

THE USA-TURKEY RELATIONSHIP AFTER THE 2003 IRAQ CRISIS

2003 Irak Krizi Sonrasında ABD-Türkiye İlişkileri

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Abstract:

Turkey and the USA have been strategic allies since declaration of Truman Doctrine in 1947. This strategic partnership got worse due to the USA's politics towards Middle East after 9-11 tragedy and Turkey's new changing domestic political situation through AKP in 2002. Specifically, 2003 Iraq crisis was milestone to decline the relationship between Turkey and the USA. In spite of deterioration of relationship, Turkey and the USA had to overcome this problem due to security, foreign, and economic concerns of both countries, and the process have advanced as expected. In this article, the US-Turkey relationship will be examined in the contexts of recent Iraq crisis, Turkey's new approach to foreign policy, NATO, war on terrorism, European Union, and economic concerns in order to comprehend the new era of Turkey-US strategic partnership.

Keywords: *the US-Turkey relations, Turkish foreign policy, US foreign policy, 2003 Iraq crisis, NATO, EU, war on terrorism, economic relations.*

Özet:

Türkiye ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri 1947'de ilan edilen Truman Doktrini'nden bu yana stratejik ortaklardır. Bu stratejik ortaklık, 11 Eylül sonrası Amerika'nın Orta Doğu politikaları ve Türkiye'nin 2002'de AKP ile değişen yeni siyasi atmosferi neticesinde zarar görmüştür. Özellikle, 2003 Irak Krizi ikili ilişkilerin zayıflamasında bir dönüm noktası olmuştur. İlişkilerdeki bu bozulmaya rağmen, iki ülkenin güvenlik, dış politika ve ekonomik endişelerinden dolayı, Türkiye ve ABD bu problemi halletmek zorundaydılar; ikili ilişkilerdeki süreç de beklendiği gibi iyileşme yönünde ilerledi. Bu makalede, ikili ilişkilerdeki yeni dönemi anlayabilmek için, Türk-Amerikan ilişkileri, 2003 Irak krizi, Türkiye'nin yeni dış politika yaklaşımı, NATO, terörizmle mücadele, Avrupa Birliği ve ekonomik ilgiler perspektiflerinde incelenecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *ABD- Türkiye ilişkileri, Türk dış politikası, Amerikan dış politikası, 2003 Irak Krizi, NATO, terörizmle mücadele, ekonomik ilişkiler.*

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey and the United States have been strategic security partners since Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952. In the US and West eyes, Turkey was a crucial blockade against the Soviet expansion toward Mediterranean and Middle East. Moreover, Turkey provided significant NATO and American installations which controlled and monitored Soviet danger in the context of arms-control agreements. After the collapse of Soviet Union, Turkish officials feared that Turkey lost its strategic importance in the eye of the United States. Yet, that fear did not come to true because new world order has increased Turkey's strategic and geopolitical importance instead of decreasing. As in the past, Turkey's strategic importance comes from its geopolitical privileges. Turkey is located at the junction of three major areas in which the United States has much concern: the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Balkans. In these areas, Turkish partnership is more important than before in order to achieve American goals in terms of balance of power, democratization, energy politics, and cultural cooperation between East and West. Nonetheless, Turkish foreign policy has been changed by a new Turkish actor, Justice and Development Party (AKP). Turkey has begun to pursue an independent and activist foreign policy in the areas where the US has primary concerns. Specifically, Middle East has been a breaking point of Turkish-American relationship. Therefore, reliance of Turkey has become suspicious in the US perspective.

Particularly, Turkish-American relationship was shattered because of recent invasion decision of Bush Administration into Iraq. At this point, the United States and Turkey have differed in invasion of Iraq and its consequences. Furthermore, Turkey and the United States have diverged on Iran, Syria, and Israel which have strong relations with the US in terms of both partnership and hostility. In addition to these differences, increasing anti-Americanism (!) in Turkey has raised the tension between Turkey and the United States.

In short, Turkey and USA were a strategic partnership during the cold war era. After demise of the Soviet Union, that strategic partnership seemed to end. Yet new policy of the US upon Greater Middle East and other related areas showed that US-Turkey partnership has still continued because the US and Turkey needs each other more than before in this new period, so the US-Turkey relations got better than before. Unfortunately, 2003 Iraq and 1 March 2003 Bill crisis caused to decline the relationship as never seen before. The former strategic allies were in the lowest level in their strategic partnership and relationship in 2003 and 2004. But, after this period, Turkey and the United States have mitigated the deterioration of their strategic relations and sought to establish a new strategic partnership era in order to get mutual benefit in terms of their global and regional policies. In brief, these strategic allies need each other in order to maintain their healthy foreign and domestic political lives.

The purpose of this study is exploring what the underlying reasons for deterioration of the US-Turkey relationship are; however, 2003 Iraq war and Bill crisis were the igniters of the deterioration, and why these allies needs each other. Even though both allies annoyed each other due to Iraq and Bill crisis, Turkey and the US have recently tried to normalize and mitigate their shattered relationship because both of them need their supports in the contexts of NATO, European Union, war on terrorism, and economic concerns.

1. THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE USA-TURKEY RELATIONSHIP

The theoretical background of the US-Turkey relationship should first be considered in order to get better understanding of this alliance. Why are these two countries allies? What are the theoretical reasons for this alliance? These important questions will give us clear understanding of background of the partnership.

For Turkey, reasons for alliance are to maintain its regional security, to get economic and military aid, and strengthen its Western-style state structure. The main reason for the US to establish strategic partnership with

Turkey is Turkey's significant strategic importance for the US interests in the Middle East and global level.¹

1.1. Security

When a country faces an external threat, that country seeks a security partner which has common threat. Then both countries combine their military resources against the common threat. In other case, a weak country needs a powerful ally to protect itself against a major threat.²

The US-Turkey case is appropriate for both cases. In that era, Turkey was threatened by Soviet Union. That was a really big threat for Turkey because Soviet Union abolished Treaty of Friendship of 1925 and wanted to revise Montreaux Convention of 1936 in order to get more benefit. That meant constraint of freedom of Turkey. Because of this reason, Turkey wanted to get alliances of USA and NATO. In the post Second World War era, American officials came to Turkey, and Turkey and USA made an agreement for common Soviet threat by assisting Turkey both in economic and military levels. By making this agreement, both USA and Turkey got a strategic partner against Soviet threat, and US gained a useful installation for its Middle East policies.³

1.2. Assistance Need

In order to strengthen their developing economy, lesser powers always seek economic aid. Generally, Major Powers which set up military alliance with lesser powers economically help their allies.

¹Nasuh Uslu, *The Turkish-American Relationship between 1947 and 2003: the History of a Distinctive Alliance* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003), 13.

² Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 25.

³ George S. Harris, *Troubled Alliance* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1972), 21.

Turkey did not join the Second World War because its economy was not powerful, and didn't want to struggle with war damage. Due to this reason, Turkey sought a powerful state which economically assists Turkey. The options were USSR and USA to get economic aid. In logical manner, Turkey chose the US in order to build an economic and military partnership. After establishing the alliance, Turkey has received economic and military assistance of USA many times until now.⁴

1.3. Strategic Reasons

When a lesser power confronts with a threat, lesser power allows a major power to construct an installation in the country. It is important that Turkey's geostrategic importance⁵ urge the USA to set up strategic partnership with Turkey, and the US got a significance station against USSR. Also, Turkey strengthened its force against Soviet threat. As a result, the presence of the US troops in Turkey is beneficial for both countries interests, so Turkey has never stopped the US bases in the country even in troubled times, such as Cyprus crisis.⁶

1.4. Ideology

Turkey has pursued a democratic and secular way since 1923. The main goal for Turkish intellectuals and ideology has been closeness to Western values after establishing new Turkish government. Thus, Turkey had to choose the USA option in order to reach its goal and set up its own healthy future. Along with getting closeness with USA and then NATO, Turkey carried out its own westernization plan.⁷

⁴ Uslu, *The Turkish-American*, 15.

⁵ This issue will be explained in further sections.

⁶ Uslu, *The Turkish-American*, 16.

⁷ Uslu, *The Turkish-American*, 17.

1.5. Internal Reasons

Lesser states want to enter into alliances to stabilize their domestic environments. Entering into alliance with a respectful and powerful state and obtaining economic and military support increase lesser states' charismas in the eye of the people. At those times, Turkish government really needed to increase its prestige because Second World War destroyed economy and prestige of Turkey and Turkish government. Turkish people lost their trust and reliance to Turkish government. Therefore, this coalition with USA was an important budging for prestige of Turkish government.⁸

In order to comprehend Turkish-American relationship, the theory and model of this relationship should be formed. The reasons for this strategic relationship are mentioned above, but it still needs a general comprehensive theory to examine this partnership and embed it into a structure. Hence, Patron-Client State relationship and Dependency theory will be explained.

1.6. Patron-Client State Relationship

In this theory, a state is small while the other is major or big. It can be said that Turkey was a small state according to its economy and military levels and really a client to USA in those years. What are the characteristic of patron-client relationship theory? There must be sizeable difference between the military capabilities of two states. This is clear that military capability of US was greater than Turkey's. 2- The client play important role in superpowers (patrons) competition. As it is known, Turkey was a political competition tool for USA and USSR in era. 3- In this relationship, patron and client are closely tied each other, and Client follows patron in every issue to get positive reward. Moreover, manipulation, coercion, and authority are in the background, yet they are not dominant. In Turkey-US case, Turkey has often followed and supported the US policies except some breaking points, such as Cyprus problem in 1070's and recent 2003 Iraq crisis. 4- Arm transfer is the powerful tool of influence for patrons. The US military

⁸ Uslu, *The Turkish-American*, 18.

assistance was significant for this relationship in the Cold War era. The significant two reasons for Turkey to structure a partnership with the US were Military and economic assistance. 5- Elite of the client state have same perceptions with patron state through domestic and foreign education. If we look at the Turkish elite in those years, it is clear that Turkish elite were influenced by Western values of American, French, and German schools in Turkey. Robert College (American), Galatasaray High school (French), and German high school were basic schools which raised Turkish elite.⁹

1.7. Dependency Theory

Dependency theory is related with economic aspects of the patron-client state relationship. General characteristic of dependent country is that the internal market of the dependent country is internationalized and its economy is incorporated into the global capitalist system. A large share of needs is supplied externally, a large share of markets is foreign, and ratio of foreign to domestic capital, technology, production facilities, etc. is high. Development of economy is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy and by the attitude of multinational corporations. Also, there is an alliance between local and international capital and state, derived from mutual interest. Moreover, dependent state is specialized in the export of a few products, and its export heavily relies on few trading partners.

In the Cold War era, Turkey's economy was fitting to dependent countries. Today, Turkey is a developing country, yet its economy is still affected by developed countries and multinational corporations.

In general approach, realist perspectives played important role in this relationship. According to Realism, security, power and economic concerns are main three issues. Turkey was one of the reasons of Truman Doctrine¹⁰

⁹ Uslu, *The Turkish-American*, 25-26.

¹⁰For details see: George Crews McGhee, *The US-Turkish-NATO Middle East Connection: How the Truman Doctrine and Turkey's NATO Entry Contained the Soviets* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Macmillan, Hampshire: 1990).

which is a main tool for hegemonic politics of the US. Both America and Turkey needed each other for security, power, and economic concerns. The US needed Turkey in the Cold War era due to surround politics of the US to USSR and getting a strategic country against Soviet threat to balance of power. Also, Turkey was a fresh market and the gate of other market states in the Middle East. Turkey needed the US because Turkey wanted to balance its power to Soviet threat and get economic assistance by the US aid. As it is seen, realist arguments played important role to shape the US-Turkey relationship.¹¹

2. TURKEY'S STRATEGIC OUTLOOK AND IMPORTANCE

Turkey is an important actor in the Middle East and Eurasia according to the USA interest in these regions. Turkey is located in an important area which is called heartland of Eurasia and of course the Middle East. On one side, Asia, which has recently become an important actor in international economic and politic arena, has internationally significant actors, Russia, Caucasus, East Asian countries, and Middle Asian countries. On another side, the Middle East countries, which have been popular for West in terms of energy and democracy, share same religion and similar culture with Turkey. On the other side Europe, where much of the world's political and economic powers are concentrated has immense interest for those regions. As a result, Turkey is the key country or a bridge for all those countries to communicate each other in terms of cultural, economic, and political spheres.¹²

According to Henry Kissinger, Turkey is located between “three revolutions” consisting of the traditional state system of Europe, the radical Islamist challenge to historic notions of sovereignty, and the drive of the center of gravity of international affairs from the Atlantic to the Pacific and

¹¹ Burcu Bostanoğlu, *Türkiye-ABD İlişkilerinin Politikası: Kuram ve Siyasa* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999), 330-333.

¹² Nezihi Çakar, “A Strategic Overview of Turkey,” *Perceptions* Vol 3 No 2 (June-August 1998): 1, Accessed 02 October 2008, <http://www.sam.gov.tr/volume3b.php>.

Indian Oceans.¹³ Therefore, Turkey is linkage between ideological differences which Europe and the US don't have more chances to ideologically access to the region.

After dissolution of Soviet Union, Turkey has thoroughly been interested in Turkic States. The reason for this interest is not only ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural affiliation but also marvelous oil and gas reserves in that region. Turkey politically entered to region just after the collapse of Soviet Union in order to establish ties with Turkic and Muslim states, and the US supported the policy of Turkey on those newly independent countries because Turkey was the only country to communicate those countries and to open West's gate to this region in spite of Iran and Russia. As a result, Turkey has played a constructive role in this region as a counterweight to ambitions of Russia and Iran, and this role is really important for American interests.¹⁴

As an overview, the reasons for why Turkey is significant to American interest are:

- Turkey is neighbor to pivotal countries for American policy and interest.
- The instability within Turkey easily affects the other country in the Middle East because of Turkey's location and ties with Middle East countries.
- Turkey has critical waterways (Straits) and narrows which are trade and energy linkages.
- Turkey's economic contribution to small countries of region makes them economically stable.

¹³ Stephen J. Flanagan, and Samuel J. Brannen, *Turkey's Shifting Dynamics: Implications for U.S.-Turkey Relations* (Washington, DC: The CSIS Press, 2008), 8-9.

¹⁴Bülent Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position* (London: Portland OR. F. Cass, 2002), 2-3, 20.

- Turkish-American friendship is a good example for other Muslim countries which are opposed to the US due to religion.
- Turkey's cooperation for Iraq is important to decline violence and to increase political settlement of Iraq.
- Turkey's contribution to the US about global terrorism is significant to defeat terrorism from the Middle East.
- Turkey's contribution to NATO with its army force and NATO installations in its soil.¹⁵

3. TURKEY'S NEW POLITICAL DEMOGRAPHY

The breaking point of the US-Turkey relationship was of course 2003 Iraq intervention of the US. The strategic partnership was deteriorated at that time because Turkey didn't approach the US purpose as in the past. What was the reason for this different approach? The best answer of this question is changing domestic and political situation of Turkey. Turkey has undergone a rapid transformation by President Turgut Ozal since second part of 1980's, and it has reached its peak through AKP's new vision of international politics since 2002 election. Therefore, the US-Turkey relationship has been affected by that transformation and entered the new period consisting of deterioration and recondition.

Turgut Ozal began to leave former Turkish isolationist and passive approach and pursued activist politics in the region. Ozal's contribution to President George Bush in the Gulf War I. first was amazing, and that

¹⁵Rajan Menon, and S. Enders Wimbush, "The US and Turkey: End of an Alliance?" Accessed 02 October 2008,

www.newamerica.net/files/Menon%20and%20Wimbush--US%20Turkey%20Alliance%20Survival%202007.pdf, 131-133;

Rajan Menon, and S. Enders Wimbush, "Is The United States Losing Turkey?" Accessed 02 October 2008, www.hudson.org/files/pdf_upload/Turkey%20PDF.pdf, 3-5.

contribution rendered Turkey important political actor in the Middle East.¹⁶ In addition to that activist politic, Turkey initiated democratization process in those years by the European Union membership requirements. Under the light of these requirements, Turkish politicians advocated political and social reforms in the militarist based regime. When Turkey's political structure began to change from militarist to civilian, Turkey tried to change its hostile and combative attitudes towards periphery countries.¹⁷

After Turkey got the candidacy status from EU Helsinki summit in 1999, Turkey's relations with hostile countries have become getting better. For example, Turkey abandoned the tension politics with Syria, and pursued "soft power" to fix problematic issues. Also, Turkish Foreign Minister visited Greece in 2000 after the 40 years of freezing diplomacy due to Cyprus crisis. This transformation of Turkish foreign policy accelerated when AKP came to power in 2002 election.¹⁸ AKP tightly followed the EU membership process because they had struggled with the 28 February 1997 post-modernist military interference to Turkish democracy as an Islamist side of government. Thus, AKP wanted to spread democratic understanding in the structure of government by EU process so that the US supported the AKP's renovation to transform the structure of Turkish government.¹⁹ Another important point for AKP is that AKP has created its own political elite, and released some new faces to Turkish political life. Due to renewing the political actors, the US had to agree with new Turkish politicians who are different than preceding ones who didn't struggle with American policies in the Middle East in larger scale.²⁰

¹⁶ Alan Makovsky, "Turkey's New Foreign Policy Activism," (Security and Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean: International Conference, June 9-19, 1999, Istanbul: Ari movement, 1999), 19.

¹⁷ Heinz Kramer, *A changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United State* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, c2000), 236-238.

¹⁸ Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey's Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times," Accessed 02 October 2008, www.ciaonet.org/journals/iisfpa/v3i1/0000760.pdf, 96.

¹⁹ Zeynep Dağı, *Doğu'dan Batı'ya Dış Politika: Ak Partili Yıllar* (Ankara: Orion Yayınevi, 2006), 89.

²⁰ Stephen J. Flanagan, and Samuel J. Brannen, *Turkey's Shifting Dynamics: Implications for U.S.-Turkey Relations*, 4.

One of the new politic actors of AKP is Professor Ahmet Davutoglu, former chief ambassador of Prime Minister Erdogan and current Foreign Minister. He is the underlying reason of changing foreign policy of Turkey. He mentions the new Turkish approach to international relations in his book, *Strategic Depth*. He claims that Turkey ought to follow its own making instead of global designs, for Turkey has strong cultural and historical ties with regional states, and Turkey fosters a new vision which renders Turkey a regional power.²¹

4. SOURCE OF FRICTION: 2003 IRAQ CRISIS

President Bush declared the US manner against terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 in Manichean. The well known quota of President Bush is “if you are not with us, you are against us.” That speech was a result of stability to terrorism. Nonetheless, that speech was hard to digest by some Muslim countries. Kemalists²² and Islamists didn’t like this perspective due to different reasons.²³

Due to Turkey’s strategic importance for Iraq war, the US wanted to use Turkish territory to defeat Saddam Hussein. The deterioration of the US-Turkish relations began over this problem. Turkish civil, military, and politic societies didn’t agree about opening the Iraq border to the US troops to access Iraq because of fear of independent Kurdish state, economic results, and of course uncontrolled the PKK in Northern Iraq. Ankara offered to the US to send 20,000 Turkish troops to help reconstruction, yet the US didn’t agree with Turks and ignored Turkish anxieties on Northern Iraq.²⁴ Before the voting, AKP administration, higher military generals and President Ahmet Necdet Sezer had often met to comprehend and finalize desire of the

²¹Carol Migdalovitz, *Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views* CRS Report for Congress, August 29, 2008, 2-3, Accessed 02 October 2008, www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34642.pdf.

²² The word refers followers of Ataturk’s revolution, secular and nationalist people.

²³ Rajan Menon, and S. Enders Wimbush, *Is The United States Losing Turkey?*, 6.

²⁴ Steven A Cook, *Generating Momentum for a New Era in U.S.-Turkey Relations* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2006), 9-10.

US on Iraqi-Turkish border. Turkey also wanted to get 92 billion dollars because of compensation of effect of Iraq war on Turkish economy. But, Turkey was refused again by Bush administration. Turkey had not yet defeated its anxieties and its anxieties had always been ignored by the US. Both Turkish civil society and opposition party and some AKP members didn't definitely want the US troops in the Turkish border. Turkish Military was hesitant about this intervention through Turkish border. Therefore, on 1 March 2003, Turkish Grand National Assembly refused the request of Bush administration to use Turkish territory in order to access to Iraq.²⁵ After the repair diplomacy, Turkey wasn't convinced to open border to American troops. As a result, the US was really shocked because Bush administration didn't assume such decision of Turkish side. The US had to choose a different way to access Iraq, and that meant much money and less efficiency of operation. As expected, The US and Turkish relations got worse as never been before. In addition to this crisis, Turkish Special Force was detained by the US soldier on 4 July 2003 in Suleymaniah, Northern Iraq. Hence, Turkey and the United States were living the worst relationship period in their history.²⁶

As a consequence of the detention of Turkish soldiers in Northern Iraq, public opinion about Bush administration was also deteriorated.²⁷ Turkish people saw America as second "best friend" in a widely public poll in 2002. The first friend was "nobody" at 33 percent, and second friend was the "US" at 27 percent.²⁸ In two years after Iraq intervention, another poll which

²⁵ Murat Yetkin, *Tezkere: Irak Krizinin Gerçek Öyküsü* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2004), 153-154, 173.

²⁶ Ahmet Erimhan, *Tezkereler Sürecinden "Süleymaniye Baskınına": Çuvaldaki Müttefik* (Istanbul: Otopsi Yayınları, 2004), 313.

²⁷ Somebody mentioned that anti-Americanism had incredibly risen in Turkey, but that is not true because the incredibly rising idea in the Turkish people's minds was anti-Bushism.

²⁸ Philip H. Gordon, and Omer Taspinar, *Winning Turkey: How America, Europe, and Turkey Can Revive a Fading Partnership* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 25.

shows public opinion about the US- Turkey relations was conducted in Ankara in 2005. The result of survey was basically:²⁹

- 91 percent of Turkish public does not approve Bush policies. Only 0.5 percent approves George W. Bush's policies.
- 74 percent of Turks see Turkey and the US are allies.
- 16 percent of Turks define himself/herself anti-American.
- 4 percent of Turks hate Americans.
- According to majority of Turkish people (69%), the best American president for global security and peace is Bill Clinton. Only 3 percent of Turks see Bush is the best.
- According to majority of Turks (74%) the thorniest issue in the US-Turkey relations is the existence of THE PKK in Northern Iraq. Only 3 percent of Turks blame Turkish government due to deterioration of Turkish-American relations.

5. RENOVATION OF THE USA-TURKEY RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between Turkey and the United States was at the bottom level in 2003-2004 because of 1 March 2003 Bill and 4 July 2003 Suleymaniah crisis. The US had not considered Turkey's anxieties before deciding to fight with Saddam Hussein; then Turkey's response to the US was really bewildering when thinking in the context of strategic partnership and alliance. Therefore, both strategic partners declined the relations at the lowest level. Yet, Ankara and Washington realized that both former strategic partners needed each other more than before due to new policies of both countries and global changing at the political agenda. After 2004, both political actors of countries have showed their incentives to renovate the relationship, but those incentives were not enough to renew the broken

²⁹ "Turkey-USA Relations Survey Results 12 March 2005," ISRO, Accessed 02 October 2008, www.turkishweekly.net/us-tr_eng.pdf.

relations and Turkey and the United States needs more cooperation than before.

An example for renovation the relationship was done by the US in 2007 by supporting Turkey in terms of intelligence to defeat the PKK in Northern Iraq. This interaction diminished tension of Turkish side. Then, Turkish politicians declared their amity to the United States. Thus, The US-Turkey relationship was tilted to normal level. However, the United States and Turkey need more than this example because they need each other at NATO, EU, war on terrorism, and economic levels.

5.1. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

In order to understand Turkey's importance to NATO and the US, its contribution to NATO should first be considered. Turkey's proximity to the Middle East, Russia, and Central Asia is reason for its importance to NATO. Before demise of Soviet Union, Turkey was the only barrier to Soviet threat in the Middle East and Europe. Also, Turkey was the only country which might have been faced Iraq, Syria, and Iran threats, so Incirlik airbase used many times by Turkey, US, and other NATO members in order to bomb enemies of NATO. Moreover, the Straits were the crucial feature of Turkey to control Soviet vessels. Due to Turkey's geographic position, Turkey was indispensable in the eye of the West block.³⁰ Likewise, in the Turkey's eye, NATO was the most important tool to defend itself in this devil region including Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

After the Cold War, Turkey's importance to NATO seemed to diminish because the major threat to the US and NATO was the Soviet Union. But, after September 11 event, Turkey demonstrated its importance again to the US and NATO by owning geographic proximity to the problematic countries to the US and proving its cooperativeness in Lebanon and Afghanistan cases.

³⁰ George Crews McGhee, *The US-Turkish-NATO Middle East Connection: How the Truman Doctrine and Turkey's NATO Entry Contained the Soviets* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Macmillan, Hampshire: 1990), 170.

Robert Wexler, chairman of the subcommittee on Europe, highlights Turkey's importance to the US:

Turkish military forces have fought side by side with American forces from the Cold War to Balkan Wars, and from Korea to Afghanistan, where Turkey has twice led ISAF forces. As the only NATO country bordering Syria, Iraq, and Iran, Turkey has hundreds of its troops on the ground in Lebanon, maintains a strong relationship with Israel and is an essential component to the East-West Energy Corridor providing America and Europe with a critical alternative energy supply route other than gas and oil coming from the volatile Middle East and Russia.³¹

Also, Dough Bereuter, representative of Nebraska, emphasizes the importance of Turkey to the US policies in that region:

For this Member of Congress, Turkey remains a vital element of America's strategy in NATO, in the eastern Mediterranean, in the Caucasus region and in the Middle East.³²

As a result, Turkey has crucial importance to the US in context of NATO. The higher performance of Turkish military proved this importance in the past through assisting the US in Korea, Balkans, Afghanistan and lastly Lebanon. Turkey's proximity to problematic countries and its efficient and useful military render it necessary in the aspect of the US. The US will

³¹ United States Congress House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe. *U.S.-Turkish Relations and the Challenges Ahead: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*, (House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, first session, March 15, 2007), 1-2.

³² United States Congress House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Europe. *Turkey's Future Direction and U.S.-Turkey Relations: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on International Relations*, (House of Representatives, One Hundred Eighth Congress, first session, October 1, 2003), 3.

always need Turkey's military assistance as long as war on terrorism and Greater Middle East project are continued.³³

With regard to Turkey's need to the US in the context of NATO, NATO still provides the main multilateral tool for achieving Turkish security interest. Turkey always seeks strong security force of NATO in order to protect itself prospective danger from antagonist states. For example, if Iran continues to make nuclear weapon, Turkey will need security missile program of NATO in its territory.³⁴ Despite the Cold War is ended, Turkey's need to NATO has been evolving. In this regard, the US has the largest and strongest military as a member of NATO, and the US' military is pretty active in the Middle East and surrounded region of Turkey. If both former strategic allies heal their relationship as in the past, both allies get really beneficial assistant in their struggles with their enemies and global peace.

By the way, NATO is a significance element to improve the relationship between Turkey and the United States. The Supreme Allied Commanders Europe (SACEUR), one of NATO's suborganization, has always kept up a successful relation period with Turkish Military. By the support of this organization, Turkey and the United States might generate better dialog between their militaries.

5.2. European Union

There are some factors which renders Turkey's membership to European Union valuable to American perspective. First, one of the American higher officials claimed that Turkey's integration into EU was an important aspect of increasing cooperation between the US and Turkey. Turkey will be more effective in terms of illegal immigration, refugees and asylum seekers, drug trafficking, and environmental problems under the membership title of

³³ F. Stephen Larrabee, *Turkey as a U.S. Security Partner* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., 2008), 22.

³⁴ Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian Lesser, and F. Stephen Larrabee, *The future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2000), 42.

European Union. Those are what the US cares at the global level. Second, Turkey's accession to EU collapses of Huntington's "clash of civilization" theory. Otherwise, Turkey leaves the westernization goal and finds undesirable religious allies. Furthermore, Turkey's integration into EU as a Muslim state will be a bridge between West and Islamist world in terms of democratization and war on terrorism. European Union is one of the key institutional settings which anchor Turkey to West. By the active promotion of Turkey's integration into Europe, the US will be able to get more benefit Turkey's membership to EU. First of all, the US will take advantages of strengthening secular Turkish democracy as a model to the Middle East's antidemocratic Muslim countries through Turkish integration into EU.³⁵ The last factor is that full membership of Turkey to EU will bring to the US more support in EU council. Therefore, the US should support EU membership of Turkey as a lobbyist of Turkey in EU.³⁶ All those factors require improving relationship between Turkey and the US.

EU membership of Turkey is significant for another point that if Turkey's relationship were poor with EU and the US, Turkey would be dragged to nationalism as in the past. When Ankara can not find any external ally, internal option become vulnerable because Turkey must relies on its own devises in order to create its foreign policy. Also, AKP would begin to look for new allies for compensation of weak relations with West; for example, Russia is the best substation for Turkey.³⁷

Another benefit of Turkey's membership to EU to the US and EU is that energy cooperation between EU and Turkey will be increase through Nabuco pipeline. Azeri and Middle Asian gas and oil will be transfer to

³⁵Ziya Öniş, and Suhnaz Yılmaz, "Turkey-EU-US Triangle in Perspective: Transformation or Continuity?" 12, Accessed 02 October 2008, home.ku.edu.tr/~zonis/ONIS-YILMAZ-TURKEY-EU-US%20TRIANGLE-REV%20DEC%202004.pdf.

³⁶ Sabri Sayari, "The United States and Turkey's Membership in the European Union," 173-175, Accessed 02 October 2008, www.politics.ankara.edu.tr/dosyalar/MMTY/34/7_sabri_sayari.pdf.

³⁷ Larrabee, *Turkey as*, 23-24.

European countries without Russian pressure on the energy politics. As known, European countries consume Russian gas so that they are dependent to Russian's demands. Due to alternative energy corridor which is Turkey Europe will get benefit both in energy and politic level. With regard to the US in this perspective, the US will be reduced Russian effectiveness on the Eurasian aspect by supporting Turkey for EU membership.³⁸

It is important that the US support for Turkey's membership to EU helps increase Turkey's visibility and presents it under the better light. Specifically, it could underline the many areas where Turkey's devotion to NATO and the West, to western rights and coercions provides continuing proven value. The United States could point to those strategic areas where Turkish contribution is obvious and cooperative to a lasting common cause across the Atlantic.³⁹

On the Turkish side, the US support for EU membership might be easier solution for Turkey's some ongoing problems. In fact, chronic Cyprus issue can be overcome in a simple way. The US's diplomatic pressure on EU makes this issue easier. Otherwise, an isolated Turkey without American support may confront the rejection of its EU membership.⁴⁰

Along with Turkey's integration into EU, the US expectations of Turkey might be fulfilled. Turkey's EU agenda and the US desire to deepen democracy in Turkey and liberalize its political and economic lives coincide. Also, Turkey needs American investment, science and technology, and education when pursuing EU norms. As a result, Turkey and the US should improve their relations in order to get more benefit in terms of EU aspect.⁴¹

³⁸ Flanagan, and Brannen, *Turkey's Shifting*, 20.

³⁹ Michael Lake, "Tilting from US to EU," in *The Evolution of U.S.-Turkish Relations in a Transatlantic Context*, ed. Frances G. Burwell, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2008), 60.

⁴⁰ Flanagan, and Brannen, *Turkey's Shifting*, 25.

⁴¹ *The United States and Turkey: Allies in Need*, ed. Morton Abramowitz (New York: Century Foundation Press, 2003), 141.

According to Soner Cagaptay's speech in front of the Europe committee of Congress:

Even if it doesn't result in Turkey's eventual EU membership, I think the EU process has been beneficial because it has catalyzed significant and much needed reforms in Turkey, yet it is also important since we are discussing foreign policy today to note that the powerful force behind the EU reform is also symptomatic of Turkey's emerging pro-European tendency in foreign policy, especially toward Iraq.⁴²

In the triangle relations among EU, Turkey, and the US, American support for Turkey's EU membership generates a smooth and deepening progress between Turkey and EU. Then deepening Turkish relations with EU mitigates reform progress in Turkey; therefore, due to that process, reconstruction of Turkish-American relations will be smooth and quick.⁴³

Despite recent disagreement between the US and Turkey, both countries had better try to develop their relationship as soon as possible because both countries need each other to take advantages of EU.

5.3. War on Terrorism

After demise of Soviet threat, the United States and Turkey found themselves in a new collaboration against terrorism. Particularly, September 11 terrorist attacks made clear that the US and Turkey need each other in order to fight against terrorism. Also, along with emerging greater Middle East project, ensuring stability in the wider Middle East region has been an important cooperation reason for the US-Turkish partnership. Deepening the

⁴² United States Congress House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Europe. *Turkey's Future Direction and U.S.-Turkey Relations: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on International Relations*, (House of Representatives, One Hundred Eighth Congress, first session, October 1, 2003), 9.

⁴³ Flanagan, and Brannen, *Turkey's Shifting*, 27.

collaboration upon war on terrorism could reinvigorate bilateral relationship between the US and Turkey.⁴⁴

In the Turkish perspective, Turkey has always opposed to separation of Iraq because integrity of Iraq keeps some extremist groups under the control. Kurdish movement in Northern Iraq has always bothered Turkish governments due to separatist role of the PKK in southeast of Turkey. Turkish anxiety about the PKK was that the second Iraq War created a vacuum which enabled the PKK to find protected paradise in Northern Iraq and increased its war in Turkey. Thus, the PKK would escalate its brutal attacks in Turkey. That Turkish prediction about the PKK came true and the PKK has escalated its attacks in Turkey, so many Turkish soldiers have been killed.⁴⁵

The US has been the most important partner in the context of war against the PKK. Especially, after the US took control in Iraq in 2003, Turks has seen the US the most important authority to eliminate the PKK in Northern Iraq via cutting off the relations between the PKK and its supporters in Iraq and providing Turkish military forces by effective intelligence of the PKK actions in Northern Iraq. An example of this collaboration happened in 2007. Turkish and American army officials signed an agreement upon sharing intelligence in Northern Iraq to defeat the PKK, and then, Turkish forces began to fight with terrorist groups through Turkish air forces via American intelligence. That agreement has still continued between Turkey and the US on fighting with the PKK together.⁴⁶ Therefore, Turkey needs the US in order to fight against the PKK.

⁴⁴ Frances G. Burwell, "Rebuilding US-Turkey Relations in a Transatlantic Context," in *The Evolution of U.S.-Turkish Relations in a Transatlantic Context*, ed. Frances G. Burwell, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2008), 2.

⁴⁵ Carol Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Issues for U.S. Policy," Report for Congress, May 22, 2002, 9, Accessed 02 October 2008, www.fas.org/man/crs/RL31429.pdf.

⁴⁶ Burwell, "Rebuilding US-Turkey," 6.

In the US perspective, after September 11 attacks, Turkey voted related defense treaty and joined to coalition to fight against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime. Turkey provided the US with opening its air space within 24 hours to start operation against Al-Qaeda. Moreover, Turkey contributed the US by intelligence comes from Uzbek-Tajik-Hazera Afghan Northern Alliance. Then, Turkey sent 90 Special Forces troops to Afghanistan to train Northern Alliance forces. In addition, Turkish naval force blocked suspicious vessels in Mediterranean and Adriatic Seas, and all humanitarian flights to Afghanistan were operated from in Turkey.⁴⁷

After Taliban problem emerged, Turkey sent 267 troops to Afghanistan to join International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) peacekeeping operation. Another Turkey's respond to Al-Qaeda terrorism was that Turkey blocked all Al-Qaeda account which related with Egypt, Libya, Uzbekistan, and Somalia, and defeated Turkish members of Al-Qaeda in Turkey. Also, Turkey undertook to educate 600 National Guard battalion of Afghans as well as supply them with necessary equipments and educated 20 new Afghan diplomats who would play significance role to establish new Afghan relationship with West.⁴⁸

Turkish role on Al-Qaeda terrorism was critical to the US to fight against terrorism. The US had never faced brutal domestic terrorist attack until September 11 and hadn't known much more things about Islamist terrorism, thus, Turkey was the most important collaborator via its domestic terrorism experience and its Muslim identity.

According to Douglas Bereuter, chairman of the subcommittee on Europe:

After September 11, Turkey was one of the first to join us in the struggle against global terrorism. Turkey became a staging area for the

⁴⁷ Burwell, "Rebuilding US-Turkey," 8.

⁴⁸ Burwell, "Rebuilding US-Turkey," 9-10.

Afghan operation and later took command of the international security force there.⁴⁹

According to General Joseph W. Ralston:

The PKK uses Iraq as a base to plan, train for, and conduct direct attacks against Turkey. For several years United States and Iraqi forces have lacked the resources to root out this pocket of terrorist camp.⁵⁰

Also, as Robert Wexler, representative in Congress from the state of Florida, stated:

The myriad of challenges to the US-Turkish relationship, which will be addressed by our witness, are multiple, complex and intertwined. The most significance divergence has been in Iraq and particularly as it relates to Kurdish terrorism. Since 2004, the PKK has killed and injured more than 1500 people in Turkey. Given America's leading role in Iraq, there is a perception in Turkey that America has not done enough to remove the threat of the PKK terrorists based in Northern Iraq. Perceived inaction on the American side has lead to a nationalist backlash in Turkey against the US. It is critical that the US and Iraqi Kurdish leaders do more to make address the PKK threat.⁵¹

As a result, Turkey helped the US to defeat and take control of Islamist terrorism and need it for the future collaboration of terrorism. Turkey has

⁴⁹ United States Congress House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Europe. *Turkey's Future Direction and U.S.-Turkey Relations: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on International Relations*, (House of Representatives, One Hundred Eighth Congress, first session, October 1, 2003), 2.

⁵⁰ United States Congress House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe. *U.S.-Turkish Relations and the Challenges Ahead: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*, (House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, first session, March 15, 2007), 18.

⁵¹ Burwell, "Rebuilding US-Turkey," 3.

suffered from the PKK, located Northern Iraq, so Turkey needs America's contribution as a neighbor.

5.4. Economic Concerns

Turkish-American economic relations began as early as 1785. By the sanction of an English company the United States began to trade with the Ottoman Empire. In 1811, the Ottoman Empire and the United States realized their economic importance for each other and signed an agreement to refine the economic relations. Due to mutually beneficial economic relations, the United States got capitulations from Sultan. In 1876, Turkey ranked among the ten leading nations of the world in foreign trade, and the United States was Turkey's third best customer. Hence, that important economic relationship had gradually increased even though Turkish-American political relations got worse in the First World War era. Yet, along with establishing new Turkish Republic, Turkish-American relations in both economical and political sphere remarkably boomed, so the United States was second buyer of Turkish goods before the Second World War.⁵²

Today, the United States is seventh export and fifth import market of Turkey, and Turkey is seventeenth largest economy in the world, so needs to increase its share of the US trade. In the near past, the US-Turkey economic ties mainly depended on defense based trade. Yet, Turkish-American economic relationship has been expanded to the other sectors over the past three years by the contributions of both governments and NGOs. As a result, Turkey and the US have become important economic partners for each other, and this partnership seems to improve in the near future.⁵³

The other significant economic partnership between the US and Turkey is related with the energy sector. As a consequence of Turkey's geostrategic

⁵² Leland J. Gordon, *American Relations with Turkey 1830-1930* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), 345-346.

⁵³ "Turkey Brief: Turkish-US Relations," TAIK, March 2008, 20. Accessed 02 October 2008, www.turkey-now.org/db/Docs/Turkey_Brief_2008.pdf.

importance, Turkey has an immense potential to bridge three continents by oil and gas resources. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline Project (BTC), the Blue Stream, and Nabucco gas pipelines have increased Turkey's both economic and political importance and have made a booster effect to Turkish economy. As it is remembered, BTC were realized by the positive effort of the US. Turkey would not be able to realize it without American support when Russia is considered. Due to common benefits, BTC was carried out and has brought economic and political benefits to the US and Turkey.⁵⁴

Turkey is unique to the US in terms of economic relations due to: proximity to new markets in Middle East and Central Asia, the gateway of energy resources, strong ties with Caucasus and Central Asia, huge domestic market, a fast developing country, strong international investment record, high-skilled and competitive labor.

For Turkey, developing trade relations and partnership on energy sector with the US have enlarged Turkish economy and improved Turkey's political importance in the regional and world levels. To the US, by active participation with Turkey at the economic level, the US has gained more economic and political benefits.

Both American and Turkish officials emphasize this mutually beneficial economic partnership.

Kürsad Tüzmen, the Minister of State, said:

It is now high time to increase trade volume between Turkey and the United States to \$30 billion after witnessing development in defense and security cooperation in the last several years. Of the 600 American firms doing business in Turkey, fully one-third of them started their economic activities here within the last two years, which

⁵⁴ Burwell, "Rebuilding US-Turkey," 21.

shows the increasing level of international confidence in our economy.⁵⁵

Ross Wilson, the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, said:

We have regretted that U.S. business is a little behind Europe and various Arab countries in the privatization race that is taking place in Turkey. We are trying to address this by re-launching the Economic Partnership Commission (EPC). The Turkish economy has achieved extremely impressive economic results over the course of the last four years in terms of the growth of Turkish gross domestic product, this country's success in taming inflation, this country's success in improving the climate for business and foreign investors, and resolving outstanding problems that companies, including American companies, have had in previous years. All of that has led to a substantial increase in American investor interest here. Some of that has translated into specific commitments that have been made. The decision of General Electric Capital to invest in Garanti Bankasi is one big example. There have been several others in the news over the course of the last couple of months, and I hope and expect that there will be more.⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

Even though Turkish-American strategic partnership has deteriorated because of recent Iraq crisis, both former allies still share short and long-term interests in the Middle East, Central Asia, Caucasus, and Europe more than Cold War era. In addition, they have suffered from terrorism and dealt with nonproliferation in the region. Also, both countries depend on their supports in terms of economic and political developments so that they will be able to create a strong and healthy political and economical future for

⁵⁵ "Turkey Brief: Turkish-US Relations," 25.

⁵⁶ "Turkey Brief: Turkish-US Relations," 26.

their own countries if they succeed to establish strategic alliance and close partnership.

Turkey travels in a process which will render Turkey a participant with new world order soon. In this journey, Turkey extremely needs American support for its security because it is encircled by many threats. The US emphasis on NATO as a main security organ of West is fitting to Turkey's anxieties and their solutions, so Turkey needs the US in order to strengthen its own security circle. Besides, the US is the key country for Turkey to sustain Israeli-Turkish relationship, to solve Kurdish problem, and to get more benefit from energy sector. Furthermore, support of the US for Turkey's candidacy of EU is significance for democratization of Turkey. The other American importance for Turkey is that the US is the most important arms supplier of Turkey. 80 percent of Turkish defense-industrial activity relies on the US.

In the US perspective, Turkey is the most important country in that region to serve American interests. Turkey's role in NATO and war on terrorism are crucial for the United States' successful policies in the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia. Also, the US needs Turkey in order to get easy access to the Middle Eastern and Central Asian markets due to its strong ties with these regions.

Soner Cagaptay, Director of Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, underlined that:

Turkey is important for the United States because it straddles two vital regions for US policymakers--The Middle East and Central Eurasia-- that is an energy rich area with a large Muslim population, stretching from the Black Sea to Central Asia to the north. Given the country's location, as well as post-September 11 United States

priorities toward these regions, Turkey bears utmost importance for Washington.⁵⁷

As a result, Turkish-American strategic partnership was gotten worse by 2003 Iraq war, but both countries should escalate the renovation process and improve their partnership more than before to achieve their mutual interests upon NATO, European Union, war on terrorism, and economic concerns.

⁵⁷ United States Congress House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats. The state of U.S.-Turkey Relations: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats of the Committee on International Relations, (House of Representatives, One Hundred Ninth Congress, first session, May 11, 2005), 18.

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