



# **Rebuilding a Partnership: Turkish-American Relations for a New Era**

**A TUSIAD REPORT PREPARED BY:**

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## **Executive Summary**

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**This text is the Executive Summary of an ongoing Report project with the same title. The Report is expected to be published by the end of 2008. Please do not quote this draft text. You are welcome to send your comments to [soli@bilgi.edu.tr](mailto:soli@bilgi.edu.tr)**



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TUSIAD-sponsored reports and conferences have been instrumental in launching and advancing major public policy discussions in Turkey and have influenced government decisions in many areas. For example, TUSIAD's 1997 report on democratization ("Perspectives on Democratization in Turkey") put forward concrete solutions in such areas as human rights and electoral law with policy recommendations that continue to generate debate among Turkish government and civil society circles. TUSIAD's ongoing activities are helping to build a strong and vocal civil society – a cornerstone of any democracy.

TUSIAD has expanded its scope to include US-Turkish relations and launched its office in Washington DC in November 1998. Through this office, TUSIAD has already taken numerous initiatives to develop the economic relationship between the two countries, and has actively contributed to the frank and open exchange of ideas on the key issues facing the US-Turkish alliance and to challenge both US and Turkish policymakers to tackle these issues with innovative policy solutions.

TUSIAD already has a long-established presence in Europe through its EU representative offices in Brussels, Berlin and Paris, and its membership in European Business (formerly UNICE, the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederation of Europe). As a result, TUSIAD has been an active participant in the European-Turkish dialogue. TUSIAD has also been present in Asia through its office in Beijing, China, which became operational in 2007.

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## **Rebuilding a Partnership: Turkish-American Relations for a New Era**

### **I.**

There was a time when Turkish-American relations were celebrated in popular songs one of which promised, “America, America/the Turks will be with you/as long as the world turns/in the fight for freedom”. This was in the 1950s. Today Turkey consistently ranks as the country where the US is the least popular and anti-Americanism in fiction or film pays off. The relations between the two countries have gone through a rough period particularly after the failure of the Turkish government’s motion to allow the deployment of American troops on March 1, 2003. Nowadays the relations appear to be back on track, institutional suspicions are being overcome and trust is being gradually rebuilt between the two allies.

It is quite clear that when the next American administration takes charge of American foreign policy it will have a momentous task of rebuilding American power, prestige and popularity. Given the strategic landscape and the diminished capabilities of the United States this can best be done with the help of friends and allies. Arguably few other countries will be as critical for US strategic interests, foreign policy goals and overall success in accomplishing these goals as Turkey. A cursory look at the top priorities of the US strategic agenda would confirm this observation although Turkey itself is not among the items. Simply put, for the resolution of almost every pressing problem that the next administration will need to tackle Turkey is likely to be called upon, has certain assets that it can help with or has the capability to provide assistance and a frame of reference for action.

This report, therefore, is inspired by this simple observation and the concomitant view that both parties would benefit immensely from working together in harmony. To reach such a state of cooperation the current state of the relations ought to be clearly and honestly assessed. As a report published by CSIS stated “a new strategic framework for US-Turkey relations would reflect the changing geopolitical dynamics and allow for both more effective pursuit of enduring common interests and management of areas where policy preferences and interests diverge.” In recent years many reports and analyses had been published in the United States that attempted to provide just such a framework. The common thread in most of them was the importance of maintaining Turkey as a member of the Western alliance and the great concern was “to not lose Turkey” or “winning Turkey” as a recent report would have it. In addition to bringing under the spotlight the pending issues, problems and conflicts between the two sides most such reports were compelled to treat Turkey’s usually turbulent domestic politics with considerable seriousness.

The belief that Turkey’s strategic choices and preferences would be a function of its domestic configuration gained considerable ground. In that context the fact that Turkey had a government formed by a political party that has an Islamist past led to the expression of views on Turkey’s identity. The question was thus raised whether ultimately Turkey’s identity was going to be compatible with membership in the Western alliance. That in turn had two dimensions: For one, could Turkey remain Western if its old ruling elites turned increasingly authoritarian as they faced the challenge of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the forces it represented? Secondly, would the AKP, unchallenged electorally, resist the temptation of either Islamism’s siren songs and remain on its self-declared path of “conservative democrat” or the lure of illiberal democracy that its own populism makes it particularly prone to?

A corollary to the last set of questions is to shift the debate on Turkey from one that is becoming exclusively culture-centered in both domestic and foreign policy analyses towards one that uses geopolitical categories in foreign policy and analytical categories in domestic politics.

## II.

The starting point of the report is that the post-Bush administration period in world politics will be one of restoration of American power's legitimacy. Both the old rules of global governance and the institutional set-up that made these operational are in need of repair and revision. The period of unilateralism will need to be replaced by one of multilateralism and cooperation. If anything the Iraq war and the Afghan war proved that might can no longer be enough to get weaker parties to submit to the will of the big powers.

Zbigniew Brzezinski makes the observation that "President Bush leaves office with the United States bogged down in a huge, unstable and conflict-ridden area from east of Egypt to west of India" and that the Obama administration will have to rise to this challenge by adopting what he calls a "comprehensive regional diplomacy". In other words his suggestion is a heavier reliance on tools of diplomacy with resort to war as a clear and readily available option. Such a diplomatic approach would also necessitate the assistance and collaboration of America's allies and friends.

The aforementioned area happens to be where Turkey is located at the centre of and on almost all issues that top the new administration's security and strategic agenda Turkey is well positioned to be a valuable partner for the United States. In this report we see the rebuilding of Turkish-American relations as an endeavor that needs to take place in the context of revitalized Transatlantic relations. Therefore, the amelioration of Turkish-American relations is intimately linked to the continuation, deepening and eventual consummation of Turkey's EU accession process. As will be noted in this report, a "*bon pour l'orient*" type democracy for Turkey that proved satisfactory to her allies during the Cold War can no longer be appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Therefore, Turkish democratization both for the country's own sake and because of the nature of the coming era and Turkey's ability to influence its surrounding regions by its example must remain a priority in both bilateral and Transatlantic relations. Similarly, the strengthening and intensification of economic ties between the two allies must become a higher priority.

In terms of the modalities of rebuilding the partnership we start with the following observation. Far too often Turkey had remained an "afterthought" in American and Transatlantic thinking. In former US Ambassador Mark Parris' words "we need to break the habit of thinking of Turkey 'as a function of' the crisis of the moment". This change matters not only because Turks get offended by being sidelined in the search for solutions to problems that are in their vicinity and have a bearing on their well being, stability and security. It also matters because over the course of the last decade and particularly during the last five years Turkish diplomacy has registered a number of significant successes, some of them despite American policy preferences, in the region. Therefore, as a regional power and one that is a member of the western alliance Turkey, independent of the party in power, will want to be listened to, be an equal partner in policy-making and demand that its interests is taken into consideration. The calculus that as a global power the United States will not have to worry too much about its regional ally's concerns should no longer be operational. To that end, it is

imperative to define the common interests and goals so that patchwork negotiations on different and disparate policy issues do not lead to inadvertent misunderstandings and failures as had been dramatically observed during the run-up to the Iraq war.

Much has been said and written about different anti-Western tendencies and strategic options in Turkey that emerged in recent years. The so-called Eurasian alternative that privileged relations with Russia, Iran and the rising powers China and India or its twin the neo-nationalist one or the Islamist alternative have been analyzed mostly on cultural grounds. We would argue that the attractiveness, if there is one, of such alternatives in the minds of some circles is a function of what we term “Turkey as an afterthought”. We would suggest that when Turkey feels that its interests are being shortchanged or its views are not taken into consideration what enters into play is “the neutralist impulse” that corresponds to the strongly unilateralist tendencies of the public in foreign policy matters.

### III.

Turkey is currently displaying most symptoms of “alliance security dilemma,” as a partner locked into an institutionalized framework, which does not adequately serve the purpose of preserving trust in, and maintaining communication with its partners. Such alliance security dilemmas are exacerbated by fear of abandonment or isolation. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has suffered from such fears. It remains to this day unsure of its place in the Alliance and its institutions such as NATO and EU. Post-9/11 Transatlantic rift and US unilateralism particularly in Iraq all heightened Turkish fears regarding the US intentions. With its EU membership bid seemingly drained into a dead-end, Turkey is simultaneously unsure of the intentions of its European partners as well. Hence, ulterior motives of US and the EU are questioned by Turks at all levels.

### **Recommendations on TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS:**

#### **To the US:**

- Repair the Transatlantic Rift and Help Reassure Turkey of its place in the western security community
  - By revitalizing Turkey’s EU membership prospects
  - By helping out with its ESDP disputes
- Use renewed US leadership to promote Turkey’s EU membership
- Encourage a Rapid Solution to the Cyprus Problem:
  - Will unblock eight chapters of negotiations currently suspended
  - Will clear the way for improved NATO-EU Security Cooperation
- Help reassure Turkey of its territorial integrity
  - By encouraging Yerevan to confirm its commitments under UN Charter, OSCE and the Council of Europe principles

#### **To Turkey:**

- Speed up domestic reforms
- Take advantage of UN Security Council membership to promote a lasting solution in Cyprus

- Adopt more flexible and constructive positions in NATO-ESDP affairs
- Work on relations with Armenia

One indirect consequence of solving the Cyprus problem will be to enhance Turkey's potential contribution to international peacekeeping and stabilization operations. Turkey can turn itself into a far more capable and willing international security provider, if it can substantially reduce its military commitments in Cyprus from two full strength army divisions. All things being equal, such freed up assets can be used elsewhere.

### **Recommendations on Building Trust Through Multilateral Institutions:**

For much of the post-Cold War, the partnership was based on Turkey's real estate value which found a new lease on life after 9/11. The March 1 episode marked the low water-mark for a partnership based solely on real estate value. Moreover, the primacy of security actors, Pentagon and Turkish General Staff, in the partnership also ended on March 1, 2003.

With the second Clinton administration, "quality of Turkey's democracy" became a defining parameter in the partnership. A reformed Turkey would make a better partner and ally. Turkey's EU membership made perfect sense in that context. The reforms to meet the Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership empowered new actors in policy-making. There is now multitude of opinions and a diverse range of actors that are competing to shape Turkish foreign policy and strategic priorities.

#### **To the US:**

- Emphasize the quality of Turkish democracy as a foundation of the partnership
- Be prepared to accept that domestic debate may not always necessarily yield to possible policy outcomes compatible with the US interests.
- Rely on multilateral frameworks when pursuing Turkey's involvement in high-profile crisis management operations

#### **To Turkey:**

- Do not mix democratic debate with yielding to populist choices and voices.

#### **To Both Sides:**

- Design the partnership around a multi-dimensional agenda while allowing representation of plurality of interests and actors.
- Avoid focusing solely on security concerns and relying on security actors alone
- Develop democratically acceptable mechanisms to bring security actors on board at appropriate levels.

### **Recommendations on Cooperation in Regional Crises:**

More reliance on multilateral frameworks is necessary to help re-build trust between the security actors on both sides. Due to German and French opposition, Ankara could not secure a NATO commitment for Turkey's defense against a possible Iraqi act of aggression on Turkey during US military operations in 2003. In the past transatlantic rifts resulted in reduction in perceived utility of NATO alliance for Turkey. NATO is regarded as a burden rather than an asset for Turkish security. Therefore, Turkey has a vested interest in repairing the Transatlantic partnership.

#### **To the US:**

- Be more aware and considerate of Turkey's international obligations and commitments under international treaties in your expectations.

#### **To Turkey:**

- Adopt a more cooperative attitude in tackling regional crises with NATO and EU partners.
- Regard proposed regional mechanisms and schemes as complementary rather than substitute for existing arrangements
- Be prepared to assume a greater (not necessarily combat) role in Afghanistan in case new administration shifts its commitments away from Iraq onto Afghanistan

### **Recommendations on Military-to-Military Relations:**

#### **To the US:**

- Avoid being seen as punishing the Turkish military for the role it played (or it did not play) on the March 1 episode

#### **To Turkey:**

- Take more advantage of US military education and training opportunities and facilities that are made available to Turkish military.
- Transform your military for rapid deployability and sustainability

#### **To Both Sides:**

- Instead, focus should be on improving Turkey's democratic standards and attendant alignment of its civil-military relations with democratic norms.
- Develop exchange programs particularly for cadets in war/naval colleges to promote mutual social and military understanding. Turkish-Greek military cooperation and exchange agreements may serve as a model in this respect.

There are practical problems that feed continuously into mutual distrust. Both US and Turkey developed instruments to tackle security challenges in the ME outside of conventional alliance framework. The lack of trust and communication are bigger issues for Turkish Special Forces and the US CENTCOM than other agencies dealing with each other mostly within NATO (EUROCOM) framework.

**To the US:**

- Ensure coherence in CENTCOM's and other US COMMAND's operating procedures with allied militaries.

**To Both Sides:**

- Establish mechanisms to improve communication and build trust between these two agencies that are in face-to-face contact (at times at odds) with each other on the ground.

In designing mechanisms to improve military cooperation, it should be borne in mind that US military will probably never enjoy the degree of prestige and status, it once enjoyed with the Turkish military. Problems of communication and trust aside, US military no longer provides a "paradigm" that can be emulated by others. In other words, the US way of war which once was thought to be "here to stay" today lies far beyond the capabilities and needs of Turkey.

Similarly, US defense industry no longer produces types of weapons and equipment militaries like that of Turkey need most. In coming years, more and more Turkish defense needs will be met from local as well as European suppliers.

So, re-built military partnership will not be enjoying an ample stock of "goodwill" or "soft power" associated with "paradigm" militaries. In the coming decades, Turkish military will gradually adhere to a "European way of war" rather than an American way in light of post-9/11 contingencies.

**IV.**

The prominent strategist Brzezinski described Eurasia as a "grand chessboard," where both global and regional actors constantly compete to secure their geo-strategic and economic interests. Turkey certainly has a pivotal position in this grand chess board and is a decisive regional actor in the Caspian endgame. There are three main aspects of the developments in Eurasia, which will impact Turkish-American relations:

1. The Energy Politics of the Caspian Region and Pipeline Politics
2. Developments concerning Georgia and the New US Black Sea Strategy
3. New Developments Concerning Turkey-Armenia Relations

Turkey is confronted with the challenge of a strong energy dependence on Russia and the arduous task of balancing the intricate dynamics of a very volatile region. The delicate equilibrium and the

interaction of domestic and international factors will ultimately affect the path of Turkish-American relations, as well as the outcome of the Caspian endgame.

In a world of rapidly increasing energy demand, the global struggle over the access to and the control of energy resources has been intensifying. Consequently, “the energy ellipse,” encompassing both the Caspian region and the Persian Gulf that contains over two-thirds of the global proven petroleum reserves and more than 40 percent of the world’s proven natural gas resources, is like a strategic “jack-pot.” In shaping the intricate dynamics of the Eurasian energy geopolitics, there are three major issues which are of critical importance for all key players (i) the amount of energy reserves available for extraction; (ii) the ownership of the resource; and (iii) the distribution routes determining direct and environmental costs. In this respect, Russia, the US, the EU, and China are the main global actors with significant interests and influence in these areas; while Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Iran are emerging as important regional actors in Eurasia. The challenging task of transporting land-locked Caspian energy to the international markets further complicates the delicate dynamics between energy producers, energy transit countries and energy consumers turning “pipeline politics” into an indispensable part of energy security. In this respect, Turkey has a persistently increasing significance as an energy transit country.

The East-West Energy Corridor, which has been initiated through intensive collaboration between Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the United States, forms a critical part of these initiatives. The Energy Corridor aims primarily at transporting the Caucasian and Central Asian crude oil and natural gas to international markets via safe alternative routes to Russia and Iran. The major components of this major energy outlet, include BTC crude oil pipeline, the Shah-Deniz natural gas pipeline (Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum), as well as the other Trans-Caspian Natural Gas Pipeline projects (i.e. the Turkey-Greece-Italy Inter-connector Project and Nabucco Project), railroads and complementary infrastructure. In this respect, completion of the BTC pipeline project has been particularly significant.

At the OSCE Istanbul Summit in November 1999, Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan reached an agreement, with the endorsement of the US President Bill Clinton, for building a major exportation pipeline through Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC). When the BTC project was finally completed in 2006, it had a total length of 1767 kilometers and cost approximately 4 billion dollars. When Kazakhstan also expressed the possibility for its joining the pipeline by 2010, it raised the expectations that the capacity of the pipeline could eventually reach 75 million tons. Consequently, BTC opened a new East-West energy corridor providing an alternative energy route to Russia and Iran for crude oil. Hence, it also enhanced the geo-political significance of Turkey by turning it into a critical energy corridor.

In the recent period, Russia has also been very active in the field of energy politics and the South Stream Project of Russia has for the time being effectively sidelined the Nabucco project of Turkey backed by the United States by undermining the natural supply through Russia’s new agreements with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. In this regard, there is the urgent need for a renewed push in the field of energy politics between the United States and Turkey to enhance energy security in this region by securing alternative routes to Russia to connect the land-locked energy resources of the Caspian region to the world markets.

## **Recommendations on ENERGY POLITICS:**

### **To the US:**

- Provide support for the Nabucco project, by facilitating the formation of the necessary legal and infrastructure framework to plug Iraqi natural gas to Nabucco before the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

### **To Turkey:**

- Develop ‘an integrated energy strategy’ in order to promote Nabucco and other new energy transit projects more effectively by working more closely with the US, the EU and the other regional partners, as well as meeting its own rapidly increasing energy needs.
- Establish the necessary framework to connect Iraqi gas to Nabucco to make it economically viable. However, three issues emerge to be quite problematic and needs to be addressed to realize this goal: (1) Territorial Integrity and Status problem(the nature of energy sharing agreement): Erbil –Baghdad relations; (2) Turkey’s own dynamics; (3) Developments in Northern Iraq.
- Try to reduce Turkey’s own energy dependence to Russia through investments in renewable (wind, solar etc.) as well as nuclear energy.
- Target turning Ceyhan into “an energy hub” both for oil and natural gas in the whole region.

### **To both sides:**

- Given the successful cooperation of Turkey and the US in BTC, devise a new pro-active energy strategy particularly concerning natural gas in order to provide alternative energy routes to Russia. In this respect, it is important to revitalize the Nabucco project.
- Develop effective mechanisms to connect Iraqi gas to Nabucco in the medium term. Since Russia has already made agreements with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, having only Azeri gas would not make the project economically viable. Moreover, this would generate vested economic interests both for Turkey and Iraq, it will also contribute to enhanced collaboration between the two neighbors and possibly ease tensions between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds in particular.

The recent developments in the Caucasus, marked by Russia’s attack on Georgia in August 2008 when Georgia used force in an attempt to recapture its separatist pro-Moscow region of South Ossetia, caused significant turmoil in the region. Despite the US and EU condemnations about troop deployments and bombings deep inside Georgia proper, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has defended the Russian stance arguing that “Russia has returned to the world stage as a responsible state which can defend its citizens.”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Russia has promptly recognized the two break away pro-Russian provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. These actions signal that a resurgent Russia will display an increasingly assertive foreign policy. In the new confrontation between the United States and Russia, Turkey will be faced once again with the challenging task of striking a delicate balance between its alliance with the United States and NATO and its relations with Russia to which Turkey is heavily dependent for its energy needs.

In response to these new developments, Turkey has maintained its multidimensional and soft power approach by championing the idea of forming a “Caucasus Solidarity and Cooperation Platform” in the wake of the Georgia-Russia war. Turkish leaders have conducted numerous high level diplomatic meetings to promote it. However, since this would primarily be a regional cooperation platform, the US has not been very enthusiastic about its implementation.

The political leadership in Turkey attempts to exploit inter-linkages between different dimensions of foreign policy. Turkey’s facilitator role in various conflict situations becomes increasingly important in enhancing its status as a pivotal regional power. AKP government particularly emphasizes this facilitator role within the context of the greater Middle East. For instance, in order to open a functional channel of dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Turkey invited the Pakistani President Musharraf and Afghan President Karzai to meet in Turkey during May 2007. The Israeli and Palestinian Presidents Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas got together in Ankara before their critical Annapolis meeting in the US. Turkey’s also facilitated and fostered diplomatic contacts and dialogue between Pakistan and Israel, and between Israel and Syria. In this respect, if Turkey improves its relations with Armenia, it can certainly serve as an effective facilitator for the peaceful resolution of the long-lasting Nagorno-Karabagh dispute. Hence, there can be significant collaboration between the US-Turkey to limit Russian influence and to promote security and stability in this highly volatile region. However, this strategy would be more effective, if the US pursues a more multilateral and dialogue oriented approach rather than a direct confrontation with Russia under the new Obama government.

One of the primary areas of divergence, concerns the Black Sea strategies of Turkey and the United States. While the United States wants to increase its presence and NATO’s power in the Black Sea region, Turkey believes that increasing NATO’s naval presence may increase tensions. Instead, Turkey argues that in line with the Montreux treaty, the riparian countries to the Black Sea region should have a say over the presence of any fleet in the Black Sea. For more urgent situations, Turkey as a NATO member is already present in this area. Particularly as highlighted by an authoritative Turkish Diplomat, “Any attempt to revise the Montreux Treaty is highly problematic and is unacceptable for the Turkish side.”\*

### **Recommendations on BLACK SEA and the CAUCASUS:**

#### **To the US:**

- Acknowledge the significance of Montreux Treaty as a binding international agreement for providing stability in this region and a safeguard against Russian expansionism since 1936. An attempt towards its modification, might dangerously backfire by significantly strengthening the hand of Russia, which is not desirable neither for the US and nor for any of the other riparian states.
- Try to devise a new strategy pursuing more multilateral and dialogue oriented approach rather than a direct confrontation with Russia. A confrontational approach and polarization also places Turkey in a very difficult position having its long lasting ally the US on the on

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\* Personal Interview with a high level Turkish Diplomat, October 24, 2008.

side and its formidable neighbor Russia to which it has strong energy dependence on the other.

- Support regional initiatives, which would enhance security and stability in this region. Although it would not be a direct party to the “Caucasus Solidarity and Cooperation Platform”, such a regional cooperation and security mechanism would still enhance US interests through its indirect engagement and close cooperation with Turkey. In this respect, particularly facilitating tripartite dialogue between Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan is very critical.

### **To Turkey:**

- Closely align Turkey’s Black Sea strategies particularly in the short and medium term with the US and seek more effective mechanisms for cooperation within NATO in this respect. However, this closer alignment still needs to be conducted within the confines of the Montreux treaty, which provides an essential international legitimacy in defining the actions of the relevant parties.
- Improve Turkey’s relations with Armenia towards which the opening of the borders would be a critical move.
- More closely cooperate and engage the US in the background of the regional schemes, while trying to play a facilitator role and forming regional arrangements in order to provide stability in the Caucasus region.

The new administration’s handling of the Armenian Resolution issue will prove critical in deciding the tone of the new administration’s dealings with Turkey and whether the allies would turn a new page. It is essential that the Armenian Genocide resolution not pass at the US Congress. Not only will it have extremely negative repercussions for the Turkish-American relations setting a negative tone for the Obama period from its outset, but it will also be counterproductive for the newly flourishing improvement in Turkish-Armenian relations.

Turkish President Abdullah Gul made a brief yet landmark visit to Armenia on September 6, 2008 to attend the World Cup qualifying match between Armenia and Turkey in Yerevan utilizing “football diplomacy” as an opportunity to open channels of communication between the two countries. This has been a significant symbolic first step towards addressing diplomatic and political challenges in the bilateral relations, as well as promoting cooperation on broader regional issues, indicating political will at the highest level. Currently, the work of the technical committees is ongoing to improve the relations. Moreover, Turkey has been acting as a facilitator for the resolution of the longstanding Nagorno-Karabagh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

### **Recommendations on the ARMENIAN ISSUE:**

#### **To the US:**

- Address the issue of the Armenian Resolution not only as matter of domestic politics with respect to the Armenian-American population, but also keeping in mind the extremely adverse effects it would have on Turkish-American relations if it passes.

- Rather than focusing on the claims of the Armenian diaspora in the US, try to foster cooperation between Armenia and Turkey which will be more constructive and will be more likely to yield strategic as well as political results.
- Support and contribute to the efforts towards the solution of the Nagorno-Karabagh dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Work closely with regional actors including Turkey in order to achieve this goal.

### **To Turkey:**

- Improve relations with Yerevan and marginalize the role and impact of the Armenian diaspora within the United States
- Devise a more comprehensive policy going beyond addressing immediate challenges at the US Congress
- Open the borders with Armenia and intensify trade and investment links
- Revitalize the idea of a “Joint historians Commission” for an objective analysis of historic facts and depoliticize the issue by discussing it at the more technical and academic level
- Send a delegation to DC before and immediately after the Democrats take power to explain and promote the Turkish case concerning the Armenian issue and also effectively use lobbying strategies for this purpose
- Continue high level contacts between the two countries, while intensifying the ongoing work and expanding the scope of technical committees between Turkey and Armenia.
- Try to facilitate cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan towards the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh dispute, which is critical for regional stability and for further improvement of Turkish-Armenian relations.
- Initiate track-two diplomacy and support civil society initiatives in order to overcome long-lasting animosity and biases between the two neighbors.

### **V.**

In assessing the recent high profile of Turkish foreign policy in the greater Middle East area, it would be appropriate to look at the elements of continuity and change. It is also necessary to understand the new conceptualization of Turkey’s policies and the principles that shape policy preferences. Looking from a Western perspective one must register the fact that, although a member of the Atlantic Alliance Turkey also borders the region. She has historical ties to the region and her geography shapes her perception of threats and opportunities. As one of the most astute observers of Turkish foreign policy, Sir David Logan notes that

*Geographical proximity brings with it shared interests, but also potential or actual threats where these diverge. Unlike some of her neighbors which have massive hydrocarbon resources, Turkey has virtually none. Her energy requirements are massive, which has vital implications for her relations with Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran and potentially Turkmenistan. On the other hand, she is relatively well resourced with water and controls the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates, whose water is vital to Iraq and Syria. She has used water as a card in her confrontation with Syria over support for the PKK. Turkey ... now has a thriving trading relationship with the Middle East, with her exports to the Middle East rising five-fold between 1990 and 2004, which brings with it a strong interest in regional security and stability.*

*As for threats, these include WMD proliferation and terrorism, as well as exported fundamentalism. The future of Iraq is important to Turkey not just for trade and oil, but also because a fragmented Iraq would destabilize the Middle East and because northern Iraq can be a safe haven for the PKK. Iran is important not just as a valuable source of energy, but also because, if her nuclear ambitions were realized, she would be a serious threat to regional stability and conceivably to Turkey itself. Turkey's neighbors like Syria and Iran have medium range missiles capable of reaching Turkish population centers. Turkey is the only major regional country that does not possess such missiles.*

Such structural conditions frame Turkey's policy choices and preferences. As a result Ankara's evolving policy towards the region reflect the opportunities and constraints of these conditions, as well as the limits to identity of interests with Turkey's alliance partners.

For the last six years Turkey had in power a party that had its origins in the Islamist movement. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) took a particular interest in relations with the Middle East and undoubtedly Turkey's ties to the region and the pace of diplomatic activity intensified significantly. Some observers drew from this development the conclusion that the AKP's religious proclivities explain Turkey's policy towards the region. Others explain this as a natural outcome of the waning of the traditional secularist establishment and the rise of a provincial counter elite that takes religious affinity seriously. The more alarmist ones among them view recent developments as the "Islamization" of Turkish foreign policy, an assessment that does not stand scrutiny given the continuation and deepening of relations with Israel.

Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East had already begun to change in the late 1990s. When President Özal attempted to reconfigure Turkish foreign policy after the end of the Cold War and re-engage the country with its surrounding regions, this effort was dubbed neo-Ottomanism. This is the framework within which the AKP conceives and practices its foreign policy as well. The re-engagement is as much, if not more, a function of structural changes in the regional order, its balance of power and the strategically revolutionary changes that the American war, perhaps inadvertently, brought about. Therefore, there is more continuity in Turkish foreign policy since the AKP's advent to power than drastic change. There are two main differences between the pre-AKP period and the period of AKP rule though. The first is the conceptualization of Turkey's policy towards the Middle East. In ways that their predecessors did or could not AKP principals presented a theoretical framework that encompassed all of Turkey's moves in the region. Secondly, the AKP establishment culturally feels much more at ease with their Middle Eastern counterparts and believes that Turkey is the natural leader of the region. As a consequence theirs can be considered a more impassioned involvement with the region's affairs.

The element of continuity in Turkish policy towards the Middle East is one of the dimensions of Turkey's deepening engagement in the region. After all, the United States' war effort failed to a large extent in both its military and political goals. The war created a vacuum and an imbalance of power in the region that the Bush administration could not deal with. Consequently regional actors had to fill in this vacuum and take matters into their own hands as the lame duck presidency of Mr. Bush almost totally disintegrated by the end of his term. In this context Turkey was willing to play the role of the stabilizer in the region even if it professed to have no interest in being Iran's balancer. These circumstances also allowed Ankara to take many initiatives and engage with the region on an

institutional basis as well. Turkey became an observer of the Arab League, the first ever elected secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Conference is a Turk.

In the region Turkey's goal is to assure security and freedom for all and rely on political dialogue and inclusiveness as well as economic interdependence. The government claims to favor ethnic and cultural coexistence everywhere so as to avoid ethnic or sectarian based conflict and violence. The instruments of choice to pursue these goals are: a) highest level bilateral relations; b) reaching out to all communities in the region; c) regional level initiatives; d) proactive policy for conflict resolution; e) strengthening relations with regional/international organizations.

So far Turkey, due to its political agility, regional presence and tradition of diplomacy was able to bring to life its principles and use these instruments. As the Bush administration leaves the scene with an unfathomable meltdown of American political and economic power, the environment within which Turkey will conduct its policies will change as well. Such a change offers both risks and opportunities. The new agenda, in the absence of an assertive even aggressive United States should give regional players such as Turkey more leeway. On the other hand, whether the issue is the reassertion of Russian power and the Western response to it, or how to devise new policies for energy security or Iran's growing influence and its nuclear program and how to respond to it, Ankara could be faced with difficult choices. If, as expected, the United States begins to withdraw from Iraq, Turkey's cooperation and logistical support would be of paramount importance. To the extent that Turkey is a provider of security and stability in these troubled regions its strategic profile will rise. One would expect its allies particularly the EU to take note of that.

Turkey's weakness in taking full advantage of this new strategic environment would stem from its own domestic politics though. A country that presents itself as the guarantor of ethnic and cultural pluralism in the regions that it neighbors cannot continue to have its own sectarian and ethnic problems unresolved in a democratic framework. The recent escalation of PKK attacks against military and civilian targets and the success of these operations ought to be eye openers. It is clear that the PKK has not been destroyed and will not be until the root causes of what allows it to recruit among the Kurdish youth are eliminated. The fact that the PKK has no viable end game does not obviate the fact that it manages to polarize the country and fills Turkey's ethnic fault lines with destructive energy. In this context, the Kurdish question, of which the PKK is both a symptom and a violent perpetrator, is Turkey's most important and indeed existential problem.

It is only when it overcomes these difficulties that Turkey will fulfill its potential as a regional power. There is no doubt that when such a time arrives, Turkey could continue to play a constructive role in the strategic equation of the greater Middle East and set an example. Thus, it would also contribute to the security of Europe, the West and the enduring stability of the region.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **To the US:**

ON IRAQ

- Hear Turkey out before engaging in the region. In Iraq, do not act precipitously and leave prematurely. A premature departure, particularly if the Iraqi state is still incapable of providing security for all will destabilize the country and lead to a promiscuity of violence.
- Do not plan for permanent bases in the north. This would undermine the political position of the Kurds further and increase animosity and probably violence against them.
- Make sure that Kirkuk remains in its particular status and is not integrated to the Kurdistan regional government by force.
- Use your influence and capabilities to cut off all supply routes and logistical support for the PKK.
- Encourage the economic integration of Turkey and northern Iraq particularly through energy projects.

#### ON IRAN

- Seek a diplomatic solution. Without concerted action and without taking into consideration Tehran's legitimate interests no durable solution is possible.
- Be as multilateral as possible. Turkey would be a partner both in NATO and from January onwards in the UNSC
- Avoid a sanctions regime that will hurt Turkey economically in a disproportionate way

#### ON AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

- Seek diplomatic solutions to the problem. Target the elimination of al Qaeda but if need be deal with the Taliban
- Use Turkey's resources and historical ties to the country for nation-building. This would be much more promising than asking for troops.
- Turkey operates hospitals, schools in Afghanistan. If possible provide resources for such projects to continue and widen.

#### **To Turkey:**

##### ON IRAQ

- Continue the opening with Iraqi Kurds and deepen economic relations with them. Do not treat relations with Iraqi Kurds as a function or extension of your domestic Kurdish problem.
- Open a consulate in Erbil
- Continue your reconciliation efforts between Iraqi parties.

##### ON IRAN

- Use your relations with Iran to impress on the leadership that they need to be more forthcoming about their nuclear program.

## ON AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

- Communicate to Washington your capabilities in Afghanistan. Present your plan and make concrete proposals.
- Explain your readiness to take part in nation-building in Afghanistan
- Impress upon the Americans that your historical ties with Pakistan privilege you in playing a role in the stabilization of that country and finding reconciliation between Kabul and Islamabad.

## VI.

In conclusion, at its simplest the common interests of Turkey and the United States are: stability in the area that Brzezinski identified that includes the Middle East, the Gulf, the Caucasus and the Caspian basin as well as Central Asia, Afghanistan-Pakistan; to ensure the security of energy supplies and routes; the avoidance of the proliferation of failed states in the region as to more effectively fight against transnational terrorism; the beefing up of the economies of the countries in the region which would in turn strengthen economic actors and help create an integrated economic area that will partake of globalization; peaceful resolution of conflicts in the region, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to keep Russia as a responsible non-aggressive power in the critical regions of the Caucasus and the Black sea. Once the agreement is there that these are shared goals and once the two sides communicate to one another their particular demands, concerns and bottom lines it would be a lot easier to move forward. To that effect, in this report, we have made specific recommendations to both parties for particular items on their respective agendas.

From this perspective, we come to the conclusion that Turkey can be of significant assistance to the United States in dealing with the problems of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and the Caucasus, as well as in moving the moribund Middle East peace process forward, which will be crucial for rebuilding Turkish-American partnership in a new era.

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