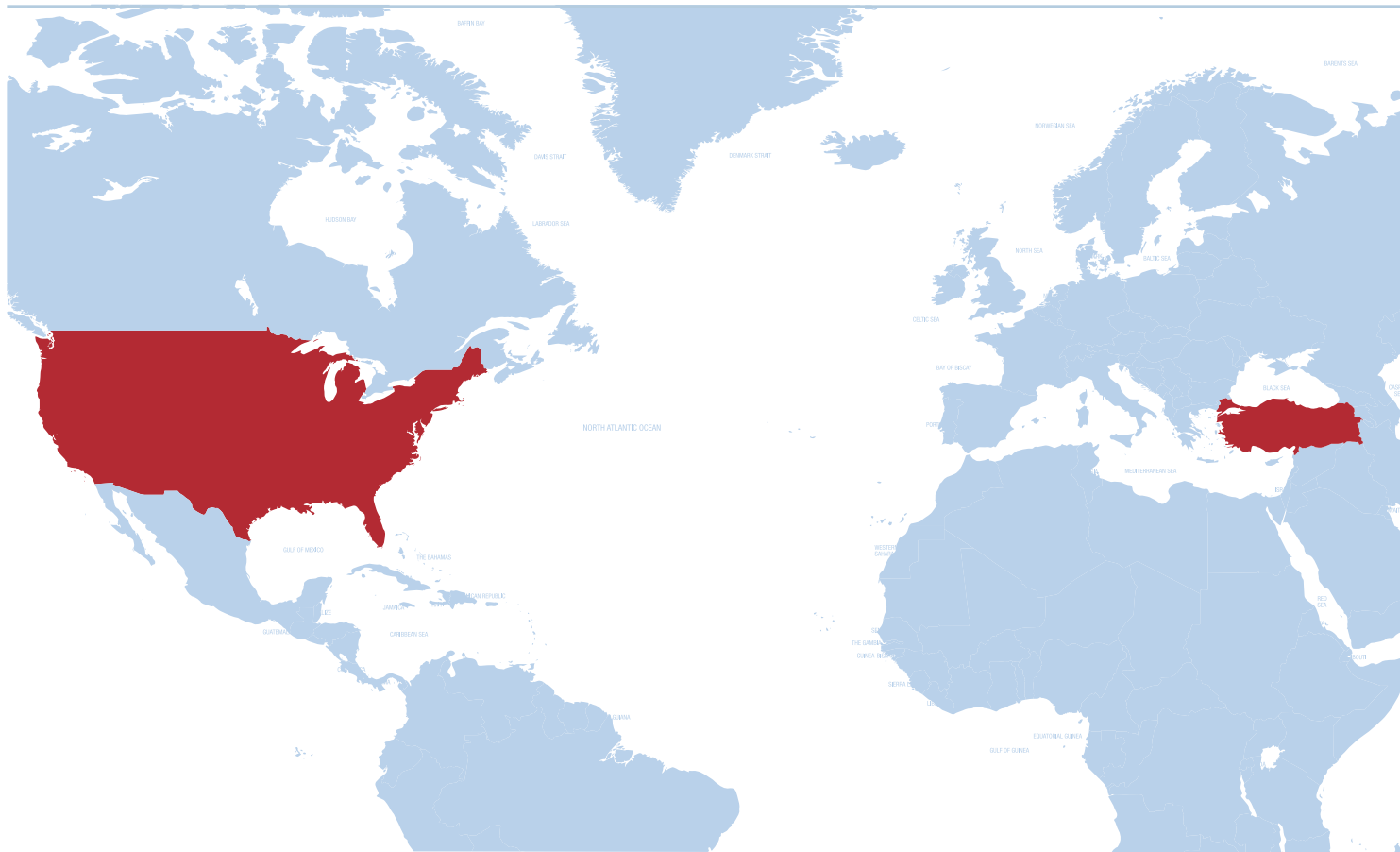


# U.S.-Turkish Relations

A REVIEW AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD DECADE  
OF THE POST-COLD WAR ERA



## *Report Coordinators*

Bulent Aliriza

Bulent Aras

November 2012



center for  
strategic  
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Republic of Turkey  
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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



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## PREFACE

As the United States and Turkey enter the third decade following the end of the Cold War, they are enjoying a new cooperative era in their relationship. Their partnership has recently been enhanced by overlapping perspectives on the unprecedented transformation sweeping the Middle East as well as in a number of other regional and functional areas.

This report is the product of a joint effort by the Center for Strategic Research at the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Turkey (SAM) and the CSIS Turkey Project. It incorporates the perspectives from both sides of the relationship, and in addition to examining the opportunities and challenges the alliance has confronted in the past six decades, it looks ahead to those it is likely to face in the future.

Part I of the report examines the origins and development of the alliance during the Cold War. Part II looks at the inevitable adjustments brought on by the end of the Cold War and identifies the key factors that helped to ensure the continuation of the relationship in the first two decades of the new era. Part III looks forward at the beginning of the third decade of the post-Cold War era to how the relationship may evolve by focusing on the main areas of cooperation.

We would like to thank all of the current and former U.S. and Turkish policymakers and diplomats who generously shared their views with us on the past, present, and future of U.S.-Turkish relations. On the Turkish side, we owe a particular debt of gratitude to Deputy Foreign Minister Naci Korum, Turkish Ambassador to the United States Namik Tan, and Ambassador Tuncay Babali for their invaluable support for this project from its inception to its completion. We are also grateful to former U.S. national security adviser General Brent Scowcroft and former U.S. ambassador to Turkey Robert Pearson who participated in our workshop in Washington, as well as current U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Frank Ricciardone. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of all of our colleagues at SAM and CSIS, especially Dr. Mesut Ozcan and Dr. Saban Kardas of SAM and Deni Koenhems and Andrew Haines of CSIS.

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## INTRODUCTION

The partnership between the United States and Turkey, which traces its origins to the Cold War, has gone through constant adjustment since the beginning of the post–Cold War era.

The current turmoil in the Middle East has served as a stark reminder to both Washington and Ankara of their shared interests and complementary strategic perspectives. Close coordination between the United States and Turkey during the Arab Spring, Turkey’s continuing contribution to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, Turkey’s decision to join the U.S.-led NATO missile shield program, and U.S. security assistance to Turkish military efforts against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) all highlight the extent to which the two countries can cooperate in Turkey’s increasingly volatile and conflict-prone region.

However, the relationship is not without its problems. Significant points of divergence in their perspectives, as well as policies, remain. Unlike during the Cold War period, when each side knew what it could give and expect to receive in the relationship, each side has sometimes fallen short of the other’s expectations. For example, Turkey has been critical of U.S. failure to put greater pressure on Israel, while the United States has been uncomfortable with the extent of Turkey’s continued dealings with Iran.

Looking ahead to the future of U.S.-Turkish relations, the alliance is likely to be shaped by a number of factors. The first is how the United States will reposition itself in the world as it reduces its military presence in the Middle East and continues its “pivot to Asia.” The future of the relationship will also be affected by the extent to which Turkey will opt for independent action over cooperation with the United States when conducting its foreign policy. Needless to say, domestic political considerations in both countries will be another important determinant. Nationalist currents in Turkish politics do not welcome Turkey appearing to act on behalf of the United States in regional issues. The Turkish public still harbors deep skepticism about long-term U.S. intentions and commitment to Turkey’s security. At the same time, demands in the United States for a lower profile in the Middle East may undermine the basis for regional cooperation. There could also be a revival of earlier questions about Turkey’s place in the West and an “axis shift.”

The unfolding of a number of specific issues will also help shape the future of the alliance. In the Middle East, the trajectory of the Arab Spring, driven by forces unleashed in the form of popular uprisings, is likely to exert pressure on both Washington and Ankara to coordinate their policies, especially as they have similar perspectives on the root causes of the upheaval and the need to assist the regional transformation toward democracy. How the two countries deal with the Iranian nuclear program, regional tensions created by Iran’s stance in the Syrian crisis, and Tehran’s difficult relationship with its Arab neighbors will continue to be major components in the U.S.-Turkish relationship. The role Russia chooses to play in the various parts of the world in which Washington and Ankara have interests will also be a factor.

Like every relationship, the evolving partnership between the United States and Turkey has the potential for improvement as well as deterioration. Consequently, while responding to these developments, Washington and Ankara need to bear in mind that the alignment of their interests in security, stability, and democratization requires them to work in tandem as much as possible.





## DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING THE BILATERAL ALLIANCE IN A MULTILATERAL CONTEXT, 1952–1990

Although Turks and Americans first established diplomatic relations with the opening of Ottoman and U.S. legations 1867 and 1901 respectively, a close alignment between the two countries did not develop until after World War II. This is understandable as the relationship had no geographic, cultural, or economic foundations. The alliance was constructed on urgent strategic needs at the outset of the Cold War. As World War II was coming to an end, the United States and Turkey saw a convergence of their national interests due to their common but distinct perceptions of the Soviet Union as a threat.

Initially, Turkey enjoyed a close relationship with the Soviet Union during the early period of the Republic. Both had emerged from the ashes of empires at the conclusion of World War I and sought to establish themselves in the new global order. The Soviet Union had been instrumental in supporting the Turkish National Movement during the War of Independence, and Atatürk's early state planning was partly influenced by the Soviets. World War II had a profoundly negative effect on the relationship as a newly emboldened Soviet Union under Stalin sought to press its advantage in Eastern Europe, while seeking to establish control over the Turkish Straits that linked the Soviet-dominated Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Ankara was naturally alarmed by Moscow's termination of the 1925 Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality in April 1945, as well as by the Soviet Union's territorial demands and desire to modify the Montreux Convention governing the use of the Turkish Straits.

For its part, the United States slowly came to the conclusion that its former ally against Nazi Germany had become its main challenger in the new global order. Consequently, as the U.S.-Soviet confrontation escalated, Washington and Ankara each gradually began to recognize the need for strategic cooperation. This process culminated in the establishment of the fundamental institution that would underpin the relationship for four decades: a close bilateral alliance within the multilateral context of the main Western collective defense organization, NATO.

While progress toward a mutually advantageous alliance may have appeared entirely logical, if not inevitable, for both sides, it was in fact far from preordained. U.S. views on Turkey's national security and its role in the defense of the Western world evolved as the confrontation with the Soviet Union escalated. Even before the end of World War II, the United States recognized the Soviet Union's desire to add Turkey to its postwar sphere of influence. Consequently, it concluded that "the defense of the Republic of Turkey [was] vital to the defense of the United States," according to a statement by U.S. ambassador to Turkey Edwin Wilson. Ambassador Wilson reinforced this perception of a Soviet threat in a March 23, 1946, cable emphasizing that "Turkish independence [had] become a vital interest for the United States."

Accordingly, President Harry S. Truman extended military and economic aid valued at \$45 million to Turkey through the Lend-Lease Act of 1941, which continued through 1946. This aid package was but a small precursor to the much larger and longer-term funding—\$75 million in

the 1948 fiscal year—which would be provided after his proclamation of what became known as the Truman Doctrine. In March 1947, Truman declared that Turkey was “essential to the preservation of order in the Middle East” and that the consequences of its fall at the hands of the Soviets would be “far reaching to the West as well as to the East.” Truman’s action was prompted by the decision of the United Kingdom to retreat from its position in the Near East. A British aide-memoire delivered in Washington on February 21, 1947, had informed the United States that the United Kingdom “could no longer extend financial assistance to...Turkey” and “express[ed] earnest hope...that the United States Government [would] agree to bear...the financial burden, of which the major part [had] hitherto been borne by His Majesty’s Government.”

However, the United States did not initially see Turkey’s future as a member in the evolving Western collective defense arrangements that culminated in the establishment of NATO in 1949. A February 12, 1951, memorandum summarizing the views of Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee argued in favor of “an Eastern Mediterranean grouping, centered around Turkey,” since “the land defense of Western Europe... [was] separate from the land defense of Turkey.” Accordingly, the United States refrained from supporting multiple Turkish attempts to enter NATO, instead backing a Mediterranean Pact or a similar grouping, which the United Kingdom also preferred, to help allay Turkey’s security concerns.

U.S. attitudes began to change with the continued escalation of Cold War tensions coupled with Turkish participation in the Korean War. McGhee—who would later become ambassador to Turkey—commented in the February 1951 memorandum that by committing itself to the Allied effort in Korea, Turkey had revealed the “tremendous fighting qualities of the Turkish troops” and “demonstrated its willingness to participate in collective security.” Equally importantly, the first free multiparty Turkish elections in May 1950 had provided the necessary democratic credentials for membership in NATO, an issue that had been raised by many of the European NATO members.

The dramatic change in U.S. views on Turkish membership in NATO is demonstrated by two Joint Chiefs of Staff memoranda in September 1950 and April 1951. The first argued that “Turkey and Greece’s inclusion [in NATO] may adversely affect the progress being made” to strengthen the collective defense organization. In contrast, the second memorandum declared that U.S. “security interests demand that Turkey and Greece be admitted as full members of [NATO]. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, from the military point of view, would not regard either bilateral security arrangements between the United States and Turkey or Greece as an adequate solution.” The strong arguments in favor of Turkey’s inclusion in NATO and its importance defending the West from “Soviet domination [of] Europe, the Middle East and Asia” then led the United States to convince its hitherto reluctant NATO allies to accept Turkey’s admission in February 1952. This was also facilitated by Turkey’s agreement in July 1951 with the United Kingdom to play a leading role in efforts to construct a parallel Middle East Defense Organization after it was admitted into NATO.

Turkey’s admission provided the United States access into a second NATO country sharing a border with the Soviet Union next to what was perceived as its “soft underbelly” in the Caucasus. The United States also concluded hundreds of separate bilateral agreements parallel to the multilateral defense arrangements provided by their common membership in NATO. Once the United States began to engage Turkey in a security alliance, most of its interaction was with the Turkish military. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the Pentagon–Turkish General Staff (TGS) link served as the core of the U.S.–Turkish relationship for the next 40 years. Consequently, most of the major interactions between the United States and Turkey occurred in the context of this primary security relationship. In addition to the security guarantee provided by the United States through

NATO, Turkey also depended on the protection of the U.S. “nuclear umbrella” and the massive amounts of military and economic assistance it received from the United States. From 1948 to 1975, Turkey received over \$4.5 billion in military aid from the United States. Needless to say, U.S. policies were also in accordance with the U.S. perception of its own security interests.

The predominance of Cold War calculations in the relationship on the U.S. side can be seen by its tolerance of the Turkish military’s tutelage over the political system, demonstrated by the coup of May 1960. In August, a few weeks after the military takeover, a cable from U.S. ambassador Avra M. Warren asserted that the United States “intend[ed] to work with [the military government] just as loyally and faithfully as [the United States] did during the Menderes government” and that it would work with any future government to ensure Turkey’s commitment to the West, “unless it is commie.”

This imperative would continue throughout the Cold War, with the United States supporting, or at the very least condoning, the subsequent 1971 and 1980 coups. A memorandum from Harold Saunders of the National Security Council Staff of President Richard M. Nixon on March 25, 1971, reflected U.S. priorities. Instead of displaying any sense of apprehension after the military had forced the elected government to resign, Saunders merely noted that the military leaders “[were] the final arbiters” and that the United States should now be open “to convincing the military decisionmakers of the urgency of the opium problem,” the primary issue of concern to the United States at the time.

While the United States was committed to the defense of Turkey through the NATO Charter, the United States felt no obligation to consult or even inform the Turkish government of major decisions when it was not perceived to be in its interests. The Cuban Missile Crisis provided a vivid example of this tendency. The United States had placed Jupiter nuclear-tipped missiles in Turkey in 1959–1960 to bolster NATO defenses against the Soviet Union. This decision was also seen as a strong indicator of U.S. support and commitment to Turkey. However, the discovery during the crisis that the Soviets had placed nuclear weapons in Cuba dramatically changed U.S. security calculations. As part of the secret deal that ended the crisis, President John F. Kennedy agreed quietly to withdraw the Jupiters from Turkey after the Soviets withdrew their missiles from Cuba. Washington had decided to remove the missiles from Turkey without consulting Ankara. The absence of a need for Turkish input in a decision that significantly affected Ankara clearly demonstrated the inequality in the relationship, albeit not as unequal as the relationship between the USSR and its satellites in the Warsaw Pact.

The same lack of concern for Turkish sensitivities was displayed over the Cyprus issue. The main U.S. motive in this long-festering problem was the prevention of a Turkish-Greek clash in the interests of the stability of the eastern flank of NATO. On June 5, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson went so far as to question the security guarantee in the NATO Charter in a letter to Prime Minister Ismet Inonu of Turkey. In a message designed to deter Ankara from an intervention in Cyprus to protect its ethnic brethren, Johnson bluntly warned that Turkey’s “NATO allies have not had a chance to consider whether they have an obligation to protect Turkey against the Soviet Union” if Turkey were to intervene in Cyprus.

When Turkey finally intervened in Cyprus in 1974, the U.S. Congress, motivated by the emergence of ethnic politics spearheaded by the Greek lobby, came into the U.S.-Turkish equation in a negative way by imposing an embargo on U.S. military supplies to Turkey. Then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who strongly opposed the congressional action, argued in an internal memoran-

dum on December 6, 1974, that the alliance with Turkey was “essential to Western security, and that this relationship exist[ed] not as a favor to Turkey,” but was a product of the importance of Turkey to the security of not only the “Mediterranean, [but] of all of Europe and the Atlantic area.” As Kissinger feared, Ankara retaliated by abrogating the Joint Defense Cooperation Agreement and closing U.S. listening posts focused on the Soviet Union. However, Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, then deputy national security adviser, has noted that while the closing of the listening posts “hurt the United States for a time,” Washington succeeded in overcoming the problem by “quietly getting Chinese cooperation to put [listening posts] up in Tibet.” The Carter administration was eventually able to pressure Congress into lifting the embargo in 1978. Although the episode left a bitter taste for Ankara, the continuing importance of mutual Cold War interests ensured the maintenance of their strategic relationship.



## THE POST-COLD WAR ERA THE FIRST TWO DECADES, 1991-2011

Just as the period toward the end of World War II set the course for the first phase of the U.S.-Turkish alliance, the adjustment at the end of the Cold War would provide the framework for the subsequent two decades.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the common bond between the two Cold War allies was gone. Nonetheless, the close relationship between the United States and Turkey not only endured after the Cold War, but thrived, unlike many of Washington's other relationships established during the same period. Washington and Ankara sought and found a new set of rationales for an alliance that they both wanted to maintain. This said, it was essentially a case of ad hoc adjustment, the implications of which were not fully considered by either Washington or Ankara.

In contrast to the primarily anti-Soviet partnership during the Cold War, the emphasis was now on how to redefine an evolving alliance that was multiregional and multidimensional in nature. President George H.W. Bush, who oversaw the transition in 1991 to 1992, highlighted the changing nature of the relationship in his visit to Turkey in July 1991. He said Turkey's importance as an ally had developed beyond being purely the "bulwark of NATO's southern flank." Turkey now served "as a model" to the newly independent former Soviet Turkic states and as a possible transit route for energy from the Caspian Sea to international markets that would bypass Russia. Turkey had thus rediscovered its "historic place as a trade hub, uniting Europe—East and West—Asia, and the Middle East," while acting as a "beacon of stability." Bush also emphasized another important component of U.S. post-Cold War policy toward Turkey to his host, President Turgut Ozal, by saying that "there should be no question that Turkey deserve[s] entry into the European Community."

The strategic alliance between the United States and Turkey found a new point of focus when Bush looked to Ozal for Turkish cooperation after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Bush noted in September 1990, soon after the invasion, that "Turkey [had] stood firm and steadfast despite the heavy burden the Iraqi invasion [had] placed on its own economy." As then-National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft confirmed, the personal relationship between Bush and Ozal facilitated cooperation in the "political, economic, and cultural" sphere. He described Bush and Ozal's dialogue as having produced an "intimate, personal" bond "where the relationship really became...very close and in a sense less military and more political than it had ever been before," while "demonstrating the indisputable strategic importance of Turkey to the United States."

President Bill Clinton would essentially follow in his predecessor's footsteps as he managed the changing bilateral relationship. In October 1993, he highlighted the shift in the alliance "from a Cold War emphasis on military assistance to shared values and greater political cooperation." Turkey's strategic location and history would also play "a stabilizing role in a host of regional trouble spots." Clinton continued Bush-era cooperation in Iraq, while working with President Suley-

man Demirel and other Turkish leaders on NATO operations in Bosnia and Kosovo and actively supporting Turkey's efforts to build an East-West corridor for Caspian energy. In an April 1995 congressional hearing, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke stressed that U.S. interests in Turkey were "considerable" despite the end of the Cold War because it was "the front line state for U.S. security interests in Europe."

Clinton also sought to reaffirm and strengthen Turkey's institutional ties with the West through eventual EU membership. Ambassador to Turkey and later Assistant Secretary of State Marc Grossman stated that the "United States supports Turkey's EU membership; not half membership or three quarters of membership; but full membership." In 1995, Turkey concluded a Customs Union with the European Union, a stepping-stone to its highly sought-after candidate status, attained in 1999. This step would not have been possible without the support of the Clinton administration.

Clinton later summarized his view of the significance of the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relationship during his November 1999 visit to Ankara, when he declared "Since the Cold War ended, we have learned something quite wonderful. We have learned that our friendship does not depend upon a common concern related to the Soviet Union, and that in fact, our partnership has become even more important in the post-Cold War era." However, significant as each of these areas of cooperation were, none of them really filled the void created by the elimination of a common enemy and the certainties of the Cold War. In that 40-year-long phase, each side of the bilateral relationship knew what it could expect from the other and what it could give in return. The end of the Cold War allowed a great deal more latitude for a more independent Turkish foreign policy, which the United States tolerated. Turkey utilized this newfound flexibility to improve its ties with Russia and Iran. While this caused discomfort in Washington, the United States nonetheless endeavored to maintain cooperation, including the maintenance of the No-Fly Zone over Iraq.

The post-Cold War relationship was seriously tested during the presidency of George W. Bush. As a part of President Bush's Global War on Terror after the September 11, 2001, attacks, he pursued a "with us or against us" approach. The Turkish Grand National Assembly did not approve Bush's request in March 2003 for U.S. troops to operate from Turkish bases and ports preparing to attack Iraq. Nonetheless, the Bush administration chose to blame the Turkish General Staff instead of the Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party—JDP), which had come into power in November 2002. Although the relationship quickly recovered, the event was a major turning point in U.S.-Turkish relations, not least because it accelerated the shift in the balance of power between the military and civilian leadership in Turkey.

In June 2004, Bush reiterated the importance of Turkey's ties to the West during his visit to Istanbul, while highlighting its vital role in the spread of democracy in the region through what he termed the "Freedom Agenda." He stated that, "because of [Turkey's] character...[its] success is vital to a future of progress and peace in Europe and in the broader Middle East." Turkey not only "belong[ed] in the European Union" because of its strategic importance historically fighting the Soviets, but its "membership would also be a crucial advance in relations between the Muslim world and the West, because [it is] part of both."

The damage caused by the split over the Iraq War was partly mitigated by Turkey's continuing support in Afghanistan. Like other NATO members, Turkey had answered Washington's call in the wake of the September 11 al Qaeda attacks. Ankara sent troops to help establish public order and

functioning economic and political structures in Afghanistan after the United States had overthrown the Taliban regime that had sheltered al Qaeda. Turkey has been one of the top contributors to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and has twice led the Kabul Regional Command. As a Muslim-majority NATO member and significant troop contributor to ISAF, Turkey's involvement had major symbolic value. Washington also benefited from valuable intelligence and expertise provided by Turkey in the fight against terrorism.

President Barack Obama would focus even more than Bush on Turkey's role in his declared endeavor to bridge the divide between the West and the Muslim world. In fact, by choosing to visit Turkey in April 2009 just three months after moving into the White House, Obama signaled in a highly symbolic manner the priority he would assign to U.S.-Turkish relations in his foreign policy. This was underlined by the unveiling of his vision of "a model partnership" between the two countries during his visit. Compared to the long-standing "strategic partnership" between the two countries, the concept of a model partnership sought to take the relationship between the United States and Turkey a step further, by emphasizing closer cooperation between a global power and an assertive regional power.

Obama had argued prior to his election that the Bush administration had alienated people in many countries, especially Muslims, during its global War on Terror. In his statements in Ankara, Obama aimed at pursuing a different policy whereby Turkey, a country which he emphasized belonged to the West as well as the Muslim world, would play a key role. While welcoming Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Washington in December 2009, Obama said that Turkey was "a great country" with "growing influence around the world." Obama also emphasized how, as "a majority Muslim nation," Turkey was playing "a critical role in helping to shape mutual understanding and stability and peace not only in its neighborhood but around the world."

Obama's approach reflected Washington's growing recognition of Turkey's economic strength and regional influence. This consequently contributed to a change in U.S.-Turkish relations during this period. In other words, Turkey's new multidimensional and multilateral foreign policy agenda changed the U.S. perception of Turkey's regional and global role in world politics. Similarly, the fact that the JDP has its roots in political Islam and was more interested in the Middle East and the wider Islamic world than any previous Turkish government was undoubtedly perceived to be an advantage by both the Bush and Obama administrations.

Obama expanded the level of cooperation to the extent that he talked about the "friendship and bond of trust" that he had developed with Erdogan during a January 2012 interview. This special relationship—akin to the one between former president George H.W. Bush and Ozal—mitigated strains in 2010 caused by differences over Iran, Turkish-Israeli tensions, and the reintroduction of a congressional resolution on the "Armenian Genocide" issue, which had long bedeviled the relationship.



## LOOKING AHEAD AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD DECADE OF THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

The future of the alliance in the third decade and beyond will be determined to a great extent by the ability of the two countries to maximize their convergence and minimize their divergence in a number of areas of common interest, in particular the Middle East.

### **Broader Middle East: The Role of the Turkish “Model” or “Inspiration”**

At the core of growing U.S.-Turkish cooperation is the Turkish “model” or “inspiration” for the changing Middle East. With its political stability and economic development in a resource-rich but politically volatile region, Turkey, with U.S. backing, has supported widespread Arab demands for democratic transformation. As Islamist activists and others previously shut out of long-ossified political systems have risen up against autocratic rulers in the region, the two countries have been encouraging the revolutionaries to seek power through the ballot box. The policy convergence between Washington and Ankara has built on the experience of working together as NATO allies for six decades. They also share a joint vision to spread, throughout the region, democracy, freedom, a free market economy, and the rule of law, which have come to form the basis of the Turkish system.

Establishing closer relations with the Middle East and helping it to emulate Turkey’s own positive example have been an integral part of the country’s increasingly proactive foreign policy, particularly with its declared goal of trying to move toward “zero problems with neighbors.” The more influential role that Turkey has been seeking to play in the region has also dovetailed with the “model partnership” concept outlined by President Obama in Ankara in 2009. This incorporated his vision of the two allies working more closely together in the pursuit of their common values and goals. Taking advantage of its unique status as an integral part of both systems, Turkey would also play a special role in improving the strained relationship between the West and the Islamic world.

The advent of the Arab Spring constituted a test, as well as an opportunity, for new cooperation. At the beginning of the post-Cold War era, Turkey had seen itself as a successful democratic example for the Turkic republics that gained independence after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Even more so with the Arab Spring, Turkey has seen itself as an example that could be emulated throughout the Middle East, a country successfully combining moderate Islamic values with a fully democratic secular system. The common goal of the United States and Turkey was to facilitate as smooth a transition as possible away from dictatorship to democracy while countering the appeal of radicalism.



However, Turkish policymakers have refrained from openly advocating their country as a model. Instead, they have preferred to portray Turkey more as an “inspiration” for those struggling to transform the region. In their view, countries can draw on lessons from the Turkish experience while applying them in accordance with their own unique historical conditions. In other words, Turkey would be better suited to readily share its experience and thus assist in regional transformation. Wisely, the United States has also refrained from openly advocating the Turkish model, while taking every opportunity to refer to the Turkish example as the process has unfolded.

The developments in Tunisia and Egypt led the way to genuine democracy for the first time in their history relatively quickly after popular uprisings. This made it impossible for autocratic regimes to survive while serving to demonstrate the soundness of the joint and coordinated U.S.-Turkish approach. Ruled by moderate Islamists committed to maintaining the democratic systems that brought them to power, to resisting extremists unwilling to show tolerance to those who do not share their views, and to developing a new and healthier relationship with the West based on mutual respect, Tunisia and Egypt can provide their own model or inspiration to others in the region with the encouragement of Washington and Ankara. Libya also moved away from a long dictatorship to a form of democracy through a very different and bloodier path. The struggle in Syria is even fiercer, and as such presents an interruption in the flow of regional democratization and a much less desirable example posing a very real challenge to U.S.-Turkish cooperation in the Middle East.

## Syria: Dealing with an Escalating Crisis

Trying to manage the difficult and complicated transition from autocratic regimes in the Middle East became the primary theme in the Washington-Ankara relationship in 2011, and the autocratic government in Syria was seen by both countries as the next domino to fall. However, Syria has broken from what was seen as a natural progression of democracy sweeping through the region.

Initially, both the United States and Turkey viewed the Syrian uprising through the prism of the earlier revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and to a lesser extent Libya—as a homegrown movement that would inevitably force long-delayed reforms on the Syrian regime or push it aside. However, the long-drawn-out struggle with its growing cost in Syrian lives is threatening the entire process of change.

Prior to the revolution, Syria was the cornerstone of the Turkish policy of “zero problems with neighbors.” Visas were lifted, and there was flourishing cross-border trade and even joint cabinet meetings. Understandably, Ankara’s initial reaction was to engage Damascus and to advise it to reform. However, when the Syrian regime resisted and responded with increasing savagery, Turkey chose to support the actions of the Syrian insurgents.

The Syrian crisis quickly escalated from a purely domestic conflict into an international crisis. While Syria enjoyed the backing of Russia at the diplomatic level and Iran at the operational level, the rebellion was supported not only by Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, but also by the Friends of Syria group including the United States and a wider international consensus backed by the UN General Assembly. On a wider scale, the crisis underlined and exacerbated other regional issues, including the political strife in Lebanon and Iraq, regional competition between Iran and the Arab countries of the Gulf, Russia’s quest for residual influence in the Middle East, and Israeli security concerns.

The cruelty and sectarianism of the Syrian regime has provoked a similar response from the insurgents and consequently made it inevitable that sectarian radicalism will be a major factor in the post-Assad equation in Syria and probably beyond. This is especially unwelcome for Ankara, which has endeavored to avoid a Sunni-Shia divide in the Middle East. It is also concerned with the possibility of Kurdish autonomy in northern Syria as the conflict worsens, coupled with resumption of Syrian support for the terrorist activities of the PKK inside Turkey.

The United States and Turkey have endeavored to cooperate as much as possible in dealing with the Syrian crisis. In addition to participating as key members of the Friends of the Syrian People Contact Group and working together to draft UN resolutions on Syria, they have also sought to coordinate their response to the escalating conflict. However, despite mutual interests, shared principles and goals, and increased joint operational and intelligence support to the opposition, U.S.-Turkish cooperation on Syria has not been effective from Ankara's perspective. As the crisis has become protracted, the financial, human, and diplomatic costs of the conflict have mounted for Turkey. As Ankara has repeatedly made clear, dealing with the Syrian crisis alone is beyond its own capabilities. Turkey needs the United States to give more concrete support for it to be able to exercise its own regional influence to help end the conflict.

However, while Turkey has looked to the United States for greater leadership on this issue, the United States in turn has looked to Turkey to help spearhead the effort in Syria as part of the Obama administration's multilateral "leading from behind" approach. Moreover, having fought with Islamist extremists for over a decade after the September 11 attacks, there has been a very real reluctance on the part of Washington to provide greater backing for the Syrian opposition due to the presence of what it considers to be potentially hostile radicals in its ranks. The paradox is that this approach has had the effect of forcing the opposition in its desperate struggle to look elsewhere not only for arms, but also for additional volunteers from the extremist fringe. At the same time and even more importantly, it has led Ankara to question the scope and depth of U.S.-Turkish cooperation, which has seen its limitations exposed in the face of a challenge to the entire Arab Spring process.

## **Iraq: Promoting Stability, Development, and Governance after the U.S. Withdrawal**

Although overshadowed by the Arab Spring and the Syrian crisis, Iraq and Iraq-related issues continue to occupy an important place in the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relationship. The fragile political structures in Iraq and security concerns generated by its internal conflicts have been a serious concern for Turkey since the First Gulf War. The PKK's use of Northern Iraq as a base for its terror campaign against Turkey is a major issue for Ankara. Accordingly, bridging policy differences and developing closer security cooperation in Iraq has constituted a challenge for U.S.-Turkish relations.

Despite their serious disagreement immediately prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, the United States and Turkey have both supported the political stability and territorial integrity of post-Saddam Iraq. After the invasion, Turkey contributed to stabilization efforts in Iraq, believing that such support was vital for Turkish interests, as well as for broader regional security. Since then, the United States and Turkey have acted on the understanding that a functioning state in Iraq is their common objective. Taking into account the political turmoil and ongoing realignment

in the region, both the United States and Turkey have perceived that they had a common interest in helping Iraq consolidate its transition from authoritarianism to full constitutional democracy. However, while the outcome desired by both countries for Iraq was the same, there were important differences between them on the roles of ethnic and sectarian groups during this process.

Following the withdrawal of U.S. forces, changes in Iraqi domestic politics caused U.S. and Turkish policies in Iraq to diverge. The United States supported Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, a Shia, as a strong leader capable of maintaining Iraq's security and stability. Understandably desirous of portraying post-withdrawal Iraq as a foreign policy success, it has been backing Maliki despite his authoritarian tendencies and close relations with Iran. For its part, Turkey has supported the Sunni and Shia opponents of Maliki and expressed concern about the growth of Iranian influence in Iraq. Differences between Turkish and Iraqi leaders during the Arab Spring, especially in Syria, coupled with ongoing disputes over Northern Iraq, have caused a further deterioration in the relationship between Ankara and Baghdad.

Tensions between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Northern Iraq threaten the stability that both Washington and Ankara desire in this fragile system. Turkey's initially cautious and even hostile attitude toward the KRG contrasted with the positive relationship the KRG enjoyed with the United States. However, in the past few years, the situation has changed considerably. Turkey's opening toward Iraqi Kurds, especially in the construction and energy sectors, has developed to the point of creating additional strains with Baghdad. It has also added to Washington's own concerns over Iraq's stability and territorial integrity.

Although the United States is pleased with improved relations between Ankara and the KRG, it has nonetheless been concerned about the impact of Turkish-Iraqi Kurdish initiatives on the difficult relationship between Baghdad and the KRG. These include a discussion of the export of Iraqi Kurdish oil to markets via Turkey without the permission of the Iraqi Oil Ministry. U.S. and Turkish oil companies have signed a number of agreements with the KRG that have been declared invalid and illegal by the Iraqi government. While the U.S. government has not discouraged U.S. companies from dealing directly with the KRG, Washington has indicated that it prefers the extraction and export of Iraqi Kurdish oil to be undertaken with the blessing of Baghdad. While Ankara also seeks such a solution, it has nonetheless indicated that it might go ahead even without such an agreement. Consequently, it is important for Washington and Ankara to find a way to resolve their differences before developments reach that point.

Turkey's increasing political and economic engagement with the Kurdish authorities has placed it in the unaccustomed position of being the KRG's champion against a potentially hostile government in Baghdad. To be sure, Turkey's problems with the Iraqi central government have contributed to closer relations with the Iraqi Kurds. However, the most important element of Turkish-Kurdish rapprochement has been Turkey's hope that the KRG leadership can serve as a positive model and a strategic asset in its efforts to deal with Kurdish unrest within Turkey and the PKK presence in Northern Iraq and, more recently, Northern Syria.

Despite the extensive support the United States provided Turkey, particularly after 2007 when Washington agreed to provide "actionable intelligence" in the struggle against PKK terrorism, Turkish politicians and officials have continued to complain. Their main source of grievance has been the alleged inadequacy of U.S. assistance in tracking and eliminating PKK terrorists, especially in Northern Iraq. This dissatisfaction has been exacerbated by the residual anti-Americanism within Turkey that continues to be fed by skepticism that the United States is not doing

enough to help in the three-decade-long struggle against the PKK, despite repeated assurances to the contrary. Thus, it is vital that the two countries find a way to work even more closely on this issue. This could involve the development of a new security structure in Iraq that excludes the PKK, in order to eliminate this thorn in U.S.-Turkish relations.

## Iran: Balancing Mutual Opposition to Nuclear Weapons and Regional Hegemony with Diplomatic, Economic, and Energy Ties

Turkey's effort to maintain good relations with Iran has necessitated a difficult balancing act with the United States because of the animosity between Washington and Tehran. However, the balance has the potential to be upset by a number of issues, in particular a U.S. or Israeli military strike against Iran's nuclear installations.

Washington has pursued an increasingly stringent policy of sanctions to isolate the Islamic Republic and to generate international pressure against it on the grounds that it supports international terrorism, fails to comply with the nuclear nonproliferation regime, and violates human rights. In contrast, Ankara has opted for continued engagement with Iran, arguing that isolation and pressure would only further radicalize its policies and that sanctions cause innocent citizens to suffer rather than the current regime.

Accordingly, Turkey has rebuffed U.S. and EU sanctions on Iran and only complied with international sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council. In addition to its general opposition to sanctions, this is also due to the importance of Turkey's trade with Iran. The Turkish and Iranian economies complement each other to a considerable extent. While Iran offers a profitable market for Turkish exports, its vast hydrocarbon resources help meet increasing Turkish demand for energy. The growing trade between the two countries has an imbalance in favor of Iran due to Turkish purchases of Iranian gas. At the same time, Turkey has been soliciting Iran's cooperation to tackle security challenges posed by cross-border terrorist activities of the PKK.

The United States and Turkey have important shared interests regarding Iran, most crucially with respect to the weaponization of Tehran's nuclear program and the containment of its rising regional power. In addition, they have a joint commitment to the nonproliferation regime, share a mutual concern about a nuclear-armed Iran, and are in general agreement on the use of Turkey's links to Iran to help nudge it in the direction of a negotiated settlement on its nuclear program. However, the issue has also been a major source of irritation between the two allies. In 2010, the separate deal on the nuclear issue that Turkey and Brazil struck with Iran was immediately opposed by the United States, and soon afterward Turkey voted against a U.S.-sponsored package of sanctions at the UN Security Council.

The competing regional visions of the United States and Iran have also presented a challenge for U.S.-Turkish relations. Iran has approached its neighbors as potential battlegrounds to fight the United States, while containing Iranian influence has been a major objective of U.S. policy in the Middle East. To a great extent, this is consistent with Turkey's own perception of Iran as a rival with policies that could endanger regional stability. For Ankara, this view was reinforced after Iran resumed previous support for the PKK and began to give increased backing for the Syrian regime as it suppressed its opponents with brutal force. These moves, combined with Iranian influence in Iraq and in Lebanon through Hezbollah, have led Ankara increasingly to perceive Iran as the

leader of an emerging de facto Shia front seeking to curb Turkish influence in the Middle East. From Ankara's point of view, Iran may be pushing the region toward a sectarian divide, which is anathema to Turkey. Turkey has chosen to cooperate with the U.S. strategy of counteracting Iranian influence in the region by agreeing to Washington's request to allow the stationing of an antimissile NATO radar system in southeast Turkey, while publicly insisting that the system was not specifically designed to target Iran.

However, Ankara continues to view the possible escalation of the U.S.-Iranian confrontation to the point of armed conflict as detrimental to regional peace and stability. Consequently, in its balancing act of maintaining relations with Iran while also cooperating closely with the United States, Ankara has regularly been conveying Washington's concerns to Tehran in order to try to defuse tensions. For its part, Washington has made it clear that it regards the use of military force against Iran as an undesirable last resort and has shown tolerance toward the nuanced policy of Turkey. That implicit understanding has proved useful in limiting disagreements in U.S.-Turkish relations over Iran. However, if strains between Washington and Tehran escalate, maintaining a balance is likely to prove more difficult for Ankara.

## Israel and Palestine: Promoting a Two-State Solution?

As a strong supporter of the long-standing relationship between Turkey and Israel, the United States has tried to ease recent Turkish-Israeli tensions while continuing to maintain the closest possible cooperation with Turkey. However, sustained U.S. backing of Israel is in contrast to Turkey's increasing advocacy of Palestinian rights and may eventually force the two countries to confront their differences on this issue.

Having long maintained good relations with Israel, Turkey has also been supporting the idea that it should live in peace with its neighbors within internationally recognized boundaries. It has been arguing that a just and durable solution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem is essential for regional peace in the Middle East and that such a solution is contingent upon a two-state solution. Accordingly, Turkey has been backing international initiatives aiming at such a goal, while seeking to explain the Palestinian case to the international community, most notably through the United Nations.

Turkey has been underlining the fact that it pays close attention to the regional atmosphere when calibrating its relationship with Israel. When the atmosphere appeared more favorable to a settlement based on a two-state solution, Turkey's own relationship with Israel also continued to flourish. The relationship deteriorated as the peace process ground to a halt, and it reached a new low with the Turkish-Israeli dispute during the flotilla incident in 2010. Turkey's relations with Israel are also influenced by public opinion. There is strong support for the Palestinians in Turkey, and Turkish politicians have to take these sentiments into consideration when formulating policies.

During the Bush administration, the United States supported the Roadmap for Peace Plan with the target of a two-state solution. The Obama administration backed the same goal. However, in the absence of any tangible progress in the peace process, Washington has lobbied strongly against a Turkey-backed effort by the Palestinians to seek recognition as a state by the United Nations. The two countries have also diverged on the status of Hamas. While Turkey recognizes Hamas as a legitimate political organization that has to be brought into the equation eventu-

ally, the United States shuns it as a terrorist organization. Overall, Turkey has been expecting the United States to be more forthcoming toward the Palestinians, while strongly urging Israeli leaders to work for a settlement.

Although the United States and Turkey have found a way to manage their differences on this issue, a breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute will undoubtedly have a positive spillover effect on Turkish-Israeli relations and indirectly on U.S.-Turkish relations. As a solution to the dispute does not appear likely in the near future, the two countries will, in essence, have to continue to compartmentalize the issue within their relationship. However, if the ongoing political transformation in the Middle East as a result of the Arab Spring changes the strategic equation in the region and creates more favorable conditions for the peace process, this would surely benefit the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

## Russia: Advancing the “Reset” while Addressing Differences

The transformation of the Turkish-Russian relationship has been a significant element of Turkish foreign policy in the last decade. Building on the positive momentum generated by a flourishing economic partnership, particularly in the energy sector, Ankara and Moscow have developed a closer political dialogue. Coupled with greater diplomatic coordination in regional and to some extent global affairs, they have moved beyond the legacy of centuries-old enmity and rivalry. Through what has been described as a multidimensional partnership, the two countries have endeavored to deepen their bilateral relationship while trying to approximate their positions on neighborhood issues in the Caucasus and Black Sea.

However, as it enhanced its ties with Moscow, Ankara has experienced occasional friction in its relationship with Washington. For example, while Turkey was lukewarm toward U.S. efforts to expand U.S. and NATO military power into the Black Sea basin, it was comfortable cooperating with Russia to bolster maritime security in the Black Sea. Similarly, on the issues of the “color revolutions” and European energy security, Turkey’s policy was sometimes far from alignment with the U.S. position and closer to that of Russia. Such differences came to the surface most visibly during the Russian-Georgian War of 2008 when, invoking the stipulations of the Montreux Convention, Turkey restricted the passage of U.S. warships into the Black Sea on their way to Georgia. This move, combined with its subsequent shuttle diplomacy in the region, stemmed from Ankara’s belief in the notion of regional ownership and its ability to help solve regional problems without external involvement.

The U.S. policy of “reset” with Russia was welcomed by Ankara as it promised some relief from the burden of balancing its ties with Washington and Moscow. However, the trilateral dynamics were negatively affected by growing convergence between the United States and Turkey in the wake of the Arab uprisings, Russia’s stance on the Syrian uprising, and Ankara’s decision to allow the installation of NATO’s early warning radar system despite Moscow’s opposition. At the same time, Ankara gradually came to the conclusion that Moscow was not as forthcoming as it had hoped it would be on neighborhood issues, such as the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

Nonetheless, Russia continues to be a very important trade partner for Turkey and the principal supplier of natural gas and, to a lesser extent, oil. Consequently, Turkey perceives it to be in its interest to follow a policy designed to avoid a major crisis with Russia and participation in any

confrontation between Moscow and the West. In that context, it has been supporting Russia-NATO security cooperation and continued talks on the missile shield, the future of nuclear weapons in Europe, the application of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in the Caucasus, and the enlargement of NATO parallel to its bilateral dialogue with its northern neighbor. Given Washington's own commitment to developing its own nonconfrontational relationship with Moscow, it seems unlikely that the Turkish-Russian relationship will cause serious problems in the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

## Central Asia: Advancing Mutual Interests in Energy Development, Security, and Political Reform

The United States and Turkey have cooperated closely in post-Soviet Central Asia and share foreign policy interests in the region. The key strategic priority of both countries in the region has been to bolster the political independence of the Central Asian countries, despite the efforts of Russia and China to assert their regional hegemony. Paradoxically, their joint efforts to help enhance the independence and self-confidence of the Central Asian states have made the region a lower priority in U.S.-Turkish relations. Nevertheless the existing level of cooperation is likely to continue, particularly in the fields of energy, regional security, and political reform.

Energy development in this region has been a very important issue for the United States and Turkey since the region gained independence from Russia. Both Washington and Ankara have been encouraging Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to export their oil and natural gas through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipelines, which were realized through the close cooperation of the United States and Turkey, as well as that of Azerbaijan and Georgia. The United States and Turkey have also been in agreement on the need to resolve tensions between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. Particular sources of tension between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan stemming from the status of the Caspian Sea and conflict over the Kepez/Sardar oilfield have undermined the development of the Trans-Caspian Pipeline project and consequently of the EU-backed Southern energy corridor.

The United States and Turkey also have overlapping interests concerning regional security issues in the region. They both support better relations between the Central Asian states and NATO through the Partnership for Peace program, which helps to counter the destabilizing influences of turmoil in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. In addition, the United States and Turkey have closely cooperated on drug trafficking, organized crime, and terrorism issues in Central Asia. Ensuring the safety of the Northern Distribution Network for Afghanistan has been yet another common interest of the United States and Turkey.

Political reform in the Central Asian countries is an important area of strategic cooperation between the United States and Turkey. Washington and Ankara have long supported the democratization process in the region, which has intensified following Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution in 2005. The authoritarian regimes in the region have refrained from further developing their relations with the United States and Turkey, partly due to their ruling elites' fear of losing their privileges during the democratization process. As a result, despite the greater push for democratic political reform in these countries, both the United States and Turkey still have a lot to do to enhance their bilateral cooperation as they promote democratic reforms in this region.

## Afghanistan/Pakistan: Enhancing the Transition to “Afghanization” and Regional Stability

U.S.-Turkish cooperation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) region has been an important test of how the two countries can bridge their differences in order to work toward peace and stability in regional affairs. Although Turkey has supported the basic elements of Washington’s Af-Pak strategy since 2001, by trying to ensure security and stability, advocating democratic elections, and increasing economic development and reconstruction, Ankara has been declining repeated requests to send combat forces to Afghanistan.

Although the Iraq War exposed a serious fissure in U.S.-Turkish relations, this was largely offset by Turkish backing for the U.S.-led effort in Afghanistan after September 11. Turkey offered its support as a NATO member, most notably as one of the main contributors to ISAF and leader of the Kabul Regional Command. As a Muslim-majority nation in NATO, Turkey’s partnership in Afghanistan has been very important for U.S. efforts. Washington and Ankara have also shared intelligence on the region as part of their broader cooperation to combat terrorism.

Backed by the United States, Turkey has also used its diplomatic influence to establish and maintain peace and stability in the region. Turkey has facilitated tripartite summits involving Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have been important in trying to generate momentum toward lasting regional peace. Turkey has helped to bolster regional stability through its support for rapprochement between Pakistan and Afghanistan, in addition to other local peace initiatives parallel to the NATO and UN frameworks. Ankara has simultaneously attempted to engage Islamabad in order to try to reduce tensions between the United States and Pakistan. As U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan Marc Grossman noted after the November 2011 Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, Turkey’s close contacts with both Afghanistan and Pakistan are important in the pursuit of common objectives.

A major issue on the agenda of the United States and NATO has been the withdrawal of combat forces from Afghanistan. In this context, Turkey’s proactive regional diplomacy is critical as the United States and NATO prepare for withdrawal in 2014. Turkey’s contribution to training the Afghan army and police force will be even more vital during the transition period, along with its contributions in the fields of education, health, social charity, and trade investment. Consequently, after the withdrawal of international forces, it will be even more important for the United States and Turkey to cooperate as Turkey contributes to the “Afghanization” of security and reconstruction.

## Caucasus: The Challenge of Frozen Conflicts

In the immediate aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States and Turkey cooperated closely in the Caucasus. In particular, they worked together to bolster the newly regained independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan and helped to ensure the construction of a pipeline extending through these two countries to Turkey to bring previously inaccessible Caspian oil to markets.

Despite a brief period of tension between the United States and Turkey due to the latter’s policy during the Russian-Georgian conflict, they have continued to maintain cooperation, including their joint contribution to Georgian stability at a time of increased fragility in the regional security



environment. In retrospect, it is clear that the Russian-Georgian crisis helped to underline the dangers of conflict in the Caucasus for both Washington and Ankara and reinforced their desire to coordinate on policy.

Since the conflict, Georgia has become an even more important neighbor and economic partner of Turkey. Citizens of the two countries can cross the border by presenting only their national IDs, while Georgia's Batumi Airport is served by Turkish Airlines as a domestic airport. However, Azerbaijan, a fraternal Turkic state, is the cornerstone of Turkey's Caucasus policy. Despite occasional strains, relations have generally been excellent. In addition to their cooperation on the transportation of Azeri oil, the two countries are planning to increase their collaboration on the transportation of Azeri gas to European markets. For its part, Baku considers Ankara a major partner and ally in the region, with expectations of Turkish support in the Karabakh dispute.

The Turkish-Armenian relationship is the trouble spot for Turkey's Caucasus policy and the source of complications in U.S.-Turkish relations. The Turkish-Armenian normalization process, backed by the United States, began with strong momentum generated by President Abdullah Gul's visit to Yerevan for a soccer match in 2008. However, it has since broken down. Although both sides apparently sustain hope for the revitalization of the process, there is little evidence of progress. The bilateral relationship continues to be overshadowed by the Armenian genocide allegations, and it is clear that normalization is unlikely until the issue is resolved. Needless to say, resolution would also eliminate the periodic crises it causes in U.S.-Turkish relations.

In line with its regional policy, Turkey has sought to create a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform to help bolster regional stability. However, the initiative has failed to get off the ground due to the lack of dialogue between Russia and Georgia and the parallel failure of the Turkish-Armenian normalization process. As an alternative, Turkey has been aiming to reenergize regional cooperation through a separate trilateral mechanism among Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. As the United States has been acknowledging, there is a need for closer cooperation and more constructive involvement in regional issues because the Caucasus has a number of ongoing and frozen conflicts that could heat up at any moment.

## Cyprus: Synchronizing Efforts to Achieve a Settlement

The conflict between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, which led to the most significant military intervention beyond its borders in the history of the Turkish Republic in 1974, has been a permanent feature of Turkish foreign and security policy, as well as domestic politics for over 50 years. While the Cyprus dispute itself has not been an issue of equal significance for the United States, its importance for Ankara and its implications in the international arena have helped to ensure it a place on the U.S.-Turkish agenda.

The primary role of the United States has been that of a stakeholder in the longstanding UN-led efforts aimed at resolution of the dispute. The United States recognizes that the absence of a solution affects Turkey's EU accession process and continues to impede the institutional relationship between NATO and the European Union. Washington is also concerned about the dangers of a new arena of confrontation between Turkey and Israel because of the latter's growing cooperation with the Greek Cypriots, as they both exploit gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean.

However, since the failure of the last major UN initiative in 2002–2004, U.S. involvement has declined. While the United States remains committed to its position that the problem should be solved, its focus has been on pursuing joint policy goals with Turkey in other areas without the Cyprus problem getting in the way. This is not only because it gives a much higher priority to the other issues on which it cooperates closely with Turkey, but also because it does not have a sense of urgency about this “frozen conflict,” particularly after the collapse of the UN effort.

While Washington acknowledges the positive contribution Ankara made to the peace process by supporting the UN plan, this is insufficient from the Turkish point of view, as Turkey wants the United States to put greater pressure on the Greek Cypriot side, which rejected the plan but was still allowed to join the European Union. From Ankara’s point of view, the Greek Cypriots have utilized the prerogatives of international recognition, buttressed by EU membership, to pressure Turkey during accession negotiations and thus contributed to the stalling of the process and disillusionment in Turkey about EU membership.

The communities on the island are a long way from reaching a negotiated agreement on a bi-zonal and bi-communal federal arrangement. Consequently, the Cyprus dispute remains a potential flashpoint and as such retains the potential to affect U.S.-Turkish relations in a negative way, not least because of the existence of a strong ethnic lobby directly interested in the issue in the United States.

## Europe: Promoting Integration Efforts Parallel to the EU Accession Process

Following acceptance by the European Union as a candidate state in 1999, Turkey enacted political reforms to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and moved toward convergence with European standards. In accordance with EU norms of liberal democracy, Turkey transformed itself, especially in the fields of civil liberties, human rights, and control over the military. However, as the process backed by the United States has stalled, enthusiasm in Turkey for the European Union has waned considerably. While Turkey remains a candidate, negotiations with the Union have entered a period of uncertainty.

Although Turkey started accession negotiations on June 12, 2006, only 1 out of the 35 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* has been opened and temporarily closed. The 12 chapters that were opened could not be closed because of the Cyprus problem, and the Greek Cypriots themselves have blocked 6 chapters. France has blocked 5 chapters, and 9 chapters have been blocked by the EU Council.

Although Turkey remains committed to the goal of EU membership, its foreign policy focus has inevitably shifted to other areas, primarily to its bilateral relationship with the United States and U.S.-Turkish cooperation in the Middle East. With the fastest-growing economy in Europe, Turkey is increasingly confident in its ability to sustain economic stability even as the European Union grapples with serious economic problems. Ankara also believes that it can maintain the political reforms that it developed parallel to the EU accession process.

However, it has been a U.S. priority through successive administrations to support Turkey’s EU accession process in order to underline its membership within the Western community. It remains to be seen how the stalling of the negotiations will impact the dynamics in the Ankara-Washington-Brussels trilateral relationship.

## Balkans: Cooperation on Economic Development and Political Stability

Ankara's perspective on the Balkans has been to consider the region an integral part of Europe and ultimately of the European Union. This is in accordance with the objectives of the United States, which also welcomes Turkey's role as a regional stabilizer. Energy security in the Balkans is a major concern for both the United States and Turkey, and Turkey's potential contribution through various pipeline projects is an example of U.S.-Turkish cooperation in this region. However, U.S. interest in the region has been waning since the resolution of the Bosnia and Kosovo conflicts, and the level of cooperation between Washington and Ankara is not as close as it was in the 1990s.

Through its activism in the Balkans, Turkey has been seeking to create bilateral and multilateral dialogue mechanisms. While Turkey's close interest in the region is not a new phenomenon, its recent policy in the Balkans fits into the new framework of a Turkish foreign policy that aims at enhanced cooperation and integration with surrounding areas. Turkish politicians also see immigrants of Balkan origin in Turkey as an essential link to the region. As Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu noted, there are more Bosnians in Turkey than in Bosnia-Herzegovina and more Albanians than in Kosovo.

Turkey has been aiming for a psychological breakthrough in the region, which was characterized by war, destruction, and ethnic enmity in the previous century. Accordingly, it has made considerable progress in improving previously difficult relations with Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia. It has established trilateral dialogue mechanisms with Serbia and Bosnia, as well as with Croatia and Bosnia. Ankara has also promoted regional cooperation through the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) and seeks to lay foundations for economic interdependence to secure positive political relations. All of these moves help to buttress regional stability, which is the common goal of the United States and Turkey.

## Economic Dimension: Expanding Bilateral Trade and Cooperation in Third Countries

Despite many commitments by both Washington and Ankara over the years to redress the situation, U.S.-Turkish economic relations remain far behind the level of political relations. Nevertheless, the joint desire for the improvement of their economic relationship remains on the agenda for both sides, as attempts to create additional mechanisms of cooperation indicate.

The establishment of the Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation in Washington in 2010, with an affiliated Business Council parallel to existing organizations such as the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council and the Economic Partnership Council, has contributed to some improvement. In 2011, there was a 21.9 percent increase in Turkey's exports to the United States and a 30.2 percent rise in imports compared to the previous year. Trade volume reached almost \$20 billion, with \$16.03 billion in imports and \$4.59 billion in exports. However, the rise in the trade imbalance, primarily due to sales by U.S. aviation and defense industries to Turkey, needs to be addressed. At the same time, the small and medium-size business portion of the U.S.-Turkish economic partnership also requires attention.

A promising area of economic cooperation is the promotion of entrepreneurship in the wider area of the Middle East, which is in the midst of a challenging transformation after the Arab

Spring. The Second Summit on Entrepreneurship in Istanbul in 2011 provided an example of what can be done in this field. At the same time, there is an expectation in Turkey of an increase in U.S. investment there. The United States ranked fifth in 2011 in foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to Turkey, and its share in the overall total FDI of \$11.1 billion was only \$1.4 billion or 12.6 percent. The situation could be improved by the U.S. designation of Turkey as one of six preferential markets in the world.

Turkish companies are endeavoring to increase their presence in the U.S. market through entrepreneurship programs and trade promotion facilities that may help decrease market penetration costs for Turkish companies. To overcome existing obstacles, Turkish business organizations have been working to improve their direct contact with U.S. counterparts. However, they have often experienced difficulties finding local U.S. partners, as U.S. companies have exhibited an understandable tendency to focus on exporting their own products. Nevertheless, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (TUSKON) have been engaging in active economic diplomacy on behalf of Turkish exporters in conjunction with the Turkish-American diaspora to improve the situation. In the last quarter of 2011 and the first half of 2012, for example, delegations comprising more than 500 businessmen visited more than 23 U.S. states.



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