

Reexamining the U.S.-Turkish Alliance

The July 22, 2007, Turkish national elections instigated a series of political debates in Turkey about the role of the 60-year-old U.S. alliance and the future orientation of Turkish foreign policy. Does Turkey still need its U.S. alliance in a post-Cold War environment? Particularly after U.S. pressure on Turkey in 2003 to open a northern front in the war in Iraq, which the Turkish parliament rejected, and given how unpopular the United States has become in the Middle East and in Europe, is the alliance still valuable to Ankara today? Coupled with the deteriorating situation in Iraq and the constant threat of the Turkish use of force in northern Iraq, these debates have forced U.S.-Turkish relations onto the international scene. The severity of the estrangement in relations has been consistently downplayed on both sides of the Atlantic, even while external factors such as Turkey's floundering EU membership process and regional differences over how to deal with Iraq have only exacerbated the problems in the alliance. The fallout from the Iraq war has now gone beyond a simple misunderstanding between the United States and Turkey and casts a dark shadow over future relations and the wider regional security structure of the Middle East.

The emergence of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) as a political force in Turkish politics has coincided with this unprecedented estrangement in U.S.-Turkish relations. Although the 2002 elections allowed the AKP to form a single-party government, their legitimacy was disputed. The most recent elections unequivocally erase these doubts and place the AKP at the forefront of Turkish foreign policymaking and alliance relations more specifically.

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Although the United States and Turkey have had serious policy disagreements in the past, there has always been an overarching strategic vision to keep the alliance intact. Now, with the absence of a common threat from the Soviet Union and with new civilian-military dynamics in Turkey, the future of the U.S.-Turkish alliance needs to be carefully reexamined.

Because of its Islamic roots and Muslim outlook, the AKP has brought with it an unprecedented willingness to reach out to Turkey's Middle Eastern neighbors, such as Iran and Syria, which have traditionally been viewed as common enemies by Ankara and Washington. Articulating a new vision for Turkey that is not dependent on Washington while actively seeking ways to balance its relationships and alliances, the AKP still has many domestic hurdles to overcome. Although the AKP's policy of maintaining optimal independence and leverage on the global and regional stage appeals to its Turkish constituency, this type of policy does not bode well for Turkey's historic alliance with the United States.

Although all relationships as complex as the U.S.-Turkish alliance experience natural ebbs and flows, the rupture in strategic vision between these allies has been so egregious that some commentators have placed the blame squarely on the AKP. Given the internal tensions within Turkey surrounding the Islamist roots of the party and the sensitivities of Turkey's secular establishment, the argument goes that the U.S.-Turkish relationship has become the latest victim of domestic Turkish politics.¹

The March 1, 2003, vote in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) to reject the U.S. request to open a northern front against Iraq has come to symbolize the clear divergence of strategic interests between the United States and Turkey, and it has also erroneously been used to demonstrate the anti-American bias of the AKP. Yet, by tracking the ascent of the AKP from the November 2002 elections to the most recent ones, it is clear that, far from being the source of anti-Americanism in Turkey, the AKP represents an ideal partner for the United States in the region.

Enter the AKP

The November 3, 2002, national elections in Turkey represented an earthquake in domestic politics. The AKP, a newly established party running on an agenda of anticorruption and rooted in "Islamic Conservatism," came in first place. The term "Islamic Conservative," which AKP coined and claims to be akin to Europe's various Christian Democratic parties' social conservatism, has been a continual theme in the Turkish press, as the AKP has sought to balance its commitment to Turkey's strict secular constitution with its constituency's Muslim worldview and faith.

Turkey's electoral system and constitution requires that parties must first cross a 10 percent national threshold to obtain any seats within the TGNA, and as such, only two parties were eligible for representation in the government. Therefore, despite the fact that the AKP received only one-third of the popular vote in 2002, they ultimately received more than two-thirds of the TGNA seats, allowing for the formation of a stable, one-party government, with the fiercely secular and left-leaning Republican People's Party (CHP) as the sole opposition in parliament.

AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan was unable to become prime minister officially, however, because of jail time he had served while mayor of Istanbul, which made him constitutionally unable to serve in parliament. Therefore, Erdogan's then-deputy, Abdullah Gul, was appointed prime minister until the AKP government was able to amend the constitution and elect Erdogan to that post in late March 2003.

The domestic impact of the AKP's sweeping victory cannot be overemphasized. Each of the parties that made up the ruling coalition government prior to the election was thrown out of office by the Turkish popular vote, and a clear message was delivered that Turkey was ready for a change. Therefore, despite the AKP's Islamic credentials that generated considerable friction from the secularist military, presidency, judiciary, and various bureaucratic ministries, the bottom line was that only the AKP enjoyed a clear majority to govern.

As the historical successors of Turkey's right-leaning Islamic conservative movement, the AKP had many domestic hurdles to overcome. After its surprising electoral victory, the AKP enjoyed popular support for most of its term. This popularity was fueled by the fact that the AKP was seen as being untainted from the corruption and cronyism of Turkey's secular parties. As an eclectic collection of Islamically oriented politicians, the AKP was a new party with no experience in governing the country or exercising party discipline when it came to parliamentary votes. Roughly one-third of the AKP's members came from the uncompromisingly Islamist and anti-U.S. Refah party, which had been banned in 1998. As a result, the AKP's stated commitment to Turkey's secular system failed to be credible to the secularist establishment and left Washington wondering what it could expect from Turkey's new leaders. The AKP's relative lack of foreign policy experience left it floundering for a coherent approach toward the United States, and thus it did not do anything immediately to rock the boat with Washington.

The widespread perception in Turkey is that the United States controls northern Iraq.

The U.S. Role in Turkish Politics

Often forgotten in discussions about U.S.-Turkish relations today is the influential role that the United States has played within the internal Turkish domestic political structure. Despite Washington's negative experience with the AKP's predecessor, Refah, the Bush administration decided to reach out and openly support the AKP after its election victory in 2002.

Breaking with its tradition of noninterference in domestic Turkish politics, the United States decided to help Erdogan and the AKP's domestic legitimacy and credibility by extending an official White House invitation to the new party leader in December 2002, four months prior to the constitutional amendment that allowed Erdogan to enter the TGNA. For the first time, the United States had invited a Turkish party leader who was not a government or TGNA member to the White House, and the act was seen as a clear signal of support from the Bush administration for Erdogan and the AKP government.

In the face of strong opposition from the Turkish military and the traditionally pro-U.S. secular establishment, the Bush administration championed the AKP and Turkey as a shining example of a democratic and moderate Muslim positive force in the Middle East, in the hopes of winning over the support of the new AKP leaders for its plans to confront Iraq.² Given the AKP's Islamic roots and friction with the Turkish military establishment, Erdogan's invitation to Washington was seen as decisive for the party's domestic and international agenda. Without this overt support from the U.S. administration, Erdogan and the AKP could have been plagued by strong domestic pressure to call an early election to establish a clearer mandate from which to rule.

At that time, the importance of Turkey to the United States included its geostrategic location on Iraq's northern border as well as the symbolism of including a Muslim-majority nation within the coalition of the willing against Iraq. Turkey, with the second-largest army in NATO, had already contributed a significant number of troops to the war in Afghanistan and pledged its support to the United States in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Given Turkey's history of military cooperation with the United States, it was assumed that the Turks could be convinced to participate in any future war against Iraq. In addition, the Bush administration continually used Turkish participation in the "global war on terror" to defuse charges of a crusade against Islam and to stress that it was a war against "Islamofacism." As the administration pushed for greater international pressure on Iraq, the newly elected AKP leadership in Turkey became a primary target.

After the Turkish elections, the U.S. administration immediately began to court AKP leaders, culminating in an official visit by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs and

former ambassador to Turkey Marc Grossman to Ankara in December 2002 to make an official request for Turkish cooperation in the Iraq war planning efforts.³ Over the course of the meetings and press events, the new Turkish prime minister and foreign minister stated their commitment to cooperating with the United States but insisted on the importance of “international legitimacy,” which to them represented both the exhaustion of all diplomatic solutions and the securing of a UN mandate before any action in Iraq could be taken.

The radically different perspectives on both sides of the Atlantic on what cooperation entailed subsequently led to a series of negotiations in which Turkey stressed the importance of the financial losses that it would inevitably suffer from any war in Iraq. No concrete agreement was reached between the U.S. or Turkish administrations, but each assumed that the other partner clearly understood their definition of cooperation.⁴

Turkey’s new regional assertiveness does not bode well for the status quo U.S. alliance.

The Lead-up to March 1, 2003

In the lead-up to the Iraq war, the AKP had several important factors to consider, primarily the military’s close relationship with the U.S. administration and its concerns that a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq would not bode well for Turkey’s strategic interests. Turkey’s previous experience with the Persian Gulf War of 1991, during which President Turgut Ozal had unilaterally promised unconditional support to the United States, was less than ideal. In the aftermath of the war, Turkey was left suffering from considerable economic losses and strikes from Kurdish terrorist groups based in northern Iraq, which were ironically being protected by U.S. planes patrolling the skies from a Turkish air force base.

Saddam did not pose a direct threat to Ankara, and many Turks worried that interactions with Iraq without a dictator would be far more difficult. Therefore, unlike the U.S. impression of Saddam as being highly erratic and a menace to regional stability, the preference in Turkey was to deal with a known entity that could easily be overpowered and defeated militarily than with the alternative scenarios being promoted by U.S. officials.

From a Turkish perspective, the important strategic factor in the impending war was the territorial integrity of Iraq, based on apprehensions regarding the establishment of an independent or a federated Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Turks have always been opposed to a Kurdish state, particularly on its border, because of the 12 million Kurds living in Turkey that might push for more

autonomy or secession. Given its past problems with Kurdish insurgencies and terrorism, the Turks would have preferred to keep the status quo in Iraq. Thus, the question for Turkish decisionmakers became how best to influence events.

There was little question at the time of the March 1 vote what the military outcome would be when the United States invaded Iraq, but most discussions centered on what the resulting aftermath would be. In contrast to the Bush administration's rosy predictions about stability and liberty in Iraq, the Turks, drawing on their past history as Ottoman rulers of Iraq, saw a higher likelihood of regional instability and an increased wave of terrorism.

In a dramatic session on March 1, 2003, the TGNA convened to consider the AKP government-sponsored motion, which requested that U.S. forces be permitted to use Turkish soil as a staging ground for a possible campaign in Iraq. In an unusually complex outcome, 264 of the 533 deputies in session voted for the motion, 250 voted against it, and 19 abstained, bringing the motion only four votes shy of the majority required by the constitution. As a result, the legislature refused to authorize the motion, and the AKP government failed to pass its most important international agenda to date. Although this vote was not the first time that the TGNA had voted on U.S. military action involving Turkey, it was the first time that the parliament had explicitly hamstrung its strategic ally in defiance of government pressure.

The shockwaves of this momentous decision were felt immediately in Washington and Ankara. Headlines in the United States negatively portrayed the refusal as a snub, whereas in Turkey the headlines focused on the democratically reached decision, which accurately reflected Turkish popular opposition. On March 2, 2003, U.S. headlines from the *Boston Globe* and *Chicago Tribune* were "Turkey Snubs U.S., Rejects Troops" and "In Blow to U.S., Turks Deny Bases," respectively. In Turkey, the headline from the *Yeni Safak* read "Demokrasinin Zaferi" (Victory for Democracy). The March vote left Washington feeling betrayed by a Turkish establishment that had assured them that they could pass the motion, and it effectively cut Turkey out of the decisionmaking process in Iraq, which had serious consequences for Turkey's own national security interests.

The Iraq Fallout

The March 2003 vote has been widely blamed for the downturn in U.S.-Turkish relations, although analysts do not agree on whether the vote itself constituted a crisis, accident, or vote of no confidence in their relations. Regardless of the semantic classification, the vote represented a significant break in the shared strategic vision for the United States and Turkey that has only been exacerbated in the wake of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. More than any other recent event, the invasion of Iraq has shaped the tone of the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

Turkish sensitivities to having U.S. and coalition forces occupying its southern neighbor have been evident since the March 2003 invasion. The deteriorated security situation within Iraq and along Turkey's own southeastern border only heightened tensions in Ankara over fears of an independent Kurdish state arising from the ashes of Saddam's Iraq. Compounding these fears, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which had been dormant since the 1999 arrest of its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, declared shortly after the invasion of Iraq that it would resume its war against the Turkish state. The previous PKK campaign for an independent Kurdistan in southeastern Turkey, which lasted from the early 1980s until a unilaterally declared ceasefire in 1999, had claimed the lives of more than 35,000 Turks and untold numbers of ethnic Kurds and only reinforced Turkish sensitivities.

If the EU rejects Turkey, Ankara could just as easily reach out to Iran and Russia.

The PKK has been able to operate throughout the northern Iraq territory controlled by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Given Iraqi Kurdish sympathies for the PKK and its separatist agenda in Turkey, Turkish officials have sought to apply varying levels of pressure on the KRG directly as well as indirectly through its benefactor, the United States. The perception in Turkey that the United States controls northern Iraq and restricts the Turkish army from crossing the border all while doing nothing to stop the PKK terrorists is widespread.

President George W. Bush's words, "You're either with us or against us," began to take on new meaning to Turks who increasingly viewed U.S. cooperation with the Kurds in northern Iraq as being counterproductive to Turkey's interests. The United States for its part has designated the PKK as a terrorist organization and continually emphasized its commitment to defeating all terrorists in Iraq. Yet, in an environment in which daily attacks on Turkish soldiers have resulted in more than 1,500 deaths since 2004, Ankara has become increasingly skeptical.

Turkey has refrained from large-scale cross-border operations reminiscent of its previous interventions in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, the 1997 operation in northern Iraq, and most recently the crossing of 1,500 Turkish troops into Iraq to combat the PKK in March 2003. Given the internal dynamics of Turkish domestic politics, both the military and secular nationalist parties have turned the "Kurdish problem" into an issue that has been used against the AKP and Erdogan, who are seen as being weak on the PKK. Given the historical tension in Turkey between civilian and military control of foreign and security policy, it is not far-fetched to imagine that if the Turkish

military calculated that it could destroy the PKK through a massive cross-border operation, it would have already unilaterally done so.

Another threat to U.S.-Turkish relations comes from the small-scale Turkish Special Forces' cross-border operations routinely carried out throughout northern Iraq. These operations have led to several diplomatic fiascos between the United States and Turkey, most notably the July 2003 Sulaymaniyah incident during which U.S. forces apprehended Turkish forces, mistaking them for al Qaeda terrorists. The infamous hooding and humiliation of the Turkish soldiers was made into the top-selling Turkish movie *Valley of the Wolves*, which complements a trend of anti-American entertainment exemplified best by the novel *Metal Storm*, about a fictional war between the United States and Turkey over Iraq in 2007.

Against this backdrop that has framed the U.S.-Turkish relationship for the past four years, it is interesting to observe how carefully the AKP has guarded the alliance and tried to work with the Bush administration, particularly when compared to other European nations. Although Turkey was not a part of the U.S. coalition of the willing and in spite of its problems with the KRG, it has been an active participant in the subsequent rebuilding effort in Iraq. The AKP even went so far as to authorize a peacekeeping contingency of 10,000 Turkish soldiers to send to Iraq in October 2003 before the KRG vetoed the offer.

Supplying the lion's share of construction and food materials, Turkish businesses and truck drivers have become an integral part of the reconstruction in Iraq. In addition, Turkey serves as a vital transportation hub for U.S. troops stationed in Iraq, with more than 60 percent of logistical support coming through Turkish air and ground space. Turkey has provided a variety of diplomatic and training services since the inception of the fledgling Iraqi government. Through supporting the efforts of Iraq's first democratically elected prime minister, Ibrahim Jafari, whose first official visit outside of Iraq was paid to Turkey, and to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Erdogan has been quick to capitalize on bilateral relations. Improved Turkish-Iraqi relations, however, have not directly translated into better U.S.-Turkish or Turkish-KRG relations.

Turkey's Balancing Act

Given the changing nature of Turkey's international environment, in which its interests over Iraq have diverged from those of the United States and in which the European Union recently halted membership negotiations, policymakers from the AKP have begun to search for alternatives to its Western-dominated foreign policy. The fallout from the Iraq war has now gone beyond a simple policy disagreement between the United States and Turkey.

As part of Turkey's "strategic depth" doctrine, which has been advocated by Erdogan's chief foreign policy adviser, Ahmet Davutoglu, the AKP has been actively trying to reach out to its neighbors. The premise of strategic depth is that Turkey should not be dependent on any one actor and should actively seek ways to balance its relationships and alliances so that it can maintain optimal independence and leverage on the global and regional stage.⁵ This type of policy does not bode well for the historic U.S. alliance.

Erdogan cleverly made Turkey's accession process to the EU the AKP's most important foreign policy issue early in his tenure and has continually used Turkey's EU membership bid to bolster his own pro-Western credentials. Although Turkey realistically is still at least 10–15 years away from EU membership negotiations, the AKP's rhetoric and legislative attempts to enact reforms to meet the Copenhagen criteria have won over many of the party's greatest critics.

Turkey's EU membership has been a prioritized talking point for every U.S. administration. Anchoring Turkey in Europe has always been a U.S. priority because of its global role and strategic vision. In Washington, having Turkey be part of Europe and the transatlantic community more broadly has always been preferential to a Turkey that operates more as a regional counterweight with regard to Iran or Russia.

As a result, the United States has always attempted to use whatever leverage it has with its European allies to push for Turkish EU membership, which has been appreciated by the Turks. Turkey has always benefited from this U.S. policy, which led then-President Jacques Chirac of France to warn Bush to mind his own business when it came to the AKP's negotiations over Turkey's EU accession status.

The opening of negotiations for Turkey's EU accession in Luxembourg on October 4, 2005, added a new chapter to the EU-Turkish and U.S.-Turkish relationships. Having become a clearly defined candidate country, Turkey has entered official EU negotiation talks that have traditionally resulted in EU membership offers. With the highly symbolic nature of a Muslim-majority secular democracy such as Turkey waiting at the doorway of Europe, the United States cannot ignore the global ramifications of Turkey's accession negotiations. An EU that stops at the Bosphorus will be a very different type of strategic actor than one that pushes into Central Asia and the Middle East. Therefore, this question of Turkish accession, which is only now beginning to be considered by policymakers in the EU and the United States, will have

Turkey's anti-Americanism cannot simply be erased with a new U.S. president.

massive ramifications on the U.S.-Turkish alliance and makes Turkish accession the predominant strategic issue for the EU.

Turkey's geostrategic position is critical for U.S. interests throughout the region, but more importantly, it represents what a truly democratic Middle East might resemble. The underlying assumption for the Bush administration has been that a more democratic and open society is in the U.S. national interest because such a nation would surely be more pro-U.S. Unfortunately

The peaceful July 2007 election results serve as a powerful endorsement of Turkey's democracy.

for the Bush administration, this prediction has not been the reality in Turkey. In light of actions taken by various European parliaments and most recently those taken by the U.S. Congress on so-called Armenian genocide resolutions, Ankara has increasingly begun to view the world through the prism of an old Turkish adage: "Turks have no friends but themselves."

U.S. efforts to convince its European allies of the importance of anchoring Turkey in the West through the EU have often fallen on deaf

ears. If the EU does not admit Turkey, a spurned Turkey guided by its policy of strategic depth will not follow the typical Kemalist prescription of isolation (named for the Turkish Republic founder Kemal Ataturk's foreign policy of regional noninvolvement and strategic engagement with the West) but could just as easily reach out to other important regional actors, such as Iran and Russia, to form a loose alignment.⁶ Recent economic and energy deals between Turkey and these nations have generated concern in Washington, particularly in the face of Iran's nuclear ambitions and Russia's renewed meddling in the Caucasus.

As Turkey has risen, U.S. stock in the region and in Turkey in particular has been falling. The United States is not just dealing with the usual anti-Bush or anti-U.S. policy sentiment in Turkey, but rather a long-term slide into an anti-Americanism that cannot simply be erased with a new U.S. president in January 2009 or a special envoy to the Muslim world. In the Pew Global Attitudes Project's 47-nation survey released in June 2007, Turkey displayed the greatest depth of anti-American sentiment in all of the most important categories. Most tellingly, Turks have the lowest favorability for the United States and its citizens (9 percent and 13 percent, respectively). Moreover, Turkey tied with the Palestinian territories for the lowest percentage of citizens who think the United States is fair in its Middle East policies, at a paltry 2 percent.⁷

Another disturbing sign for U.S. policymakers is the fact that Turkey, an active partner in Afghanistan and crucial transportation hub for Iraq, has the second-lowest level of support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism (9 percent)

of all nations surveyed. Moreover, that opinion does not stop at U.S. foreign policy. Turkey had the highest percentage of respondents who disliked U.S. ideas about democracy (81 percent) and even the way that Americans do business (83 percent). Turks have never been the most pro-American Middle Eastern country, yet the drop in favorability from when Bush first took office (52 percent in 2000) and even at the one-year anniversary of the war in Iraq (30 percent in 2004) to today is unprecedented.⁸

July 2007 Elections

In this climate of distrust, the July 2007 Turkish elections provided a rare opportunity for the United States to prove naysayers wrong and to work hand in hand with Turkey's democratically elected government. Capturing close to one-half of the popular vote, the AKP swept the July 22 Turkish parliamentary elections and gained 341 out of the 550 seats in the TGNA. By putting his political future on the line by promising to quit politics should the AKP not win a clear mandate to form the next government alone, Erdogan has emerged the biggest winner from the elections.

The Turkish military's ominous electronic warning on April 27, 2007, which it posted on the Turkish General Staff's Web site, set in motion the events that led to the early elections. Responding to the possibility of Erdogan or Gul being elected as the next Turkish president, the military threatened a coup to restore and preserve Turkey's secular order. Since this time, the Turkish military has been forced to back down after being dealt a clear message from Turkish voters, who unambiguously rejected the secular establishment's fear-mongering about the hidden Islamist agenda of the AKP. The recent election of Gul as the eleventh president of Turkey has brought the tensions full circle, erasing any questions about the AKP's previous legitimacy, and stands as a powerful mandate for the party who won with the largest margin of victory for any Turkish party in the last 50 years.

Judging by any standards, Erdogan has led one of the most stable and successful governments in Turkish republican history. The AKP in its five years has effectively promoted a vital policy agenda at home and abroad, including robust private-sector economic development, eventual membership in the EU, and a broad program of democratic reform. Furthermore, these pivotal elections represent the rise of a new Turkish political consciousness that would extend the reach of democratic values to the entire citizenry, shift the locus of responsibility for sustaining constitutional integrity from military to civilian control, and reconcile Turkish nationalism with a far less restrictive approach to freedom of thought and expression. The outcome was also welcome because these electoral results clearly underscore the growing marginality of the

secular Turkish establishment, which had succeeded for decades in defining secularism in such a narrow way as to safeguard the outmoded and repressive antidemocratic features of the Turkish state.

The U.S. media's portrayal of the AKP as Islamists has blocked perceptions of the real meaning of the AKP victory in the July 22 elections. It has produced a string of commentary in the American press that interprets the election as casting a dark shadow of political Islam over the future of Turkey.⁹ Such commentary complicates foreign relations for Turkey, especially with the EU and the United States, and aggravates internal tensions. A more nuanced understanding of political trends in Turkey would celebrate what happened on July 22 as the most decisive indication to date that the Turkish public enthusiastically embraces Ankara's moves in recent years to deepen and widen constitutional democracy without challenging the fundamental integrity of the secular character of the Turkish state.

The peaceful election results in Turkey serve as a powerful endorsement of its democracy and serve as an important example to the rest of the Middle East. Given the Bush administration's emphasis on democracy promotion and reform throughout the greater Middle East, maintaining strong relations with Turkey is vital for the United States.

Policy Recommendations for the U.S.-Turkish Alliance

The global calculus in Turkey's region has already been changing for the United States as a result of events in Iraq and Iran. Now, Erdogan must determine how best to conduct Turkey's important relationship with the United States. When the AKP was first elected, the Bush administration was only in its second year, and Erdogan was careful to maintain a working relationship despite serious tensions caused by the U.S. intervention in Iraq. Most recently, however, Erdogan has been disappointed by the initial reluctance of the Bush administration to support him after the Turkish military's warning on April 27, which resulted in early elections.

Despite continued internal tensions between the secularist establishment and the AKP, Erdogan has established himself as the primary player with whom the United States must work. For Turkey's democracy to mature fully, its strategic relationships need to better reflect its political identity and democratically determined national interests, but such goals will not be attained without a long and difficult campaign.

The United States has strong reasons to avert a Turkish civilian-military crisis that pits the secularist establishment against the AKP, which could cause great fissures in the already tattered alliance. The general tenor of the American press, which implies that the July elections were primarily a battle between

the forces of Islam and secularism, is extremely unhelpful and has only served to fan the flames of simmering tensions in domestic Turkish politics. In contrast, what would be helpful would be governmental and diplomatic assertions by U.S. leaders of confidence in the AKP, closer cooperation over fighting the PKK, a push for a more forthcoming European attitude toward the EU accession negotiations, and a deeper understanding of the AKP's sensitivities.

Closer cooperation and a tangible military operation against the PKK would go a long way toward neutralizing Turkish calls for an invasion of northern Iraq. By understanding and articulating Turkish sensitivities over its Kurdish issue, U.S. policymakers would be assuring Turkey that it does have a friend in Washington. Without entering the murky world of Turkish domestic politics, Washington must strike a delicate balance between supporting Turkey's right to defend itself against PKK terrorism and encouraging the Turkish military to respect the wishes of Turkey's civilian leadership. In this role, the United States could play a critical part in helping to ameliorate the tensions that continue to simmer between Erdogan and the Turkish military leadership.

Taking an active role in combating the PKK in the one area of Iraq where U.S. soldiers are not under attack may seem counterintuitive, but it is ultimately in the United States' long-term interest. The United States must encourage Turkey to work within a multilateral framework that involves the Iraqi central government and the KRG by demonstrating real progress toward addressing Ankara's concerns. The recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between Turkey and Iraq is a step in the right direction, as are tightened security measures along Turkey's borders. Yet, the lack of agreement on Turkey's right to chase its attackers over the border is a serious shortcoming. Recent attacks in Turkey by the PKK launched from northern Iraq have provoked the parliamentary sanctioning of unilateral "hot pursuits" by Turkey's armed forces. By signaling Washington's intentions to deal with the PKK seriously, the United States can avert a Turkish intervention in Iraq, which in the short term would only heighten domestic tension and complicate the delicate rebuilding process in Iraq and in the long run further damage U.S.-Turkish relations.

The United States can also play an active role in Turkey's other crucial relationships, most importantly with the EU. Washington's influence in Brussels has always been overestimated in Ankara. By leveraging the unique position that the United States does have, however, the Bush administration would further ingratiate itself with the AKP by actively promoting the benefits of an EU that included Turkey. European leaders have often resisted U.S. attempts

The United States should encourage active Turkish regional diplomacy.

to lobby on Turkey's behalf, but by encouraging the EU to take a longer-term, strategic view of Turkey's membership bid, the United States would be doing Turkey and Europe a service. Although the United States is currently engaging the EU on these issues, the tenor and intensity of the discussions should be increased.

Helping to tone down the anti-Turkey rhetoric of European leaders by emphasizing Turkey's positive attributes would allow Washington to gain greater

influence in Ankara. Given the importance of the EU factor in Turkish domestic politics, it is easy to understand Erdogan's desire to proceed on the path to membership but much more difficult to see how he will proceed without greater help from the United States.

Turkey and the United States no longer share a common existential threat.

Turkey, led by the AKP, has jealously guarded its strategic partnership with the United States while strengthening its rela-

tionship with regional players, which has concerned the Bush administration. Attempting this precarious balancing act without the full support of the Turkish secular establishment, particularly the military and diplomatic apparatus, the AKP has been surprisingly successful. Given developments in Turkey's neighborhood, the United States needs Turkey's support far more immediately than vice versa. Still, Turkey's long-term interests in the region and beyond align with those of the United States.

Turkey's regional influence should not threaten Washington but rather encourage the administration to include Turkey in its efforts to build a successful partnership toward greater regional stability. Turkish-Syrian relations have continued to strengthen at the same time that U.S.-Syrian relations have reached an all-time low. Turkish-Iranian relations have also flourished in spite of Iran's nuclear standoff with the West.

In addition to its offers over Iran, Ankara has also offered its good offices to begin a dialogue between Hamas and Israel, an idea toward which the United States has been ambivalent. Turkey would serve as an ideal candidate for both parties and could help foster trust building on both sides. In all of these arenas and in Iraq, the United States should encourage active Turkish diplomacy and work toward a common regional approach.

Peddling in the prevailing nationalist mood of anti-Americanism in Turkey may have been inevitable in the lead-up to the recent elections, but now the AKP must return to its role as the representative of Turkey's national interest. Regardless of its differences with the Bush administration, the AKP knows that vital Turkish interests are still at stake in the U.S.-Turkish alliance. The

AKP remains the most pro-American party in government and has continually demonstrated its willingness to pragmatically deal with outstanding issues concerning Iraq over which the United States has influence. The reelection of Erdogan and election of Gul as president mean that the AKP will continue to shape Turkey's foreign policy unhindered by the secular opposition but still under the watchful eyes of the Turkish military.

Asymmetries in power and scope have always been apparent between the United States and Turkey, which have in turn affected the alliance. Unlike in the Cold War, during which Turkey was constantly adjusting its policies to fit the U.S. approach, today the burden falls predominately on the United States. The AKP has been successful in guiding Turkish foreign policy away from Kemalist isolation and has prepared Turkey for a rapprochement with the United States. The United States, however, should make the first move toward Turkey and has the farthest way to come in repairing the alliance. Given the continued tensions over the Armenian genocide resolution working its way through Congress, U.S. leaders must redouble their efforts to assure Turkey and the AKP that they understand the sensitive nature of this historical issue and that they are not simply playing favorites because of domestic lobbying.

Shared history cannot be the only driving force in the alliance.

Finally, the particular sensitivities of the AKP must be understood by U.S. leaders to rebuild a stronger working relationship with Turkey. Close security ties between the United States and Turkey have always been the strategic glue guiding the relationship. Military and intelligence services have been effectively integrated through a common NATO framework, but U.S.-Turkish security relations have always been exceptionally close because of shared common threats and a continued U.S. military presence in Turkey.

Yet, with the emergence of the AKP and the strong establishment of civilian control over military initiatives, these security links have begun to deteriorate without parallel civilian equivalents in place. The high-level summits that occur annually between the U.S. secretary of state and Turkish foreign minister are a step in the right direction, but more institutionalized forums between Turkish and U.S. political parties and leaders could be instrumental in developing closer civilian political connections. By leveraging Washington's closeness to the Turkish military and the AKP, the U.S. administration can play a valuable role in mediating Turkey's domestic tensions, which will in turn help reinvigorate the U.S.-Turkish alliance.

Catalyzing Reengagement

The U.S.-Turkish relationship has survived over 60 years of history. Yet, shared history cannot be the only driving force in the alliance. Despite attempts to substitute terrorism for the Soviet Union, Turkey and the United States no longer share a common existential threat. The international environment and the balance of power in Turkey's region in particular have changed tremendously. By recognizing these shifts and appreciating the nuances of Erdogan's domestic position in Turkey, the United States would be wise to emphasize its shared common interests while trying to downplay its differences.

July 22, 2007, should serve as a catalyst for U.S. reengagement with Turkey.

The AKP's second term in office promises to be full of reforms as they continue to define a space for their Muslim identity in Turkey's fiercely secular state. The rise in nationalist sentiment throughout Turkey has provoked an isolationist mood that has manifested itself at various times in the forms of anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, and even anti-Europeanism. Although the AKP is not the primary source of these forces, Erdogan

with his AKP must work to combat them by demonstrating that a globally engaged and regionally linked Turkey that works with the United States will benefit all Turks.

The United States will elect a new president next year who will largely determine the United States' place in world affairs and the use of U.S. force around the world. Given the U.S. experience on September 11, 2001, and in Iraq, it is tempting for the United States to give up on constructive engagement in the Middle East. Nevertheless, as a Muslim-majority democracy and 50-year NATO ally, Turkey matters to the United States. Therefore, the time for serious action on repairing the U.S.-Turkish alliance does not begin on January 20, 2009. Instead, July 22, 2007, should serve as a catalyst for further reengagement.

No alliance as complex as the U.S.-Turkish relationship can be perfect or static. In spite of accounts to the contrary, this relationship has always had its ebbs and flows and relied on the continued attention and focus of policymakers in Washington and Ankara. Having survived the end of the Cold War and terrorist attacks by al Qaeda, the U.S.-Turkish relationship has much to offer both countries. Cooperation in the Balkans and Afghanistan has proven that Turkey can be a valuable partner when other European partners prove unwilling or unable to help in U.S.-led peacekeeping operations. Neither the policy divergence over Iraq nor the congressional Armenian genocide resolution

need be a fatal blow to the alliance, but it does require the type of serious diplomatic creativity and engagement that has been sorely lacking in recent U.S. treatment of Turkey and the AKP.

Notes

1. See Burak Bekdil, "American Mis-En-Scene," *Turkish Daily News*, August 3, 2007, <https://turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=79994>; Soner Cagaptay, "Liberal Turkey?" *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2007, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1077>.
2. Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, "President Bush Discusses Democracy, Freedom From Turkey," June 29, 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/06/20040629-4.html>.
3. See Barak Salmoni, "Strategic Partners or Estranged Allies: Turkey, the United States, and Operation Iraqi Freedom," *Strategic Insight 2*, no. 7 (July 2003), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/july03/middleEast.asp>.
4. Vernon Loeb and Karl Vick, "U.S. Official Confident of Turkey's Support," *Washington Post*, December 5, 2002, p. A29.
5. Ahmet Davutoglu, *Strategik Derinlik, Turkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* [Strategic Depth, Turkey's International Position] (Istanbul: Kure Yayinlari, 2001).
6. Joschka Fischer, interview with author, Vienna, October 23, 2006.
7. "Rising Environmental Concern in 47-Nation Survey," Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 27, 2007, <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=256>.
8. See Joshua W. Walker, "Truly Democratic and Anti-American," *Jerusalem Post*, July 15, 2007, p. 13.
9. Soner Cagaptay, "Turkish Troubles," *Wall Street Journal*, July 31, 2007, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1077>.

