

TYOLOGY OF CRISES IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS: A STUDY OF EIGHT CASES

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Abstract: Once hailed as an exemplary model of a strategic partnership, Turkish-American relations have overcome many crises. These crises had different catalysts, but shared a commonality: negatively affecting bilateral relations. This study analyzes eight major crises in Turkish-American relations by focusing on causing factors. This paper categorizes the causes to help identify further disagreements that could destroy relations between Turkey and the United States.

Keywords: *Turkish-American Relations, Crises, Political Crises.*

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TÜRK-AMERİKAN İLİŞKİLERİNDE KRİZLERİN TİPOLOJİSİ: SEKİZ ÖRNEK VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

Öz: Bir dönem örnek bir stratejik ortaklık olarak övülen Türk-Amerikan ilişkileri, bugüne kadar birçok krizi atlatmıştır. Bu krizler, farklı sebeplerden kaynaklanmış ve ikili ilişkilere zarar vermiştir. Bu çalışma, Türk-Amerikan ilişkilerinde yaşanan sekiz büyük krizi, nedenlerine odaklanarak incelemektedir. Bu minvalde, araştırmada, Türk-Amerikan ilişkilerinde krize neden olan konular kategorize edilecek ve ilişkilerin kopmasına neden olabilecek yeni krizlerin önlenmesi amaçlanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, Krizler, Siyasi Krizler.*

Introduction

After the Second World War, Turkish-American relations quickly transformed into a strategic partnership during the Cold War. Stalin's threats towards Turkey helped convince Ankara to make decisive steps in establishing an alliance with the other "superpower" of the era. After sending troops to assist in the Korean War, Turkey became a member of NATO in 1952. The 1950s were the "honeymoon" period between United States (U.S.) and Turkey. Unfortunately, in the 1960s, problems began to emerge in bilateral relations. These problems caused political crises in the subsequent years. The end of Cold War in the 1990s did not help matters and political crises continued to erupt between both countries with increasing regularity and danger.

This study analyzes eight major crises in Turkish-American relations by categorizing their causes. By creating a typology of crises in Turkish-American relations, this paper helps avoid future disagreements that could ruin relations. This paper argues that there are five main causes of crises in Turkish-American relations. They are:

1. Lack of harmony between the United States' global political designs and Turkey's national and regional policies.
2. Problems caused by democratic mechanisms in both countries.
3. Communication problems and misunderstandings.
4. Differences in political culture and political tradition.
5. Other actors that intercede and steal a role in Turkish-American relations.

1. Eight Cases of Crises in Turkish-American Relations

This section analyzes eight major cases of political crisis in Turkish-American relations to create a typology of crises.

1.1. U-2 Incident: The U-2 Incident was the first major political crisis Turkey and the U.S. had to face during the Cold War. The event took place on May 1, 1960, when a U.S. spy plane (U-2) was shot down by Soviet Air Defense Forces. The plane was performing photographic aerial reconnaissance deep in the Soviet territory around Sverdlovsk. Since the plane took off from Incirlik Base in Adana, Turkey hours before the incident, Soviet reaction was directed at Washington and Ankara. Francis Gary Powers, the pilot of the plane was

found alive and sentenced to 10 years of hard labor in prison on espionage allegations.² He was later exchanged with Soviet agent Rudolf Abel in 1962.³ Officials in Moscow issued a diplomatic note to Washington on May 10, 1960 and described the event as a “*hostile activity*”.⁴

The U-2 Incident stopped the emerging detente between the U.S. and Soviet Russia and negatively affected Turkish-Soviet and Turkish-American relations. Ankara withstood Soviet threats after the incident by moderating its foreign policy. Although the U-2 Incident did not immediately erode the confidence between Ankara and Washington, Ankara noticed allying with Washington might not always be safe and advantageous. As NATO’s “*southern flank*”, Turkey realized that becoming a member of NATO and an ally of the U.S. made Ankara a hostile state with Soviet Russia.

The U-2 Incident is an example of a crisis caused by the lack of harmony with the United States’ global political designs and Turkey’s national and regional policies. While the U.S. wanted its allies -especially Turkey- to assume greater responsibilities and risks during the Cold War conditions to protect the “*free world*”, Ankara realized that Soviet Russia was a neighboring country and confronting Moscow could be an existential threat.

1.2. The Johnson Letter Incident: The Johnson Letter Incident occurred when U.S. President Lyndon Johnson sent a letter to Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü on June 5, 1964.⁵ The letter was delivered to İnönü by the U.S. Ambassador to Ankara, Raymond Hare.⁶ The letter was written in a patronizing style⁷ and asserted that Washington did not want a war between the two NATO allies Turkey and Greece due to Cyprus Problem. The letter also expressed that if war broke out between Greece and Turkey, Ankara would face the risk of confronting Soviet Russia without U.S. and NATO support and not be able to use American made weapons if Moscow decides to intervene.

The letter created a shock in Ankara. Due to the 1963 events in Cyprus (known as the “*Bloody Christmas*”) that led to the death of 364 Turkish Cypriots as well as the forced migration of 25,000 others, Turkish public was angry and Prime Minister İnönü was prepared

² Bilal Karabulut (2016), “U-2 Casus Uçağı Krizi”, in *Türk Dış Politikasında 41 Kriz 1924-2014*, Haydar Çakmak (ed.) Ankara: Kripto Kitaplar, p. 88.

³ Erhan Kanyılmaz (2019), “U-2 Casus Uçağı Krizi”, *Bütün Dünya*, May 2019, pp. 133-134.

⁴ Bilal Karabulut (2016), “U-2 Casus Uçağı Krizi”, p. 89.

⁵ The Turkish translation of the letter can be read from here:

http://www.akintarih.com/turktarihi/cumhuriyetdonemi/johnson_mektubu/johnson_mektubu.html.

⁶ Süha Bölükbaşı (1993), “The Johnson Letter Revisited”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, July 1993, Vol. 29, No: 3, p. 505.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 517.

for a military intervention on the island.⁸ The Johnson Letter was the turning point for Ankara to start diversifying its foreign policy options and reducing dependency on Washington during the late 1960s and the 1970s.

This crisis had multiple causes. The first cause was the lack of harmony in policies. After the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, the U.S. was keen on keeping the status quo with Soviet Russia during its Cold War rivalry. However, Ankara was searching for ways to militarily intervene in Cyprus as one of the three guarantor powers of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) (along with the United Kingdom and Greece). While Ankara referenced Article 5 of the NATO Treaty⁹ and thus, the “*solidarity*” and “*collective defense*” principles, President Johnson referenced Article 4¹⁰ and the concept of “*consultation*” before performing unilateral actions. The U.S. also tried to avoid causing any problems between Turkey and Greece, two NATO allies. Ankara on the other hand considered its national and regional interests relating the security priorities in the Eastern Mediterranean and Turkish Cypriots.

The second important cause was the communication problems and misunderstandings. While President Johnson did not try to insult Turkey and the Turks, his patronizing style was interpreted as disrespect by the Turkish public. The Turkish public became aware of the letter on January 13, 1966, when Cüneyt Arcayürek, a young journalist published the letter in the popular *Hürriyet* newspaper.¹¹ The patronizing style of the Johnson Letter and its publication became a milestone in increasing anti-Americanism in Turkey after 1966.

1.3. Opium Crisis: The opium crisis has always been a controversial issue in the history of Turkish-American relations. In fact, the issue was a political matter during the Ottoman Empire. The opium crisis heightened and became a major political controversy in

⁸ Umut Arık (2016), “Johnson Mektubu ve Kıbrıs Krizi”, in *Türk Dış Politikasında 41 Kriz 1924-2014*, Haydar Çakmak (ed.) Ankara: Kripto Kitaplar, p. 102.

⁹ **Article 5:** The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security. See; NATO, “The North Atlantic Treaty: Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949”, Date of Accession: 02.06.2020 from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

¹⁰ **Article 4:** The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened. See; NATO, “The North Atlantic Treaty: Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949”, Date of Accession: 02.06.2020 from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

¹¹ İsmail Cem Feridunoğlu (2017), “Hürriyet Gazetesi’nce 1964 Johnson Mektubu Süreci’nde Kullanılan Dilin Milliyetçi Söylem Bağlamında Söylem Analizi Yöntemiyle İncelenmesi”, *KSBD*, Fall 2017, Year: 9, Vol. 9, No: 2, p. 377.

Turkish-American relations in the late 1960s and the 1970s.¹² Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel tried multiple times to mediate American requests and Turkish farmers' economic interests. One of the first acts of the newly elected Demirel government was to sign the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs in 1965. Eventually, Turkey signed the agreement in 1967 after parliament approval. Demirel was pressured into action by America when U.S. Ambassador to Ankara, Raymond Hare, asked Turkey to stop all opium production. The number of addicts in the U.S. was rising in the 1960s and American officials claimed that drug trafficking in the U.S. was related to opium production in Turkey. America asked for an immediate ban, but Demirel offered a gradual ban that would take place over three to five years.¹³ The U.S. Ambassador to Ankara who succeeded Raymond Hare, Robert Komer, helped Ankara receive a 3 million U.S. dollars loan to help set up a modern narcotics department.¹⁴ Eventually, Turkey established its first Narcotics department within the Turkish Police Force (General Directorate of Security) on July 26, 1969, due to the loan.¹⁵ However, this was not enough to convince American officials who were anxious about domestic developments regarding the rising number of addictions and deaths from drugs use. The Vietnam War also served as a catalyst for drug addiction as American soldiers were turning into drug addicts on the battlefield and young Americans were using drugs at anti-war protests and anti-war festivals. Republican Presidential candidate Richard Nixon touted a “*Vietnamization Policy*” during his 1968 campaign that would end the war in Vietnam, bring American soldiers back to their home, and stop drug addiction in the U.S.¹⁶ In 1969, Gallup research showed that around half of Americans (48 %) took the drug issue very seriously.¹⁷

American efforts to end opium production in Turkey continued during William Handley's tenure in office as the U.S. Ambassador to Ankara. Handley offered Demirel's government 5 million U.S. dollars to stop production. Demirel refused the offer by referencing a Turkish city named “*Afyon*” (opium in Turkish). After the military memorandum on March 12, 1971, the Demirel government was replaced by a military-backed technocratic government led by the CHP (Republican People's Party) member and Kocaeli deputy Nihat Erim. Turkey

¹² For a comprehensive study on this issue, see; Çağrı Erhan (1996), *Beyaz Savaş: Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinde Afyon Sorunu*, Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi.

¹³ James W. Spain (1975), “The United States, Turkey and the Poppy”, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 29, No: 3 (1975 Summer), p. 297.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹⁵ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Narkotik Suçlarla Mücadele Daire Başkanlığı, “Tarihçe”, Date of Accession: 09.06.2020 from <http://www.narkotik.pol.tr/tarihce>.

¹⁶ *History.com*, “Vietnamization”, Date of Accession: 05.06.2020 from <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnamization>.

¹⁷ Jennifer Robison (2002), “Decades of Drug Use: Data From the '60s and '70s”, *Gallup*, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/6331/decades-drug-use-data-from-60s-70s.aspx>.

immediately banned opium production during the interim government. However, the Turkish public saw the opium production ban as a weakness and a national sovereignty issue. Moreover, although Americans tried to compensate for the economic losses caused by the ban with a 35.7 million U.S. dollars grant, Turkish Minister of Agriculture Orhan Dikmen said the economic losses from the opium ban amounted to around 100 million U.S. dollars.¹⁸

The opium controversy was cleverly utilized by the young and charismatic CHP leader, Bülent Ecevit, before the 1973 elections. Ecevit won the election against Demirel. The new coalition government, which included Ecevit's CHP and Erbakan's National Salvation Party (MSP), changed the ban of opium production to a limit on opium production. Ecevit's main goal was to have a symbolic political victory against his political rival Demirel and the junta-backed government of 12 March regime. Moreover, Ecevit wanted to have grassroots support in domestic politics rather than irking and upsetting Americans. During Jimmy Carter's presidency, this issue was less significant because of the events relating to the Cyprus Peace Operation of 1974 and Washington issued an arms embargo against Ankara that lasted from 1975 to 1978. Çakmak claims that, in the 1970s, Washington knew Turkish opium production was not the main cause of drug trafficking in the U.S. Moreover, Turkey's emerging rapprochement with Soviet Russia alarmed Washington, and anti-Turkish Greek and Armenian lobbies in the U.S. began to focus on the Cyprus Dispute rather than opium crisis.¹⁹ So, the focus on Cyprus Problem led to the opium crisis becoming a less vital issue in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The first cause of the opium crisis was the lack of harmony between both countries' policies. Washington initiated a war on drugs during Nixon's presidency to address increasing concern in the American public about drug trafficking and drug addiction among American youth. While America was fighting a war on drugs, the Turkish economy and Turkish farmers living in the Aegean region were heavily dependent on poppy planting and opium production. Thus, the ban imposed by Washington caused economic damage to Turkey and Turkish farmers which further degraded the American image in Turkey.

The second cause was the democratic mechanisms in both countries. While the American public was critical of Turkey's opium production and drug trafficking, Turkish politicians considered the votes they could lose if they would look too obedient. Demirel's goal when

¹⁸ See; Çağrı Erhan (1996), *Beyaz Savaş: Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinde Afyon Sorunu*.

¹⁹ Haydar Çakmak (2016), "Haşhaş Krizi", in *Türk Dış Politikasında 41 Kriz 1924-2014*, Haydar Çakmak (ed.) Ankara: Kripto Kitaplar, p. 143.

suggesting the gradual ban on opium production was to minimize losing votes in cities that were economically dependent on opium production. Demirel was correct and Ecevit used the opium ban later in great political rhetoric and won the general elections in 1973 and 1977.

The third cause was the differences in both countries' political culture and political tradition. In the 1970s, the Turkish public was unaware of the dangers posed by drug trafficking and drug addiction. Opium was seen as harmless as it was -and still is- used in cooking and pharmaceutical industries. American conservatives, however, began to perceive it as a security and public health problem in the 1960s and increased pressure on Turkish statesmen. Eventually, the difference between both countries' statesmen increased "anti" feelings on both sides.

1.4. 1 March Memorandum: Turkey's AK Parti (Justice and Development Party) came to power in 2002, shortly after it was established in 2001. The party's leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had an Islamist background. While Erdoğan had an unexpected victory in the 1994 municipal election in Istanbul and became Istanbul's first Islamist-oriented municipal leader, he was still inexperienced and vulnerable to attacks from Turkey's secular establishment in the early 2000s. Erdoğan could not become the Prime Minister until 2003 due to his political ban although he won the election in 2002 as the AK Parti leader. During this early period, Erdoğan and AK Parti's greatest fear was a military coup that could be organized by the historically Washington supported secular establishment. So, Erdoğan wanted to establish a good relationship with the European Union (EU) and the U.S. Erdoğan showed his support for the American military intervention in Iraq by stating that he was praying for the American soldiers to safely return to their home with minimum losses.²⁰ Erdoğan also personally supported the 1 March memorandum which would have made Turkey a part of the Iraqi War with the U.S. The head of Turkish delegation during the pre-war negotiations with the U.S., Deniz Bölükbaşı, stated that Erdoğan was openly supporting the memorandum while Abdullah Gül was not as willing to support the memorandum.²¹ While Gül was Prime Minister in the late 2002, Erdoğan visited the Washington as the AK Parti leader on December 10, 2002 and met with President George W. Bush, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, and Secretary of Defense Colin Powell. Although there was no open declaration showing Erdoğan's support for Turkey's inclusion into the

²⁰ Erbil Tuşalp (2019), "İkisi de üçü de dördü de..", *Cumhuriyet*, Date of Accession: 09.06.2020 from <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/1529172/ikisi-de-ucu-de-dordu-de.html>.

²¹ *Hürriyet* (2017), "Hâlâ 1 Mart tezkeresinin bedelini ödüyoruz", Date of Accession: 09.06.2020 from <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/hala-1-mart-tezkeresinin-bedelini-oduyoruz-40604056>.

“*Coalition of the Willing*”²² and the subsequent American war plan (opening a front against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq from Turkish border), the perception in the Turkish and American media implied that he was supporting Turkish involvement in the Iraqi War.

Negotiations between American and Turkish diplomats focused on the 62,000 U.S. soldiers that would stay in Turkey’s Southeastern Anatolia region for at least 6 months. The U.S. requested that American soldiers stay in Turkey and start a front to face Saddam’s forces in southern Turkey and northern Iraq. In return, America offered substantial economic aid to Turkey in addition to Turkish military access and military operation right into Northern Iraq.²³ A political analyst from the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, John Kunstadter, mentioned in a diplomatic cable on February 20, 2003 -that was later exposed by the Wikileaks scandal- that “*Turkey was reluctantly rolling towards Coalition of the Willing*”.²⁴ The motion was not approved by the Turkish Parliament (TGNA-Turkish Grand National Assembly) due to absentees and rejecters within the AK Parti and the opposition of the CHP. The motion failed to pass three votes and was considered rejected by the international public.

After the rejection, the disappointment on the American side was felt during the telephone conversation between Turkish Chief of General Staff Hilmi Özkök and U.S. Chief of General Staff Richard Myers. Turkish press rumored that Myers threw the phone due to his anger while talking to Özkök.²⁵ In fact, similar to Erdoğan, Özkök also supported the motion and hoped that Turkey could easily intervene in the Iraqi War in order to prevent the emergence of a safe haven for the PKK in the Qandil Mountains and the establishment of a Kurdish State.²⁶ Moreover, the second motion which allowed American military personnel access to Turkish military bases was approved by the Turkish Parliament shortly after the rejection of the first motion to show Turkish support of Washington’s war efforts.²⁷ However, U.S. President George W. Bush showed his disappointment with Ankara in his memoir called *Decision Points* (2010): “*The one remaining uncertainty was the role of Turkey. For months, we had*

²² The term “Coalition of the Willing” refers to the U.S.-led Multi-National Force in Iraq before the Iraqi War of 2003. Only three contributed troops to this force. These countries were; the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland.

²³ Özlen Çelebi (2016), “1 Mart Tezkeresi Krizi”, in *Türk Dış Politikasında 41 Kriz 1924-2014*, Haydar Çakmak (ed.) Ankara: Kripto Kitaplar, p. 277.

²⁴ *Vatan* (2011), “Erdoğan 1 Mart’ta devlete yenildi!”, Date of Accession: 09.06.2020 from <http://www.gazetevatan.com/erdogan-1-mart-ta-devlete-yenildi--367239-gundem/>.

²⁵ *Hürriyet* (2003), “Telefonu neden fırlattı”, Date of Accession: 09.06.2020 from <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/telefonu-neden-firlatti-38552432>.

²⁶ *Habertürk* (2013), “1 Mart Tezkeresi’nin tutanakları açıklanacak mı?”, Erişim Tarihi: 09.02.2020, Erişim Adresi: <https://www.haberturk.com/polemik/haber/819489-1-mart-tezkeresinin-tutanaklari-aciklanacak-mi>.

²⁷ *Milliyet* (2003), “Erdoğan bastırdı! Tezkere kabul edildi”, Date of Accession: 09.06.2020 from <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/erdogan-bastirdi-tezkere-kabul-edildi-5186260>.

been pressing the Turks to give us access to their territory so that we could send fifteen thousand troops from the Fourth Infantry Division to enter Iraq from the north. We promised to provide economic and military aid, help Turkey access key programs from the International Monetary Fund, and maintain our strong support for Turkey's admission to the European Union. At one point, it looked like we would get permission. Prime Minister Abdullah Gül's cabinet approved our request. But when the Turkish parliament held a final vote on March 1, it came up just short of passage. I was frustrated and disappointed. On one of the most important requests we had ever made, Turkey, our NATO ally, had let America down.”²⁸

To categorize this crisis using the previously mentioned model, the first cause is the lack of harmony between both countries' political projections and designs. While President Bush and his neocon team were confident and wanted the Iraqi War, the Turkish political elite were hesitant and the Turkish public was completely against it. Turkish citizens and politicians were afraid of the negative consequences of a war with a Muslim country, economic losses, the likelihood of a migration crisis, and the probability of Kurdish statehood. The U.S., however, wanted its partner and strategic ally to act in harmony.

The second cause is the difficulty of implementing democratic regimes or in other words, the discrepancy in democratic responses. Although Turkey's highest rank officials including Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Chief of General Staff Hilmi Özkök, and Foreign Minister Yaşar Yakış wanted the motion passed, the members of the Turkish Parliament did not want to initiate a war with a neighboring Muslim country. Therefore, the democratic mechanism in Turkey became a problem when implementing a common strategy.

The third important cause is the communication problems. While American officials thought they agreed with Erdoğan earlier, the rejection of the motion in the Turkish Parliament was an unexpected blow to them. The U.S. not only faced economic losses (the U.S. Army was already establishing facilities for the American soldiers in Turkey) after this decision, but also had to change its war plan in Iraq completely.

1.5. The Hood Event: On July 4, 2003, on the anniversary of American Independence Day, a group of Turkish soldiers were captured and interrogated by American military units in Sulaymaniyah. The Turkish soldiers were treated in an insulting manner and by hoods being placed on their heads like terrorists. Although a short telephone conversation between Turkish

²⁸ George W. Bush (2011), *Decision Points*, Virgin Books.

Prime Minister Erdoğan and U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney released the Turkish soldiers quickly, the Turkish public became increasingly hostile to the U.S. During this event, Turkish soldiers acted responsibly and prevented a political scandal by not responding and resisting the American soldiers' aggression and detention.²⁹ Anti-Americanism reached an all-time high in Turkey following the “hood event”. Turkish Chief of General Staff Hilmi Özkök underlined that this crisis would create a lack of confidence between countries, while Turkish press used headlines such as “Ugly Americans”.³⁰ American military units were hosted by local Kurdish forces who claimed that Turkish soldiers were trying to destabilize the region by organizing an assassination of the new governor of Kirkuk.³¹ American soldiers seized 15 kg of explosives, sniper rifles, grenades, and maps of Kirkuk, while the Turkish press claimed that Kurdish forces were trying to destroy the Turkmen's census bureau registration records in Sulaymaniyah.³² This event overshadowed the half-century alliance between Turkey and the U.S.

The “hood event” was largely caused by strategic disaccord between the two countries. The U.S., as a federal state, wanted to rebuild Iraq based on federalism, whereas Turkey, intimidated by its own Kurdish problem, wanted Iraq to stay a unitary state. Thus, Ankara and Washington's strategic plan differed and the two allies became bitter rivals during this crisis.

The second cause was the democratic mechanisms in both countries. When the motion for Turkish entry into the Iraqi War was not approved by the Turkish Parliament, it angered the U.S. Congress and the Bush administration. Therefore, the “hood event” came as a result of the 1 March memorandum crisis. Furthermore, after the event, anti-Americanism in Turkey became a common political stance for most political groups and the AK Parti government's efforts to fix relations with Washington were not supported by the Turkish public.

The third cause was the misunderstandings and lack of communication. While U.S. forces firmly believed that Turkish soldiers were preparing for an assassination attempt on the Kirkuk governor, Turkish authorities believed that Washington was trying to establish a Kurdish State in Northern Iraq.

²⁹ *Sabah* (2010), “Çuval olayındaki 7 yıllık büyük sır”, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from https://www.sabah.com.tr/galeri/dunya/cuval_olayindaki_7_yillik_buyuk_sir.

³⁰ *The Guardian* (2003), “US arrest of soldiers infuriates Turkey”, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/08/turkey.michaelhoward>.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Sabah* (2010), “Çuval olayındaki 7 yıllık büyük sır”, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from https://www.sabah.com.tr/galeri/dunya/cuval_olayindaki_7_yillik_buyuk_sir.

The fourth cause of the crisis was the differences in political culture and tradition. The Turkish public abhorred how the Turkish soldiers were treated by the Americans when pictures of soldiers were released with hoods on their heads.

The fifth cause was the other actors that intercede and affect Turkish-American relations. In this case, it was the Iraqi Kurds who became a loyal U.S. partner during the Iraqi War. Iraqi Kurds, especially the Peshmerga forces, became an important political actor during this process. In that sense, the “hood event” is a perfect example that shows all problematic aspects of Turkish-American relations.

1.6. Pastor Brunson Crisis: Pastor Andrew Brunson is a Protestant American priest who lived for 23 years in Izmir, Turkey until recently. Pastor Brunson was detained by Turkish police forces in October 2016. He was alleged of supporting the PKK and FETÖ terrorist organizations.³³ His long trial and accusations made by the Turkish State were criticized in the American press. Brunson was eventually sentenced to 3 years in prison. Since he served time in prison while awaiting his trial, he was released in 2018 and was welcomed by U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House.³⁴ Turkish President Erdoğan gave a speech during Brunson’s trial where he stated “*Ver Papazı Al Papazı*” (Give us the preacher, take the preacher). This was interpreted by the American public as an attempt to use Brunson in an exchange for Fethullah Gülen, who has been residing in Pennsylvania for many years. Gülen is accused of masterminding the failed coup plot of July 15, 2016, by the Turkish State. After Erdoğan’s speech, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence gave a harsh speech against Erdoğan and Turkey and demanded immediate release of Brunson.³⁵ While the American public perceived the issue as the prosecution of an innocent Christian man, the Turkish public analyzed the event from the perspective of civilizational difference (prejudices against a Muslim State) and increasing Evangelical domination in the U.S. politics.³⁶ This event further distanced two allies that were in disagreements relating to Syria, the Kurdish Question, relations with Israel, relations with Iran etc.

Analyzing the Brunson crisis, the most important cause is the difference in political culture and political tradition. The U.S. is the land of freedom for different faith and organized

³³ *BBC Türkçe* (2018), “Pastör Andrew Brunson kimdir: Türkiye-ABD ilişkilerinde kriz yaratan davada hüküm ve tahliye”, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-43782841>.

³⁴ This meeting can be watched from here; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcB3Rt53rqM>.

³⁵ This speech can be watched from here; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRfcQMLDMTU>.

³⁶ Özcan Hıdır (2018), “Rahip Brunson olayı ve ABD siyasetinde Evanjelik etki”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz-haber/rahip-brunson-olayi-ve-abd-siyasetinde-evanjelik-etki/1215528>.

religious groups. The first Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states that: “*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.*”³⁷ However, due to fears based on the strengthening of religious movements outside of state control, Turkey is a country where secularism is carefully protected and religious movements are strictly controlled by the state. Turkey is one of the few countries that put “*secularism*” (*laiklik* in Turkish) into its constitution and in an unchangeable manner. Article 2 of the Turkish Constitution states that “*The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state governed by rule of law, within the notions of public peace, national solidarity and justice, respecting human rights, loyal to the nationalism of Atatürk, and based on the fundamental tenets set forth in the preamble.*”³⁸ Furthermore, Article 4 of the Turkish Constitution states that “*The provision of Article 1 regarding the form of the State being a Republic, the characteristics of the Republic in Article 2, and the provisions of Article 3 shall not be amended, nor shall their amendment be proposed.*”³⁹ Both countries’ different political cultures and legal infrastructure caused this clash. While missionary activities are ordinary and even found necessary by the American public as part of religious freedoms, the Turkish public views these activities as hostile.

1.7. PYD/YPG Problem: Although Turkey and the U.S. originally supported the Arab Spring and oppositional movements against the Bashar al Assad regime, the Obama administration began to hesitate after the emergence of ISIS since ISIS was a greater threat. Although Obama previously stated that Washington would intervene if any chemical attacks towards civilians occurred, the U.S. did not react militarily when chemical attacks were carried out by regime forces in Syria. After the September 2014 ISIS attacks, the U.S. and Western powers began to support PYD/YPG. Turkey opposed U.S. and Western support to PYD/YPG due to their links with the outlawed PKK.⁴⁰ The barbaric deeds of ISIS and the presence of radical Islamist elements within the Syrian opposition (Free Syrian Army or Syrian National Army) caused the West to support the Kurdish militia. As a part of this strategy, Washington stopped the Syrian Train and Equip Program and provided its political

³⁷ Legal Information Institute – Cornell Law School, “First Amendment”, Date of Accession: 15.06.2020 from https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first_amendment.

³⁸ The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Turkey, “Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (1)”, Date of Accession: 16.06.2020 from <https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/en/legislation/turkish-constitution/>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *BBC Türkçe* (2019), “YPG: Yerel bir örgütten, NATO ülkelerinin desteklediği bir güce nasıl dönüştü?”, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-50180068>.

and military support to Syrian Kurds by sending arms. This angered Ankara, but the U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mathis explained American support to PYD/YPG as “*tactical*”.⁴¹ After ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s death during a U.S. operation, ISIS was completely destroyed, but the U.S. did not stop supporting the Kurds. President Trump, who succeeded Obama as the 45th U.S. President, tried to mediate Turkey and the Kurds. He supported Turkey’s military operations near Turkish border, but he requested that Turkey conduct military operations within a 20 mile safe zone. President Trump also asked Turkey not to attack all Kurds and he threatened Ankara with an economic crisis if Kurds were targeted.⁴² Both countries still have differences and diverging positions on this matter.

If we apply the crisis model (typology) to this issue, first thing is again the lack of harmony between each countries’ Middle East strategies. In theory, Washington is not against Kurdish autonomy in Syria, as seen with the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq that was officially established after the U.S.-led Iraqi War. Turkey, however, completely opposes to Kurdish political movements aiming autonomy or independence in Syria. In addition, while Turkey considers PYG/YPG as terrorist groups, the U.S. does not consider them a terrorist organization, but the PKK has been designated as a terrorist organization in the U.S. for many years.

The second cause relates to problems caused by the democratic mechanisms in both countries. The public opinion in the U.S. largely favors the Kurds because they are seen as a more secular group that stand against ISIS and radical Islamic elements within the Syrian opposition. In Turkey, however, the strengthening of the PYD/YPG is seen as the worst scenario due to their links with the PKK. Since the political landscape is largely shaped by public opinion, politicians and lawmakers feel the pressure from their voters and constituents in both countries.

Thirdly, problems emerge when other actors that intercede and affect in Turkish-American relations. In this case, it was the Syrian Kurds that fought against ISIS and became an influential group in Washington and Brussels, shaping negative Western views on Turkey.

1.8. S-400 and F-35 Crises: Since Turkey’s air defense system only consists of warrior jets; Ankara has been searching for an air missile defense system recently. In the early

⁴¹ *Anadolu Ajansı* (2017), “US to take back arms from PKK/PYD after Daesh defeat”, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-to-take-back-arms-from-pkk-pyd-after-daesh-defeat/847017>.

⁴² *BBC Türkçe* (2019), “Barış Pınarı Harekâtı - Trump neden üç günde birbiriyle çelişkili dört Suriye açıklaması yaptı?”, Date of Accession: 10.06.2020 from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-49984539>.

2010s, Ankara made an agreement to buy the Chinese made HQ-9 (FD-2000) system, although the agreement was later cancelled due to NATO pressure.⁴³ According to Egeli, the Chinese offer was generous as it offered technology transfers as well.⁴⁴ Turkish officials claimed Washington was reluctant to sell its Patriot system during Ankara's search for alternatives. In 2017, Turkey declared that it decided to buy the Russian made S-400 air missile defense system. The sale also helped Ankara quickly recover ties with Moscow after the jet crisis of 2015 and Karlov assassination of 2016. U.S. officials warned that Ankara should not buy the S-400 system because it posed security risks related to NATO forces.⁴⁵ When Ankara did not give up on the sale, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution to stop the delivery of the new generation of F-35 jets to Ankara. So, at the cost of buying S-400, Ankara lost the ability to buy F-35s.

Applying the crisis model to this controversial event, the first issue was the lack of harmony regarding political designs and conflicting interests between two countries. Ankara, until recently, had an approximately 50 % dependency on Russia's natural gas and Russia established Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu, Mersin. Washington on the other hand has always been cautious against Moscow after Vladimir Putin took over after Boris Yeltsin.

Secondly, this event shows the fragility of democratic regimes in strategic affairs. President Trump's efforts to correct relations with Turkey by allowing the sale of F-35s and the Patriot system were prevented by the U.S. Congress. This prevention was caused by the U.S. Congress' negative views and prejudices against the Turkish political system and Turkish foreign policy choices in recent years.

Conclusion

This study developed a framework of five different crisis types in Turkish-American relations in order to create a typology. Eight different crises were analyzed in accordance with this framework. The study showed that most problems in Turkish-American relations are caused by both countries' different political designs and strategic priorities. Problems were also

⁴³ *Hürriyet* (2015), "Türkiye Çin füzesinden vazgeçti, milli füze projesi başlatılacak", Date of Accession: 11.06.2020 from <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/turkiye-cin-fuzesinden-vazgecti-milli-fuze-projesi-baslatilacak-40014297>.

⁴⁴ Sıtkı Egeli (2017), "S-400 alımı, hava savunması, füze savunması, NATO: Mitler ve Gerçekler", *Kokpit*, Date of Accession: 11.06.2020 from <http://www.kokpit.aero/s400-sitki-egeli>.

⁴⁵ *BBC Türkçe* (2019), "S-400 ve F-35 krizi - Üst düzey ABD'li yetkililer: Türkiye'nin S-400 satın almasıyla NATO büyük bir krizle karşı karşıya", Date of Accession: 11.06.2020 from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-49040938>.

created and impacted by difficulties related to the democratic mechanisms in both countries, communication problems and misunderstandings, differences in political culture and political tradition, and other actors that interceded and affected Turkish-American relations. This study concludes that both countries should work together on a roadmap and grand strategic plan to make their policies more coherent and consistent to deepen their strategic partnership. Turkish-American alliance is still crucial for liberal world order and the stability in the Middle East and it is worth taking risks and giving concessions to keep the strategic partnership alive and strong.

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