

In this week’s Türkiye in Focus, we cover the following topics:

- Türkiye’s response to the fall of the Assad regime in Syria, its implications for domestic politics, and the evolving dynamics between the two nations.
- The CHP’s foreign policy missteps, highlighted by its reactions to developments in Syria and ongoing challenges in adapting to the changing geopolitical landscape.
- Türkiye’s successful mediation between Ethiopia and Somalia, resulting in a landmark agreement that balances territorial integrity with economic cooperation.

Türkiye’s Response to the Overthrow of Syria’s Dictatorship

The collapse of Syria’s Baathist regime has been a key focus of Türkiye’s foreign policy for several reasons. Official statements reflect a careful and measured approach, with both the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasising that Syria belongs to the Syrians and reaffirming support for a unified Syria. Public platforms, from social media to official statements, have also expressed praise for the Syrian people’s struggle.

Simultaneously, thousands of Syrians across Türkiye, particularly in migrant-heavy cities like Istanbul and Gaziantep, took to the streets to celebrate. Over the past 13 years, Türkiye has hosted over 4 million Syrians, though current official numbers estimate around 3 million. While migrants have contributed to the economy, their presence has also brought challenges, including social tensions and political exploitation.

Following the fall of Assad, long queues formed at the Cilvegözü border gate, one of the main crossings into Syria. In response, President Erdoğan announced the reopening of the Yayladağı border gate as a secondary route. Although Syria’s future remains uncertain, the developments are expected to have significant implications for Türkiye’s domestic situation.

Political figures and parties that have built their platforms on anti-migrant rhetoric now face a difficult position. On the other hand, the ruling AK Party, which has borne the political cost of hosting migrants, appears to be in a stronger position.

In this context, Türkiye’s active foreign policy has gained global recognition, with President Erdoğan emerging as the biggest domestic political beneficiary. Türkiye is poised to play an influential role in shaping Syria’s future, a position that the government has made clear. Erdoğan has also taken a strong stance



(Cem Tekkeşinoğlu - Anadolu Agency)

against Israel’s aggressive actions toward Syria, using harsh language to condemn them.

Furthermore, it seems likely that ties between Türkiye and Syria will continue to grow. Many Turkish civil society organisations have maintained strong connections with Syria, and Turkish search-and-rescue teams have contributed to efforts such as rescuing prisoners from Sednaya prison and identifying mass graves. Additionally, millions of Syrians in Türkiye, who have lived there for over a decade, are expected to deepen the relationship between the two countries.

For now, however, Türkiye’s focus remains on ensuring Syria’s territorial integrity and facilitating a transition to civilian governance.

CHP Left Out of the Game

For years, the CHP has faced criticism for its inadequacy in foreign policy, and the reactions from the main opposition regarding events in Syria have once again amplified these critiques. CHP leader Özgür Özel became the subject of ridicule on social media following a statement he made just one day before Assad’s downfall. At a time when opposition forces had reached the gates of Homs, Özel called on the government to engage in talks with Assad and suggested that Syrian migrants in Türkiye benefit from Assad’s general amnesty and return to their country.

Only 24 hours later, Bashar al-Assad fled the country, and reports began to emerge of numerous survivors, both dead and alive, being extracted from the regime’s prisons, including those who had returned under amnesty. Even media outlets sympathetic to the CHP criticised this lack of foresight.

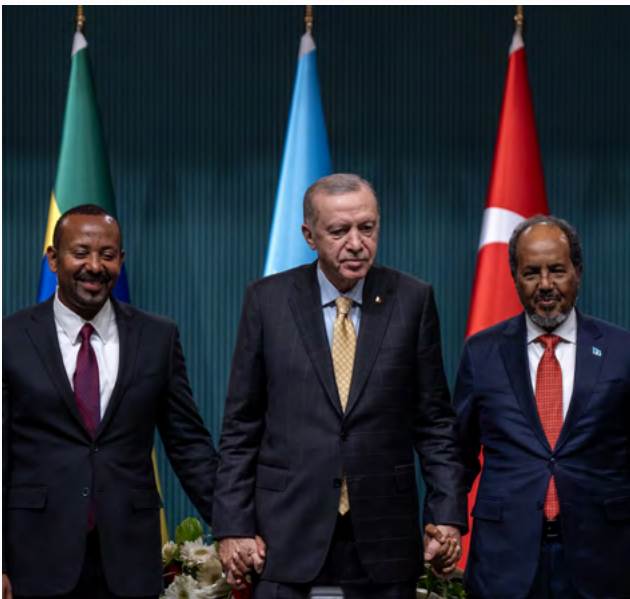
It is fair to say that the journey of the opposition forces from Idlib to Damascus was rather brief, and the CHP has struggled

to adapt to the rapid developments. However, the party’s challenges in foreign policy extend beyond this incident.

The CHP attempts to address its lack of vision in foreign policy by framing issues through the lens of domestic political rivalries. Assessments that emphasise the secular nature of the fallen Assad regime and express concerns about the changes in this context have been voiced by opposition politicians, journalists, and intellectuals alike. These perspectives disregard Syria’s internal dynamics, reducing the issue to the secular-religious polarisation within Türkiye.

Another controversial issue has been the discriminatory statements and social media posts by some CHP officials, including Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavaş, regarding the return of Syrian migrants. While the developments remain uncertain, the effectiveness of such populist rhetoric in a future where the political salience of the migration issue diminishes remains a significant question.

Ankara Mediates Peace Between Somalia and Ethiopia



(Mehmet Ali Özcan - Anadolu Agency)

The crisis between Ethiopia and Somalia arose after Ethiopia signed an agreement with Somaliland, which had unilaterally declared independence from Somalia. The agreement, granting Ethiopia access to the Red Sea via Somaliland, was perceived by Somalia as an infringement on its sovereignty.

In early July, Türkiye intensified efforts to facilitate dialogue between the two nations with concrete steps. This week, Ethiopian and Somali leaders, alongside President Erdoğan, announced in Ankara that they had reached a mutual agreement benefiting both countries.

Under the terms of the agreement, Ethiopia’s access to the sea will be facilitated by Somalia, while Ethiopia will respect Somalia’s territorial integrity. The agreement is expected to contribute to the commercial and political development of both nations.

With Türkiye’s mediation, technical negotiations are set to begin in February 2025 and are planned to conclude within four months.

Highlights

- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Türkiye on 13 December to discuss regional developments.
- Donald Trump has announced his intention to appoint Tom Barrack as the U.S. Ambassador to Ankara.
- Turkish central bank’s foreign reserves hits record in November.

Recent Publications by TRT World Research Centre

- [Anatolian Resolve: Türkiye, U.S., and Israel in the Shifting Middle East Landscape](#) Discussion Paper by Çağdaş Yüksel
- [Echoes of Empire: Gladiator’s Insights on Leadership, Entertainment, and the Illusion of Freedom](#) by Berfe Yaşar

No Edition Next Week

We wanted to inform you that won’t be an edition of *Türkiye in Focus* next week as we take a short break. We’ll return the following week with fresh perspectives and updates on the latest developments in Türkiye. Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding!

The Türkiye in Focus Team



Send us leads and feedback at:
turkiyeinfofocus@gmail.com