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Interview With
Assoc. Prof.
Atilla SANDIKLI

Translated By:
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**WISE MEN
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

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BILGESAM PUBLICATIONS



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Question: What is the role of think-tanks in the formation of foreign policy of states? And what is their impact on the people taking important foreign policy decisions?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: The world has undergone a process of rapid transformation which started in the late 20th century. Within this atmosphere, the Cold War ended and the phenomenon of globalization has profoundly affected societies, companies, countries, and the international system. As a result of the changing balance of power, the foundation for a new world order has been laid. Today, states' successes are determined by their ability to adapt to these changing dynamics and utilize them to realize their national goals. Thus, successful states are those that rapidly develop and then benefit from the wealth and prosperity of the world at the highest level whereas it is the underdeveloped states that get marginalized and crushed under the worsening and increasingly complicated problems. Therefore, it is very important to ascertain correct policies that are in line with the rapidly changing conditions of the world and to determine the principles required to apply these policies successfully.

It is particularly for this reason that the significance of strategic research centers has increased. It is these centers that provide the scientific data for the policies to be implemented by states. Thanks to this scientific data, we are provided with multiple options for field researches, various scenarios and predictions. And again, it is this scientific data that

provides the decision makers with wide-ranging sources for the formation of the states' foreign policy.

From this point of view, think tanks influence state policies in two aspects. Firstly, some strategic research centers, especially those in America, act as the research center of the party in power, be it Democrat or Republican for example. When these take part in administration, for instance when the Democrats coming to power in America, research conducted by the centers with which they are in aligned with directly influence the state policies. Accordingly, foreign policy is directly oriented in this sense. The role of strategic research centers is not limited to the determination of the foreign policy of states. They also meet the need for the staff in implementing these policies. For instance, when the Democrats takes over power in the States, it is the very staff themselves that put those policies into practice and contribute to the successful implementation of these policies. Secondly, strategic research centers that are not state-controlled or that are not in line with the purposes of the state pose alternative policies to those of the state. In this sense, they produce various researches, scenarios and proposals. This, in turn, offers foreign policy decision-makers many new perspectives. Hence, with time, an alternative to any policy is formed and this reduces the time for determining and implementing those new policies in case of administration changes within the democratic states. In this regard, research run by different strategic research centers enables us to evaluate the same foreign policies from different point of views, thereby creating the chance for correct perceptions over events and likewise increasing the efficiency of the optimal policies, formed in thanks to these correct perceptions. Therefore, not only the polices of the research centers (that are in line with the government) but also those policies of other research centers, are of utmost importance for the implementation of the policies.

Bureaucrats both in developing and developed countries try to carry out the same work. However, since data formation and implementation of policies within state bureaucracy is done in line with the perspective of the state, most often well-established ideas and the limitations cannot be surmounted. What I mean is this: it becomes unlikely to evaluate the events from different perspectives. That's why people dealing with daily bureaucracy may not adopt new visions and look at the events from different point of views but instead, they are somehow restricted with the existing implementations. That's why the existence of different think tanks, along with those that are controlled by the state, offers the opportunity to enlarge vision by producing both new scenarios and policies. This, in turn, contributes greatly to the implementation of accurate policies and the minimization of mistakes during the application of these policies.

Question: What kind of development has been attained thanks to think-tanks in Turkey? It is well known that the number of think tanks has increased recently. What is the reason behind the sharp increase of their number and does it explain their strengthening role in determination of priorities of foreign policy?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Turkey, especially since the end of the Cold War, has undergone a rapid progress and emerged as a regional power. After the end of the Cold War, unlike the bipolar world, Turkey has embarked on application models. However, if one takes a look at the bipolar world, for instance, they can see a scene in which decisions taken by the super powers leading the bipolar world were imposed on the members of these groups. In this case, these groups, without questioning, felt it imperative to accept those decisions.

Yet, with the disappearance of the bipolar world after the Cold War and with the advent of a multipolar world, states have no longer been the agents of the policies imposed by the larger super powers. Rather, it has led to an atmosphere in which the regional powers have been able to apply their own policies at an optimal level and sense, taking into account the global powers as well. Thus, rather than being an onlooker or a predetermined agent of a scenario, it is time for each and every country, particularly for the regional powers like Turkey, to develop different data, views and stances that (in concurrence with their own political targets on the region) will lead their countries and contribute to the peace and stability within them. Hence, the importance of think-tanks in Turkey has increased in recent years parallel to the need for strategic research centers as a consequence of the above-mentioned reasons. Likewise, the number of these centers is increasing day-by-day.

Looking at Turkey, one can see some strategic centers acting for public diplomacy. In this sense, they play the role in conveying the policies of the government to the public. Those acting in close collaboration with the government conduct their researches in compliance with those within the government and conduct research to this end. Apart from these, independent and even heavily opposing strategic research centers exist in Turkey as well. These centers, in a strict opposition to the government, elaborate on especially different policies, develop a critical look on the government and put forward multiple proposals. This opens the policies of the government to constant questioning and assists the government in perceiving its own insufficiencies. In fact, this stands as one of the main missions of the opposition party in democracy. In Turkey, think-tanks like BILGESAM look at the events and developments from the points of a pure science and ration instead of being part of a certain ideology. Thanks to this, BILGESAM comes to the forefront as a sound and non-aligned research center. To reach this end, BILGESAM gives priority to field work, developing policies that proceed at an optimal level and that are compatible with our database comprised of different points of view. This is what makes BILGESAM different from the other think-tanks

that (may or may not) have government ties. BILGESAM remains right in-between these two ends of the spectrum, remaining firmly non-aligned in its' views. Therefore, both the government and opposition-wing think tanks pay great respects to BILGESAM for cutting edge studies and researches. Furthermore, studies produced by BILGESAM are widely used by an increasing number of universities. At the same time, people wishing to specialize in internal and external politics and to conduct researches can apply to the internship and training programs and join the BILGESAM family. Many specialists and institutions both at home and abroad can make use of the views of BILGESAM in their research. Thus, it is evident that BILGESAM increasingly contributes to the development of specialists in the field of international relations.

Question: What are the similarities and differences between think-tanks at home and abroad?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Firstly, structural differences between think-tanks at home and abroad stand out. When comparing Turkish institutions with think-tanks abroad, especially with those in the United States, we see that they have an abundance of resources. Also, there are research centers feeding directly from the government, those dependent on parties in opposition- be it Democrat or Republican- or those that are founded with great funds. Thus, compared with the ones in Turkey, the works they produce are of the same nature, yet they differ in some regards with respect to the entry of sources. For example, those think-tanks in line with the party in power do not face many difficulties, in this sense. What's more, this opportunity of finding more and more sources and personnel makes it plausible for them to engage in much more activities in a much more effective manner. However, it is sure that those acting in line with the opposition parties face difficulties in finding resources. But, they can benefit from the units of the opposition wing. Here, it becomes much more difficult for think tanks like BILGESAM, which are totally bipartisan, enlightened with science and ration to find those sufficient sources. BILGESAM is as close to everyone as much as it also keeps its distance. Hence, since both parties and other units advocate and assist those that act in parallel fashion to themselves, it is restricted with a limited number of support. Operating with the sources supplied by those who are not affiliated with any ideology, BILGESAM prioritizes a scientific, rational and a contemporary world. Anyway, this is one of the leading characteristics of BILGESAM. Since wholly depending on foreign aids or certain groups and sources would remove BILGESAM's independence, this is what the administrators of BILGESAM try to avoid.

Question: What is the main factor and aim for the foundation of BILGESAM?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla Sandıklı: The main factor for the foundation of BILGESAM lies under the fact that BILGESAM, by combining the experience and the knowledge of the wise men with young and dynamic researchers within the organization, aspires to yield synergy that will be reflected in studies. Here, two major dynamics appear in this sense, the first of which is being the wise men of Turkey who have been involved in many positions of the administration (namely ministers, undersecretaries, governors, high order military men and highly respected academic members). Young and dynamic researchers in Turkey constitute the other dynamics of BILGESAM. The young have dynamic structures but they are quite limited in experience. Therefore, the merger of the two would be rather helpful as they somehow complement each other, so this has been the underlying reason for the foundation of BILGESAM. Considering this, contributions of such a think-tank become clear. And this is what makes BILGESAM different.

Another point is that strategic research centers perform either in compliance with the administration (in other words, the government), or are in line with the main opposition party. However, BILGESAM is the center which takes into consideration the synergy arising from the interaction between different views and sciences, and accordingly conducts optimal evaluations and researches, which produces policies and scenarios in which anyone can trust.

Within the organization of BILGESAM, there is a 'Wise Men' board comprised of highly respected people with their knowledge and experience. There is also an Academic Advisory board consisting of highly well-known academic members. Unlike other think-tanks, BILGESAM puts great emphasis on the youth platforms. With the platform of BILGESAM-IRST (Wise Men Center for Strategic Studies - International Relations Studies of Turkey), it is actively involved in the activities that aims at the interaction between students and student clubs at universities and research centers. Therefore, it does not only address to the today's specialists or administrators but also to the future of Turkey.

Question: What foreign policy ambience was in Turkey during the foundation of BILGESAM? How is the relationship between the foundation of BILGESAM and this ambience?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla Sandıklı: The administration at that time was trying to perceive the changes after the Cold War and to accordingly initiate different foreign policy openings. Here, BILGESAM aimed to shed a light on that atmosphere and to produce policies that are in compliance with this atmosphere. Yet, in today's world, external politics cannot be

separated from internal politics. This is due to the fact that a direct relationship between the developments in foreign policies and developments in domestic policies exists. This stands as one of the main contributions of BILGESAM. BILGESAM, pointing out the topmost importance of the interaction between foreign and domestic policy, has attached great significance on universal values which reflect the soul of the present time. These universal values in turn, have contributed greatly to the development of realistic, scientific and flexible policies in a manner that matches with the characteristics of the region. With the book published right after the foundation of BILGESAM, *Turkey's Vision*, various reports were included on the problems of Turkey both in the foreign and domestic policy arena. Among these reports is one related to the deepening of democracy. Here, such a question comes to mind: whether or not it [democracy] is applied today ? Yes, it is widely used. There is another study on what should be the contemporary understanding of nationalism. Again, the same question arises: is it put into practice today? Turkey is still in search of an answer. Besides, a study on judicial reform and constitutional changes also exists, in addition to studies particularly focusing on the basic problems in Turkey's development. One of these development problems is what is frequently referred to as the 'southeastern or Kurdish problem.' Comprehensive field work has been conducted on this issue. BILGESAM is trying to develop offers for solutions inclusive of international dimensions. Likewise, BILGESAM has considered the developments in the world during this process and has, accordingly, made decisions on domestic policies. Forming the interaction between external and internal policies BILGESAM has completed much research with the purpose of opening to foreign politics with such Turkish policies towards the Middle East, Armenia, Cyprus and Iran. It is because of these goals that BILGESAM stands out amongst the other think-tanks in Turkey, and maybe even the world, as well.

Question: What are the main attributes and values that BILGESAM advocates?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Modernity. Being scientific and rational makes BILGESAM different from other think-tanks. It has no ideological stance and it does not exclude the other ideologies either. It gives weight to the variety of ideologies and sciences, for they will pave the way for a different and a fresh look at the events and developments. To reach this, BILGESAM has done its best in order to analyze the events and developments from rather versatile and multiple perspectives and to develop policies and strategies with an unbiased and fresh look. In this regard, BILGESAM, taking into consideration the needs of the country, has aimed to form a synergy between ideologies and disciplines, thereby contributing to the determination of correct and applicable policies in a suitable manner.

As for the ideologies, it can be said that a certain issue has to be approached from the perspectives of all the ideologies. It will not be sound to analyze events from a single

ideology. If that is the case, it will be difficult to perceive the events properly. Therefore, the need for different perspectives is quite clear. Here, the scientific and unbiased look of BILGESAM comes to the forefront. This, in turn draws such a portrait in which BILGESAM is paid great respects by anyone -be it someone close to government or the opposition or someone of no ideological stance at all. Another thing is that people of variant ideologies may not perceive the data of the other. For instance, even if the resultant study is of high quality, if the person sees that it is written with bias, then that person insists on not accepting that information and thus interaction is restrained.

Yet, the overall structure of BILGESAM forms the basis for that very interaction. So I can say that with the data it creates, BILGESAM tries to be of help for not only the government, but also the opposition parties.

Question: Does BILGESAM aspire to be form a new ideology in Turkey's foreign policy or does it only perform the function of the informer or advisor for decision makers in foreign policy?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: As I said before, what we aspire to do is not to form any ideological structure, but instead to pave the way for a scientific and rationalistic world in a flexible and compatible manner to fit the changing world's needs. Here, that question is of topmost importance: what are the characteristics of this changing world? First of all, the world has undergone the removal of the bipolar world and this has resulted in multi-dimensional foreign policies. This has especially provided the regional powers with the opportunity of fulfilling their foreign policy targets in a flexible way in the area of foreign policy. And what BILGESAM emphasizes is the usage of this very opportunity in the best plausible way. The phenomenon of globalization has enabled us to take advantage of all the practices that foreign policies encompass by political, economic and socio cultural dynamics, too.

What BILGESAM adopts is the universal values. Then what are those values that are intertwined with the present time? Those values are namely: human rights, democracy, rule of law, free market economy, and a Turkish Republic and a Turkish nation that lives in peace, prosperity and stability with the whole world. BILGESAM aims at the formation of optimal values in the light of these. Thus, what BILGESAM intends to attain is not an ideological formation for the foreign policy decision makers, because ideological formation leads to the loss of flexibility of the administrators and decision makers on foreign politics. Due to this, people may not perceive the events properly and develop incorrect policies as a result. That's why, it would not suffice today's needs to be strictly committed to a single ideology or a certain theories on foreign policy. Likewise, in order to detect the needs changing with the

dynamics of the world, the rules for flexible behaviors and vision have to be formed. This is one of the main constituents to which BILGESAM attaches special emphasis.

Question: What are the differences between current BILGESAM and the former BILGESAM?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: In terms of vision, there has not been any difference between the current BILGESAM and the former BILGESAM. BILGESAM has undergone a gradual development since its foundation. This is because of the fact that it performs with a limited number of sources and does not depend on any group as such and broadens its sources in compliance with its own development targets. Hence, it can be said that BILGESAM has enhanced its efficiency since its inception, yet there has not been any change in its vision. In the upcoming period, BILGESAM will strive for implementing new policies and initiatives that will have profound effects not only on Turkey or the region, but also on the international system.

Question: Who defines the scope of researches in BILGESAM? Are the initiatives of young experts welcomed in BILGESAM or is there a rigid hierarchy in the center?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: There is not any strict hierarchy in BILGESAM and it is mostly the decisions taken by the board that are put into effect. The common mind dominates these decisions. Within the body of BILGESAM, there is the Wise Men board that conducts their own evaluations while Academic Advisory board does its own evaluations as such. The interaction between the two, coupled with the vision and policy proposals they create, reach the executive board. Likewise, the executive board decides on which subjects, scope and with which staff these researches will be conducted. Thus, it can be said that there is not any particular person dominating the events in BILGESAM. But instead, everybody within the boards of BILGESAM has something to say. Additionally, there is an intense flow of studies, reports, analyses carried out by the staff. And attached to these, to a large extent, any amendments have not been made. Thus, the personnel can find the ground for freely studying to the utmost degree. As I said at the outset of the speech, we attach crucial emphasis to the basics of the above mentioned vision. To reiterate these, our vision is based on making contributions to human rights, democracy, rule of law, free market economy, indivisible integrity of Turkey and to peace and stability of both the region and the world. We aspire to make use of diverse ideologies and disciplines rather than a single ideology or a biased stance.

Question: What is the personnel policy of BILGESAM? What are the principles for the personnel recruitment of the center?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: We, as BILGESAM, pay meticulous attention to the selection of the qualified personnel. What I mean by 'qualified personnel' is the personnel who is sufficient and efficient enough both in terms of education and vision. Within this scope, we recruit those who will be able to act in compliance with our vision. Along with the core team there are those personnel who are studying part time and contributing to us on a freelance basis with their views and studies. They, as a whole, form the links of a big chain, which is in itself getting bigger and bigger.

Question: What requirements and criteria should one satisfy to become a specialist of BILGESAM?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: We have already touched on these. Good education comes first. The person wishing to work with us has to proficiently know the language of his/her field as well. For instance, if that person is specialized in the Middle East, he/she has to be proficient in Arabic and English, if the field work is on the US, then we expect that person to have a firm grasp of English. Considering the Far east [Asia] and Russia as field work, knowledge of Chinese and Russian becomes incumbent on those experts respectively. Among the requirements are at least possessing a master degree, being in the process of doctorate study or having completed this. Of course, these are the characteristics of our staff. As you know, along with that staff, there are 'Wise Men' working with us, highly respected people with their knowledge, experience and abilities. They have an exchange of ideas in a mutual understanding of each other and interact with each other. This forms the base of synergy in which BILGESAM aims.

Question: Is it possible for foreign specialists to become a staff member of BILGESAM?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Yes, it is possible. They can get involved in the activities of BILGESAM as both an intern of foreign origin, assistant specialist or as a specialist.

Question: What are the specific criteria for them? Or do the same criteria apply to them as well?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Yes, the same criteria apply to them, too. They have to have attained a prestigious position in their countries as well. What I mean is that they are not to be people who are excluded by their countries, or people who will publicize their own countries. Those may be the people who will bring the positive policies of their

administrations to the forefront, at the same time, they may also be those who develop constructive and critical approaches on these policies related to their countries.

Question: Is it possible for people to first work as a specialist at BILGESAM and then proceed with the government authorities, or vice versa?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: You can see examples of this in BILGESAM; it is probable to see people within multiple positions of the state who had once worked for BILGESAM. Similarly, there are those who were previously involved in different governments and administrations later taking part within BILGESAM. We have no limitations as such. However, it has to be clarified that it is of utmost significance for us that those working within that BILGESAM not have any [simultaneous] direct ties with any of those [higher] positions at that time.

Question: What is attitude of the universities and institutions towards think-tanks in Turkey?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: There has been an increasing interest towards think-tanks in recent times. Universities have initiated close collaborations with strategic research centers. BILGESAM, in particular, attaches great weight to this. It takes part in many conferences, congresses and workshops in cooperation with many universities both at home and abroad. BILGESAM, as a requirement of globalization and the international system, does not conduct almost any of its activities individually, but rather in common ground with foreign and domestic universities.

The activities of BILGESAM are in a remarkably reliable position in the eyes of the educational institutions and likewise, the studies of BILGESAM are widely used within official and private educational institutions.

Furthermore, BILGESAM keeps quite good relations with other institutions, universities and the Higher Education Council (YOK). For instance, BILGESAM is invited to every meeting carried out by ministries and state bureaucracy in Turkey. Moreover, a demand that BILGESAM participate in the activities run by international foreign agencies also exists.

Question: Are there any direct and official contacts between BILGESAM and the universities?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: It has no official ties with any university per se. BILGESAM, in this regard, is a totally independent entity. Yet, BILGESAM proceeds with activities at various universities.

Question: Which forms of cooperation does BILGESAM establish with other Turkish and foreign think-tanks?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: BILGESAM, especially at present, in a sheer harmony, is holding mutual negotiations with domestic strategic research centers on certain studies. Within this scope, BILGESAM periodically convenes with other think-tanks and have an exchange of ideas in mutual understanding. BILGESAM, with the purpose of conveying its vision and opinions to the think-tanks at a global level, pays visits to the think-tanks abroad as well. Likewise, it summons foreign specialists in order so that it can benefit from the ideas and studies of those research centers. BILGESAM is also keeping touch with many think-tanks for the share of its publications.

Question: Are there any official treaties between BILGESAM and similar centers in Turkey and abroad?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Cooperation agreements have been signed with universities. There is not any official treaty, but agreements that suggest the intentions of reciprocal developments of the cooperation agreements do exist.

Question: What is the role of financial support for the researches of BILGESAM?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Source supply is among the most essential matters of think-tanks. The more resources, the more researches. Compared with those think-tanks acting in compliance with opposition parties, BILGESAM is at a disadvantage in finding sources, let alone the think-tanks acting in parallel with the government. The underlying reason is that think-tanks that criticize the policies of the government take any advantage from the opposition wing. Those performing in accordance with the government enjoy the contributions of the administration. However, BILGESAM, adopting a non-aligned stance, has difficulty in finding sufficient sources however well-established the relations it may form with others. This is because it is not part of any party, ideological formation or any other political organization. The only address for its sources is people who are there for scientific rationality and diversity of views. In a parallel fashion, BILGESAM, striving to preserve its neutrality, has so far never received any funds from foreign countries as well.

Within the current structure, BILGESAM's Board of Trustees satisfies the basic routine needs. As for any additional need for projects and researches, those people or organizations sponsoring that certain project are asked for support. Here, the main thing is to conduct all these in a rationalistic mind under the light of science. Thus, despite the restrictions,

BILGESAM tries to enhance its efficacy by minimizing the overall costs. Therefore, BILGESAM has the potential of doing more with the less.

Question: Which organizations do financially support think-tanks in Turkey?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: There are certain parts of the state that subsidize such centers. At the same time, some centers with a certain ideological stance are subsidized by those who themselves exist within that particular ideology or community. We see also many businessmen sponsoring these organizations. Some think-tanks, however, are backed up by foreign funds.

Question: To what extent these subsidies play an important role in the financing of think-tanks in Turkey?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: BILGESAM meets the routine needs itself. In some respects our researches proceed on a project-basis and we finance those projects that are of great use. Some of these projects are done with multiple partners, thereby minimizing the impacts of any ideology or idea. Otherwise, those think-tanks depending on the government, opposition parties, state, institutions or political parties deepen their interaction and somewhat come to be subordinate to these financiers.

Question: Is there a high competition for subsidies provided by state institutions among think-tanks in Turkey?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Yes, there exists a competition between think-tanks. On the one hand, those acting in compliance with the government, somehow conducting public diplomacy, receive much more financial aid. On the other hand, think-tanks in line with the opposition wing complain about not being supported as such. BILGESAM, in this regard, has no problem. BILGESAM does not want to be close to the government just as much as it does not want to oppose it. This very stance of BILGESAM broadens its range of sources. We may have limited amount of sources. Nevertheless, since the number of people and institutions who provide sources is increasing, when those small amounts of sources come together, they form the bigger part.

Question: Is it possible for an individual specialist to collaborate with BILGESAM for the grants and to conduct research on an individual basis?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Yes, there could be both an individual specialist and an institution to carry researches within BILGESAM, meeting the costs as well. Yet, the studies can not be done at his/her will. They have to be actualized in sheer harmony with the vision of BILGESAM.

Question: What is the influence of think-tanks on the foreign-policy making and decision-making process in Turkey?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Think tanks influence foreign-policy making and decision making process in two respects. They have huge effects on decision making process. First, think tanks adopting the notions of the government tend to be the actors of public bureaucracy. They strive to explain and convey the validity of the government policies to the public. Research centers, assuming the role of the opposition parties, however, criticize and point out the insufficiencies of the administration from their views and attract the attention of the administration. Here, what BILGESAM opts for, however, is to actively participate in the very process of foreign policy making process with its scientific, rationalistic and realistic data. If one takes a look at the reports of BILGESAM, they can see that each and every one of them have profound implications in practice today.

Question: How does BILGESAM organize a cooperation with:

- a. Press**
- b. Government and governmental authorities**
- c. Experts**
- d. Foreign partners**
- e. Public**

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI:

a. BILGESAM keeps its touch with the press in two ways. Firstly, BILGESAM has an electronic connection with every media organization. Thus, all the analyses, reports, field works, books and policy proposals are sent to all media members in an electronic environment. Secondly, when these studies are printed, they are distributed in hard copies form as well. In addition to these, BILGESAM holds press conferences with the purpose of acquainting the press with the reports. Furthermore, both the board members, president and experts of BILGESAM touch base with the members of the press in the premises of these organizations and the relations with the press is maintained in this sense. Besides, during these process, visits are

paid to media organizations by BILGESAM and there are meetings held with the members of press.

b. Cooperation with the government and other governmental authorities is sustained in two ways. BILGESAM prepares certain projects. For the preparation of these projects, BILGESAM seeks for the plausible ways of finding support from the governmental authorities. These subsidies contribute to the realization of these projects along with the supports coming from other places. In this respect, BILGESAM markets its projects to the government. Apart from this, other governmental institutions request BILGESAM carry out researches on specific issues.

c. As for the cooperation with the specialist, BILGESAM has its own strategy; the one I mentioned before, the links of a chain. We have the core staff consisting of specialists. In order to limit the costs of this core team, BILGESAM tries not to exceed the certain level with regard to the number of the staff. Besides, within BILGESAM, the number of those working both part-time or on a project basis is much higher. Likewise, analyses of the specialists are published on our website and on the electronic environment. Interns can find the media for discussing in detail with the specialists and assistant specialist on their studies. BILGESAM cooperates with many other academicians of all the universities. To say over, studies run by the members of the board play a key role as such.

d. By establishing mutual relationships with think-tanks abroad, BILGESAM holds its contact and cooperation with these centers alive. Both sides send each other their specialists, thereby creating the chance of an exchange of ideas on a common ground. Additionally, this collaboration is enhanced by congresses, conferences and workshops with the participation of the specialists of each side. In a parallel fashion, there is a share of publications between us and research centers abroad.

e. Our collaboration with the public proceeds in this way: All of the studies prepared by BILGESAM are published on our website are free-of-charge. Through our website, people can directly reach our analyses on current developments, more comprehensive and detailed reports and similarly, books prepared by BILGESAM. Additionally, we directly address the public through conferences, seminars and panel discussions. Our publications are forwarded to a group of almost 10,000 people including higher order authorities, academic members and university students. For the upcoming period, in compliance with our target of internationalization, we intend to enlarge this group in the worldwide, thereby appealing to the whole world public opinion on the electronic environment. Another means of addressing the public is the press and television programmes. Participation of the BILGESAM experts in open forums and interviews as well sustains the flow between the public and BILGESAM. In a

nutshell, the contact between BILGESAM and the public is largely maintained either through direct contact with people or through press or on the electronic environment. As for the field works, direct contact with people is established so that that interaction is kept alive.

Question: What are the main priorities of BILGESAM's research today? What are the research fields?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: The researches of BILGESAM attach priority to three fields. We've already mentioned the first two; one of which is being the researches on domestic policy, the other is being the researches on foreign policy, while the third priority goes for the researches on technology. In the globalizing world, technologies have direct implications on both foreign and domestic policies. In order to balance and meticulously analyze that interaction, BILGESAM's studies largely focus on these points. On domestic policy, BILGESAM concentrates on the steps Turkey should take so that Turkey can adapt to universal values and dynamics. As for the issues of foreign policy, Turkey focuses on studies that enhance the role of Turkey in contributing to the regional, global peace and stability, dealing with the further enhancement of these processes. As for technology, BILGESAM especially organizes workshops on nanotechnology and advanced technologies. In this way, the interaction between these fields is pursued as well.

Question: Do the foreign policy tendencies of Turkey match with the priorities of BILGESAM?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: The tendencies of Turkey in foreign policy, to a large extent, match with the priorities of BILGESAM. Yet, from time to time, there may be several restrictions as such. One of these limitations can be seen in the relations of Turkey with the EU, since Turkey has undergone a slowdown process in the direction of the current policies of the European Union. Here, to a certain extent, administrators of Turkey may be held responsible. However, to a larger extent, the problem derives from the uncertainty and reluctance of the EU policies towards Turkey. This poses a stumbling block for us to put our priorities into practice. Besides Turkey, BILGESAM in particular executes studies in line with this integration process. These studies mainly aim at the maintenance of a multi-dimensional and flexible foreign policy, regional peace and stability and regional, economic, commercial and socio-cultural interaction. Therefore, I can say that Turkey's foreign policy inclinations mostly accord with the priorities of BILGESAM.

Question: Does BILGESAM invite specialists to conduct certain researches on specified issues?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Yes, it can invite people specialized on any subject. BILGESAM conducts its studies not only with several specialists, but instead with many specialists from various countries.

Question: Who may become such a specialist? What kind of qualification should that person have?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: We, as BILGESAM, consider it of topmost importance that specialists should have developed the ability of working together. As we carry out almost all of our studies with people of different views, we weigh importance on this. We can work with all the specialists who are specialized in different subjects and who will conduct their researches in a coordinated and compatible manner that will create synergy.

Question: Why the headquarters of BILGESAM is situated in Istanbul but not in the capital of Turkey? Is it connected with the fact that the BILGESAM wishes to be close to Europe?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: Yes, although Ankara is the capital of Turkey, Istanbul stands as the historical center of the political elite group, economic formations and socio-cultural entities. Likewise, in Istanbul, it is much more probable to form a more comprehensive Wise Men board, academic advisory board and the youth platform, being directly able to address the majority of Turkish public in Istanbul. That's why, we decided to be here. For instance, Istanbul consists of about 14 million people, and this is remarkably significant number considering Turkey as a whole. Regional-wise, not only taking into account Istanbul, almost one in three citizens live quite close to each other. In this respect, we based our center in Istanbul. However, as Ankara is the political center of Turkey, another one of our offices is based there with the purpose of maintaining our contacts with the capital and following up work there.

Question: Does BILGESAM plan to expand more? Does BILGESAM intend to open new branches in other cities of Turkey or abroad? Is it possible for BILGESAM to open an official branch in Russia? What could be done for this purpose?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: At home, we tend to open a new branch in Diyarbakır – city in the southeastern part of Turkey- to which we attach special emphasis. This is the issue which we intensely negotiate during board meetings. We have had already some representative offices abroad. Thanks to these, we can keep close track of the knowledge and

developments there. These can be transformed into an office primarily in Washington D.C. [USA], then in other places when sufficient sources are found.

Question: What does BILGESAM aim at by establishing internship programs for young researchers? What role do these young researchers play in BILGESAM?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: This program was put into practice as a requirement of our vision. One of the fundamentals of our vision lies under the fusion of the experienced ones with the young researchers. BILGESAM does not simply deal with those who are currently making analyses, but at the same time, it lays the foundations for the future researchers. The office organizes intern and training programs with the purpose of embedding the young with a broad vision, with wide knowledge and ability that is necessary to carry researches. Maybe it is this vision of BILGESAM that brings it to a distinct position in the world. That's why it performs such studies, thanks to which its vision is conveyed to the young, and synergy will eventually arise. With the platform of BILGESAM-IRST (Wise Men Center for Strategic Studies- International Relations Studies of Turkey), we can contact university students in Turkey. Thus, what we, as BILGESAM, do is to raise generations who will orient the today and the future of Turkey in the direction of BILGESAM.

Question: Is there a tendency towards the rejuvenation of scientific researches in Turkey in common? What does BILGESAM do in this sense?

Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI: The importance of scientific researches has remarkably increased, compared to past in Turkey. It is this need and demand that has led to an increase in the number of think-tanks in Turkey. BILGESAM, taking into account this need from its own vision, tries to meet those needs for scientific studies.

BILGESAM PUBLICATIONS

Books

China: a New Superpower? Dimensions of Power, Energy and Security

Edited by Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI

Turkey's Strategy in a Changing World

Edited by Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI

Turkey's Today and Tomorrow

Ret. Minister/Ambassador İter TÜRKMEN

Middle East Policy of the Republic of Turkey

Ret. Minister/Ambassador İter TÜRKMEN

Turkey's Vision: Fundamental Problems and Solution Proposals

Edited by Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI

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Prof. Dr. M. Oktay ALNIAK

4th National Hydrogen Energy Congress and Exposition Information Book

Prof. Dr. M. Oktay ALNIAK

Selected Articles of Hydrogen Phenomena

Prof. Dr. M. Oktay ALNIAK

Liberal, Democratic and Secure Elections

Kasım ESEN, Özdemir AKBAL

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Wise Strategy Journal Vol 1, No 3, Fall 2010

Wise Strategy Journal Vol 2, No 4, Spring 2011

Wise Talks

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Interview with Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI

Elif KUTSAL

Wise Talk -2: Nabucco Project

Interview with Arzu Yorkan
Elif KUTSAL-Eren OKUR

Wise Talk -3: Nuclear Iran

Interview with Ret. Minister-Ambassador İler TÜRKMEN
Elif KUTSAL

Wise Talk -4: European Union

Interview with Dr. Can BAYDAROL
Eren OKUR

Wise Talk -5: Constitutional Change

Interview with Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI
Merve Nur SÜRMEİ

Wise Talk -6: Turkey- Israel Relations in Recent Period

Interview with Ret. Ambassador Özdem SANBERK
Merve Nur SÜRMEİ

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Sina KISACIK

Wise Talk -8: Missile Defense Systems and Turkey

Interview with Assoc. Prof. Atilla SANDIKLI
Eren OKUR

Wise Talk -9: Today's and Tomorrow's Developing and Changing Turkish Navy

Interview with Ret. Admiral Salim DERVIŞOĞLU
Emine AKÇADAĞ

