foreign Policy, European Union, Syria

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada 20 Mayıs 2016 ve 15 Nisan 2017 tarihlerinde Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Meslek Yüksek Okulu ile İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi öğrencileriyle internet üzerinden gerçekleştirilen anket çalışması kıyaslanması ele alınmakta ve bu ankette verilen cevaplar değerlendirilmektedir. Ankette, son dönemlerde Türk dış politikası gündemini meşgul eden konular ele alınmıştır. Bu bağlamda Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği üyeliği sürecinden Mülteci politikalarına, dost-düşman algısından özgün ve güçlü dış politika uygulamalarına kadar geniş bir yelpazede kamuoyunun algısı ölçülmeye çalışılmıştır. Anket çalışması, Kamuoyu ve Türk Dış Politikası arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koyarak öğrencilerin Türk dış politikasına yönelik tutum ve algıları, Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği üyeliği, Avrupa Birliği'nin tavrı, ABD ve Rusya'ya bakışı, mülteciler konusunda ne yapılması gerektiği gibi konulardaki eğilimlerini saptamayı hedeflemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Türk Dış Politikası, Avrupa Birliği, Suriye

1. INTRODUCTION

In this study, between 20 May 2016 and 15 April 2017, Selcuk University Social Sciences Vocational School and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences students are compared with the questionnaires conducted on the internet and the answers given in this questionnaire are evaluated. In the questionnaire, topics that have recently been on the agenda of Turkish foreign policy were discussed. In this context, Turkey's European Union membership process to the refugee policy, the friend-enemy perception unique and powerful foreign policy in a wide range of applications up to the public's perception of measuring facing 12 questions were asked.

The survey, "Public Opinion And Turkish Foreign Policy Perception: Selcuk University Case" undergraduate and graduate students are putting forth the relationship between attitudes and perceptions of the Turkish foreign policy, Turkey's European Union membership, the European Union's attitude, the US and

¹ In this study, Kadir Has University, Public Opinion Perceptions of Turkish Foreign Policy Research, Quantitative Research Report, 27 May 2015, survey questions and www.surveey.com were used.

Russia to look, what about the refugees as it should be aimed at determining trends in the subject. The aim of the research is to reveal the perspective of Selçuk University students towards Turkish foreign policy and to determine their approach to foreign policy issues. Pre-prepared questionnaires are required to be answered by the students through the net. Quantitative research method was used in the questionnaire study and students' opinions of Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences were used in the selection of the sample.

Goal	To reveal the perspective of Selçuk University students towards Turkish foreign policy and to determine their approach to foreign policy issues	
Method	Research method	Quantitative research
	Data collection technique	Questionnaire method based on pre-prepared questionnaire
Sampling	Students aged 18 and over from Selçuk University Social Sciences Vocational School and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	
Calendar	Fieldwork	May 15, 2016 April 15, 2017
	Data Control and Analysis	April 20, 2017 April 23, 2017
	Reporting	April 24, 2017 April 26, 2017

2. SURVEY QUESTIONS AND EVALUATION

In your opinion, what has recently (2014-2016) been the primary agenda topic of the Turkish Foreign Policy?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
Fight against terrorism	51,49	45,85
Syrian issue	18,28	26,03
Relations with the EU	16,23	24,65
Threat of ISIS	12,31	2,99
Relations with Israel	1,30	0,23
Relations with Armenia	0,37	0,23

To the question of primary agenda of the Turkish Foreign Policy, participants gave the reply of fight against terrorism respectively by 51, 49% and 45, 85% in 2016 and 2017. In fight against terrorism, although a 6-point decrease occurred, it has been observed that opinions of participants about primary agenda have not changed. In the second rank, with the 8-point increase related to Syrian issue and relations with the EU compared to the previous year, the ranking kept its place in the table respectively by 26, 03% and 24, 65%. It is noteworthy that threat of ISIS decreased from 12, 31% in 2016 to 2, and 99% in 2017.

In your opinion, which one or ones of the following should be concentrated on for a more powerful Turkish foreign policy?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
Deinforcing political relationships with other countries	28,04	30,64
Diplomatic and economic sanctions	25,22	29,95
Reinforcing economic relationships with other countries	24,69	26,72
Having an active part in international organizations	13,93	8,75
Public diplomacy activities	4,4	2,53
Mediate between countries	3,7	1,38

The area which participants thought should be concentrated on in foreign policy between the years 2016 and 2017 has been found to be, with the highest rate, reinforcing political and economic relationships with other countries and heading for diplomatic and economic sanctions. Increasing when compared to the previous year, reinforcing political relationships with other countries became 30, 64% and diplomatic and economic sanctions ranked second by 29, 95%. It is seen that the ones who preferred reinforcing economic relationships with other countries became 26, 72% by a 2-point increase in 2017. When compared to 2016, a decrease occurred in the options of having an active part in international organizations, being engaged in public diplomacy and arbitrating by falling respectively to 8, 75, 2, 53 and 1, 38%.

In your opinion, which country is the “closest friend” of Turkey?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
Azerbaijan	60	62,44
Does not have a friend	14,51	28,11
Pakistan	8,14	2,07
Bosnia and Herzegovina	7,25	0,92
TRNC	5,84	2,3
Saudi Arabia	2,83	0,92
USA	0,7	0,46
EU	0,53	0,69
Iranian	0,17	0

Azerbaijan is the country regarded as the closest friend by over 60% in 2016 and 2017. According to preferences of participants, when compared to 2016, the state of Pakistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, TRNC, Saudi Arabia, the USA and Iran being regarded the closest friend decreased. The rate of the ones who did not regard them as friend was in the second rank respectively by 14, 51% and 28, 11% in 2016 and 2017.

In your opinion, which country or countries pose a threat to Turkey most?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
Israel	37,72	14,05
USA	27,54	52,99
Syria	13,44	10,82
Armenia	11,87	1,38
Iranian	6,13	2,53
Iraq	3,26	0,92

In perception of threat, while Israel ranked first by 37, 72% in 2016, the USA ranked first by 52, and 99% in 2017. The rate of the ones who thought Syria, Armenia, Iran and Iraq posed a threat to Turkey decreased when compared to 2016.

In your opinion, which country or countries should be chosen to take joint action while following the Turkish foreign policy?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
Muslim countries	34,25	34,56
Turkic Republics	18,5	20,27
Azerbaijan	17,37	9,44
Follow a policy alone	16,72	24,42
USA	6,49	2,99
EU	5,35	3,22
Russia	1,29	4,37

The rate of participants who considered Turkey should take joint action with the Muslim countries in foreign policy was in the first rank by 34% in 2016 and 2017. While the ones who thought foreign policy should be followed with the Turkic Republics ranked second by 18% in 2016, they preferred the option that it should follow a policy alone by 24% in 2017. While the rate of the ones who considered it should take joint action with Azerbaijan was 17% in 2016, it fell to 9% in 2017. A 3-point decrease occurred in 2016, when compared to 2017, in the rate of the ones who thought it should take joint action with the USA and the EU in foreign policy and it became respectively 2, 99% and 3, 22%. Another remarkable development occurred in the rate of the ones who considered it should take joint action with Russia. While the rate of the ones who considered it should take joint action with Russia was 1, 29% in 2016, the mentioned rate rose to 4, and 37% in 2017

Do you want Turkey to become a member of the European Union?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
No	45,15	56,68
Yes	28,63	21,88
Undecided	26,21	21,42

While membership of Turkey to the EU was not leaned towards in general in 2016 and 2017, this rate was seen to be more in 2017. While the rate of the ones who said no to the EU membership was 45% in 2016, it rose to 56% in 2017. The rate of the ones who leaned towards the EU membership decreased from 28% in 2016 to 21% in 2017. Related to membership, the undecided ones are at a level close to the ones who said yes.

In your opinion, does the European Union behave reliably and intimately towards Turkey?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
No	84,44	90,09
No idea about the matter	13,55	7,37
Yes	2	2,53

The rate of the ones who did not consider the EU behaved reliably and intimately towards Turkey became 90% with a 6%-point increase in 2017, when compared to 2016. While the rate of the ones who stated they had no idea about the matter 13% in 2016, it fell to 7% in 2017.

Do you think membership of Turkey to the European Union is hindered?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
Yes	90	93,31
No	10	6,69

The rate of the ones who consider the EU membership of Turkey is hindered is over 90%. The rate of the ones who did not consider its membership was hindered fell to the levels of 6% with a 4-point decrease from 2016 to 2017.

How do you define the relationships between Russia and Turkey?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
There are problems	63,42	44,47
Hostile	23,96	6,68
There is neither cooperation nor problem.	5,99	18,66
There are cooperation.	5,37	26,26
There is very close cooperation.	1,23	3,91

Majority of the ones who defined the relationship between Turkey and Russia stated there were problems in 2016 and 2017. However, while it was stated by 63% that there were problems in 2016, this rate fell to the levels of 44% in 2017. While the rate of the ones who thought it was hostile was 23% in 2016, it fell to 6% in 2017 by decreasing seriously. The rate of the ones who considered there was cooperation became 26% by increasing seriously when compared to the previous year. While the rate of the ones who considered there was neither cooperation nor a problem was 5% in 2016, it rose to 18% in 2017.

In your opinion, what kind of policy should Turkey follow?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
Should stay neutral and should not interfere in	25,69	20,05
To support international sanctions against Esad government	22,11	16,82
Support should be given in case of international military intervention	19,12	20,73
Only help unarmed refugees	15,53	16,12
Commercial relationships should be broken off but any political or military sanction should not be applied	10,15	9,21
The armed opponents in Syria should be supported	7,37	16,58

To the question what kind of a policy Turkey should follow against Syria, majority of participants thought that it should stay neutral and should not interfere in. While the rate of the ones who said it should stay neutral 25% in 2016, it was at the levels of 20% in 2017. In the second rank, while the rate of the ones who considered international sanctions against Esad government should be supported 22% in 2016, it fell to 16% in 2017. The rate of the ones who thought that support should be given in case of international military intervention was 20% in 2016 and 2017. The rate of the ones who thought commercial relationships should be broken off but any political or military sanction should not be applied was 10% in 2016 and 2017. While

the rate of the ones who considered the armed opponents in Syria should be supported was 7% in 2016, it became 16% with a 9%-point increase in 2017.

In your opinion, what kind of policy should Turkey follow against refugees?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
Refugees should be ended and refugees who came previously should be sent to their countries	22,14	35,25
A buffer zone should be established	20,56	23,96
The rate of the ones who considered the number to form a limit for refugee to enter the country	19,85	13,82
Should be placed in the camps	15,64	12,44
People must be protected	11,42	7,83
Refugee recruitment should be stopped and those who have arrived before should not be sent	5,79	4,83
The rate of the ones who considered refugees, regardless of their numbers, should be accepted	4,56	1,84

To the question what kind of policy Turkey should follow against refugees, participants mostly stated in 2016 and 2017 that admittance of refugees should be ended and refugees who came previously should be sent to their countries. The rate of the ones who considered a buffer zone should be established was 20% in 2016 and 2017. While the rate of the ones who considered the number to form a limit for refugees to enter the country should be determined was 19% in 2016, it fell to 13% with a 6-point decrease in 2017. The rates of the ones who thought refugees should be placed to camps and admittance of refugees should be ended but did not think refugees who came previously should be sent back fell to respectively 12% and 4% with a 1-2-point decrease in 2017. While the rate of the ones who considered refugees, regardless of their numbers, should be accepted, was 4% in 2016, it fell to 1% in 2017.

How do you define the USA in terms of its relations with Turkey?

Options	Years % Rate	
	2016	2017
a self-seeking country	37,14	40,09
unreliable country	20,48	32,25
a strategic partner/allied country	16,66	5,76
a colonialist country	16,24	10,82
an enemy country	5,64	10,36
military ally	2,96	0,46
friendly country	0,84	0,23

The rate of the ones who regarded the USA as a self-seeking country in terms of its relations with Turkey ranked first respectively by 37% and 40% in 2016 and 2017. While the ones who regarded it unreliable ranked second, it rose from 20% in 2016 to 32% in 2017. While the rate of the ones who thought it was a strategic partner/allied country was 16% in 2016, it fell to 5% in 2017. While the rate of the ones who regarded the USA as a colonialist country was 16% in 2016, it became 10% with a 6-point decrease in 2017. The rate of the ones who thought it was an enemy country rose to 10% with a 5-point increase in 2017. Finally, participants did not regard the USA as a friendly country in its relations with Turkey in both years.

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