



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## THESIS

**TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND THE UNITED  
STATES: A SHIFT IN ALIGNMENT?**

by

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March 2009

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**TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND THE UNITED STATES:  
A SHIFT IN ALIGNMENT?**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the past and present condition of Turkey's relations with an ally, the United States, and an old neighbor, Iran, and identifies the variables that have divided or united these three important players of the Middle East since 1979.

The goal of this thesis is to answer the following questions: Is Turkish foreign policy changing direction? Is there really a common ground for Turkey and Iran to cooperate for the stability of the region? Is cooperation possible for these two old rival states each of whom has been seeking to be the dominant power of this region since the very beginning of their relations' long history? If yes, is it worthwhile for Turkey to improve her relations with Iran even in the face of U.S. opposition? In this context, although there seems a relative recovery in Turkish-Iranian relations and a decline in Turkey's relations with the United States due to diverging interests in the Middle East, Turkey and the United States should realize their importance for each other. They should establish a stronger structure to synchronize relations, so they do not end up in a "lose-lose" position by ignoring each other's priorities.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Turkey has been a longstanding ally of the United States in the Middle East since the end of World War II. She was an important front for the policy of containment, or “Truman Doctrine,” that countered the spread of communism during the Cold War. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and the threat of communism vaporized. This was thought to be the end of East–West conflict and the beginning of global stability. Unfortunately, however, the end of the Cold War resulted in increased uncertainty as new ethnic conflicts popped up in many parts of the world.<sup>1</sup>

The new unipolar world order with the hegemony of the United States did not change the strong relations between Turkey and the United States until 1 March 2003. As Henry Bakery observes, “The primary U.S. foreign-policy vision after the Cold War was one based on preventing regional disputes from threatening its own and its allies’ interests and on expanding market reforms and democratic principles and practices”.<sup>2</sup> Turkey acted consistently with U.S. policies in the First Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia and Afghanistan, even sometimes with high economic costs (like the Iraq embargo which cost three billion dollars a year<sup>3</sup> and the more than two million Kurdish refugees who fled from Saddam’s attacks to Turkey after the first Gulf War<sup>4</sup>).

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1 U.S. Department of State, “Dissolution of the USSR and the Establishment of Independent Republics, 1991,” <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/pcw/108229.htm>, (accessed February 21, 2009).

2 Henri J. Barkey, “Turkey’s Strategic Future: A U.S. Perspective”, Prepared for the CEPS/IISS European Security Forum, Brussels, 12 May 2003, [http://aei.pitt.edu/1959/01/ESF\\_WP13.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/1959/01/ESF_WP13.pdf), (accessed February 21, 2009).

3 Alan Cowell, “Turkish Leader to Press U.S. on Iraq Embargo,” The New York Times, October 14, 1993.

4 Katherine A. Wilkens, “How we lost the Kurdish Game,” The Washington Post, September 15, 1996.

The second Gulf War, however, introduced discord into U.S.–Turkish relations. The Turkish parliament’s rejection on March 1, 2003 of a draft resolution that would allow U.S. troops to open a northern front into Iraq from Turkey was the beginning of a deep decline in U.S.–Turkish relations. This decline got deeper with “the sacking incident” in Suleymaniah and consequent Kurdish de facto formation of an independent enclave in the north of Iraq.<sup>5</sup> From then on, a huge anti-Americanism spread over the public in Turkey, which showed itself in a Turkish movie named “The Valley of Wolves: Iraq.” As the director of Turkey’s International Strategic Researches Institute, Sedat Laciner, said “This underscores the public-image problem that the United States has in Turkey. The United States is blamed for almost everything that goes wrong in Iraq or the Middle East”.<sup>6</sup>

While Turkish–American relations were declining, Iran, which was looking for a way out from the sanctions imposed by the United States, saw this situation as a chance to get closer to Turkey. Historically, Iran is Turkey’s most important neighbor and a firm rival in the Middle East. Iran and Turkey are two of the most populous countries and influential native actors of this region. These two states are very different from other regional states in many ways. They have a deep state culture and historical background. They are the heirs of powerful historical states in the region. Bilateral Turkish–Iranian relations are as old as history itself. According to some observers, Turkey’s repeated frustrations by the European Union and a decline in her relations with the United States may result in a

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5 Nüzhet Kandemir (Former ambassador of Turkey to Washington DC), “Turkish American Relations Past and Future,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1 Spring 2005, [http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi\\_turkey\\_tpq\\_id\\_21.pdf](http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_turkey_tpq_id_21.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

6 Ali Senkaya, “US is not trustable, Iran and Syria should not be attacked, Turkish survey claims,” *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, March 25, 2006, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=28647> (accessed February 21, 2009).

reorientation of her future policies in the region.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the latest survey carried out by USAK/ISRO among 2500 respondents in Turkey's five biggest cities revealed that "Turks don't trust the U.S. and are against attack on Iran".<sup>8</sup>

In my thesis, I will examine the past and present condition of Turkey's relations with an ally, the United States, and an old neighbor, Iran, and identify the variables that have divided or united these three important players of the Middle East since 1979. The goal of this thesis is to answer the following questions: Is Turkish foreign policy changing? Is there really common ground on which Turkey and Iran may cooperate for the stability of the region? Is it possible for these two old rival states, each of whom has been seeking to be the dominant power of this region since the Battle of Çaldıran in 1514, to now become allies?<sup>9</sup> If yes, is it worthwhile for Turkey to improve her relations with Iran even in the face of U.S. opposition? This evaluation is very important not only for Turkey and Iran, but also for the United States and her interests in the region and for the future stability of the region itself.

## **B. IMPORTANCE**

Turkey has been in a struggle to protect the stability of her region since the Turkish war of independence. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and since the new Turkish republic was established, she came face to face with four major challenges: recognition of the newly established Turkish republic, staying out of World War II, security challenges from the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and the changing political situation and alliances after the Cold War,

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7 Richard Giragosian, "Redefining Turkey's Strategic Orientation", Turkish Policy Quarterly, Winter, 2007, <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/images/stories/2007-04-international/richardgiragosian.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

8 Ali Senkaya, "US is not trustable, Iran and Syria should not be attacked, Turkish survey claims", The Journal of Turkish Weekly, March 25, 2006, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=28647> (accessed February 21, 2009).

9 David Morgan, "Shah Isma'il and the Establishment of Shi'ism", Medieval Persia: 1040-1797, Chapter 12.

together with the need to find her way in this new era.<sup>10</sup> Turkey's geopolitical situation was the dominant factor in her regional importance for a long time. But the end of the Cold War, the first Gulf War, the second Gulf War, and frustrations with the EU membership process have made her relations with neighbors another dominant parameter for her future and for security issues in the region. At this point, there are many factors distancing her from U.S. policies and forcing Turkey to find some new ways to protect her interests. Strains in U.S.–Turkish relations have been caused by many incidents, including the Turkish–Iranian gas deal signed in 1996 despite U.S. pressure; denial of permission for the stationing of U.S. troops on Turkish territory before the second Gulf War in 2003; the situation of Kurds in Iraq's north after the second Gulf War; the raid of U.S. troops on the office of Turkish special forces and arrest of eleven Turkish officers in Sulaymaniyah in 2003; the Syrian visit of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in 2005; the Turkish movie, “Valley Of The Wolves: Iraq” as a reaction to the arrest of Turkish officers in Iraq; and a decline in the U.S. image (as seen in survey tables below) not only in Turkey but all over the world.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Director Andrew Kohut, “15-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey”, the Pew Global Attitudes Project, [www.pewglobal.org](http://www.pewglobal.org).

Dangers to World Peace				
% saying 'great danger'	US in		North	Israeli-Palestinian
	Iran	Iraq	Korea	conflict
	%	%	%	%
U.S.	46	31	34	43
Great Britain	34	41	19	45
France	31	36	16	35
Germany	51	40	23	51
Spain	38	56	21	52
Russia	20	45	10	41
Indonesia	7	31	4	33
Egypt	14	56	14	68
Jordan	19	58	18	67
Turkey	16	60	6	42
Pakistan	4	28	8	22
Nigeria	15	25	11	27
Japan	29	29	46	40
India	8	15	6	13
China	22	31	11	27

	Favorable Opinions of the U.S.					
	1999/2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Great Britain	83	75	70	58	55	56
France	62	63	43	37	43	39
Germany	78	61	45	38	41	37
Spain	50	--	38	--	41	23
Russia	37	61	36	47	52	43
Indonesia	75	61	15	--	38	30
Egypt	--	--	--	--	--	30
Pakistan	23	10	13	21	23	27
Jordan	--	25	1	5	21	15
Turkey	52	30	15	30	23	12
Nigeria	46	--	61	--	--	62
Japan	77	72	--	--	--	63
India	--	54	--	--	71	56
China	--	--	--	--	42	47

1999/2000 survey trends provided by the Office of Research, U.S. Department of State

Figure 1. 15-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey-1

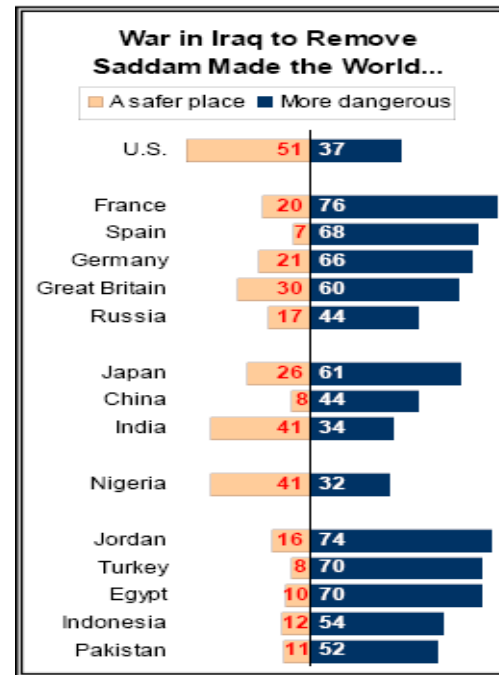
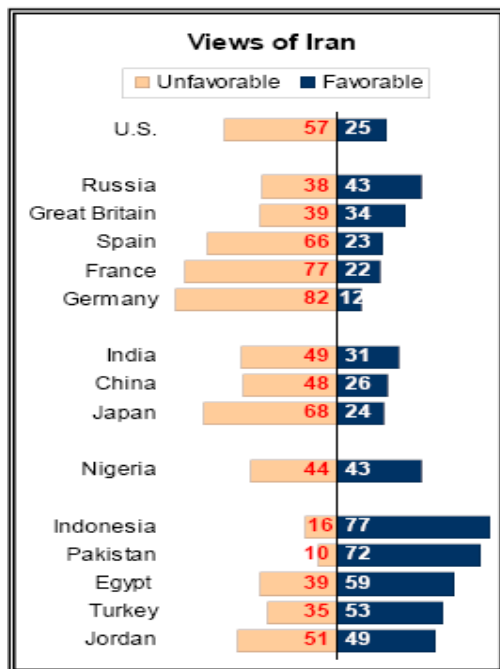


Figure 2. 15-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey-2

The world order started to change after the Cold War, and now members of the international system are trying to adapt to the new security challenges and looking for new opportunities. In this context, the relations between the U.S., Turkey, and Iran are becoming very important for the stability in this new world order in the Middle East. The importance of the situation in the Middle East was stated by a former prime minister of the United Kingdom with the following words: "What is happening today out in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and beyond is an elemental struggle about the values that will shape our future".<sup>12</sup>

The unique position of Turkey, which is secular, democratic, and a social state governed by the rule of law with her ninety-eight-percent Muslim society has been very important and it seems as if it will be more important in dealing with 21<sup>st</sup> century threats in the Middle East.<sup>13</sup> Turkey has received the support of the United States in many important matters due to her reliable posture. For example, one of the most important problems for Turkey is PKK terrorism. The United States has listed the PKK as a terrorist organization for a long time, as opposed to Iran which started to recognize PKK as a terrorist organization only after the barrel turned on her in 2004. Besides that, the United States has been not only declared her support of Turkey with words, but has also provided important ammunition, weaponry systems, and actionable intelligence to Turkey in the war on terrorism, especially during the capture of the leader of the PKK terrorist organization, Abdullah Ocalan, and after the 2007 PKK attacks on a Turkish outpost very close to Iraq.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Press Association guardian.co.uk, "Blair calls for complete rethink of Middle East policy", August 01 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2006/aug/01/foreignpolicy.syria> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Part I General Principles, Article II Characteristics of the Republic, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/mevzuat/anayasa/anayasa-ing.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Gunter, "The Kurdish Question", Online News hour Transcripts, February 17, 1999. [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle\\_east/jan-june99/kurds\\_2-17.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june99/kurds_2-17.html) (accessed February 21, 2009).

The United States has been fully backing Turkey and lobbying among EU states for Turkey in the process of joining the European Union, which is another very important issue in Turkish foreign policy. According to the co-director of the Brookings Project on Turkey, Ömer Taşpınar, “Washington continued to support Turkey in the IMF; Congress passed a bill authorizing the administration to offer USD one billion grant to Turkey as compensation and the U.S. continued to portray Turkey as an inspiration for democracy in the region”.<sup>15</sup>

The United States supported the Baku–Tiflis–Ceyhan oil-pipeline project, which has high importance for Turkey as a country seeking to be an energy hub and alternative route for Europe.<sup>16</sup>

One other important issue in Turkish foreign policy is stability in the Middle East in general, the territorial integrity of Iraq, and the future of the Kurds in Iraq in particular. The United States has been working very hard on protecting the stability and integrity of Iraq, which is important to Turkey’s stability and economic development.

On the other hand, according to the Washington Institute’s Turkish research program director, Soner Cagaptay, Turkey has been intensifying her relations with Iran in economic, political, and security issues, especially after the election of the AKP government, which many fear, believing that Shiite Iran poses a challenge to predominantly Sunni Turkey. However, military leaders have been expressing their concern about Iran’s nuclear program.<sup>17</sup> Turkey’s

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<sup>15</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, “The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism in Turkey”, The Brookings Institution November 16, 2005 [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/articles/2005/1116turkey\\_taspinar/taspinar20051116.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/articles/2005/1116turkey_taspinar/taspinar20051116.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Robert L. Pollock, “The Sick Man of Europe”, The Wall Street Journal, February 16, 2005 <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110006299> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Soner Cagaptay, “Turkey at a Crossroads, Preserving Ankara’s Western Orientation”, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, August 11, 2004, 14.

present support for Iran's nuclear research, which is declared to be for "peaceful purposes," may easily turn into a big problem Turkey cannot engage alone in the future.

Turkey's position is complicated, since she has to protect the emerging balance of her interests between East and West and must calculate accurately the possible results of getting closer with Iran, which has been being isolated from the West for many important reasons, and losing the support of her ally, the United States as a superpower. The accuracy of this calculation of Turkey is important not only for herself, but for the region and world.

### **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The world order, which was set after World War II, changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "In the past, new international orders were established as a result of great wars—by the Treaty of Westphalia after the Thirty Years War, by the Congress of Vienna after the Napoleonic wars, by the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, at Yalta and Potsdam after World War II. Keeping in step with this history, a new world order should have been established after the cold war".<sup>18</sup> In the new order, the importance of energy is well known by all. Turkey and Iran as regional players, and the United States as a global player, will be in an important position to determine the future of this region.

Turkey and Iran are the most populous and influential actors of the Middle East. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, these old rivals became much more influential, not only in Middle Eastern politics, but also in central Asia and the world. Given that, since the 1920s, world politics is generally concentrated on energy centers that are in and around the Middle East, their geopolitical positions—Turkey as an important energy-transfer route that brings oil and gas

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<sup>18</sup> Longin Pastusiak (President of the Senate of Poland in 2004), "After the cold war: We need to build a new world order", International Herald Tribune, January 3, 2004, [http://www.iht.com/articles/2004/01/03/edpast\\_ed3\\_.php?page=1](http://www.iht.com/articles/2004/01/03/edpast_ed3_.php?page=1) (accessed February 21, 2009).



from the east and north to the west and south, and Iran as an important oil and gas supplier<sup>19</sup>—put them at the center of world politics.

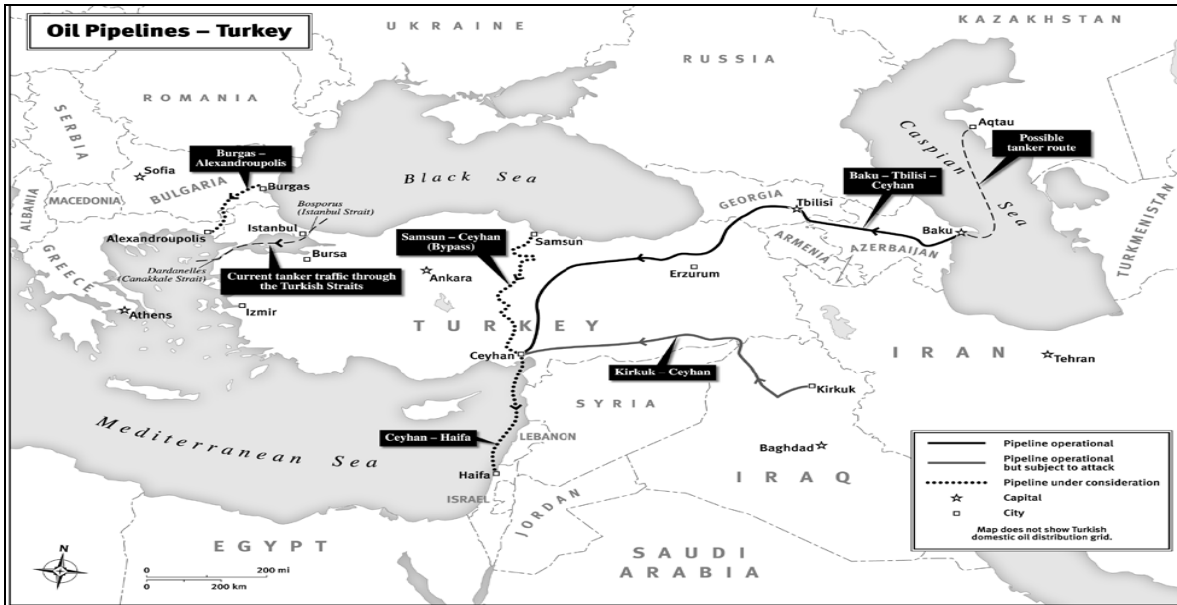


Figure 3. Oil Pipelines in Turkey

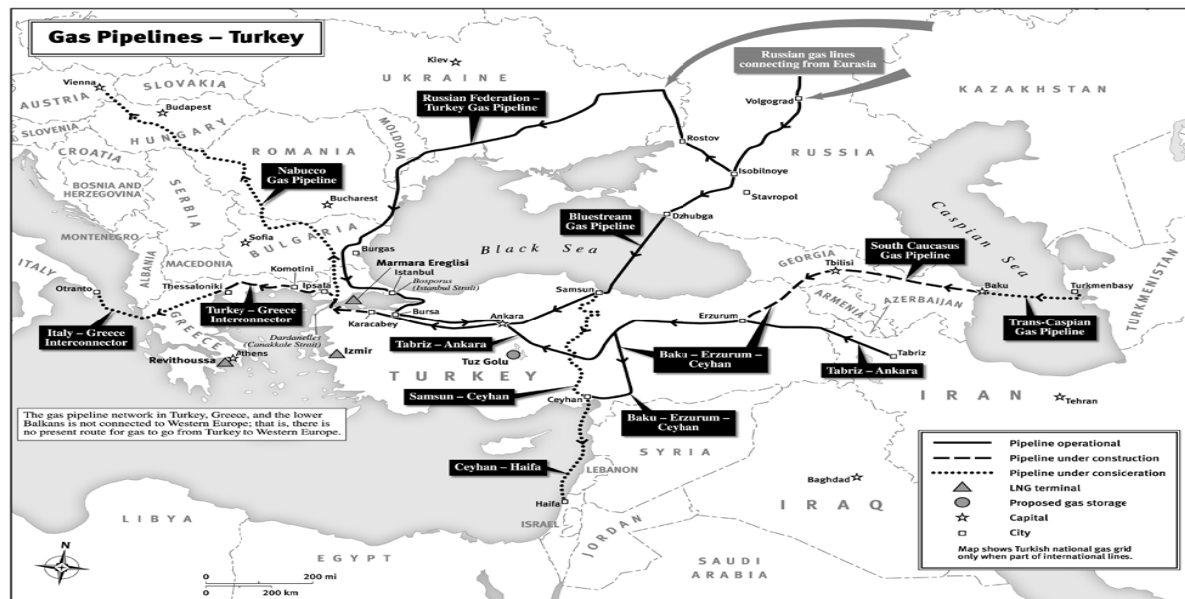


Figure 4. Turkey and Iran’s Geopolitical Situation and Energy Sources

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Fink, “Assessing Turkey’s Future as an Energy Transit Country”, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Number 11 (July 2006): 1.

Sedat Laciner, director of the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), observes that “When all these data are considered, it is natural to expect a serious economic cooperation or even economic integration between these two neighbors, Turkey and Iran. However, a thorny picture is confronted when the relations are considered”.<sup>20</sup> According to Laciner, there has always been uncertainty towards Iran among Arabs, Turks, and other Muslim nations of the Middle East. The Ottomans and Iran could not manage to be allies and ensure any serious economic or political cooperation; furthermore, Iran’s relations were much better with the Vatican during that era.<sup>21</sup>

Despite their historical rivalry, Turkish–Iranian relations experienced a golden era during the Ataturk and Riza Shah Pahlavi period. Both states’ fates were similar against the imperial powers. The Soviet-communist threat was one of the important causes of good relations between the United States, Turkey, and Iran during the Cold War. Turkish–Iranian relations continued cooperatively until the Islamic Revolution in Iran. After the Islamic revolution, a 180° turn happened in Turkish and U.S. relations with Iran. Iranian efforts at spreading Islamic revolution to neighboring countries were at the center of tensions among the new regime in Iran, Turkey, and the United States, except for the Erbakan era in Turkey. Iran became a target of the United States and faced many sanctions, and has always been accused of helping terrorist organizations. The collapse of the Soviet Union and emerging new world order is again pushing these three powers onstage.

There are two different schools of thoughts about Turkey’s emerging position in the international arena after the Cold War and the probable future foreign policies in the region. According to one school of thought, Turkey is likely to remain close to the United States. For example, Lenore G. Martin argues “The realization that the Middle East was creating new risks and opportunities for its

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<sup>20</sup> Sedat Laciner, “Mistrust Problem in Turkey-Iran Relation”, *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, February 21, 2008, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/comments.php?id=2839> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

national security thrust Turkey into the pursuit of an activist foreign policy in the region in the last decade of the twentieth century. Yet the Republic relies on its U.S. alignment for long-term strategic security in NATO and to deter threats of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East”.<sup>22</sup> Martin also adds that Turkey has some common economic interests with Iran, but on the other hand some conflicting political ones. Iran is a potential source of markets with its large population and a source of cheap oil and gas for Turkey. Thus, Turkey started to get Iranian gas in 2001 through a new pipeline as a result of 1996 long-term gas agreement negotiated despite U.S. opposition and violation of the 1996 Iran–Libya Sanctions Act.<sup>23</sup>

Turkey and Iran share the same concern about possible Kurdish independence in Iraq’s north but neither wants the other to be dominant in the region. Turkey also does not want Iraq to be under the dominance of Iran. Iran used the Kurdish card for a long time against Turkey, but recently developing Kurdish movements in Iran forced her to agree with Turkey. In addition, another big divergence between Turkey, which is a secular democracy, and Iran, which is an Islamic theocracy, is ideology. Turkey has accused Iran of trying to export its Islamic regime to Turkey and offering support for terrorist groups such as Hizbullah and the PKK. The Turkish armed forces have condemned Iran for helping injured PKK terrorists, providing them weapons, including SAM-7B air-defense missiles, which were used to shoot down two Turkish helicopters in 1997.<sup>24</sup>

Another school of thought sees Ankara and Washington drifting apart. According to Ian O. Lesser, “Turkish–American relations since the 1960s have been characterized by recurring tensions, including widespread anti-Americanism, arms embargoes, and disagreements over the Aegean, Kurds,

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<sup>22</sup> Lenore G. Martin and Dimitris Keredis, “Turkey’s Middle East Foreign Policy”, *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, (The MIT Press Cambridge, 2004), 157.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Olson, “Turkish-Iran relations, 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics”, Mazda Publishers, 2003, 40.

northern Iraq, and the PKK”.<sup>25</sup> Lesser also emphasizes that “the Justice and Development Party (AKP) brought a new look to Turkey’s foreign policy, with more attention to the north, east, and south, which is needed for diversification and strategic depth. By design or circumstance, more of Turkey’s external policy energy is now devoted to relations with Russia, Iran, Syria, et al., and rather less to the maintenance of relations with Washington and Brussels”.<sup>26</sup> But when we consider the help of Turkey from the very beginning of Turkish–American relations until now, including the AKP era, it looks like a heavy judgment. Even though it seemed like Turkey did not help the United States in the second Gulf War, even in the worst situation Turkey let the United States use their Incirlik base, which has been critical for the support of operations on the battlefield. Turkey opened up airfields and strategic logistics ways, which carry seventy-five percent of the materiel to support coalition operations in Iraq.<sup>27</sup> There is anger toward Bush’s Middle-Eastern policies, not only in Turkey, but also in most of the European states, so disagreements over Iraq need not imply anything more about Turkey’s relationship to the United States than it does in the case of America’s European allies.

According to Sedat Laciner, “Some right-wing Jewish groups in the U.S. see the AKP and al-Qaeda as identical. These groups characterize the governing AKP as ‘Islamist’ and claim that Turkey is leaning towards Islamism at the expense of Westernism”.<sup>28</sup> But Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other members of the AKP have rejected this claim repeatedly, from the very first day of their government. Laciner also adds that during the AKP period, Turkey reached a historical peak of democratic reforms and the Turkish economy developed

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<sup>25</sup> Ian O. Lesser, “The State of U.S.-Turkish Relations: Moving beyond Geopolitics”, in *The Evolution of U.S.-Turkish Relations in a Transatlantic Context*, April 2008, 44. <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> Ian O. Lesser, “The State of U.S.-Turkish Relations: Moving beyond Geopolitics”, in *The Evolution of U.S.-Turkish Relations in a Transatlantic Context*, April 2008, 46-47. <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

dramatic integration with Western economies.<sup>29</sup> Besides that, the many mutual agreements that were signed with Israel during the AKP government seem to be evidence against that perspective.

Finally, Turkey's cooperation with Iran seems difficult under present circumstances. According to Laciner, "Iran's support to the PKK terrorist organization is still in memory. The intelligence reports clearly show that Teheran helped or ignored the PKK in the 1980s and 1990s. It is claimed that the PKK bases and other infrastructure around Kandil Mountain was constructed by the Iranians. Iran generally turned a blind eye to terror and the PKK terrorists freely crossed the border to attack Turkish forces during the 1990s".<sup>30</sup> After the United States invaded Iraq, the balance of power changed in the region. Iran started to be a target of the terrorism she used against Turkey for many years. "The PKK recently killed more than a hundred Iranian soldiers and police. The Kurdish problem in Iraq and other Iraqi problems threaten Iran too, and Iran seeks Turkey's friendship over Iraq and the PKK problem. However, it is really difficult for the Turks to fully trust Iran in strategic issues. Past experiences and mixed signals from Teheran also do not help the Turks to rely on Iran".<sup>31</sup>

#### **D. METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION**

This study will rely on a combination of historical and policy analysis. Initial chapters will use historical research to analyze international relations among Turkey, the U.S., and Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution. The historical review focuses on Turkey's bilateral relations with the United States and Iran, respectively, and stresses turning points in these relationships, which are important in understanding both today's realities and future foreign-policy alternatives. The next part of the thesis will identify policy options for Turkey and

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<sup>29</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "The State of U.S.-Turkish Relations: Moving beyond Geopolitics", in *The Evolution of U.S.-Turkish Relations in a Transatlantic Context*, April 2008, 46-47 <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

possible advantages and disadvantages. The thesis concludes with an assessment of these potential outcomes and recommendations for the future. In general, I will use the historical study method, but will also use case studies to emphasize events that brought about important shifts in foreign affairs.

This study relies on data obtained through secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers articles, and research-center reports. The next chapter in this thesis presents a review of Turkish—U.S. relations in their historical context since 1979. The third chapter examines Turkish—Iranian relations in the same period. The fourth chapter examines the conflicting interests of Turkey, the United States, and Iran, with pros and cons for Turkey; the fifth chapter offers conclusions and recommendations. Turkey's position between a neighbor and an old ally seems to be challenging, but for Turkey's best interest Turkey should find a balance in her relations with her neighbors and with western allies and the United States.

## **II. TURKISH–AMERICAN RELATIONS**

This chapter is about the main events that shaped the background of Turkish-American relations which have been varied over time, but in an order. Turkey's strategic location, unique democracy, devotion to modernization and credibility and reliability were important factors that made her a strong ally of the United States for a considerable period. Although there have been some diverging interests, generally both states realized the importance of each other and took measures needed to protect the alliance during the most strained times. In general Turkish-American relations provided many important advantages to both states from the very beginning. Turkey protected its territorial integrity against the increasing pressures of the Soviet Union, and received United States aid in order to develop its economy and military. On the other hand the United States contained the spread of the Soviet Communism, has used Turkish bases for power projection in the region to protect stability, and achieved Turkish support in many crisis all over the world. The common values of the United States and Turkey and their overlapping interests brought them into alliance from 1940s to now. Both states mostly achieved their interests during this time. It is highly important for both states to protect and develop the relations which started to decline during Bush administration, and both sides should calculate and respect their interests reciprocally.

### **A. THE COLD WAR**

Turkey was one of the lucky countries that were able to stay neutral during World War II. Under high pressure from both sides of the conflict to choose a side and join, Turkey's determined stance against these pressures spared her the devastation of World War II. İsmet İnönü, the second president of the young Turkish Republic during World War II, was a wise and clever leader, having been an experienced soldier during the Turkish war of independence and a diplomat during the negotiations of Lausanne Agreement. He held Turkey safe in a circle

of fire during the deadliest war of human history. “Turkey entered World War II on the Allied side shortly before the war ended, becoming a charter member of the United Nations”.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, Iran tried to stay neutral, but after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Iran’s strategic position forced Britain and the Soviet Union to invade Iran to create a path for British and American equipment support to the Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup> “At the Tehran Conference, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Prime Minister Josef Stalin reaffirmed a commitment to Iran’s independence and territorial integrity and a willingness to extend economic assistance to Iran”.<sup>34</sup> The United States and Britain withdrew their troops after the war but the Soviet Union did not do the same, instead requesting oil concessions from Iran and posing a danger to the stability of the region. Realizing the danger caused by the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and the U.N. pressed the Soviet Union to withdraw her troops from Iran. Finally, with the strong posture of President Truman, Soviet troops left Iran in 1946. Truman’s letter to his secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, discussed the increasing danger posed by the Soviet Union and her communist ideology.

There is not a doubt in my mind that Russia intends an invasion of Turkey and the Black Sea Straits to the Mediterranean. Unless Russia is faced with an iron fist and strong language, another war is in the making. ... I do not think we should play compromise any longer. ... I am tired of babying the Soviets.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Turkey”, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, January 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> University of San Diego, “Iran in World War II”, <http://history.sandiego.edu/GEN/WW2tIMELINE/iran.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> George Lenczowski, “United States’ Support for Iran’s Independence and Integrity, 1945-1959”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 401, *America and the Middle East* (May, 1972), 45-55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/1039111.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).



The implementation of the Truman Doctrine is generally accepted as the beginning of the Cold War. The duty of supporting Greece and Turkey from the danger of spreading communism was not within the financial capability of Britain. The United States was the only power that could have done this in favor of her interests in the region to contain the spread of communism. “Truman justified his request on two grounds. He argued that a communist victory in the Greek civil war would endanger the political stability of Turkey, which would undermine the political stability of the Middle East. This could not be allowed in light of the region's immense strategic importance to U.S. national security”.<sup>36</sup> Realizing the need to help not only European states, the United States started to support Greece and Turkey economically and militarily under the Marshall Plan.

Turkey continued to support the U.S. Cold War strategy not only in the Middle East but also in other parts of the World by contributing troops, as in the Korean War, which took place six thousand miles away from Turkey. By contributing fifteen-thousand soldiers to this war, Turkey showed and proved her willingness to be a member of the Western nations, which was the main purpose of the new Turkish republic and its founder Kemal Ataturk, and achieved a chance to be a member of NATO, which was established by Western countries against the threat of Soviet communism. As Ertugrul Kurkcu stated, “Participation in the Korean War sealed with blood Turkey's baptism as a ‘Western nation’ in the global realignment of forces”.<sup>37</sup>

As Boyer and Katulis observe, “Turkey’s entrance into NATO—the alliance’s first expansion of significance—was designed as a buffer against Soviet expansion into the Persian Gulf region. At the time, Turkey’s role was largely to maintain pressure on the Eastern Bloc’s southern flank in the event of

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36 U.S. Department of State, “The Truman Doctrine, 1947”, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/82210.htm> (accessed February 21, 2009).

37 Ertugrul Kurkcu, “Desperately but Deliberately, Turkey Joins Bush’s War”, Middle East Report Online (MERIP), November 8, 2001, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero110801.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

war with the Soviet Union”.<sup>38</sup> After becoming a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, Turkey always has been an important security partner for the United States. “Ankara tied down 24 Soviet divisions that otherwise could have been deployed against NATO forces on the Central Front. Turkey also provided important installations for monitoring and verifying Soviet compliance with arms-control agreements”.<sup>39</sup>

Turkey allowed the United States to build a base in Adana in 1951. Adana Air Base was finished in 1954 and an agreement was signed between the Turkish General Staff and the United States Air Force about the joint use of this new base.<sup>40</sup> Its first official name “Adana Air Base (AB) later started to be known as Incirlik Common Defense Installation and on 28 February 1958 its name was changed to Incirlik Air Base”.<sup>41</sup> “The U.S. Air Force initially planned to use the base as an emergency staging and recovery site for medium and heavy bombers. The following years would prove the value of Incirlik's location, not only in countering the Soviet threat, but also in responding to crises in the Middle East”.<sup>42</sup> The United States has used this base in many operations, such as reconnaissance missions against the Soviet Union, the Lebanon crisis in 1958, the first Gulf War, humanitarian relief operations, the second Gulf War, the war on terrorism in Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq, and many minor missions. The following figure depicts the importance of Incirlik Air Base.

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38 Spencer P. Boyer and Brian Katulis, “The Neglected Alliance Restoring U.S.-Turkish Relations to Meet 21st Century Challenges”, Center for American Progress, December 2008, [http://www.turkey-now.org/db/Docs/CAP\\_turkey.pdf](http://www.turkey-now.org/db/Docs/CAP_turkey.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

39 F. Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey as a US Security Partner”, RAND Project Air Force, 2008, 1, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG694.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG694.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

40 Incirlik Air Base Official Website, “Incirlik Air Base History”, <http://www.incirlik.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=5344> (accessed February 21, 2009).

41 Globalsecurity.org, “Incirlik Air Base”, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/incirlik-history.htm> accessed February 21, 2009).

42 Ibid.

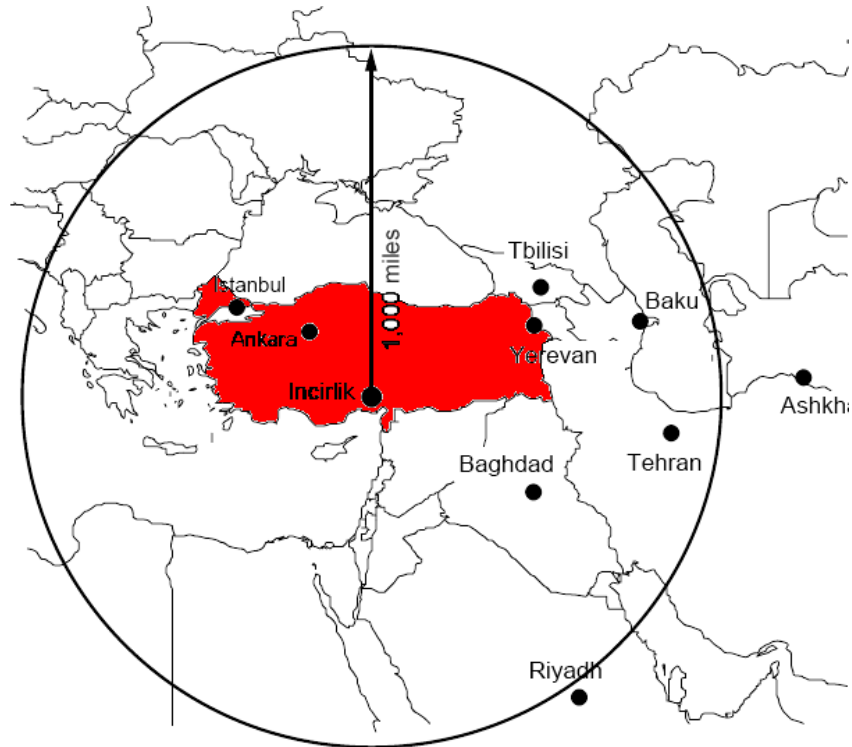


Figure 5. Geographical importance of the Incirlik Air Base<sup>43</sup>

The United States deployed nuclear weapons all over the Europe as a countermeasure against the threat of the Soviet communism.<sup>44</sup> “In 1959, Ankara permitted the American Jupiter missiles to launch from its soil. Turkey, as the first Muslim country to have recognized Israel, has proved to be a significant and viable partner for the American Middle East policy determined by the Eisenhower Doctrine”.<sup>45</sup>

43 Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, F. Stephan Larrabee, “The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan”, Rand Corporation, 2000. [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1241/MR1241.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1241/MR1241.sum.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

44 Hans M. Kristensen, “US Nuclear Weapons in Europe”, Natural Resources Defense Council, 2005 [http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/euro/euro\\_pt1.pdf](http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/euro/euro_pt1.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

45 Omer G. Isyar, “An Analysis of Turkish–American Relations From 1945 to 2004: Initiatives and Reactions in Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Volume 4, Number 3, Fall 2005, <http://www.alternativesjournal.net/volume4/number3/isyar.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

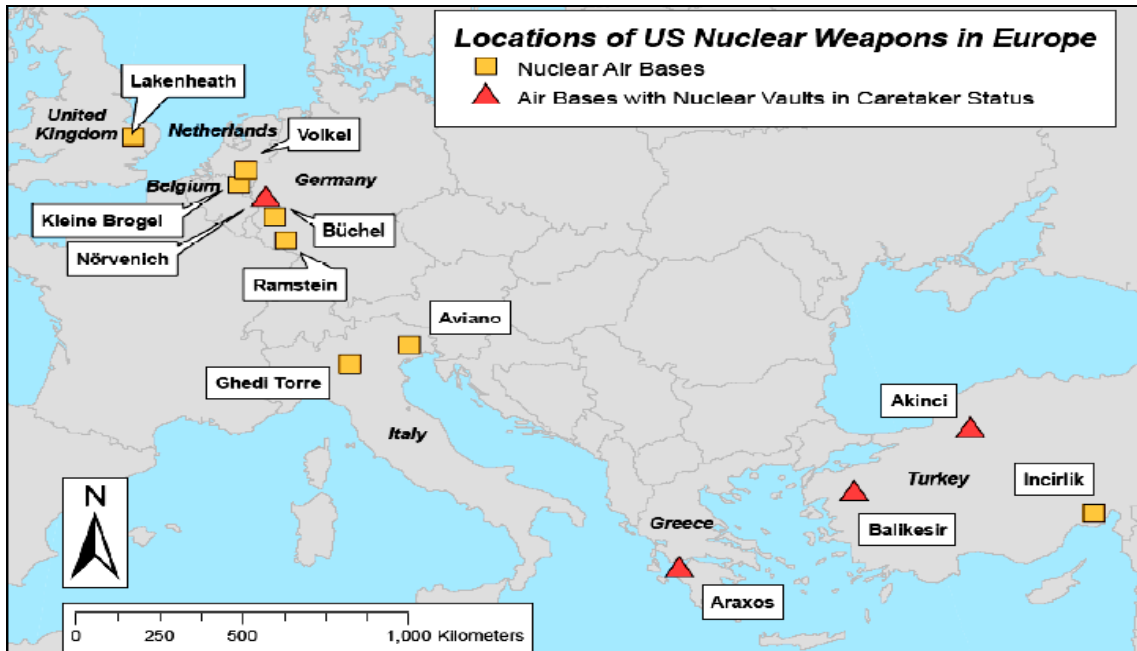


Figure 6. American Nuclear Weapons in Europe

In the 1950s, the United States was seeking to establish an alliance structure in the Middle East as another countermeasure against the communist threat. “The idea was to conclude an alliance that would link the southernmost member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Turkey, with the westernmost member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), Pakistan”.<sup>46</sup> Turkey participated in the Baghdad Pact in 1955 alongside Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Britain to prevent communist incursions and foster peace in the Middle East. The organization was renamed as the Central Treaty Organization, or CENTO, in 1959 after Iraq left.<sup>47</sup>

There are two important disappointments that caused some decline in the relationship between Turkey and the United States in the 1960s. The first was the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. The American U-2 reconnaissance pilot Major

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of State, “The Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)”, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/98683.htm> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Richard Heyser took photos of Soviet missiles in Cuba on October 14, 1962.<sup>48</sup> The Soviet Union used her missiles as a bargaining trump against the American Jupiter missiles in Turkey. “Reciprocal removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey and Soviet missiles from Cuba was proposed by the Soviets. Although the U.S. administration refused to confirm such a deal, the Kennedy administration unilaterally removed the Jupiter missiles from Turkey in 1963”.<sup>49</sup> Şükrü Elekdağ who was the Turkish ambassador to Washington between 1979 and 1989 emphasized that Turkey had no information about the bargaining between the two superpowers during the crisis.<sup>50</sup> “Though they would have been superseded by the submarine-based Polaris missiles in any case, the Jupiter missiles experience was a salutary reminder of the asymmetrical nature of the Turkish–American alliance, and has not been forgotten by Turkey’s foreign policy and security elites”.<sup>51</sup>

The second strain between Turkey and the United States took place when President Johnson sent a letter to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü to prevent a possible Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1964. President Johnson was warning about the danger of a Soviet response to a Turkish military intervention to Cyprus and declaring to Prime Minister İnönü not to look for automatic NATO protection in such a situation. Furthermore, he warned İnönü not to propose using U.S. military equipment if such an intervention happened.<sup>52</sup> The Turkish government was dissatisfied because of strained relations with the United States and started to revise its relations with the Soviet Union as a response. In 1965, the Turkish

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48 Laurence Chang & Peter Kornbluh, “The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962”, The George Washington University National Security Archive, September 28 to October 26, 1962, 358 [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba\\_mis\\_cri/620928\\_621025%20Chronology%201.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/620928_621025%20Chronology%201.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

49 Betül Dicle, “Factors Driving Turkish Foreign Policy”, Master’s thesis Louisiana State University, 2008, 26, [http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-11022008-215511/unrestricted/Finalized\\_Dicle\\_Masters\\_Thesis\\_.pdf](http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-11022008-215511/unrestricted/Finalized_Dicle_Masters_Thesis_.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

50 Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 130.

51 Ibid., 131.

52 Ibid.

foreign minister visited Moscow and the Soviet Union recognized two different nations on the island of Cyprus. In 1966, Turkey asked for a review of the ninety-one bilateral agreements between Turkey and the United States and restricted the privileges given to American bases and personnel.<sup>53</sup>

The worst decline in Turkish–American relations occurred after the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus. After the failure of a long period of diplomatic efforts to find a solution to Greek Cypriot attacks against Turkish Cypriots, Turkey moved unilaterally to protect peace on the island as one of three guarantor states. On July 15, 1974, the Greek dictators staged a coup in Cyprus, and five days later Turkey invaded the north of the island.<sup>54</sup> The United States Congress condemned the invasion and imposed an arms embargo on Turkey from 1975 until 1978. As a response, “Turkey has annulled the Bilateral Defense and Cooperation Agreement and halted all foreign military base activities excepting the ones in the framework of the NATO purposes, over all Turkey”.<sup>55</sup>

According to Larrabee, “Turks regarded the embargo as a slap in the face of a loyal ally, so the embargo led to a sharp deterioration of U.S.–Turkish relations. It is still remembered with bitterness and colors contemporary Turkish attitudes about the degree to which the United States can be considered a reliable ally”.<sup>56</sup>

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53 Uğur Büyüktepe, “Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinin Müttefiklik ve Stratejik Ortaklık Boyutlarının Karşılaştırmalı Analizi”, Master’s thesis Karadeniz Technical University, 2006, 26-29.

54 Michael W. Doyle, Nicholas Sambanis, “United Nations Peace Operations Making War and Building Peace”, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2006, 263.

55 Omer G. Isyar, “An Analysis of Turkish-American Relations From 1945 to 2004: Initiatives and Reactions in Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Volume 4, Number 3, Fall 2005, <http://www.alternativesjournal.net/volume4/number3/isyar.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

56 F. Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey as a US Security Partner”, RAND Project Air Force, 2008, 27, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG694.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG694.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

Even though the relations were highly strained due to the U.S. arms embargo, the United States fully lifted the embargo in 1978 just before losing another ally in the region, Iran.<sup>57</sup> In 1980, Turkey and the United States signed the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA), in which Turkey gave permission to the U.S. to use its airfields and intelligence facilities. In return, Turkey achieved U.S. economic support and assistance in modernizing the Turkish military.<sup>58</sup> “Turkey also purchased fighter jets (F-16s) from the U.S. and co-produced F-16s with the U.S. based on the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement”.<sup>59</sup>

The Motherland Party of Turgut Özal, who was an ultra pro-American politician with strong religious tendencies, won the general elections in 1983.<sup>60</sup> “He was willing to come across with constitutional institutions in order to implement even more pro-American policies.”<sup>61</sup> Özal supported and wanted to participate in the American occupation of Iraq in 1991, but was halted by the resignation of his chief of staff, Necip Torumtay, and the strong opposition of the foreign-affairs ministry.<sup>62</sup>

In this context, Turkey and the United States worked well enough to protect their interests in the region. “Although there were episodic problems in U.S.–Turkish relations, for much of the Cold War, Turkey was a major recipient of

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57 Murat Karagoz, “US Arms Embargo Against Turkey- after 30 Years An Institutional Approach Towards US Policy Making”, PERCEPTIONS Winter 2004-2005, 116 <http://www.sam.gov.tr/perceptions/Volume9/Winter/Murat%20Karag%C3%B6z.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

58 Betül Dicle, “Factors Driving Turkish Foreign Policy”, Master’s thesis Louisiana State University, 2008, 34, [http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-11022008-215511/unrestricted/Finalized\\_Dicle\\_Masters\\_Thesis\\_.pdf](http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-11022008-215511/unrestricted/Finalized_Dicle_Masters_Thesis_.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 33.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

U.S. economic and military assistance”.<sup>63</sup> In return, the United States used Turkey’s alliance and military bases in many crises, operations, and policies towards region.

## **B. AFTER THE COLD WAR**

### **1. 1991 Gulf War**

The end of the Cold War caused significant changes for a Turkey that had stood at the forefront against the threat of communism for many years as an American ally. “The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union forced Turkey to redefine and reshape its foreign policy in important ways. Initially many Turks feared that the end of the Cold War would diminish Turkey’s strategic importance. These fears, however, proved to be unfounded. Turkey’s strategic importance has increased, not decreased, as a result of the end of the Cold War”.<sup>64</sup>

Turkish–American relations started to intensify especially after the 1990s, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. This event triggered a sequence of events that encouraged Turkey to increase relations with the United States but be more suspicious about the American policies in the region. From then on, Turkey followed contradictory policies back and forth between protecting its territorial integrity and protecting the relations with the United States.<sup>65</sup>

Turkey proved the geopolitical importance of itself and the territories it is sitting on after the 1990s, when the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, sent the Iraqi armed forces to invade Kuwait and capture her oil fields. The Turkish president, Turgut Özal, cut off the Kirkuk–Yumurtalik oil pipeline from Iraq and gave

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<sup>63</sup> Betül Dicle, “Factors Driving Turkish Foreign Policy”, Master’s thesis Louisiana State University, 2008, X, [http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-11022008-215511/unrestricted/Finalized\\_Dicle\\_Masters\\_Thesis\\_.pdf](http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-11022008-215511/unrestricted/Finalized_Dicle_Masters_Thesis_.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, Chapter 3, 34.

<sup>65</sup> Özlem Demirkıran, “Soguk Savas Sonrasi Ortadogu Ekseninde Turk-Amerikan Iliskileri”, Master’s thesis Suleyman Demirel University, 2005, 2.



sanction to the coalition forces to strike Iraq from Turkey during operation Desert Storm, although it brought a high economic cost and raised the risk of Iraqi military action towards Turkey.<sup>66</sup> Turkey opened its most important bases, such as Incirlik, Batman, Mus, and some others for the use of coalition forces, and Turkish forces offered vital assistance by tying down Iraqi forces in the north of Iraq.<sup>67</sup> “Many officials in the United States emphasized the increased importance of Turkey. Some have even argued that Turkey’s role in the new era could be as important as Germany’s during the Cold War”.<sup>68</sup>

Turkey played another important role, and bore the economic results of this role again, after Operation Desert Storm, by giving permission to use Turkish bases for Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Northern Watch, which were planned and conducted to protect Kurds from the rage of Saddam Hussein. “Provide Comfort Operation strained Turkey's economy in ways it could not absorb. Initially, Ankara had to care for the Kurdish refugees. Turks complained that they were being asked single-handedly to rectify the plight of these people. With the world watching (via CNN), Turkey could hardly turn its back on this problem”.<sup>69</sup>

President Bush worked on some type of assistance to ease Turkey’s situation by economic aids, supporting Turkey’s full membership in the European Economic Community, supporting the idea of an American opening to the former Soviet Republics with Turkey and even endorsing Turkey’s position on Cyprus.

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<sup>66</sup> National Defense University. “Final Report to Congress: Conduct of the Persian Gulf War”, <http://www.ndu.edu/library/epubs/cpgw.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, F. Stephan Larrabee, “The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan”, Rand Corporation, 2000, Chapter 4, 14 [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1241/MR1241.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1241/MR1241.sum.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., Chapter 5, 80.

<sup>69</sup> Stephen J. Blank, Stephen C. Pelletiere, William T. Johnsen, “Turkey’s Strategic Position at the Crossroads of World Affairs”, Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College, December 3, 1993, 46 <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=178> (accessed February 21, 2009).

However, President Bush was voted out of office just after Desert Storm and his last \$543 million aid request for Turkey to Congress was cut to \$450 million and converted into loans.<sup>70</sup>

Turkey and the United States were in mutual understanding regarding the terrorist organization PKK once the Cold War was over. Both states agreed that PKK terrorism had become a major destabilizing threat in the region and presented a danger to Turkish national security. Thus, Washington and Ankara regarded the response of Turkey to PKK terrorism as legitimate self defense, not only in southeastern Turkey, but also in Iraq's north, and considered it in accordance with international law. However, the Turkish government did not agree with some important U.S. assumptions and solution proposals related to the problem.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, the PKK found a safe heaven in the north of Iraq, indirectly under the protection of coalition operations that created an uncontrolled region in the north of Iraq next to Turkish borders.

In addition to this, Turkey has never been compensated for its economic losses during and after Gulf War I. "Before the imposition of UN sanctions, Iraq was Turkey's third largest trade partner and its largest oil supplier. Turkey would like to see this trade restored".<sup>72</sup> However, later developments in Iraq always postponed Turkey's wishes and dragged the situation into a worse condition.

These harmful experiences became some of the most criticized issues about American policies among the society and elites of Turkey and have never been forgotten. These events became the roots of increasing anti-American

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<sup>70</sup> Stephen J. Blank, Stephen C. Pelletiere, William T. Johnsen, "Turkey's Strategic Position at the Crossroads of World Affairs", Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College, December 3, 1993, 49 <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=178> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> Mahmut Ali Baykan, "Turkish Perspectives on Turkish-US Relations Concerning Persian Gulf Security in the Post-Cold War Era: 1989-1995", Middle East Journal, Vol. 50, No. 3(Summer, 1996), 350 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4328955> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, F. Stephan Larrabee, "The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan", Rand Corporation, 2000, Chapter 3, 12. [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1241/MR1241.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1241/MR1241.sum.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

ideas among the people in Turkey. The United States started to be blamed for any problem related to Iraq and posing danger to Turkish interests, especially increasing PKK terrorism and economic difficulties.

## **2. 1 March Draft Crisis**

The September 11 terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center became a turning point in post–Cold War world politics. Turkey, as a country that has been fighting against terrorism for more than twenty years, was one of the states that immediately condemned the terrorist attacks and provided full support to the United States as it declared war on terrorism and started its first operation in Afghanistan. Turkey agreed to send troops to Afghanistan and stood with the United States on related issues. “On November 2, in response to Washington’s request for assistance, ninety Turkish special-forces operators deployed to Afghanistan, where they provided technical assistance to the northern alliance”.<sup>73</sup> Turkey played other important roles in Afghanistan, especially after the Taliban regime was toppled. Turkey stationed a contingent of 825 troops in Afghanistan and has twice led the NATO international security-assistance force.<sup>74</sup>

At the same time, Turkey had a cautious foreign policy concerning Iraq, which was directly related with Turkey’s security and regional stability. As a neighbor of Iraq, Turkey bore the burden of the first Gulf War in many areas and was faced with concerns ranging from economics and security to stability and territorial integrity. According to Steven Cook and Elizabeth Sherwood, “Ankara argues that the international isolation of Iraq, which prior to the first Gulf War was

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<sup>73</sup> Steven A. Cook and Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, “Generating Momentum for a New Era in U.S.-Turkey Relations”, Council on Foreign Relations, June 2006, 7 <http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/TurkeyCSR.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Turkey's largest trading partner, cost the Turkish treasury an estimated \$35 billion and damaged the local economy of the region bordering Iraq—one of the most underdeveloped in Turkey".<sup>75</sup>

Besides this, the possibility of the emergence of an independent Kurdish state in the north of Iraq and the future of oil-rich city Kirkuk were declared as "the red line" of Turkey even though "Paul Wolfowitz said that 'a separate Kurdish state in the north would be destabilizing to Turkey and would be unacceptable to the United States'".<sup>76</sup> Thus, Turkey was unwilling to see a second war on her borders, which could push Turkey in to more severe conditions. Instead, Turkey as always, was in favor of political solutions to protect stability. According to Prof. Nasuh Uslu, "The general Turkish view on Iraq is that Iraq's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity should be preserved and Iraq should comply fully with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. While the U.S. remains focused on removing Saddam from power and challenges Iraq's territorial integrity with its policies, Turkey does not want to see Iraq destroyed and divided, fearing that this would destabilize the balance of power in the region and contribute to the expansion of the Iranian influence".<sup>77</sup>

Even though Turkey was in a massive election process and had many concerns and questions about the Iraqi policies of the U.S., the new AKP government (with its inexperienced ministers) and general staff were both in favor of supporting the U.S. if security and economic losses would be

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<sup>75</sup> Steven A. Cook and Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, "Generating Momentum for a New Era in U.S.-Turkey Relations", Council on Foreign Relations, June 2006, 10 <http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/TurkeyCSR.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> Ertugrul Kurkcu, "Washington Pushes Turkey Toward 'The Red Line'", Middle East Report Online (MERIP), August 6, 2002 <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero080602.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>77</sup> Nasuh Uslu, "The Factors Affecting Turkey's Relations with the United States in the Post-Cold War Period", The Turkish YearBook, Vol. XXXI, 200 [http://www.politics.ankara.edu.tr/dosyalar/MMTY/31/11\\_nasuh\\_uslu.pdf](http://www.politics.ankara.edu.tr/dosyalar/MMTY/31/11_nasuh_uslu.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

compensated. The Turkish government accepted a first request about modernization of Turkish bases and facilities for use by the United States, and U.S. military personnel started to work on those sites.

The AK Party government prepared a motion that would cover a period of six months on March 1, 2003, which sought permission to deploy Turkish troops in Iraq and to allow U.S. troops to use Turkish soil for deployment in Iraq. The motion was rejected in Parliament because it failed to receive the vote of the absolute majority as suggested by Article 96 of the Constitution. Out of the 533 deputies, who attended the voting, 250 of them voted against the passage for the motion while 264 deputies voted in favor of it; 19 deputies cast a blank vote.<sup>78</sup>

Turkey and the United States could not agree about opening a northern front, but Turkey opened its airspace to the United States “on March 19 and authorized U.S. access to eleven Turkish air corridors for six months. Turkey’s air space was used by armed Tomahawk missiles, U.S. Navy B-2 bombers, and U.S. planes that airlifted the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade paratroopers who jumped into northern Iraq”.<sup>79</sup>

According to Prof. Ilter Turan, there were several reasons for Turkey’s failure to respond to U.S. requests.

The Turkish public was clearly against such involvement. There were also disagreements among various branches of government. The president was insistent on a UN resolution, the opposition party was adamant in its resistance; the government party was divided within itself and could not get its deputies and even some ministers in the cabinet to vote for it. The military while supportive of the resolution had abstained from strong public statements in its favor in order to prevent the government from blaming the military for dragging Turkey into Iraq. The decision appears not so much the result of deliberate policies to say no to the U.S. but a failure on the part of the government to mobilize sufficient support for the

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<sup>78</sup> Ercan Yavuz, Ali Aslan Kilic, “US Seeks to Withdraw from Iraq Using Turkish Soil”, Today’s Zaman, 12 February, 2009 <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=166679&bolum=100> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>79</sup> Carol Migdalovitz, “Iraq: Turkey, the Deployment of U.S. Forces, and Related Issues”, Report for Congress, May 2, 2003, 18 <http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/crs/permalink/meta-crs-8186:1> (accessed February 21, 2009).

resolution to pass. The foot-dragging on the part of the Turkish government was often a result of uncertainty about how much their party would back them and an unrealistic optimism that somehow Saddam might be persuaded to change his course.<sup>80</sup>

### **3. The U.S. Invasion of Iraq**

The United States invaded Iraq in order to topple Saddam Hussein, who was alleged to have weapons of mass destruction, in March 2003, without a UN resolution or a northern Turkish front. The Turkish Grand National Assembly's rejection of opening a northern front and stationing American troops in Turkey strained relations on both states. For Turkey, the worst scenario about the American invasion of Iraq was its strategically dangerous results which would directly affect Turkey and other regional states in one way or another. "Indeed, said Dogu Ergil, head of an independent research institute, the war to oust the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, 'ended up with the United States becoming Turkey's neighbor' as the de facto ruler of Iraq, opposed to any Turkish military adventure that might set off a new conflict with the region's Kurds".<sup>81</sup>

Kurds were already enjoying regional autonomy since the 1991 Gulf War under the protection of the United States, Britain, and Turkey. Turkey's refusal of the American request for a northern front became another invaluable chance for Kurds to move alongside the United States and await their reward after the war. Turkey was being harshly criticized by hawkish American politicians about increasing American casualties due to the lack of a northern front.

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<sup>80</sup> Ilter Turan, "The United States and Turkey: Limiting Unilateralism", ISN ETH Zurich International Relations and Security Network <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0C54E3B3-1E9C-BE1E-2C24-A6A8C7060233&lng=en&id=22191> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>81</sup> Alan Cowell, "A Nation at War: Turkey, Spared a War, Still Pays a Heavy Price", The New York Times, April 19, 2003 <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F07E1DD153AF93AA25757C0A9659C8B63> (accessed February 21, 2009).

According to Zalmay Khalilzad, “Turks fear that U.S. efforts to topple Saddam could destabilize Iraq and lead to the creation of an independent Kurdish state on Turkey’s border”.<sup>82</sup> Khalilzad’s assessment and the fear of Turkey came out to be true. The Kurds fought against Saddam with the United States and managed to have a seat at the table after Saddam. Jalal Talabani became the new president of Iraq, and Mesoud Barzani became the president of the de facto independent Kurdish region in the north of Iraq. In October 2005, President George Bush welcomed Barzani, who was in his traditional clothes, to the White House as the “president of the Kurdish region”.<sup>83</sup> After this development “the charge d'affaires for the U.S. embassy, Nancy McEldowney, was called to the foreign ministry, where Turkish Undersecretary Nabi Şensoy formally asked her to explain ‘whose president’ Barzani was welcomed as at the White House. Şensoy reportedly passed on a warning to McEldowney that such practices threatened the unity of Iraq. The official U.S. reply to the events was, ‘... Barzani carries the title of ‘President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.’ This is why Bush referred to him as ‘president.’ President Bush spoke directly to Barzani about Turkey’s sensitivity towards Iraq’s geographic and political unity.”<sup>84</sup> This looks like an ironic controversy, but the truth is a big change took place in the picture of Iraq after invasion, but not in favor of the Turkish–American relations. These persons were the leaders of two Kurdish tribes until the invasion of Iraq and now they became presidents. Iraq was divided between three ethnic groups, Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, and a rally began to control more territories by means of force.

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<sup>82</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, F. Stephan Larrabee, “The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan”, Rand Corporation, 2000, Chapter 3, 12 [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1241/MR1241.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1241/MR1241.sum.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>83</sup> Cuneyt Ulsever, “Bush Receives ‘President Barzani’ at the White House”, Turks.us Daily World EU News, 27 October, 2005 <http://www.turks.us/article.php?story=20051027100029925> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>84</sup> The Journal of Turkish Weekly, 28 October 2005 <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/21203/ankara-visibly-disturbed-by-barzani-visit-to-white-house.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

Even though “The U.S. government guaranteed that Kurds would not enter Kirkuk or Mosul”,<sup>85</sup> Kurds looted the government land-registration offices of oil-rich Kirkuk and burned all land deeds, birth registries, records, and titles of those territories and started a planned immigration of Kurds from various areas of Iraq to Kirkuk to change the demography in favor of themselves.<sup>86</sup> Turkey watched the developments carefully and President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Erdogan, warned Iraqi Kurdish groups against trying to seize control of Kirkuk. He said Turkey would not stand by amid growing ethnic tensions, prompting accusations of interference by Iraqi Kurds.<sup>87</sup> Turkey repeatedly stated the historical importance of the city of Kirkuk, which should not become a destabilizing factor and should stay under the control of all Iraqis. According to the late historian Hanna Batatu, “Kirkuk had been Turkish through and through in the not too distant past ... [but] by degrees, Kurds moved into the city from the surrounding villages ... By 1959, they had swollen to more than one-third of the population, and the Turkomans had declined to just over half. While the Kurds ‘Kurdified’ Irbil, Kirkuk retained a greater sense of cultural links with Turkey... [and] ethnic identity”.<sup>88</sup> Turkish officials warned that Kurds would use the oil revenues of Kirkuk to prepare for a fight for their independence. Ankara requested Washington to make two changes to the Iraqi constitution to prevent this grave development. First, a Kirkuk referendum about the administrative and geographic status of Kirkuk must include all Iraqis and second, Ankara wanted the referendum delayed two years.<sup>89</sup> Turkish intelligence found out that “Barzani, who is the leader of Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (IKDP), sent money in the

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85 Yucel Guclu, “Who Owns Kirkuk? The Turkoman Case”, *The Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2007, 79-86 [http://www.meforum.org/article/1074#\\_ftn23](http://www.meforum.org/article/1074#_ftn23).

86 Ibid.

87 Mark Tran, “UN Warns of Looming Crisis in Kirkuk”, *Guardian.co.uk*, 16 January 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jan/16/iraq.marktran> (accessed February 21, 2009).

88 Yucel Guclu, “Who Owns Kirkuk? The Turkoman Case”, *The Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2007, 79-86 [http://www.meforum.org/article/1074#\\_ftn23](http://www.meforum.org/article/1074#_ftn23) (accessed February 21, 2009).



amount of \$500,000 to former Iraqi Justice Minister Hashim El Shebli. The documents carried by Turkish Special Representative to Iraq, Celikkol appear to show that Barzani offered bribes to various Iraqi officials to oversee new laws offering compensation to ethnic Arabs who would leave the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk".<sup>90</sup>

Two acts of American carelessness disturb the Turkish side concerning the Iraqi invasion. "First, in the run-up to the war, Washington summarily dismissed Ankara's warnings about the consequences of invading Iraq. Second, as events have confirmed Turkey's grave misgivings about the war, Turks believe the United States has not taken sufficient care to address Turkey's security concerns".<sup>91</sup> This situation creates an idea in the minds of both Turkish intellectuals and ordinary Turkish citizens that the United States does not support Turkey in its struggle with the PKK but supports an independent Kurdistan.

Turks as a people are very sensitive about some issues and soldiers' security is at the top of the list. Turks have been proud of their soldiers from the beginning of their history, and the Turkish army is based on a draft by which every twenty-year-old has a duty to serve. This means that every Turkish man serves in the armed forces once in his life, and every family has at least one family member in the army, considering its 450,000 soldiers. Thus, every Turkish soldier killed by the PKK terrorists of Iraq's north, which is under American control, increases animosity towards U.S. policies; and consequently, anti-Americanism in Turkey has increased to levels never seen before.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Steven A. Cook and Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, "Generating Momentum for a New Era in U.S.-Turkey Relations", Council on Foreign Relations, June 2006, 11 <http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/TurkeyCSR.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>90</sup> Hurriyet, "Turkish Special Representative to Iraq Brings Documents Showing 'Barzani Bribes' to the U.S.", 11 April 2007 [http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/6312972\\_p.asp](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/6312972_p.asp).

<sup>91</sup> Steven A. Cook and Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, "Generating Momentum for a New Era in U.S.-Turkey Relations", Council on Foreign Relations, June 2006, 10 <http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/TurkeyCSR.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Despite Turkey and America's deep divergence about the invasion of Iraq, both states were aware of their mutual importance. Thus, as U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said in 2004, "regardless of Ankara's views of U.S. policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, Turkey remained a very strong ally in the fight against terrorism".<sup>93</sup> Turkey became the most important life-vein supporting American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Incirlik Airbase became the most important logistics center for United States troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. After a disagreement between Washington and Ankara about the Armenian resolution, "Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates warned about the 'enormous implications' for American military operations in Iraq if Turkey limited flights over its territory or restricted access to Incirlik Air Base through where seventy percent of the military cargo sent to Iraq is flown."<sup>94</sup>

All I can say is that a resolution that looks back almost a hundred years to an event that took place under a predecessor government, the Ottomans, and that has enormous present-day implications for American soldiers and Marines and sailors and airmen in Iraq, is something we need to take very seriously.<sup>95</sup>

Turkey as an ally of the United States in hard times always stood with her in many crises. Today the United States again needs Turkey's help in a safe and successful withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. "The ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government is not against the withdrawal of U.S. land forces from Iraq via Turkey and wants the U.S. administration to set an exact withdrawal timetable. During the talks, which were held recently, officials

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<sup>93</sup> Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate General of Press and Information, "Turkish Press Review", <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/CHR/ING2004/08/04x08x12.HTM#%202> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>94</sup> David S. Cloud, "Military Seeks Alternatives in Case Turkey Limits Access", The New York Times, 12 October, 2007 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/world/europe/12military.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

discussed the prospects of withdrawing U.S. troops first through northern Iraq and then transferring them to Adana and Iskenderun through the Habur border gate".<sup>96</sup>

Turkey's requests concerning Iraq are simple and deal with the most important problem between the two allies since 2003. First, Ankara wants Washington to be more active against PKK terrorism and to put pressure on Mesoud Barzani not turn a blind eye to PKK enclaves, to forbid all actions of the PKK, and to hand over leaders of the terrorist organization to Turkey. Second, Turkey wants to protect the integrity of Iraq, which takes first place in the list of security concerns and has lethal importance for Turkey's future. Thus, Iraqi unity seems to be the main issue in Turkish–American relations.

#### **4. The Sacking Crisis**

Turkish–American relations were damaged in March 2003 by the Turkish Grand National Assembly's veto of a northern front to Iraq from Turkey. Before its effects could die down, "another tension between Turkey and the United States over Iraq were heightened in July 2003 when reports surfaced that eleven Turkish Special Forces officers and others were detained for allegedly attempting to assassinate Kurdish political figures".<sup>97</sup> This crisis became one of the most important indicators of the derailed relations between Turkey and the United States. According to former the Turkish ambassador to the United States, Nuzhet Kandemir, "This crisis, the incident during which American soldiers ambushed a number of Turkish special forces and put sacks over their heads, referred to as 'the sacking incident,' created an unacceptable situation for the Turkish

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<sup>96</sup> Ercan Yavuz, Ali Aslan Kilic, "US Seeks to Withdraw from Iraq Using Turkish Soil", Today's Zaman, 12 February, 2009 <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=166679&bolum=100> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Spencer P. Boyer and Brian Katulis, "The Neglected Alliance Restoring U.S.-Turkish Relations to Meet 21st Century Challenges", Center for American Progress, December 2008, [http://www.turkey-now.org/db/Docs/CAP\\_turkey.pdf](http://www.turkey-now.org/db/Docs/CAP_turkey.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

people”.<sup>98</sup> Turkish General Staff described the event as “the biggest crisis of trust between Turkish and U.S. forces.” “For some sixty hours, it led to an unprecedented blockade of one NATO country's facilities by another”.<sup>99</sup>

According to Nuzhet Kandemir, “This act was not at all compatible with friendship and alliance. Kurdish actors in Iraq played an active role in this incident, which was perceived by the Turkish public as a conscious effort to take revenge on Turkey for the 1 March 2003 parliamentary action”.<sup>100</sup> This crisis created another trust problem between the United States and Turkey. According to Soner Cagaptay, “Many in Ankara believe that the United States is trying to set up a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, and many in Washington are convinced that Turkey is aiming to complicate things there for the United States. Accordingly, little trust can be found today between American and Turkish troops, especially those stationed in Iraq”.<sup>101</sup>

This crisis affected all levels of Turkish society, causing a deep negative attitude towards the United States and remaining for a long time the most important item on the agenda in Turkey. The movie “Valley of the Wolves: Iraq,” which was prepared as a response to the sacking crisis, became an important indicator of increasing anti-American attitude of the society and it became the most popular film of the year by breaking all box-office records within days of release. Even though both states declared that the event was a mistake and apologized to each other, the social effects of the “humiliation,” which touched a delicate nerve among Turkish elites and citizens, still can be felt.

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<sup>98</sup> Nuzhet Kandemir(former Turkish Ambassador to the United States), “Turkish-American Relations Past and Future”, [http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi\\_turkey\\_tpq\\_id\\_21.pdf](http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_turkey_tpq_id_21.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>99</sup> Jon Gorvett, “Turkey’s ‘Red Lines,’ U.S. Raid in Northern Iraq Cause Further Strain in Relations”, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, April 2006 <http://www.wrmea.com/archives/sept03/0309036.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>100</sup> Nuzhet Kandemir, “Turkish-American Relations Past and Future”, [http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi\\_turkey\\_tpq\\_id\\_21.pdf](http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_turkey_tpq_id_21.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>101</sup> Soner Cagaptay, “Turkey’s Future Direction and the U.S.-Turkey Relations”, Committee on International Relations U.S. House of Representatives, October 1 2003, [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2003\\_hr/cag100103.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2003_hr/cag100103.htm) (accessed February 21, 2009).

## 5. Different Priorities for the United States and Turkey

According to the Hudson Institute senior fellow Zeyno Baran, “The fundamental problem for U.S.-Turkey relations is that the threat perceptions of Washington and Ankara have changed considerably since 9/11. For the U.S., the primary threat is al-Qaeda terrorism. While Saddam Hussein was considered a primary threat for some time, Iran and now Syria are increasingly viewed in this light—as are Hamas and Hizbullah. For Turkey, the primary threats are the PKK, instability in and outside Turkey, the independence of Kurdistan or the splitting of Iraq into three sections (whether by ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ partition)”.<sup>102</sup> These different priorities have been dragging the longtime allies towards different directions in the name of national interests.

Iraq’s future is one of the most important and troubled topics in Turkish–American relations since 1991 Gulf War, but especially after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Although Turkey fully supported the first Gulf War in 1991 and rapidly went along with the U.S. in Afghanistan, in 2003 Turkey opposed the invasion of Iraq for several important reasons. These reasons continued to be of utmost importance after the U.S. invasion, and still are.

The situation in Iraq did not progress in the way Turkey wished and Turkey and the United States had agreed on before. The United States gave its attention to stability in Iraq and supported the relatively stable north and Kurdish region for the sake of protecting and improving stability. On the Turkish side, the decreasing influence in the north of Iraq was once more confirmed with the Kurdish victory in the 26 May elections in Kirkuk, which were organized and controlled by the United States. This action of restricting the rights of Turkmen in Kirkuk by the United States showed to the Turks that the U.S. did not pay any

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<sup>102</sup> Zeyno Baran, “Changed Threat Perceptions,” in Rajan Menon and S. Enders Wimbush’s “Is the United States Losing Turkey?”, Hudson Institute, 25 March 2007, 22 [http://www.hudson.org/files/pdf\\_upload/Turkey%20PDF.pdf](http://www.hudson.org/files/pdf_upload/Turkey%20PDF.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

attention to the 28 February agreement, in which Turkey declared its sensitivities and priorities about Kirkuk and Turkmen living in Kirkuk, signed between Turkey and the United States.<sup>103</sup>

Turkey suffered the most pain, damage, and economic loss, after Iraq itself, from Iraq's instability. Turkey has been fighting terrorists who launch their attacks from bases in Iraq, where the central government lost its ability to control the whole state after the U.S. invasion. Kurdish groups, who are being supported by the United States in return their help in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, are not moving against the PKK terrorists and the U.S. pressure on them seemed fruitless until President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki signed a protocol for the withdrawing of the U.S. troops.

After the date of withdrawal of the United States became known, the Kurdish groups in the north of Iraq started to look for friendly relations with Turkey. In this picture, the Shia groups can develop their relations with Iran and the Sunnis probably will develop their relations with Sunni Arab states, but the Kurds will stay alone in an unfriendly environment. This scenario seems to be accepted by the Kurds in Iraq, especially after the Arab 12<sup>th</sup> Division's move to Kirkuk.<sup>104</sup> After these developments, it does not seem to me by chance that they hosted the annual Abant meeting platform in Erbil and started talk about friendship, brotherhood, and peaceful futures waiting for both sides. They forgot their provocative statements about not being willing to give to Turkey "PKK terrorists and even a Kurdish cat", which was mentioned by Celal Talabani, to Turkey.

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<sup>103</sup> Robert Olson, "Turkish-Iran Relations 1979-2004 Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics", Mazda Publishers, California 2004, 218.

<sup>104</sup> Milliyet, "Kurdish Regional Government's Response to the Iraq Armed Forces", 9 February 2009, International Strategic Research Institution (USAK-Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu) <http://www.usakgundem.com/haber.php?id=29647> (accessed February 21, 2009).

To conclude, there are some important issues between Turkey and the United States on which both states should agree and find a common way which can meet the needs of both states. The stability and unity of Iraq, Nabucco energy line, Iran's nuclear ambitions, cooperation on the war on terror which mostly means PKK for Turkey and Al Qaeda for the United States, Turkish permission for the use of its bases by the United States for future needs, the United States' support to Turkey's accession to the EU, and removing the isolation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and other economic issues are the main drivers that force both states to cooperate in these areas in order to achieve their goals.

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### **III. TURKISH–IRANIAN RELATIONS**

Turkish-Iranian relations have been generally characterized by rivalry during history. Being on neighboring territories has forced both states to struggle for power in favor of themselves and this became the main reason of tension between these two neighboring states with completely different cultures. The Iranian states became the most important representative of the Shiite sect and the Turkish state of the Sunni sect. This difference generally has been a source of distrust between both states. One of the main issues between both states is the ambitions of Iran about spreading its regime to the neighboring states and controlling them. Iran has been in a struggle to spread the Shiite sect among the Turks living in Turkey and tried different methods including terror to achieve its goal. Iran also supported the PKK terrorism for a long time and provided shelter, training, weapons and medical needs for them.

#### **A. DURING THE COLD WAR**

##### **1. Before the Islamic Revolution**

Turks and Iranians are the oldest residents of their territories in the Middle East. There is a long background between these two nations and the states that were established by them. However, Turks and Iranians have struggled to be the hegemon of the Middle East and to control this geography since the Çaldıran Battle in 1514 between Yavuz Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail, both of whom were Turks but Muslims of different sects.<sup>105</sup> This struggle for domination caused many tensions and crises in their long neighborhood relations, but they preserved their cultures and societies up to now without one surrendering to the other. The mistrust and fear of being dominated that are byproducts of the long struggle between Turks and Iranians have survived as long as relations have

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<sup>105</sup> Ufuk Aydın, "A Close Look to the Future of Turkish-Iranian Relations", Master's thesis Naval Postgraduate School, September 1994, 24 (accessed February 21, 2009).

gone on and have never disappeared.<sup>106</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although Sunni–Shiite sectarian differences seemed to lose importance in the bilateral relations between Turkey and Iran, they still lie in the subconscious of the both states and their people.<sup>107</sup>

Turkey and Iran had similar fortunes during their establishment period at the beginning of the 20th century and during the Cold War. “Reza Khan’s coup in Tehran, in February 1921, marked the beginning of a new period in the history of Turkish–Iranian relations. At roughly the same time, in both countries, two nationalist, anti-imperialist, and open-minded soldiers, Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) and Reza Khan/Shah struggled against enemies both internal and external”.<sup>108</sup> Despite these similarities, mistrust remained. “Although Reza Khan supported Atatürk’s modernization policies, he was concerned that the Turkish Republic was simply a continuation of the Committee of Union and Progress and as such, was a pan-Turkic structure; it is for this reason that he adopted anti-Turkish policies in Iran”.<sup>109</sup>

These two southern neighbors of the Soviet Union were under the pressure of communist threat during the Cold War. The Soviet Union was unwilling to pull its troops back after World War II finished, although they agreed to do so with the United States and Britain before invading Iran. In addition to that, the Soviet Union requested oil-concession agreements with the Iranian government and used the Azeri Turks and Kurds as a threat against the integrity

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<sup>106</sup> Sedat Laçiner, “İran–Türkiye İlişkileri: Aşılamayan Güven Sorunu”, Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu (USAK), 2 December, 2008  
<http://www.usakgundem.com/yazarlar.php?id=906&type=3> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>107</sup> Arif Keskin, “Bütün Boyutları ile İran ve Türkiye İlişkileri”,  
<http://www.oyrenci.com/SpecialPart/b5775632-5417-4cf3-a4fa-6749171121e6.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>108</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historic Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations”, Middle East Review of International Affairs(MERIA), Volume 7, No.3-September 2003, 122 <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue3/cetinsaya.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>109</sup> Arif Keskin, “Iran-Turkey Relations: Balance, Rivalry and Mutual Dependence”, Avrasya Stratejik Arastirmalar Merkezi-ASAM (Eurasia Strategic Research Center), 3 September 2008, <http://www.asam.org.tr/tr/yazigoster.asp?ID=2546&kat1=5&kat2=> (accessed February 21, 2009).

of Iran.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, Turkey was being threatened and pressured about rearrangement of the control of the Turkish Straits in favor of the Soviet Union and giving the cities of Kars and Ardahan to the Soviet Union. Turkey and Iran looked for the alliance of the West and the United States to prevent the Soviet threat. Thus, Turkish–Iranian relations continued to be friendly and strengthened by regional alliances such as Bagdad Pact (later named CENTO) in 1955 and Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964.<sup>111</sup>

“Iran and Turkey were the only Muslim states which recognized the state of Israel immediately after its establishment in 1948. As non-Arab and as pro-Western states in the Middle East, they were isolated to a certain extent by Arab countries, which intensified their efforts to seek support from the Western powers”.<sup>112</sup> According to Cetinsaya in the 1960s and 1970s, several issues created new tensions between Turkey and Iran. These issues were:

First, the Shah continued to express his dissatisfactions regarding CENTO, despite efforts by post-1963 governments in Ankara, especially the Demirel governments from 1965 onwards, to placate him in this regard.

Second, Turkish public opinion, and especially the growing left, became increasingly critical of the shah’s dictatorship. The critical language of the Turkish press toward the regime in Iran was a source of irritation to the Shah.

Third, a large number of Iranian dissident students living in Turkey received support from the Turkish left.

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<sup>110</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historic Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*(MERIA), Volume 7, No.3-September 2003, 125 <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue3/cetinsaya.pdf>, and University of San Diego, “Iran in World War II”, <http://history.sandiego.edu/GEN/WW2tIMELINE/iran.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>111</sup> Ufuk Aydın, “A Close Look to the Future of Turkish-Iranian Relations”, Master’s thesis Naval Postgraduate School, September 1994, 70-74.

<sup>112</sup> Unal Gundogan, “Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*(MERIA), Volume 7, No.1 March 2003, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue1/jv7n1a1.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

Fourth, Turkey was anxious about the shah's support of Iraqi Kurds and repeatedly warned him concerning the possible results of such support for both Turkey and Iran itself. At a time when Iraqi-Turkish relations were progressing rapidly, and inevitably straining relations between Iran and Turkey, Ankara tried several times to mediate between Baghdad and Tehran on the issue of the Shatt al-Arab river forming part of their border.

Fifth, Turkey was apprehensive about the shah's attempt to establish patronage over Turkish Kurds and Alevis; the Turkish authorities believed that he had sent emissaries to the Kurdish and Alevi regions of Anatolia.<sup>113</sup>

Iran gave up its claims on Bahrain through a secret deal with Britain, in exchange for invading the three disputed islands, Great- and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa in the Persian Gulf, in 1970. However, the Shah's aggressive policies and ambitions disturbed both Iraq and Turkey.<sup>114</sup>

Turkey was in a difficult situation economically during the 1973 oil crisis, politically during the 1974 Cyprus crisis and militarily with the U.S. arms embargo. On the other hand, Iran became a rich, militarily strong, and strategically important country in regional politics.<sup>115</sup> "Although the Shah, expressing his concern to Washington, was critical of the arms embargo and supported the Turkish cause in Cyprus, he was nevertheless content with the change in the relative power situation between Turkey and Iran, and sought to turn it to his advantage"<sup>116</sup> and did not accept the Turkish request for cheap oil.

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<sup>113</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historic Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations", *Middle East Review of International Affairs(MERIA)*, Volume 7, No.3-September 2003, 127 <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue3/cetinsaya.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>114</sup> Ufuk Aydın, "A Close Look to the Future of Turkish-Iranian Relations", Master's thesis Naval Postgraduate School, September 1994, 78.

<sup>115</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historic Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations", *Middle East Review of International Affairs(MERIA)*, Volume 7, No.3-September 2003, 127 <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue3/cetinsaya.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

## 2. After the Islamic Revolution

There has always been a regime problem between Turkey and Iran. This problem revolved around the differences between their monarchic and republican systems after 1924. The regime differences between Turkey and Iran turned into complete opposition after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. Iran changed its structure according to the rules of Sheri 'a.<sup>117</sup> Although the general idea about the revolution was that it would deeply damage Turkish–Iranian relations due to their completely opposite political mentalities, it did not come true.<sup>118</sup> “Contrary to expectation, the same patterns of conflict and collaboration in relations continued as ever, and reached a peak especially in the field of trade, compared with the shah period”.<sup>119</sup>

The identity definition has generally been the basic factor in the determination of Turkish–Iranian relations. Turkey started its westernization struggles at the end of Ottoman era and is still struggling to westernize. Thus, Turkey has always defined itself as a Western state and tried to reach the standards of developed states, which are generally Western states, especially after Kemal Ataturk established the Turkish republic. However, Iran started to define itself with an Eastern identity and saw Western culture as an evil danger after the revolution.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Arif Keskin, “Bütün Boyutları ile İran ve Türkiye İlişkileri” (Turkish-Iran Relations with All Dimensions), <http://www.oyrenci.com/SpecialPart/b5775632-5417-4cf3-a4fa-6749171121e6.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>118</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “From the Tanzimat to the Islamic Revolution: Continuity and Change in Turkish-Iranian Relations”, Ortadogu ve Balkan Incelemeleri Vakfi (OBIV) (Middle East and Balkan Researches Foundation) <http://www.obiv.org.tr/2003/ORTADOGU/Gokhan.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Arif Keskin, “Bütün Boyutları ile İran ve Türkiye İlişkileri” (Turkish-Iran Relations with All Dimensions), <http://www.oyrenci.com/SpecialPart/b5775632-5417-4cf3-a4fa-6749171121e6.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

According to Kibaroglu, there are contrary forces at work in the relationship between Turkey and Iran:

The 1979 Islamic revolution shook the stability of Turkish–Iranian relations. The Islamic Republic of Iran’s militant Islamist statements and foreign policy fuelled tension and mutual distrust. However, both countries sought to prevent conflict or a rupture in relations. This reluctance to escalate the tensions stemmed largely from their desire to protect their economic interests, given that Turkey was an exporter of goods to Iran and Iran was a major energy supplier for Turkey.<sup>121</sup>

The Islamic-revolution supporters increased their demonstrations and attacks in big cities such as Tehran, Mashad, Tabriz and Qum in the late 1970s and the revolutionary transformation gained momentum in Iran. Turkey was concerned about a possible Soviet intervention or communist takeover in Iran, which would put Turkey’s security interests in danger.<sup>122</sup> Although concerned about the Soviet threat, “The Turkish government preferred neutrality toward Iran’s internal conflict. Politicians consciously refrained from any clear declaration of support for the Shah in his difficulties”.<sup>123</sup>

Islamic revolution succeeded in 1979, and Turkey instantaneously recognized the new administration as the legitimate regime and declared its desire to develop relations in the new era. “In his message to Tehran, Ecevit stressed the importance of preserving good bilateral relations and Turkey’s intention not to interfere in Iran’s internal affairs. He advised ‘other countries to do the same,’ a point aimed at the Soviet Union but also applying to the United States”.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Twists and Turns in Turkish-Iranian Relations”, in *Iran Revolution at 30, The Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, <http://www.mideasti.org/viewpoint/the-iranian-revolution-30> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>122</sup> Unal Gundogan, “Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)*, Volume 7, No.1 March 2003, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue1/jv7n1a1.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Cetinsaya there were several reasons for Turkey's acceptance and recognition of the new regime from the outset and refusal to intervene:

First, the Ecevit government, as a continuation of its foreign and domestic policy, had already been critical of the shah and the CENTO alliance. They were therefore pleased with an 'independent' and non-aligned' Iran.

Secondly, the Turkish military and political elite, just as after the FWW and the SWW, were apprehensive about the disintegration of Iran as result of a civil war. In that case, a Kurdish separatist movement would rise or the Soviets would take control of Iran. Turkey therefore closely observed the policy of the new regime towards the Kurdish disturbances in Iran, following the revolution.

Thirdly, a weakened and isolated revolutionary Iran would be a good trading partner for Turkey's bankrupt economy. Last but not least, Turkey was pleased to see that Iran had lost its prestige, power, and capacity in regional politics, as the pendulum swung once more in favor of Turkey.

All these factors played a part in varying degrees in the developments of the relations between secular and Western-oriented Turkey and Islamic and anti-Western Iran.<sup>125</sup>

The American embassy takeover and seizure of diplomats as hostages in Tehran strained the relations between Turkey and Iran, but Turkey did not join the United States embargo on Iran. "The Turkish government condemned the Iranian behavior but also rejected U.S. demands for the use of the Incirlik bases in case of a military intervention inside Iran. This decision was closely related to the 1974–1978 U.S. arms embargo on Turkey".<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "From the Tanzimat to the Islamic Revolution: Continuity and Change in Turkish-Iranian Relations", Ortadogu ve Balkan Incelemeleri Vakfi (OBIV) (Middle East and Balkan Researches Foundation) <http://www.obiv.org.tr/2003/ORTADOGU/Gokhan.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>126</sup> Unal Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences", Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA), Volume 7, No.1 March 2003, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue1/jv7n1a1.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

In response to Turkey's rejection of the U.S. embargo on Iran, the Iranian government offered to develop both economic and political relations with Turkey. Turkey accepted this offer because of its serious budget and balance-of-payments deficits. "Thus, Turkey sent a message to U.S. authorities in April 1980 stressing 'the special nature of the historical good relations with Iran' and stating 'we said that the sanctions could not be beneficial [but would] be harmful. We are a neighboring country with Iran and have historical ties which will also be in the future'".<sup>127</sup> The following table shows the sizeable increase of foreign trade between 1980–1985 due to the Iran–Iraq War and the increases and decreases of trade values according to changing policies between Turkey and Iran until 2004.

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<sup>127</sup> Unal Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences", *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)*, Volume 7, No.1 March 2003, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue1/jv7n1a1.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).



Turkish Iran Foreign Trade (1000 Dollar)					
YEARS	EXPORT	IMPORT	VOLUME	BALANCE	EXP/IMP
1980	\$84.821	\$802.503	\$887.324	-\$717.682	9
1985	\$1.078.852	\$1.264.655	\$2.343.507	-\$185.803	1
1990	\$495.483	\$492.400	\$987.883	\$3.083	1
1991	\$486.903	\$90.538	\$577.441	\$396.365	0,2
1992	\$455.211	\$364.883	\$820.094	\$90.328	0,8
1993	\$289.571	\$667.027	\$956.598	-\$377.456	2,3
1994	\$249.784	\$692.409	\$942.193	-\$442.625	2,8
1995	\$268.434	\$686.476	\$954.910	-\$418.042	2,6
1996	\$297.521	\$806.334	\$1.103.855	-\$508.813	2,7
1997	\$307.008	\$646.402	\$953.410	-\$339.394	2,1
1998	\$194.697	\$433.026	\$627.723	-\$238.329	2,2
1999	\$157.815	\$635.928	\$793.743	-\$478.113	4
2000	\$235.784	\$815.730	\$1.051.514	-\$579.946	3,5
2001	\$360.536	\$839.800	\$1.200.336	-\$479.264	2,3
2002	\$291.699	\$918.631	\$1.210.330	-\$626.932	3,1
2003	\$533.786	\$1.860.683	\$2.394.469	\$1.326.897	3,5
2004	\$812.580	\$1.962.058	\$2.774.638	\$1.149.478	2,4

Table 1. Turkish–Iranian Foreign Trade Statistics Chart<sup>128</sup>

After the Islamic revolution, Iran was trying to spread the ideology of revolution towards the Shiites living in Iraq and supporting the Kurdish groups against Iraq. This actions of Iran and the dispute over the waterway of Shatt-ul Arab forced Iraq to mobilize its forces. Iraq wanted to take advantage of the weak situation of Iran, and thus waged war against Iran in 1980.<sup>129</sup> This war continued for eight years and ended in 1988. Although Turkey was not happy with Iran's backing of the Kurdish groups in Iraq, she preferred to stay neutral during the

<sup>128</sup> Turkish Statistical Institute, "Foreign Trade Statistical Database", [http://tuikrapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwervlet?disticaretdb2&report=TYtablo02.RDF&desformat=html&p\\_kod=1&p\\_yil1=1980&p\\_ulke1=616&ENVID=disticaretEnv](http://tuikrapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwervlet?disticaretdb2&report=TYtablo02.RDF&desformat=html&p_kod=1&p_yil1=1980&p_ulke1=616&ENVID=disticaretEnv) (accessed February 21, 2009).

Iran–Iraq war and protected her relations with both states until the end of war. “Turkey’s main concern was preserving the power balance in the region and securing the oil-supply lines”.<sup>130</sup>

At the same time, Turkey started to struggle with PKK terrorism after 1983, and this became another problematic issue between Ankara and Tehran. “Ankara blamed Tehran for allowing PKK terrorists to use Iranian territory as a base for their attacks on Turkey. Iran, on the other hand, accused Turkey of supporting anti-revolutionary forces, such as the Mujaheddin-e Khalq (MKO) within Iran”.<sup>131</sup> Iran’s support of PKK terrorism caused deep resentment in Turkey and sometimes PKK terrorism brought the two rival states to the brink of hot conflicts. “Turkey requested Iran to sign a similar ‘hot pursuit’ agreement to the one it had done with Iraq in October 1984, but Iran did not accept at first. However, it was vital for Iran that Turkey continued its neutral stance and, thus they signed an agreement in November 1984 with Turkey promising that they would not allow activity that would threaten Turkey’s security on Iranian territory”.<sup>132</sup>

Turkey mobilized its armed forces against the PKK terrorists in the north of Iraq and conducted several operations in 1986 and 1987. After these operations “Mejlis spokesman Hashemi Rafsanjani claimed that Ankara was planning to capture the oilfields of Kirkuk. Tehran continued these claims in the 1990s

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<sup>129</sup> Ufuk Aydın, “A Close Look to the Future of Turkish-Iranian Relations”, Master’s thesis Naval Postgraduate School, September 1994, 89.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Erkan Arslan, “Defense Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey”, Master’s thesis Naval Postgraduate School, December 2007, 17.

<sup>132</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Turkish-Iranian Relations since the Revolution”, Ortadogu ve Balkan Incelemeleri Vakfi (OBIV) (Middle East and Balkan Researches Foundation) <http://www.obiv.org.tr/2004/Ortadogu/008-Cetinsaya.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

too”.<sup>133</sup> According to Nadir Entessar, Tehran was afraid of Turkey’s aim to directly control the oil fields in the north of Iraq and, by doing so, changing the balance of power in the region.<sup>134</sup>

## **B. AFTER THE COLD WAR**

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War caused a vacuum of power over which Turkey and Iran struggled. The Turkic and Muslim independent states of the old Soviet Union became the subject of rivalry between Turkey and Iran. “Both countries underlined their common history, values, and linguistic and religious affinities with the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Western countries, especially the United States, which feared the spread of political Islam in the area and regarded Turkey as a ‘model’ to the former Soviet republics, supported Ankara’s efforts”.<sup>135</sup>

Iran’s most concerning issue was the situation of newly independent Azerbaijan and the ten million Azeri who live in Iran and control seventy-five percent of the markets of Tehran. Once in 1946 Azeri nationalists of Iran tried to establish Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and Kurds tried to establish Mahabad Republic but failed. Thus, Iran had two threats against its integrity after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>136</sup>

According to Robert Olson, “there were three main geostrategic and geopolitical issues” between Iran and Turkey to be agreed on:

1. Common interests in the oil and gas reserves and the distribution of these,

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<sup>133</sup> Robert Olson, “Turkish-Iran Relations 1979-2004 Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics”, Mazda Publishers, California 2004, 14.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Twists and Turns in Turkish-Iranian Relations”, in Iran Revolution at 30, The Middle East Institute Viewpoints, <http://www.mideasti.org/viewpoint/the-iranian-revolution-30> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>136</sup> Robert Olson, “Turkish-Iran Relations 1979-2004 Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics”, Mazda Publishers, California 2004, 15.

2. The willingness of the both states to refrain from Caucasian and Central Asian politics and especially Azeri matters in Azerbaijan and Iran,
3. The need to agree on the Turkish and Iranian areas of interest in the north of Iraq.<sup>137</sup>

Another and, in fact, more important issue was the nationalist movements of the Kurds in three neighboring states. The Kurdish problem was considered to be one of the most important threats to the integrity of Turkey, Iran, and Syria, who signed many security protocols and organized a dozen meetings related to this problem and to preventing the possibility of a Kurdish state in the north of Iraq.<sup>138</sup>

The parliamentary elections of 1995 in Turkey resulted in the victory of Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) with a 21.3 percent voter turnout. According to Olson, "As Tehran knew, while Erbakan was a big supporter and a fan of the Islamic regime in Iran, he was suspicious towards the United States and struggling for establishing D-8 economic organization which would include Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Egypt".<sup>139</sup> Erbakan made his first foreign-country visit to Iran and took some important steps to crush the PKK with the cooperation of Iran. He signed a 23-billion-dollar natural gas agreement with Iran although the United States Congress had put sanctions on to companies that invested more than 40-million dollars in Iranian oil and gas.<sup>140</sup>

Although Turkey and Iran resolved some problems between them and signed economic agreements, Turkish–Iranian relations were getting worse towards the end of the 1990s. Ankara warned Iran not to interfere in its domestic

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<sup>137</sup> Robert Olson, "Turkish-Iran Relations 1979-2004 Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics", Mazda Publishers, California 2004, 19.

<sup>138</sup> Robert Olson, "Turkish-Iran Relations 1979-2004 Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics", Mazda Publishers, California 2004, 20.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

affairs by means of radical Islamic organizations that were being used to agitate against the secular regime in Turkey. “The events reached a peak on the night of February 1, 1997, when during the commemoration of ‘Jerusalem Day’ in Sincan (a small town in the environs of the Turkish capital of Ankara), posters of Hizbullah and Hamas were displayed and the participants strongly criticized the secular regime of the Turkish Republic. One of the participants, then-Iranian ambassador to Turkey Mohammed Reza Bagheri, reportedly called for the institution of Shari‘a in Turkey”.<sup>141</sup> This event caused deep anger and a crisis in Ankara, and Bagheri and Istanbul consulate Mohammed Riza Rashid were pronounced “persona non grata.” Later, both states called back their ambassadors.<sup>142</sup>

PKK terrorism became again a problem between Iran and Turkey in 1999, when Öcalan was captured and brought to Turkey. “The biggest demonstrations were organized by the members of the PKK settled in Iran, when Öcalan was captured. Moreover, upon the closure of Syrian border, PKK militants started to pass into Turkey through Iran”.<sup>143</sup> Iran blamed Turkey for student events in Iran, then claimed that a village in Iran was bombed by Turkish planes. “These were followed by the arrest of two Turkish soldiers who crossed the border and entered Iran by mistake. The crisis started by these arrests ended only with the release of the Turkish soldiers. In the meantime, Iran surprisingly accepted ‘joint and sudden’ inspection and ‘synchronized’ joint operation, which had been demanded by Turkey for long time, in the places where PKK was active inside the Iranian border”.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Twists and Turns in Turkish-Iranian Relations”, in *Iran Revolution at 30, The Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, <http://www.mideasti.org/viewpoint/the-iranian-revolution-30> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Turkish-Iranian Relations since the Revolution”, Ortadogu ve Balkan Incelemeleri Vakfi (OBIV) (Middle East and Balkan Researches Foundation) <http://www.obiv.org.tr/2004/Ortadogu/008-Cetinsaya.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>144</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Turkish-Iranian Relations since the Revolution”, Ortadogu ve Balkan Incelemeleri Vakfi (OBIV) (Middle East and Balkan Researches Foundation) <http://www.obiv.org.tr/2004/Ortadogu/008-Cetinsaya.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

According to Gokhan Cetinsaya, Turkey changed its position toward Iran after September 11. “Following the events leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the relationship between Turkey and Iran has seemingly entered a new phase. Similar concerns about the probable consequences of developments in Iraq have caused the two countries’ positions with respect to regional political issues to converge”.<sup>145</sup> Turkey and Iran lost their influence in the north of Iraq after the U.S. located in Iraq. After the invasion of Iraq, the United States became the new neighbor of Turkey and Iran, and both states could not maneuver in the area without U.S. permission.<sup>146</sup>

Although relations between Turkey and Iran have had their ups and downs in history and “in spite of the stark ideological differences, since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey in 2002, Turkey and Iran have increasingly cooperated on a variety of fronts. The AKP’s Islamic credentials and affinity for the Muslim world have certainly helped Iran and Turkey get closer, but it would be wrong to assume that this is the most important reason for the warming of relations”.<sup>147</sup> The Turkish government has been looking for good relations with its neighbors and producing policies and economic links that will work for this purpose.

In this context, “today, the geopolitical situation has provided ample opportunities for Turkey and Iran to become friendlier. Cooperation comes mainly in the form of energy arrangements, where Turkey looks to Iran’s abundant oil and gas resources to supply its growing energy needs. The situation in Northern Iraq also provides a point of convergence with both countries combating Kurdish

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<sup>145</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Turkish-Iranian Relations since the Revolution”, Ortadogu ve Balkan Incelemeleri Vakfi (OBIV) (Middle East and Balkan Researches Foundation) <http://www.obiv.org.tr/2004/Ortadogu/008-Cetinsaya.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>146</sup> Robert Olson, “Turkish-Iran Relations 1979-2004 Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics”, Mazda Publishers, California 2004, 217.

<sup>147</sup> Daphne McCurdy, “Turkish-Iranian Relations: When Opposites Attract”, Turkish Policy Quarterly, Volume 7, No. 2, 88 <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/images/stories/2008-02-policy/dmc.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

separatist groups based in this autonomous region”.<sup>148</sup> Since Turkey’s energy demand is increasing and Turkey imports ninety percent of its energy, Iran came into prominence as a close energy source to meet the energy problem. Thus, Iran is the second largest energy supplier to Turkey, after Russia.<sup>149</sup>

Turkey remains in a difficult situation in becoming closer to Iran, due to Iran’s worsening relations with the West because of its nuclear program and support of terrorist groups. According to McCurdy, “Ankara prefers to follow a pragmatic policy and stress the positive aspects of its relationship with Iran, but does not want this to come at the expense of its Western orientation”.<sup>150</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu states that “Turkey’s official stance toward Iran’s nuclear program is clear. Turkey recognizes the right of Iran, which is a member of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to develop nuclear technology, provided that it remains on a peaceful track and allows for the application of full-scope safeguards inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in such a way that would lend the utmost confidence to the international community about its intentions”.<sup>151</sup>

Turkish–Iranian relations and their future seem likely to be directly affected by Turkey’s position as a member of the United Nations Security Council for the period of 2009 to 2010 and a newly elected member of the board of governors of the IAEA, which has been busy researching suspicious nuclear activity in Iran.<sup>152</sup>

According to Kibaroglu, “Bearing in mind the rivalry between the Turks and the Iranians throughout history, despite the fact that some common concerns

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148 Daphne McCurdy, “Turkish-Iranian Relations: When Opposites Attract”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Volume 7, No. 2, 89 <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/images/stories/2008-02-policy/dmc.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

149 Daphne McCurdy, “Turkish-Iranian Relations: When Opposites Attract”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Volume 7, No. 2, 89 <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/images/stories/2008-02-policy/dmc.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

150 *Ibid.*

151 Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Twists and Turns in Turkish-Iranian Relations”, in *Iran Revolution at 30*, *The Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, <http://www.mideasti.org/viewpoint/the-iranian-revolution-30> (accessed February 21, 2009).

152 *Ibid.*

exist as regards their national interests, the scope and the content of Turkish-Iranian relations may not go far beyond the present levels unless Turkey makes a radical turn in its relations with the West in general, and with the United States in particular, even if they may not be at satisfactory levels either”.<sup>153</sup>

In conclusion, it seems difficult for Turkey and Iran to establish a healthy relation, since Turkey remains dedicated to Western values and develops its democracy, human rights, and modernization. Iran sees these values as evil and struggles against them. These values are considered as highly dangerous for the continuation of the Islamic regime in Iran, thus Iran does not hide its discomfort about these issues. For example, when they visit Turkey they do not visit Anitkabir, which is the place of Ataturk's cemetery. They see Ataturk as the founder of these values. So, there may be relative development of the relations between Turkey and Iran, but it seems very difficult for both states to overcome their biases about each other and relations of both states can prosper only under common threats and only for economic and political needs for specific periods. Even in the best days of both states during Ataturk and Reza Shah Pahlavi, both states approached each other with suspicions. Turkish-Iranian rivalry seems to continue regarding the long history of rivalry.

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<sup>153</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Twists and Turns in Turkish-Iranian Relations", in *Iran Revolution at 30*, The Middle East Institute Viewpoints, <http://www.mideasti.org/viewpoint/the-iranian-revolution-30> (accessed February 21, 2009).



#### IV. PROS AND CONS OF ALIGNING WITH THE U.S. OR IRAN

One of the most important rules of international relations is that there is no friendship between states and governments, only interests. Sometimes states cannot reach their interests without the help of another state. In that situation, “alliance” formation becomes a valuable key for states to achieve their goals. The most important reason for making an individual alliance is to achieve goals that cannot be achieved alone. This rule is the same for states. States need each other’s capabilities in order to reach their own purposes by giving back something in return. While choosing allies, states calculate their strategic interests and the goals they will reach owing to the alliance.

When we look at Turkish–American relations through this window, Turkey and the United States have gained a lot from one another’s capabilities by being allies. Turkey and the United States have been allies since the end of the Second World War. This alliance has survived many vicissitudes and persevered even through harsh disagreements. The United States and Turkey supported each other in many occasions during this period; in many crisis and wars, Turkey has stood with the United States. According to Joshua Walker, “although the United States and Turkey have had serious policy disagreements in the past, there has always been an overarching strategic vision to keep the alliance intact”.<sup>154</sup>

America’s first support came when Turkey was under a dangerous threat from her historical adversary, the Soviet Union, in the beginning of the Cold War. Turkey had waged wars against the Russians, whose biggest dream for centuries has been to capture Istanbul and both Turkish straits connecting the Mediterranean to the Black Sea so Russia can reach the Mediterranean. The Soviet Union was using direct, arrogant language against Turkey about its aim instead of political language. American support in such a difficult time was

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<sup>154</sup> Joshua W. Walker, “Re-examining the U.S.-Turkish Alliance Since the Rise of the AKP”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2007-08  
[http://www.twq.com/08winter/docs/08winter\\_walker.pdf](http://www.twq.com/08winter/docs/08winter_walker.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2009).

crucially important, because Turkey was in need of help that was very difficult to find. The United States supported Turkey not only militarily but also economically and psychologically for a long time against the threat of communism. “As part of the cooperative effort to further Turkish economic and military self-reliance, the United States has loaned and granted Turkey more than \$12.5 billion in economic aid and more than \$14 billion in military assistance”.<sup>155</sup> Table-2 on the next page shows the U.S. aid to Turkey from the very beginning of the alliance to present.

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<sup>155</sup> U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm#relations> (accessed February 21, 2009).

**U.S. Foreign Aid to Turkey (in millions)**  
**Source: US Overseas Loans & Grants [Greenbook]**

Program Name	Post-War Relief Period 1946-48	Marshall Plan Period 1949-52	Mutual Scty Act Period 1953-61	1962-02	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total FAA Period 1962-06	Total Loans & Grants 1946-06	Of which loans 1946-06	Outstand-ing Amt. as of 09/30/2006
Economic Assistance, Total	12.2	225.1	1,093.00	4,108.90	8.1	10.3	16.3	5.3	4,148.90	5,479.20	2,127.00	65.2
USAID and Predecessor, Total	0	225.1	926.5	3,671.00	0.8	1	10.4	1	3,684.20	4,835.80	1,811.20	56.3
Economic Support Fund/Security Support Assistance	0	0	724.5	2,684.00	0	0.7	10	0	2,694.80	3,419.30	0	0
Development Assistance	0	0	0	3.3	0.6	0	0.2	0	4	4	0	0
Child Survival & Health	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Other USAID Assistance	0	225.1	202	983.7	0.2	0.3	0.2	0	984.4	1,411.50	1,811.20	56.3
Department of Agriculture, Total	0	0	166.5	394.1	0	0	0	0	394.1	560.6	303.6	8.9
Food Aid, Total	0	0	166.5	394.1	0	0	0	0	394.1	560.6	303.6	8.9
Title I	0	0	149.7	268.6	0	0	0	0	268.6	418.3	303.6	8.9
Title II	0	0	16.8	125.5	0	0	0	0	125.5	142.3	0	0
State Department, Total	0	0	0	22.8	3	1.6	4.5	3.8	35.8	35.8	0	0
Narcotics Control	0	0	0	10.6	0	0.1	0	0	10.8	10.8	0	0
Migration and Refugee Assistance	0	0	0	4.6	1.5	0	2.1	2	10.2	10.2	0	0
Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining & Related	0	0	0	2.3	0.6	0.6	1.2	0.2	4.9	4.9	0	0
Other State Assistance	0	0	0	5.3	0.9	0.9	1.3	1.6	9.9	9.9	0	0
Other Economic Assistance, Total	12.2	0	0	21	4.3	7.7	1.3	0.4	34.8	47	12.2	0
Peace Corps	0	0	0	15.2	0	0	0	0	15.2	15.2	0	0
Other Active Grant Programs	0	0	0	5.8	4.3	7.7	1.3	0.4	19.6	19.6	0	0
Inactive Programs	12.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.2	12.2	0
Military Assistance, Total	68.8	553.2	1,463.40	11,572.40	20.4	40	37.4	17.9	11,688.10	13,773.60	5,684.90	429.5
Economic & Military Assistance, Total	81	778.3	2,556.40	15,681.30	28.5	50.3	53.7	23.2	15,837.00	19,252.70	7,812.00	494.7
Non-Concessional U.S. Loans, Total	32.3	0	32	969	-53	9.7	140.2	70	1,135.90	1,200.20	1,200.20	63.4
Export-Import Bank Loans	32.3	0	32	612	-53.7	0	0	0	558.3	622.6	622.6	50
OPIC & Other Non-Concessional U.S. Loans	0	0	0	357	0.8	9.7	140.2	70	577.6	577.6	577.6	13.4

Table 2. U.S. Foreign Aid to Turkey

The United States has been backing Turkey in the areas of energy security and alternative paths to bring Central Asian oil and gas to world markets. In this important project, “Prime Minister Ecevit told American officials that Turkey would not be able to collect the 2.5 billion dollars needed to complete the Baku–Tiflis–Ceyhan pipeline during his trip to the United States in 2002”.<sup>156</sup> Vice President Dick Cheney promised Ecevit to find the source needed to complete the pipeline and did so with the help of the World Bank.<sup>157</sup>

American presidents and congresses have supported Turkey’s struggle to be a member of the European Union for a long time. In this regard, Kemal Kirisci stated that:

In respect to the EU, the United States has very actively pushed for Turkish membership even when this has meant friction with some European governments. The United States played a critical role in ensuring the ratification of the Customs Union Treaty signed between Turkey and the EU in 1995. The United States clearly sees the issue of Turkish membership in strategic terms and argues that membership would enhance Turkish economic development and democracy, while also helping make Turkey a much more stable country in a critical neighborhood. This logic has also been pursued in respect to including and actively promoting Turkey as one of the big emerging markets deserving U.S. investment.<sup>158</sup>

Turkey has generally achieved the support of the United States in the struggle with terrorism. The United States declared Turkey’s right to defend itself against terrorism in many platforms. President Bush welcomed Prime Minister Erdogan in 2007 for a White House visit and gave his and his government’s full

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<sup>156</sup> Robert Olson, “Turkish-Iran Relations 1979-2004 Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics”. Mazda Publishers, California 2004, 127.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Kemal Kirisci, “ Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies”, Middle East Review of International Affairs(MERIA), Volume 2, No. 4, November 1998  
<http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1998/issue4/jv2n4a3.html> (accessed February 21, 2009).

backing to Turkey in its fight against terrorism by the PKK or Kongra-Gel, which he characterized as a "common enemy" of Turkey, Iraq, and the United States.<sup>159</sup>

The economic dimension of Turkish-U.S. relations has been considered to be inadequate by Turkish politicians. However, one of the latest measures to improve the deteriorating relations between the United States and Turkey is related to trade and economics. "The U.S. and Turkey for several years have had a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, which met in Turkey in January 2009. In 2002, the two countries indicated their joint intent to upgrade bilateral economic relations by launching an Economic Partnership Commission, which last convened in Washington in April 2008. In 2006, Turkish exports to the U.S. totaled about \$5.4 billion, and U.S. exports to Turkey totaled \$5.7 billion".<sup>160</sup>

Besides there having been a variety of advantages to being an ally of the United States, Turkey lived through some bad experiences and encountered some disadvantages in its relations with the U.S. One of the most important disadvantages happened with the Cuban missile crisis, in which Turkey was not consulted by its ally, the United States, in order to solve the crisis with the Soviet Union. The second was President Johnson's letter to Prime Minister Ismet Inonu. The letter was a warning to Turkey not to act unilaterally in the Cyprus problem and if did, not to expect U.S. or NATO support if the Soviet Union intervened in response to Turkey's act against Cyprus. The third was the economic burden paid by Turkey after Gulf War I, which was conducted under the leadership of the United States against Iraq. The results of Gulf War I were not only economically, but also strategically, dangerous cons for Turkey. Finally, the most important cons of this alliance happened after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Kurdish groups in the north of Iraq built a semiautonomous structure which was a

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<sup>159</sup> U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm#relations> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

danger to the integrity of Iraq. Turkey mentioned the importance of Iraq many times in order to prevent further crises and cons for all sides in the future.

Looking at the relations between Turkey and Iran through the interest window, there is not a good background for improved relations between the two states. Although Turkey and Iran are neighbors, there has always been a problem of trust. Even when they came together for common interests, they could not overcome the trust problem, which is one of the most important issues of bilateral relations. Iran's interest in exporting its regime to Turkey and other neighboring states has always been a matter of tension between two states.

According to Sedat Laciner,

It must be a natural expectation for neighboring states like Turkey and Iran to look for a serious economic rapprochement, even integration. However, when one looks at the relations, one meets a very unhealthy picture:

Iran is among states like China and Russia to which Turkey has a foreign-trade deficit. It has already gone beyond five-billion dollars. While seventy-five percent of the trade is constituted by gas purchase, only two-billion dollars is left for the trade apart from energy trade. Although Turkish industry, agriculture, and stockbreeding is very suitable for meeting Iran's needs, Iran does not indulge in Turkish goods and trade does not reach the desired level and velocity. The situation in direct investments is worse. Turkish investors who want to enter the Iranian market face incredible obstacles. Leaving aside enjoying the status of a neighbor state and being Muslim with the same culture, Turkish investors can come face to face with special hindrances just because of being Turkish. After passing over all these hindrances and reaching the end of a business bid, the whole process can be cancelled suddenly. Turkcell and TAV failures became two open examples about these hindrances. It is certain that there are some forces that do not want to see more Turkish companies in Iran, with the underlying idea that 'Turkey is the spy of the United States and Israel.' They think that if the number of Turks increased in Iran

there will be a counterrevolution. Although Turkey's active policy after the 1 March draft and invasion of Iraq softened these kinds of ideas, Turkey is still a country which must be treated suspiciously.<sup>161</sup>

Although the best-known idea about Turkish–Iranian relations is that “Turkish–Iranian relations have been peaceful since 1639 Kasr-i Sirin agreement,” Soner Cagaptay disagrees with this idea and calls it as a myth. He states that,

Turkey and Iran have repeatedly fought since the 1639, and since the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran has supported terror groups inside Turkey to undermine Ankara. First a bit of history: the Ottoman and Iranian Empires have fought many wars since Kasr-i Sirin. For instance, a full-scale war broke out in 1733 when the Persians attempted to take Baghdad from the Turks. The Persian siege of Baghdad and the accompanying battles ended in 1746 with the Treaty of Kurdan, signed between the new Zand Dynasty of Persia and the Ottoman Empire. Soon after, in 1775, the Zand Dynasty attacked the Ottoman Empire again and captured Basra. The invasion lasted until 1821, at which time another war started between the Ottoman Empire and the new Qajar Dynasty of Persia. The war ended in 1823, with the First Treaty of Erzurum. Rivalry over the Muhammarah region (modern day Khorramshar, Iran) deepened the conflict between the two empires by adding a new dimension to the conflict. Persians and Ottoman Iraqi governors clashed over its control, bringing the two empires to the brink of war in 1840. The British intervened, establishing a boundary commission composed of Iranian, Turkish, British, and Russian diplomats. As a result, the Persian and the Ottoman Empires signed the Second Treaty of Erzurum, which reconfigured the Iranian-Ottoman border. In 1930, when some Kurds launched a rebellion around Mount Greater Agri (Ararat) in Turkey, Kurdish bands armed by Armenian nationalists entered Turkey across the Iranian border to support the rebellion. This was not a small skirmish. Turkey used airplanes in a counterattack and mobilized 15,000 troops to suppress the incursion. In the end, the Turkish army was able to put down the border infiltration, though with great difficulty, and only after losing several planes. In 1931, Ankara asked Iran for a border rectification that put Mount Lesser Agri, the

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161 Sedat Laciner, “Iran-Türkiye İlişkileri: Asilamayan Güven Sorunu”, International Strategic Research Institution (USAK-Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu), February 13, 2008, <http://www.usakgundem.com/yazarlar.php?id=906&type=3> (accessed February 21, 2009).

base of the 1930 incursions, inside Turkey. Volatility along the border became an issue again when the terrorist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) launched a campaign against Turkey in 1984. Iran's theocratic regime, which is diametrically opposed to Turkey's secular, pro-Western society, saw the PKK as a useful tool with which to wreak havoc in Turkey. Accordingly, Tehran allowed PKK bases such as Haj Umran, Dar Khala, Benchul, Mandali, and Sirabad in its territory. Iran has supported not only the PKK but also Islamist terrorist cells. Since the 1979 revolution, Iranian-backed terrorist cells have assassinated a number of secular Turkish intellectuals and journalists whom they consider offensive, including theologian Bahriye Uçok, a female Islamist modernizer, and journalist Cetin Emec.<sup>162</sup>

Although there is a growing cooperation between Turkey and Iran and Turkey is trying to repair relations with all its neighbors, and although Kurdish actions and American support to them pushes Turkey to Iran and Syria, these states have not been consistent towards Turkey in their history. Iran seems to be supporting Turkey over the Kurdish issue in Iraq for now, but it can change its policy easily and agree with the Kurdish groups in the north of Iraq in order to have a dominant position all over Iraq. Iran has not been a reliable neighbor of Turkey and other Sunni states of the Middle East and in many occasions moved in the opposite direction to its own official statements. For example, the latest developments happen to force Iran to be friendly towards Turkey since Iran has been under harsh sanctions of the United States and the international community, yet Iran still does not act in a trustworthy manner in bilateral relations with Turkey.

Turkey signed some energy agreements with Iran in order to diversify its energy sources, but Iran tried to use this as a trump against Turkey by decreasing the gas flow in the middle of winter when its people needed gas. Even though Iran needs Turkey in order to decrease the damage of isolation from the world, Iran still does not trust Turkish companies and prevents Turkish

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<sup>162</sup> Soner Cagaptay and Duden Yegenoglu, "The Myth of 1639 and Kasr-i Sirin", The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 18, 2006, <http://www.turkishpac.org/pdfs/KasriSirin.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).



companies from investing in Iran. The history of Turkey and Iran is generally described as a long rivalry that is the source of multiple disadvantages between two states. Even though Turkish–Iranian relations have been improving lately, this is not a natural development between the two neighboring states and is not a guarantee for the future. Iran’s unfavorable identity in the international community related to its nuclear research can put Turkey in a difficult position between Iran and Turkey’s Western allies.

It seems a little bit complicated for Turkey to find the right direction for its interests in the region under present conditions. During the Bush administration, Turkey distanced itself from the United States and Turkish-American relations experienced deep declines after the United States invaded Iraq. Turkey’s alliance with the United States cost Turkey a great deal in last decade, and Turkey started to find a way out with the regional states for regional problems. Turkey and the new Obama administration should find a common way and turn from this decline to development of better relations between Turkey and the United States for the sake of their interests. Although Turkey and Iran seem to share common goals about Kurdish separatism in the region, and energy issues for the future, in fact even in the matter of Kurdish separatism there is not a guarantee for bilaterally coordinated action. Iran supported the Kurdish terrorists for a considerable time against Turkey and can do the same thing when the interests diverge. Iran has been increasing its influence in Iraq and can use this force to spread its force over Kurds in the north of Iraq and may again diverge from Turkey in the future. Although Turkey supports the peaceful use of nuclear energy by Iran, Turkey can be in a difficult situation if Iran seeks to be a nuclear armed power and destroy the historical balance, which is the source of peace between two neighboring states. Thus, Turkey and the United States should redefine their goals and coordinate them with each other in order to be in the most advantageous position regionally and globally.

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## V. CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis is to find answers to questions about Turkish foreign-policy change in a new era. The possibility of a common ground for Turkey and Iran to cooperate for the stability of the region, Turkey's improving relations with Iran even in the face of U.S. opposition, and similar questions about the future of Turkish–American and Turkish–Iranian relations are being asked frequently after the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the deterioration of Turkish–U.S. relations. This evaluation is very important not only for Turkey and for Iran, but also for the United States and her interests in the region, and for the future stability of the region itself.

I can surely say that Turkish foreign policy has been changing since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and evaporation of the communist threat, which was the main glue of bipolar world alliances. After being released from the confining environment of a bipolar world order, not only Turkey, but also many other states started to move and act more freely. Contrary to negative predictions about Turkey's declining importance to her allies, Turkey's importance has increased as conflicts started to pop up with the relief and free movement that appeared with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Here, Turkey's importance has different meanings for two different sides: on one side, Turkey's old ally the United States and the West; and on the other side, especially after the government change in Turkey and rule of the AKP government, neighboring states such as Iran and Syria that had been trouble for Turkey for many years. For the United States, Turkey was a key ally to support the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, to continue to support power projection in the Middle East, and nowadays to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq over Turkey. For Iran, Turkey became an important neighbor and trade partner for breaking Iran's isolation and becoming a bridge between Iran and Europe.

The hostility between the United States and Iran seems to put Turkey in a very difficult position in the near future regarding Iran's continuing nuclear research. Turkey does not look with favor on the nuclear activities of Iran, but also does not want to solve this problem by use of force and does not want another war with unpredictable results, which will certainly damage Turkey at least as much as the participating sides.

Turkey as a state in a strategic location, which connects east to west and north to south, continued her close alliance with the United States after 1991 even though she did improve her interests, she suffered many losses in the subsequent period. The United States did not pay attention to the voice of Turkey and sought its own interest at the expense of damaging Turkish interests and violating Turkish "red lines." Although Turkey and the United States diverged in their Iraq policies, Turkey supported the United States during its stabilization operations in Iraq. But what did Turkey achieve for its support? A fragmented Iraq, a semiautonomous Kurdish region seeking independence in the north of Iraq, increasing PKK terror coming from the north of Iraqi territories under the control of the United States, and unheeded Turkish warnings about the future of Kirkuk and the Turkmen population of Kirkuk.

These are the issues distancing Turkey from its old ally the United States and forcing her to take care of her own problems and fulfill national interests by establishing regional alliances, especially against common threats. This seems to be the most basic right of Turkey regarding American policies in sustaining stability with the help of Kurds in Iraq. There is an emerging general idea in Turkey that if the United States has the right to develop relations with Kurds in the north of Iraq for their common goals, although sustainability is open to debate regarding the background of Turkish-Iranian relations, it must be Turkey's right to develop good relations with Iran, which has common interests and goals with Turkey about PKK/PJAK terrorism, the Kurdish independence movement in the north of Iraq, energy security, regional stability and other economic interests.

According to Ahmet Davutoglu, senior advisor to the Turkish premier on foreign politics, Turkey must develop relations with her neighbors to the level of “zero problems” in the new world order and use strategic depth to protect stability in the region. I agree with his idea and think that Turkey should be a central state that can develop good relations with all sides and mediate the troubled issues between these sides to protect stability and peace. Turkey is a unique state that contains all surrounding cultures in its body. Turkey has some European culture, some Arabic, some Caucasian, some Balkan, some Mediterranean, some Anatolian, some Kurdish, some Shiite, some Sunni and some Turkish culture. You can see the signs, tastes, customs and lifestyles of all these different cultures in Turkey living together in the same street, village, or province. This is the soft power of Turkey and because of this, Turkey must be taken into account regarding regional problems.

After the 1 March draft crisis, many said that Turkey should have moved with the United States in 2003 in order to have a seat at the table on the future of Iraq. But some ask whether the American policy in Iraq is successful after hearing the following statement of Necirvan Barzani, “If the disputes remain after the U.S. leaves, it will be war between both sides”.<sup>163</sup> What kind of war will it be? Who will be involved in that war? What will be the effects of this war to the region and regional stability which is in the interest of all sides? This was the main reason Turkey did not support the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Turkey and the United States have tightened relations in the period following the invasion of Iraq, and both states have still common interests in the region. Turkey and the United States share the idea of “strategic partnership” and they can find a common way that can serve their interests and goals. In order to

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<sup>163</sup> Sebastian Abbot, “Iraqi Kurds Feel Abandoned by US, Worry About Future War with Arabs”, Associated Press, February 14, 2009, [http://www.startribune.com/world/39615267.html?elr=KArks:DCiUBcy7hUiD3aPc:\\_Yyc:aUU](http://www.startribune.com/world/39615267.html?elr=KArks:DCiUBcy7hUiD3aPc:_Yyc:aUU) (accessed February 21, 2009).

do this, both sides should develop mechanisms to understand events in the region and predict the possible results of possible actions in order to find the best way to solve troubles.

Turkey's alliance with Iran at the strategic level seems full of structural and deep-rooted hindrances, due to their long history of rivalries and struggles. The basic differences between Turkey and Iran can easily come up to the surface even in the best period of bilateral relations. Even though there is a group in Turkey looking sympathetically towards Iran, just because Iran is a Muslim state, there is another large group who are well aware of the history of Turkish–Iranian relations and the inconsistency of Iran. In addition to these two groups, there is another group who is like the second group, but just for parallel interests with Iran partially supports this policy. After the American invasion of Iraq, political attitudes entered into a relative change. Iran, which had been supporting the PKK terrorists in order to balance Turkey in colliding interests, suddenly changed their policies and seemed to be Turkey's close neighbor and enemy of the PKK. After being the target of PJAK, which is brother of PKK, Iran ceased its support to PKK and started to fight against PKK terrorists.

Another important matter is Iran's nuclear ambitions. Iran seeks to be the second nuclear power in the Middle East, after Israel. For the present, the Turkish government seems to be giving a green light to Iran in order to protect developing economic relations and stability in the region and create a balancing countermeasure to the possibility of Kurdish independence in Iraq. The Kurdish-nationalism threat seems to be the important issue that distances Turkey from the United States and brings it closer to Iran. However, Turkey and Turkish politicians should realize the danger and the possibility of losing control to a dominance-seeking nuclear Iran, which can cause irremediable consequences. Turkey's decision in favor of an inconsistent nuclear neighbor may turn into an uncalculated threat to stability, from which there is no re-turn. The historical background of Turkish–Iranian relations and the unbalanced attitudes of Iran in the Middle East—not only towards Turkey, but also towards the most of the

Sunni Muslim states—create questions about the reliability of Iran and its future attitudes in different political conditions. Regarding historical background and the general idea about Iran, nobody can guarantee the future attitudes of a nuclear Iran if Turkish and Iranian interests diverge.

Under these circumstances, there may be strained days ahead for Turkey regarding ongoing nuclear research of Iran and the United States opposition to these activities, the Kurdish issue in Iraq, and the future of Kirkuk and the Turkmen. Turkey may be in the same position she was in prior to the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003, between a neighbor seeking improved relations and an ally with conflicting interests over Iraq, Kurds, Kirkuk's future and Iran policies. Turkish political elites observing bilateral relations on all sides may remain under pressure to find a way out that will satisfy all sides and protect stability in the region, which is the most beneficial option for Turkish interests. According to Soner Cagaptay, "Dangerously shorn as it is of Middle Eastern allies, Washington cannot afford further deterioration in its relations with a country that has long been one of the Western world's greatest allies in the region".<sup>164</sup>

Finally, both the American and Turkish policy elite should emphasize the shared values between Turks, Americans, and the wider Western world, highlighting Turkey's unique status as a secular, Muslim-majority democracy with strong ties to the West.<sup>165</sup>

To do this, Turkey and the United States should establish a stronger structure to synchronize relations and not find themselves in a "lose-lose" position by ignoring each other's priorities.

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<sup>164</sup> Soner Cagaptay, "Turkey at a Crossroads, Preserving Ankara's Western Orientation", The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Focus #48, October 2005, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/CagaptayBookWeb.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2009).

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

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