A PLACE IN THE SUN OR FIFTEEN MINUTES OF FAME?
Understanding Turkey’s New Foreign Policy

The Paper in a Nutshell
As Turkey’s economy grows, the country has become more independent and assertive on the world stage—clashing recently with Israel over the Gaza flotilla incident and brokering a nuclear deal with Iran criticized by the West. Despite recent frictions between Turkey and the West, however, it is premature to suggest that the two are drifting apart. By recognizing Ankara’s growing clout and pushing it to be a responsible international stakeholder, the United States and Europe can help Turkey become a genuine partner and a role model for other emerging powers.

Vital Statistics
- In the past decade, Turkey’s GDP has increased from U.S. $192 billion to $640 billion. During the same period, per capita income tripled from $3,000 to $9,000 per year.
- Turkey is the world’s sixteenth largest economy.
- Growing economic affluence has contributed substantially to Turkey’s growing international ambitions. As Turkey expands its status as a trading nation, it has sought a “zero problems” policy with its neighbors.
- By virtue of its size and location, Turkey already counts as one of the indispensable security stakeholders in several interlocking regions: the Middle East, Balkans, Caucasus, and Black Sea.
- As the West adapts to Ankara’s growing stature and newfound assertiveness, the challenge for the European Union and the United States is to ensure Turkey remains firmly tied to Western interests.

Recommendations for EU Policy Makers
Jumpstart Turkey’s stalled EU accession process: In recent years, the dream of EU membership has dissolved so thoroughly that it no longer anchors Turkish foreign and domestic policy. To help keep Turkey in the Western camp, the EU should work toward settling its outstanding disputes with Ankara over Cyprus and other issues while laying out a clear pathway to eventual EU membership.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy Makers
Grant Turkey more leeway to pursue its own foreign policy: The United States should strike a grand bargain with Turkey, recognizing its expanded role in global affairs and showing greater understanding when the two countries’ interests periodically diverge.

Insist that Turkey shoulder the full responsibilities of a major power: In exchange, Washington should demand that Turkey play a more constructive role in the international community, sharing both the costs and benefits of providing solutions to global challenges. The United States stands to gain an important partner and establish a useful blueprint for other emerging powers looking to raise their profile on the world stage.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Sinan Ülgen is a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels, where his research focuses on the implications of Turkish foreign policy for Europe and the United States, particularly with regard to Turkey’s regional stance and its role in nuclear, energy, and climate issues. He is also chairman of the Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), an independent think tank in Istanbul.

ABOUT THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE: Founded in 1910, the Carnegie Endowment is a leading, nonpartisan think tank specializing in foreign affairs. It is also the world’s first truly global think tank with operations in Washington, D.C., Moscow, Beijing, Beirut, and Brussels.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: A full-length version of this study is available on the web at: carnegieendowment.org/ulgen. For more information or to speak with one of our scholars, please do not hesitate to contact our congressional liaison, Scott Toussaint, at (202) 939-2307 or stoussaint@ceip.org.