



ANALYSIS of TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS POST-1990s

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ABSTRACT

The nature of the bilateral ties between the Türkiye and the US have mostly been influenced by the Cold War discourse until the 1990s. However, since then, the spirit of the relations has differed in terms of scope, direction and partnership perspectives. Following the end of the Cold War, Türkiye embarked on a foreign policy approach characterized by increased flexibility until the year 2000. Nevertheless, starting from the year 2000, the bilateral relations between these two nations have seen significant and unforeseen transformations. Despite maintaining their alliance and partnership, the agendas and national strategic interests of both nations have varied. They sometimes engage in competition on both global and regional matters. Hence, the aim of this study is to examine the dynamics of Turkish-American relations post-1990s, considering evolving global political discourse. The major outcome of this analysis is that there is a challenging relationship between the two countries. The return of geopolitics is a very important and decisive factor that has an impact on US-Türkiye relations. It virtually prevents the relations between both parties from deteriorating and leading to unexpected consequences.

Key Words: The US, Türkiye, bilateral relations, challenges, post-1990s.

1990 SONRASI TÜRK-AMERİKAN İLİŞKİLERİNİN ANALİZİ

ÖZ

Türkiye ile ABD arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin niteliği 1990'lı yıllara kadar çoğunlukla Soğuk Savaş söyleminden etkilenmiştir. Ancak o tarihten bu yana ilişkilerin ruhu; kapsam, yön ve ortaklık perspektifleri açısından farklılık göstermiştir. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinin ardından Türkiye, 2000 yılına kadar esnekliğin arttığı bir dış politika anlayışını benimsemiştir. Ancak 2000 yılından itibaren iki ülke arasındaki ikili ilişkilerde önemli ve öngörülemeyen dönüşümler yaşanmıştır. İttifaklarını ve ortaklıklarını sürdürmelerine rağmen, her iki ülkenin gündemleri ve ulusal stratejik çıkarları farklılık göstermiştir. Bazen hem küresel hem de bölgesel konularda rakip olabilecek tutum sergileyebilmektedirler. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmanın amacı, gelişen küresel siyasi perspektifleri dikkate alarak 1990'lar sonrası Türk-Amerikan ilişkilerinin gelişiminin incelemektir. Analizin en önemli sonucu, iki ülke arasında zorlu bir süreç yaşanmaktadır. Jeopolitiğin geri dönüşü, ABD-Türkiye ilişkilerini etkileyen çok önemli ve belirleyici bir faktördür. Her iki taraf arasındaki ilişkilerin daha da bozulmasını ve beklenmedik sonuçlara yol açmasını adeta engellemektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Amerika, Türkiye, ikili ilişkiler, zorluklar, 1990 sonrası.

Introduction¹

The genesis of the diplomatic ties between Türkiye and the US can be attributed to the convergence of strategic interests following the end of World War II. Specifically, Türkiye

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sought a robust alliance with the aim of deterring the "expansionist foreign policy" of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The US was likewise in search of a strategically advantageous "geographic location" to exert influence over the Soviet Union and impede its access to the abundant oil deposits in the Middle East. Consequently, following the Second World War, there was a convergence between Türkiye's imperative for security and the US' geopolitical interests.

The convergence of these objectives has emerged as the fundamental basis for the bilateral relations between the two nations. Although the fundamental link of relations is mostly due to military issues, the contacts have evolved to include economic, political, cultural, defense cooperation and others as well.

The nature of the bilateral ties between the two nations was mostly influenced by the Cold War discourse until the 1990s. However, since that time, the spirit of the relations has differed in terms of scope, direction and partnership perspectives since then. Following the end of the Cold War, Türkiye embarked on a foreign policy approach characterized by increased flexibility until the year 2000. This approach was undertaken while also upholding its commitments to the NATO alliance and maintaining the fundamental aspects of its relationship with the US. Nevertheless, starting from the year 2000, the bilateral relations between these two nations have seen significant and unforeseen transformations. Despite maintaining their alliance and partnership, the agendas and national strategic interests of both nations have varied. They sometimes engage in competition on both global and regional matters.

Indeed, the current situation regarding international relations is significantly divergent from the conditions observed in 1945. Hence, the objective of this study is to examine the dynamics of Turkish-American ties after the 1990s, taking into account evolving global political perspectives.

Therefore, the main research question of this article is how relations between both countries have developed from the end of the Cold War to the present day. In this context, the article aims to analyze which dynamics/determinants were effective in the development of relationships; why relationships have differed over the past two decades, what kinds of problems have arisen, and how both countries have acted to overcome the challenges they faced.

In order to explain the research question, the topic will be analyzed as follows:

- The synopsis of diplomatic relations leading up to 1990
- Turkish-American Relations from the end of Cold War to 2000
- The Evolution of relations between two countries in the 21st Century and beyond

The research methodology employed in this study will involve the use of narrative analysis, drawing upon a range of sources and underpinned by relevant theoretical frameworks.

The synopsis of diplomatic relations leading up to 1990

The initial encounter between the Turkish and American populations occurred through the North African principalities, known as Garp Ocaklari or Western Associations, which were part of the Ottoman Empire. The Garp Ocaklari disengaged from their affiliation with the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the 18th century, and afterwards came close to achieving a state of autonomy. Several European nations, to protect themselves against the piracy activities of the Garp Ocaklari, reached a consensus to remit annual taxes to these princes (Schuyler, 1886, p. 104 cited in Erhan, 2019, p. 35-56). Following the attainment of freedom by the US, instances of piracy emerged whereby American trade vessels were targeted and assaulted. The relationships gave rise to a sequence of conflicts known as the "Barbary Wars," which lasted from 1816 until 1895, with the American victory (Erhan, 2019, p. 35-56).

The bilateral links between the two nations were further enhanced via the signing of the Ottoman-American Trade and Maritime Treaty on May 7, 1830 (Erhan, 2019, p. 38). This treaty was a new type of capitulation agreement granted to the US by the Ottomans. The opening of missionary schools and subsequent foundation of American Colleges within the Ottoman territory were significant educational instruments that exerted influence on the relationship and ultimately contributed to the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Numerous instances can be observed wherein American missionaries provided support for the separatist endeavors undertaken by Christian factions, including Greeks, Bulgarians, and Armenians, who resided within the soils of the Ottoman Empire (See all in detail Erhan, 2019, p. 44-50) Notwithstanding these irregularities, both the Ottoman Empire and the US experienced a growth in their weapons-centric economic endeavors in the latter part of the 19th century (See all in detail Erhan, 2019, p. 41-44). Nevertheless, the burgeoning diplomatic connections between the Ottoman Empire and Germany led to gradual erosion of the US and Ottoman economic and political relations (Erhan and Siviş, 2017, p. 91-92).

The philosophical underpinnings of the connection between the two countries remained unchanged from the onset of the 20th century until 1927. Despite being part of the opposing bloc during the First World War, the US refrained from declaring war on the Ottoman Empire due to concerns for the safety and well-being of American missionaries residing in Ottoman territories. The political declaration made by US President Wilson in January 1918, consisting of fourteen articles, significantly contributed to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War. The twelve articles encompassed under this statement exhibited a significant correlation with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire (Erhan and Siviş, 2017, p. 91-92).

The US exhibited a more restrained approach during the War of Independence, exemplified by the visit of US General Harbord to Anatolia in 1919 and his official meeting with Mustafa Kemal. This diplomatic gesture fostered a cordial climate between the two nations. Unfortu-

nately, the Treaty of Lausanne was not approved and was thus rejected by the American Congress. Thereupon, a temporary agreement, namely "modus vivendi", was made between the US government and Turkish Republic. Thus, a mutual agreement was reached between the governments of the US and the respective counterpart to initiate the inaugural exchange of ambassadors in the same year. This event marked a significant shift in the strained diplomatic ties preceding the outbreak of the First World War. Both countries signed new commercial treaties in this period as well. (See the relation of both countries between two great wars-period in Kose, 2019, pp. 57-83).

During the Second World War, Türkiye adopted a strategy of 'active neutrality'. In October 1939, Türkiye entered a mutual assistance pact with Britain and France, which outlined the provision of British and French support to Türkiye in the case of an aggression against its sovereignty. In 1939, Türkiye further extended the non-aggression treaty established in 1925 with the Soviet Union. In June 1941, Türkiye entered a Treaty of Friendship, also referred to as a non-aggression pact, with Germany (Eminoglu, 2019, p. 87, 88-89). Türkiye was also included in the list of countries eligible to receive military assistance from the US. In order to achieve this objective, the US Government initiated its support to Türkiye by means of the Lend & Lease programme in December 1941 (Eminoglu, 2019, p. 87). Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, there was a notable intensification in American-Turkish relations, mostly centered around Türkiye's participation in the conflict against Nazi Germany. During the war, a sequence of conferences took place between Türkiye, England, and the USA to facilitate Türkiye's opening and front against Germany. The primary issue for Türkiye was not to open a front against Germany alone. Therefore, Türkiye exploited its weakness in not actively participating in the war, despite intense pressure from the Allies. Türkiye insisted that a southern front against Germany could be opened from the Balkans if all allies participated (See the negotiation process of all these conferences in detail in Eminoglu, 2019, p. 91-98). However, American generals were against this view due to the inadequacy of Turkish military infrastructure, materials and combat vehicles, the high cost of renewal of these infrastructures, the fear of Soviet control of Türkiye after the war, the duplication of military efforts and the negative consequences of military intervention and shifting military capabilities from the Western front to the Southern front. When no progress was made in these conferences and meetings until 1944, the USA, England and the Soviet Union stopped pressuring Türkiye to enter the war for different purposes.

Türkiye, due to its limited participation in the war efforts of the Allies, experienced a state of isolation following the conclusion of the Second World War. The Soviet Union sought to capitalize on Türkiye's post-World War II isolation (Türkmen, 2009, p. 111). The Soviet Union presented Türkiye with demands that were deemed unacceptable, including the proposed modification of the Montreux Convention, the establishment of a permanent military base in the Turkish Straits, and the ceding of several cities in Eastern Türkiye to Russia (Larrabee, 2010, p. 3).

Although Türkiye declined Stalin's request, it actively sought assistance from the United Kingdom and the US to counteract Stalin's belligerent measures. Washington gained an understanding of Stalin's threats approximately one year subsequent to the analysis provided by George Kennan's comprehensive 8000-word cable report, which examined the future objectives of the Soviet Union and advocated for the implementation of a strategy of containment vis-à-vis the Soviets. Following the report, Washington dispatched the funeral proceedings of Munir Ertegun, who died during the war, to Istanbul in April 1946, accompanied by the naval vessel Missouri, bearing the emblem of warfare (Truman, 1965, p. 497). The port visit of Missouri to Istanbul by the state of Missouri can be interpreted as a demonstration of Washington's intention to provide military support to Ankara in the event of any acts of aggression. This move can be seen as a response to the pressure exerted by Stalin on Greece and Türkiye. Considering these circumstances, President Truman of the US introduced the Truman Doctrine, which involved the provision of military assistance to both Türkiye and Greece. The development resulted in the augmentation of United States' defence connections with Türkiye and established the foundation for Türkiye's subsequent integration into NATO in 1952 (Larrabee, 2010, p. 3). In July 1947, the Military Assistance Agreement was signed between Türkiye and the US. This agreement stipulated that Türkiye was permitted to utilize American military assets solely for the sake of self-defense (Erhan and Sıvış, 2017, p. 111). The implications of this article would have been observed throughout the 1960s in relation to the ongoing Cyprus conflict.

Türkiye has been regarded as an integral component of Western culture, much like the circumstances that transpired following the signing of the Paris Treaty in 1856, nearly a century earlier. From this standpoint, it is noteworthy that Türkiye assumed membership in the European Council in 1949 and actively engaged in the Korean War in 1950. During that period, Türkiye joined NATO in 1952, took the lead in establishing the Balkan Pact in 1953, and participated in the formation of the Baghdad Pact in 1955, afterwards transitioning to CENTO in 1958. (See all these issues in detail in Erkan 2019, pp. 127-142; Erhan, 2001A, pp. 522-574).

Türkiye also offered numerous bases and installations to accommodate the American military, with their quantity peaking at around 90 during the Cold War era. Incirlik, one of the bases established in 1951 and operational by 1954, emerged as a significant military installation during both the Cold War and the subsequent post-Cold War era (Erkan, 2019, p. 134-135).

During the 1960s, there were varying perspectives and disagreements over the nature of Turkish-American relationships. The Cuban Crisis has significantly impacted bipolar global politics, resulting in a potential nuclear crisis between two opposing poles. Furthermore, Türkiye has come to recognize that relying solely on the US for all aspects may not align with Türkiye's strategic goals. Türkiye has also come to understand that a nation of relatively little power can be negatively impacted by conflicts between nuclear powers. An instance of the US U-2 spy plane departing from Incirlik Airbase and subsequently being downed by the Soviet missile de-

fence system occurred during an aerial reconnaissance mission conducted within Soviet territory on 1 May 1960. Türkiye was not cognizant of the existence of such flights. In addition, it is noteworthy that the deployment of short-range Jupiter missile systems took place in Türkiye during the month of July in 1962. However, these missile systems were subsequently withdrawn from Türkiye in October of the same year, following the culmination of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Türkiye's lack of awareness regarding the agreements between the US and the Soviet Union, including the deployment of Jupiter missiles in Türkiye in exchange for the removal of Russian missiles in Cuba, contributed to its unfortunate circumstances (See all issue in detail in Yılmaz, 2019, p. 146-148 and Erhan, 2001B, 681-714).

The letter sent by President Johnson of the US to Turkish Prime Minister İnönü on June 5, 1964, with the aim of averting a potential Turkish military intervention in Cyprus, resulted in a significant strain in bilateral relations and facilitated the subsequent adoption of a more autonomous foreign policy approach by Türkiye. Due to this rationale, Türkiye implemented the policies of collaborative efforts with Russia in economic domains and establishing close connections with non-aligned nations (Larrabee, 2010, p. 5). The letter of President Johnson served as a definitive catalyst for the emergence of anti-American sentiment in Türkiye. In contrast, Türkiye entered into a new Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US in 1969, with the objective of consolidating multiple cooperation agreements (Erhan, 2009, p. 128) and curtailing the unrestricted privileges previously granted to American military.

During the 1970s, the bilateral relationship between Türkiye and the US was characterized by volatility, influenced by a series of challenges. These challenges included the prohibition of Turkish opium production, the imposition of an arms embargo by the American Congress in 1975 due to Türkiye's involvement in the Turkish Cyprus Peace Operation of 1974, the retaliatory closure of all American bases in Türkiye by the Turkish Government, and the termination of the 1969 Mutual Defence Cooperation Agreement (Türkmen, 2009, p. 113). Nevertheless, due to persistent Soviet Union threats, both nations maintained a security relationship (Larrabee, 2010, p. 6) based on their shared strategic interests.

In the 1980s, there was a noticeable improvement in the formerly strained relations. The conclusion of the negotiations for the new economic and defence cooperation agreement between the US and Türkiye took place in January 1980. The agreements pertain to the establishment and maintenance of military bases, the provision of defence support from the US to Türkiye, and collaborative efforts aimed at advancing the domestic defence sector in Türkiye (Erhan, 2009, p. 129). The military regime of 1980 demonstrated a greater inclination towards compromise due to its reliance on international legitimacy.

Another difficult issue was the readmission of Greece into NATO's military wing. Greece withdrew from NATO's military wing in retaliation for Turkey's Peace Operation against Cyprus in 1974. However, after a while, Greece wanted to reverse this reckless misstep. Until the 1980 military coup, no civilian administration in Turkey allowed Greece to return to NATO's military

wing. The Turkish coup leaders granted authorization for Greece to rejoin NATO's military wing under the influence of significant pressure exerted by Washington. Unfortunately, Turkey did not get anything in return (Ergin, 2022). The outcome of the historical miscalculated decision of Turkey will be seen in the illegal occupation of Turkish small islands in the Aegean Sea by Greece in the 2000s and beyond.

However, it is worth noting that certain international political occurrences, such as the Islamic Uprising in Iran and the subsequent removal of Shah Pehlevi, as well as the Soviet Red Army's annexation of Afghanistan in 1979, served to enhance Türkiye's significance in the perception of Western nations. Therefore, the value of Türkiye's geopolitics once again became highly important for the Western. (See the US and Turkey relations between 1960-1980 in detail in Uzgel, 2001A, 34-77).

Turkish American Relations from the end of Cold War to 2000

By the year 1990, the bipolar nature of global politics had ceased to exist, resulting in Türkiye being freed from the restraints imposed by a polarized globe. Türkiye is situated in a highly unstable region characterized by the emergence of previously unresolved issues that now pose new challenges. Türkiye was also concerned about the potential decline in its significance in the eyes of the US, given that Russia's danger to America would be temporarily diminished. However, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the emergence of newly independent Turkish republics has presented Türkiye with fresh prospects (See detailed information in Aydin, 2001, pp. 336-426).

The collapse of the Soviet Union undeniably had several impacts on Türkiye. Initially, the cessation of the Russian menace, which had exerted a dominant influence on Türkiye's foreign policy approach for a span of more than two centuries, has created a notable opening for Türkiye to reconfigure its international ties and adopt a multifaceted foreign policy (Demir and others, 2018, pp. 387-407 and Uzgel, 2001B, 243-318). Furthermore, the conclusion of the Cold War resulted in a shift of Western security priorities towards addressing the challenges posed by failed states, terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This shift occurred due to the diminished perception of Russia as a threat. Thirdly, the fundamental shift that took place in Türkiye after the 1990s has yielded certain advantages, notably the absence of a formidable neighboring state. This has enabled the entity to pursue a more diverse and inclusive range of foreign policy instruments, since significant opportunities have arisen in the Balkans, Central Asia, and Caucasus regions (Demir and others, 2018, pp. 387-407). The fourth consequence arose from the fact that Türkiye's European journey encountered certain obstacles due to Europe's emphasis on consolidating central and Eastern European countries under the umbrella of the European Union (Demir and others, 2018, pp. 387-407).

Türkiye and the US, longstanding allies, endeavored to adapt their policies in response to emerging difficulties. Since 1990, Türkiye has experienced a growth in its worth due to its capacity to develop diplomatic contacts with newly formed Turkish governments, contributing to

stability in its surrounding region. Hence, the strategic significance of Türkiye has not diminished; rather, it has given the US with novel advantages (Demir and others, 2018, pp. 387-407). Consequently, the apprehension among Turkish authorities regarding the potential loss of their nation's geopolitical significance did not materialize. The increased significance of Türkiye in the new US global strategy may be attributed to several significant events, including the merger of the two Germanys in Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first Gulf War, and the Syrian-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli problems in the Middle East.

In summary, the bilateral relations between Türkiye and the US have been influenced by several significant dynamics. These include Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the First Gulf War, the evolving security and political dynamics following the Soviet Union's dissolution, the transformation of the European Union, endeavors to exclude Türkiye from the European security architecture, the complexities of Türkiye's relations with Greece, and the disagreements between these two nations. Additionally, the US' inclination to use military aid to Türkiye for political objectives and the contentious matter of the so-called Armenian problems have further impacted the relationship between the two countries.

Both countries' relations progressed during the Ozal presidency. Ozal backed the US operation in the First Iraq War in 1990-1991. This was the major change in Türkiye's foreign policy that aimed at noninterference in the Middle East issue (Turkmen, 2009, p. 113). The whole effect of the Gulf War worsened the US-Turkish relations. For example, Türkiye did not receive economic support they had provided the United States during the crisis. Türkiye also incurred economic losses as well as met some security challenges from the Iraqi border. PKK terrorists used Iraqi territory as a haven to attack Türkiye (See the outcomes of the Gulf Crises on Turkey's security in Demir, 2012, pp. 553-578).

On the other hand, 'Provide Comfort' and 'Northern Watch' operations which aimed to protect Iraqi Kurdish from Saddam' attacks gradually created anger towards the U.S. in the Turkish public (Larrabe, 2010, p. 9), because of allegations of indirectly protecting the PKK terrorists.

The active involvement of President Bill Clinton of the US played a crucial role in resolving the Imia / İmece dispute that unfolded between Türkiye and Greece from 1995 to 1996. Consequently, the potential occurrence of a conflict between two nations was successfully averted. President Clinton attended the OSCE meeting convened in Istanbul in 1999. Additionally, he paid a visit to the location of the earthquake that took place in August 1999. The occurrence of this visit engendered a significant degree of public sympathy towards the US (Larrabe, 2010, p. 9).

Both Ankara and Washington managed to reconcile their differing perspectives on Iraq. However, it is worth noting that Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK terrorist group, was apprehended in 1998 at an airport in Kenya with the aid of intelligence services from the US

and Israel (Larrabe, 2010, p. 4). This development facilitated the establishment of cordial relations between two nations, which had not been witnessed in the preceding thirty years.

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution, the US has sought to address the power vacuum in Central Asia and the Caucasus. This strategic interest is driven by a desire to tap into the abundant energy resources in these regions, while leveraging Türkiye's influential position to exert soft power over them. In general, the strategic interests of both nations coincided with the evolving circumstances surrounding the Turkish Republics. The Western nations expressed a desire for Türkiye to serve as an exemplar for the other Turkish republics. This was due to Türkiye's reputation as a Westernized, contemporary, democratic, and secular nation that adhered to liberal free market ideals (Aydın, 2001). The US expressed significant concerns regarding the potential influence of Iran's extreme Islamic doctrine on the newly established republics (Çelik & Erol, 2019, p. 26-28). As a countermeasure, the Western world actively advocated for the adoption of the Turkish model to mitigate the risk of the area succumbing to Iran's sphere of influence (Aydın, 2001, pp. 336-426; Aydın, 2009, p. 383).

The dissolution of the USSR has resulted in the erosion of Russian control over the Caucasus. From this standpoint, Washington exhibited significant backing for the notion of conveying energy resources from the Caucasus and Central Asia to Europe via pipelines that bypass Türkiye rather than Russia. The Nabucco pipeline played a pivotal role in the implementation of American ideology. The applicability of the idea was negatively impacted by Russia's endeavors to establish alternate natural gas routes and the growing influence of the Turkic Republics (Aydın, 2001, pp. 336-426; Aydın, 2009). Thus, this project was annulled because of Russian opposition.

Nevertheless, the renewed aspirations of Russia and China to exert influence over Central Asia have compelled the Turkish republics to shift their focus away from Türkiye. Moreover, Türkiye's economic capability fell short of meeting the aspirations of those nations. Consequently, the aspirations of Türkiye to exert influence over these emerging republics have not yielded the intended outcome (See Aydın, 2001, pp. 336-426; Aydın, 2009).

Following the end of the Cold War, most Central and Eastern European nations swiftly attained membership in the European Union within a span of approximately ten years. In contrast, Türkiye has encountered challenges and delays in its pursuit of full membership of the EU. Türkiye levied accusations against the Western Bloc, asserting that it has not adequately appreciated Türkiye's significant contributions during the Cold War. For instance, the security privileges that Türkiye had earned within the ambit of the Western European Union were discarded throughout the transformation of the EU. Türkiye was ultimately excluded from the European Union's newly established Common Defence and Security Policy initiative, despite some supportive efforts by the US (See all details about the European security and Turkey in Demir, 2012).

During the 1990s, the diplomatic ties between the US and Türkiye experienced a notable improvement as a result of the reconciliation efforts undertaken by Türkiye and Israel. From the standpoint of Türkiye, cultivating positive relations with Israel might potentially garner the support of the Jewish lobby in the US, thereby countering the influence of the Armenian and Greek lobbies in America (Uzgel, 2001B).

Throughout the 1990s, legislative proposals commonly referred to as "Armenian genocide bills" were ratified by the various federal states' legislatures across the US. Nevertheless, once the issue was taken up by the US Congress, it resulted in significant strain between the two nations. The active involvement of President Clinton in the matter impeded the successful passage of the so-called bill through Congress. In addition, Congress reduced aid to Türkiye due to its decision to close its airspace to Armenia. Türkiye declined to accept conditionality-based aid (Uzgel, 2001B).

The American Congress altered the nature of US aid to Türkiye in 1993 by using the pretext of no serious threat to NATO after the Cold War. Furthermore, during the middle of 1994, the US Congress expressed its intention to reduce 10% of the financial assistance provided to Türkiye. This proposed reduction was contingent upon Türkiye's failure to undertake constructive measures to address the Cyprus issue, the withdrawal of its military forces from Cyprus, improving relations with Armenia, unresolving the Kurdish problem, and addressing various limitations pertaining to human rights practices. Ankara categorically opposed this demeaning approach (Uzgel, 2001B; Özer, 2019). The US assumed the role of mediator between Türkiye and Greece, providing support to a certain country in each instance based on its own national interests. Washington provided 7/10 percent military aid to Greece and Türkiye. The US Congress granted permission for the US government to extend military aid to Türkiye and Greece in the form of credit through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme. The interest rate for this credit is determined by market interest rates rather than being negotiated between states. Nevertheless, the Congress terminated these loans completely in 1999 (Uzgel, 2001B; Özer, 2019).

The US provided a security assurance against potential hostilities originating from Türkiye, as stipulated within the US-Greece Agreement of 1990. This guarantee resulted in a lack of trust between Washington and Ankara. But, during the Kardak crisis in 1996, the US put pressure over Greece, urging the withdrawal of its troops and the removal of the Greek flag from the island as a means to resolve the dispute (Uzgel, 2001B; Özer, 2019).

The ongoing Cyprus issue is a subject of significant contention between the two nations, as is customary. The US sought to address the Cyprus issue with the aim of alleviating tensions between its two allies. However, the American Congress, under the influence of the Greek lobby, frequently linked the Cyprus issue with American aid, a stance that Türkiye found to be intolerable.

Türkiye and the US successfully established a productive collaboration during the Balkan crisis that transpired in the 1990s. Türkiye supported American led international operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. Türkiye deployed military forces alongside the US in order to assist in mitigating hostilities against the Muslim population residing in the former Yugoslavian territories. The support offered by Türkiye played a crucial role in the worldwide operations directed by the US, as Türkiye's participation in these activities conferred them with "religious legitimacy." Türkiye was the sole Muslim nation that participated in NATO Operations approach (Özer, 2019).

Following the assumption of the prime ministerial position by Erbakan in July 1996, concerns arose inside the US regarding the potential divergence of Türkiye from NATO and the West. The Erbakan-Ciller Government initially took steps towards engaging with Muslim countries. However, Erbakan subsequently shifted his stance towards the West, expanding the Northern Watch Operation and reducing criticism towards NATO and the US. Furthermore, the apprehension of PKK terrorist leader Ocalan in Kenya with assistance from the US resulted in a time of significantly improved relations between both nations, reminiscent of the warmest diplomatic ties observed in the 1960s (Bağcı, 2019).

Nevertheless, the American Congress' stance regarding the Armenian allegation concerning the events of 1915, and its use of the date of 24 April as a means to discredit Türkiye, significantly contributed to the deterioration of bilateral relations between the two nations. On April 24th, American Presidents initiated the dissemination of a statement wherein Türkiye was accused, albeit refraining from employing the terminology commonly associated with the concept of "genocide." In contrast, the Turkish destroyer Muavenet was shot by sparrow missiles launched by the American cruiser Saratoga on October 2, 1992. This issue also emerged as a contentious topic in international relations (Uzgel, 2001B; Özer, 2019).

In brief, subsequent to the initial period of uncertainty following the end of the Cold War, it has been recognized that the importance of Türkiye-US relations has not diminished, but rather expanded to encompass additional domains beyond security. These include regional collaboration, humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping efforts, serving as an exemplar for emerging Turkish Republics, and Türkiye's potential membership in the European Union. However, this process of diversification also entailed an expansion of perspectives, leading to the emergence of tensions and disputes between the two nations (Özer, 2019).

The Evolution of Relations Between Two Countries in the 21st Century and Beyond

The terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, commonly referred to as 9/11, marked a significant turning point in Turkish-American relations, ushering in a new era. The US initiated military action against the terrorists. The US administration perceived this happening as a potential opportunity for establishing unchallenged dominance of the US on a global scale. This perspective has served as the primary catalyst for the proliferation of varied interactions between the two nations during the 2000s. The primary geographic focus

of the US' military engagement in the War on Terror was concentrated in the vicinity of the Türkiye border, namely encompassing Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Afghanistan. The interests of Türkiye and the US have largely diverged in their approaches to addressing terrorism, including the identification and classification of terrorist organizations. Moreover, the unilateral decision made by Washington to dismiss Türkiye's concerns over crises in the Middle East has emerged as a significant discussion between the two nations during the 2000s and subsequent years.

The government of Ankara expressed concern on the potential destabilizing effects of American actions in the Middle East, which might potentially undermine Türkiye's national interests in the region. Hence, Ankara expressed opposition to any potential American military intervention targeting Saddam Hussein, as they perceived the adverse consequences that Türkiye had experienced during the First Gulf War. However, the American administration, primarily neoconservatives, was resolute in its pursuit to undertake a military intervention in Iraq with the objective of removing Saddam Hussein from power.

Despite some disagreements, Türkiye demonstrated its support for the US in combating terrorism by contributing troops to the NATO forces in Afghanistan. Türkiye became the first country to assume the ISAF Command which enhanced the legitimacy of the operation among Muslim populations.

The AK Party, founded in August 2001, became victorious in the elections conducted on November 3, 2002. It has successfully maintained its position as the ruling government of Türkiye since 2002. For almost two decades, this has engendered a distinct and continuous era in the diplomatic ties between Türkiye and the US. The AK Party emphasized from the beginning its commitment to engage in collaborative efforts with other nations in combating terrorism across all platforms. The US also regarded Türkiye as an exemplar for Muslim nations due to its contemporary, moderate Islamic, and democratic framework. Consequently, Türkiye came to be regarded as a significant regional actor within the framework of US global strategy (Bağcı, 2019).

Hence, this historical era will be examined in accordance with the tenures of American presidents.

The period of President George W. Bush (2000 – 2008)

Until the crisis on 01 March 2003, there had been smooth functioning relations based on mutual alliance understanding. "1 March Crisis" is a turning point in relations between the two countries, and its influence continues even today. The Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) did not approve the bill allowing American troops passage to northern Iraq (Bağcı, 2019).

America responded to the rejection decision in three ways. First of all, they overtly supported the Northern Iraqi Kurdish Administration to gain autonomy. Currently, there is an undeclared state in northern Iraq awaiting matured conditions for independence. The fact that all

Kurdish groups, especially the Northern Iraqi Kurdish Administration, will be supported by the USA later on can be seen as a "rematchist policy" of the USA.

The second response from the US was specifically aimed against the Turkish military, as the US had anticipated a greater level of support from the Turkish Army. But the Turkish military remained silent in support of the US' Iraq occupation. The Turkish military has had a significant role in shaping the dynamics of Turkish-American ties. Numerous factors have contributed to TAF's significant position. Firstly, it has played a pivotal part in the establishment of the Republic, and secondly, it has served as a custodian of the Republic (Koçak & Demir, 2019, p. 37). On July 4, 2003, the Turkish Information Bureau in Sulaymaniyah, Northern Iraq was subjected to an attack by US troops stationed in the region. This incident resulted in the apprehension of 11 Turkish soldiers. The rationale provided for this action was the alleged plot to assassinate the Kurdish governor of Kirkuk, rendering it a particularly degrading occurrence. The arrest, which was perceived as degrading, served as a catalyst for the development of anti-American sentiment in Türkiye, an attitude that has endured up to the present day. Furthermore, the more humiliating one was that a group of prosecutors and police officers who were the secret members of a terrorist organization started to open cases against high-level military personnel. The Army has faced several humiliating accusations, such as supporting terrorism, spying, committing coups, prostitution and crime and founding a terror organization. Although all accusation were dropped however, it has huge implication for civil-military relations in Türkiye.²

The third response was related to searching for new allies in the region as Türkiye appeared not to give full support to the US during the Iraqi Occupation.

The US spearheaded the "Broader Middle East and North Africa" (BMENA) Initiative, sometimes referred to as the "Greater Middle East Project," with the objective of advancing democratic principles, freedom, and human rights concerns. The announcement was made in June 2004 (Erhan, 2005, p. 160-164). Nevertheless, the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East was deemed unsuitable for the implementation of such a programme. Then the interest in this endeavor diminished in due course. Because the Arab governments saw the plan as an intrusion to their national affairs. Furthermore, the European countries also viewed the plan as duplicating their efforts to engage with Arab countries through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (or Barcelona process). (Ottaway, 2008, Carnegie, Endowment for Peace Process).

In 2006, Türkiye and the US entered into a bilateral pact referred to as a "strategic partnership," wherein both nations committed to fostering a relationship that would surpass the

² See for detailed analysis, Sertif Demir & Oktay Bingöl, "From Military Tutelage to Absolute Civilian Control: An Analysis of the Evolution of Turkish Civil-Military Relations", *Journal of British Middle Eastern Studies*, XXXVII/2, 2020, pp. 172-191 and Murat Mülgül & Sertif Demir, "Keeping the Soldiers at Bay: Coup-proofing Strategies in Turkey", *Journal of Middle East Policy*, XVII/3, Fall 2020, 138-158.

traditional bounds of alliances. As per the terms of this agreement, the two states have mutually committed to upholding peace and stability in the Middle East. Additionally, they have agreed to actively address the Arab-Israeli conflict, promote the proliferation of democracy within the region, safeguard the territorial integrity and democratic governance of Iraq, resolve the Cyprus problem in accordance with United Nations regulations, enhance energy security, and eradicate the PKK and its affiliated entities, including any associated extensions. (The US Department of State Archive, 06 July 2006). Nevertheless, the concept of a "strategic partnership" proved to be unsuccessful as the interests of both countries gradually weakened over time.

To eliminate the existence of the PKK terror group in Northern Iraq, Türkiye wanted to conduct an operation in Northern Iraq in winter 2008. Before the operation, Prime Minister Erdogan visited Washington on November 5, 2007. The US agreed to help Türkiye to fight against the PKK by promising to provide open airspace and intelligence to Türkiye. In this context, the Instant Intelligence Sharing Agreement was signed between the two countries. Then, American Office Defense Cooperation in Turkey was selected as a venue for instant intelligence sharing. However, after the operation began, America forced Türkiye to end the operation due to pressure from Iraq. (Akçay, 2019, p. 191-192). Türkiye ceased the operation in one week which increased anti-American perception once more.

In summary, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Bush pursued a course of action aligned with the preventive war doctrine, engaging in a unilateral campaign against terrorism with limited regard for international norms and global consensus. During the Bush administration, the US and Türkiye shared enduring mutual interests pertaining to the stability of the Middle East. These interests encompass combating terrorism, upholding an open global economy, ensuring the security of energy supply routes, safeguarding the stability and sovereignty of nations in the Caspian and Central Asian regions, and maintaining a productive relationship with Europe. Nevertheless, the American occupation of Iraq and subsequent developments significantly impacted the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Barack Hussein Obama period (2009-2016)

Upon assuming the presidency, Obama endeavored to repair the tarnished perception of the US that had transpired during the preceding Bush administration. The era of Obama can be characterized as a period of "reconciliation with Islam" from its inception. This reconciliation was evident through his speeches and visits to Islamic nations, which served as significant indicators of this effort.

Türkiye, much like the majority of the global community, expressed satisfaction with the political transition in the US. In fact, Obama's statements during his visits to Ankara conveyed the prospect of a renewed era in the bilateral relations between the US and Türkiye.

President Obama emphasized the significance of Türkiye by recognizing it as a pivotal link between the East and West (Akçay, 2019, p. 194). Consequently, the two nations entered a

treaty known as the "model partnership," which aims to facilitate a closer and more harmonious relationship. This shift signifies a transition towards a more comprehensive and exemplary partnership (Akçay, 2019, p. 194).

However, the bilateral relations between Türkiye and the USA have unexpectedly deteriorated during the first two years of Obama presidency (Çakmak & Güneysu, 2013, pp. 193-211). One of the contentious matters between the US and Türkiye pertains to the recurring Armenian genocide allegations, which are consistently raised by the Armenian lobby in America. With the support of Obama, both parties convened in Switzerland in September 2009 and formally endorsed two protocols. But, the implementation of these protocols was hindered due to concerns stemming from internal political criticisms (Akçay, 2019, p. 196).

Furthermore, the armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008 resulted in additional tensions between the US and Türkiye. Ankara adhered to the limitations outlined in the Montreux Convention of 1936. Subsequently, there were extensive deliberations within American political circles concerning Türkiye's stance and the legal standing of the Montreux Treaty.

The nuclear enrichment programme of Iran served as a source of tension between two nations. Türkiye and Brazil expressed their opposition to the imposition of sanctions on Iran during the UN Security Council meeting, citing concerns related to its uranium enrichment activities. The Obama administration grew concerned with Türkiye's divergent policy stance (Akçay, 2019, p. 195).

The Mavi Marmara incident, which occurred in May 2010, was a significant event that had repercussions on diplomatic relations. In this incident, Israel was responsible for the deaths of nine Turkish citizens in international waters. As a result of diplomatic efforts led by President Obama, the Israeli Prime Minister issued an apology and agreed to withdraw all international judicial cases related to the incident. Additionally, a compensation of \$20 million was provided to the families of the victims (Akçay, 2019, p. 196).

Despite its initial disagreement, Türkiye finally agreed to deploy the NATO radar system at Kurecik/Malatya as a component of the NATO Missile Defence System, following its approval at the NATO Summit in November 2010. This decision also led to the emergence of distinct policy approaches between the two nations.

The Arab Spring events started in 2011 also negatively affected the relations. Supporting diverse groups created tension between Türkiye and America. Initially, Türkiye did not fully endorse the uprising in Libya due to its vested economic interests. Nevertheless, Türkiye subsequently extended support to the International Operation in Libya.

The Syrian civilian war is another event that caused friction between two countries. The friction arose from the methods used to oust the Assad regime, which groups to support, and how to end the ISIS/DAESH threat. Ankara was supporting mostly Sunni Arabic groups, while America was supporting Kurdish groups. Likewise, Ankara was looking for the establishment

of a buffer zone, however, America was not favoring such an idea. But both countries also made some cooperation. For example, both capitals agreed to train and equip Syrian opponent forces on February 19, 2015, committing to training 5000 Syrian moderate opponents each year. However, this initiative failed because of lack of interest. In addition, an agreement was reached on March 14, 2015, for the use of the Incirlik Base by the coalition forces against ISIS. With this agreement, Incirlik Base, which has been already used for logistical and humanitarian purposes, has also started to be used for the purpose of attacking ISIS and sometimes Syrian official forces, too (Akçay, 2019, p. 197-199).

Overall, the theoretical progression of relations between the US and Türkiye transitioned from a "strategic partnership" to a "model partnership," with the intention of highlighting the unique and exceptional nature of relations. Nevertheless, the national interests of both countries did not align when it came to concrete matters concerning Israel, Palestine, Iran, Syria, and Iraq. Türkiye had its own strategic interest in foreign relations which contradicted the US' in the Middle East. Türkiye also began to pursue a more versatile and religiously focused foreign policy. This policy change, that is, the strategy of moving towards the East, was defined as a "change of axis" by Western intellectuals. Bear in mind that during the Obama tenure, the US priorities shifted from Europe to Asia, due to the rise of China as a new global player to counter the US hegemony.³

The Donald Trump period (2017-2021)

The ascension of Donald Trump to the presidency of the US elicited a profound sense of astonishment worldwide, owing to the populist, extreme, and intimidating nature of his campaign speeches. Throughout his tenure, the foreign policy pursued by President Trump faced widespread criticism from the majority of Americans, who found it to be lacking coherence, characterized by aggression, and marked by sudden and unexpected shifts.

Donald Trump assumed the presidency in 2017 with the objective of revitalizing the US and prioritizing domestic interests rather than engaging in extensive international affairs. Consequently, the US pursued a policy of political and military isolationism, leading to a diminished focus on matters pertaining to the Middle East (Ertem & Karadeniz, 2019, p. 8). This approach inadvertently created a void in geopolitical influence, which is anticipated to be filled by Türkiye, Iran, and Russia.

However, following President Trump's assumption of office, Türkiye anticipated a potential reconfiguration of bilateral relations, given the less favorable trajectory observed during Obama's final term. It is important to acknowledge that Türkiye exercises prudence in its approach, as the actions and policies of the Trump administration remain uncertain. Notably,

³ See Sertif Demir, "Küresel Hegemonya, ABD ve Covid 19 Pandemisi" (Global Hegemony, the USA and the Covid 19 Pandemic), *Novus Orbis*, 3/1, Haziran 2021, 4-35.

Trump assumed office following the occurrence of a violent coup in Türkiye in 2016, which has also had an impact on the bilateral relationship.

In the past decade, Türkiye has undergone significant domestic political changes that have resulted in a substantial transformation of its foreign policy priorities and perceptions. Analysts from abroad assert that Türkiye has increasingly viewed itself as an autonomous regional power and a prominent figure in the Islamic world, placing its alliance with the US and NATO secondary to these roles (Cohen, 2013). Furthermore, these analysts argue that Türkiye has taken advantage of the geopolitical void created by the US in the Middle East, gradually distancing itself from Western alignment in order to pursue its own strategic objectives in the volatile Islamic Middle East (Trangka, 2017, p. 1) and neighboring regions.

The presidency of Trump coincided with a significant period of tension between two nations, primarily due to the Syrian crisis. The two countries exhibited contrasting perspectives on various aspects in Syria, such as the selection of supported groups, the list of the priorities, and the status of President Bashar al-Assad. Additionally, Türkiye expressed dissatisfaction with the US' alliance with Syrian Kurds, and the failure to extradite the leader (Aydintaşbaş & Kirişci, 2017, p. 2) of the Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation (FETO) residing in the US.⁴

Several instances of diplomatic crises between two nations were resolved through the intervention of their respective Presidents. One such incident occurred in December 2016, when American Evangelical pastor Andrew Brunson was arrested in Türkiye on charges of espionage and alleged connections with terrorist groups. This event significantly strained the relationship between the two countries. In response to Türkiye's refusal to release Pastor Brunson despite demands from the US, Washington imposed sanctions on Türkiye's Justice and Interior Ministers and implemented additional tariffs on steel and aluminum products in August 2018. Additionally, President Trump employed a strategy of using Twitter to issue daily threats towards Türkiye, a tactic commonly referred to as "tweet policy." The Turkish currency experienced a significant devaluation of 40% against the US dollar following President Trump's Twitter announcement, further exacerbating the economic pressure on Türkiye (Ertem & Karadeniz, 2019, p. 28). Eventually, Pastor Brunson was released after being sentenced to three years in prison. This development temporarily alleviated tensions between the two nations.

Another issue pertains to Türkiye's reliance on Russia, particularly in relation to the Syrian crisis. In November 2015, Türkiye shot down a Russian warplane within its own airspace. Russia subsequently hindered Türkiye's ability to conduct air operations, deploy troops, or intervene in support of friendly opposition forces within Syria (Aydintaşbaş & Kirişci, 2017, p. 15). Therefore, the compromise of Turkish-Russian relations in summer of 2016 on the Syrian crisis was critical for the Turkish military operations in Syria. Türkiye launched three security operations around its border inside Syria, which were Operations of Euphrates Shield, Olive

⁴ According to Turkish law, the Gulen movement has been accepted as Fetullahist Terror Organization

Branch and Peace Spring, to clean the ISIS enclave and clean Syrian Kurdish Groups that have affiliations with the PKK.

The Turkish Operation Peace Spring elicited strong reactions from America and Western nations. President Trump actively expressed his disapproval through frequent tweets, vowing to undermine the Turkish economy. In response to Operation Peace Spring, the US imposed sanctions on selected Turkish cabinet ministers and defence industry officials. However, these sanctions were lifted following Türkiye's declaration of a permanent ceasefire on October 23, 2019 (Zanotti & Thomas, 2019). The act of imposing an embargo on a country considered an ally raises questions about the appropriateness of such behavior. This action undermines the purported "strategic" or "model" partnership between the two allied nations.

In contrast, Türkiye, Russia, and Iran convened meetings in Astana, Kazakhstan, with the shared objective of achieving a diplomatic resolution to the ongoing civil war in Syria. The actions taken by Ankara, which had the potential to bolster Iran's influence in Syria, were met with concern by Washington.

Türkiye's acquisition of the S-400 Air Defence Missile System from Russia posed a significant challenge for the Trump administration. Following the commencement of Russia's delivery of the S-400 air defence system to Türkiye in July 2019, the US declared its undesirability to supply the 100 F-35 aircraft that Türkiye intended to procure and ceased the production of F-35 components for Türkiye (Zanotti & Thomas, 2019). In order to prevent further tensions with the US, Türkiye is currently maintaining the S-400 in a non-operational state. Furthermore, the US Congress approved the 2020 Military Budget by, which grants the President the authority to propose the implementation or revocation of sanctions against Türkiye to the Senate.

Furthermore, the disclosure of the Khashoggi murder in Istanbul by Türkiye had a damaging impact on the reputation and legitimacy of the Trump administration, as Trump explicitly declined to enforce sanctions on Saudi Arabia (Oktav, 2019).

The Turkish government has expressed its dissatisfaction with President Trump's May 2018 decision to relocate the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This move has elicited strong negative emotions from the Turkish government. Additionally, the Trump administration's policies regarding Türkiye's relations with Iran and its alliance with Qatar during the Gulf crisis posed further challenges in the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

Following the end of the "Kurdish Opening" process in Türkiye, the Turkish government has adjusted its Syrian policy. This shift involves a transition from an unwavering commitment to removing the Assad regime to a focus on preventing the emergence of a Kurdish entity in Syria. The Turkish government holds the belief that such aspirations could have repercussions for its own Kurdish population (Aydintaşbaş & Kirişçi, 2017, p. 10). Consequently, Türkiye perceives the US' support for the Kurdish group affiliated with the PKK terrorist group in Syria as a potential threat to its national security.

One additional issue that arose between the two nations pertained to the endorsement of a resolution by the American Senate on December 12, 2019, acknowledging the alleged Armenian genocide concerning the historical occurrences within the Ottoman Empire in 1915. The Trump administration refrained from endorsing this resolution due to concerns about exacerbating the strained relationship between Türkiye and the US. However, the Senate's acceptance of this resolution reflects a bipartisan sentiment of discontent towards Türkiye (The New York Times, 12 December 2019).

On the other hand, the Idlib issue disrupted Turkish-Russian unity in Syria. Türkiye and Russia decided on September 17, 2018, to establish a demilitarized buffer zone in Idlib Governorate, where military forces from Russia and Türkiye will patrol and observe. However, Syrian forces are persistently attacking the rebel group in Idlib, violating the agreement. Later, in February 2020, Syrian forces attacked Turkish troops patrolling in Idlib, and Turkish forces responded to these attacks. Turkish and Syrian forces are clashing for the first time since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. Later Russian military aircraft deployed in Syria attacked Turkish troops stationed in the Idlib area, causing the death of 34 Turkish soldiers (Duclos, 2020). Finally, Putin and Erdoğan reached an agreement on a temporary ceasefire during the negotiations held in Moscow on March 5, 2020. This event led Türkiye to get closer to America. Washington and Ankara discussed how to cooperate against Syrian forces in Idlib. However, the Ukrainian-Russian War started in 2022 has impacted on further progress in Syria.

It might be argued that Trump's unfavorable stance towards NATO and the EU has also diminished the potential for tough discourse from NATO and the EU directed at Türkiye.

The recent imposition on Türkiye by the Trump administration pertains to the S-400s and involves the implementation of US sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). These sanctions were enacted shortly before the US 2020 election (The US Department of State, Press Statement, December 14, 2020). The CAATSA, which was passed by the US Congress in 2017, encompasses sanctions against Iran, Russia, and North Korea, countries perceived by the US as posing a threat to its national security. In the CAATSA context, the Presidency of Turkish Defense Industries will not be able to obtain an export license from the USA, will not be able to benefit from loans from US and international financial institutions, and some senior Turkish defense industry officials will be included in the sanctions list and their assets in the USA will be frozen.

President Trump's leadership was characterized by unpredictability and a lack of control, although his policies ultimately proved to be more transparent. Trump did not send the US Army to new operations around the world. He also made efforts to end US operations in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. He resisted some decisions taken against Türkiye in the US Congress. He chose to solve the problems by calling the relevant head of state directly and in this context, he tried to keep the direct communication channel open with the President of Türkiye, to bring a solution to any disagreement between two countries.

Jose Biden Period (2021-)

Joe Biden emerged as a highly qualified contender for the foundational leadership of the US, owing to his extensive tenure as a senator and subsequent vice presidency during the Obama administration. During the candidacy period, he promised to support democracy, freedom, human rights globally, and augment NATO as the basis of the transatlantic bond. President Biden preferred to deal with foreign affairs through institutional channels rather than individual contacts.

But he has gained recognition for consistently adopting a negative stance towards Türkiye throughout his extensive political career. For example, Biden delayed responding to a congratulatory phone call from the Turkish President until April 24, 2021. He took advantage of this occasion to inform the Turkish President that he intended to use the term "genocide" in his statement on April 24, which is recognized as a day of remembrance for the disputed Armenian genocide (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/24/...>). In fact, until the Biden, the US presidents issued the expressions of "Meds Yeghern", meaning "great disaster", in their texts for the commemoration day, avoiding "Genocide" wording. Furthermore, Biden also used a similar word in his 2022 and 2023 so-called Memorial Day declarations. This may potentially lead to challenging circumstances for Türkiye in the future.

The Biden administration discloses its negative attitude towards Türkiye in every aspect. For example, the new US administration organized a virtual "Democracy Summit" in 2021 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/12/23>) and 2022 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/11/29/>) to improve democratic values on a global scale. While nearly 100 states from around the world were invited to these meetings, Türkiye was not. The 2023 Democracy Summit was held only with a few states.

Biden's policy of keeping a distance from Türkiye seems to have lost its importance due to Russia's operation to invade Ukraine in February 2022. The ongoing war in Ukraine has once again proven how Türkiye's geopolitical position is necessary for the USA and NATO. In addition, with the re-election of President Erdoğan in the 2023 elections, the USA began to follow a more moderate foreign policy towards Türkiye.

The primary concerns that have emerged in Turkish-American ties during the Biden era encompass Türkiye's exclusion from the F-35 fighter programme and the procurement of more F-16 airplanes, Sweden's potential NATO accession, United States' collaboration with the YPG in Iraq, the of CAATSA sanctions, the procurement of S-400 matter from Russia, and lastly, the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Palestine.

The TGNA ratified Finland's full membership in NATO in March 2023 and TGNA also ratified Sweden's application for NATO membership in January 2024. Türkiye delayed Sweden's

application, due to the activities of PKK and FETO-affiliated terrorist groups and lack of measures taken against the public burning of the holy book, the Quran, as a means of insulting Islam in Sweden.

After the ratification of TGNA, Türkiye expects the concrete support of the US administration on the F-35 and F-16 aircraft matters. Actually, the US Government has approved a \$US23 billion deal to sell F-16 warplanes to Turkey, after ratification of Sweden's application. Turkey will get 40 new F-16s and upgrades to 79 of the jets in its existing fleet (The Guardian, 27 January 2024) as well as buy some key spare parts of these aircraft. The state department notified the Congress of the agreement. The agreement took effect as there was no objection from Congress within two weeks. This mutual agreement was the first agreement agreed upon by both countries in a long time.

Türkiye refrains from participating in the sanctions imposed by the West on Russia due to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Turkey stands out as one of the few countries that has the capacity to negotiate with both warring sides. In line with its strategic interests, the USA deems it appropriate for Turkey to remain exempt from sanctions against Russia.

Another issue that may have an impact on the future between Türkiye and the USA is the USA's increasing military cooperation with Greece. In particular, the base established by the USA in Dedeğaç carries the potential to pose a risk and threat to Türkiye in the future. In addition, the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement between the USA and Greece, which entered into force in November 1990, was renewed for five years in October 2021 (<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/20-...>). The agreement is similar to the alliance agreements made before World Wars I and II. This agreement also allows the US to benefit from military bases and facilities in Greece.

The US' back Greece was evident in the negotiation process pertaining to the delineation of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and other maritime jurisdictional boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. It was the US, along with the EU, that criticized Türkiye's drilling activities in the sea areas. As a result of increasing pressure, Türkiye and Greece decided not to engage in mutual drilling activities in the disputed areas within the scope of confidence-building measures.

The biggest disagreement between the two countries is about the situation in Syria. The US's full support to the YPG, a member of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in the fight against ISIS/DAES poses a serious security risk for Türkiye. PYD/YPG wants to benefit from American support to create an autonomous (later fully independent) Kurdish state in Northern Syria. Turkish Armed Forces are currently conducting deep air operations in Northern Syria to destroy YPG's warehouses, ammunition fields and oil wells. On the other hand, the American F-16 shot down a Turkish Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) in Syrian airspace on October 5, 2023. The US side announced that it shot down the Turkish UAV deliberately. In the current situation,

relations between the two countries cannot be evaluated within the framework of alliance and partnership.

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza will have implications for the future trajectory of both countries' relations.

Conclusion

The foundation of the relationship between Türkiye and the US can be traced back to their shared strategic interests following the end of the Second World War. Türkiye sought the US as a reliable ally to counter the Soviets Union's aggressive foreign policy. Simultaneously, the US sought Turkey as a geographically strategic location to contain the Soviets Union and safeguard the valuable oil reserves in the Middle East. Hence, the security needs of Türkiye and the geopolitical considerations of the US aligned significantly in the post-World War II era. This convergence has remained a fundamental aspect of the bilateral relationship to the present day.

But Türkiye and the USA are experiencing the worst situation in their relations since they became an alliance. This deterioration can be attributed to the growing divergences between the two nations in terms of their perspectives on crucial global and regional security matters. Türkiye's stance significantly diverges from that of the US, particularly in the Middle East, notably Syria. Additionally, differences arise in their approaches to relations with Russia and Iran, as well as their strategies for combating terrorism.

There were significant concerns regarding the future nature of the partnership, leading both parties to explore alternative alliances to gain diplomatic advantage. Türkiye sought to improve relations with Russia, while the US engaged with the Syrian Kurds in the battle against ISIS. What was once considered an exemplary partnership has now deteriorated into a dysfunctional relationship, yielding unsatisfactory outcomes for both sides (Aydintaşbaş & Kirişci, 2017, p. 2). Presently, U.S.-Türkiye relations find themselves in an undesirable state that fails to serve the interests of either country (Aydintaşbaş & Kirişci, 2017, p. 2).

From time to time, the USA has tried to take advantage of Türkiye's weaknesses and imposes unacceptable conditionality on Türkiye. Moreover, it has maintained its anti-Türkiye attitude in most events and crises. Adopting the so-called Armenian claims, banning the sale of some high-tech weapons to Türkiye, forcing Türkiye to join in sanctions against Russia, not taking sides with Türkiye in the Aegean and Mediterranean issues, and finally preventing efforts on Türkiye from exercising its right of self-defense against terror groups in Syria and Iraq are some examples of the USA's unilateral and anti-Türkiye policies.

In addition, some American academics and intellectuals are discussing the issue of removing Turkey from NATO because they think that it no longer acts in accordance with American interests. Such a decision would be the worst decision between the two states in historical terms, and its effects will not be forgotten by Turks as long as the two states exist. Therefore,

both countries should always disregard marginal and radical views that have the potential to derail relations.

The US should be aware that no option/solution to any crisis around Türkiye will be fully under control unless Türkiye's concerns are taken into account. As a strong regional power, Türkiye currently has the capacity, ability and willingness to influence all decisions to be taken in its immediate surroundings.

Considering all above, the logical and pragmatic discourses often prevent relations from deteriorating further. In fact, the return of geopolitics is a very important and decisive factor that has an impact on US-Türkiye relations. It virtually prevents the relations among both countries from further deteriorating and leading to unexpected consequences. In the end, both countries should seek ways to overcome the challenges and different political preferences.

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GENİŞ ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, gelişen küresel siyasi perspektifleri de dikkate alarak 1990'lardan sonra Türk-Amerikan ilişkilerinin dinamiklerini incelemektir. Dolayısıyla bu makalenin temel araştırma sorusu, Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden günümüze kadar her iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin nasıl geliştiğine ilişkindir. Bu bağlamda makale, ilişkilerin gelişiminde hangi dinamiklerin/belirleyicilerin etkili olduğunu analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca ilişkilerin son yirmi yılda neden farklılaştığı, ne tür sorunların ortaya çıktığı ve her iki ülkenin de karşılaştıkları zorlukların üstesinden gelmek için nasıl hareket ettiği bu kapsamda incelenmesi hedeflenmiştir.

Türkiye ile ABD arasındaki diplomatik bağların ortaya çıkışı, İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın sona ermesinin ardından stratejik çıkarların yakınlaşması ile ilintilidir. Türkiye, özellikle Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetler Birliği'nin (SSCB) "yayılmacı dış politikasını" caydırmak amacıyla güçlü bir ittifak arayışına girmişti. Eş zamanlı olarak ABD, Sovyetler Birliği'ni kontrol altına almak ve Orta Doğu'daki değerli petrol rezervlerini korumak için Türkiye'yi coğrafi açıdan

stratejik bir konum olarak görmüştü. Dolayısıyla İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası dönemde, Türkiye'nin güvenlik ihtiyaçları ile ABD'nin jeopolitik kaygıları önemli ölçüde örtüşmüştü. Bu yakınlaşma, bugüne kadar ki ikili ilişkilerin temel bir unsuru olmaya devam etti. İlişkilerin temel bağı çoğunlukla askeri konulardan kaynaklansa da, ilişkiler ekonomik, siyasi, kültürel, savunma işbirliğini ve diğerlerini de içerecek şekilde gelişmiştir.

İki ülke arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin niteliği 1990'lara kadar çoğunlukla Soğuk Savaş söyleminden etkilenmişti. Ancak o günden bu yana ilişkilerin ruhu, kapsam, yön ve ortaklık perspektifleri açısından farklılaşmıştır. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinin ardından Türkiye, 2000 yılına kadar esnekliğin arttığı bir dış politika yaklaşımı benimsedi. Bu yaklaşım, hem NATO ittifakına olan yükümlülüklerini, hem de ABD ile ilişkilerinin temel bağlarını da korudu. Öyle ki 1990-2000 dönemi iki ülke arasında yaşanan en sıkıntısız ikinci dönem olduğu söylenebilir. Ancak 2000 yılından itibaren bu iki ülke arasındaki ikili ilişkilerde önemli ve öngörülemeyen kırılmalar yaşandı. İttifaklarını ve ortaklıklarını sürdürmelerine rağmen, her iki ülkenin gündemleri ve ulusal stratejik çıkarları farklılık gösterdi.

Analizlerde ortaya çıkan sonuç, bugün Türkiye ve ABD, 1945 'ten sonra ortaya çıkan dostluk ve ittifak sürecinin en sorunlu safhasını yaşamaktadırlar. İlişkilerdeki bu bozulma, iki ülke arasında önemli küresel ve bölgesel güvenlik konularına ilişkin bakış açıları arasında artan farklılıklara bağlanabilir. Türkiye'nin tutumu, özellikle yakın çevresindeki olaylarda ABD'den önemli ölçüde ayrılmaktadır. Arap Baharı ile başlayan bu ayrışma, bugün, Suriye, Libya, terörle mücadele stratejilerinde ve Rusya ve İran'la ilişkilerde açıkça görülmektedir.

ABD zaman zaman Türkiye'nin zaaflarından faydalanmaya çalışmış ve Türkiye'ye kabul edilemez koşullar dayatmıştır. Üstelik çoğu olay ve krizde Türkiye karşıtlığını sürdürmüştür. Sözde Ermeni iddialarının benimsenmesi, Türkiye'nin PKK terör örgütü ile ilintilendirdiği Suriye'deki YPG'ye ABD'nin verdiği açık destek, bazı yüksek teknoloji silahların Türkiye'ye satışının geciktirilmesi/yasaklanması, Türkiye'yi Rusya'ya karşı yaptırımlara katılmaya zorlanması, Ege ve Akdeniz meselelerinde Türkiye'nin yanında yer almaması ve son olarak Türkiye'nin Suriye ve Irak'taki terör örgütlerine karşı meşru müdafaa hakkı kapsamında yaptığı operasyonlara karşı çıkması, ABD'nin Türkiye karşıtı tek taraflı politikalarının örneklerindedir.

Ayrıca bazı Amerikalı akademisyenler ve aydınlar, Türkiye'nin artık Amerikan çıkarlarına uygun davranmadığını gerekçesi ile Türkiye'nin NATO'dan çıkarılması konusunu gündeme getirmek istemektedirler. Böyle bir karar, tarihi açıdan iki devlet arasındaki ilişkileri kökünden etkileyebilecek verilebilecek en kötü karar olacaktır. Böyle bir kararın sonuçlarının sonsuz değin Türkler tarafından unutulmayacağı bilinmelidir. Bu nedenle her iki ülkenin de ilişkileri raydan çıkarma potansiyeli taşıyan marjinal ve radikal görüşlere itibar etmemesi gerekmektedir.

Ayrıca, ABD, Türkiye'nin kaygıları dikkate alınmadığı sürece, Türkiye çevresindeki hiçbir krize yönelik hiçbir seçeneğin/çözümün kontrol altına alınamayacağını bilincinde olmalıdır. Güçlü bir bölgesel güç olarak Türkiye, hâlihazırda yakın çevresinde alınacak tüm kararları etkileme kapasitesine, yeteneğine ve isteğine sahiptir.

Bütün bunlar göz önüne alındığında, mantıksal ve pragmatik söylemler, çoğu zaman ilişkilerin daha da kötüleşmesini engellemektedir. Son yıllarda jeopolitiğin geri dönüşü, ABD-Türkiye ilişkilerini etkileyen çok önemli ve belirleyici bir faktör izlenimi vermektedir.

Jeopolitiğin önemselliđi, adeta iki ÷lke arasındaki iliřkilerin daha da kötüleřmesini ve beklenmedik sonuçlara yol açmasını önlemektedir. Sonuçta jeopolitik, her iki ÷lkenin zorlukları aşmanın ve farklı siyasi tercihlerini nasıl örtüştürebileceđine iliřkin yeni yollar bulması konusunda tekrar etkin bir dinamik olmaya başlamıřtır.